



Mike Hedges MS
Chair of Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

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17 March 2021

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 3 March in which you provided the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee's report on the Climate Change (Wales) Regulations 2021. I am pleased to provide my formal response to the two recommendations for the Welsh Government.

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the Welsh Government revisit the emissions targets in due course, in particular, to ensure they fully reflect the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Welsh Government response: Accept

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 provides a limited number of circumstances where we are able to amend targets and carbon budgets. These are: (a) significant developments in scientific knowledge about, or EU or international law or policy relating to, climate change; (b) following a recommendation from the advisory body (the Climate Change Committee, CCC); or (c) in connection with amendments to the definition of Welsh emissions from international aviation and shipping, or the definition of a greenhouse gas. In effect, therefore, the emissions reduction pathway is always under review as we may need to respond to such circumstances. More specifically, we are unlikely to have a complete picture of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Welsh emissions until mid-2023 at the earliest. We are required to set the fourth carbon budget (2031-35) before the end of 2025, which could offer a suitable opportunity to consider the emissions reduction pathway as a whole.

This Government has established a strong foundation during the first carbon budget period, putting Wales on track to deliver both the first budget and the 2020 target. While emissions targets are important, the focus of the next Government must be on delivery if we are to make the 2020s the 'decisive decade of climate action', as the CCC has called for.

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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.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that the Welsh Government commits to consulting on the draft Second Low Carbon Delivery Plan not least to ensure that the Senedd and its committees have an opportunity to scrutinise the Plan before it is finalised.

Welsh Government response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Government is committed to the principle of open and transparent policy making, working in partnership with people and organisations across Wales, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

To help us deliver the all-Wales approach the First Minister has committed to, the plan must be informed by evidence and expertise drawn from a wide range of voices on a plethora of topics. This will help to build the nationwide consensus for the action which is essential to meeting our ambitious targets, and play a part in mobilising communities towards achieving a just transition to net zero.

The plan aggregates policies, strategies and programmes. The engagement plan we published last year highlighted to the Senedd and its committees, and wider stakeholders, when relevant consultations were due to come forward.¹ In the last twelve months alone we have formally consulted on a circular economy strategy, the future of UK carbon pricing, access to superfast broadband, supporting farmers after Brexit, the National Development Framework, coal policy, tackling fuel poverty, a transport strategy, energy efficiency in building regulations and an electric vehicle charging strategy. The Senedd is, therefore, already able to scrutinise the elements of the plan for their emissions reduction potential as they come forward. This spreads the burden of scrutiny work over a longer period and enables a richer consultation on each area in turn.

The engagement plan also describes other events and activities, including November's Wales Climate Week when over 2,000 people subscribed to hear from 80 speakers. We have also provided support for Wales's first Citizens' Assembly on Climate, now underway in Blaenau Gwent. My officials are exploring options for further engagement in the coming months to improve the cross-sector elements of the plan and we will update our engagement plan in due course.

Finally, the legislative requirements relating to the plan were agreed by the Senedd when it approved the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Senedd must recognise we cannot bind the next government's actions. However, I strongly agree with the committee any incoming government will need to work closely with all Senedd committees to maximise the engagement of the wider public in developing the next plan.

Regards



Lesley Griffiths AS/MS

Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/engagement-approach-for-low-carbon-delivery-plan-2.pdf>