

CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET



Date of Meeting : 15 September 2026
Cabinet Member : Cllr. Craig ab Iago
Relevant Officer : Dylan Owen, Statutory Director of Social Services
Title of Item : Financial bid to develop climate and nature work in Cyngor Gwynedd 2026/27 – 2029/30.

Report to a meeting of Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

1. Decision Sought

- i. That Cabinet approves the bid for finance to yn cymeradwyo'r cais am gyllid i fund employment costs and implementing projects within the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan:
 - ii. Employment costs until March 2030 - £416,383.
 - iii. Project costs - £582,750
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2. The reason why the Cabinet needs to make the decision

- i. The budget allocated by Cyngor Gwynedd's Cabinet in 2023 for the use of the implementation of the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan has been spent or has been allocated for expenditure on current work. Cabinet will need to approve a request for further funding in order to continue the work from 2026/27 onwards.
- ii. The existing contracts of 3 positions implementing the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan expire in 2027, so a timely decision is needed to ensure the continuation of the work.

3. Background

- i. 'Green Gwynedd' is one of the Council's eight Improvement Priorities, and the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan 2022/23–2029/30 (the Plan) is one of the 5 projects within that priority. The Plan sets the ambition for Gwynedd Council to be net zero carbon and ecologically positive. Within this context, the application seeks to secure resources over a four-year period, up to 2029/30, which is the last year of the current plan and the date for achieving the first phase of the corporate ambition.
- ii. Cyngor Gwynedd's [Climate and Nature Emergency Plan](#) was passed by the Council's Cabinet on 7 July this year, following public consultation and input from the Council's Communities Scrutiny

Committee. This version of the plan evolved on the original plan which had been in place since April 2022.

- iii. The need for investment is underpinned by wider legislative and policy requirements, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the Energy Act 2023 and the international commitments arising from the 2015 Paris Agreement. In addition, the Welsh Government is committed to preventing and reversing nature loss by 2030, including the '30 by 30' target, which means effectively protecting and managing 30% of land and sea for nature by that date.
- iv. There are a total of 39 risks on the Council's Corporate Risk Register related to climate change and nature. 15 of these relate directly to the implementation of the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan such as threats of flooding, lack of transport, waste collection, rising energy costs etc. An additional 24 are associated risks such as fuel poverty challenges for residents, loss of access to care and education services, rising costs of service provision etc.
- v. This request for funding is structured around two areas:
 - 1. **employment costs** to maintain core capacity and attract external funding
 - **continued investment** in existing decarbonisation projects across buildings, energy and charging infrastructure.
- vi. The financial information has been presented annually over a 4-year period between 2026/27 and 2029/30. Multi-year funding certainty would enable better planning, more strategic action and greater impact in terms of reducing carbon emissions and strengthening nature's resilience.
- vii. In addition to the two funding headings in 3.v above, initial work will take place in 2026/27 to explore possibilities to develop **new innovative schemes**, particularly in collaboration with communities, in order to deliver services that will reduce carbon emissions and generate income or reduce costs. As the costs are not yet known any relevant funding applications will need to be submitted as the business cases mature.

4. Employment

- i. Funding is requested to continue three key positions until 31/3/2030: Climate and Nature Programme Manager (part-time), Climate and Nature Project Officer, and Biodiversity Officer. The current contracts for these positions expire in 2027.

- ii. **Climate and Nature Programme Manager (part-time) –**

- iii. *Achievements to date:*

- The post has provided clear value in terms of the Council's ability to **attract external funding and move priority projects forward**. Since January 2024, the Programme Manager, in conjunction with the Professional Trainee, has successfully **attracted £892,297 in grants**, enabling investment in key projects such as charging points, EV fleet development, urban tree planting and ecological studies.
- Strategically, the role has established the **leadership and coordination structures** needed to deliver the climate change programme, including:
 - providing expert advice to the Climate Change Response Board;
 - developing and informing the content of the Climate and Nature Plan;
 - ensure cross-departmental alignment and coordination on projects;

- strengthen the evidence base for investment (carbon and financial benefits, value for money).
- As a result, the post has been instrumental in moving the Council from individual activity to **a more systematic, harmonised and better evidence-based programme.**

iv. Priorities for the next phase:

- The main focus will be to move from development to **delivery at scale**, with the Programme Manager central to achieving this. Priorities will include:
 - Lead the implementation of the new Climate and Nature Plan, ensuring its adoption and implementation across the Council and its presentation to Cabinet;
 - Strengthen the governance and monitoring of program performance by ensuring that departments are accountable for delivery and outcomes;
 - Develop and prioritise the projects, improving the evidence of costs, carbon and financial benefits and payback periods to support investment decisions;
 - Continue to attract external resources and grant funding, and maximise funding opportunities as they arise;
 - Strengthen internal and external collaboration, ensuring that the Council makes the most of regional and partnership opportunities.
- In summary, the priority is **to accelerate delivery and ensure measurable impact from the programme.**

v. Risk if the post did not continue:

- There would be an immediate risk to the Council's ability to:
 - lead and coordinate the climate change programme across departments, resulting in a **lack of consistency and duplication**;
 - **deliver the Climate and Nature Plan** at scale and on time, undermining one of the Council's core improvement priorities;
 - **attract further external funding**, reducing the ability to invest in projects that generate carbon and financial benefits;
 - **provide strategic overview and sound governance**, creating risk to the quality of investment decisions and value for money;
- In practice, the effect would be:
 - reduction in programme leadership capacity;
 - slowing down or delaying projects;
 - and a higher risk of **not meeting the Council's climate targets and corporate priorities.**

vi. Climate Change Officer

vii. Achievements to date:

- The post (or the equivalent role of Professional Trainee to date) has provided **vital operational capacity** to enable the practical delivery of the climate change programme as well as support for the Programme Manager.
- In particular, the post has:
 - supported the **attraction of grants (£892k+)** and the development of priority projects;

- contribute to **the development of business cases, reports and decision papers**, strengthening the programme's evidence base;
- supporting **project co-ordination** and workstreams across departments;
- enabling **the collection, analysis and presentation of data**, improving the quality of information for decisions;
- facilitate **internal and external collaboration**, ensuring a more coordinated response to the requirements of the programme.

viii. Priorities for the next phase: (6–12 months):

- The priority is to strengthen the delivery capacity of the programme as the Council moves to deliver at scale. The role will be key to:
 - **Implementing and delivering Climate and Nature Plan projects**, ensuring measurable progress;
 - **Coordinate and manage** multiple workflows and projects, ensuring order, prioritisation and timely delivery;
 - **Developing business cases and grant applications**, and taking advantage of funding opportunities as they arise;
 - **Analysing project data and performance**, providing robust input to investment decisions;
 - **Supporting governance and communication arrangements**, ensuring that progress and risks are effectively reported;
 - **Strengthen cross-departmental collaboration**, ensuring consistent implementation across the organisation.

ix. Risk if the post did not continue:

- The role is critical to **the delivery capacity of the programme**. Without the job:
 - there would be a lack of capacity to **coordinate and manage multiple projects**, leading to delays and lack of prioritisation;
 - there would be less ability to **develop grant applications and take advantage of funding opportunities**, resulting in a loss of external income;
 - the **quality** of data, reporting, and evidence for decisions would **decline**;
 - there would be a higher risk of **not delivering the Climate and Nature Plan projects** on time and within resources;
 - the pressure would increase significantly on the Programme Manager, who is a part-time position (3 days a week).

x. Biodiversity Officer

xi. Achievements to date:

- The post has provided **vital technical expertise and** evidentiary capacity to strengthen the Council's ability to plan, measure and report on biodiversity and nature activities.
- Since his appointment to the post in November 2025, the role has:
 - developed **mapping and data management systems** for Council projects and lands;
 - using GIS to centralise information and **identify opportunities** at landscape scale;
 - improving the **ability to collect data** and report through the use of drone technology;

- supporting work to explore **methods of measuring carbon on Council land** and strengthening the evidence base for the 2030 environmental targets.
- As a result, the post has helped the Council move towards a more systematic, data-based and strategic approach to managing biodiversity and nature work.

xii. Priorities for the next phase:

- The priority is **to strengthen the Council's ability to manage, monitor and prioritise biodiversity work** on the basis of robust data and evidence.
- The role will be key to:
 - **Mapping and collecting data** on the condition of the Council's lands and woodlands;
 - **Developing bids to attract external funding** for environmental assessments and land management;
 - **Assessing the state of nature reserves** and producing reports to Welsh Government on progress against 2030 targets;
 - Identify **opportunities for tree planting** and implementation of tree-related projects in the Climate and Nature Plan, supporting a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to nature.

xiii. Risk if the post did not continue:

- The role is essential to maintain **the Council's technical capacity and expertise** in the area of biodiversity, nature and **environmental compliance**. Without the post:
 - there would be less capacity to collect, analyse and manage environmental data, weakening **the evidence base for decisions**;
 - there would be **less capacity to develop** management plans and investment priorities for the Council's land and habitats;
 - there would be a higher risk of **not meeting the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016** and new biodiversity legislation;
 - the Council's ability to demonstrate measurable progress towards the 2030 environmental targets would be significantly reduced.

*xiv. Funding is sought for total employment costs of **£416,383** to support 3 posts between 2026/27 and 2029/30, with information broken down as follows:*

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Climate Change Programme Manager 27/28 - 29/30 (based on 0.6 FTE)		42,711.59	43,992.93	45,312.72
Climate and Nature Project Officer 4 years 26/27 - 29/30	5,611	35,288.35	60,787.51	62,611.14
Biodiversity Officer 2.5 years 27/28 - 29/30		23,728.66	47,457.31	48,881.03
Total £	5,611	101,728.59	152,237.76	156,804.89

5. Project Costs

- i. Financial support is requested for a range of decarbonisation projects within the Climate and Nature Plan, mainly in the areas of buildings, energy and charging infrastructure. Information is included per project regarding the costs, carbon and financial benefits, payback periods and risks, to enable you to make a value for money decision and prioritise investment.

6. Project: Changing lighting in Council offices and premises to LED - all sites.

- i. **Description / Business Case:** An additional £4m is needed to roll out the work. Expected 30% electricity/financial savings.

ii.

Cost 26/27	Cost 27/28 -29/30	Carbon Saving (4 years)	Financial Saving
£1,000,000	£3,000,000 (£1m per year)	462/ tCO2e/year	£443,503 per year

iii. **Comments / risk**

Reducing electricity consumption would free up the remaining capacity on sites to be used for heat electrification. This would result in annual revenue financial savings and cost savings by avoiding the need to upgrade the grid in order to increase electricity capacity. E.g. Savings of £14k at Ysgol Llanbedrog, £30k at Hafod Lon as a result of not spending on grid upgrades.

Savings like this are in addition to the £444k savings shown in the box above.

iv. **Recommended funding source:**

The recommendation of the Finance Department is to borrow through the Salix programme.

Salix's borrowing rates are currently favourable and Finance's recommendation is that that would be a better option for the Council than to borrow from a source such as the PWLB rather than to use internal resources. While the rates change daily, at a certain point here in August the borrowing rate from the PWLB for a period of 6 years was 5.43% compared to 2.45% for borrowing through Salix.

It is noted that funding needs to be applied for from Salix, so there is no guarantee of funding. Should the application be unsuccessful we will consider what the best option is at this time, as borrowing/investment rates vary on a daily basis.

7. Project: Switching site heating method from gas to electricity - Heat decarbonisation (retrofit)

- i. **Description / Business Case:** Complete payment to upgrade 2 sites - Hafod Mawddach care home and Byw'n Iach Penllyn - to meet the terms of a grant already received (Hafod Mawddach) and 10% match funding to a grant application to finish Penllyn.

ii.

Cost 26/27	Cost 27/28 - 29/30	Carbon Saving (4 years)	Financial Saving
£411,000		Penllyn: 107 tCO ₂ e/year Hafod Mawddach: 48 tCO ₂ e/year	Not at the moment, but protects the Council from the risks of future fuel price increases

iii. **Comments / risk**

This is an application to fund the completion of a programme of work already underway. The risk of not funding is that grant conditions are not adhered to, and that the work that has already been done becomes wasteful.

iv. **Recommended funding source:**

The Finance Department's recommendation is to add this project to the Asset Management Plan.

Finance's view is that it should be prudent and assume that new funding needs to be sought to deliver this project – although there is money remaining in some relevant funds, this money appears to have been extensively committed to other schemes. This scheme has not been included in the capital budget at this time, and as the grant is at risk if the Council does not move forward, it is recommended to use the limited flexibility available in the capital budget, whilst recognising that consideration of the Asset Management Plan is a wider issue.

8. **Project: New solar panels**

- i. **Description / Business Case:** Installing solar (PV) panels at 23 new sites and adding to the capacity of some existing sites to power the building and charge EVs. If fully supported it will provide around half of the Council's electricity needs resulting in savings of £627k per annum.

Cost 26/27	Cost 27/28 -29/30	Carbon Saving (4 years)	Financial Saving	Payback term
	£2,300,000 (2027/28)	589 tCO2e/year (if including work already funded)	£627k per year	4 years

ii. **Comments/risk:**

A risk of not doing so is to pay higher energy costs. There is a separate risk that you may need to pay the costs of upgrading the grid if you want to install EV charging.

iii. **Recommended funding source:**

The Finance Department's recommendation is to look further into what the Salix programme offers as a source of funding. In cases such as this in the past, the Council has established a "negative fund" which was repaid as savings were realised. However, this is no longer considered an acceptable course of action, and Audit Wales has confirmed this. Salix is used as the main source of funding for solar panels in local authorities and Finance believes that Gwynedd Council should consider doing the same. As with the lighting change project described above, the funding will have to be applied for and there is no guarantee of success, but the terms they offer are more favourable than the other options available to us for expenditure of this size and nature.

9. **Installation of energy consumption management and monitoring systems – electricity / Installation of energy consumption management and monitoring systems – LPG and oil**

- i. **Description / Business Case:** Installation of heating control systems (BMS) at 3 new sites over 3 years. Monitoring energy consumption to identify waste resulting in finance and carbon savings. AMR = an energy monitoring system equivalent to BMS but for sites with LPG and oil heating. Monitoring energy consumption to identify waste resulting in finance and carbon savings.

Cost 26/27	Cost 27/28 -29/30	Carbon Saving (4 years)	Financial Saving	Payback term
BMS £20,000 (2026/27)	£40,000 (2027/28)	49 tCO ₂ e/year	£15k per year	4 years
AMR £46,750	£46,750	-	£15k	

ii. **Comments / risk:**

Significant benefit from a small investment. Without putting the AMR in place, it is impossible to know if there is waste. It can be high or low. As a result, ROI cannot be calculated. Savings are therefore difficult to declare definitively.

iii. **Recommended funding source:**

The Finance Department's recommendation is to use existing funds, or treat these applications as investment to save. The author's comments note that the returns on investment cannot be definitive, and further it is noted that no monitoring system can bring savings of its own without there being definite action on the results. As it is not possible to accept assurance that savings will come this cannot be treated as an investment to save application at the moment so it is seen that there is no option but to identify additional resources within 2026/27 and 2027/28 but with a commitment that any savings arising from the scheme will be used to repay the commitment, by reducing budgets.

10. Project: Switching site heating method from gas to electricity - Heat decarbonisation (retrofit)

- i. **Description / Business Case:** Capital of 10% match funding for the sites that are part of stage 4 of Welsh Government's Low Carbon Heat Grant – Plas Silyn, Plas Ffrancon and Ysgol Llanllyfni.

Cost 26/27	Cost 27/28 -29/30	Carbon Saving (4 years)	Financial Saving
£105,000		Plas Silyn: 13 tCO2e/per year Plas Ffrancon: 13 tCO2e/ per year Ysgol Llanllyfni: 2 tCO2e/ per year	Protecting the Council from future energy cost increases

ii. **Comments / risk:**

Failure to support the application would result in the loss of a £900k grant from the Welsh Government, and the project not being able to be delivered.

iii. **Recommended funding source:**

The Finance Department's recommendation is to use the Transformation Fund as a first resort, and if this is not acceptable, the scheme is added to the Asset Management Plan. The commitment would release £900,000 of government grant so is considered to be a reasonable use of the Transformation Fund.

11. Project: Internal costs of installing 6 site charging points / Purchase of X 3 charging points at 6 sites

- i. **Description / Business Case:** 6 sites × £4k, with a maximum of £200k on the installation costs / Equipment, back office, maintenance and warranty. 18 × £4,536, based on no grants.

Cost 26/27	Cost 27/28 -29/30	Carbon Saving (4 years)
£224,000		No direct savings, but installed EV chargers is essential for implementing the Council's Green Fleet Plan.
£81,660		No direct savings, but installed EV chargers is essential for implementing the Council's Green Fleet Plan.

ii. **Comments / risk:**

The installation of charging points for the use of the Council's fleet is necessary in order to be able to cater for the increasing number of electric vehicles.

iii. **Recommended funding source:**

The Finance Department's recommendation is to an existing fund. The Council received a relevant grant in a previous year for this purpose, and there is remaining money available for use.

12. Innovative Schemes

- i. To date, the Council has focused on implementing 'traditional' schemes (e.g. buildings, energy and fleet), which have provided carbon reduction and financial savings. Although they have been successful they have also limited the ability to explore new ways of working and collaborating with partners. The new Climate and Nature Plan sets out an intention to increase the level of collaboration with communities, creating the need for a more flexible resource to enable this.
- ii. We have not yet explored the possibilities for the Council to seek to deliver existing services in different or innovative ways. We will begin the preparation and research work in 2026/27 to assess whether the Council can generate income or significantly reduce costs, perhaps by establishing arm-length services.
- iii. Innovative projects can be implemented by the Council alone or in partnership with the community, public or private sector. The benefits (carbon and financial) would depend on the nature of the project, but any investment would be assessed against clear criteria, namely whether it is:
- a. reducing the Council's carbon emissions;
 - b. increase income;

- c. or reduce demand for services leading to reducing costs.

13. Measuring success

- i. We will continue to collect data on Cyngor Gwynedd's annual carbon emissions and submit them to the Welsh Government in accordance with the procedure in place since 2021.
- ii. Those results are published in annual reports, which can be seen [here](#).

14. Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-Economic Duty

- i. An Impact Assessment on the Characteristics of Equality, the Welsh language and the Socio-Economic Duty was produced on the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan when it was adopted at the Cabinet meeting on 8 March 2022. An update to the assessment can be found at Appendix 1.

15. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- i. Have you included residents / service users? If not, when and how do you intend to consult with them?

A public consultation on the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan was conducted during the summer of 2025 and the results can be seen [here](#).

- ii. Have you considered collaboration?

Chapters 11 and 12 of the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan cover the work carried out in part by the Gwynedd Nature Partnership, namely a consortium of local organisations led by the Council. A number of other projects in CNEP are carried out in partnership with others, such as active travel projects in collaboration with Public Service Board partners.

The new review of the CNEP lists new projects where it will be absolutely essential to collaborate with community organisations and residents in order to achieve them – eg. 'collaborating with community organisations in order to produce and distribute renewable energy'.

- iii. What has been done or will be done to prevent problems arising or worsening in the future?

One of the basic principles of CNEP is to try to prevent further increases in the average temperature of the planet and to limit global warming to "well below 2oC" in accordance with the United Nations Paris Agreement. Each of the plan's projects seek to stabilise or even reverse the probability that the current situation will lead to further problems in the future.

- iv. How have you considered the long-term and what will people's needs be in coming years?

As noted above, the basis of the CNEP is to seek to prevent global warming problems from getting worse in the future, and while the Council has its own target of net zero carbon by 2030 the Welsh

Government has set a target for the whole of Wales to be net zero by 2050. The CNEP therefore also takes into account that changing the habits of Gwynedd's residents and businesses will be long-term work beyond 2030.

v. To ensure integration have you considered the possible impact on other public bodies?

A large number of CNEP projects are planned or implemented in collaboration with other public bodies or with the voluntary sector and communities. There is ongoing collaboration with other local authorities across north Wales, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Welsh Government's Energy Service, and Transport for Wales which has resulted in joint planning and commissioning.

A number of local public bodies including Cyngor Gwynedd are members of the Public Services Board and one of the three Well-being Objectives in the Gwynedd and Anglesey Well-being Plan 2023-2028 is 'We want to work together to support our services and communities to move towards Net Zero Carbon'.

16. Next Steps and Timetable

- i. Continue to develop projects and business cases and find funding to fund them.
 - ii. Publication of an Annual Report for the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan 2022/23 – 2029/30 in the Autumn term each year to review progress on the projects.
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Views of the Statutory Officers

Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety

Chief Finance Officer:

Officers from the Finance Department have had the opportunity to offer input to the report while the author was preparing it and I am satisfied with the information that has been included.

Some of the proposed schemes will be an opportunity to realise financial savings as well as reducing carbon emissions and where this happens budgets will need to be reduced as appropriate, noting that any loans will need to be repaid.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Impact Assessment on the Characteristics of Equality, the Welsh language and the Socio-Economic Duty