

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd / Priorities for the Sixth Senedd
PR104
Ymateb gan Christine Meirion / Evidence from Christine Meirion

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your consultation process in general and in particular on the letter you received from the Minister and Deputy Minister. I am a retired trainer of psychotherapists and now the environment lead for Ruthin FOE and a member of Extinction Rebellion in North Wales . We work closely with the town council in Ruthin and with Denbighshire County Council Climate Change managers. I have consulted with my colleagues as much as time allowed and incorporated their views. It is perhaps a salutary lesson for us that we were not aware of this consultation process until this week. Perhaps there could be other avenues to advertise your work and request feedback.

The main omission for me in the feedback from the Ministers is the consideration of the needs of children and young people including how to build their resilience and how adapting to the CEE should be reflected in their education. The mental health needs of young people have always needed more attention and prioritisation in our society. In my discussions with young people, they tell me that all their secondary school curriculum could be informed by a perspective on the Climate and Ecological Emergency. Younger children and their teachers need support and information on how to build important life skills and psychological strength.

We cannot afford a growth economy but how unfair it will seem to them when they discover the reality of the world that we leave them.

Additional specific comments

Climate change

We would like to see Welsh government do more on communicating and influencing behaviour change amongst different audiences.

Tackling climate change and preparing for the impact already banked will take changes in every aspect of people's lives. This is an immense and unenviable task for the Senedd which requires cross party co-operation and the engagement of the general public. Previous attempts to get the message across seem largely to have reached only the people already on board. At national level there needs to be a

massive communication and marketing strategy involving scientists, politicians and the media (akin to the Covid campaign) to begin to get the information across to the public. At regional and at county level, there needs to be funds and personnel allocated to this task. The Welsh government has achieved amazing results with Covid and with increasing recycling rates in Wales. They need to do the same now for climate change.

In Ruthin, FOE are planning a COP26 event in 6/11 and inviting other environmental groups to participate in an attempt to raise public awareness and engagement. We believe that it is important to offer a positive message so that people do not move from climate denial to climate despair, but instead we work together to build a resilient community with increasing deliberative democracy.

While this public engagement is crucial, the emphasis nationally needs to be more on system change. Individual change will not be enough. We are mindful of the recent report on Wales by the CCC and its recommendations on Wales' climate targets.

Energy

An Energy Strategy for North Wales has been drafted and in final stages of clearance and will be in the public domain shortly. The vision and priorities of that strategy are as follows:

Vision: Delivering maximum local economic, social, ecological and wellbeing benefits from transitioning to a net zero economy and becoming a net exporter of low carbon electricity through cross-border and regional cooperation.

Priorities:

1. To harness the abundance of local low carbon resource to become a green powerhouse and diversify the energy mix.
2. To become a world-leader in offshore wind and marine technologies.
3. To improve the energy efficiency of the region's housing and accelerate the decarbonisation of North Wales' building stock.
4. To achieve a shift to lower carbon transport.

A task and finish group has been established and met once to move the strategy into delivery. This was run by Welsh Government Regional Office.

A supporting piece of work is the development of Local Energy Area Plans for each LA area.

This work is being funded by WG working with LA's and NWEAB and will be done in 2022/23.

A lot of community/public engagement will be involved in that process.

Net Zero

The new Net Zero Wales plan is being published on 28th October. We understand that there are sector emissions specific chapters and one is on public sector emissions. It is essential that we face the full picture of the crisis in Wales not just the public sector emissions.

Divestment of pension funds investment is an obvious starting point and avoids the real danger of "stranded assets" in fossil fuel companies.

All MSs and Local Councillors should attend CAT's Zero Carbon Britain course or the equivalent.

Tree planting

The current record on tree planting is dire. We look forward to seeing the new Woodland for Wales Action Plan later this year, but the targets are immense. We need engagement at every level of society.

Nature and biodiversity

It will be important to see what the indicators will be. In Denbighshire, DCC has established its own metric for judging performance in lieu of anything agreed pan Wales. This is detailed in the DCC Climate and Ecological Change Strategy based on species richness of land.

Environment

More community flood plans are needed covering more communities- work which is led by NRW as part of the 'Severe Weather Group' sub group within the regional emergency planning governance structure.

Transport

Investment in railways, particularly in South Wales seems to be urgent. Fares need to be affordable if people are to reduce their journeys by car.

More work could be done by the trunk road agencies to manage their land and road side verges for benefit of biodiversity.

Digital Infrastructure

Links to work being undertaken as part of the Growth Deal by NWEAB under Digital Programme

We wish you well with your deliberations.

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