

## ROCP 44, Oxfam Cymru

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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

### **Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee**

Adolygiad o flaenoriaethau'r Pwyllgor ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd | Review of the Committee's priorities for the Sixth Senedd

Ymateb gan Oxfam Cymru | Evidence from Oxfam Cymru

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## Your views

### **1. What are your views on the Committee's three strategic priorities: Climate Change; Sustainable Communities; and Protecting and enhancing the natural environment?**

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We support the three strategic priorities of the Committee, demonstrating the Committee's ambition to develop a holistic approach to tackle the climate crisis and address climate injustices.

As a small team of two, Oxfam Cymru have prioritised its responses to the year two strategic priorities.

#### Our view on Priority 1: Climate Change

Oxfam Cymru's own strategy is one of Climate Justice, with a strategic focus that is moving towards fair finance for just and transformational climate solutions. The crisis of climate change is driven by inequalities. With just transition as a priority we are keen to see legislation introduced to ensure we reach a just transition by 2035.

Amid the accelerated warming of earth's temperatures, the arc of climate justice has no time to lose, requiring a joint effort of all Welsh Government departments through a lens of climate actions on the nexus of climate and inequality in order to ensure solutions do not further entrench inequality, locally or globally.

The flow of finances must move from those that support the fossil fuel industry and turn the flow of money from polluters to communities most marginalised and impacted by the climate crisis. Oxfam are due to release research on fair ways

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to make polluters across the UK pay for climate justice.

When viewing the Committee's own priorities through the lens of the Welsh Government's future budget deficit outlined by the First Minister, it is time Wales considers ways to secure much-needed funds to tackle the climate crisis which ensures the burden does not fall on ordinary Welsh households. Under our current funding model, this requires urging UK Government to hold our biggest polluters to account, ensuring they pay for the damage causing the climate emergency we all now face.

The upcoming report of Oxfam, *Payment Overdue: Fair Ways to make UK Polluters Pay for Climate Justice*, found that fair taxes on the UK's biggest polluters could have resulted in enough money for Wales to make bus travel in Wales more affordable. Fair taxes on the UK's biggest polluters - including fossil fuel companies and the extremely rich - could have raised more than £23bn last year, and depending on how the UK Government spent the revenue raised, illustrative modelling suggests that up to £86 million could have been allocated to Wales to spend on climate action.

The Climate Change Committee's (CCC) report was rather critical of the Welsh Government, emphasising that the carbon budget 1 was only met by factors beyond Welsh control. If work to cut emissions is too slow in devolved areas, this Committee must focus on how we accelerate if we have any chance of meeting our legally-binding target of net zero by 2050.

At present the gap between ambition and actual emissions reduction is problematic, with Wales requiring a 39% cut in emissions in the next 5 years in order to get back on track. There is a need for Welsh Government to make greater use of its powers if we wish to close this delivery gap. Future priorities of the Committee must shift to reflect this urgent need. The CCC recommend improvements on:

Clarity of local authority roles and responsibilities,

Quality of climate action plans ,

Longer term funding for local authorities in relation to climate roles and responsibilities.

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## Our view on Priority 2: Sustainable Communities

Oxfam Cymru's work on climate justice takes a caring and green economy at its heart. Our approach recognizes that climate justice is not just about mitigating the effects of climate change but also addressing the inequalities and vulnerabilities that marginalized communities face. By placing a caring economy at its core, Oxfam Cymru prioritizes the well-being of people and the planet, in line with Wales' pioneering "The Well-being of Future Generations Act".

Oxfam Cymru advocates that investing in the care sector and envisioning a caring economy must be integral components of a just and equitable transition to a green economy. Our stance recognizes the interdependence of social and environmental sustainability. By directing resources towards the care sector, we emphasize the importance of valuing and remunerating essential care work while creating job opportunities.

Women's Budget Group research shows that investment in the care sector could create 2.7 times as many jobs as the same investment in construction and produce 30% less greenhouse gas emissions.[1] Care should be seen as a social infrastructure, and the jobs in the social infrastructure should be seen as a part of the green economy. Other research by Women's Budget Group demonstrates that the average job in health and care produces 26 times less greenhouse gas than a manufacturing job, over 200 times less than an agriculture jobs and nearly 1,500 times less than a job in oil and gas.[2]

A caring economy not only ensures the well-being of vulnerable communities but also fosters economic resilience and reduces inequality. Oxfam Cymru's commitment to this approach reflects our understanding that a green economy should not only reduce carbon emissions but also address social injustices and promote inclusive growth.

To achieve just and fair transition to a green economy and sustainable growth in where communities can thrive, the economic growth models should take a radical shift from GDP centred growth to a caring, equitable and just economic growth strategies. A recent discussion paper by Oxfam, *Radical Pathways Beyond GDP: Radical Pathways Beyond GDP*, presents a rich discussion on how to move our economies beyond GDP and growth-centred economies to caring, green economies.

In the long term, we believe that Wales should consider taking bold actions to

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transform the economy into a care-centred green economy. Transitioning to a care-centred green economy is a visionary and forward-thinking approach that can significantly contribute to the long-term plans of tackling climate crisis. Such an economy not only places a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability but also prioritizes the well-being of future generations and the planet.

[1] Women's Budget Group (June, 2020), A care-led recovery from coronavirus.

[2] WBG analysis of ONS Emissions Inventory and Business Register and Employment Survey, 2019; Quoted by Women's Budget Group (November 2022), A Green and Caring Economy.

### Our view on Priority 3: Protecting and enhancing the natural environment

To mitigate the climate crisis, it is critical to take strong actions aimed at protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Wales has been encountering serious threats of deforestation, water pollution and agricultural pollution. Water pollution has emerged as a pressing concern, exacerbated by inadequate sewage infrastructure maintenance, which threatens both freshwater and marine ecosystems and public health. Agricultural pollution compounds the issue, as the runoff of chemicals and fertilizers into water bodies threaten water quality and biodiversity.

Being aware of these problems, Oxfam Cymru works with partners organising campaigns and taking actions. Earlier this year Oxfam Cymru funded Climate Cymru to deliver the Green Tour, a celebration of community climate action in Wales developed for the tour which hosted 150 events to over 7500 participants.

The tour culminated in the largest citizens response letter to go to the First Minister asking Welsh Government to act on a Nature Positive Wales in this years legislative programme. Despite the strength in numbers, with signatures from over 350 organisations, this did not happen. This provides the Committee with the opportunity to act on behalf of the public to ensure that Wales environmental governance gap no longer pervades. We invite you to prioritise scrutiny of the policy development of the 'Environmental Governance and Biodiversity Targets Bill' to ensure it meets the needs of nature and scrutiny is not a hindrance to rapid policy development.

What Oxfam Cymru do in the area of climate justice and sustainable communities

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Oxfam Cymru host Race to Zero Cymru, working closely with partners in the third sector and local government with the aim of rallying ambition for Wales to become the first Race to Zero nation. Race to Zero is a UN backed global initiative rallying non-state actors to take rigorous and immediate action to halve global emissions by 2030 in line with the Paris Agreement and deliver a healthier, fairer zero carbon world. Race to Zero is a framework that can help Wales to raise ambition, achieve the clarity needed and close the delivery gap identified in the CCC report.

Where the Committee look to consider decarbonising the public sector, Race to Zero provides a stark and important insight - whilst local authorities are directly responsible for 1-2% of carbon emissions they actually have the authority to impact 33% of emissions in their geographic areas. This data is included in current APSE/ Cynnal Cymru carbon literacy training. Climate Change requires us to act now and act fast, supporting the public sector to deliver 33% carbon emissions reduction by partnership working through Race to Zero Cymru will enable us to remove barriers to decarbonisation and deliver accelerated practical action.

Where the CCC commended Welsh Government's Transport Strategy, the upcoming Bus Bill will require scrutiny from a range of perspectives. Transport makes up 17% of Wales' carbon emissions. Sustainable and just communities will require investment in public transport as a key part of the active travel remit if we wish to combat the climate crisis and simultaneously lift people out of poverty. The Committee should include social justice in the parameters of transport governance or work closely with other Committees to do so. Transport plans must be created with those most impacted at the heart of informing decisions. Those who experience poverty disproportionately rely on buses and are also likely to be impacted by the impact of the climate crisis.

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**2. To what extent are the Committee's three strategic priorities still relevant, reflecting on social, economic and environmental developments since they were set at the start of the Sixth Senedd?**

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No response.

**3. What are your view on the Committee's detailed priorities/outline programme of work for Years 3 to 5 of the Sixth Senedd (set out in its report, [Priorities for the Sixth Senedd?](#))**

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No response.

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**4. To what extent are the Committee's detailed priorities/outline programme of work still relevant, reflecting on social, economic and environmental developments since they were set at the start of the Sixth Senedd?**

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No response.

**5. Are there any other matters related to the Committee's priorities/work programme/ways of working that you would like to comment on?**

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No response.

**6. Other information**

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No response.

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