

Building on Audit Wales' work, the Committee would welcome your views on any or all of the following:

1. What are your views on the role of the Welsh Government in supporting public bodies to deliver on the five 'calls for action' identified in the Audit Wales' report?

Given the recent IEA report suggesting that annual clean energy investment would have to reach \$4tn by 2030 to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050, a figure that illustrates the scale of the challenge facing governments around the world and the WWF's Living Planet Report 2022 which finds that wildlife populations have declined by an average 69% in the past 50 years, the role of the Welsh Government in supporting public sector bodies in accelerating action on these emergencies cannot be understated and is indeed critical. In particular, there is need for 100% of public sector organisations to declare climate and nature emergencies, particularly regarding their statutory duty under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The sheer pace of change needed requires a particular focus from Welsh Government in assuring that all public sector bodies have in place, with a real sense of urgency, leaders with the right expertise, qualifications, skill-set and ability to set meaningful strategy which addresses the emergencies as a critical and fundamental first step. The Audit Office report highlights the number of organisations that still don't have a fully developed written strategic plan in place which is very concerning. Without an ability to mobilise their partners and rapidly build a truly shared vision and action plan, there is real danger of failure. The Audit Wales report states that 'Some respondents told us that a wholesale change of thinking is required, with a more co-ordinated and joined-up approach across the public sector'; Welsh Government should consider stepping into this space as without a centrally coordinated approach this idea may lead to delay and failure to reach net zero and nature positive targets. There is also an opportunity for Welsh Government to support public sector bodies via funding structures which are aligned with net zero targets – that is, ensuring that net zero is part of the corporate risk register and is embedded throughout all policies and committees at all levels throughout the public sector organisation, thereby building in skills and expertise throughout the organisation from bottom to top. There is perhaps a need to strengthen the remit of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. The Welsh Government has a critical role to play in providing organisations with financial security and certainty over a much longer period. Shorter financial timelines make it extremely difficult to provide certainty that the capital investment required will be available to meet publicly stated targets which stretch to, at least, 2030 and therefore place these targets at risk.

To summarise, although organisations are taking the emergencies seriously, central leadership and support from Welsh Government is critical to the stated ambitions for Wales and the public sector to

meet net zero and nature-based targets. There are only several short years in which to address the enormous challenges we face so effective leadership must be in place if there is any chance of keeping the works effects of climate change at bay and certainly if there is any chance of meeting the Paris Agreement.

2. What are your views on the Welsh Government's Net zero carbon status by 2030: A route map for decarbonisation across the Welsh public sector as a means of providing strategic direction to public bodies?

The route map provides a useful framework for discussion at the organisational level but is very broad in its approach which may be problematic. In particular, the document states in the 'vision, that 'by 2030, choosing zero carbon will be routine, culturally embedded and self-regulating across the Welsh public sector'. The statement around self-regulation may work for organisations that have robust strategic plans supported with experienced and highly motivated/skilled staff and, financial certainty until 2030 but where this is not the case, then it may be that organisations have a mandatory requirement for external audit. This may be used to provide people with clear information relating to public services within their area and particularly where this is coupled with a public campaign to inform citizens-who may be completely unaware of the strategies of public sector organisations.

3. What are your views on the progress made by public bodies in the priority areas for action set out in the route map - Sustainable procurement; Net zero buildings; Mobility and transport, and Land use:

4. What are your views on the support provided by the Welsh Government to deliver progress in the priority areas, including any gaps?

The Net zero carbon status by 2030: A route map for decarbonisation across the Welsh public sector includes mention of higher education as part of its wider influence. There is an important gap relating to further education who do not have a statutory duty under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act due to its funding structure, although FE institutions have adopted the goals. The FE sector is able to provide education and skills training alongside HE courses and apprenticeships to help provide a highly skilled workforce ready to tackle the climate and nature emergencies. FE already works as a member of the PSB's and asset groups and has a significant role to play in economic regeneration through upskilling and offers huge potential where we are able to offer courses and training aligned with net zero.

5. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?