

Committee:	Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	11 th of January 2025
Subject:	Review of the council's approach to its climate programme.

1. Who will be the Lead Officer(s) / Lead Cabinet Member(s) presenting the report?

Name:	Role:
Councillor Jackie Charlton	Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys
Ellen Sullivan	Interim Head of Economy and Digital Services

2. Why is the Scrutiny Committee being asked to consider the subject?

The Committee is being asked to consider the report, to act as a critical friend to the Service in relation to the findings of the commissioned report completed by Netherwood Sustainable Futures (NSF), on the council's approach to its climate programme.

3. Role of the Committee:

The role of the Committee in considering the subject is to:

To act as a Critical friend as to whether the council has undergone due diligence on challenging our progress and setting an improved road map.

Provide feedback on whether the report covers all the elements asked for by the Climate & Nature Emergency and addresses the need to progress with the agenda for reaching Net Zero by 2030 and delivering on the Nature Recovery Plan.

4. Key Scrutiny Questions:

What Key areas should the Committee focus on:

Whether they feel the priorities are right?
 Whether the report is strong enough on delivering the leadership and governance needed?
 Has the Council been successful in Challenging our progress and setting an improved road map?

5. Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members:

To assist the Committee when scrutinising the topic:

- 5.1 Impact the matter has on individuals and communities :
- 5.2 A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality
[focus on value]
- 5.3 A look at any risks
[focus on risk]
- 5.4 Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of:
- Long term
 - Prevention
 - Integration
 - Collaboration
 - Involvement
- [focus on wellbeing and future generations]
- 5.5 The potential impacts the decision would have on:
- protected groups under the Equality Act 2010
 - those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in their lives (when making strategic decisions)
 - opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
[focus on equality and the Welsh language]
- [focus on equality and Welsh Language]

Key Feeders (tick all that apply)

Strategic Risk		Cabinet Work Plan	
Director / Head of Service Key Issue		External / Internal Inspection	
Existing Commitment / Annual Report		Performance / Finance Issue	
Suggestion from Public		Referral from Council / Committee	
Corporate Improvement Plan		Impacting Public / other services	
Service Integrated Business Plan			
Suggestion from Members			
Partnerships			

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

Economy, Residents and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date: 11th of January 2024

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor: Councillor Jackie Charlton
Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys

REPORT TITLE: Review of the council's approach to its climate programme.

REPORT FOR: Information and decision

Note: The NSF completed report falls under a commercial contract, requiring any use of the information to acknowledge Netherwood solutions.

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information and raise awareness of the commissioned report completed by Netherwood Sustainable Futures (NSF), on the council's approach to its climate programme. The focus of the report will be on the key recommendations including feedback from the Council and stakeholders.

2. Background

2.1 Powys's Climate and Nature Board Commissioned Netherwood Sustainable Futures (NSF) in May 2023 to review and challenge the Council's current approach to our Climate programme, specifically in relation to:

- Leadership and collaboration (internal and external)
- Strategic direction, prioritisation, and pace of decarbonisation
- Actions and the financial commitments for achieving Net Zero 2030 for PCC
- Approaches to progress Net Zero Powys 2050 across partnerships in Powys
- Climate risk and adaptation for the Council and across Powys
- The capacity building and resources for an enhanced approach

The commission drew on NSF's extensive work and research at UK, Wales, partnership and local authority levels on climate change policy, practice, and governance.

2.2 The Analysis and recommendations made from this work will inform the Council's actions to address the climate emergency and support the development of a business case to seek funding.

2.3 In order to gain insight into current approaches and options for improvement, evidence was gathered and analysed, including relevant documentation and correspondence on the Council's current approach, emissions data, action plans and corporate, partnership and service specific strategies. Also views of members of the Climate and Nature Board, the Cabinet lead, Cabinet Advisors, Senior Leadership Team, managers from PCC and Powys PSB were sought.

This activity enabled NSF to develop an understanding of the complex organisational, service, financial and political contexts for working on climate change, both within and external to the Council.

2.4 NSF's full report can be found in appendix 1. It must be noted that the report should be read as strategic advice to the organisation on pursuing an enhanced, whole organisation approach to climate change, for both decarbonisation and climate risk management.

The purpose of the report is to provide Powys CC with an external expert view on scale, scope, pace, resource requirements and priorities going forward and ways to integrate climate change into the Councils core activities as it evolves to meet future service needs.

2.5 Feedback on NSF's findings has been gathered from a number of stakeholders and fed into this report. These stakeholders include:

- Climate and Nature Programme Board (Full report)
- Climate and Nature Member Steering Group (Full Report)
- Climate and Nature Member/Officer Group (Full Report)
- Climate Stakeholder Group (Full Report – feedback asked on specific priorities)
- Public Service Board (Full Report – feedback asked on specific priorities)

3. NSF Advice

3.1 Key messages highlighted in the report were:

3.1.1 **It is recognised that a lot of valuable work has been developed since PCC Climate Change Strategy was published.** Notable achievements include the development of the Climate and Nature Programme itself, annual emissions reporting, and data analysis, achieving emission reductions, and the establishment of Working Groups. The Council has also established a member group, a cabinet lead and cabinet advisors, and recently facilitated a climate change stakeholder group and engaged with Town and Community Councils.

3.1.2 It is strongly recommended that the work of the Climate and Nature Programme is **reframed to focus on both decarbonisation and climate risk** and that PCC develops its community leadership role on these issues.

3.1.3 Engaging in the 1-1s highlighted a **tension between those individuals who interpret the corporate commitment as being a strategic issue for the Council, with the need for the Council to provide strategic leadership as an organisation, and across Powys as a whole, and others, in both operational and senior positions, who see the Council's agenda through an operational lens – to reduce emissions through Councils services.**

3.1.4 The Council's current approach to climate change, has focused predominantly on addressing emissions reduction from Councils services, with Net Zero 2030 target and annual reporting to Welsh Government the core activity. **The current approach is measure led and focused on the organisation itself.** The Council is focusing on what it reports on – emissions reduction.

3.1.5 The current Climate and Nature programme is **not strategic enough to address climate change challenge**, for the Council as an organisation, or in its various roles of working across Powys through its services and community leadership.

3.1.6 Additional resources are needed for PCC to enhance its approach to the climate emergency. However, the additional costs are not solely about operational 'kit' to drive emissions down to meet the Net Zero 2030 public sector target. There are also a broad range of additional resource needs, mainly related to **building capacity and understanding of opportunities for decarbonisation and climate risk management**, across the organisation, at a critical time for service reform for the Council.

3.1.7 Efforts should be made to invest staff time, resource, evidence gathering and partnership work in the **identified key eight areas**.

3.2 It is clear from the key messages that the Council's Leadership role is key, strategic leadership from within the organisation and Leadership within the community. It is also clear that the Climate Programme needs to be re-shaped, to support a wider strategic approach and also to support the drawing down of investment which is required to progress the actions.

4 Identified priorities and findings.

4.1 The below priority areas have been identified as ways the council can improve and strengthen its approach, and delivery of its Climate change programme. It must be noted that these priority areas are not in priority order.

The eight priority areas are:

Priority 1: Sustainable Powys – ensure that climate change is central to service redesign and delivery of the Council's Transformation Programme over the next 18 months.

Priority 2: Place Planning across Powys – pursue decarbonisation and climate risk management in 13 communities across Powys through place planning, engaging the community on both issues in the places that they live.

Priority 3: Council Emissions Reduction prioritise emissions reduction in the supply chain and asset management over the short and medium term alongside carbon sequestration on the Council's land. (see priority 5)

Priority 4: Climate Risk & Adaptation: combined risk to services and place, planning service delivery in a changed climate and building community resilience to climate impacts.

Priority 5: Asset Management ensure the Strategic Property Management Review identifies and implements opportunities for carbon sequestration, emissions reduction and climate resilience for both built assets and land, alongside other well-being outcomes.

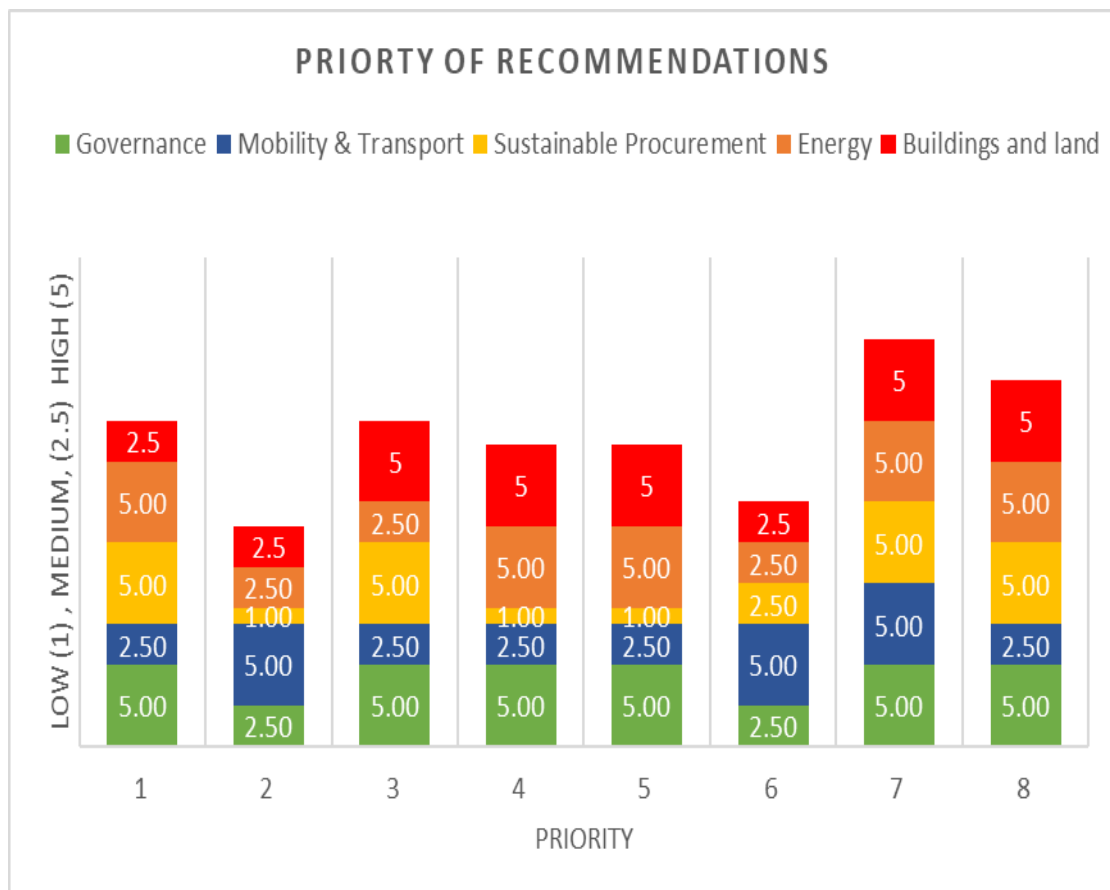
Priority 6: Powys-wide and cross border collaboration: involve key partners, stakeholders and the community in identifying specific outcomes to address decarbonisation and climate adaptation at a territorial scale.

Priority 7: Leadership on Climate Change: support senior management, members; and officers to lead on decarbonisation and climate adaptation in decision -making; service planning and community leadership.

Priority 8: Resources for climate transition: Establishing and maintaining resource for delivering an enhanced climate change programme – to pursue priorities 1- 7.

4.2 Through consultation with stakeholders listed in 2.5, we were able to conclude that **All** Stakeholders agreed with the eight priorities (apart from two stakeholder groups that were only asked to comment of specific priorities)

The below graph shows the Climate and Nature Boards feedback on which priorities they believe are low, medium or High.



The above graph shows priorities in the following priority order:

Rank	Priority (Summary-full description in 4.1)
1st	Leadership and Governance on Climate Change
2nd	Resources for climate transition
3rd	*Sustainable Powys – ensure that climate change is central to service redesign and delivery of the Council’s Transformation Programme, and Council Emissions Reduction
4th	Climate Risk & Adaptation AND Asset Management
5th	Powys-wide and cross border collaboration
6th	*Place Planning across Powys

**At the time of this report being commissioned, place-based planning was in concept stage and had not been discussed as an approach to support a ‘sustainable Powys’. It is therefore recommended that we move forward with an amalgamated priority which covers both.*

4.3 It must be noted that despite the ranking all the priorities are viewed as essential, however there are a number of key priorities that require initial focus in order to pave the way for successful, sustainable delivery.

4.4 Below is a sample of comments/observations from stakeholders:

“The commissioning of this report is a very constructive step to help PCC understand how best to practically deliver on this commitment in its own operations and across the county”.

“The phrase ‘Place Planning’ needs explaining – it used to be to help PCC with their Local Development Plans. Now it is wider – Communities are asked to notice changes needed due to the coming changes in Climate e.g. rain causing flooding, colder winters breaking up road surfaces, council buildings needing retro-insulation”.

“I welcome the support PCC has given to the PSB to take this approach. There is a need to further develop ways of working between PCC and PSB so that PCC fully contributes to the Powys-wide strategy and plan being developed”.

“I would like to have seen a document with all the mandatory CC/emissions and biodiversity goals set out”.

“I would add carbon sequestration to that list - natural carbon sinks need to be restored at very large scale for the climate to stabilise, and Powys has a huge potential as a rural county. Net zero with nature is a helpful way of thinking about the integrated approach needed to the climate and nature emergencies”.

“It was noted that the evidence-base surrounding the territorial climate risk and emissions needed to be established with partners such as Natural Resources Wales. Dr A Netherwood advised that service areas would then be able to facilitate emissions reduction and take up the community leadership role to support this”.

“The report is balanced and offers opportunities for collaboration”.

5. Challenges

5.1 Central to the eight priorities listed in 4.1, NSF identified four fundamental challenges. These are listed below and will be considered along with other identified challenges.

- The Council, as a service provider will need to plan for delivering services to Powys’ communities in a changed climate in coming decades. This will require them to plan forward to both manage the consequences of climate risks and to deliver services to meet the publics needs in a changed climate.
- The Council will need to continue to drive down its own GHG emissions in its services, reducing its contribution to further climate change for future generations – Net Zero 2030 and Net Zero Powys 2050 are commitments made by the Council on this issue.
- As a ‘place shaper’ the Council will also need to help Powys’s communities, businesses, landowners, and partners build resilience to ongoing climate change, identifying ways to make these places develop and thrive in a changed climate,
- While at the same time using its influence and relationships to help to reduce carbon emissions across Powys within these places.

6. Next steps

6.1 The Climate Programme will be re-shaped, to support a wider strategic approach, enable stronger leadership and act as a conduit to develop effective plans and draw down appropriate funding to drive forward change. To complete this at pace the Climate and Nature Board will consider utilising the current transformation funding already secured.

6.2 Reviewed workstreams and their costed Action plans will go forward into a business case to seek funding. The business case will be developed in a way that specific actions/ outcomes can be lifted to form ‘shelf ready’ projects, managing the overall cost and ensuring that the council is prepared for future external grant funding opportunities.

6.3 We will enhance climate action by strengthening engagement with our Steering group, Stakeholder Group, Climate and Nature Board, and Communities, the Councils ‘Place based’ planning model will be a key conduit to this.

6.4 Review the Governance of the Climate and Nature Programme as part of a stock take exercise in response to recent changes to the Corporate Leadership Team and upon reflections drawn from priority 8 of NSF’s report. This will provide clarity on the many internal and external stakeholder and partner working groups, forums and steering groups that are in existence.

6.5 Although the focus of this report was not the Councils Carbon accounts, they do play a key role in the next steps. The Councils 22/23 Carbon accounts have identified key areas across the council where our carbon emissions are high. These key areas will also feed into the work described in 6.2.

7. Resource Implications

7.1 There are no direct resource implications in the acknowledgment of the commissioned report. However, the next steps of this work will include the development of a business case to seek Transformation Funding. It is anticipated that such a business case will require significant amounts of funding but will also provide a pragmatic approach to manage funding such as a phased approach (SMART action plans assisting our goal of achieving Net Zero 2030 over the next 6 years), focusing on the priority areas highlighted in 4.2 and external funding.

8. Legal implications

(State here any legal implications and confirmation that the report has been approved by the Monitoring Officer) Awaiting comments.

9. Climate Change & Nature Implications

9.1 This report is for information purposes only; however, the findings of NSF's commissioned report will be considered in the re-shaping on the Climate and Nature Programme, which will contribute positively towards the delivery of the Council's Climate and Nature emergency declarations. There are no negative implications on Climate Change and Nature.

10. Data Protection

10.1 There are no data protection implications within the proposal.

10.2 The Data Protection Officer notes the proposal within the report and has no further comments to make.

11. Comment from local member(s)

11.1 Not applicable.

12. Impact Assessment

12.1 An assessment is not required as the report does not directly impact policy, our direct delivery of services to our residents or staff.

11. Recommendation

11.1 To acknowledge the commissioned report completed by NSF on the council's approach to its climate and nature change programme and to acknowledge the council and stakeholders' position on the identified recommendations.

11.2 To agree the recommendation that the Climate and Nature Programme will be re-shaped, to support a wider strategic approach, enable stronger leadership and act as a conduit to develop effective plans and draw down appropriate funding to drive forward change.

11.3 To acknowledge the Climate and Nature Boards feedback on the order of importance of the priorities detailed (4.2).

11.4 To acknowledge the Governance review of the Climate and Nature Programme, which will improve and enhance effective partnership working bringing access to more knowledge, funds, innovation, and expertise ensuring our individual and collective journeys to net zero are quicker, cheaper, and provide better outcomes to our residents and communities.

11.5 To acknowledge the development of costed Action plans. The aim is to have initial plans completed by the end of Qtr 1, 2024. The plans will provide clarity and management of the overall cost and ensure that the council is prepared for future external grant funding opportunities.

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Corporate Director: Diane Reynolds

Appendix 1

Powys County Council Climate Change Programme Advisory Review Dr Netherwood
<https://powyscc.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/services/cld/ops/SS/EcvpluAcJ2BCmaC0GkerB6MB6ZDnc6VKNKtvJsnEeNcDNg?e=LKTObj>