

## **CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL**

**County Council**

**5<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Aled Davies, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Countryside and Transport**

**SUBJECT: Question from Kate Jones**

**I want to ask what is Powys County Council doing in order to address the current climate emergency our planet is suffering?**

**For example:**

**In terms of recycling - where does it end up?? Is it all actually recycled?**

Information is provided on our website detailing where all the material we collect is taken and how it is recycled. Apart from a very small percentage that may be rejected during the process, all collected materials are recycled. This is verified through the reporting process to NRW.

**General waste - how is landfill coping??**

Whilst some of our residual waste does still go to landfill we are now diverting significant amounts to Energy from Waste facilities. This not only means that energy is generated from this waste, but also means that even more material can be extracted for recycling and the bottom ash used in the building industry.

**Renewable energy - Is Powys investing in windfarms, hydro schemes (we get enough rainfall!), ground source heat pumps etc...**

### **Response**

#### **Mid Wales Growth Deal**

The region has been given the opportunity to negotiate a Growth Deal for Mid Wales with UK and Welsh Governments. Working in partnership, Powys County Council, Ceredigion County Council & the Growing Mid Wales Partnership have undertaken a significant programme of work to date. Efforts have focussed on gathering, testing and refining evidence and data whilst building strong co-ordination and support from a wide range of stakeholders, across political, institutional and sectoral interests through engagement workshops and consultations. Activity will support the region in creating a strong case for investment through a Mid Wales Growth Deal but also support the identification of strategic economic priorities that will enact sustainable change in the Mid Wales economy. It is important that we develop the Growth Deal

and our ways of working to be able to respond flexibly to a changing economic, policy and funding landscape. Global challenges, leaving the EU and political shifts will all require us to be flexible.

A key area of focus for the Mid Wales region is Energy (Low Carbon, Hydrogen and Circular Economy) this is reflected in the emerging vision and strategic economic plan for the Growing Mid Wales Partnership but is also a key theme for the emerging Mid Wales Growth Deal.

The UK has committed to legally binding targets of a reduction in carbon emissions of 80% by 2050. Welsh Government has said that it wants to go further and reach net zero by 2050. Mid Wales is abundant in the natural resources that, if harnessed properly, can help both governments achieve their targets. The awareness and impacts of climate change are becoming more prevalent forcing global, national and local priorities to rapidly work towards a decarbonised future. The need for systematic change in the way we view, produce and consume energy in the region is key and can provide opportunities for economic growth, supporting our key sectoral strengths such as high value manufacturing, Agriculture, tourism & transport as well as supporting our communities and future generations prosperity, health and wellbeing. Mid Wales has the ambition to act upon the economic opportunities which will arise in the transition from fossil fuels to a low carbon economy. Using our wealth of natural resources, expertise in low carbon technology, business and educational institutions we will build resilience within the region, which is inclusive and sustainable.

### **Mid Wales Energy Strategy**

The Growing Mid Wales Partnership alongside Powys and Ceredigion County Councils with support from the Welsh Government Energy Service & the Carbon Trust have undertaken a year-long project to produce a regional energy vision and action plan for Mid Wales. Once finalised the strategy and action plan will be key documents for the region to work with partners and Welsh Government to develop proposals alongside growth deal activity which will meet our decarbonisation targets and tackle climate change.

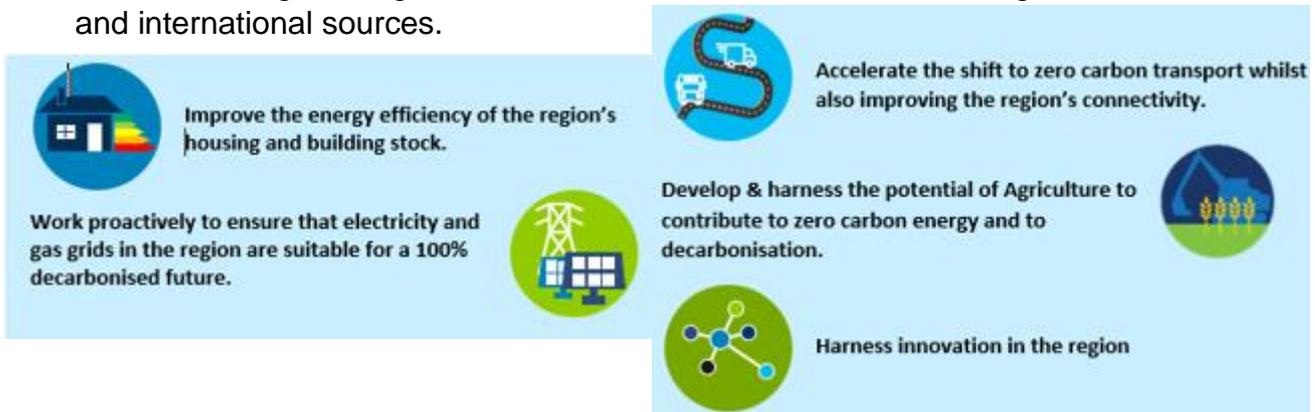
This work seeks to provide a strategic direction for the future of a decarbonised energy system including heat, power and transport within Mid Wales. It will define steps to begin to overcome the challenges we face.

### **Mid Wales Energy Strategy Vision**

*“To achieve a zero carbon energy system that contributes to wider UK decarbonisation and delivers community and economic benefits, eliminates fuel poverty, and better connects Mid Wales to the rest of the UK.”*

## Mid Wales Energy Plan priorities

The energy strategy has identified several key priorities for the region to take forward and prioritise activity within the action plan between now and 2035. The vision and priorities were developed through various stakeholder events, consultations and feedback along with significant evidence and data collated from regional, national and international sources.



## **Are all new builds given specific eco standards so they are carbon neutral?**

Planned Maintenance/WHQS - Powys County Council's Housing Services has been committed to tackling climate change for a number of years, this has been achieved through installation of systems of renewable energy, improved window and door specifications, and increased and new levels of insulation, all with the objective of reducing carbon emissions and improving the lifestyles of our tenants. We will continue to look at, and pilot, new and innovative ways in which we can achieve decarbonisation. However, we cannot compromise current systems with an impetus that could force tenants into fuel poverty.

Affordable housing & Wood Knowledge Wales- Powys County Council are committed to building new energy efficient homes across the County with a focus on ways in which construction and build specification can reduce the carbon footprint. The affordable housing programme will see the development of new homes which are 16% above building regulations, Passivhaus homes, timber framed construction, a reduction in the use of PVC materials, homes achieving EPC A, the use of renewable energy sources such as solar panels and air source heat pumps, and where the supply chain permits, using as many locally skilled consultants and contractors as possible. Powys County Council continue to work collaboratively with Welsh Government Housing Policy colleagues to ensure healthy and sustainable new homes are delivered in Powys.

Powys County Council has led the Home Grown Homes initiative. A partnership project between housing associations, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Community Housing Cymru (CHC), Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales, which has increased the use of locally grown and processed timber in the construction of new homes. This will help support local economic activity and contribute positively towards a more sustainable environment. As part of its commitment to the Home Grown Homes project the council has adopted a Wood Encouragement Policy. This commits the Council to maximising wherever practicable the use of timber in the construction process. The Wood Encouragement Policy is issued when procuring all new Council House developments.

## **Green Powys - Housing**

As the 'Green Heart of Wales' Powys County Council will be working to improve the thermal comfort of its council-owned homes and at the same time, help reduce the carbon footprint of the county.

The results of the Welsh Audit Office Customer Experience Survey, has shown over 20% of our residents do not feel that all rooms in their homes are warm enough. The Green Powys programme is designed to increase fuel efficiency and reduce fuel poverty for tenants of the Council. It will also build a solid foundation for the Council to contribute towards the Welsh Government's proposals to decarbonise homes across Wales.

The cost of decarbonising all of the homes currently owned by the Council is difficult to quantify. However, a broad brush estimate based on the costs estimated by other Welsh landlords suggest a possible investment of £135m will be needed for

Powys. The Council is considering scaling back the installation of fossil fuel heating systems and begin ramping up more sustainable systems, such as air source heat pumps, and begin developing 'whole home' solutions. Progress will increase once further details are known about potential new decarbonisation standards with further guidance likely to be received from Welsh Government in 2020.

## **New Builds**

Powys County Council Building Control are required to apply current national building regulation standards to all new dwellings.

Building Regulations are minimum standards therefore builders of new dwellings are at liberty to design their dwellings to a standard that exceeds that of the current regulations if they so wish.

## **Why are our supermarkets in Powys STILL using SO MUCH single use plastic???**

As a Council we have no control over the activities of international companies such as the supermarkets in Powys. However, with the increasing public and media scrutiny since the Blue Planet documentary, supermarkets are now competing with each other to reduce the plastic that they use.

## **Why do we only have a handful of 'refill' shops?? Every supermarket should give us the option to refill our shampoo, hand soap, washing liquid, washing powder, dishwasher powder, pasta, rice, coffee etc. (thus reducing plastic)**

Again this is not in the control of the Council. Market forces will control whether shops set up and they will only do so where there is a demand from the public.

## **Come on Powys our lush green county should be leading the way on climate change for the rest of Wales and the rest of the UK.**

**Please invest more in the forestry industry. We need more trees planted to absorb more CO2 and to emit more oxygen. Powys has the surface area. Let's get planting it.**

## **Are you going to make sure that climate change and environmental science becomes a key topic in our education system from pre-school to university?**

We encourage schools to build awareness of environmental issues into the curriculum by undertaking a range of activities. We also encourage pupil voice in all of our schools in the classroom through participative pedagogy and through their school councils. All schools have a school council and most schools also have an eco-committee. Pupil voice is a key element in the Estyn framework for the inspection of schools and is something that is promoted by school improvement officers in school visits. We will also be taking on board the publication from the

Children's Commissioner for Wales 'The Right Way – A Children's Rights Approach for Education in Wales. (May 2019)

At primary level there are numerous examples of climate change and responsible citizenship re recycling, energy use built into units of work but also through their eco clubs – some of our schools have the platinum eco awards such as Newbridge on Wye, Hay on Wye and from the secondary sector Crickhowell HS and Llanidloes HS.

It carries through to secondary schools with eco clubs, but is covered intensively in numerous subject areas:

- Geography & Science (all key stages) – the science behind climate change (natural and human causes) but more importantly how to address the issues – both mitigation and adaptation. Also renewable and non-renewable energies are discussed at length.
- Personal/ Social Education (PSE) – citizenship
- Welsh Baccalaureate – as part of the Global Citizenship skills challenge – where frequently pupils work independently or in groups to come up with schemes / methods to combat the effects of climate change.
- Another good example is the rich task that Crickhowell HS did on minimising plastic use as part of the four purposes as global citizens. They undertook a beach clean after looking at the impact of plastic on food webs, in Design and Technology produced clothing from waste material & developing renewable energy etc. Other schools would have examples of similar rich tasks too.