

Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030

Although the public sector only accounts for a small amount of Wales' emissions it is uniquely placed to influence emissions far more widely in areas such as transport, energy and land use.

As well as tackling the issues of air pollution, this approach can have a positive impact on the local economy by reducing energy costs and by creating investment opportunities for the low carbon economy.

The Cabinet Secretary is now seeking evidence of the opportunities and challenges around the carbon neutral ambition, including whether interim targets should be introduced and how progress should be monitored and tracked.

The Welsh Government is already investing over £2m a year to identify and support renewable energy projects and energy efficiency projects within the public sector. By the end of this Government term almost £70m is expected to be invested in public sector energy projects.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“Wales is already at the forefront of global action on climate change, leading the way in the UK in recycling and introducing ground-breaking legislation of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

“I believe the public sector should lead by example in reducing emission, which is why I would like to see the sector be carbon neutral by 2030. I am keen to hear views on how best to address particular challenges and how we realise the significant opportunities and benefits associated with this agenda. This evidence will then inform how we proceed with work in this important area.”

Natural Resources Wales' (NRW) is already making progress through its Welsh Government financed Carbon Positive Project. Through calculating the organisation's net carbon impact, it found that over 80% of their emissions were indirect, with 55% from the procurement of goods and services alone. Results indicate that the organisation is net carbon positive; storing more carbon annually than it is releasing through its operations.

As part of the Project, NRW has identified feasible options to reduce emissions and protect and enhance carbon stocks. For example, it found it could achieve up to 27% emissions saving from its vehicle fleet through adopting low emission transport options.

NRW are pressing forward with action , including installing charging points, procuring electric vehicles and looking to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings, recognising the economic business case as well as the environmental reasons for taking action.

The lessons learnt from the project will be shared with the Welsh public sector with the aim of encouraging others to follow NRW's lead.

The Cabinet Secretary added:

“It’s pleasing to hear the excellent work Natural Resources Wales are doing through their Carbon Positive Project and I would like to see others follow their lead, including the Welsh Government. I have asked officials to look at a similar project across our offices.”

Jennifer Kelly, leading the Carbon Positive Project for Natural Resources Wales, said:

“As a public sector body, and as the environment body for Wales, we have an important role to play in addressing climate change. Our Carbon Positive Project has taken an ambitious approach to understand our carbon impact and to identify opportunities to address it.

“One opportunity we’ve identified is that, by using current low emission technologies in our fleet, we could cut emissions by up to 27%, and reduce costs by 5%. We’ve also been delivering some exciting demonstration projects to take action on our carbon impact now, including introducing electric vehicles, installing renewable energy and restoring peatland habitats.

“We’re looking forward to sharing our experiences with others later in the year and hope this will encourage wider decarbonisation in Wales.”