

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	21 st February 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Barry Mellor (Lead Member for Environment and Transport) / Gary Williams (Corporate Director - Governance and Business & Climate and Ecological Change Programme Senior Responsible Owner)
Report author	Helen Vaughan-Evans (Climate Change Programme Manager)
Title	North Wales Energy Strategy, the associated Action Plan and Local Area Energy Planning in Denbighshire

1. What is the report about?

1.1. This report is about the regional energy planning process and incorporating priorities into strategic actions and intervention. It recommends endorsing the North Wales Energy Strategy and the associated Action Plan and provides information regarding the commencement of Local Area Energy Planning in Denbighshire.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. A decision is required on whether to endorse the North Wales Energy Strategy (Appendix 1 and <https://www.gov.wales/regional-energy-strategy-north-wales>) and associated Action Plan (Appendix 2).

2.2. To provide information regarding the commencement of Local Area Energy Planning in Denbighshire.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. That Cabinet endorses the attached North Wales Energy Strategy and associated Action Plan, and commends the vision and ambition of the strategy.

3.2. That Cabinet note the commencement of Local Area Energy Planning in the county.

4. Report details

North Wales Energy Strategy and Action Plan

- 4.1. Each region in Wales has developed its own Energy Strategy and Action Plan. The North Wales Energy Strategy was drafted by Welsh Government (WG) Energy Service with support and input from the Ambition North Wales (ANW), WG and regional stakeholders. The supporting Action Plan has been co-developed by ANW and WG with support from regional stakeholders via a task and finish group. The task and finish group comprised of representatives from ANW, WG, the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council, all six local authorities, and the Regional Skills Partnership.
- 4.2. The North Wales Energy Strategy was endorsed by ANW and WG's Minister for Climate Change in March 2021. The Action Plan was approved by ANW in September 2022. Democratic support from each constituent local authority is now being sought.
- 4.3. The North Wales Energy Strategy identifies key priorities and opportunities to deliver on the region's ambition for decarbonising its energy system. The Strategy sets out the following vision for North Wales: *'Delivering maximum local economic, social, ecological and wellbeing benefits from transitioning to a net zero economy and becoming a net exporter of low carbon electricity through cross-border and regional cooperation'*. Appendix 3 outlines the 5 priorities for achieving the vision.
- 4.5 The Action Plan translates the priorities in the Strategy into strategic actions and interventions. ANW and WG note it will be necessary to progress more detailed work to establish any funding requirements and sources for any un-costed actions. There are a number of actions in the plan where Local Authorities have been identified as the Lead. These have been lifted from the document and collated in Appendix 4 for ease.
- 4.6 ANW and WG have agreed that the existing Task and Finish Group transitions to a Steering Group / Project Board with a revised Terms of Reference to provide the governance to oversee the completion of actions within the action plan. Membership will be reviewed as an early priority, the Group will meet regularly and will agree arrangements for reporting to the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, Local Authorities and WG.

4.7 The Strategy and Action Plan provide the strategic context for the development of a more detailed Local Area Energy Plan for Denbighshire.

Local Area Energy Planning

4.8 Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) is a data driven and whole energy system, evidence-based approach that sets out to identify the most effective route for the local area to contribute towards meeting the national net zero target, as well as meeting its local net zero target.

4.9 LAEP is being funded by WG and involves dedicated plans being prepared within each local authority area in Wales. These plans will be co-developed by the local authority and local stakeholders with support from partners including ANW, WG and external support.

4.10 The work on LAEP commenced in January 2023 and is scheduled to be completed in January 2024.

4.11 The completed LAEP will come back to Cabinet once completed to be endorsed.

4.12 It is proposed that annual updates on progress are provided to secure effective democratic oversight of progress and to influence and decide on actions going forward into future years.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1 The decision will support the Council in making its contribution to the WG policy for the public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030 and for Wales to meet its legally binding target of reducing emissions to Net Zero by 2050. It will support the Council in meeting its locally agreed target of the Council becoming Net Carbon Zero by 2030, the ambitions set out in the 2019 Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration and within the Corporate Plan Greener Denbighshire Priority (2023-2028).

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1 For certain actions within the North Wales Energy Strategy and Strategic Action Plan, further detailed work on establishing funding requirements and sources has commenced by the regional Task and Finish Group.
- 6.2 Many of the actions identified with LA's as the lead are "engage" / "input into" type actions with "no funding required". This will involve however staff time across a range of service areas within DCC including: Climate Change Team, Planning, Energy Management, Public Health, Denbighshire Housing, Property Services, Fleet Management, Procurement, Public Protection, Transport, Communications and Business Support
- 6.3 Local Area Energy Planning is being funded by WG. Consultants ARUP have been appointed by ANW to deliver the LAEP for Denbighshire. 3 roles have been recruited by ANW to support the delivery of these plans working with the Local Authorities in North Wales and ARUP.
- 6.4 The likely impact of the LAEP on service areas in the Council are as follows:
- Climate Change Team- lead contact for this piece of work or ANW and ARUP, coordinating internal effort and delivering set tasks.
 - Planning Department, Housing, Energy Management Team- input to the data collection and development of the LAEP.
 - Communications Team and Community Development - input to the data collection and development of the LAEP, identifying stakeholders for engagement workshops.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1 The North Wales Energy Strategy and Action Plan is aligned to the '5 ways of working' of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The contents have been co-produced through engagement with a diverse group of regional stakeholders. A Denbighshire specific Well-being Impact Assessment will be carried out as the Denbighshire LAEP is developed.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1 ANW has shared the draft Action Plan with each proposed lead and enabling organisation identified in the Plan, ANW Energy Programme Board, North Wales Planning Officers Group, North Wales Decarbonisation Group, Welsh Local Government Association, and all workshop attendees (circa 100 individuals representing 60 organisations).

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1 As stated in 5.1, the recommendations in this report support the Council in meeting its locally agreed target of the Council becoming Net Carbon Zero by 2030. The Medium Term Financial Plan includes investment for the Carbon Zero Project and recognises that DCC financial budgets will need to align with the Council's climate and ecological priorities when projects and interventions are developed and implemented. As noted in 4.5 more detailed work is required to establish the funding requirements and sources for any un-costed actions. Any future funding requirements will be considered by the Capital Scrutiny Group and a final decision on approving funding will come back to Cabinet.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- 10.1 Pertinent risks are noted in Appendix 5.

11. Power to make the decision

- 11.1 Section 2, Local Government Act 2000 - the power to do anything which DCC consider is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area.