

26th November 2021

COP 26, COP CYMRU AND DECARBONISATION

Purpose

1. To provide feedback from recent major climate change events that have taken place and for Council to consider a related report, discussed at the Partnership Council for Wales on 24th November.

Background

2. Under the 'banner' of COP Cymru, there have been numerous climate change related events taking place over the last month including:
 - The major UN Conference of the Parties (COP 26) in Glasgow
 - Regional roadshows across the UK including four held in Wales, linked to COP26
 - Wales Climate Week, which finishes on the day of this WLGA Council meeting.
3. Headlines from these events are included in the Appendix of Annex 1 of the following report which went to Partnership Council. From a local government perspective, one of the most significant developments in the final COP 26 agreement was the recognition, for the first time, of the vital role that local (and regional) government plays in delivering on the high-level objectives.
4. The local government role relates not only to in-house measures being taken by councils but also to the important leadership role local government plays in its communities. This includes crucial decisions that are taken relating to land use planning, transport, waste management/recycling, housing, economic development, education and training, community facilities, flood management and many other functions.
5. Councils have already made a number of commitments in relation to the **decarbonisation / mitigation goal** of achieving a net zero public sector by 2030. These were included in the Welsh Government's recently launched Net Zero Wales plan (see [Net Zero Wales | GOV.WALES](#) Carbon budget 2021-25 report, page 204-5).
6. The attached report to Partnership Council includes a set of next steps to increase momentum. These include firming up on the high-level commitments already made and including some clear targets that can be monitored over time. It also includes

a proposal to extent support for councils to include **adaptation** activity, recognising the challenges of preparing for changes already happening as a result of historic and ongoing emissions. A verbal update will be given on the outcome of discussion at Partnership Council at the meeting.

Recommendations

7. Members are asked to:

7.1 **Note the report to Partnership Council and offer comments on the next steps, to feed into and inform forward planning.**

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Partnership Council for Wales – 24th November 2021 – WLGA Decarbonisation Update

Purpose

1. In light of COP 26 and ongoing COP Cymru events, to update the Partnership Council on decarbonisation work by local authorities and the WGLA's support programme and seek views on forward plans and proposals.

Background

2. At the Partnership Council meeting on 7th July progress of the Local Government Decarbonisation Strategy Panel¹ was reported. **Commitments** under the four themes of the Route Map to Net Zero were reported and endorsed (relating to procurement, transport, buildings and land use).
3. Details were also given of how the WLGA support programme was progressing including, as an important next step, a **review of councils' decarbonisation plans**. The purpose of that review was to find and share examples of good practice, to help councils develop their action plans as living documents, and to identify where further advice and assistance is required.
4. Since the July meeting, further good progress has been made. The findings from the review were discussed at a workshop with local authority officers in September and a final report has now been produced, circulated to councils and uploaded on the WLGA website – see [Review of plans](#). Meanwhile, local authorities have submitted **baseline assessments** of their own emissions in line with the Welsh Government's reporting tool.
5. The first part of this report to Partnership Council sets out how the above review is being used to inform forward planning for the WLGA Programme.
6. The second seeks views on proposed next steps. These are intended to help increase momentum, so that local government's actions reflect the urgency needed in response to the climate change/nature emergencies. They will also help in terms of the public sector ambition to achieve net zero by 2030.
7. The **Appendix** covers 'COP Cymru', including COP's explicit recognition of the role of local and regional government in delivering on the goals. It contains an overview of the COP26 Conference in Glasgow, the regional roadshows run in parallel in Wales and Wales Climate Week, which started on 22nd November. This Partnership Council meeting therefore takes place during Climate Week. A local government-led session is being held on the afternoon of the 24th,

¹ The Decarbonisation Strategy Panel was established at the request of the Partnership Council meeting in June 2020.

highlighting some of the positive measures being taken by councils in Wales.

WLGA Support programme – forward planning

8. There are two main strands of work currently being developed under the WLGA support programme, which is funded by Welsh Government. The first is to **share good practice** that has been identified. A series of seminars is being arranged that will involve local authorities talking about significant projects they have successfully developed, and which will make a substantial contribution to their net zero objective. These examples have been drawn from the recent review of LA plans. The seminars will provide opportunities to explore issues such as the barriers faced and how they were overcome, governance arrangements put in place to oversee the work and how impacts are being measured.
9. The review focused on local authority level arrangements. In addition, there is collaborative work underway at regional level. All of this activity needs to be mapped to raise awareness of what is being done, where, and by whom. That, in turn, will feed into efforts to ensure there are good channels of **communication**. Making this information publicly available will be of benefit not only to councils but also, hopefully, partners in other sector.
10. The second strand involves the commissioning of a **number of studies**, guidance and advice notes. These will focus on areas where councils have identified that they need additional advice and support. The programme will enable necessary work to be done once and shared with all councils instead of having to be done 22 times. It may be supplemented with bespoke support for some individual local authorities where specific needs are identified. This strand of work will draw on the consultancy framework that was reported to the Partnership Council in July².
11. An initial list of potential commissions has been drawn up. It covers a range of advice under the following broad headings:
 - Climate change leadership and behaviour change
 - Procurement and measurement of Scope 3 emissions³
 - Low carbon infrastructure and transport
 - Land use for carbon sequestration and nature recovery.

² The five consultants on the WLGA framework are: Netherwood Sustainable Futures, Miller Research, Cylchog, Grant Thornton and Costain.

³ Scope 1 covers direct emissions from council owned or controlled sources. Scope 2 covers indirect emissions arising from purchased electricity, heating, cooling etc. Scope 3 emissions include purchased goods and services, investments, leased assets, from waste disposal etc.

12. Draft briefs for various pieces of work are under discussion between WLGA and relevant teams within Welsh Government. These will then be considered with all five consultants for their expert input and suggestions before the work is then commissioned. Results and outputs will be put onto the Decarbonisation pages on the **WLGA website**: [Decarbonisation - WLGA](#). Progress will also be reported back to Partnership Council on an ongoing basis.

Proposed next steps and requirements

13. As with COP 26 itself, commitments that have been made are only as good as the manner in which they are taken forward and honoured. It will be important to keep a clear focus on progress being made at local, national, UK and international levels (all are relevant – reflecting, in many ways, the multi-level approach that has been needed in relation to the Covid pandemic).

14. As far as the Partnership Council's ongoing oversight of local government progress is concerned, some initial thoughts on 'next steps' are suggested below, for discussion and agreement:

- Ensure climate change remains a **standing item on Partnership Council agendas** so there is ongoing and regular discussion between Welsh Government Ministers and council Leaders
- Welsh Government and councils (and other interested partners) to work together to agree **innovative, Wales-wide, multi-year programmes of work** aligned to the commitments made by councils at the last Partnership Council meeting and explore ways of co-ordinating and funding these
- In light of the above, agree a number of **specific targets** in relation to the commitments
- Agree to an **annual report on progress against the commitments** and the targets that are developed, and an annual refresh of the action plan review⁴, to focus action and continue to share good practice
- Agree to an **annual update of emissions reports** by councils so that progress can be monitored over time, highlighting areas where more effort is needed and feeding into the above reports

⁴ Via a commissioned study, as before, again to minimise demands on officer time.

- Consider extending the remit of the Decarbonisation Strategy Panel and the WLGA support programme to **include adaptation** explicitly, as well as mitigation measures.

15. Following this steer from Partnership Council, engagement will be sought on development and delivery of the above steps, and of the associated support programme, including discussions with:

- the Decarbonisation Strategy Panel
- a range of local authority Cabinet member and professional networks
- Leaders at WLGA Executive Board.

Recommendations

16. It is recommended that Partnership Council:

- notes the progress of the WLGA support programme to date
- reflects on developments throughout the various COP Cymru events
- considers and comments on the next steps suggested in para. 14.

APPENDIX: COP Cymru Developments / Round-up

COP Cymru has been used as a 'banner' to cover the COP26 conference in Glasgow, the four regional roadshows that have taken place in Wales during COP26, and Wales Climate Week. Brief details on each of these is included below.

COP 26 Conference

The Conference concluded on 12th November after a fortnight of negotiations. The four headline goals were:

- To secure global net zero by 2050 and keep within reach the goal of limiting the rise in global temperatures to a maximum of 1.5 degrees
- To adapt to protect communities and natural habitats
- To mobilise finance (at least \$100bn a year)
- To work together to deliver, with collaboration between governments, business and civil society.

The final agreement signed by nearly 200 countries that attended, focused on the above points.

Headline developments during the Conference were:

- An agreement to 'phase down' the use of coal (this as the first time coal has been mentioned in a climate deal, but it was not the 'phase out' that was originally hoped for, due to late opposition from China and India)
- Countries to meet next year to pledge further carbon cuts to move accelerate progress towards the goal of limiting the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels⁵. Countries have been asked to republish climate action plans with more ambitious emissions reduction targets for 2030
- A surprise joint declaration by USA and China, the world's two biggest emitters, to work together to achieve the 1.5-degree goal
- A promise from 100 countries representing 85% of the world's forests to stop deforestation by 2030
- A scheme to reduce 30% of methane emissions by 2030, agreed by more than 100 countries
- A commitment from around 450 financial organisations to back 'clean' technology' and direct finance away from fossil fuel using industry.

⁵ According to the IPCC, observed global mean surface temperature for the decade 2006-2015 was 0.87 degrees higher than the average over the 1850-1900 period. Estimated anthropogenic global warming is currently increasing at c0.2 degrees per decade due to past and ongoing emissions ([Summary for Policymakers](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/) – Special Report on Climate Change and Land (ipcc.ch))

Recognition of the role of local and regional government

On 11th November, the day was dedicated to Cities, Regions, the Built Environment. It was also designated as a 'local and regional government day' following joint lobbying by the four UK Local Government Associations. WLGA liaised with the other three LGAs to ensure local government was represented at the Conference, highlighting councils' key roles in local delivery of objectives. As part of the proceedings on 11th the Leader of WLGA, Councillor Andrew Morgan, made a video statement outlining local government's work on mitigation and adaptation which was played during one of the events.

The final COP 26 agreement stated in the introductory text: "*Recognising the important role of indigenous peoples, local communities and civil society, including youth and children, in addressing and responding to climate change, and highlighting the urgent need for multilevel and cooperative action*". Inclusion of the term multilevel has been welcomed by local government as explicit recognition from the COP of the role of local government, as well as regional and national government.

Later in the agreement (at para 88) it "*recognizes the important role of non-Party stakeholders, including civil society, indigenous peoples, local communities, youth, children, local and regional governments and other stakeholders, in contributing to progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement*".

During the proceedings on 11th November, the Under2 coalition⁶ ([Driving climate action in states and regions | Climate Group \(theclimategroup.org\)](https://theclimategroup.org)), which includes Welsh Government, announced that 68 cities, states and regions had signed up to actions to be taken within the next decade to decrease emissions, increase climate resilience and protect biodiversity.

Regional roadshows

As part of a UK-wide series, events took place in each of the regions of Wales, with Denbighshire, Powys, Pembrokeshire and Cardiff councils involved in their organisation. They were supported by Welsh Government, WLGA and a range of other partners. Each roadshow showcased good practice, aligned with a theme under discussion on the COP26 Programme for the day, as follows:

*North Wales (4th Nov) – focus on **energy transition**.* This took place at Menai Science Park, Ynys Mon. After an overview of clean energy in Wales, there was consideration of hydrogen and marine energy projects and other technologies being developed. A panel looked at production, storage and distribution of renewable energy across Wales

⁶ The coalition covers 260 governments. Representing 1.75 bn people and 50% of the global economy. It has updated its criteria to align with the 1.5-degree target.

Mid Wales (6th November) – focus on **nature-based solutions**. This took place at the Centre for Alternative Technology, in Machynlleth. A range of experts looked at how supply chains and production systems can become more sustainable, including circular economy development

South West Wales (8th November) – focus on **adaptation and resilience**. This took place at the National Botanic Gardens in Carmarthenshire. It looked at how we can build resilient infrastructure and agriculture, protect and restore habitats and support those most vulnerable to climate change. Sessions also covered topics including training and development needs, food security and coastal adaptation

South East Wales (10th November) – focus on **clean transport** and the move to low carbon transport. This took place in Cardiff, with examples used including the introduction of electric buses and development of the S Wales Metro and included the launch of the 'try before you buy' Green Taxi initiative.

Climate week, 22nd to 26th November

The schedule of Wales Climate week is as set out below:

22nd – *Wales and the World* – learning innovative solutions from other nations and sharing Wales's successes

23rd – *Energy and emissions* – reducing our reliance on traditional energy sources and increasing use of renewables

24th – *How Wales is responding to the climate emergency* – looking at actions and policies in different sectors

25th – Exploring the role of nature in climate change – actions being taken on land and at sea to reduce the impact of climate change

26th – *How individual choices impact the world climate* – steps that can be taken at home, in work and in communities, whilst addressing equalities issues.

On the afternoon of the 24th one of the sectors that is being covered is local government. Officers from Denbighshire, Powys, Carmarthenshire and RCT will be talking about seps their authorities have been taking.