

Committee priorities for the Sixth Senedd: summary of evidence

December 2021

1. Background

- 1.** At its 16 July 2021 meeting, the Committee agreed to undertake a public consultation to help inform its priorities for the Sixth Senedd. The consultation ran over the summer recess and closed in mid-September 2021. The Committee received 118 responses covering the breadth of its remit.
- 2.** During the first half of the autumn term, the Committee held a series of thematic evidence sessions with stakeholders to further inform its priorities. It also took evidence from the Minister for Climate Change ('the Minister') and the Deputy Minister for Climate Change ('the Deputy Minister'). Transcripts of these sessions can be found on the [Senedd's website](#).
- 3.** This paper highlights the key issues raised in evidence. The Committee's report on priorities for the Sixth Senedd has been published separately.



2. Ways of working

4. Several stakeholders commented on the Committee’s wide remit and the potential challenges for scrutiny of the full range of policy areas, particularly in the context of a fortnightly meeting cycle. Bus Users UK and Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (‘CILT’) emphasised the need to ensure sufficient priority is given to scrutiny of transport policy now that it sits alongside key policy areas of climate change and the environment. The Civil Engineering Contractors Association (‘CECA’) Wales made the same point in relation to infrastructure. The Federation of Small Businesses (‘FSB’) Wales said it will be “important for the committee to build expertise on infrastructure as a new policy field within its remit”.¹

5. Several of the issues identified by stakeholders as potential priorities for the Committee are cross-cutting, for example, the housing retrofit programme, the Sustainable Farming Scheme, and addressing skills shortages to deliver a green recovery. There were calls for the Committee to undertake joint working with other Senedd committees, or to adopt more innovative working practices, to consider these.

6. Several stakeholders suggested the Committee should focus its scrutiny on policy delivery and outcomes, with some commenting that, although the right policies may be in place, barriers to delivery exist.

7. Stakeholders said the Committee’s work should be informed by engagement with organisations representing the wide diversity of people in Wales, children and young people, and individuals with lived experience of inequality.

¹ Written evidence, PR07 FSB Wales

3. Climate change and net zero

'Net Zero Wales' and carbon budgets

8. The Welsh Government published *Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 (2021 to 2025)* ('the Plan') on 28 October 2021. The Plan includes 123 policies and proposals for meeting Wales' second carbon budget and longer-term carbon reduction targets.

9. Natural Resources Wales ('NRW') said the Plan "will inevitably provide an important driver for action" and should be "seen as a living document". It considered "periodic review of the Plan and barriers to delivery should be an important priority".²

10. Several stakeholders expressed disappointment at the lack of engagement by Welsh Government in the development of the Plan. According to the Wales Centre for International Affairs, "Welsh Government has missed an opportunity to work proactively and collaboratively with others to produce [the Plan] which would have resulted in collective ownership of it".³

11. There were calls for the Committee to undertake early work on the Plan, and to review progress towards delivery during the Senedd term.

A net zero public sector by 2030

12. The Welsh Government has set out its ambition for the public sector to reach net zero by 2030. In July 2021, it published *Net zero Carbon status by 2030: A route map for decarbonisation across the Welsh public sector* ('the route map'), which provides "a strategic overview of the key priority areas for action and milestones needed" to reach its ambition. The four priority areas are: buildings; mobility and transport; procurement; and land use.

13. There were calls for the Committee to consider how the Welsh Government is supporting the sector to deliver the 2030 net zero ambitions. NRW reported that within the organisation and the wider public sector "there are many challenges to decarbonisation, particularly transforming our buildings and procurement".⁴

14. There was a particular focus on NHS Wales, as a major contributor to carbon emissions and the largest public sector employer. According to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health ('RCPCH'), the Welsh Government's net zero ambition as it relates to NHS Wales "is not

² Written evidence, PR117 Natural Resources Wales

³ Written evidence, PR46 Wales Centre for International Affairs

⁴ Written evidence, PR117 Natural Resources Wales

backed up by serious planning, resource and a timetable of actions to achieve the agreed outcomes".⁵ RCPCH explained that, in comparison, NHS England ('NHSE') has a '*Greener NHS*' to drive forward change.

15. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society said NHS Wales "will need to play a central role" if Wales is to meet its net zero target.⁶ It suggested the Committee should scrutinise the implementation of '*NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan*' (March 2021). On 2 November 2021, the Minister for Health and Social Services provided an update to the Senedd on the Plan.

Public engagement and behaviour change

16. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of engaging the public with the climate change agenda, recognising that behaviour change will be essential if Wales is to meet its net zero target. Stakeholders suggested the Welsh Government needs to improve on this. There were calls for the establishment of a climate assembly, regular updates from the Welsh Government and a public awareness campaign, and a behaviour change programme.

17. Several stakeholders called for climate and global citizenship education to support understanding of the implications of climate change.

Fair and just transition

18. Respondents emphasised the importance of a just transition to net zero and called on the Committee to ensure the Welsh Government's policies and programmes provide for this.

19. Energy Saving Trust suggested the Committee should focus on "helping to ensure that the transition to net zero is fair, with the opportunities and benefits the transition offers distributed equitably across Wales". It said, securing a fair and just transition "will prove to be exceptionally challenging, especially in a country which already has issues of entrenched poverty and significant regional disparities".⁷

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

20. The Minister and Deputy Minister said the Welsh Government "continue to drive progress" in emissions reduction in the public sector and "have developed a monitoring framework to track progress".⁸ In May 2021, the Welsh Government published its *Welsh Public Sector Net Zero*

⁵ Written evidence, PR12 Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

⁶ Written evidence, PR50 Royal Pharmaceutical Society

⁷ Written evidence, PR14 Energy Saving Trust

⁸ Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting

Carbon Reporting Guide, which aims “to develop a universal guide set of instructions for use by Welsh public bodies, to estimate baseline emissions, identify priority sources and to monitor progress towards meeting the [2030] target”.

21. The Minister and Deputy Minister said the Welsh Government Energy Service, “offers technical advice alongside loans to public sector and community organisations for renewable and retrofit projects”. They said, “a wide variety of public organisations have benefitted from our decarbonisation innovation programme, which seeks to identify and nurture new and ground-breaking ideas and concepts to support work on decarbonisation”.⁹

Supporting other sectors to reduce emissions

22. The Future Generations Commissioner said, “there isn’t sufficient focus on how all sectors, organisations and individuals across Wales can support our carbon reduction targets”. She suggested the Committee should prioritise work on “understanding our emissions across all sectors including where to prioritise action”.¹⁰

23. There were calls for the Committee to consider the preparedness of sectors across the economy to transition to net zero, and whether and how they are being supported by the Welsh Government to overcome any challenges.

24. Several stakeholders, including Constructing Excellence in Wales, suggested the construction sector should be a particular focus, noting it is one of the least sustainable.

25. The Mineral Products Association (‘MPA’) said that decarbonisation of industry was an “obvious gap” in the priorities identified by the Minister for Climate Change. It emphasised the need to support Welsh industry so that “a decarbonised industrial base can grow which can underpin the low carbon economy providing essential jobs and vital materials”. MPA cautioned against “taking policy decisions that result in (Welsh) industry being offshored”. It called for the Welsh Government to prioritise the development of an industrial strategy for Wales “to ensure industry is supported to decarbonise whilst remaining competitive”.¹¹ A similar view was expressed by Tata Steel.

⁹ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

¹⁰ Written evidence, PR51 Future Generations Commissioner

¹¹ Written evidence, PR60 Mineral Products Association

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

26. The Minister and Deputy Minister said that the new UK Emissions Trading Scheme, introduced in January 2021, is not yet linked to the EU scheme, although “the devolved nations and elements of UK Government have been advocating this approach for some time”. They expected to consult on “changes to strengthen the Scheme in the coming months”.¹²

Decarbonising the housing sector

27. A significant number of stakeholders highlighted decarbonisation of housing as a key challenge for the Welsh Government during the Sixth Senedd. They emphasised the scale of the challenge of retrofitting Wales’ existing housing stock, in particular the owner-occupied and private rented sectors. The main issues raised were:

- funding needed for the decarbonisation of housing, and how the cost should be shared between government, business, and households;
- how to encourage or incentivise the owner-occupier and private rented sectors to retrofit their properties;
- the need to strengthen the supply chain and address the ‘green skills’ gap to deliver retrofit at scale;
- the impact of decarbonisation of housing on fuel poverty levels, and the need for a ‘just transition’ to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities.

28. Several stakeholders suggested the Committee should consider the Welsh Government’s proposals for decarbonising the housing stock in the context of the Decarbonisation of Homes Advisory Group report, *Better Homes, Better Wales, Better World*. According to the Construction Industry Training Board (‘CITB’) Cymru, the Advisory Group “proposed much larger scale interventions (particularly in terms of retrofit)”.¹³ Although the Welsh Government accepted in principle the recommendations in the report, it is unclear whether and how it has taken them forward to date.

29. The Future Generations Commissioner and other stakeholders referred to recent research, which estimates a Welsh housing decarbonisation programme will require £14.75bn of investment over the next decade. According to the Commissioner, “addressing this challenge

¹² Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting

¹³ Written evidence, PR13 CITB Cymru

needs to be a shared endeavour across many stakeholders with Welsh Government leading the way". She suggested the Committee may wish to consider the "long-term plan for funding the decarbonisation of our homes".¹⁴

30. Chris Joffe, former Chair of the Independent Advisory Group on Decarbonisation of Homes in Wales, suggested it would be important to ensure sufficient emphasis is given to privately-owned homes, "which form the majority of Welsh homes and are responsible for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions from Welsh homes". He suggested the Committee should focus on "the financing of residential retrofit for all sectors".¹⁵

31. Energy Saving Trust noted that the revised Part L and Part F of the Building Regulations for new dwellings are due to come into effect soon. They suggested the Committee may wish to consider how these are being applied in practice and what impact they are having on emissions from Welsh homes and businesses.

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

32. According to the Minister and Deputy Minister, the Welsh Government has "made good progress in how to build new homes that are low or zero carbon in use and that generate vastly reduced emissions during the build process". They explained all new social housing planned from 1 October is required to be built without the use of fossil fuels to heat the homes and provide hot water. Their ambition "is that where social housing leads, market housing will follow".¹⁶

33. The Minister and Deputy Minister said the Welsh Government has adopted "a 'test and learn' approach" to retrofit of existing housing stock, focussing on 'fabric ready interventions - making homes as fuel efficient as possible and getting them ready for future iterations of their decarbonisation journey". They said the Optimised Retrofit Programme ('ORP') "is the means of delivering a clear mechanism to take meaningful, test and learn, coordinated steps to decarbonise homes, using a structured, technically robust methodology, whilst remaining as affordable and pragmatic as possible".¹⁷

¹⁴ Written evidence, PR51 Future Generations Commissioner

¹⁵ Written evidence, PR02 Christopher Joffe

¹⁶ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

¹⁷ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

Understanding and reducing Wales' global footprint

34. There was support in evidence for the Committee to consider how the Welsh Government is supporting the reduction of Wales' global footprint, in particular its deforestation footprint. WWF Cymru stated:

*"One of the key factors driving the global climate and nature emergency is deforestation and habitat loss. The IPCC is clear that without our forests, we will fail to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Wales needs to play its part by changing what it buys, consumes and invests in, since these choices can drive unethical practices and environmental degradation overseas."*¹⁸

35. Size of Wales emphasised the need for Wales to "tackle global footprints in our supply chain, particularly through the food commodities and products we import".¹⁹ It referred to the findings of recent research, which shows that an area equivalent of 40% of the size of Wales (83,000 hectares) was required overseas to grow Welsh imports of specified commodities in an average year between 2011 and 2018. 30% of the land used to grow these is in countries categorised as high or very high risk for social issues and deforestation.

36. Stakeholders called for the Welsh Government to measure consumption emissions and for these to be factored into Wales' carbon budgets. The Wales Centre for International Affairs said that data on Wales' consumption emissions is "woefully out of date". It added:

*"Without a consistent mechanism for measuring consumption emissions we cannot track our global impact and without a plan to reduce them we risk offshoring our climate responsibilities to other nations. This is not what global responsibility looks like."*²⁰

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

37. The Minister's official explained it was extremely difficult to estimate consumption emissions. However, she said the Welsh Government is undertaking work in this area and will be publishing a report next year on Wales' consumption emissions footprint.

¹⁸ Written evidence, PR48 WWF Cymru

¹⁹ Written evidence, PR10 Size of Wales

²⁰ Written evidence, PR46 Wales Centre for International Affairs

Climate change adaptation

38. Under the Climate Change Act 2008, the Welsh Ministers must produce a report on its objectives, actions, and future priorities regarding the impacts of climate change (commonly referred to as the climate change adaptation plan). The current plan, *Prosperity for All: A Climate Conscious Wales*, sets out actions to mitigate climate change from now until 2025. It includes over 30 commitments to support adaptation efforts across all sectors and details several areas of work that are under development and due to be launched during the early stages of the plan.

39. Some stakeholders, including the WLGA and NRW, noted the response to climate change so far has been dominated by climate mitigation rather than adaptation. NRW said the latest Climate Change Risk Assessment²¹ ('CCRA3') and the Sixth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change "reinforces the urgency of further action [on adaptation]".²² It suggested reviewing progress of delivery of the Welsh Government's adaptation plan should be a priority over the next 18 months.

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

40. The Minister indicated her intention to review the plan in light of the CCRA3 and latest advice from the Climate Change Committee ('CCC'). She said she expects to make a statement in due course on the delivery of the adaptation plan, including any updates needed.

Flooding

41. In October 2020, the Welsh Government published its 10 year *National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales* ('the National Strategy'). The National Strategy sets out how the Welsh Government intends to manage the risks from flooding and coastal erosion across Wales. It sets objectives and measures for all partners to work towards over the life of the document.

²¹ Under the Climate Change Act 2008 the UK Government must publish a Climate Change Risk Assessment ('CCRA') every five years. In practice, this work is undertaken by the Climate Change Committee ('CCC'). The primary purpose of the CCRA is to assess the risks to the UK from the current and predicted impacts of climate change. The third CCRA ('CCRA3') was published in June 2021, along with a summary for each of the four UK nations. At the same time, the CCC published its Progress report to Parliament, which includes its biennial assessment of progress in adapting to climate change.

²² Written evidence, PR117 Natural Resources Wales

42. Several stakeholders believed flooding should be a priority for the Committee, referring to the increase in frequency and severity of floods as a result of climate change.

43. NRW identified several “major challenges” for flood risk management: continued investment in existing infrastructure assets that help manage flooding; adaptation, at pace and for long term plans for communities at greatest risk of flooding; building resilience, at pace, including increasing communities’ understanding of flood risk and what they can do to help themselves.²³

44. There were calls for the Committee to consider the impact of flooding on communities. Shelter Cymru said that flooding “further exacerbates social and racial inequality”.²⁴ Royal College of Psychiatrists referred to the “significant mental health effects” of flooding.²⁵

45. Representatives from local government suggested the Committee should consider how funding for flood risk management is prioritised. The WLGA noted the Welsh Government’s focus is on protecting homes rather than businesses. According to the WLGA, this “is likely to impact on prosperity and local economies and does not reflect the ambition set out in the National Development Plan”. The WLGA suggested the Committee should explore how business “will be protected and funded in the face of increasing flood risk”.²⁶

46. Stakeholders highlighted the role of land use planning in managing flood risk, including the need for increased transparency in the planning application process and clear monitoring and reporting on planning decisions. The Welsh Government recently announced that developments will have to take into account future flooding and coastal erosion risk.

47. The Audit Wales said it was planning to undertake a review of flood risk management, although the scope of the work is yet to be agreed.

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

48. The Minister and Deputy Minister said that “reducing the risk of flooding to people, properties and infrastructure in our communities is a significant priority”.²⁷ The Programme for Government includes commitments to fund additional flood protection for more than 45,000

²³ Written evidence, PR117 Natural Resources Wales

²⁴ Written evidence, PR107 Shelter Cymru

²⁵ Written evidence, PR91 Royal College of Psychiatrists

²⁶ Written evidence, PR61 Welsh Local Government Association

²⁷ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

homes, and to deliver nature-based flood management in all major river catchments to expand wetland and woodland habitats.

49. According to the Minister and Deputy Minister, this financial year the Welsh Government is investing over £65 million in flood risk management activities across Wales. It is “developing a pipeline of capital flood and coastal erosion schemes to better protect homes across Wales”.²⁸

50. The Minister and Deputy Minister reported pilot schemes for nature-based flood management have been on-going for the past two financial years. All schemes being developed through the capital programme are required to consider nature flood management as one of their options.

²⁸ Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting

4. Green recovery

Green skills

51. Stakeholders highlighted the need to address the ‘green skills’ shortages to deliver a ‘green recovery’ and tackle the climate change and nature emergencies. They identified shortages across all sectors of the economy, including the built environment and construction, and nature restoration. Stakeholders called for the Committee to undertake work with other Senedd committees to consider this issue.

52. The Future Generations Commissioner’s recent report, *Skills through Crisis: Upskilling and (Re)Training for a Green Recovery in Wales*, found over 60,000 jobs could be created in the green economy by 2022 with infrastructure investment but the current skills pipeline is not prepared for this demand.

53. The WLGA stated:

“Wales is facing a significant shortage of skilled workforce impacting on the ability of Councils, Natural Resources Wales, and the private sector to recruit and fill-in specialist posts. Shortages are seen across a range of areas including Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management, Climate Change, Energy, Housing, Forestry, and Sustainable Drainage. This can be partly explained by a lack of suitable courses delivered by academia, difficulty of councils to adapt to fast moving policies, and lack of support to implement these policies.”²⁹

54. Several stakeholders suggested the Committee should pursue the proposal to establish a ‘National Nature Service’ – a skills and employment scheme focused on restoring nature and providing good quality jobs and livelihood opportunities across Wales. The proposal was one of the priority actions identified by the Green Recovery Task and Finish Group (‘the Task and Finish Group’), chaired by Sir David Henshaw. Stakeholders reported the Welsh Government has yet to respond to the proposal.

55. More broadly, Hafren Dyfrdwy suggested the Committee should follow up progress in taking forward recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

²⁹ Written evidence, PR61 Welsh Local Government Association

Nature based solutions

56. Several stakeholders highlighted investment in nature as key to a green recovery. RSPB Cymru said its recent **report** “shows the significant return that can be gained from investing in our natural assets”.³⁰ Moreover, RSPB Cymru’s report, **Developing a Green Workforce in Wales Estimating the Scale of the Need and Opportunity** (November 2020), estimates that an investment in nature restoration could support almost 7,000 direct FTE jobs in Wales. It called on the Committee to revisit the recommendations made by the EIS Committee in its report, **Long-term recovery from COVID-19** (March 2021), including investment in and acceleration of ‘shovel ready’ green infrastructure, including nature-based solutions.

³⁰ Written evidence, PR80 RSPB Cymru

5. Energy

Renewable energy

57. In 2017 the Welsh Government set targets for renewable energy:

- For renewables to generate an amount equivalent to 70% of Wales' electricity use by 2030 [in 2019 this was 51%];
- For 1GW of renewable energy capacity to be locally owned by 2030; and
- For all new energy developments to have at least an element of local ownership from 2020 [currently 83% of projects do].

58. However, the rate of installation of new renewable energy capacity has fallen annually since 2015.

59. In October 2021, the Deputy Minister for Climate Change announced a deep dive exercise "to identify barriers to significantly scaling up renewable energy in Wales and identifying steps to overcome the barriers". The outcome of the exercise is due to be announced ahead of Christmas recess.

60. There was a general view among stakeholders that more needs to be done to accelerate and scale up renewable energy in Wales, particularly in the context of its net zero target.

61. Marine Energy Wales cautioned:

"Welsh evolution of our energy generation is currently falling behind other areas of the UK and international competition due to a challenging consenting regime, slow delivery of policy intent and insufficient investment in infrastructure. Resulting in the potential forfeit of the associated jobs, prosperity and economic growth for Wales as well as the provision of secure and predictable energy to the energy mix."³¹

62. There were calls for the Committee to consider barriers to, and support for, the development of various types of renewable energy, in particular marine energy, and floating offshore wind.

³¹ Written evidence, PR82 Marine Energy Wales

- 63.** The Future Generations Commissioner and Development Trusts Association Wales highlighted the need for the Welsh Government to continue to promote and incentivise local renewable energy schemes, including community initiatives. The FGC suggested “public bodies can go further” in these, especially where they are able to improve environmental, social, economic, and cultural well-being.³²
- 64.** Representatives of the farming unions and academics from Bangor University highlighted potential within the agriculture sector to contribute to renewable energy generation. They believed the Welsh Government could do more to support the sector, for example, through reintroducing financial incentives. FUW called for the Committee to review this issue.
- 65.** Several stakeholders highlighted the need to update and expand energy infrastructure to meet increased demand as all areas of the economy switch to low carbon electricity.
- 66.** RWE referred to the lack of sufficient grid capacity as the “most critical barrier to renewable energy”. It said, “Wales urgently requires a coherent and costed plan for the upgrading of its grid infrastructure to enable full decarbonisation and support its renewable energy targets”.³³
- 67.** There were calls for the Committee to review how the Welsh Government is working in partnership with the UK Government, Distribution Network Operators, National Grid and Ofgem to address grid capacity across Wales, in particular in Mid-Wales.

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

- 68.** The Minister and Deputy Minister said the Welsh Government “set out a comprehensive statement of its approach to energy policy in Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition” and had subsequently published more detailed policies.³⁴
- 69.** They said the devolved planning system “is one of our greatest levers in driving changes across Wales over the longer period”.³⁵

³² Written evidence, PR51 Future Generations Commissioner

³³ Written evidence, PR95 RWE

³⁴ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

³⁵ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

70. The Minister and Deputy Minister said the Welsh Government is “heavily involved in a range of initiatives designed to promote public ownership and reduce emissions from the power sector”.³⁶

71. They also said:

“We have worked with the four regions of Wales “to develop energy strategies highlighting the scale of change needed to reach net zero, and the economic opportunities this presents”. This puts Wales in a strong position to develop the more detailed and integrated plans needed to design a low carbon energy system... Building on the work of the regional energy strategies, the Welsh Government is piloting Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) in partnership with local authorities. This is a more detailed approach to identify the actions to decarbonise a local energy system.”³⁷

72. On marine energy, the Minister and Deputy Minister explained that, since 2019, work has been underway “to stimulate renewable tidal power generation...and help other forms of marine energy generation”.³⁸

73. The Minister and Deputy Minister said they will soon be issuing a Written Statement in response to the Hinkley Point C Stakeholder Reference Group’s report³⁹ (March 2021).

Energy efficiency and fuel poverty

74. Fuel poverty cuts across the remits of this Committee, the Equality and Social Justice Committee and the Local Government and Housing Committee. Responsibility for fuel poverty falls to the Minister for Social Justice.

75. There was support for the Committee to follow-up its predecessor’s work on fuel poverty, with a particular focus on tackling inequalities and supporting home energy efficiency improvements in the private rented sector.

³⁶ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

³⁷ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

³⁸ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

³⁹ In July 2020, the First Minister convened the Hinkley Point C Stakeholder Reference Group to provide an independent assessment of the implications for Wales of the new nuclear power station currently being developed at Hinkley Point, in Somerset.

- 76.** Stakeholders emphasised the need for the Welsh Government’s approach to fuel poverty to align with its 2050 net zero target.
- 77.** There were calls for the Committee to scrutinise the effectiveness and scope of the Warm Homes Programme, how UK Government ECO funding is being utilised in Wales; and the Welsh Government’s forthcoming cold weather resilience plan.
- 78.** National Energy Action (‘NEA’) Cymru suggested the Committee may wish to consider the next iteration of the Welsh Government’s Warm Homes Programme, the Optimised Retrofit Programme, and the new version of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.
- 79.** Following on from its 2019 report on fuel poverty, the Audit Wales has undertaken a review of the Welsh Government’s management of the current Warm Homes Programme. Its [report](#) was published in November 2021. It focuses on the key issues and lessons for the Welsh Government to take forward into the next iteration of the Warm Homes Programme.

Decarbonising heat

- 80.** NEA Cymru said that the development of comprehensive policy on decarbonising heat is “a welcome priority” and suggested the Committee should consider this. It said decarbonising heat “is a key concern of current policy and programmes” which will require “effective collaboration with the UK Government”.⁴⁰
- 81.** Calor Gas said, “the intersectionality of heat decarbonisation, energy efficiency and fuel poverty makes the question of the Welsh Government’s approach to decarbonising heat a critical one for the Sixth Senedd term and beyond”.⁴¹
- 82.** Stakeholders highlighted the potential impact of decarbonising heat on household energy bills and on fuel poverty levels. Liquid Gas UK emphasised the need for the Welsh Government to prioritise development of a heat decarbonisation policy that supports carbon reduction targets, “but is based on what people can pay and want to install”.⁴²

⁴⁰ Written evidence, PR18 National Energy Action Cymru

⁴¹ Written evidence, PR73 Calor Gas

⁴² Written evidence, PR86 Liquid Gas UK

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

83. The Minister and Deputy Minister said to deliver its net zero ambitions “Wales will need to develop a more comprehensive policy on decarbonising heat, which is a substantial cross cutting challenge linked to fuel poverty, housing, commercial, industrial and waste policy areas”.⁴³

⁴³ Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting

6. Environment

Environmental governance

84. During the Fifth Senedd, the Welsh Government indicated its intention to legislate to address any environmental governance gaps in Wales arising from the loss of access to the EU governance system. It did not commit to a timeline to do this.

85. There will be no environmental governance Bill in the first year of the legislative programme.

86. Representatives of the environment sector, as well as academics, expressed disappointment the Welsh Government chose not to prioritise the environmental governance Bill in the first year of the Sixth Senedd. They raised concern the Welsh Government has not given a firm commitment to introducing the Bill in year two. There were calls for the Committee to seek regular updates from the Welsh Government on the development of the Bill, and to press for it to be introduced in the early part of year two.

Nature and biodiversity

87. There were strong calls for the Welsh Government to introduce statutory biodiversity targets as a matter of priority. WWF Cymru said statutory targets “will provide crucial accountability and focus Welsh Government’s attention on achieving the targets and milestones, in the same way we have seen happen on climate”.⁴⁴ Stakeholders suggested the Committee has an important role to play in pushing forward this agenda.

88. Stakeholders highlighted biodiversity targets must be accompanied by sufficient resource for site management and monitoring, which they stressed are under-resourced.

89. Other issues raised by stakeholders include:

- whether and how the Welsh Government is embedding nature’s recovery across all departments and in all key decisions;
- management of the UK **National Site Network** (previously **Natura 2000** under the EU) and how current gaps can be addressed, including gaps in management of the offshore;

⁴⁴ Written evidence, PR48 WWF Cymru

- the carbon storing capabilities of the Welsh seas, and the recovery of marine blue carbon habitats; and
- how National Parks can contribute to Welsh Government's environmental priorities and whether they have the right tools and resources to enable them to do this.

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

90. The Minister acknowledged calls from the environmental sector for statutory targets. She emphasised the importance of getting the targets right and added:

"It's all very well to say statutory target, but what exactly do we mean by that, and what legislative action therefore follows from that? And then have a road map to get from where we are now to where we want to be."⁴⁵

91. She said the Welsh Government is exploring whether the planned environmental governance Bill would be a suitable legislative vehicle to introduce statutory targets.

92. The Minister previously told the Committee that a decision on statutory targets would be informed by the outcome of COP15, due to be held in May 2022.

Marine spatial planning

93. Several stakeholders emphasised the Welsh Government's marine development ambitions are delivered in a way which does not further hinder the achievement of Good Environmental Status. They pointed out that the Welsh National Marine Plan ('WNMP') does not have a spatial component or development control policies. Wales Environment Link ('WEL') said the 'Sectoral Locational Guidance' currently being developed by the Welsh Government is not sufficient. It added:

"A statutory spatial plan must look cross-sector, at either a regional or national level, to address cumulative impacts on our marine ecosystems from all marine users is required. A marine development plan, such as those that are commonplace on land, would be one way to achieve this."⁴⁶

94. Representatives of the environment sector suggested the Committee could consider how a spatial approach can be embedded into marine planning.

⁴⁵ RoP, para 95, 20 October 2021

⁴⁶ Written evidence, PR77 Wales Environment Link

95. Other suggestions for scrutiny of marine policy from stakeholders include:

- the Welsh Government's progress in delivering its commitment "to develop a scheme to restore seagrass and saltmarsh", including funding for the scheme, and
- the identification, designation, and management of the Marine Conservation Zones process.

96. There was support for the Committee to work with ETRA Committee to scrutinise the UK Joint Fisheries Statement ('JFS'), given its significance for determining long-term fisheries management policies.

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

97. The Minister and Deputy Minister said, "effective marine planning for, and regulation of, new development is crucial to enabling sustainable marine sector growth, particularly for the development of marine energy projects to contribute to net zero".⁴⁷

Review of Natural Resources Wales

98. Stakeholders across sectors raised concern NRW has insufficient capacity and resources to carry out its statutory responsibilities, not to mention wider work to accelerate efforts to tackle the climate and nature emergencies, and to support the delivery of a green recovery. Wildlife Trusts Wales said, "given the deepening Climate and Nature crisis, we believe the time has come to rigorously assess the ability of NRW to carry out its regulatory functions."⁴⁸

99. RSPB Cymru noted NRW "has received a budget cut in real terms of 35% between 2013 and 2020". It said NRW resourcing needs to be "scaled up urgently in recognition of the scale of the challenge that we must meet to halt and reverse biodiversity loss".⁴⁹ RSPB Cymru called on the Committee to consider this in its scrutiny of future Welsh Government draft budgets.

100. RWE stated:

*"NRW's statutory consultee function needs to be adequately resourced to ensure they are equipped to play their role in the swift transition to Net Zero".
Recent experience with NRW's statutory consultee function suggests it is*

⁴⁷ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

⁴⁸ Written evidence, PR84 Wildlife Trusts Wales

⁴⁹ Written evidence, PR80 PSPB Cymru

severely under-resourced to provide the timely and substantive advice required to drive renewable energy projects forward.”⁵⁰

Post-legislative scrutiny of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016

101. Several stakeholders suggested it would be timely for the Committee to undertake post-legislative scrutiny of Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (‘the 2016 Act’), which sets out the legislative framework for sustainable management of natural resources. According to WEL, “scrutiny of the [2016 Act] and that of NRW’s broader statutory duties and functions is key to determining whether the intended environmental outcomes are being achieved”.⁵¹ WEL suggested the Committee should consider this when setting its priorities.

Forestry

102. The Welsh Government’s Woodlands for Wales Strategy (2018) includes an ambition to plant at least 2,000 ha of new woodland annually from 2020 to 2030. Its Low Carbon Delivery Plan proposed to double the planting rate to 4,000 ha per year as soon as possible. However, from 2010 to 2020 Wales’ average planting rate was 430 ha per year. Just 80 ha were planted in 2019-20 and 290 ha in 2020-21.

103. The Welsh Government has committed to creating a National Forest, attempting to accelerate planting rates and harness the socio-economic and environmental benefits of woodland. The first sites have been identified.

104. In June 2021, the Deputy Minister for Climate Change commissioned a deep dive, led by the Trees and Timber Task Force (‘the Task Force’), to consider barriers to tree planting, with the aim of developing proposals to overcome them. The Task Force published its recommendations the following month. A new Woodlands for Wales Action Plan (to replace the 2015 Plan) is due to be published before the end of 2021.

105. Stakeholders called for the Committee to prioritise scrutiny of how the Welsh Government is working to accelerate tree planting, recognising that planting rates are significantly lower than the Welsh Government’s current ambition. Coed Cadw suggested the Committee should scrutinise implementation of the Task Force’s recommendations. NRW said that achieving the

⁵⁰ Written evidence, PR95 RWE

⁵¹ Written evidence, PR77 Wales Environment Link

required 'step change' "will rely to a large extent on the implementation of the recommendations".⁵²

106. Academics from Bangor University referred to "major challenges" in determining the relative effectiveness of different tree planting options for climate change mitigation and the trade-off with other targets such as biodiversity. They said these had not been resolved by the recent 'deep dive' and require "further urgent attention".⁵³ Stakeholders warned of the potential unintended consequences of woodland expansion on biodiversity and emphasised the importance of 'the right tree in the right place'.

107. The WLGA highlighted the need "to design efficient and modern regulation and strategic planning for tree planting to ensure multiple benefits are achieved rather than one at the expense of the other".⁵⁴ Confor also referred to the need "to simplify an overly complex regulatory system", which it said is "a significant hurdle".⁵⁵

108. Several stakeholders, including farming unions reported concerns that farms and agricultural land are being purchased for afforestation by external investors in commercial forestry, and by businesses outside of Wales for the purpose of carbon offsetting. According to academics:

*"The significant challenge of how to integrate woodland expansion targets with a socio-economically viable farming sector is a serious issue for Wales that deserves considerable Ministerial attention."*⁵⁶

109. There were calls for the Committee to consider the potential impact of woodland expansion on the agriculture sector and the wider rural community.

110. Other issues raised by stakeholders include:

- the development and delivery of the new Woodland for Wales Action Plan;
- how the Welsh Government is working with National Parks to ensure tree planting is done in the right areas and complements peatland restoration and carbon sequestration strategies developed by National Parks;

⁵² Written evidence, PR117 Natural Resources Wales

⁵³ Written evidence, PR33 Bangor University

⁵⁴ Written evidence, PR61 Welsh Local Government Association

⁵⁵ Written evidence, PR94 Confor

⁵⁶ Written evidence, PR33 Bangor University

- the use of tree planting as a means of carbon off-setting;
- the importance of greenspace and tree cover for 'liveable cities' and how these can be protected and developed;
- the need to protect existing forests in Wales and overseas;
- the need to remove barriers to tree planting/woodland creation initiatives for farmers; and
- the need to scrutinise 'grant funded tree planting' to ensure they deliver positive outcomes and value for money.

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

111. The Minister and Deputy Minister said the deep dive had identified a series of actions to be taken forward, including a new funding scheme for woodland creation and an industrial strategy to coordinate the timber supply chain and construction sectors.

112. They said the Welsh Government had recently opened a new window of the Glastir Woodland Creation scheme and a pilot Woodland Creation Planning scheme "as a first step to develop the new funding offer". Furthermore, a woodland finance working group is "considering models to attract investment in woodland creation, without disrupting existing communities and patterns of landownership".⁵⁷

113. The Minister and Deputy Minister said the Welsh Government will consult later this year on the long-term delivery of the National Forest and will begin work to identify areas for 30 new woodlands and 100 Tiny Forests as part of the National Forest programme.

114. The Minister and Deputy Minister reported that work on the timber industrial strategy has begun.

Air quality

115. Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation, Living Streets Cymru and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health expressed disappointment the Welsh Government had chosen not to introduce the Clean Air Bill in the first year of its legislative programme. Some questioned whether the Bill is still a priority for the Welsh Government and suggested the Committee

⁵⁷ Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting

should pursue this matter. They suggested an inquiry into the timing of the Bill and implementation of legislative measures, amongst other issues.

116. A summary of responses to the consultation on the White Paper for the Clean Air (Wales) Bill was due to be published by the end of October 2021. At the time of writing, it has yet to be made available.

Water

117. Several respondents suggested the Committee should consider matters in relation to water management, including the management of wastewater and sewage.

118. Hafren Dyfrdwy expressed disappointment the Welsh Government had decided to delay the review of the Water Strategy for Wales and said there is “a clear need to update many of the priority actions”.⁵⁸ Similar views were expressed by Arqiva and the Consumer Council for Water (‘CCW’).

119. Consumer Council for Water said the Sixth Senedd provides an opportunity “to elevate the importance of water consumers - and water more generally - in Welsh policy and legislation that can help meaningful action to tackle climate change”.⁵⁹ It suggested the Committee should consider issues relating to affordability of water bills; wastewater and flooding; water efficiency in retrofit schemes; and water resource planning and transfers.

120. Dŵr Cymru referred to the “longer term challenge around water consumption” and called for greater support from Government to address this.⁶⁰

121. Dŵr Cymru reported unprecedented demand on water supply in some areas of Wales, linked to the increase in staycations as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It said existing infrastructure “just isn’t up to being able to deliver the level of water”.⁶¹ Dŵr Cymru explained it was looking to set aside funding to address issues around ‘pinch point’ areas ahead of summer 2022. However, it emphasised the need to work with the Welsh Government and Ofwat to identify longer term investment needs to address the issue.

122. Wildlife Trusts Wales referred to the “ongoing unacceptable pollution of Welsh rivers” and called for scrutiny of this issue. It raised concern about the “small proportion of prosecutions for

⁵⁸ Written evidence, PR79 Hafren Dyfrdwy

⁵⁹ Written evidence, PR115 Consumer Council for Water

⁶⁰ RoP, para 421, 16 September 2021

⁶¹ RoP, para 429, 16 September 2021

water pollution incidents in Wales by NRW”, which it referred to as “an alarming situation”. It said The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021 should be “backed up by meaningful enforcement”.⁶²

123. Dŵr Cymru emphasised the need for stakeholders to work together “to bring more water bodies up to good ecological status” and for a suitable framework to be put in place to achieve this.⁶³

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

124. The Minister and Deputy Minister referred to the Programme for Government commitment “to begin designation of Wales’ inland waters for recreation and strengthening water quality monitoring”. They said they are working with stakeholders, including NRW, water companies and the agricultural sector “to ensure where improvements are needed to support cleaner inland waters (including rivers) action is taken”.⁶⁴

125. The Minister and Deputy Minister said the Welsh Government want to make sustainable drainage systems (‘SuDS’) mandatory on almost all new building developments. The Programme for Government includes a specific commitment to enhance the SuDS legislative framework to provide additional environmental, biodiversity, well-being and economic benefits to our communities.

126. The Minister and Deputy Minister explained they are working with NRW and water companies to develop Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans (‘DWMPs’). The DWMPs will look at ways to address existing and future pressures on the sewer system, and “help ensure water companies invest strategically and transparently for a wastewater and treatment network that is resilient and affordable in the long and short term”.⁶⁵

127. The Minister and Deputy Minister emphasised the importance of ‘resilient rivers’ and expressed concern that “the majority of Wales’ SAC [Special Areas of Conservation] rivers fail to meet phosphorus targets”. They said a Management Oversight Group has been established “to provide strategic direction and help expedite a number of areas”.⁶⁶

⁶² Written evidence, PR84 Wildlife Trusts Wales

⁶³ RoP, para 473, 16 September 2021

⁶⁴ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

⁶⁵ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

⁶⁶ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

Sustainable farming

128. Responsibility for agriculture falls outside the Minister for Climate Change's portfolio and this Committee's remit. However, stakeholders emphasised the agriculture sector is key to tackling the climate and nature emergencies. According to academics from Bangor University, "the importance of agriculture and its land base in enabling Wales to meet the net zero challenge is palpable".⁶⁷

129. Most stakeholders focused comments on the new Sustainable Farming Scheme and the Agriculture Bill, which will provide the legislative framework for the Scheme. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of joint working with the ETRA Committee to scrutinise these.

130. WEL said the Agriculture Bill is "a critical piece of legislation [which] will shape our landscape, ecosystem and rural communities for many years to come". It added:

*"Ecological resilience, food production and the long-term viability of farming in Wales are interdependent; a healthy environment underpins food production itself. The Agriculture Bill must respond to the triple challenge of delivering high quality sustainable food whilst restoring nature and getting to carbon net zero."*⁶⁸

131. The Welsh Government has indicated its intention to introduce a Senedd Agriculture Bill in the first year of this Senedd term. It is expected the Bill will be referred to the ETRA Committee for scrutiny.

132. More broadly, representatives of the agriculture sector said the Committee had a vital role in engaging with the sector to understand and promote its net zero and climate ambitions.

Circular economy and waste management

133. In March 2021, the Welsh Government published its circular economy strategy, *Beyond Recycling* ('the Strategy'). The Strategy is structured around six core themes and eight headline actions and sets out the steps the Welsh Government will take over the next ten years towards its 2050 waste reduction and carbon emissions reduction targets.

⁶⁷ Written evidence, PR33 Bangor University

⁶⁸ Written evidence, PR77 Wales Environment Link

134. There were calls for the Committee to monitor progress towards delivery of the Strategy and waste reduction targets.

135. Representatives of the environmental sector expressed frustration about the delay in introducing waste reduction legislation, including Extended Producer Responsibility ('EPR') for packaging, a Deposit Return Scheme ('DRS'), and a ban on commonly littered single-use plastics. They called on the Committee to pursue this matter with the Welsh Government, and to hold it to account on timescales for the introduction of these measures.

136. NRW reported it was advising the Welsh and UK Governments on further waste reduction legislation, which "will help achieve the aims set out in Beyond Recycling". However, it said "careful consideration will be required to understand what will be required by different actors to effectively implement the intended aims of the new legislation".⁶⁹

137. FSB Wales emphasised the need for waste reduction legislation "to understand the needs of SMEs".⁷⁰ Chartered Institution of Waste Management ('CIWM') Cymru said it is "important that businesses are able to adapt and evolve to react to the requirements of government to deliver a circular economy".⁷¹ It called for the Welsh Government and its agencies, such as WRAP Cymru, to continue to support businesses to do this.

138. National Federation of Women's Institutes-Wales ('NFWI-Wales') welcomed the Welsh Government's commitment to ban single use plastics but said there is also a need to focus on microplastics, in particular microplastic fibres. It called for research and development of solutions to limit the release of microplastics. NFWI-Wales suggested the Committee should revisit recommendations made by the CCERA Committee in its Report on policies and proposals relating to plastic pollution and packaging waste (June 2019).

139. The Future Generations Commissioner said public bodies "need to find innovative solutions to reduce and reuse waste and promote a circular economy".⁷²

140. CIWM Cymru emphasised the need to produce less waste through "purchasing decisions and the design and development of sustainable products". It added:

"a priority action for the Welsh Government is for all departments to adopt the Sustainable Procurement Hierarchy as well as encourage the public sector

⁶⁹ Written evidence, PR117 Natural Resources Wales

⁷⁰ Written evidence, PR07 FSB Wales

⁷¹ Written evidence, PR44 Chartered Institution of Waste Management Cymru

⁷² Written evidence, PR51 Future Generations Commissioner

in particular to adopt the principles of circular procurement, based on the waste hierarchy – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Recover to drive markets and support new business approaches for new products and services.”⁷³

141. CIWM Cymru called on public sector bodies to “work together on the development of contract specifications that can minimise the carbon impact of works, goods, and services procured. This should be based on enhanced understanding of their emissions profiles”.⁷⁴

142. Aneurin Bevan University Health Board noted “the NHS procures vast quantities of single use materials and generates large volumes of plastic waste”. It said there is “scope for the NHS to use more reusable products and to improve the recycling of products where single use is the only acceptable choice”.⁷⁵

143. Stakeholders called for support to make various sectors more circular, in particular infrastructure and construction, food, and agriculture.

144. Constructing Excellence Wales explained waste is “an endemic problem when constructing buildings and infrastructure”, with up to half of materials from some projects ending up in landfill.⁷⁶ CECA stated:

*“The infrastructure sector, and the broader construction sector, lends itself better than most sectors to the introduction of a truly circular economy...there are opportunities to make significant improvements particularly as the Welsh public sector spends in the order of £2bn per annum on construction and infrastructure but rarely measures the carbon impact of this investment. A Committee inquiry into the Circular Economy, with the infrastructure sector as a key part of this, could unlock these opportunities”.*⁷⁷

145. CIWM said the resources and waste sector require “more infrastructure for reuse and repair to be expanded and greater investment in our capacity to recycle material such as plastic and packaging”. It also said data technologies will be required “for circular business models and the complex demands of circular supply chains”.⁷⁸

⁷³ Written evidence, PR44 Chartered Institution of Waste Management Cymru

⁷⁴ Written evidence, PR44 Chartered Institution of Waste Management Cymru

⁷⁵ Written evidence, PR41 Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

⁷⁶ Written evidence, PR59 Constructing Excellence Wales

⁷⁷ Written evidence, PR27 Civil Engineering Contractors Association

⁷⁸ Written evidence, PR44 Chartered Institution of Waste Management Cymru

146. Audit Wales referred to its series of reports on waste management: waste prevention (March 2019); municipal recycling (November 2018); and the procurement or residual and food waste treatment capacity (October 2018). It said that “many of the issues raised by our previous reports remain relevant as policy/strategy develops”, including the relative priority given to waste prevention measures, progress against waste prevention targets and data collection.⁷⁹

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

147. The Minister and Deputy Minister said, “further increasing recycling and reducing waste remain key”. They said the Welsh Government will “work with partners to look at how our existing recycling and waste collection infrastructure...can maximise the generation of high-quality resources which can be kept in use for longer and to minimise the amount of waste businesses generate”.⁸⁰

148. The Minister and Deputy Minister explained the Welsh Government will be taking action to phase out unnecessary single use items and halving food waste by 2025; and bringing forward measures to encourage more efficient resource use, including EPR. They said the final designs for EPR for packaging and a DRS will be published early in the New Year. They reported the Welsh Government is exploring how EPR reforms can potentially be applied to other items such as batteries, electrical and electronic equipment, motor vehicles, textiles, and fishing gear.

⁷⁹ Written evidence, PR100 Audit Wales

⁸⁰ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

7. Planning and Infrastructure

Resources and capacity issue

149. Several stakeholders referred to the critical role of the planning system in supporting the delivery of Welsh Government priorities, including delivering affordable housing, an integrated transport system, and renewable energy developments. However, stakeholders raised concern about the lack of capacity, resources and specialist skills within local authority planning departments to carry out their role and responsibilities effectively. The Royal Town Planning Institute ('RTPI') Cymru and the House Builders Federation drew attention to reports by Audit Wales, *The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales* (June 2019), and *Picture of Public Services 2021* (September 2021), which explore these issues.

150. The RTPI Cymru stated:

*"Planning offers an established and effective process to facilitate a sustainable future for Wales. However it needs to be invested in and strengthened to be able to deliver expectations...The RTPI and other stakeholders have long called for the adequate resourcing of the planning system in order for it to achieve its full potential in addressing the complex and challenging issues it faces."*⁸¹

151. There were calls for the Committee to consider resourcing, skills shortages, and support for capacity-building in local authority planning departments.

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

152. The Minister told the Committee:

*"One of the reasons that, in the last Senedd, we introduced the corporate joint committee concept was in order to be able to regionalise some of the [planning] services where it's really hard to recruit and people are basically fishing in the same pool, driving prices up, and so on. So, we've been collaborating with the local authorities to make sure that they share expertise across different local authorities."*⁸²

⁸¹ Written evidence, PR31 Royal Town Planning Institute Cymru

⁸² RoP, para 41, 20 October 2021

153. She added the Welsh Government will be “looking to work with local authorities around the costs of delivering development management services in Wales”.⁸³

Strategic Development Plans

154. Strategic Development Plans (‘SDPs’) are regional level development plans covering cross-boundary issues like housing and transport. Provision was first made for them in the Planning (Wales) Act 2015.

155. Stakeholders expressed frustration at the pace of SDPs coming forward. The Welsh Government has legislated to establish Corporate Joint Committees (‘CJCs’) to deliver certain local government functions regionally – including strategic planning. The intention is for CJCs to prepare SDPs.

156. Stakeholders highlighted the practical challenges of developing SDPs, which they said are exacerbated by the lack of resources in local planning authorities.

157. Dr Neil Harris of Cardiff University said SDPs are “the important missing part of that jigsaw in the planning system in Wales”, but are still five years away from being in place.⁸⁴ He suggested the Committee may wish to oversee progress made in the preparation of SDPs.

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

158. The Minister explained that SDPs will be delivered through the CJCs. She said the transfer of function of preparing a SDP would transfer to the South East Wales CJC in February 2022 and to all CJCs for the remaining regions in June/July 2022. The Minister outlined the process and anticipated timeline for the preparation of SDPs. She said the first SDP will be available in 2028, but added:

“There are no planning barriers limiting early and rapid progress towards SDP adoption, so it's absolutely now down to local authorities and national parks to proceed as fast as possible... there is nothing stopping them coming together as shadow authorities already and setting up the entire structure so that they're ready to go on the day that their powers vest.”⁸⁵

⁸³ RoP, para 41, 20 October 2021

⁸⁴ RoP, para 299, 16 September 2021

⁸⁵ RoP, para 55, 20 October 2021

Rural planning

159. CLA Cymru and NFU Cymru emphasised the need for the planning system to better support the rural economy. CLA Cymru referred to its report, *Rural Powerhouse: a planning system designed for the rural economy in Wales* (March 2021), which refers to existing system as “restrictive, expensive and inefficient” and “harming the potential of the economy in rural areas”.

160. NFU Cymru said rural Wales “needs an enabling planning system, with a uniform, consistent and easy to understand approach to planning across each of Wales’ local authority areas and designated landscapes”. It added:

*“We need a planning system which allows farmers to meet with statutory and regulatory requirements as well as allow the investment on farm which will allow agriculture to develop and diversify, rather than hold it back”.*⁸⁶

161. CLA Cymru and NFU Cymru called for the Committee to consider these issues.

162. Other issues raised by stakeholders include:

- the role of the planning system in flood risk management;
- how the planning system can support the delivery of nature and biodiversity objectives;
- what planning policies are in place, or are being developed, to encourage growth in rail freight and to safeguard both existing and potential locations;
- how the planning system can support a net zero energy system;
- community engagement in the planning process, including the value of pre-application consultations required under the Planning (Wales) Act 2015;
- the need for a more integrated approach to transport and land use planning;
- the need to review permitted development rights in respect of digital telecommunications infrastructure; and
- the need to progress the infrastructure consenting Bill and planning consolidation Bill.

⁸⁶ Written evidence, PR03 NFU Cymru

Decarbonising infrastructure

163. CECA referred to its report, *Decarbonising Our Infrastructure* (November 2021), which sets out “an action plan of how we believe both public and private sectors need to collaborate far more widely if we are to decarbonise our infrastructure and what actions need to be taken”. It suggested this could be useful in assisting the Committee “to measure progress in decarbonising our infrastructure”.⁸⁷

164. CECA called for carbon measures to sit alongside economic and social measures in determining infrastructure investment. It said these measures should “follow through the procurement process so that public and private sector providers of infrastructure are properly rewarded for reducing carbon”.⁸⁸

National Infrastructure Commission for Wales

165. CITB Cymru suggested the Committee may wish to focus on the work of the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales (“NICW”), referring to the Commission’s “slow progress” and “limited visibility in Wales”, and limited scope. CITB Cymru said “a long-term infrastructure pipeline for Wales could potentially have prevented (or minimised the impact of) some of the historical, high-profile project cancellations including M4, tidal lagoon, Wylfa and rail electrification”.⁸⁹

166. CECA said NICW is “very ineffective at the moment”. It explained:

*“For us, the commission should have been about that forward look—that medium to long term look: how are things changing globally across Wales, across the UK and then adapting our infrastructure to meet that. It's clearly not doing that for a variety of reasons. We would have also liked to have seen it being a lot more proactive in terms of the delivery—so, delivering on some of those things to lower carbon, for instance. But, again, it doesn't have that mandate. So, I guess my question is at the moment: does the Welsh Government want it? Because it's very difficult to work with that—.”*⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Written evidence, PR27 Civil Engineering Contractors Association

⁸⁸ Written evidence, PR27 Civil Engineering Contractors Association

⁸⁹ Written evidence, PR13 CITB Cymru

⁹⁰ RoP, para 413, 16 September 2021

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

167. The Deputy Minister told the Committee he was “very keen to sharpen the focus of the infrastructure commission to help us to meet the net-zero challenge”.⁹¹ He said the Welsh Government will be publishing the NICW’s remit letter later in the year. He added:

“What we've said to them is that I would like them to come up with their initial priorities of where they want to focus their work plan, we'll come up with suggestions of where we think it'd be really helpful to us to have their input, and, between the two of us, we'll come to an agreed list of things that they can then go off and work on and come back to us on.”⁹²

⁹¹ RoP, para 75, 20 October 2021

⁹² RoP, para 76, 20 October 2021

8. Transport

Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021

168. In March 2021, the Welsh Government published *Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy* ('WTS'). It focuses on decarbonisation, including a target to increase the share of journeys by public transport and active travel from 32% to 45% by 2040.

169. Delivery of the WTS will be via a new five-year National Transport Delivery Plan ('NTDP') and Regional Transport Plans ('RTPs'). The NTDP will be developed by Transport for Wales ('TfW'), the Welsh Government's transport delivery body. RTPs are intended to be developed by Corporate Joint Committees ('CJCs').

170. The WTS also includes nine 'mini-plans' for individual transport sectors, and commits to more comprehensive strategies for aviation, logistics, freight, ports, and maritime sectors. Cross-cutting 'delivery pathways' will be developed (decarbonisation, equality, integrated journey planning and 'rural pathways'), each with specific delivery structures and monitoring.

171. There was general support for the WTS among stakeholders. However, they highlighted that effective implementation of the WTS would be dependent on adequate resources.

172. Stakeholders emphasised the need for scrutiny of progress towards the implementation of the WTS, including the development of accompanying delivery and action plans, and progress towards the new modal shift target.

173. Stakeholders from a wide range of sectors from ports/logistics, to public transport and active travel highlighted the importance of integration of land-use and transport planning. Living Streets Cymru called for "ambitious goals" like car free developments.⁹³

174. CILT said the establishment of CJCs "offers an opportunity to integrate land use and transport planning on a regional basis". It suggested the Committee may wish to consider an inquiry to determine how CJCs "could best deliver the integration between planning and transport to reduce the need to travel".⁹⁴

⁹³ Written evidence, PR23 Living Streets Cymru

⁹⁴ Written evidence, PR55 Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport

Transport Governance

175. TfW was established in 2015 as a wholly Welsh Government owned subsidiary company limited by guarantee. Its initial purpose was to procure and develop/operate the new Welsh rail franchise and Metro services in the valleys. However, TfW's anticipated role is growing to include a role in wider modes, and to act as both a consultant and delivery body for the Welsh Government and local authorities.

176. At local government level, CJs will undertake regional transport planning, although the Welsh Government anticipates they will take on wider roles. Alongside these structures, a range of other bodies exist with similar, sometimes overlapping, responsibilities.

177. Evidence from stakeholders suggests there is little clarity on transport governance in Wales. Bus representatives said Welsh transport policy is good, but delivery structures, governance and resources need to improve. Sustrans supported effective regional working. CILT consider CJs, which will also have a strategic planning function, as an opportunity to integrate land-use planning and transport regionally.

Decarbonisation of transport

178. Decarbonisation of transport, particularly through behaviour change and modal shift, was a key issue raised by stakeholders.

179. The Future Generations Commissioner emphasised the need to measure the carbon impact of transport investment and of transporting goods to ensure decisions are supporting carbon emission reduction targets.

180. There were mixed views from stakeholders on the Welsh Government's roads review. There were calls for the Committee to scrutinise the outcome of the review as soon as possible.

181. While some stakeholders highlighted the importance of electric vehicles ('EVs') in the transition towards net zero, others emphasised EVs alone are not the answer. There was a strong view that an integrated, accessible, and affordable public transport system, along with improved active travel infrastructure are required if Wales is to radically reduce carbon emissions. Some of these issues are explored further in subsequent sections.

182. Stakeholders highlighted particular challenges and complexities associated with decarbonising rural transport and the port/logistics sector.

Electric vehicles

183. In March 2021, the Welsh Government published its *Electric vehicle charging strategy: Facilitating the transition to Net Zero*. (‘the EV Strategy’), which sets out the following ambition:

“By 2025, all users of electric cars and vans in Wales are confident that they can access electric vehicle charging infrastructure when and where they need it.”

184. The Strategy was followed by an action plan in October 2021, which includes Key Performance Indicators that will be monitored and reviewed annually to help track progress.

185. There was concern among stakeholders that Wales is lagging behind other UK nations in the rollout of EV charging infrastructure, with calls for greater investment to address this issue.

186. According to Energy Saving Trust, “ensuring that the continued rollout of EV charging infrastructure is equitable and occurs ahead of need will be a critical transport policy challenge over the sixth Senedd term”.⁹⁵ There were calls for the Committee to scrutinise the implementation of the EV Strategy, including timescales for delivery and investment levels.

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

187. The Minister and Deputy Minister referred to the “stretching deadline” to switch the bus fleet to ultra-low emissions.⁹⁶ In addition, they said they will work with Network Rail and UK Government to roll out rail electrification to decarbonise the railway in Wales.

188. The Minister and Deputy Minister said the South East Wales Transport Commission’s recommendations on alternatives to the M4 relief road “are now being readied for implementation by a delivery unit chaired by Simon Burns”.⁹⁷ In addition, they referred to the road review, which will assess the potential carbon impacts of planned road projects and make recommendations on whether these should continue, be reconsidered, altered, or halted.

Public transport and active travel

189. Several stakeholders emphasised the need to ensure public transport services and infrastructure, and active travel networks and facilities, are accessible and inclusive. They

⁹⁵ Written evidence, PR14 Energy Saving Trust

⁹⁶ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

⁹⁷ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

suggested the Committee should take account of this when scrutinising the development and delivery of transport policy.

190. Sustrans referred to the risk of “transport poverty, and a widening gap in those who can access transport and those who cannot”. It added:

“right now, the way things are heading, if you can afford an electric car you'll be fine. There's a risk that public transport services will reduce or be withdrawn, that fares will go up, and that creates the wider gap and increases social exclusion, and that is a huge thing that we should be worried about.”⁹⁸

191. There were calls for additional investment in public transport. The Future Generations Commissioner noted “Wales has one of the lowest per capita spend on public transport in the UK leading to a lack of affordable and accessible sustainable transport options”. She recommended the Welsh Government should “allocate at least 50% of capital transport spend on improving bus and train services, providing long-term funding wherever possible”.⁹⁹ Transform Cymru called for reallocation of road building funds to public transport and active travel.

Active travel

192. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of accelerating action on active travel, in particular through investment in infrastructure and a programme of behaviour change. Although the Welsh Government has committed £75m to active travel in 2021-22, Sustrans called for at least 10% of the total transport budget to be dedicated to active travel.

193. There were calls for the Committee to consider progress made in implementing the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, and the effectiveness of active travel policies to date. Stakeholders suggested this could include following up recommendations made by EIS in its report, *Post Legislative Scrutiny of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013* (June 2018).

194. Sustrans emphasised the need to look at increasing the number and diversity of people travelling actively, including tackling barriers for those with protected characteristics.

⁹⁸ Written evidence, PR68 Sustrans

⁹⁹ Written evidence, PR51 Future Generations Commissioner

195. Some stakeholders suggested there should be a review of the effectiveness of ‘pop-up’ active travel schemes introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic, including any decisions by local authorities to reverse the schemes.

Buses

196. Bus Users UK and the Confederation of Passenger Transport (“CPT”) Cymru suggested the Committee should prioritise work on post-Covid recovery for the public transport sector. Bus Users UK stated:

“There is a very real danger that, post-Covid, we will see a car-led recovery. UK Government demonised public transport in the early stages of the health crisis and actively encouraged people to travel by car. There needs to be greater promotion of the benefit of sustainable transport...backed by a Welsh Government campaign encouraging people back onto public transport.”¹⁰⁰

197. CPT Cymru noted the Bus Emergency Scheme 2 will come to an end in July 2022. It said if passenger levels do not recover by then “there is likely to be significant pressure on bus networks that could lead to increased fares or reduced service levels without government support”. CPT Cymru said the Committee should consider “the transition out of current Covid-19 support arrangements for bus services”.¹⁰¹

198. Stakeholders referred to the Welsh Government’s long-standing commitment to reform bus services in Wales. They suggested the Committee should undertake early work to help shape the reform programme.

Rail

199. Great Western Railway said it would like to see “a wider discussion about rail to include mainline services, and how they form part of the answer for local journeys, and for business and visitor journeys to and from Wales”. It suggested this work could incorporate “the opportunities set out in the Burns Report”; how train operators are working together to promote a return to rail; and how they are encouraging greater modal shift.¹⁰²

200. CECA suggested the Committee should focus on progress made in taking forward the Burns Commission recommendations. It noted that “many of the recommendations, particularly

¹⁰⁰ Written evidence, PR40 Bus Users UK

¹⁰¹ Written evidence, PR43 Confederation of Passenger Transport Cymru

¹⁰² Written evidence, PR78 Great Western Railway

those involving partially or non-devolved functions, such as works to the mainline railway, require significant cooperation between the Welsh and UK Governments”.¹⁰³

201. Transport Focus said the UK Government’s *Great British Railways: William-Shapps plan for rail* (May 2020) “provides an opportunity to embed more joined up working and a stronger sense of overall accountability”. It called for “implementation across both sides of the border is scrutinised and harmonised”.¹⁰⁴ However, CILT suggested potential conflict with TfW’s rail priorities.

Discouraging car use

202. There were calls for the Committee to consider potential measures to discourage car use to achieve modal shift. Sustrans and Transform Cymru said this work should be undertaken as a matter of urgency to avoid a car-led recovery [from the Covid-19 pandemic].

203. CILT Cymru noted:

*“There are already significant investments planned for improving public transport but discussions about steps that could be taken to encourage a reduction in car use are more limited”.*¹⁰⁵

204. CPT Cymru said measures could “be designed to be income generating further alleviating the financial challenges facing the public sector in improving public transport”.¹⁰⁶

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

205. The Minister and Deputy Minister recognised the new modal shift target “may need to be raised further if the science of climate change demands it, and [the Welsh Government] has committed to keep it under review”. They said, to achieve the target, “walking and cycling must become the normal way of making shorter journeys”. They reported active travel funding “has been ramped” and “is set to increase further as active travel infrastructure construction accelerates to put in place the local authority network plans”.¹⁰⁷ According to the Deputy Minister, 10.5% of the Welsh Government’s transport budget is allocated to active travel in the current financial year.

¹⁰³ Written evidence, PR27 Civil Engineering Contractors Association

¹⁰⁴ Written evidence, PR92 Transport Focus

¹⁰⁵ Written evidence, PR55 Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport

¹⁰⁶ Written evidence, PR43 Confederation of Passenger Transport Cymru

¹⁰⁷ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

206. The Minister and Deputy Minister said the first phase of the 20mph speed limit pilot schemes “has laid the way for the forthcoming roll out to local authorities right across Wales”. In more rural areas, the Welsh Government “will work towards ‘Safe Cycling from Village to Town’”.¹⁰⁸

207. The Minister and Deputy Minister emphasised the need for car journeys to be replaced by public transport, which would require “a transformation” of Wales’ public transport system. The Welsh Government will be publishing its bus delivery plan and White Paper in late 2021. These will “set out [its] plans to transform Wales’ bus network, making it more reliable, accessible and affordable”.¹⁰⁹

Driver shortages

208. Stakeholders referred to the recruitment challenges in the logistics and transport sector, demonstrated by HGV, bus and coach driver shortages. CILT called for an inquiry to explore how the Welsh Government can work with the sector to attract talent and increase diversity in the longer term. A similar view was expressed by Bus Users UK.

Freight

209. Rail Freight Group (‘RFG’) and the CILT Cymru suggested the Welsh Government is not giving sufficient priority to freight when it comes to policy making. CILT Cymru reported it has long had concerns about “freight blindness”, with freight “often seen as an afterthought”.¹¹⁰ There were calls for the Committee to scrutinise the development and delivery of future freight strategies.

210. While RFG acknowledged the importance of decarbonising transport, including the rail freight sector, it stated:

“the immediate priority elsewhere in the UK is for freight modal shift from road to rail which is well proven to reduce carbon emissions by up to 76%, and also substantially reduce emissions of particulates.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

¹⁰⁹ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

¹¹⁰ Written evidence, PR55 Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport

¹¹¹ Written evidence, PR11 Rail Freight Group

211. There were calls for the Committee to consider how modal shift is being supported, and the role of the planning system in encouraging growth in rail freight. Stakeholders suggested this work could be undertaken jointly with ETRA Committee.

Ports

212. British Ports Authority ('BPA') highlighted Covid-19 recovery and addressing the on-going challenges associated with Brexit as key priorities.

213. The Port of Milford Haven said "Welsh ports will remain critical to the Welsh economy, but a clear cross-cutting economic strategy is required".¹¹² CILT suggested the Committee could undertake work on the development of Welsh ports, including the potential for freeports, the provision of new modal transfer facilities, and Lorry Parking facilities.¹¹³

¹¹² Written evidence, PR54 Port of Milford Haven

¹¹³ Written evidence, PR55 Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport

9. Digital

Digital connectivity infrastructure

214. Stakeholders identified digital connectivity as a priority for the Welsh Government and the Committee, recognising the increased reliance on digital technology, particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

215. Care & Repair Cymru called for “a right to digital connectivity throughout Wales”.¹¹⁴ While the NFWI-Wales said, “broadband and mobile phone signal are an essential public service in Wales, and we strongly believe that they must be recognised as such”.¹¹⁵

216. Stakeholders, including BT Group, the Future Generations Commissioner, and farming union representatives, highlighted the importance of addressing barriers to digital connectivity, particularly in rural areas.

217. NFU Cymru said poor rural connectivity and mobile signal are “sources of frustration”. FUW called on the Committee to “should push the Welsh Government to invest in rural infrastructure to enable farm businesses to capitalise on digital connectivity opportunities and not be left behind, further increasing the digital divide between urban and rural areas”.¹¹⁶

218. BT Group said:

“We believe an important aspect of meeting Wales’ carbon targets and building a sustainable Wales is future-proofing Wales’ digital connectivity through full fibre roll-out and mobile coverage, which underpins the development of digital skills. We hope the work of the Committee will recognise the long-term value of fully connecting Wales to achieving net zero and take steps to support this process, continuing the work from previous terms.”¹¹⁷

219. The Audit Wales noted the findings and recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission in its report, *Digital Communications Infrastructure in Wales* (December 2020), including the endorsement of the merits of further audit scrutiny in this area. The Audit Wales

¹¹⁴ Written evidence, PR42 Care & Repair Cymru

¹¹⁵ Written evidence, PR37, National Federation of Women’s Institutes-Wales

¹¹⁶ Written evidence, PR03 NFU Cymru

¹¹⁷ Written evidence, PR16 BT Group

explained it plans to undertake further work on broadband infrastructure, following on from its report, [Welsh Government investment in next generation broadband infrastructure](#) (May 2015). It has yet to decide on the scope of this work.

220. CECA welcomed the increase in investment in digital infrastructure. However, it suggested the Committee should scrutinise “the benefits to local business and communities” of that investment.

221. There were calls for the Committee to scrutinise the delivery of the Welsh Government’s [Digital strategy for Wales](#) (March 2021).

Digital inclusion and digital skills

222. Digital inclusion and digital skills cut across the remits of several Senedd committees. Responsibility for digital inclusion falls to the Minister for Social Justice, while the Minister for Climate Change has responsibility for cross-government digital policy and strategy.

223. Stakeholders suggested the Committee should consider what more could be done to tackle digital exclusion, particularly among older people and people with learning difficulties, and support the development of digital skills.

224. Diverse Cymru explained “digital exclusion is a significant barrier to accessing information and services”.¹¹⁸ Learning Disability Wales and Age Cymru said the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the realities of digital exclusion for many people with a learning disability and for older people.

225. Age Cymru called on the Committee to focus on ‘data poverty’, and stated:

“it is important to recognise the significant cost of getting and staying online for some older people and to ensure that nobody is digitally excluded on cost grounds.”¹¹⁹

226. BT Group referred to research by the Office for National Statistics, which found Wales has the lowest proportion of people with all five basic digital skills, and the highest proportion of those with none. BT Group suggested a green recovery “is not possible without addressing the digital divide and upskilling the nation”.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Written evidence, PR21 Diverse Cymru

¹¹⁹ Written evidence, PR70 Age Cymru

¹²⁰ Written evidence, PR16 BT Group

Evidence from the Minister and Deputy Minister

227. The Minister and Deputy Minister explained that, although responsibility for connectivity lies with the UK Government, the Welsh Government continues “to step in to provide connectivity” through its Local Broadband Fund and ABC scheme.¹²¹

228. They explained that, since 2006, the Welsh Government has overseen a pan-public sector contract to deliver public sector connectivity to 120 organisations covering around 5,000 locations such as schools, colleges, universities, fire services, police, hospitals, GP surgeries, local authority buildings.

229. The Welsh Government is also “the lead consortium partner in a ‘5G Tech Valleys’ mobile technology innovation project focussed on rural connectivity”.¹²² The programme is considered to be a ‘pathfinder’ to inform potential future mobile network deployment models and a potential opportunity to scale such services.

¹²¹ [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)

¹²² [Evidence paper from the Welsh Government, 20 October 2021 meeting](#)
