

Tracey Burke

Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol / Director General

Y Grŵp Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Climate Change and Rural Affairs Group



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Adrian Crompton
Auditor General for Wales
Audit Wales
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9LJ

26 October 2022

Dear Auditor General

I wanted to take this opportunity to welcome Audit Wales' publication of the findings from the call for evidence on the public sector's readiness for net zero carbon by 2030.

In responding, I want to highlight a few of the points we made in our response and to update you on the progress we continue to make. I also want to thank your team for the positive approach they took to the work which made participation in the process for us and other public bodies much easier.

Audit Wales' involvement and support of this national and global priority provides a positive contribution, helping to create momentum and sustained change in the way we work and live our lives. Whilst the report focuses on the actions to decarbonise our society in response to the climate emergency, it is important to recognise the need to adapt to the inevitable consequences of climate change.

Your findings against the five calls for action are ones we recognise. They are areas we continue to consider as the Welsh Government and in support of the public sector in Wales to reduce our carbon emissions and lead the way for others in Wales. This is in line with our national target and the actions set out in Net Zero Wales, our second carbon budget.

Since taking on this role, I have seen the considerable effort the Welsh Government and the rest of the public sector are making to meet the 2030 ambition, in line with the public sector route map we published last year. This is evident in the increasing number and maturity of decarbonisation plans and the level of resources and people involved. A good example of this is the commitment to report on carbon emissions on an annual basis. The first reporting cycle of this voluntary initiative resulted in returns from 80% of public sector organisations. This year we have already had 95% of organisations respond by the deadline, utilising our revised guidance which implemented valuable lessons from the first two years of reporting. We are hopeful of achieving an even higher final position which demonstrates the



BUDDSODDWYR | INVESTORS
MEWN POBL | IN PEOPLE

Parc Cathays • Cathays Park
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Ffôn • Tel 0300 0258047
tracey.burke@gov.wales
Gwefan • website: www.wales.gov.uk

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

commitment made by public sector bodies in Wales to individual and collective action.

As an organisation, the Welsh Government is taking urgent action to reduce emissions and build resilience to the inevitable impacts of climate change. This is reflected in the remit of the Climate Change Portfolio Board, which I chair. This provides strategic governance for the development and delivery of climate legislation and policy, taking an informed and joined up view. The Board includes all areas of Welsh Government who contribute to tackling, or are impacted by, climate change. It ensures mandate holders (those with relevant policy or operational responsibilities) are accountable for their actions and that we remain on course to deliver the desired outcomes in accordance with our legislative targets.

We intend to publish the Welsh Government's Net Zero Strategic Plan this month, as a mechanism to recognise the considerable work already made to reduce our emissions, for example the introduction of sustainable travel choices (including the option to lease ultra low carbon vehicles) and the 76% reduction in emissions from our administrative estate over the last 11 years. It will also galvanise further work to achieve the ambition of a collective net zero public sector by 2030, which includes a fully costed action plan. As your report recognises, this will be a challenging ambition to meet, but it remains one of our key priorities and one we are committed to support others to achieve.

That support includes the work colleagues in Health and Local Government are providing. They have established effective programmes to support the collective vision, through leadership, advice and financial assistance. For example, since 2019 the Welsh Government has funded the WLGA to run a support programme for Local Authorities (LAs), focussing on leadership as the key driver for change, and supporting the development of key LA commitments. Welsh Ministers have confirmed continued funding for the next three years in recognition of the importance of that work and to support the delivery of those commitments.

Our support for the sector extends to the Welsh Government Energy Service, which Welsh Ministers have committed to continue; the procurement of the new service to be completed by April 2023. The specification for the services recognises the continued need for technical and financial assistance to help public bodies and community enterprises to bring forward and deliver effective programmes. It also recognises the significant increase in resources which the sector have themselves invested in this important issue and of the experience gained from this. The new programme is expected to make more of this shared learning.

The Welsh Government also continues to provide financial assistance to the sector through a variety of mechanisms, such as the Wales Funding Programme which provided £16m of investment in public sector and community-based projects in 2021-2022. Whilst there is increasing budgetary pressures, for example from the consequences of Covid and the cost of living crisis, we continue to place importance on this investment to enable the Welsh Government and public sector to progress our collective ambition.

As we set out in our response to the call for evidence and above, the five calls for action are areas the Welsh Government is and will continue to invest in to support the collective responsibilities of the public sector in Wales and as an organisation within that sector. The evidence provided will help shape our actions and the support we provide.

Whilst there is a lot to do, the momentum gained can only be seen as a positive and one which will help us on our pathway to a net zero public sector by 2030.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tracey Burke." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tracey Burke

Director General, Climate Change and Rural Affairs Group