

Report to	<b>North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority</b>
Date	<b>16 January 2023</b>
Lead Officer	<b>Stuart Millington, Assistant Chief Fire Officer</b>
Contact Officer	<b>Stuart Millington, Assistant Chief Fire Officer</b>
Subject	<b>Audit Wales – Carbon Emissions Reduction Report</b>



## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide an overview of the Audit Wales Carbon Emissions Reduction Report following their audit of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority), as well as to describe the progress made in response to their findings.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 Between November 2021 and January 2022, Audit Wales sought to determine the Authority's progress towards becoming net carbon zero by 2030. Specifically, the question posed was '*Is the Authority making good progress in reducing its carbon emissions and fully contributing to Wales's public sector becoming carbon neutral by 2030?*'
- 3 Audit Wales determined that, '*It is unlikely that the Authority will meet its statutory obligations and become net carbon zero by 2030, unless there is a step change in performance*'.
- 4 In order to assist in achieving the necessary step change, Audit Wales made five recommendations which North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) has been addressing and has made significant progress towards during 2022.

## RECOMMENDATION

- 5 That Members:
  - (i) Note the content of the report; and
  - (ii) support the Service as we continue to strive towards achieving net carbon neutrality by 2030.

## BACKGROUND

4. In September 2021 the UK Government published a five-year Climate Change Strategy document with targets to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.
5. Wales shares the ambition of achieving net zero status by 2050, with an additional aspiration to achieve net zero status across the public sector by 2030.
6. In Wales, these aspirations are backed by legislation with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (as amended) and the subsequent three Climate Change (Wales) Regulations 2021 that describe the necessity for Welsh Government and all public sector partners, including Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), to demonstrate their commitment towards achieving carbon neutrality.

## INFORMATION

7. An examination of whether the *'Authority is making good progress in reducing its carbon emissions and fully contributing to Wales's public sector becoming carbon neutral by 2030'* was undertaken between November 2021 and January 2022.
8. In March 2022 Audit Wales determined that, *'It is unlikely that the Authority will meet its statutory obligations and become net carbon zero by 2030, unless there is a step change in performance'*.
9. In order to assist in achieving the necessary step change, Audit Wales made five recommendations. These were that we should:
  - develop an accurate carbon baseline;
  - develop a specific plan for carbon reduction;
  - revise the Vehicle Replacement Programme policy and agree the Authority's strategy for replacing diesel appliances and improving the charging infrastructure across the Service area;
  - engage and involve staff in planning for carbon emissions reduction to ensure that they take ownership of the Authority's plans for improvement and are fully contributing to delivery of key actions; and
  - strengthen how progress in delivering actions to reduce carbon emissions and delivery against Welsh Government targets are progressing and resulting in improvement.
10. At the time of audit, progress towards achieving carbon net zero status was at various different stages of maturity across the public sector, and this was dependent upon the resources or expertise available to each agency.

11. Prior to the audit it was recognised that the Service did not have any subject matter expertise and that it would be necessary to recruit an Environment and Sustainability Manager. The need for this expertise was reinforced further with the Audit Wales findings.
12. In August 2022 a subject matter expert was appointed and significant progress has already been made towards putting the Authority in a far stronger position towards achieving net carbon zero in line with Welsh Government targets.
13. Good progress has been made to gather the correct evidence to provide an accurate carbon baseline, and the drafting of a strategy and action plan for Authority approval is nearing completion. This will be presented to members at the next meeting.
14. Proposals for the reduction and removal of the use of diesel in our vehicles are being considered and there has been a significant investment in 2022 to improve the vehicle charging infrastructure across the Service's estate.
15. A new Environment and Sustainability group that reports to the Land and Property Committee, and which in turn reports to the Service Leadership Team, has been developed and brings together employee representatives from across the Service, improving ownership and reviewing progress and performance.
16. The Environment and Sustainability group that is chaired by the Environment and Sustainability Manager has developed a clear Terms of Reference document and has set improvement targets to put the Authority in the best position to achieve net carbon zero by 2030.
17. Whilst there is still extensive work to be done to achieve our objectives, the Authority has begun this work in earnest and is in a much stronger position today than it was at the time that the audit findings were published.

## IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Progress towards achieving carbon neutrality is supportive of a more resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales.
Budget	There will be a cost in achieving carbon neutrality that has to be balanced against the much higher cost of doing nothing. Opportunities to access grant funding have already been successful and both revenue and capital costs are being developed for future financial years as part of the medium-term planning assumptions.
Legal	The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (as amended) and the subsequent three Climate Change (Wales) Regulations 2021 place a legislative responsibility on the Authority to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030
Staffing	The Authority now employs a subject matter expert with extensive experience and qualification in the environment and climate change industry.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	N/A
Risks	The risk of not achieving the required position by 2030 is significantly reduced as the result of a clear direction and draft strategy now being in place.