

Briefing

Wales
TUC
Cymru

Net zero plans – local government

Note for Welsh local government trade unions, October 2022

Introduction

Local councils in Wales are committed to achieving net zero status by 2030. This means that councils will change the way they operate so that they release no more greenhouse gases than those which they absorb. This means cutting down significantly on the amount of gas, oil and coal which they use, including in the products and services they buy. This is important for workers because it will lead to significant changes which will effect jobs.

Transition agreements

Wales TUC wants public bodies to engage with unions in order to discuss these changes so that proper workforce planning can be put in place which ensures that:

- Staff are sufficiently trained to take advantage of new job opportunities
- Unions are consulted on significant changes
- Job losses should be avoided at all costs. If they are unavoidable then people should be offered a compensatory package which includes re-training.

The Welsh Local Government Association has committed that local councils should consult and engage with unions about the implementation of their net zero plans.

To help branches engage on the impact of plans on their workers, Wales TUC has brought together a list of all the net zero plans we've been able to find on council's websites.

Find your local council's net zero plan

Each council is required to produce a net zero plan – please see the list below. The plans vary in terms of details, action and quality and have been produced at different times.

Suggested questions to ask local authority management about the council's net zero plan

- Will the implementation of the plan be agreed with trade unions?
- **As part of the net zero plan will the management agree to a transition agreement which ensures that:**
 - o **Staff are sufficiently trained to take advantage of new job opportunities**
 - o **Unions are consulted on significant changes**
 - o **Job losses should be avoided at all costs. If they are unavoidable then people should be offered a compensatory package which includes re-training.**
- Will the implementation plan include the following:
 - o clear targets that are understandable, tangible and up to date
 - o responsibilities for delivery; and systems for communicating and monitoring impacts through work with trade unions
 - o ensuring all staff are made aware of the plan and the work of the through the website, staff inductions and appropriate training courses and awareness-raising events
 - o feeding recommendations upwards from staff via the trade unions to the senior management team and reporting back on outcomes.

Table: List of local authority net zero plans and when published and related documents

Borough, city or county	Date net zero plan published
Anglesey	March 2022
Blaenau Gwent	Not dated, but appears to have been published in late 2019 or early 2020
Bridgend	March 2022
Caerphilly - strategy Caerphilly – action plan	Not dated, but appears to have been published in late 2020 or early 2021
Cardiff	October 2021
Carmarthenshire	March 2021
Ceredigion	Not dated, but appears to have been published in early 2021
Conwy	Not found online and we are awaiting response to a freedom of information request
Denbighshire	February 2021
Flintshire	February 2022
Gwynedd	March 2022
Merthyr Tydfil	In answer to a freedom of information request to the council, they said the plan is still in draft and not available publicly
Monmouthshire	November 2021
Neath Port Talbot	May 2020
Newport	2022
Pembrokeshire	2020
Powys	Not dated, but plan begins in 2021
Rhondda Cynon Taf	Not dated, but appears to be 2022
Swansea	Not dated
Torfaen	January 2022
Vale of Glamorgan	Not dated, but appears to be 2021
Wrexham	Not dated, but appears to be 2021
OTHER USEFUL REPORTS	
Welsh Government Social Care department	Decarbonising Social Care in Wales

Audit Wales	Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030 - Evidence Report
Welsh Local Government Association	Decarbonisation Planning: Review

Perhaps [the most detailed and high quality report has been produced by Newport council](#). Whilst each council will be taking a different approach, it is probably true that each will, in the medium to long term, have to follow similar ideas and processes to those outlined in Newport's plan.

Also included in the list is the national decarbonisation plan for social care. Whilst much of social care is delivered by private companies funded by councils, this is an important area for trade union activity and support.

Also included are two national reports on the standard of council's net zero reports. One is by Audit Wales; another is by the Welsh Local Government Association. And we have included a link to the Welsh Government's overall net zero plan, which includes their updated expectations of public bodies.

On the whole, the net zero plans published in 2022 are of higher quality than those published earlier. There was some criticism of the earlier plans from Welsh government, Audit Wales and even the WLGA. It is not clear if those councils who published early will improve their plans in light of feedback.

Local government net zero plans: examples of content

Here are some examples of the areas the reports identify which relate directly to the workforce, especially where new or expanded areas of work are identified. It is noteworthy that many of the older reports contain very little detail. An opportunity perhaps for branches to request more detail and that their councils produce better plans in line with feedback from national bodies.

Newport

- One of the very few net zero plans to mention staff involvement in consultation on preparing the plan
- Includes reference to staff training on decarbonisation
- Renewable heat plans
- Green infrastructure
- Honesty and openness around mileage rates, green fleet, green travel plans for staff
- Produced in 2022, after feedback from Audit Wales, Welsh Government and the WLGA had been circulated

Flintshire

- Staff commuting and measures to decarbonise these, including salary sacrifice for electric vehicles
- Unusually, there is a direct reference for the need to "engage employees and Trade Unions to renew job descriptions to include climate change responsibilities"
- New areas of work: electric vehicle fleet; public transport in general; land for carbon absorption.

Bridgend

- Updating job descriptions to include carbon responsibilities
- Buildings - energy efficiency upgrades, including low carbon heat and decommissioning boilers for new
- Staff travel including EVs etc
- Support hydrogen vehicle market
- Green infrastructure
- More recycling, in line with Welsh government policy