



**Y Pwyllgor Craffu ar Waith y Prif Weinidog
Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister**

Carwyn Jones AM
First Minister
Welsh Government
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22 September 2014

Dear First Minister

The Welsh Government's 2010 Climate Change Strategy for Wales

The Committee was grateful to you and your officials for appearing before us at the meeting on 26 June and for responding to our questions.

In addition to the questions that you answered at the meeting you also agreed to write to us about the Welsh Government's cycling strategy for its own staff, particularly in the Cathays Park complex where so many staff are based.

The meeting looked at progress made to date in implementing the Welsh Government's 2010 Climate Change Strategy. The Committee has considered your answers to our questions and has a number of points and recommendations that it would like to make. These are set out below.

Climate Change Targets

There was a little confusion at the meeting about the extent to which climate change targets are statutory across the UK. One stakeholder had suggested that Wales was the only one of the UK administrations where targets are not statutory.

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We now understand that this is not the case. However, the Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK to reducing emissions by at least 80% in 2050 from 1990 levels. The 80% target includes greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the devolved administrations, which currently accounts for around 20% of the UK's total emissions. We understand that the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 commits Scotland to a 42% reduction in emissions by 2020 and annual reductions between 2010 and 2050. In Northern Ireland, following advice from the Committee on Climate Change, the Environment Minister is developing plans for a Northern Ireland Climate Change Act.

We also understand that the Committee on Climate Change has provided advice to the Welsh Government on potential options for climate change legislation. We would be grateful if you could set out the Welsh Government's response to this advice and in particular on the question of statutory GHG emission reduction targets for Wales.

Having said that, we were firmly of the view that legislation to introduce statutory GHG reduction targets for Wales should now be very much on the agenda. We appreciate that it may be difficult to set statutory targets for policy areas that are not fully within the Welsh Government or the Assembly's areas of responsibility. However, we noted that you argued that it is possible to have meaningful targets but that you did not want these to be statutory. In our view a move to making the meaningful targets you describe statutory would be a clear and important sign of the Government's commitment in this area.

We recommend that the Welsh Government should introduce ambitious targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions in Wales and should make them statutory for those areas of policy for which the Welsh Government and the Assembly is wholly or mainly responsible.

Carbon Budgets

The Climate Change Act requires the UK Government to set legally binding 'carbon budgets', which is a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK over a five-year period. We discussed this concept with you as a way of evaluating and judging the carbon impact of the Welsh Government's policies and operational decisions, particularly in relation to new major infrastructure projects.

We believe there is considerable merit in ensuring that the carbon footprints of all projects and operational decisions are considered consistently and thoroughly against overall targets for carbon reduction. The Well-being of Future Generations Bill, which has been introduced into the Assembly recently, seems to us an ideal vehicle for establishing the principle of putting carbon budgeting on a statutory footing. **We recommend** that you consider amending the Bill to provide that this principle should apply in future to the Welsh Government and the other public bodies that are covered by the Bill.

Carbon Budgeting - M4 Corridor around Newport

Since we discussed these matters with you, the Minister for the Economy, Science and Transport has announced her decision on the M4 corridor around Newport. Her announcement has been the subject of considerable public debate, which will no doubt continue. It is not our intention to cover ground that we were unable to cover at the meeting but the point was put to you that the decision in relation to the M4 would be a test of how the Welsh Government conducts its carbon assessments and how committed it is to meeting tougher targets.

One of the main arguments used to justify the major road building commitment that Minister's announcement involves is that the reduction in queuing traffic will offset any addition in the volume of cars using the M4.

We believe that a far more rigorous assessment of the carbon impact of this decision is needed and would be grateful for further information on exactly what steps the Welsh Government has taken and will take to carry out such an assessment.

The residential sector

We noted that In July 2013, the Welsh Government announced plans to revise Part L of the Building Regulations. The revisions will mean that from July 2014 new homes must achieve an 8% reduction in CO2 emissions in comparison to 2010 standards. However the Welsh Government originally consulted on a 40% or 25% reduction. It changed this to 8% following concerns from the building industry about impact on the viability of housing developments in Wales.

We are not convinced that this target is ambitious enough and seems to do little more than adopt improvements that were being made by the industry in

any event. You indicated that this target is a short term one for two to three years until the housing market is more stable and sustainable. We would urge you to revisit this target as soon as possible with a view to adopting a more ambitious target for the longer term.

In the meanwhile, it would be helpful if you could let us know what assessments were carried out to help persuade the Government that reducing the CO2 target to 8% would encourage the building of more new homes.

Behaviour change and education

In the introduction to the Welsh Government's Climate Change Engagement Strategy it says that the Welsh Government wants to have a conversation with people across Wales. That *'...this conversation is a large scale, long term challenge, and one which has the potential to shape delivery across all areas of people's lives to improve the long term benefits for people in Wales.'* It goes on to say that the Welsh Government wants *'...to establish Wales as a world leader in climate change communications'*.

However, we were also made aware of recent criticisms that that the approach to communicating climate change issues in Wales had to date taken a traditional, top-down approach that hadn't been able to relate climate change issues to the current concerns of local communities. We were also made aware of concerns from the Climate Change Commission for Wales (CCCW) of mixed messages from the Welsh Government about Climate Change and the need to emphasise the importance of achieving the reduction targets across sectors and with the general public. These mixed messages and the absence of strong leadership meant it was much less likely that the necessary behaviour change could be achieved.

We also wondered whether the undoubted success in getting the public in Wales to join in improving recycling rates was obscuring the need to convince the public in Wales of the need for wider and greater efforts on climate change. The current review of the curriculum may also provide opportunities for addressing the need to educate the public about climate change issues.

We would be grateful for your comments on these points and particularly on whether the Welsh Government is setting out a clear and consistent message.

Community Energy

We noted that the 'Ynni'r Fro' initiative is due to come to an end next year, and that you are now considering alternatives that might be put in place once that scheme comes to an end.

We recommend that there will be a successor to or an extension of the Ynni'r Fro, programme, which will draw on the experience and contribution of Community Energy Wales, and provide a boost in this area of policy.

Responsibility for Climate Change Issues within the Welsh Government

As you will be aware, following the publication of the Welsh Government's progress report in December 2013, the CCCW published an independent commentary on the report in January 2014.

Among the issues the Commission raised was the need to align senior level decision making especially across Government and local Government as a priority. It said that there needs to be clear internal leadership and accountability across departments to ensure consistency of message.

We noted your view that there is a limit on what you can do as the First Minister without taking responsibility away from other Ministers. You also made the point that every Minister plays a part in tackling climate change issues within and across portfolios. However, we also noted that the Welsh Government claims to have sustainable development as its core, single, organising principle and the fact that energy policy is already the responsibility of the First Minister.

Given the essentially cross-cutting nature of the issue and the singular importance that the Government attaches to the issue, we believe that it would make considerable sense for you as First Minister to take overall and co-ordinating responsibility for climate change and wider sustainable development issues. **We recommend** that you do so and that the Welsh Government's core climate change team becomes answerable directly to you and is resourced appropriately for the task.

I would be grateful for your response on the points above in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Melding". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

David Melding AM
Chair, Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister