

ROCP 46, Growing Mid Wales

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 Tyfu Canolbarth Cymru | Evidence from Growing Mid Wales

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?

To begin, we welcome the ambition to take a holistic, cross-cutting approach which the climate change and nature emergencies both require. We will respond to each priority in turn.

First, we welcome the inclusion of climate change as a strategic priority, both through mitigation and adaptation. The Committee on Climate Change have made it clear that decisive action is needed on climate change with significant investment required in the coming decades. We welcome that behavioural change is included as a focus area, as behavioural change will be critical to reducing energy demand and carbon emissions. We encourage the Senedd not to shy away from initiating difficult discussions around the need to change behaviours.

Second, we welcome the Sustainable Communities strategic priority. It is good to see transport, planning and digital connectivity being considered as one. In particular, the noting of the need to consider transport modal shift and active travel. It could however be more clearly defined how energy generation and demand fit into this strategic priority.

Third, we welcome the Protecting and enhancing the natural environment strategic priority. The consideration of environmental standards is of paramount importance. We welcome climate change adaptation, mitigation and nature restoration to be discussed together rather than in silos. Priority could be

strengthened by including reference to net benefit for biodiversity, protection of species/habitats, and scrutinising negative impacts from infrastructure developments, intensive agriculture etc.

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?

The three strategic priorities are as relevant, if not more relevant, with the cost of living crisis and ongoing revelations about the climate change and nature emergencies. The natural environmental priority is particularly important with the launch of the Sustainable Farming Scheme on the horizon.

We have a few comments where changes could be made:

1) We believe that the concept of a just transition could be better embedded into the three priorities. It is mentioned briefly in sustainable communities but not in climate change or protecting and enhancing the natural environment. For example, there is no mention of the importance of shared and local ownership on the strategic priorities document. There is also no reference to the priority of bringing people out of fuel poverty which is particularly important considering the latest Welsh Government report estimated that up to 45% of all Welsh households are in fuel poverty. We note there is no reference to Levelling Up within the priorities. For example, the need to ensure the transition is just, that the costs and benefits of the net zero transition do not fall disproportionately on certain parts of society. Indeed there is no mention within the strategic priorities of the need to deploy a place-based approach, acknowledging that the solutions required for a rural environments may look different to those needed in urban environments. For example, a focus on electric vehicle roll-out could disadvantage rural communities in Mid Wales which are heavily reliant on car ownership but have lower than average incomes in areas with limited public transport provision.

2) We noted that industrial decarbonisation is missing from the priorities. The need to ensure that businesses of all sizes are supported in their transition to net-zero will be very important.

3) Strategic grid planning is missing from the priorities. Strategic investment in the electricity grid in Wales is of high importance to enable climate change mitigation therefore it should be embedded into the planned work in this area. The Future Energy Grids for Wales report should be mentioned.

4) Green skills provision is also briefly mentioned but is particularly important

across all three priority areas. It is important that delivery of the Net Zero Skills Action Plan is appropriately reviewed and scrutinised.

5) Climate risk is very briefly mentioned in connection with climate adaptation, but we feel this should be its own priority. Fully understanding combined climate and nature risks and their impacts on future service delivery & provision, impacts on individuals lives, communities, and place is vitally important to ensure we take appropriate place-based mitigation and adaptation planning and action, thus building community resilience to climate impacts.

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?)

We will respond to each priority in turn. Overall, the programme of work for Years 3 to 5 for each three strategic priority is vague, understandably as this document was published in Jan 2022, and therefore needs updating.

First, the climate change Years 3 to 5 focus areas should be updated to provide greater detail on what continued work on decarbonising housing entails (e.g. Optimised Retrofit Programme, changes to building regulations and standards, phase out of the installation of gas boilers, reference the Heat Strategy). Additionally, updates could be provided on ongoing public engagement work regarding encouraging behavioural change. We welcome the commitment to hold annual scrutiny sessions to assess progress towards delivery of commitments. It is vital that monitoring is occurring at local, regional and national levels.

Second, the sustainable communities Years 3 to 5 focus areas should be updated to include the Regional Transport Plans, Local Area Energy Plans, National Energy plan, Future Energy Grids for Wales report, Strategic Development Plans, Place Plans, and launch of Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru and Ynni Cymru.

Third, the nature environment priorities for Years 3 to 5 look suitable.

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?

On the whole, they are still very relevant. See response to Q2.

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

No.

6. Other information

No response.
