

# CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

County Council  
11<sup>th</sup> July 2019

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Rosemarie Harris, Leader

**SUBJECT:** Question from County Councillor Lucy Roberts

**I believe that one of the most important issues that the council should currently be addressing is that of Climate Change. We should be leading the way and demonstrating our commitment to our residents, particularly our children and young people who are the ones likely to suffer most if our world doesn't change. We have committed to removing single use plastics where possible and that is a start, but there is so much more we can do. One obvious move in the right direction would be to ensure that all new council built buildings, including houses/flats and schools are built to carbon neutral standards. Another would be to ensure that all council buildings use energy from sustainable sources. Can the leader confirm that this is already happening, and if not, give some assurance that such measures will be taken in the future? Can she also give a commitment that the council will work towards becoming carbon neutral across all services, setting an example to other councils, well ahead of the UK Government's deadline of 2050?**

## **Response**

### **1. Housing**

The Welsh Government's Low Carbon Delivery Plan launched in March 2019 requires the public sector in Wales to develop and implement a range of carbon savings to meet the ambitious target of the Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030. To meet this target our New Development Project Officers within the Housing Team are currently working with Welsh Government Energy Officers as part of the design process on all our projects, as we work towards confirming our 5 year new build housing programme. This will help ensure we identify and explore all energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities. We have also recently engaged the expertise of Cardiff Metropolitan University to consider opportunities for post occupancy monitoring of new homes built giving a commitment to continuous improvement and learning.

Our Home Grown Homes Partnership and associated corporate objective is exploring the use of sustainable local timber in construction. The Council's Wood Encouragement policy introduced in January 2017 is always recommended to all our Registered Social Landlords and is embedded in our tender documentation. Through this work, the Council has secured over £1.5M of funding from the Rural Development

Programme to undertake a supply chain study that Wood Knowledge Wales and its consortium are carrying out. The study has had a significant impact on the Innovative Housing Grant Programme in Wales which has resulted in an increased use in timber and in particular home grown timber. This will make a substantial and positive difference to both the energy efficiency of homes – reducing the risk of fuel poverty – and contributing to the decarbonisation outcomes of an 80% reduction being considered by the Welsh Government for all Welsh housing by 2050.

The Welsh Government Housing Division has confirmed that it accepts that wood is the preferred material to help address the carbon agenda and is very supportive of energy efficiency and renewable opportunities as part of its future grant funding. With vast areas off grid, Powys has a significant opportunity to explore a broad range of options and is in a strong position to apply for associated grant funding going forward.

The Council's housing service is reviewing its overall investment programme for council housing, to support investment over a thirty year Housing Revenue Account business plan to reach an energy efficiency rating of SAP81 for municipally owned housing. SAP is the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure for Energy Rating of Dwellings and uses a scale of 1 to 100, with a higher rating indicating a better level of energy efficiency. This target will be challenging, and will be dependent upon the development of new technologies.

## **2. Schools and Other Buildings**

### **i. Sustainable Sources for New Buildings:**

#### **New-build Schools**

Powys County Council's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, which is jointly funded by Powys CC and Welsh Government and will invest £200 million to improve the school infrastructure within the county strives to deliver new-builds with minimal impact on the environment. This is even more poignant now that WG have declared a 'climate emergency' and it is highly likely that there will be stronger emphasis on environmental impact, carbon neutral buildings and the use of sustainable heating methods as part of the funding criteria as the programme progresses.

The 5 new primary schools in the Gwernyfed catchment area have solar panels installed with a generating capacity of 10kW. Archdeacon Griffiths CIW School, which was the first school to open in January 2018, has seen a saving of 10% in carbon emissions. The schools are heated by gas, but all new builds have highly effective insulation strategies. Ysgol Carno which opened in March 2019 also has solar panels, with the new school being heated via the existing pellet biomass boiler at the Community Centre.

Using the local supply chain and sustainable local products is key to driving down environmental impact of new buildings and this is something that is targeted through continuous monitoring; the timber for the Welshpool CIW Primary School building was supplied from a local company based only 8 miles from the school site, for example.

A key and critical part of Powys CC 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme is to ensure that the pupils, staff, parents and wider communities learn about the environmental impact of their new building. Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School pupils and parents have been actively collecting newspapers to provide sustainable insulation (Warmcell insulation) for their new-build school and have had numerous educational classes from local leaders in the field, and this will be a key driver as new projects are launched.

Moving forward, Powys CC 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme will be aiming to achieve a BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) 'Excellent' or 'Very Good' rating for every standalone newbuild school. The programme is also aiming to install electric car charging points at each new building and is currently exploring the possibility of opening the charging points for community use.

Powys County Council's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme is leading the way in delivering Passivhaus schools with Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School, Ysgol Gymraeg y Trallwng and Ysgol Bro Hyddgen projects all aiming to achieve Passivhaus status. Ysgol Bro Hyddgen will be the first Passivhaus all-through school within the UK.

ii. Retrofit Renewables to buildings:

Renewables installed on existing buildings does occur where an economic business case is found. The latest example of a renewable retrofit is an 11kW Solar PV system installed at Ffrwdgrech Highways Depot in February 2019. The number of buildings that have had retrofit renewables installed is currently limited across the property portfolio.

### **3. Powys Public Service Board - Carbon Positive Strategy**

Step 7 of Towards 2040 – the Powys Wellbeing Plan is to 'develop a carbon positive strategy that maximises green energy production'. A steering group of representatives from all PSB members including the Council has been set up by Welsh Government, who are the Lead organisation for Step 7, to oversee its development. The strategy is due to be completed by April 2020.

Areas of action within the scope of the strategy will include energy efficiency, renewable and low carbon energy deployment, behaviour change, emissions reductions, low carbon transport, and research and development of related infrastructure, for example smart grids. A sectorial approach will be taken across: power, transport, buildings, agriculture, land use and forestry, industry, public sector and waste.