



Ein cyf/Our ref SF/FM/1831/14

David Melding AM
Chair
Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

20th October 2014

Dear David,

Response to the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister: The Welsh Government's 2010 Climate Change Strategy for Wales

I am writing in response to your letter of 22nd September which set out the points and recommendations from the committee following the scrutiny session.

Climate Change Targets

Our Programme for Government reiterates the commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and recognises the importance of collective action to achieve our aims. As a Government we fully acknowledge the science and the responsibility to tackle climate change.

In terms of emission reduction targets, we have a long standing commitment to ambitious targets in terms of the 3% annual reduction in emissions in devolved areas and 40% overall reduction by 2020. That headline commitment is re-affirmed in the Programme for Government and importantly complements our priorities in working for a prosperous low carbon economy to create growth and sustainable jobs; supporting vulnerable families and deprived communities; and improving health and well-being.

As there is already a statutory duty on Welsh Ministers to report on progress in relation to climate change under the UK Climate Change Act, delivery against our targets is set out in our Annual Report along with a summary of the actions we have taken. In addition, the Climate Change Act also put in UK law the headline target of an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050. Given therefore that this target and associated reporting framework is already in place and given that, as I highlighted during the Committee meeting, the current devolution settlement means the Welsh Government does not have key powers in areas such as energy, I do not see the added value or practical difference additional statutory climate change targets would deliver. Especially as meaningful statutory targets drive performance where accountability is clearly aligned to responsibility for delivery and where the penalty for not delivering is also clearly set out. As a Government however we fully acknowledge the scientific imperative to act and the responsibility we have to deliver on climate change.

Carbon Budgets

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In terms of Carbon Budgeting, all the devolved administrations fall within the framework that was put in place by the Climate Change Act. This requires a downward trajectory for emissions to be set at a national level for different sectors of the economy, in line with the overarching target of reducing by 80% by 2050 from 1990 levels. The contributions of the devolved administrations are therefore factored in when carbon budgets are set by the UK Government. Furthermore, as I indicated to the Committee, the Welsh Government has already committed to evaluating the carbon impact of our policies and programmes as outlined in the current Sustainable Development Scheme.

The Well-being of Future Generations Bill builds on our commitment by placing action on climate change firmly at the heart of the six headline well-being goals. This is secured by direct reference to aim of achieving a low carbon economy and of a resilient Wales with the capacity to adapt to key challenges such as climate change. The Bill also recognises that measuring the extent to which the well-being goals are being achieved is key. For this reason, the Bill requires the Welsh Ministers to publish national indicators in order to measure progress towards achieving the six well-being goals. This will build on our long standing practice of measuring greenhouse gas emissions as part of our sustainable development indicators for Wales.

The aim is for the Bill to provide the legal architecture to support Wales to develop sustainably, ensuring that specified public bodies including the Welsh Ministers take the best actions to improve the current and future well-being of people and communities across Wales. Collectively, the well-being goals will therefore advance and further mainstream our efforts to tackle climate change.

M4 Corridor around Newport

The plan for the M4 Corridor around Newport addresses fifteen objectives covering matters including safer, easier and more reliable travel east-west in South Wales and best possible use of the existing M4, local road network and other transport networks. The Plan was adopted following a thorough assessment process which has taken account of all the relevant issues, including the impact of the Plan on greenhouse gas emissions. The details of these assessments have been published at: www.m4newport.com.

The detailed assessment work, which includes consideration of greenhouse gas impacts, will continue as the Plan is progressed and the preferred route is developed. We will be ensuring that there are mechanisms in place for the assessment, accounting and reduction of carbon impact during the design and construction of the project.

Residential Sector

In terms of the building regulations, as I outlined to the Committee we have already committed to reviewing Part L of the regulations in 2016 which was set out in a Ministerial statement in September 2013.

There were several factors that informed the decision in relation to the 8% carbon reduction level. These included concerns about increased construction costs at a time of declining house building activity due to the recession, lack of access to capital, increasingly unviable sites, an associated decrease in affordable homes achievable through planning section 106 agreements and growing concerns about the impact of the impending changes to the housing benefits system. These concerns were reflected in consultation responses from the building and housing sectors.

The work to inform the consultation paper also included consideration of the cumulative impact of policies affecting new house building, including the National Assembly's commitment to require sprinkler systems in new residential properties which came into force on April 30th 2013 for higher risk accommodation and are due to come into force on January 1st 2016 for new and converted housing.

Following a review of the consultation responses, alternative energy improvement targets were modelled based on building fabric improvement without the need for renewables, focusing on the range between 8% and 25% better than the then 2010 Building Regulations - the former representing the target required by national planning policy through Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 22. A key consideration was the need to improve energy efficiency without increasing air tightness to levels which relied on mechanical ventilation which at the time was raising concerns about ensuring standards of air quality. The additional modelling was assessed by the Building Regulations Advisory Committee for Wales, chaired by Professor Phil Jones of Cardiff University's School of Architecture. The final Regulatory Impact Assessment has been published at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/desh/consultation/140204building-regs-part-1-changes-impact-assessment-en.pdf>

Behaviour Change and Education

As a Government we fully recognise the importance of effective communication around climate change and note the feedback on this issue from the Climate Change Commission for Wales. Our communication and engagement work relating to climate change and sustainable living has included innovative work on behaviour change and I disagree that it has taken a traditional top-down approach. Our climate change engagement through programmes such as Cynefin demonstrates how we are engaging with communities at a local level, relating climate change to their current concerns and empowering them to take action. I would also highlight that as we have learned from our work with Cardiff University, communications on climate change are often most effective when climate change is linked with other aspects so it is important to look at key areas such as flooding, waste, energy efficiency and green growth. Success in such areas lays the foundations and creates a pathway for both individuals and more widely for Wales towards a low carbon, resource efficient and more equitable society.

In addition, specific initiatives such as Eco-Schools encourage young people to consider the challenge of climate change, how they might contribute to alleviating the inherent impacts and influence others to adjust their day-to-day lives to be more sustainable. In Wales, we have one of the most successful Eco-School programmes internationally, with 8% of the global total of Green Flags and 430,000 children in schools that are registered on the programme. I am therefore delighted that later this year we will be hosting the international Eco-Schools conference in December.

A comprehensive, independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales is currently being undertaken by Professor Donaldson. Professor Donaldson will report his recommendations to the Minister for Education and Skills in the New Year. You will appreciate that I cannot comment on what the outcome of the review might be at this stage.

Community Energy

The Ynni'r Fro programme, launched in 2010, is a long term investment in the capacity and independence of communities in Wales. Our economic analysis shows that so far Ynni'r Fro has provided net benefits of at least £11.8 million, equating to £1.36 for every £1 spent. In addition, there are further lasting benefits in terms of skills and capacity within communities that have engaged in projects. Ynni'r Fro has developed 56 local projects across Wales and at least five will be constructed and generating electricity by March 2015. The projects are however often complex technical developments and this underlines the long term nature of the work.

Although the programme is due to end in March 2015, we recognise the need to continue the support. Officials are therefore developing a follow-on programme of support for the sector. As part of this process we are working closely with the Ynni'r Fro technical development officers (many of whom are also members of Community Energy Wales), community groups, the Wales Co-operative Centre, renewable energy developers and other third sector representatives. In doing so, our aim is to ensure that the next phase of support is more easily accessible to vulnerable communities where there are opportunities to develop renewable energy projects whilst continuing our commitment to supporting community scale generation and realising the benefits that it brings.

Responsibility for Climate Change Issues within the Welsh Government

As you refer to in your letter, responding to climate change and enabling sustainable development is at the very heart of our Programme for Government. These are over-arching issues that affect all areas of policy and impact every Welsh citizen and we recognise the challenge of climate change requires a whole government response. Resourcing of climate change is therefore not a simple issue of allocating central resource. Each portfolio must consider its contribution to tackling climate change and reducing climate risks and our annual reports show how action is being taken across departments.

In terms of my role as First Minister, I would underline how an effective response to climate change is fundamental to the achievement of our objectives and emphasised within the Programme for Government on which I lead. Our climate change objectives go hand in hand with our aim of a prosperous, low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive Wales. The additional allocation of a lead Minister supports our focus on delivery in this area and also ensures that we are able to play a full and active part internationally as we committed to do.

Welsh Government Staff Cycling

Lastly, I also undertook to write in relation to the Welsh Government's support in relation to staff cycling to work. Investment has been made in promoting sustainable travel across our key sites, including provision of a range of facilities and amenities that help staff and visitors to cycle to and from our offices. Staff can also take advantage of the Advance of Salary Scheme to purchase a bike, enabling them to repay the cost over a twelve month period. Further to this, we are now developing a Cycling Strategy for our staff, with the aim to encourage as many staff as possible to choose cycling when commuting to work.

Yours sincerely



CARWYN JONES