

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	22 JULY 2025
Report Title:	BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL NET ZERO STRATEGY
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES
Responsible Officer:	GROUP MANAGER ECONOMY, NATURAL RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABILITY
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon existing policy framework or procedure rules
Executive Summary:	Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) declared a climate emergency in June 2020 and set up a Climate Emergency Response programme. In 2021, BCBC developed its Net Zero Carbon Strategy, which was formally adopted by the Cabinet in January 2023. The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on work undertaken to review the draft Bridgend County Borough Council Net Zero Strategy (Appendix 1) and to seek approval to undertake public consultation on the revised Strategy (Appendix 2).

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on work undertaken to review the draft Bridgend County Borough Council Net Zero Strategy (**Appendix 1**) and to seek approval to undertake public consultation on the revised Strategy (**Appendix 2**).

2. Background

- 2.1 Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) declared a climate emergency in June 2020 and set up a Climate Emergency Response programme. In 2021, BCBC developed its Net Zero Carbon Strategy, which was formally adopted by the Cabinet in January 2023. This commits to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030 across its operations, aligning with Welsh public sector ambitions. This goal is driven by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, and the Climate Change Act 2008. BCBC follows the Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Reporting Process for its annual carbon footprint.

- 2.2 The Environment (Wales) Act, 2016, promotes the sustainable management of natural resources in Wales, balancing the competing priorities of building the necessary infrastructure and protecting vital ecosystems. The Act requires Welsh Ministers to set decarbonisation targets and carbon budgets – an essential first step in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Amendment of 2050 Emissions Target) Regulations 2021 sets the target for Wales to achieve Net Zero by 2050.
- 2.3 In 2019, Welsh Ministers and the Senedd declared a climate emergency, reaffirming Wales' commitment and determination to tackle the climate crisis. To achieve Net Zero by 2050, a series of 5-year carbon budgets between 2016 and 2050 have been agreed by the Welsh Government in Net Zero Wales: Carbon Budget 2, published in 2021. This outlines 123 policies and proposals to meet the second of these carbon budgets (2021-2025), by reducing emissions by 37% against the baseline.
- 2.4 Net Zero Wales also has the collective ambition for the public sector to achieve Net Zero by 2030. In line with this commitment, the Welsh Government Net Zero Strategic Plan (2022) sets the approach for their own operational and supply chain emissions. Current modelling shows a gap between ambition and delivery.
- 2.5 As a result of the adoption of the Strategy, officers put forward a growth pressure revenue bid for funding of £758,000 per year. The Council did not have sufficient funding to provide any growth for this service. Alongside this, whilst an initial sum of £400,000 capital funding per year for decarbonisation was allocated in the capital programme, this reduced to £150,000 per year in 2023/24. Despite limited funding BCBC has implemented some decarbonisation projects across key areas, such as buildings, transport, and land use, but progress has been hampered due to the Council's financial challenges, which are challenges faced by all Local authorities across Wales and the UK. The Council, therefore, relies significantly on external grant funds being available and secured to have the resources to take forward its Net Zero Strategy.
- 2.6 Over the past five years, BCBC's emissions have fluctuated, peaking in 2021/22, followed by a significant decline in 2022/23 and a subsequent increase in 2023/24. Overall, total emissions have decreased by 3.4% since 2019/20.
- 2.7 Supply chain is the largest emission category. In 2023/24, supply chain emissions were 71% of the total footprint, a 7% decrease from 2020/21.
- 2.8 Building emissions have remained relatively stable at around 17% of the total footprint, however, this masks a significant reduction in fossil fuel consumption over the past year. In 2023/24, fossil fuel use fell by 21%, while electricity consumption increased by 11%.
- 2.9 Transport emissions have increased, rising from 4% of the total in 2020/21 to 9% in 2023/24. This increase is primarily due to the inclusion of commuting and homeworking emissions from 2023 onwards, as well as greater vehicle use following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. Waste emissions remain low and stable, contributing just 2% of total emissions in 2023/24.

- 2.10 Recognising the need for continuous improvement, BCBC committed to reviewing the Strategy in 2024 and 2027 to account for policy changes, technological advancements and market developments. This review assessed progress against the Strategy's objectives, updating emissions modelling, and refining action plans.

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 The Strategy has been reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose, reflects current UK and Welsh Government policy, the latest technologies and regulation, and commercial / financial options. This will provide assurance that the actions within the strategy are being delivered in the most efficient way. The review included:

- A review of the suitability of the existing action plans, governance arrangements, and alignment with current Welsh Government policy.
- An update of the emissions modelling and trajectory to 2030 incorporating outputs from completed annual emissions reports.
- Recommendations for modifications to governance arrangements and action plans, simplifying/rationalising where possible, for continued delivery.
- An appraisal of potential options for offsetting residual emissions in 2030.
- Estimated cost for delivery of actions and achievement of net zero by 2030

- 3.2 The full review report can be seen at **Appendix 1** and the outcomes of the review are summarised below.

3.3 Governance

Oversight of strategy delivery is by the Decarbonisation Programme Board which is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment. The current Strategy assigns each activity stream a 'Carbon Lead' to ensure that every area is represented across the organisation. These are individual senior officers who will review progress against existing action plans and report back to the Programme Board. This has proven to be difficult in practice largely because of a lack of capacity and difficulty coordinating Carbon Lead areas that span across multiple service areas e.g. Transport, Land Use.

The reviewed strategy proposes that the individual carbon leads are replaced by Communities of Practice (CoP), which are formal groups made up of officers that are actively involved in delivering elements of the strategy, with a Terms of Reference, Chair and rolling agenda. Members will be practitioners so will be in positions where they are able to enact change and share knowledge across the organisation which should lead to more effective delivery of actions.

3.4 Action plans

The actions set in the original strategy to achieve net zero by 2030 were reviewed to evaluate progress. Changes are proposed to remove those actions that have been achieved, revise or clarify action descriptions so that they are more deliverable, and move actions under appropriate Communities of Practice.

3.5 **Emissions and cost modelling**

The emissions model originally developed for BCBC's 2021 Net Zero Strategy has been updated to reflect actual emissions from 2021 to 2024 and to incorporate the revised actions identified during the strategy review. The updated model quantifies the emissions reductions associated with the proposed decarbonisation actions and outlines the projected emissions pathway to 2030. This helps to estimate the gap to target (i.e. the remaining carbon emissions). Based on this, a high-level offsetting analysis was carried out to explore potential options for addressing residual emissions. Alongside the emissions modelling, there is an estimate of the costs of the proposed decarbonisation actions to provide an understanding of the investment required to progress the strategy.

- 3.6 It is proposed that Cabinet consider the draft Bridgend County Borough Council Net Zero Strategy review (**Appendix 1**) and approve a public consultation for an anticipated period of 8-10 weeks on the revised Strategy (**Appendix 2**). It is proposed that a further report be presented to Cabinet following the public consultation and seeking approval of the Strategy.

4. **Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. **Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

- 5.1 Long term – Tackling climate Change through mitigation is a long term activity and often across several generations to enact the behaviour change required to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Integration – activities identified in this report promotes a shift towards sustainable practices and demonstrates our commitment to innovation and environmental stewardship, inspiring others to adopt similar initiatives. This holistic approach ensures that our project supports multiple well-being goals and aligns with the objectives of other public bodies.

Involvement – Engaging stakeholders with an interest in achieving activities identified in this report promotes action on climate change and demonstrates leadership to businesses, local community groups, environmental organisations, and council members.

Collaboration – Internally, we collaborate with various departments within the council to ensure alignment with broader sustainability goals and to secure necessary resources. Externally, we partner with suppliers and other public sector organisations to enhance our outreach efforts and share best practices. These partnerships enable us to pool resources, expertise, and networks, ensuring a comprehensive approach to promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices. By working

together, we can more effectively address the well-being goals of reducing carbon emissions.

Prevention – Activities identified in this report should over the longer term reduce our negative impact on greenhouse gas emissions. This has a direct impact on the wellbeing and future generations so they have at least the same quality of life as we do now.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 The Strategy is directly linked to climate change mitigation through the decarbonisation of the activities of Bridgend County Borough Council. Implementing all actions will reduce annual emissions by approximately 30,000tCO₂e from a 2019-20 baseline.
- 6.2 There are specific actions to maintain all owned woodland and greenfield areas in a way to promote enhanced biodiversity, identify and maintain any peatland, avoid any unnecessary loss of carbon sequestration, and prioritise areas for afforestation/reforestation and biodiversity programmes.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 No safeguarding or Corporate Parent implications associated with this report in line with the risks identified in the Safeguarding Policy.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The draft strategy estimates the total cost to achieve net zero to be approximately £109.65m. The estimate however is indicative and excludes whole-life costs and like-for-like replacement comparisons. To gain a more accurate understanding of actual costs of each potential action in delivering the strategy it is important to understand that costs associated with delivering Council services will be incurred regardless, with assets such as heating systems and vehicles having to be replaced periodically by the Council. Therefore, the actual cost of any 'net-zero' option would be the difference between that option and any 'non net-zero option', and the same principle would apply to on-going revenue implications. Individual business cases will identify the cost difference between business as usual fossil fuel and low carbon options.
- 8.2 Grant funding has been, and will continue to be, an important mechanism to deliver actions that progress the decarbonisation of BCBC operations. Since 2021 BCBC has been awarded grants from Welsh Government and the Shared Prosperity Fund of £1.42m for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, £1.1m for low carbon heating systems and solar PV, and a £204k interest free loan for LED lighting and solar PV with battery storage. Due to the amount of BCBC funding allocated towards delivering the Net Zero Strategy, the availability of external funds, and officer's abilities to secure them, will be essential in order for substantive progress to be made.
- 8.3 From 2025-26 to 2030-31 Council have approved a £150,000 annual capital allocation to support the Council with match funding for climate response grant bids.
- 8.4 The cost of incorporating net zero in major builds, e.g new schools, will be built into each individual scheme's capital budget.

- 8.5 The programme is supported by a revenue budget that is solely used to employ the Decarbonisation Programme Manager and Decarbonisation Programme Officer.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet consider the Bridgend County Borough Council Net Zero Strategy review (**Appendix 1**) and approve a public consultation on the revised Strategy (**Appendix 2**);
- 9.2 Note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet following the public consultation and seeking approval of the Strategy.

Background documents

None