

Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting:	8 March 2022
Cabinet Member:	Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn
Contact Officer :	Dafydd W Williams, Head of Environment Department Bethan Richardson, Climate Change Programme Manager
Title of Item	Climate and Nature Emergency Plan 2022/23- 2029/2030

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1. The Cabinet's approval to adopting and implementing the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan 2022-2030.


2. THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

- 2.1. At the Council meeting on 7 March 2019, a Notice of Motion was presented by Councillor Catrin Wager outlining the dangers stemming from the effects of climate change. To quote from the Motion - 'All governments (local, regional and national) have a duty to limit the negative impacts of Climate Change...The Council has obligations, under the "Wellbeing of Future Generations Act" to consider the impact of any decision it takes on generations to come.'
- 2.2. The Council responded to the Notice of Motion with the following decision:

The Council resolves to:

- Do our utmost to ensure that the county remains a vibrant, viable and sustainable home for our children and their children for generations to come. We do this by means of:
 - Declare a Climate Emergency.
 - Commit to taking decisive action to reduce carbon emissions and strive for a zero-carbon future.
 - Look for innovative means to achieve zero-carbon targets.
 - Report back within 6 months on positive steps the Council has taken to reduce carbon emissions.
 - Call on Welsh Government and Westminster Government to provide the requisite powers and resources to achieve the target of a carbon-free Gwynedd by 2030.


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- 2.3 At the Council meeting on 19 December 2019, it was resolved to accept a progress report on the work which stated that a taskforce had been established by the Cabinet – the Climate Change Board - and that it would create a 'Climate Change Action Plan'.
 - 2.4 Though the Council declared a climate change emergency in March 2019, the Climate Change Board is now of the opinion that a nature emergency should also be declared. Both are so inter-dependent that it is nearly impossible to separate them. This is the reason for adding actions for ecology and biodiversity fields in the plan.
 - 2.5 In order to realise the above-mentioned decision, the Climate Change Board has created the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan which will outline the actions that we as a Council will take in order to reach the aim of being a net-zero carbon Council by 2030. The plan can be viewed in **Appendix 1**.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. It is a recognised fact that the release of carbon emissions (greenhouse gases) mainly from human activity leads to global warming. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that an increase in temperature of as little as 1.5°C can lead to a catastrophic outcome for people and nature, with sea level rise that would lead to flooding affecting 6 million people worldwide. The target of limiting global warming to "well below 2°C" compared to pre-industrial levels was set as part of the 2015 UN Paris Agreement, and further reinforced at the COP26 conference in November 2021.
- 1.2. The Welsh Government has also set a target for the Welsh public sector to achieve net-zero carbon status by 2030. 'Net-zero carbon' means that the total amount of carbon (greenhouse gases) released into the atmosphere is equivalent to the carbon absorbed back into the ground and stored safely. It is also known as 'carbon neutral'.
- 1.3. The Climate and Nature Emergency Plan explains the reasons why the Council needs to act, what action it will take, and provides an outline timetable and costs for the work. The ambition of the plan is "Gwynedd Council will be net-zero carbon and ecologically positive by 2030."
- 1.4. The Climate and Nature Emergency Plan builds on the work the Council has already undertaken to reduce our carbon emissions following the two Carbon Management Plans we published in 2010 and 2015.
- 1.5. This is a plan for the Council itself, and it does not claim to be a plan to reduce the carbon emissions of the whole of Gwynedd as a county, although of course it will contribute significantly to doing so. The Climate and Nature

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Emergency Plan in its current form explains what changes the Council wants to make to its own arrangements and way of delivering services. It does not, for example, contain detailed plans at this stage for reducing carbon emissions by the residents of Gwynedd more widely.

- 1.6. There are some schemes for responding to the flood risks in the Plan, but as we will follow the Welsh Government's timetable and develop a Local Flood Strategy during 2022/23, more detail on our schemes in this area will appear by the time we publish a revised version of the Plan in 2023/24.
- 1.7. For the reasons set out in 1.5 and 1.6 above, we consider that 'Phase 1' is the publication of this version of the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan. 'Phase 2' of the Plan will follow by 2023/24 after we have held consultations, and will include more information on how we can support activities in the community and how to respond to flood risk.

2. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1. The matters for the Cabinet members to consider before approving the Plan are noted below:
- 2.2. The Plan has set a timetable for the delivery of schemes by 2030 as this is the target to achieve net-zero carbon set by the Welsh Government. It is almost inevitable that continued action will be needed to reduce carbon emissions and increase carbon absorption capacity well beyond that date.
- 2.3. The Plan states that we as a Council do not have all the answers on how best to respond to all the climate change problems we currently face. Gwynedd Council is no different from any other organisation in this regard. New research and technology is continually being developed, the results of which may change the way we need to operate. The Plan therefore makes it clear that we need to be flexible and to adapt our approaches, and even our priorities, if evidence arises that proves the need to do so.
- 2.4. Although it is a Plan for changing the way the Council operates, we will not be able to deliver this Plan without working with others. We will consult with our partners and with the communities of Gwynedd during 2022/23 to see how we can best support community schemes, which may inform our review of this Plan.
- 2.5. Outline budgets are included in the Plan. While we have robust costs for some projects, there are other projects (particularly medium/long term) that we need to do further work on before we can be sure of their financial cost. Some projects that we contribute towards are co-funded with partners, and there are others that are dependent on grants or that we need additional funding to be able to deliver them. The Council will need to press governments to attract that necessary funding.

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3. Equality Act 2010

- 3.1 There is a statutory requirement to prepare and consider the findings of an equality impact assessment when preparing the plan in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 as is implemented in Wales. The assessment is included in **Appendix 2**.
- 3.2 The assessment of the Plan in its entirety does not identify any impacts which would justify deviating from the recommendation and it is anticipated that there are elements which would have a positive impact. The Project Leaders will be responsible for undertaking a full Equality Impact Assessment on individual projects.

4. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

- 4.1 The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act places a 'well-being duty' on public bodies aimed at achieving 7 national well-being goals for Wales - a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, has cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and is globally responsible. The Climate and Nature Emergency Plan has been prepared addressing the objectives and the requirements of the Act.

5. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 5.1. Once the Cabinet has adopted the Plan, it will be published on the Council's website and will become operational.
- 5.2. Further works needs to be undertaken to measure the financial costs of some projects, and to confirm the financial funds available to support this plan. This work will be done in the near future and a further financial report will be brought to Cabinet in order to prioritise the projects to be implemented.
- 5.3. During the 2022/23 year we will consult on the content of the Plan and discuss new needs and approaches to reduce the impacts of climate change with Gwynedd partners and communities.
- 5.4. Following these consultations, and following a review of the Plan to include flood prevention or response actions, we will prepare a revised version of the Plan by 2023/24.

6. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

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Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. The Head of Finance Department

The Climate and Nature Emergency Plan is a vital document that will guide the Council's activities for years to come. The narrative of the Plan is fully open in stating that the total funding required to deliver all the projects in this scheme has not been fully identified; it is unlikely that the funding needed to deliver all of the individual schemes will be available, so the need to adopt a prioritisation methodology seems inevitable. Of course, whilst the Council faces significant financial costs to address the substantial challenge ahead, there would be dire environmental, social and economic costs of not acting decisively.

In addition to pertinent schemes already in our capital programme, and further bespoke grants that will be available to us for decarbonisation, further funding has already been transferred from the Transformation Fund to create a Climate Plan Fund. We will continue to review the financial position to identify appropriate funding.

I note that a report will be presented to a further meeting of the Cabinet in due course which will identify the financial aspects in more detail.

ii. The Monitoring Officer:

The Plan provides an operational response to the Council's decision to declare a climate emergency. I support the recommendation and have no observations to add in relation to propriety.

7. Local Member's views

Not a local matter.

8. Results of Any Consultation

None to note.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Climate and Nature Emergency Plan

Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment