
COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 22 JANUARY 2026

Attendance:

COUNCILLORS: Annwen Hughes (Chair) and Delyth Lloyd Griffiths (Vice-chair)

Beca Brown, Stephen Churchman, Wendy Cleaver, Elwyn Edwards, Jina Gwyrfai, Berwyn Parry Jones, Linda Morgan, Edgar Wyn Owen, Arwyn Herald Roberts, Beca Roberts, Elfed Powell Roberts, Peter Thomas, Elfed Williams, Robert Glyn Daniels and Gruffydd Williams.

Officers present:

Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Adviser) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

Present for Items 5 and 6:

Councillor Craig ab Iago (Cabinet Member for Environment), Dylan Owen (Corporate Director) and Bethan Richardson (Climate Change Programme Manager, Corporate Leadership Team)

Present for Item 7:

Councillor Craig ab Iago (Cabinet Member for Environment), Dafydd Williams (Head of Environment Department), Gerwyn Jones (Assistant Head of Environment Department, Transport) and Iwan ap Trefor (Traffic and Projects Service Manager).

Present for Item 8:

Councillor Menna Trenholme (Deputy Leader of the Council), Sandra Lynne Thomas (Programme Manager for Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board).

1. APOLOGIES

An apology was received from Councillor Dafydd Owen Davies.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 6 November 2025, as a true record.

5. REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY FROM A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC – CLIMATE AND NATURE EMERGENCY PLAN FUNDING MATTERS

It was confirmed that the member of the public was unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances. In his absence, the Scrutiny Adviser read out a written statement provided by him, which elaborated on his request by setting out the following points:

- The money spent as part of the Climate and Nature Emergency Response Plan should meet the public benefit test of the Charities Act 2011, to ensure that decisions were evidence-based, transparent and could be scrutinised effectively.
- That it was harder to demonstrate how projects were prioritised and whether they met the public benefit test, whether any other projects had been considered and what evidence had been used to reach a decision if public consultations and Cabinet oversight were not part of the governance of the Plan.
- The importance of good governance arrangements.
- It should be ensured that experimental schemes were fit for the future. If the Council ran an electric fleet vehicle pilot, the results of the pilot would not reflect the true future cost of the electric fleet.
- The Plan's projects should identify the public benefit over time into the future. Public benefit from any project could diminish if costs continued to rise. The Council needed to demonstrate that this was being taken into account.
- Delegated rights increased the risk of untested assumptions. Concern that projects may be approved on the basis of outdated information or optimism bias without being scrutinised.

In response to the request for scrutiny and to the written statement elaborating on the individual's request, the following observations were submitted by officers:-

This request by a member of the public to scrutinise the issues was welcomed, appreciating the public interest in the Plan's work.

Assurance was given that the governance of the Climate Change and Nature Board was being considered continually, giving close consideration to its operations and financial decisions, and noting that a written response to the request for scrutiny had been submitted as part of the meeting documentation.

The Corporate Director confirmed that the Charities Act 2011 did not apply to the operation of the Board or the Council generally, clarifying that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and democratic procedures were the relevant considerations for Cyngor Gwynedd.

In response to the request for scrutiny and to the written statement elaborating on the request, the following observations were submitted by Members:-

They thanked the individual for submitting this request for scrutiny, taking pride in the public interest in the field.

They disagreed with the concept that Climate Change and Nature Board matters were not subject to scrutiny, as this committee scrutinised the matter regularly. It was added that a cabinet member was present for that scrutiny process and that the observations of this committee had a positive impact on the Board.

It was confirmed that public consultations were being held regularly on climate and nature emergency matters to ensure that the people of Gwynedd had the opportunity to voice their views in the formulation of the Board's projects. However, it was considered that there was room for improvement to ensure that certain communities responded to these consultations. In response to the observations, the Cabinet Member for Environment confirmed that the public consultations were included on the 'Have Your Say' page on the Council's website, acknowledging that work was underway to ensure consultations reached Town and Community councils and that extensive responses were received.

It was also noted that field experts gathered information for the Board ensuring that accurate and up-to-date information was presented to Members. It was recognised that this was a very complex area and that specific scientific knowledge was required to be able to collect data effectively.

In response to specific observations on how the Board budgeted the approved projects, the Corporate Director confirmed that discussions about budgets took place at the Board meetings. It was elaborated that the Plan was one of the Council Plan priorities and that any decision made by the Board was considered by the Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet for oversight, and to ensure a democratic process to ensure that budgets were spent meaningfully and transparently.

In response to an enquiry about the membership of the Board, the Climate Change Programme Manager confirmed that the elected members on the Board were not all members of the Plaid Cymru Group, confirming that a cross-section of the Council were present at the meetings such as five cabinet members, 2 elected members – a representative from the scrutiny committee and the Biodiversity Champion, along with a number of senior officers.

In response to observations submitted in relation to the 'Risk of Strategic Move' submitted as part of the request for scrutiny, the Climate Change Programme Manager confirmed that anyone wishing to receive funding from the Climate Plan Fund would need to complete a form which would be considered by the Board. It was explained that this form contained a number of conditions as well as detailing the benefit that would come from carrying out the work in question, in order to be able to determine whether granting the request for funding would be in line with the priorities of the Emergency Plan. It was also noted that the expenditure of the Fund was a matter addressed by the Governance and Audit Committee.

RESOLVED to

- **Note the response of the officers, acknowledge that governance arrangements are in place and to continue to scrutinise the Plan on an annual basis.**
- **Recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment that consideration should be given to ways of increasing the response to public consultations and obtaining input from the public and others.**
- **Request that information on expenditure be highlighted and detailed in the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan Annual Report to ensure transparency.**

6. REVIEW OF THE CLIMATE AND NATURE EMERGENCY PLAN

Submitted – a report by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Corporate Director and the Climate Change Programme Manager. Attention was drawn to the following main points:

It was confirmed that the revised plan had been developed following feedback from a public consultation carried out during the summer months of 2025. It was pointed out that there had been changes to the plan's projects, also noting that there was a greater number of projects.

Members were reminded that the original plan provided details of in-house Council projects only, confirming that this had now been changed to also include external projects. It was elaborated that further work had been carried out on the original projects to ensure public value and to ensure that every effort was made to ensure that all communities joined the Council to help prevent the climate emergency. However, this was recognised as having an

impact on resources, and it was reported that work was being undertaken to try to estimate the costs of some projects.

It was emphasised that a number of factors in dealing with the climate and nature crisis were beyond the control of the Council, stressing that everything was being done to strive to address the crisis while other governments were more committed to the cause.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:

Details were provided of the percentages of some of the specific questions in the public consultation and it was considered that it would be useful to include some open questions. It was felt that the inclusion of such questions would lead to suggestions that would improve future services and would be a means of seeking new ideas for development in the field. In response, the Climate Change Programme Manager confirmed that including questions of this kind would be considered in the future.

Some observations were made out of concern that the Board was not responding as effectively as it could because it did not receive specialist scientific information. It was expanded upon that the Board was made up of the Council's experienced officers along with Elected Members, highlighting the need for specialist experts within the fields of science. Similarly, there was concern that some of the plan's projects led to increased costs suggesting that a portion of this funding could be used to respond to current challenges affecting the people of Gwynedd rather than striving to solve problems that may arise in the future.

Reference was made to page 6 of the Plan, which stated: "... We will continue to reduce our emissions over the next few decades until we reach the net zero target", considering whether reducing emissions over the next few decades is an unattainable target. The need to revise this wording to include a realistic and ambitious target for the future was discussed. In response, the Corporate Director agreed with these observations emphasising that it was key to set realistic targets as it was unlikely that the aim could be met.

It was noted that Section 10 of the Plan stated that carbon emission rates in the waste area were now zero. Given that the incineration of residual waste at Parc Adfer generated carbon emissions, it was asked how emissions from this field could be zero. In response, the Cabinet Member confirmed that further information on this matter would be shared with Members. He suggested that members visit Parc Adfer to learn more about the process.

It was reported that a pilot scheme was underway to reduce public waste through the introduction of community recycling blue boxes. It was asked whether it would be possible to receive feedback on this scheme and were there plans to extend the scheme to the County's rural areas? In response to the query, the Climate Change Programme Manager noted that the results of the pilot were not currently available and would be shared as soon as possible to see if the plan could be expanded.

Similarly, consideration was given to whether the inclusion of some new projects within section 10 of the Plan was premature. It was detailed that projects to promote a circular economy and reduce street waste indicated that carbon savings were not measurable and the Climate Change Programme Manager confirmed that this was because they varied from case to case.

Members expressed their thanks for the report, noting that it would be beneficial to include an additional section in the Plan or create a separate document celebrating the success of the scheme to date, detailing how much money had been saved as well as detailing the progress of all the schemes and the resulting carbon savings.

RESOLVED

- **To accept the report, noting the observations made during the discussion.**
- **That the Committee welcomes the intention to revisit the Council's ambition to be Net Zero Carbon by 2030.**
- **To recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment that:**
 - **successes and the work carried out to deliver the Plan should be communicated to the public.**
 - **the use of open questions in public consultations needs to be increased to receive responses that would enrich the information available to inform future direction.**
 - **consideration should be given to modifying the following wording: "... we will continue to reduce our emissions over the next decades until we reach the net zero target' (Page 6, Climate and Nature Emergency Plan, Version 2), in order to be more ambitious in meeting the target.**

7. ACTIVE TRAVEL

The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Head of Environment Department, Assistant Head of Environment Department (Transport) and the Traffic and Projects Service Manager. The following main points were highlighted.

Members were reminded that there was a wide range of schemes in place across the County, in both rural and urban areas. Examples were shared of similar projects in progress by Council partners to give a complete picture of the active travel network.

It was explained that projects were prioritised through the implementation of two grant streams which were funded by the Welsh Government. It was elaborated that one related specifically to active travel and safe routes within communities and for schools. The need to assess different projects to ensure that they met the criteria of those grants in order to be approved was detailed. It was updated that active travel plans also received further consideration under the Regional Transport Plan.

It was reported that active travel developments were being regularly updated with different projects at different levels of maturity. It was noted that this allowed new routes to be developed on a regular basis to meet the needs of communities.

It was noted that the Department was keen to increase the grant opportunities available in this area in the future. The ongoing challenge of maintaining these routes was explained and members were reminded that capital funding was provided to install the infrastructure but no additional funding was allocated to the Council to maintain them. It was acknowledged that a number of these routes were developed next to highways but it was emphasised that the work programme for highway maintenance did not meet the needs of users of the active travel routes to ensure that they were adequately swept and ensure that vegetation was controlled. The hope was that successfully funding an effective maintenance programme would achieve the aim of the project such as reducing traffic congestion and ensuring that there were no parking problems in urban areas. It was noted that the department had submitted a One-off Bid for funding to try and meet the demand for this work this year. It was emphasised that officers were also developing a package to support and equip schools to promote the use of these routes into the future.

Pride was expressed that the Department was working with the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board to develop routes that would assist Council partners. A specific example was shared of an active travel route in the Penrhosgarnedd area of Bangor, where

it was hoped that the use of those routes would reduce the traffic and parking burden for the Health Board at Ysbyty Gwynedd and the wider area. Members were reminded that maps of active routes were available detailing their locations across Gwynedd and nationally.

It was emphasised that there was no risk assessment in place should the situation arise where there was no funding from the Welsh Government for the maintenance of the routes. Particular attention was drawn to damage to the Lôn Eifion route in 2025 following a storm, noting that part of the route was now closed. The cost of renewing the route had been estimated to be around £90,000 and work was underway to find sources to fund it as soon as possible.

Reference was made to financial sources confirming that active travel schemes would receive financial support from the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee, with a view to developing a wider network of routes regionally.

It was explained that the development and maintenance of active travel routes was the responsibility of Cyngor Gwynedd and confirmed that Town and Community Councils were not expected to do so. However, Community Councils and members of the public were thanked for their work in tidying up the paths by assisting in litter picking and clearing the paths for users.

It was reported that engagement work had been undertaken within this area of work as a public consultation on the Regional Transport Plan was recently completed. It was also noted that over 2000 responses had been received as active travel maps were introduced in 2001, reinforcing the public interest in the development of the scheme.

It was noted that £2.4 million had been allocated to fund some of the scheme's projects during the 2026/27 financial year, explaining that this would not be adequate to cover all projects.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by the Members:-

The list of upcoming projects was detailed, noting that a number of developments such as a route between Caernarfon and Caeathro had been scheduled for the long term. Members were reminded that a fatal accident had occurred in this area stressing the need to develop the path. In response to the observations, the Assistant Head of Department confirmed that projects that had been scheduled for the long term were likely to be delivered in approximately 10 years or more, with medium-term projects being delivered in 5 to 10 years. Further, it was sympathised that a road accident had occurred in this area recently and also recognised that this was, unfortunately, the case for a number of other areas in Gwynedd that would benefit from similar routes.

The budget for the maintenance of these routes was considered. It was asked if there were any examples of areas where the costs of cutting grass and road verges had decreased over time as grassy road verges were replaced by a tarmac path. Similarly, were there examples where highway maintenance costs had increased due to increased work in sweeping and maintaining active travel routes as they were located on highway verges. In response to the observations, the Assistant Head of Department thanked members for their observations and stated that work would be done to assess budgets to look into the matter.

In response to an enquiry, the Assistant Head of Department confirmed that the possibility of funding the maintenance costs of the active travel routes through a Visitor Levy could be explored.

In response to queries and observations regarding town and community councils, the Assistant Head of Department confirmed that councils were not expected to spend on active travel routes. They were thanked for their work in working with the Council for their maintenance and for creating a network of similar routes in some areas. It was explained that the Council was also working with them in relation to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and noted that further information about that plan could be received in the future.

In response to a further enquiry on the repairs to be carried out on a section of the Lôn Eifion route in Penygroes, the Assistant Head of Department confirmed that this section of the path was expected to be open by Easter. It was elaborated that work was being carried out over the next few weeks to commission the work. It was pointed out that two members of staff were co-ordinating the project of developing the paths and they were thanked for their work in trying to make the paths accessible to users. He went on to note that this meant that it was not currently possible to carry out inspections on trees in order to assess risk, noting that if successful, the One-off Bid the Department had applied for would be used to address this type of work.

It was stressed that officials were constantly lobbying for more funding to develop the network of active travel routes, noting that projects that had been programmed for work in the medium and long term would be delivered faster if the lobbying work was successful.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

RESOLVED

- **To accept the report, noting the observations made during the discussion.**
- **That the Committee welcomes the work of trying to meet the maintenance costs of active travel routes.**
- **To recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment that:**
 - **there is a need to look at expenditure for the maintenance of active travel routes and costs of grass cutting/growth on verges to consider whether there are any potential savings.**
 - **questions about the maintenance of active travel routes and a question about local issues should be included in the public consultation.**
 - **risk assessment arrangements should be examined.**

8. GWYNEDD AND ANGLESEY PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD PROGRESS REPORT

Submitted – the report of the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Programme Manager. They referred briefly to the following main points:

A summary of the work of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board (the Board) in implementing the Well-being Plan 2023-2028 was presented.

It was reported that the Board was in its third year of its five-year plan, confirming there was evidence of positive progress towards its objectives. It was elaborated that most objectives had been completed or were developing and on-schedule. Pride was expressed that the Board had been able to collaborate with its partners at an operational and strategic level and were constantly sharing resources and good practice with each other.

Pride was expressed that the Board had been able to enhance the partnership and work with the Welsh Government, the Future Generations Commissioner, the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Children's Commissioner which had now led to innovative work across several priority areas.

It was confirmed that the Board's Language Sub-Group had completed the 'Good Recruitment Practices' project as well as the 'Busting the Myths about Working in Welsh' project. It was emphasised that this work highlighted that prioritising the Welsh language was a principle that was embedded across all elements of the Board's work.

Pride was expressed that the Board continued to be innovative by being the first Public Services Board to co-sign an Active Travel Charter. It was noted that this was an objective within its climate priority confirming that six board members had now formally committed to it and that a further four partners were in the process of doing so.

It was emphasised that work was ongoing to develop the Board to become trauma-informed. It was explained that specialist sessions had been held for all Board Members with follow-up work to assess their understanding and current practices. It was confirmed that there were plans to expand this training across North Wales.

Reference was made to some of the Board's further developments such as working with Public Health Wales's Healthy Weight Team to develop resources that helped organisations review their internal policies for a whole-system approach. Similarly, pride was expressed in the establishment of a regional website (agenda.wales) to share resources and good practice with Public Services Boards across the north Wales region.

This Scrutiny Committee was thanked for its observations and recommendations to constructively challenge the Board to ensure it was effective and delivered meaningful outcomes for residents.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by Members:-

The Board was thanked for its work to become Trauma-informed as well as the work done to assist anyone living in poverty. The Board's work to identify where trauma and poverty originated and to work on ways to address that effectively was welcomed. Statistics on child poverty were presented, explaining that there were an estimated 4.5 million children living in poverty in the United Kingdom (31% of the child population). It was emphasised that the figure for children living in poverty in Gwynedd was 23.6%. That was confirmed to be equivalent to 4571 children in Gwynedd. It was pointed out that for each of the children in this figure, there was at least one parent living in poverty, which was around 6-7 thousand people. Members were thanked for their observations and for presenting these important statistics, and it was confirmed that Bangor University was a great resource in tackling poverty issues with an exciting project underway in Maesgeirchen. Furthermore, it was noted that there was collaboration with a foodbank, Bwyd Da Môn, to see where referrals were coming from and to investigate whether the data was similar to what was seen in Gwynedd as well.

In response to an enquiry as to whether the 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' report had contributed to the board's trauma-informed work, the Programme Manager confirmed that the Board was considering the report. Cyngor Gwynedd and the Isle of Anglesey County Council were thanked for their pioneering work in leading the way in this area, confirming that the 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' report would receive due attention on the Board's work programme for the future.

It was pointed out that the Isle of Anglesey County Council already had Trauma-informed accreditation, and it was asked if there were plans in place to ensure that Gwynedd also received this accreditation. In response, the Deputy Leader of the Council confirmed that discussions were taking place with the Isle of Anglesey County Council regarding the process of obtaining this accreditation. It was elaborated that Cyngor Gwynedd officers were in favour of obtaining this accreditation and confirmed that the Education Department

and the Children and Supporting Families Department were already Trauma-informed. It was noted that all Departments of the Council were making enquiries to see how they could contribute to the accreditation and the importance of obtaining it for their department, confirming that a timetable would be drawn up.

In response to a further enquiry on the project of 'Busting Myths about Working in Welsh', the Programme Manager confirmed that Careers Wales was working with the Board to produce a brief of the myths that existed and how they could be resolved. It was noted that this project used social media and videos to dispel the myths such as by making content for Tiktok and Instagram. It was emphasised that various organisations from north Wales were contributing to this project to ensure that the project included the voices of ordinary people.

Thanks was expressed for the report and the Board was congratulated for its work.

RESOLVED

- **To accept the report, noting the observations made during the discussion.**
- **That the Committee welcomes the Board's work in relation to poverty, children's rights and being trauma informed.**

9. COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD PROGRAMME

The report was presented by the Scrutiny Advisor.

Members were reminded that a revised forward programme for 2025/26 had been adopted by this Committee at its meeting on 06 November 2025.

It was noted that the 'implementation of the Article 4 Direction' item had been scheduled for this meeting (22 January 2026). It was reported that the High Court's judgment of 27 November 2025 had quashed the Article 4 Direction and the Council's verbal application for leave to appeal this decision had been refused. It was elaborated that a written application to appeal the decision had been submitted, clarifying that there would be a hearing at the Court of Appeal if the application was accepted. It was clarified that due to this legal position, it was not appropriate for this Committee to scrutinise the matter at this time and it was recommended that the matter be identified as an item for scrutiny when it was timely.

Further, it was reported that the 'New Local Development Plan – Strategic Options, Vision and Objectives' item had been scheduled for this meeting (22 January 2026). It was explained that the Environment Department had submitted a request for this item to slip into the work programme for 2026/27 as circumstances beyond the department's control had arisen meaning that the Plan's work programme had slipped. It was confirmed that one of those factors was awaiting current data such as household growth projections from the Welsh Government.

As a result, it was reported that the 'Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Progress Report' item had been rescheduled to this meeting from the meeting of 19 March 2026.

Members were asked to approve the revised work programme as presented in the report.

In response to a question from a member, the Scrutiny Adviser stated that the Article 4 situation would be monitored and the Chair and Vice-chair of the Committee would discuss the timetable in their liaison meeting with the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Head of Environment Department.

RESOLVED

To adopt a revised work programme for 2025/26

The meeting commenced at 10:30am and concluded at 1:00pm

CHAIR