

Meeting of:	COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	13 JULY 2026
Report Title:	BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL NET ZERO STRATEGY
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES
Responsible Officer:	HEAD OF PUBLIC REALM
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework and 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 Cabinet in January 2023. This was reviewed and an updated strategy was published for public consultation which ended in January 2026.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on work undertaken to update the Bridgend County Borough Council Net Zero 2030 Strategy.

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 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 and requires Welsh Ministers to set decarbonisation targets and carbon budgets. 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 Recognising the need for continuous improvement, BCBC committed to reviewing the Strategy to account for policy changes, technological advancements and market developments. The first review is complete and assessed progress against the Strategy's objectives, updating emissions modelling, and refining action plans.
- 2.6 In April 2025 and November 2025 drafts of the strategy review report and updated strategy were presented to the Committee and the revised strategy was published for public consultation between November 2025 and January 2026 following a request from Committee to do so.

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 The public consultation received 129 responses and the summary consultation report can be seen at **Appendix 1**. 72.1% of respondents did not support (disagree or strongly disagree) the net zero by 2030 target and 21.7% did support it (agree or strongly agree). Some justification is due to issues outside the scope of this strategy, such as public transport, but the main reasons given by those who did not support the target are summarised below.
 - **Affordability**. Some respondents state there are higher priorities for Council budget. It should be noted that the core budget commitment to delivering the strategy is limited and has been used to access significant levels of grant funding to deliver projects that offer further financial benefits to the Council.
 - **Contribution to climate change**. Stated reasons include climate change doesn't exist, and the contribution by BCBC (and Wales and the UK) is insignificant on a global scale. The overwhelming scientific consensus is that anthropogenic climate change is happening, is largely due to the burning of fossil fuels by humans, and will lead to significant impacts.
 - **Deliverability**. Some respondents stated net zero is not possible by 2030 or at all.
- 3.2 Changes have been made to the draft Strategy to reflect the public consultation and feedback from the Committee. The changes since the Strategy was last presented to the Committee are:

- **Decarbonisation rather than Net Zero.** Delivering all identified actions will leave significant residual emissions so will not reach net zero and there are currently no viable emissions offsetting mechanisms, however there are still financial and environmental benefits to be realised from decarbonising BCBC activities.
- **No 2030 target.** The Strategy now aims to review progress in 2030. This will still support the existing Welsh Government commitment for a net zero public sector by 2030 and BCBC will continue to report annual emissions to Welsh Government however it is not possible for BCBC to achieve all strategy actions by 2030.
- **Investment basis.** Delivery has always been dependent on the availability of funding and an acceptable business case however there is clarification that investments in decarbonisation do not divert funding from statutory duties and are only made with a supportive business case and not with decarbonisation as the only outcome.

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 should resources be available.
- 6.2 In relation to nature implications, 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 revised strategy estimates the total cost to implement all action plans 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 zero carbon option would be the difference between that option and any 'non zero carbon 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 £1m with a further £0.32m funding via earmarked reserves for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, £3.1m for low carbon heating systems and solar PV to replace end of life gas boilers, 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 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 Officers.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee consider the outcome of the Bridgend County Borough Council Net Zero Strategy consultation review (**Appendix 1**) and updated draft Strategy (**Appendix 2**) and provide comments, which can be fed back to Cabinet.

Background documents

- Bridgend Net Zero Strategy – Survey response report (2026)