

Notes of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Group meeting

Date	17 / 12 / 2020
Time	9.30 - 11.00
Location	Web Ex Video Conference
Present	Cllr Gwyneth Kensler (GK); Cllr Bobby Feeley (BF); Cllr Barry Mellor (BM); Cllr Brian Jones (BJ); Cllr Arwel Roberts (AR); Cllr Graham Timms (GT); Cllr Joe Welch (CJW); Cllr Tony Thomas (TT)
Apologies	Judith Greenhalgh (JG), Cllr Emrys Wynne (EW), Nicola Kneale (NK)
In attendance	Supporting Officers: Helen Vaughan-Evans (HVE), Tom Booty (TB); Howard Sutcliffe (HS); Liz Wilcox-Jones (LWJ); Andrew Cutts (AC), Heidi Barton-Price (HBP), Joel Walley (JW), Tony Ward (TW), Alan Smith (AS)

1. Welcome and apologies

Chair GT welcomed all to the meeting and noted apologies.

2. Minutes and actions from the last meeting

Minutes of last meeting agreed as accurate.

Actions of last meeting reviewed and update provided by HVE. See summary table below.

ACTION	UPDATE
LWJ / HVE- to continue with plans for website, discussion forum and public consultation.	COMPLETED

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ACTION	UPDATE
<p>HS / LWJ– Draft letter for Cllr Tony Thomas and Cllr Graham Timm’s review to the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent asking what they are doing to mitigate the loss of trees (particularly mature trees) once felled along the A55. Letter to be sent from this working group under GT name and from the AONB under TT name.</p>	<p>COMPLETED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter sent • Reply received 9th December saying it's been forwarded to the NMWTRA Network Manager and Welsh Government Environmental Manager to reply shortly.
<p>HVE / LWJ - to produce youth friendly, easy read and infographic versions of the strategy working with colleagues/external providers.</p>	<p>COMPLETED</p>
<p>HVE – to send strategy/consultation info to all Chair of Governors.</p>	<p>COMPLETED</p>
<p>RP – to provide contact details for the land use lead at Welsh Government for DCC representatives to have a meeting.</p>	<p>ONGOING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HVE has requested and chased on email
<p>HS – send Natural Resource Wales Blue Carbon report to the group.</p>	<p>COMPLETED</p>
<p>HVE – to make changes to the letter to Lesley Griffith AM and send to BJ for review.</p>	<p>ONGOING</p>
<p>TW - to discuss with Nigel Highfield in Facilities Management about introducing low carbon menus and bring back thoughts to the group.</p>	<p>ONGOING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal update to be provided at meeting by TW

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ACTION	UPDATE
HVE - to send low carbon menu examples by CAT to TW	COMPLETED
LD – to send staff survey results in relation to new ways of working to the HVE to distribute to Climate Change and Ecological Emergency working group.	ONGOING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal update to be provided at meeting by AS
LD – to feedback back to the New Ways of Working working group the concerns raised around some meetings not working virtually and the need to circulate insurance requirements and tax advantages for staff who are now working from home.	ONGOING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal update to be provided at meeting by AS

Low carbon menu action

TW- had conversations with HVE and services. Stated we have done and are doing a lot on this agenda. Lots of really positive stories already and happy to share with the group in a future meeting/written report. Focusing on key things – buying local, reducing supply chain emission, modern kitchens and reducing waste etc. There is a new contract with Harlech foods – good news and positive PR in terms of supply chain emissions and buying local. Limited capacity at the moment to focus on this however. Will be something to pick up in earnest in the summer 2021 hopefully. However, be reassured we are doing well on this agenda as an authority. It was suggested to go to scrutiny committee and raise the plastics/schools agenda in September next year.

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ACTIONS:

- **GT-** As the Chair of the working group, to suggest to Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Committee the opportunity for a written report from School Catering to go to Scrutiny in September/October 2021 regarding progress made on low carbon and reduction of single use plastics

New ways of working action

AS – stated we have had to change the way we are working due to Covid. As seen, a staff questionnaire was circulated to see how they wanted to work in the future. Really good response rate (50%) with clear conclusions. Most wanted to be able to continue to work from home (WFH) to some degree, with right equipment, but also wanted to be able to meet their colleagues. On average people wanted 3 days at home 2 days in the office. Mindful we need to allow flexibility as this varied based on team requirements. Proposal to be circulated early in the new year. Four work streams identified: –

- how staff can be supported to work from home
- how we might use our offices in the future
- leadership and training (getting used to a different way of working)
- longer term property strategy and cost

Lots of input so far and hoping to get detailed proposals out around April. Members have also had an input and Cllr Richard Mainon looking at that input in January. There is some further thinking required around carbon emission increase at home vs the reduction in travel benefits. Very likely that WFH does have a positive influence on carbon reduction as staff commute from a wide area of North Wales and the North West of England.

HVE – queried how the working group would have an input on the feedback. AS suggested to communicate this through himself or Richard Mainon. WG members may want to have input on the details that emerge around the carbon impact. This could be looked at formally or nominate members to analyse. HVE suggested taking our collated feedback from previous meetings and forwarding to AS as a starter for 10.

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BF – highlighted the positives of WFH that we have less traffic etc. Also acknowledged the increase in time at work with increased virtual meetings, telephone calls and emails.

BF- raised the issue around traffic increase in countryside as people seek nature and the outdoors for wellbeing and felt this needed to be considered. HS – confirmed the countryside areas are more heavily used. Car parks, services etc under strain.

AR – stated Liz Grieve’s team went to work in Rhuddlan which was well received. Would AS consider meeting/staff working in other areas across the county and not just Ruthin? AS said that should be encouraged and staff to work in local areas as much as possible to reduce travel. Feels this could be a great boom to all areas of our county.

GK – queried when the email went to Cllrs about new ways of working.

ACTIONS:

- **HVE-** send on to AS the collated feedback from the working group from the meeting held in November.

3. Post consultation draft of Climate and Ecological Change strategy

HVE took the group through the briefing paper and requested feedback on the suggested changes to the strategy in light of public feedback.

All 18 suggested changes listed in Appendix C were agreed by the working group.

Recommendation to move Cabinet and Council sign off to February agreed by the working group.

General comments

GT – pleased with the feedback received and felt response numbers were good. Noted the low response from schools, though understood it is a busy time for them, and would like to keep them involved. Stated it was important to note the consultation wasn’t just a formality, it was an attempt to involve people and the changes listed shows that consulting is worthwhile given the suggested actions. It is vital to keep a positive relationship with

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environmental groups across the County and getting the message out to the public successfully.

GK – how closely are we working with other authorities and are we following similar plan? In response HVE – we are one of the first Local Authorities to produce our Net Carbon Zero plans. Been sharing our journey and approach with other public sector bodies- been positively received- Flintshire, Conwy, Anglesey, Carmarthenshire etc. HVE keen to learn more from Gwent- Climate Ready Gwent- PSB initiative. Looking for continued and greater collaborative working going forward.

BJ – discussed his approach with collaborating and communicating our position with authorities across the North Wales region and hopes to get together in the near future to raise the profile of this agenda and continue to help with forming collaborations.

TT – stated Denbighshire is doing very well with lots of positive work.

GK – asked for further information around Together Creating Communities (TCC) organisation. HVE- community action group based in Wrexham but operate across Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham. Focus on Climate Change, Sanctuary and Housing. They managed to secure officers through lottery funding which has provided them the capacity to bring about change. TCC's "ask" for DCC on Climate Change is as follows:

- To have dedicated web pages on the agenda and to appear on the front page
- To invest in carbon literacy training for staff and councillors
- To raise the issue of tackling climate change at North Wales Economic Ambition Board.

CJW – stated he was pleased HVE went through all the comments and had suggested changes to the strategy accordingly. General comment to ensure divestment from fossil fuels is sincere and maintained over the long term. GK – Clwyd Pension Fund – suggested Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill could comment on that.

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JW – added that our developed methodology for our ecologically positive goal is a first and we are being contacted by other authorities to share this. Another example of how we are leading the way as an authority.

TB- raised a concern in relation to change 12 about working with land owners in Denbighshire to encourage carbon sequestration and biodiversity improvement around staff capacity to ensure it is delivered. HVE – stated this was a valid concern and one that will be addressed through Service Planning process.

GT – queried about the mechanism to update the strategy in the future in light of achievements made or technological changes. HVE- suggested an annual review paper to Full Council reporting on progress being made and making any updates to the strategy document at the same time.

GK –Are we engaging with young farmers and the farming unions? HS- aware there is a Farm Advisor for Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire. What could we do via tenancy engagement?

GK- Air Pollution was in the news recently which has highlighted the importance of this agenda and the need to include discussions around this area in the future.

ACTIONS:

- **HVE-** make all changes agreed to the strategy document in light of public feedback.
- **HVE-** liaise with Democratic Services to change sign off of strategy document to February 2021 in Forward Plan.
- **HVE-** produce and publish to the public the Consultation Response Report.

4. Forward work programme and next meetings

HVE took the group through the forward working programme.

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Recommendation to swap Behaviour Change to January and Land Use to February to facilitate Natural Resource Wales (NRW) attendance/input. Recommendation agreed.

ACTIONS:

- **HVE-** swap January and February agendas and secure NRW representatives to come along.

Month	Proposed items for discussion
14 th January	<u>Theme: Behaviour change</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and behaviour change amongst staff and councillors
9 th February	<u>Theme: Land Use</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use for the benefit of carbon sequestration and ecological improvement • Learning from Natural Resource Wales
9 th March	<u>Theme: Closing the group and celebrating success</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting on Council's consideration of Climate and Ecological Change Strategy and Action Plan • Reflecting on the groups journey since the emergency declaration • Plans for governance and continued scrutiny of progress on this agenda moving forward. • Lessons learned and next steps for the Council

5. AOB

HS - felt there is a requirement to manage our upland moorland in a way to ensure its sequestering carbon at the optimum state.

TB [sent via email] - wondered about what "concessions" we might consider putting in place for vehicles with green number plates - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/55229009>.

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We could look at this from both a staff commuting and resident/business perspective – free parking, priority parking, mileage allowances, etc. Whilst measures may not have a huge impact on carbon reduction, symbolically it could make a big difference – showing our commitment to the agenda. As with the strategy, if we can act early on this it would demonstrate we are leaders in this field and enhance the council's reputation.