

# Responding to the Climate Emergency

5 March 2024.

Liz Hutchins, Convenor, Powys Public Services Board

## Introduction

Powys Public Services Board decided to prioritise responding to the climate emergency as one of three focuses in the Well-being Plan 2023-2028.

Since then, the emergency has deepened with nearly every month breaking records of higher global temperatures, extremes in weather, or climate impacts. In Powys we have just experienced one of the wettest Februarys on record which is disrupting farming and putting more homes in jeopardy of flooding.

At the same time some big shifts are happening in the economics of renewable energy and battery and other technologies, and in public awareness and preparedness to act. This opens the possibility of a very big acceleration in the projects and ways of organising needed.

As discussed at previous PSB Board meetings, **this stage of the Powys PSB Climate Emergency work is focused on developing a strategic plan to scale and speed up climate action across Powys.** This is the work that has been funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund in a bid approved by the Board. Starting by developing a strategic plan to scale up is important because experience from around the world show that this is the approach that drives most action.

**For Board discussion:** The Powys PSB climate work is already starting to prove successful in galvanising a coordinated Powys response to the climate emergency. The project is facing a resource cliff-edge end the end of this calendar year. Creating multi-year resource stability for the project will enable it to have higher impact in 2024, and to realise potential for the PSB in future years.

## Developing a strategic climate action plan

We have made good progress since the last PSB Board meeting and are on track with our Shared Prosperity Fund-supported project including:

- **Staffing:** Two excellent new staff members have been inducted and are helping to accelerate the work.
- **Decarbonisation:** We are in the process of procuring consultancy to support carbon footprint analysis and a fair share decarbonisation target calculation. We are using Sell2 Wales platform and following best practice procurement processes.
- **Sequestration:** We are also procuring consultancy for carbon sequestration opportunity mapping. We are working to align methodology with PSB partner approaches to nature recovery.
- **Climate adaptation:** Work has started on the climate risk assessment: we are in a phase of gathering data about climate impacts and work already underway to mitigate them. We are using the new NRW climate risk assessment tool developed for PSBs.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** We have worked with Chris Blake to refine the terms of reference of the Powys Climate Stakeholder Group and met with the group on 29 February to discuss the proposal. The PSB climate project was presented to Powys Town and Community Councils on 21 February and their feedback was sought about how they would like to be engaged.

- **Community engagement:** Informed community contributions are essential to shape the climate action plan, but there are insufficient means of having that input at the moment. We are trialling in Bannau Brycheiniog a ‘networked change’ approach to engage communities via a network of community catalysts called *Bannau Brycheiniog Race to Zero*. We are exploring whether this is a model to scale community action in Powys. We are involving groups with expertise in this field including: the Centre for Alternative Technology, Egin and PAVO Community Connectors, and are engaging with Powys Action on the Climate Emergency.
- **Funding:** We continue to comply with the Shared Prosperity Fund grant agreement.

The UN-backed **Race to Zero** framework is structuring our decarbonisation and sequestration work (as committed to in the Powys Well-being Plan), and NRW’s new **Climate Risk Assessment** framework is structuring our adaptation work.

### Next steps

- **PSB member and wider stakeholder engagement:** We will refine the information we need from stakeholders in relation to decarbonisation, sequestration and adaptation and will utilise a range of methods of engaging which are likely to include 121 meetings, bespoke workshops, questionnaire(s), and taking part in events organised by PSB members and other organisations. The PSB itself holds some of the information and analysis we need and we are linking with key colleagues across a wide range of responsibilities including nature, energy and transport. As PSB members are large organisations we are grateful for introductions to relevant people and projects.
- **Community engagement:** We will coordinate a package of support that enables community catalysts to engage with their local populations in the 13 cluster settlements across Powys. From those activities we hope to develop a more comprehensive understanding of climate-related initiatives happening across Powys, and to understand the opportunities and appetite to scale up initiatives such as community renewables, community transport, behaviour change initiatives etc.
- **Feasibility studies:** The SPF grant agreement includes a requirement for up to five feasibility studies. We will develop our scoping of the barriers and opportunities that need to be tested to inform the final climate action plan.
- **Fundraising:** We will explore sources of funding to support: extending the current staffing beyond December 2024; project delivery; community-level engagement at a larger scale.

A simplified project timeline for 2024 is below.

	Q3 (Jan, Feb, Mar)	Q4 (Apr, May, Jun)	Q1 (July, Aug, Sept)	Q2 (Oct, Nov, Dec)
<b>Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-house climate risk assessment started.</li> <li>• Commissioning instigated.</li> <li>• Coordination with Data and Insights.</li> <li>• Information management systems set up.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-house climate risk assessment ongoing.</li> <li>• Ongoing consultancy for: carbon footprint assessment; carbon sequestration potential; fair share</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-house climate risk assessment and action planning ongoing.</li> <li>• Ongoing consultancy for: carbon footprint assessment; carbon sequestration potential; fair</li> </ul>	Drafting a strategic Powys Climate Action Plan: decarbonisation, sequestration and adaptation.

		decarbonisation target calculation.	share decarbonisation target calculation.	
<b>Feasibility studies</b>	Relationship building.	Understanding the barriers and solutions that could be tested.	Feasibility studies.	Write ups.
<b>Stakeholder and community engagement.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship building.</li> <li>Methodology options explored.</li> <li>Climate Stakeholder Group TOR refined.</li> <li>Climate community catalysts network established.</li> <li>Coordination with Data and Insights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging with stakeholders and communities to understand climate vulnerability and to shape the action plan.</li> <li>Support for Climate Stakeholder Group and community climate catalysts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging with stakeholders and communities to understand climate vulnerability and to shape the action plan.</li> <li>Support for Climate Stakeholder Group and community climate catalysts.</li> </ul>	Continued stakeholder and community engagement to refine action plan drafting.
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing SPF compliance including first audited accounts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared Prosperity. Ongoing SPF compliance.</li> <li>Scoping options for future fundraising.</li> </ul>	Fundraising bids.	Fundraising bids.
<b>Staffing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BBNPA 2 days a week since Sept.</li> <li>Feb: 2 new staff inducted.</li> </ul>	Ongoing staffing contributing skills and capacity to the project.	Ongoing staffing contributing skills and capacity to the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing staffing contributing skills and capacity to the project.</li> <li>Contracts due to end Dec 31 2024.</li> </ul>

## Progressing wider climate work

The 15 December Board meeting raised the following points:

## Launching a public behaviour change campaign focusing on the actions individuals can take

The possibility of a Powys PSB website is being explored and this could be an opportunity to signpost residents to sources of information about individual behaviour change.

A wider pro-active public behaviour change campaign would need more resources than we have to develop and launch this year. We would welcome a Board discussion about resources to bring this work forward. See below risk.

## High impact actions starting this year

A wide range of actions are needed to reach net zero and improve well-being across energy, transport, food and drink, land use, and consumption of goods.

### **Food and drink**

The food production and consumption systems change stands out as having very strong well-being and nature co-benefits and the Public Services Board has meaningful influence on the system. PSB procurement of sustainable local food could provide certainty for regenerative agriculture to scale up in the county and can help to change behaviours through exposing people to healthy diets and stimulating positive public debate. A food systems shift is in line with the Future Generations Commissioner's Cymru Can priority, and Welsh Government policy.

There have been many public sector sustainable diets projects internationally and in Wales that Powys can learn from. We can also learn from climate communications experts about what inspires behaviour changes in diets.

This will be the focus of one of the feasibility studies funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund. First we need to identify what the Powys-specific barriers are, by working with those already engaged in sustainable food production and consumption in Powys.

### **Community projects and initiatives**

The work we are doing to enable and support community catalysts in each community is intended to have multiple benefits. It can inspire and kick-start practical projects such as community renewables and transport, and behaviour change initiatives – some of these are starting this year. Done well it can also deepen community buy-in to solutions and build community resilience.

## Net Zero and Climate Resilience skills

The future sustainable and net zero economy of Powys will require up-skilling and re-training across a wide range of jobs. We are now in contact with the Regional Skills Partnership and are exploring how the development of a strategic climate action plan can support the development of training and proficiency in Powys.

## Operational climate action

At the December Board meeting members expressed an interest in support from the PSB Climate Working Group to develop costed climate action plans for their organisations' operations and services. This is beyond the scope of the Shared Prosperity Fund grant – for example to commission bespoke research. There are also support structures for PSB member organisations that we need to avoid duplicating - such as the WLGA support for local authorities.

However, the Powys PSB Climate Working Group has already started to explore where there are opportunities for further joint working. A reminder that information was gathered and circulated ahead of

the September 2023 PSB Board meeting in relation to members: decarbonisation, carbon sequestration, adaptation, public engagement and carbon literacy training.

## Risks and mitigation

The Powys PSB climate work is already proving successful in galvanising Powys’ response to the climate emergency. The project is facing a resource cliff-edge end the end of this calendar year. Creating multi-year resource stability for the project will enable it to have higher impact in 2024, and to realise its potential in future years.

### SPF-funded project risks and mitigation

Risk	RAG	Planned mitigation
<b>Staff retention.</b> Two excellent staff members have been recruited to work full time alongside BBNPA’s two days a week and are immediately proving their worth in scaling and speeding up the project. It is in the nature of short-term contracts (11 months in this case) that staff start to look for future employment early. The SPF grant agreement cannot be fulfilled without this staff skill and capacity.	AMBER	Explore options to fund the two posts plus 2 days a week of BBNPA time beyond December 2024.
<b>Consultancy capacity.</b> The project rests on high-quality specialist analysis of Powys’ carbon footprint, fair share decarbonisation trajectory and carbon sequestration potential in a tight timescale. Until we have concluded the procurement process we do not know whether we can access the analysis we need within the budget and timescale we have. We also want to procure analysis that is possible to update in a cost-effective way in future.	AMBER	The procurement tender has been structured in a way to enable us to be flexible within pre-decided priorities.
<b>Timely input from PSB members, wider stakeholders and communities.</b> The PSB organisations are complex and it takes time to connect with appropriate officers. The public and third sectors are also very resource constrained which affects their ability to contribute. The Powys Climate Stakeholder Group is not currently representative of other organisations we need to engaged. Communities are not currently organised in form that makes it easy to involve them in climate action plan development.	AMBER	Minimise demands on PSB members. Work in a way that maximises synergies and efficiencies of collaboration and minimises additional demands. Relationship management with PSB members, stakeholders and communities with and clear communications about why their input is important, what is needed, in what form, and by when.
<b>Feasibility studies.</b> Conducting five meaningful studies within time and budget will be challenging.	AMBER	Work with stakeholders and subject experts to learn from wider experience and focus the studies on Powys specific barriers.
<b>Impact assessment.</b> In the SPF bid we committed to an impact assessment of the climate action plan. There is a risk we will not be able to assess the individual and cumulative impact of projects as a result of our analysis – including on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The local economy.</li> </ul>	AMBER	An academic symposium is one way to draw on the expertise of academics to help with the complexity of analysis needed.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People facing socio-economic disadvantage.</li> <li>• People with protected characteristics.</li> <li>• Welsh language</li> </ul>		
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### Delivery risks and mitigation

Developing a strategic climate analysis and action plan is intended to put Powys in the best possible position to scale and speed up delivery. However, this is not automatic and there are three red risks that relate to the ability of the Powys Climate Action Plan to be delivered once it is developed. We would welcome a Board discussion about these risks.

Risk	RAG	Mitigation
Public buy-in to the changes needed to reach net zero and become climate resilient.	RED	A coordinated package of communications is needed to explain and have dialogue with Powys communities and stakeholders about why the action in the Climate Action Plan is needed, what PSB organisations are doing to catalyse and enable a just transition, and how everyone can play their part. This work is not resourced and is not currently planned during or after 2024.
Funding for project delivery.	RED	The climate action plan will define a pipeline of fundable projects. Capacity will be needed to then raise those funds from public, community and private sources. That capacity is not currently planned for after 2024.
Funding for PSB climate coordination and leadership.	RED	The PSB is starting to enable stakeholders and communities to be a more active part of the solution. It is also starting to identify how the public sector can add value and be more efficient by working together. That work is not funded beyond 2024.