

## Minutes of the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Working Group Meeting

<b>Date</b>	10/ 11/ 2023
<b>Time</b>	14:00 to 16:00
<b>Location</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>Present</b>	Cllr Barry Mellor (Chair) (BM), Cllr Bobby Feeley (BF), Cllr Jonathan B. Harland (JBH), Cllr Martyn Hogg (MH), Cllr Delyth A. Jones (DAJ), Cllr Arwel Roberts (AR), Cllr Michelle Walker (MW), Cllr Peter Scott (PS), Cllr James Elson (JE).
<b>Apologies</b>	Cllr Paul Keddie (PK), Cllr Arwel Roberts (AR)
<b>In attendance</b>	Supporting Officers: Gary Williams (GW), Helen Vaughan-Evans (HVE), Emlyn Jones (EJ), Paul Jackson (PJ), Tim Towers (TM), Angela Loftus (AL), Bethan Morris (BMX), Martin Griffiths (MG), Aileen Charteris (AC)

### 1. Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

Chair BM welcomed everyone and thanked them for their time.

Apologies were noted.

### 2. Minutes/ actions from the last meeting and matters arising (Chair)

The minutes from the last meeting (25/07/2022) were inspected and accepted and the Actions table reviewed. Two ongoing actions were discussed in some detail:

1. HVE explained that there was a gap between the pace of changes needed and timescales of meeting Net Zero. The group had resolved in 25/07/23 meeting to keep targets as they are but to discuss how that will be presented. HVE discussed

how data likely to be presented.

***The group confirmed their resolution to keep the Net Zero target as it is.***

2. HVE reported that she had spoken to Paul Mead, Development Control Manager, on support Cllrs need on determining planning applications in relation to this agenda. Feedback was that members are not requiring further support when DCC is the determining authority on planning. However, more clarity and support is needed on expressing environmental issues where DCC is a consultee in regard to planning (e.g. on scheme of national significance).

***LWJ – Action ongoing to ensure members report long grass via C360***

## Climate Score Cards

LWJ gave an update on the council climate score cards – *see slides circulated with minutes*

LWJ and HVE explained that the accuracy of the score cards could be an issue– it was only information in the public domain for example which was used. HVE noted that other LAs have been concerned that the score cards may not be a true reflection of the work they were doing.

It was felt that there were many successes which we could be proud of but that more work can be done in areas where we had lower scores with a target of becoming the top Welsh LA in the council climate score cards next year. The group decided that a specific press release should be avoided but highlighting that we scored well on public engagement could be used when publicising our evening engagement event.

***Action: AC to analyse aspects of the council climate scoring card results and what information contributed to the scoring to feed into the strategy review***

## **3. Strategy Review Update (Liz Wilcox-Jones and Helen Vaughan-Evans)**

2023/24 review and refresh of Climate and Ecological Change Strategy

## Review of evidence and input

LWJ presented slides on the strategy review.

Highlights included:

- This is the first review of the Climate and Ecological Change Strategy and it is due to be reviewed every 3 year (running until 2030)
- Progress since July 25<sup>th</sup> included service workshops had started to update and review existing service activities/project/plans/strategies etc aligned with the strategy, along with discussing new ideas. The public consultation is due to take place on Monday Nov 13<sup>th</sup> at 6-8pm – members of the public and all Councillors have been invited.
- Expected current timelines include:
  - Reviewing targets and measure with workstream leads by the end of Dec
  - Updating the strategy document and WIA by the end of Jan 2024
  - Commence MAG engagement in Feb/Mar 2024
  - Launch public survey of revised strategy in Mar/Apr 2024
  - Attend decision making committees in the summer with a view to adopting the new strategy by July 2024

HVE took the group through the revised strategy document structure. The addition of using our influence as a council and looking at area-based emissions, nature recovery and climate risk resilience. No specific targets for these two new areas. Updated data from the workshops and consultation will be included within the climate and ecological change strategy working from a baseline and where we want to get to.

MH asked if we should look to invest in renewable energy as other local authorities are doing this. Buying shares could give us cheaper energy and investing now could save us money. We could also be sure that our energy was Net Zero.

HVE explained that due to budgetary issues we could not easily invest- we would need to borrow to invest which makes the financial case difficult.

MH agreed that borrowing to invest was not appropriate and asked if we could consider energy from green tariffs.

HVE confirmed that all DCC's electricity use is on a green tariff REGO certificated. The methodology for calculating our carbon footprint does not allow us to claim zero emissions from our electricity use though.

GW agreed with HVE that carbon reduction project delivery should be pursued, especially where it gives us a cost saving. GW suggested that Adam Johnson (Climate Communications Officer) publicise the cost savings of work which is environmentally friendly.

## Public consultation event

- A public consultation event is booked for Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November at Denbigh Town Hall.
- The event is being facilitated by Dr Alan Netherwood (Netherwood Sustainable Futures) and Dafydd Thomas (Wellbeing Planner).
- Feedback from the event will feed into the climate and ecological change strategy.

## **4. Planning (Angela Loftus and Bethan Morris)**

Planning Officers AL and BMX attended and talked through presentations on how DCC is doing what it can to support climate change mitigation and adaptation actions as well as nature recovery actions in advising and determining planning applications and within the new Local Development Plan.

AL explained:

- LDP determines planning.
- Future actions are contained within the LDP.
- Climate and ecological issues have always been considered within the LDP but in a balanced way to consider multiple needs for today without compromising future.
- The LDP needs to comply with multiple pieces of national legislation regarding to issues such as flooding and energy. However, this does not cover solar panels and EV charging in some circumstances.

- The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is taken into multiple aspects of the LDP.
- Conservation, wildlife friendly landscaping, sustainable draining, tree protection, use of renewable energy and cycle parking is also considered in new developments.

AL reminded councillors that the strategic planning group (SPG) meetings are open to all members and would encourage them to attend.

BXM explained:

- The new LDP is currently in draft and policies within it are difficult to draft because of the complexity.
- Changes have been made to PPW Chapter 6 Distinctive and Natural Placemaking and Well-Being – to address the nature emergency in terms of biodiversity.
- The LDP will need to comply with multiple policies including Future Wales, The National Plan 2040 (Future Wales) and Planning Policy Wales.
- Local Development Plan 2006 – 2021 contributes towards climate change in directing development to the most sustainable locations.

BM thanked BXM and AL for their thorough and informative presentations.

PS asked about technical advice note (TAN) 15: development and flood risk policy around defended zones. AL advised that the Tan15 review will be released in new year but there are no definite dates for the release as yet.

JH asked if the new LDP can mandate that construction companies add alternative energy to new buildings or use products such as permeable driveways. BXM explained that the LDP cannot go beyond what is currently building regulations but there are policies which look at low carbon building. Updates to building regulations could enforce environmentally friendly construction and these will be reviewed as produced.

JE asked if there are rules regarding solar energy sites on valuable grasslands. BXM explained that any renewable energy application has to have regard to local policies and the new LDP should strengthen that position.

MH complimented the very interesting report and that the new LDP is more

environmentally focused. MH asked if we could be sure the new LDP gave enough encouragement and/or enforcement around environmental requirements when it is next reviewed in 2033. AL said that the LDP will be monitored, and annual reports produced, but explained that it is difficult to collect the data required.

HVE thanked AL and BMX for an excellent presentation and that it is great that commitment of the climate and ecological change strategy is being brought into the LDP. HVE asked if the LDP can look at emissions from transport, river pollution, and adaptability of building stock. The group asked if planning for the planet documentation would be considered within this [www.foodfortheplanet.org.uk/councillors](http://www.foodfortheplanet.org.uk/councillors). AL explained that building regulations cover many aspects and might include adaptability, but the regulations do have limitations but there are also other environmental regulations which have to be complied with. Most developments will consider access to sustainable transport and footpaths etc. The team are working closely with nutrient management work taking place on the River Dee and are helping to support a nutrient management plan. Planning for the planet needs more consideration and so no definite answer can be given as yet.

BM – Thanked Bethan and Angela for their time.

## **5. EV infrastructure Transport (Paul Jackson and supporting officers)**

PJ introduced the topic and MG (Fleet Mobility Officer). As a new member of staff at the LA he believes that there needs to be direction from Welsh Government to ensure there is a country wide strategic approach to ensure there is consistency to electric vehicle infrastructure.

MG explained the current EV infrastructure in Denbighshire -

- We have increased from 7 corporate chargers to 34 and we can now charge 69 fleet vehicles. There are 74 electric vehicles in the corporate fleet.
- We have 40 public chargers which can charge 84 vehicles (these are also available to DCC fleet vehicles).

- The public charger points have been grant funded and they provide revenue which allows the chargers to fund themselves, while contributing towards our own electric vehicles.
- Welsh Government have requested that LAs to look at sites in locations which are more remote.
- We have been focused on car park locations within walking distance of terrace housing.
- We have been successful with public 700,000 miles of driving at 124 000 kwh 434000 zero emissions miles.
- Our project has been so successful that we are being approached directly to use grant funding for putting in extra electric vehicle charging points.
- Grid constraints of the electricity network means some locations are not compatible with electric vehicle charging

BM said it wasn't easy bringing in electric vehicle chargers across the county, but we are a leading local authority in these actions. Having electric vehicle chargers helps to encourage visitors to locations like Rhyl and also helps residents in terraced housing nearby. MH brought up issues of cost with home charging of electric vehicles. The vehicle chargers in public spaces allow us to consider changing behaviours as to how spaces are used. Someone could visit Rhyl, charge their vehicle in 4/5 hours while using other facilities in the town.

DJ Suggested permits for local people to use the electric chargers overnight.

MG pointed out that our overnight electric vehicle chargers set at same cost of home charging, there is only a premium cost on rapid chargers.

MH highlighted that we have been contacted by a company wishing to put in "charger gully's" which would allow people with no off-street parking to run the chargers across pathways to their cars. TT, JE, GW and MH had concerns over the strain on electricity networks. Multiple homes charging electric vehicles at once could require more substations. Therefore, it was stated we would not be interested in the charger gully feasibility study at the moment. An additional issue was raised that not everyone would be able to park directly outside of their home and be able to use their own gully. PJ agreed and suggested that Welsh Government need to be leading on issues with electricity supply

for charging EVs. HVE referenced an email from Lee Water MSP which stated there are no specific targets or duties for local authorities to provide electric vehicle infrastructure.

MG suggested that moving lampposts back towards the edge of the pathways could overcome the problem of running charging wires across pavements. MG also pointed out that most properties can cope with EV charge because they can manage load down but this can increase charging time.

BF this discussion has been very interesting and there has been lots of good ideas around potential solutions to these problems. BF was glad of PJs caution around the charger gully feasibility study. BF suggested we follow up with Welsh Government again to ask for clarification and guidance on what we should be doing in regard to home electric vehicle charging infrastructure. BM & HVE explained a letter had been sent to WG on this matter and a response received which will be circulated with the minutes.

BM thanked PJ and MG for their time

***Action – AC to distribute letter from Lee Waters MSP to the group with the minutes***

***Action – PJ to Reply to charge gully company***

## **6. Forward work programme and AOB**

Cllr Martyn Hogg suggested an agenda item on the proposed new Sustainable Farming Scheme in Wales (SFS) as this is being discussed by local groups such as the Clwyd Catchment Forum. TT requested to be included when this is discussed as it links to flood management.

Future Meetings:

March 11<sup>th</sup>

July 10<sup>th</sup>

November 13<sup>th</sup>



**Action – LWJ to confirm dates in peoples diaries.**

BM thanked everyone for their attendance and recognised that it was a moving subject.

Topics for next meeting:

Meeting Date	Agenda Items	Officer input
11 March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2023/24 review and refresh of Climate and Ecological Change Strategy                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review of draft refreshed Strategy document and paper to Performance Scrutiny</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1. DCC Climate Change Programme Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home insulation – how DCC is doing what it can to encourage and support uptake of home insulation in the County (applies in our own buildings also)</li> </ul>	2. Domestic Energy Efficiency Project Team at Flintshire CC (administer ECO4 on Council behalf), DCC Housing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting agricultural sector within Denbighshire on the proposed new Sustainable Farming Scheme in Wales</li> </ul>	3. AONB Natural Resources and Farming officer, Welsh Government External Speaker
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing from Flintshire County Council's public enquiry into decarbonisation of Clwyd Pension Fund [if enquiry has concluded and results available]</li> </ul>	4. FCC Climate Change Programme Manager and/or Chair of the FCC Climate Committee