

Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs (EERA)

Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Climate Change Scrutiny

1. This paper sets out my priorities and recent actions related to tackling Climate Change, ahead of my appearance before the Committee on 10 July.
2. Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales, published in March 2019, sets out how we will meet our first carbon budget (2016-2020). The first carbon budget is set at an average of a 23% reduction and the 2020 target is a 27% reduction (against a 1990 baseline).
3. The Plan sets out the Welsh Government's approach to cut emissions and increase efficiency in a way that maximises wider benefits for Wales, ensuring a fairer and healthier society. It contains 100 policies and proposals, broken down by all portfolios, which demonstrate our collective Cabinet commitment to accelerate the transition to a low carbon economy.
4. The sector pathways in the Plan set out the current situation and how policies and proposals contribute to meeting sector emission reductions. Aligned with the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC) sectors, each chapter sets out the modelled contributions relating to our 2020 target and our first carbon budget. The sector pathways include Power; Buildings; Transport; Industry; Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry; Agriculture; Waste and F-Gases.
5. The Plan also covers and sets out the cross-cutting actions we are taking through integrating decarbonisation across government policy.
<https://gweddill.gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/190321-prosperity-for-all-a-low-carbon-wales-en.pdf>
6. Since the passing of the Environment (Wales) Act, guided by the Well-Being of Future Generations Act, we have made progress across a range of policy areas. Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales is our first Delivery Plan. Over the coming years we will continue to develop and deliver our policies, which requires the raising of the scale and increasing the rate of action in line with our pathway towards a low carbon Wales. The next Plan, due in 2021 and covering the second carbon budget, will be a truly Wales Plan which is created in collaboration with stakeholders and demonstrates the contribution each of us needs to make.
7. On 29 April I declared a climate emergency on behalf of the Welsh Government.
<https://gov.wales/welsh-government-makes-climate-emergency-declaration>
Later the same week the National Assembly for Wales followed suit – the first Parliament in the world to do so.
8. We hope the declaration can help to trigger a wave of action at home and internationally, from our own communities, businesses and organisations to parliaments and governments around the world.

9. We are already leading the world on climate targets and climate action. The International Energy Agency recently reported the UK has led the way in the transition to a low carbon economy. Wales is playing its part in this success. Data published on 11 June shows Welsh emissions in 2017 were 25% lower than 1990, a big improvement on 2016.
<https://webstore.iea.org/energy-policies-of-iea-countries-united-kingdom-2019-review>
10. We are not complacent and take the emergency declaration seriously. I am discussing with Cabinet colleagues which actions in the Plan can be expanded and brought forward.
11. Since the declaration I have formally accepted the recommendation of the CCC to increase Wales' emissions reduction target to 95% by 2050, against the 1990 baseline. However, 95% is not the limit of our ambition. We will work with stakeholders to explore how we can set a net zero target in future. This makes us the only Government in the UK seeking to go beyond the CCC advice.
<https://gov.wales/written-statement-response-committee-climate-changes-net-zero-report>
12. The Welsh Government already had a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 'at least 80%' in 2050, in the Environment (Wales) Act. The advice from the CCC makes it clear the increase from 80% to 95% is a substantial change and requires a serious shift in policy response to match it.
13. Adopting a 95% target for 2050 means looking again at the interim targets the National Assembly passed in December. I have asked the CCC to provide us with evidence to inform these changes and will bring forward legislation next year to amend the targets for 2030 and 2040 as appropriate. At the same time I will bring regulations to set our third carbon budget and existing budgets, as necessary.
14. I welcome the UK Government's subsequent decision to legislate for a net zero target for the UK as a whole. A significant amount of our emissions are from large point sources in the energy and industry sectors, where changes in production can affect our emissions. The UK Government has a crucial role to play in decarbonising these sectors. In the Power sector, for example, where the main levers remain with the UK Government, UK emissions decreased by 60% between 1990 and 2016 but Welsh emissions increased by 44%.
15. Achievement of these targets would mean the UK as a whole ends its contribution to global warming within 30 years and fulfils our commitments under the Paris Agreement. We believe taking early, decisive action in this way can help to inspire others to take the steps necessary to avoid the most catastrophic effects of Climate Change.
16. We will establish a climate just advisory group to explore how the most vulnerable in society are impacted by the effects of climate change and how the transition away from a fossil fuel based economy to a low carbon future could impact on Welsh industries and the communities, to collectively develop measures to decarbonise to a low carbon economy that is fair for all.

17. The CCC advice is clear on the need for closer working between the Governments in the UK. The UK Government must ensure the costs and benefits of moving to net zero are spread fairly across the UK, including support for vulnerable workers and consumers. I expect the Welsh Government to be involved in the HM Treasury review of costs and benefits announced by the Secretary of State.
18. Decarbonisation offers enormous opportunities to create a vibrant and socially-just economy. We must make a difference and help create a society here in Wales that ensures well-being and tackles inequality as we decarbonise.
19. We have set targets and provided additional support for renewable energy and decarbonising the public sector. We have tested new housing models and are gathering evidence on the types of energy efficiency actions needed to decarbonise our existing housing stock.
20. We are investing in public transport, active travel and electric charging points in order to transition to a low carbon transport system which is accessible to all. We are continuing to invest in tree planting and peatland, recognising the well-being benefits they provide. We are shaping our land management policy following our withdrawal from the European Union.
21. However, the challenge of Climate Change requires everyone to act. Reaching our targets requires collaboration across the private, public and voluntary sectors and the involvement of society as a whole. Government action alone will not be enough. I have been encouraged by the leadership shown by business in welcoming the new targets and by many councils across Wales who have declared a climate emergency. Our Climate Change Conference in October will be a crucial milestone in determining the action needed from all parts of society.

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Minister for Environment, Energy, and Rural Affairs

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