

Partnership Council for Wales – 24th November 2022 – WLGA Climate Change Update

Purpose

1. To provide an update on notable developments since the last Partnership Council meeting, both in general terms and specific to work of the **Climate Strategy Panel (CSP)**¹ and the **WLGA's Transition and Recovery Support Programme**.

Background

2. A report to the last Partnership Council **meeting on 6th July 2022** set out the background to establishment of the Climate Strategy Panel. It provided a synopsis of the Panel's work to date and of commissions issued via the WLGA's Transition and Recovery Support Programme (the TaRSP is funded by Welsh Government).
3. This report covers important developments since July before giving an update on the Panel's work and the TaRSP

Significant developments

4. Since the last meeting, the following notable events have occurred:
 - **Audit Wales** issued a report in July which concluded it is 'uncertain' if the public sector will be able to meet its climate change target of net zero by 2030. The report highlighted that only 2 of the 48 public bodies it had spoken to had worked out how much it would cost
 - A **summer heatwave** in July/August, with a red heat warning for the first time for parts of the UK, although amber for Wales (where a record temperature of 37.1° was reached in Flintshire). Many reservoirs saw levels drop significantly, with a hosepipe ban introduced for part of Wales. Farmers reported harvesting crops several weeks earlier than usual
 - **Grassfires** were experienced across many parts of Wales (as well as serious larger scale incidents across Europe) as the extended period of dry weather resulted in fires spreading rapidly once started
 - The **UK Climate Change Committee** warned that heat-related deaths will triple over coming decades up to 2050 unless there is more

¹ The Decarbonisation Strategy Panel was established at the request of the Partnership Council meeting in June 2020. At the Partnership Council meeting on 7th July 2021 it was agreed to extend the Panel's work to include adaptation and resilience and the name was therefore changed to Climate Strategy Panel to reflect the overall remit.

action to address overheating within **housing**. It noted that the problem is particularly acute in flats in town and city centres

- Also in July, the **High Court** ruled that the UK Government's net zero strategy for the UK as a whole does not comply with the Climate Change Act. It found that it does not provide sufficient detail on how the target of net zero by 2050 for the UK overall is to be reached. It ruled that the strategy "lacked any quantitative assessment of the contributions expected to be made by individual policies to reductions in [greenhouse gas] emissions...".
 - The **Met Office** reported that sea levels are now rising by 3-5.2mm a year, which is more than double the rate of increase in the early part of last century
 - In October the **UN General Secretary**, ahead of COP 27 (in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt from 6th -18th November) spoke of the potential for 'global catastrophe'. He called on G20 countries, which produce 80% of global greenhouse emissions, to step up efforts to cut emissions and invest more in renewable energy
 - At the opening of **COP 27**, the emphasis has been on ensuring that there is no 'backsliding' from international commitments made at COP 26 in Glasgow last year. There is a continued focus on achieving a 'just transition' and calls for 'loss and damage' finance, with richer nations urged to help developing nations deal with the issues they are already facing as a result of climate change
 - Planning has been underway for **Wales Climate Week**, taking place in the week commencing 21st November.
5. The above developments, all within the last six months, highlight the growing profile and sense of urgency in relation to the threat and reality of climate change. It is important to note, too, that councils' Leaders and Climate Change champions/lead members met on 27th July to discuss the importance of their current term of administration, taking us up to 2027, and how councils can work together in a strategic way, whilst sharing good practice and lessons learned.

Climate Strategy Panel (CSP) and TaRSP progress

6. The CSP has been providing a strategic steer to the work of the TaRSP which, itself, is aimed at supporting councils to meet local government commitments in

Net Zero Wales (attached again for convenience at Appendix 1).

7. There have been three meetings of the Panel since the last meeting of the Partnership Council, with a fourth taking place on the same day as this meeting. The focus in those meetings has been as follows:
 - *21st July*: decarbonising the public sector estate; update on work on procurement
 - *20th September*: update on support for land-based decarbonisation and the leadership role of elected Members and relevant officers; consideration of how to promote work on adaptation
 - *20th October*: energy crisis and forward planning; heat strategy; review of councils' progress.

8. On the final point above regarding a **review of councils' progress** (which was agreed at the last Partnership Council meeting), Miller Research has been commissioned by WLGA and will be undertaking the work in coming months. All 22 councils will be asked how they have taken forward their work on decarbonisation over the last eighteen months. That will include looking at the emissions reported by each council in each of the last two years to get an early sign of whether these are moving in the right direction and at the speed required.

9. Councils will also be asked how they are approaching the risks associated with adaptation, as outlined in the UKCCC's Risk Assessment for Wales (see [UK-CCRA-2017-Wales-National-Summary.pdf \(theccc.org.uk\)](https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/UK-CCRA-2017-Wales-National-Summary.pdf)). There is no expectation that every council will have its own adaptation plan. Rather, the review will be looking at levels of awareness of the risks identified and what actions, if any, are already being taken on the risks of greatest relevance to councils' operations (locally and regionally).

10. WLGA is working with the UKCCC on the adaptation aspect of the study. UKCCC are looking at adaptation across all public sector bodies. Miller's work will enable a more in-depth assessment of council activity and will follow the same methodology as UKCCC to ensure consistency. The results are expected around next Spring.

11. In relation to the **TaRSP**, progress with the workstreams previously reported is as follows:
 - **Behaviour change** – development of an engagement and communications strategy with supporting resources/workshops
 - **Procurement** – development of a toolkit (with training) that brings together a range of resources to help make sustainable choices that

will reduce emissions, along with plans for support in engaging with supply chains

- **Transport** – work with WG Energy Services to support planning for zero emission fleet and reducing 'grey fleet' emissions; working on whole-life costing and carbon costing in business case development; producing supporting materials to feed into work on strategic development plans. A task and finish group has been set up by the Society of Welsh Treasurers (SWT) to support the transport commitments made in Net Zero Wales, including collective work on procurement of electric vehicles
- **Leadership** – a series of workshops for council officers leading on various aspects of climate change work; working with Leaders to ensure political oversight of the process
- **Masterclasses** – this series, with councils sharing good practice, has continued, attracting high levels of attendance.

12. In relation to the penultimate point, para. 5 above refers to an inaugural meeting of Leaders and Climate Change Champions/ Members, called by WLGA Leader, Cllr Andrew Morgan, in July. A second meeting has been organised for Climate Week (further details of Wales Climate Week are in Appendix 2).

13. This second meeting of Leaders/Lead Members will have taken place on 23rd November, the day before Partnership Council, and a verbal update can be given at the meeting. The first topic to be covered is the link between the **climate change and nature loss emergencies**. More extreme weather is seeing a mixture of droughts, wildfires, flooding and potentially irreversible changes to nature. One in ten UK species is already at risk of extinction and over half of UK wildlife is reported to be in decline. The nature and climate emergencies are inextricably linked and ways of tackling both together have been found. Indeed, often nature can help to provide the solutions needed to tackle the risks from climate change. Councils' Section 6 biodiversity duty (in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016) is critical here. It requires public authorities: "to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and, in doing so, promote the resilience of ecosystems".

14. The second topic to be covered at the meeting is planning for energy requirements over the coming years, including the development of Local Area Energy Plans to feed into a national energy strategy for Wales. This is an issue that has come into even sharper focus over recent months due to the current surge in energy prices and the impact on the wider cost of living crisis. Taking steps to reduce energy consumption and improve energy efficiency can contribute not only to tackling the rising cost of living but also to addressing the

climate change and budgetary crises faced by councils.

Recommendations

15. It is recommended that Partnership Council:

- notes recent developments and comments on the various workstreams underway, highlighting any areas not currently being covered that it is felt should be included
- Notes and supports the progress in the workstreams as outlined in para 11, including the work of the SWT task and finish group on transport commitments
- highlights, via WLGA, its role in checking progress identified by the review in paras 8-10.

APPENDIX 1 – TaRSP work plan against LG commitments

Net Zero Wales LG Commitments

	TaRSP Support
<p>Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and deliver a strategic plan for decarbonising local authority estate. <p>Ystadau Cymru as strategic lead;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic plan for decarbonising buildings by end of 2023. - All public buildings supplied with low carbon heat by 2030. - All new public sector buildings are built to net zero standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decarbonisation Masterclass on Buildings held on February 16th. Sharing best practice on Re:fit programme and retro fitting older buildings. • Resource bank on website. Ongoing and being updated regularly.
<p>Procurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop understanding of emissions profile of all procured goods and services by end of 2022. - Carbon reduction specifications in all new or reviewed contracts. - Focus on a number of priority contracts and share learning re. decarb across LAs by end 2022 – to develop a decarb approach to be applied to all contracts by 2023. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioned support on procurement and scope 3 emissions • Masterclass on Procurement in planning for later this year. • Resource bank on website. Ongoing and being updated regularly
<p>Mobility & Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build on fleet reviews and develop plans for transforming fleet, inc. EV charging infrastructure, all new cars and light goods vehicles ULEV by 2025, reduce carbon footprint of buses, taxis and private hire vehicles to zero by 2030. - Grey fleet review to be completed by end of 2022 (working with WGES) - Support remote working where possible, at home or in hubs. Encourage active travel and public transport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioned targeted support on low carbon infrastructure and transport that focuses on skills, making the business case, planning and grey fleet. • Masterclass on Transport held 19th January, currently planning a masterclass on Active Travel with case studies from Nottingham City Council • Resource bank on website. Ongoing and being updated regularly
<p>Land Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Map out local authority land holdings by April 2022 to identify types of land and their potential for carbon sequestration, renewable energy and flood management. - Carbon sequestration seen as a core purpose for public land by leaders. - Develop 5 year training and apprenticeship programme and peatland restoration to support the supply chain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioned support on land based decarbonisation that includes guidance to embed LBD across relevant service areas and establishing a streamlined tool for councils • Masterclass on Land Use held in March • Resource bank on website. Ongoing and being updated regularly

APPENDIX 2: WALES CLIMATE WEEK



The graphic for Wales Climate Week features a dark blue background with a green rectangular area at the top. Inside the green area, the text reads: "Wales Climate Week", "Dates: 21-25 November 2022", and "Theme: Public Engagement & Action on Climate Change". Below the green area, the website "www.climateweek.gov.wales" is displayed. At the bottom of the graphic are four icons: a wind turbine, a solar panel, a hand holding a leaf, and an electric car.

Virtual conference (21-23 Nov):

Bringing together partners to discuss a collective approach to supporting the public in taking action on climate change.

Fringe events programme (21 Nov-14 Dec):

Deliberative consultation in the form of workshops and events to involve marginalised groups in discussion on climate change.

Aim of virtual conference: To engage Team Wales partners in discussion on the public engagement strategy.

Format: 3-day virtual conference including sessions on:

- Climate change and the role of society.
- The future of transport in Wales.
- Climate and the link to health & wellbeing.
- Building resilience to climate change in our communities.
- Community engagement & solutions.
- Climate & nature solutions.
- Air quality & climate change.
- Winter fuel crisis, energy savings & decarbonising our homes.
- Understanding societal barriers to designing new energy systems.
- Consumption and waste management (reuse, repair, recycle).
- Sustainable fashion.
- Sustainable food choices.
- Behavioural science and overcoming societal barriers to action.
- Public sector, industry & business (leading by example).
- Creative industries (visioning climate futures).
- Just transition