

Correspondence from Friends of the Earth Cymru to the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee - 11 June 2024

Dear Llyr Gruffydd MS and members of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee,

We hope you are well.

We would like to highlight a possible issue you might be interested in at some point.

At a time when the need to reduce climate emissions is more pressing than ever, with 2023 being the hottest year on record by some margin (<https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/climate-change-indicators-reached-record-levels-2023-wmo>), there is an even greater urgency needed if we are to play our part in helping stop the worst effects of climate change.

There are of course many, many different things we can and must do right across society from governments at all levels to businesses, communities and individuals. Some of these things receive a lot of political attention and some, despite being large emitters, receive little attention.

One of these things, and something that continually slips under the radar, is supermarket chiller units (fridges). They use up to 1% of the UK's electricity. That may not seem like much but it is the equivalent of the electricity usage of over 730,000 homes (<https://foe.cymru/why-supermarkets-should-put-doors-their-fridges>) and (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-59141894>).

Stores such as the Co-op (<https://www.eco-business.com/news/co-op-supermarkets-extend-fridge-door-scheme/>) and Aldi (<https://www.aldipresscentre.co.uk/business-news/aldi-introduces-fridge-doors-to-reduce-energy-consumption/>) have been leading the way in fitting doors to their fridges but others are lagging behind. In France, many years ago, supermarkets signed up to a voluntary agreement to put doors on 75% of the fridges by 2020, so this isn't even a new idea.

It's a relatively niche thing to do in terms of reducing our climate emissions but it is actually disproportionately large in terms of actual emissions. Studies also suggest that putting doors on fridges helps regulate fridge temperatures which then means less food spoilage and therefore less food waste. Plus, it helps reduce, in a small way, the amount of plastic used (that which covers the food which currently goes to waste).

Friends of the Earth Cymru have been campaigning on this over the last few years. We have presented our ideas to Welsh Government and the Wales Retail Forum, with the Retail Forum mentioning it in their Delivery Plan as an idea for retailers to reduce their climate emissions.

Unfortunately, we have yet to see any action or progress.

In terms of all the challenges we face in trying to reduce our emissions and out of all the things that need to be done, simply fitting doors on supermarket fridges is such an easy one and is a relatively quick win. We therefore feel that there is a big win-win here for Wales if we could make progress on this issue.

We were wondering if the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee might be interested in having a look at this issue to see what could be done to move things forward in Wales?

Separately, we were wondering if the committee might be interested in another idea. It's sort of related to the fridge door idea in that there are a lot of climate emission reduction ideas that are simply never talked about or addressed at Welsh Government level, even some relatively important ones. If they were acted on and addressed, they would help to reduce Wales's emissions.

We know from the UK's Climate Change Committee report 2023 (<https://www.gov.wales/reducing-emissions-wales-progress-report-2023-welsh-government-response#:~:text=The%20CCC's%20report%20makes%2058,as%20low%2C%20medium%20or%20high.>) that we need to be scaling up efforts in Wales right across the board.

Some issues and topics tend to be focussed on and mentioned again and again but there are still a lot of other things which are hardly ever mentioned or acted on. Some of these are actually very important in climate terms. Fridge doors is just one example, two other relevant examples of what we are talking about would be:

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1. Methane – a hugely important and potent greenhouse gas (<https://foe.cymru/methane-its-role-averting-climate-catastrophe>). We should really have a national Methane Action Plan here in Wales.
 2. Water use – the water industry is a heavy energy user and is responsible for around 1% of all UK climate emissions (<https://foe.cymru/80-litres-person-day#:~:text=As%20we%20struggle%20with%20the.could%20have%20man>
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[y%20positive%20benefits.&text=80%20litres%20per%20person%20per%20Oday%E2%80%A6..\)](#) . Climate science tells us our summers are likely to become longer, hotter and drier more often than not so using less water would be beneficial. Water poverty affects thousands of homes in Wales. If we had ambitious water use targets in Wales then we could reduce the amount of water we use, save people money, make it less likely we enter drought conditions so quickly in dry summers and above all, save a chunk of climate emissions. Current Welsh Government plans on water use are simply nowhere near ambitious enough.

Would a special 'innovation session' of the committee be a good idea where alternative ideas could be brought to the fore and discussed and form the basis for recommendations of what more WG could do here in Wales? It would be a different sort of session but very useful and interesting. We could see what other solutions and ideas there are out there in Wales and what issues or sectors aren't being addressed in enough detail.

Many thanks for your time.

Bleddyn Lake and Joe Cooke

Friends of the Earth Cymru

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Nid yw'r farn bersonol yma o reidrwydd yn adlewyrchu polisi Cyfeillion y Ddaear.

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