

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd / Priorities for the Sixth Senedd
PR101
Ymateb gan Cymdeithas Ymddiriedolaethau Datblygu Cymru / Evidence from
Development Trusts Association Wales

Our Organisation and Network

The Development Trusts Association Wales (DTA Wales) is the national, membership organisation, supporting and promoting the dynamic networks of community owned development trusts and community enterprises in Wales.

We are part of a wider UK wide network, of 1000+ community based and owned enterprises, working together to transform and build sustainable and resilient communities. DTA Wales delivers bespoke support for the community enterprise sector through a range of programmes, peer to peer mentoring, mutual support, networking and knowledge and skills exchange.

This includes support for establishing viable and sustainable community owned enterprises, community asset ownership, community action on climate change and new community led housing.

Introduction

We welcome the Minister and Deputy Ministers priorities and agree that these are broadly the priorities the Committee should focus on, over the next 12 to 18 months and we have also suggested other areas that the Committee could include, or where there are opportunities for increased impact.

Our response is primarily from the perspective of our community and social enterprise sector we support and we have highlighted opportunities and examples of good practice and grass roots action on climate change, for the different priority areas, from our members, networks, and sector partners, that can be built upon and scaled up, to contribute to the collaborative achievements and impacts of these priorities.

Priorities for the Committee

The Priorities as set out for Government and Wales are rightfully ambitious and challenging and the Committee should examine how leverage can be better used to facilitate radical and rapid step change, to achieve these targets and aims, relating to decarbonisation and tackling climate change and investment in our communities, local economies, public health, and equality.

Given the overarching and cross cutting nature of the Climate Emergency the Committee should look at how these priorities and responsibilities are embedded and integrated across Government departments and how the welcome appointment of the new Minister and

Deputy Minister for Climate Change can use their lead to maximise step change and opportunities and ownership of this and ensure this happens.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage further with the Committee and provide examples of good practice by grass roots social and community enterprises and organisations and promote opportunities for further development and greater action on climate change and at COP26 and the COP Cymru Conference and further involvement in planning for this.

Energy

This is a key priority for the Committee to focus on and we welcome the ambitious targets for renewable energy generation in Wales by 2030 and for 1 gigawatt of renewable energy capacity to be locally owned by 2030. We would recommend investment and greater support for community owned, as well as locally owned, renewable energy enterprises and to build on the potential highlighted in Community Energy Wales's State of the Sector Report June 2021.

Awel Aman Tawe are an award winning community energy charity that has developed the largest community owned windfarm in Wales, and several associated community enterprises, such as the Egni Solar Coop and are just one of many examples of what can be achieved, across Wales and the wider job creation, local reinvestment, social and economic, as well as decarbonisation and climate impacts.

Marine Energy

If managed carefully this is an important priority and opportunity for Wales in meeting its targets.

One of our members Menter Môn, a social enterprise in Ynys Môn, is developing the Morlais tidal stream project, which manages a 35 km² area of seabed and aims to benefit local communities and economy and help tackle climate change, by using renewable energy to generate clean low carbon electricity. Morlais has the potential to generate up to 240 MW of electricity. Implementation will be phased which means technology will be installed on a small scale to begin with, to ensure that the development does not negatively impact marine wildlife.

Net Zero

This is again a key overarching and fundamental priority but the Committee could examine how the ambitious aim to engage every person, community, business and public servant in Wales, in tackling climate change, is delivered.

DTA Wales manages the successful long term Renew Wales collaborative programme, which demonstrates how communities can not only be engaged but directly own and be involved,

in local solutions, in diverse ways and locations in Wales, in delivering action on climate change and mutual support, through peer to peer mentoring, learning and knowledge exchange. Many of these communities already or have the potential to develop community enterprises or assets, linked to a just and green recovery.

Energy efficiency and savings and installing renewable technology, in community owned assets, has been a concern, for many of our members and other community enterprises or projects we have supported, through our Community Asset Transfer (CAT) and development support, many Renew Wales projects and our Energy Action Group (with UK wide community enterprise partners). Further investment is required to build on this and support retrofitting, energy efficiency and installation of renewables, in a large number of community owned assets and buildings across Wales.

Tree Planting

We welcome these ambitious targets for a significant increase in tree planting rates, of around 43,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030 and 180,000 hectares by 2050 and for a Woodland Wales Action Plan and potential role for communities, farmers and other landowners, across Wales, in planting, delivering and supporting this.

The Committee could consider if this could be part of or linked to the Nature and Biodiversity Priority and the need to be mindful of tree species, scale, location and the positive and sometimes negative impacts of large scale tree planting and forestry (on habitats/biodiversity, pollution, and flooding etc).

The Committee should ensure that large and small scale schemes maximise not just community engagement but also the social and economic value of community ownership, management and CAT, related community enterprise, local reinvestment, productive use of trees, greenspaces, and woodland resources, for recreation, public access, food production, biodiversity, education and wellbeing.

We and many other specialist third sector land, environmental and woodland organisations, have supported a range of communities wanting to take over community woodlands or land, for habitat, biodiversity, community orchards, new planting and community owned woodland development but have often found the transfer and acquisition of land difficult and restrictive.

Nature and Biodiversity

We welcome this fundamental priority and focus on halting and reversing the rapid loss of biodiversity and habitats, at an unprecedented rate and need for Wales to build resilient ecological networks.

The Committee could monitor if opportunities for greater community involvement and the potential for creating new community owned enterprises and sustainable green jobs, are

maximised and developed further, in taking action to tackle the nature and climate emergencies, protect sites of value and increase biodiversity.

We agree that much more needs to be done, as highlighted in the Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) to step up investment in resilient ecological networks and transformative change and reverse the loss of biodiversity and progress on this will need to be closely monitored and captured.

Examples of good practice and success from our Members in this priority area, we have supported include :-

Open Newtown CAT project, in Powys, are utilising natural assets and greenspaces as a focus for conservation, habitat management and biodiversity, resilience, recreation and enterprise. They have acquired 130 acres, through a CAT process, including, both sides of the riverbank, the large town park, sites for allotments and local food production, new orchards and site for a new Riverside Community and Visitor Hub and base for their nature and volunteer services.

Ecodyfi was established in 1998, in Machynlleth in the Dyfi valley and foster and support a greener economy and community, through renewable energy, responsible tourism and community development, nature and habitat management, health and social prescribing. They were the inspiration for and are one of the key partners in, the designation, development and management of the UNESCO Dyfi Biosphere area.

Circular Economy

The Committee should examine and build on the work of Circular Economy Wales and ways to actively involve community based enterprises in delivering local solutions, as well as engaging the private and public sectors.

DTA Wales supports the aims of and partners with Circular Economy Wales (CEW), a Community Interest Company, which supports enterprises that are actively involved in Re-use and Recycling. These organisations main purpose is creating wealth from waste and maximising its recirculation, to ensure long-term community benefit, trading collected material, creating new products and raising revenues to solve local problems.

Examples of CEW services include Prepare for Reuse Furniture and White Goods Centres, Green Sheds, starter packs for the homeless, the CELYN complementary currency system, community fridges, organic green materials recycling, sustainability information centres, zero waste schools project and local precious plastics recycling studios.

There could be radical changes to public and private procurement and supply chains, to drive the circular economy, decarbonisation, social value and climate benefits and make these a requirement of all contracts.

We welcome the work Oxfam Cymru, Well Being Economy Alliance and New Economics Foundation have done to promote the need for radical and transformational models for our

economy and future and are keen to see the potential for the Doughnut Economics Model at a City, Regional or Town level in Wales.

We would also recommend a Buy Local campaign to encourage people, businesses and the public sector to buy, commission and invest locally and ethically and help support and rebuild sustainable and resilient communities and local economies.

Environment

Renew Wales

Since 2012 the experience of the Renew Wales Programme and network, which we are the lead partner for and manage, that has supported hundreds of grassroots climate change actions and facilitated peer to peer support, by communities across Wales, is that ordinary citizens and community groups have both the will and capacity to take action and deliver transformational progress on climate change, nature, the environment and sustainable futures and economies more broadly. However, they are often undervalued and meet many challenges and barriers in developing and undertaking these projects and enterprises.

The Committee should look at, in terms of this and other priorities, how these barriers can be removed to maximise, scale up and build on the success and achievements of grass roots community action on climate change.

Transport

We welcome the priorities of the Wales Transport Strategy (WTS) 2021 that sets out the long-term vision for an accessible, sustainable and efficient transport system and focus on and responsibility for transport decarbonisation, including electric vehicles, air quality, and road user charging.

Many of our Members and community enterprises, from likeminded networks such as Community Energy Wales and the Renew Wales network, have developed local cycle and sustainable transport links, electric car sharing schemes, installed vehicle charging points and developed community transport services which could be replicated and rolled out across Wales.

Housing

This is again an important priority, for the Committee to monitor due to the impact of housing and the built environment and need to tackle fuel poverty and climate change. We agree that the focus should be on setting and monitoring the implementation of robust standards, for the retrofit of social homes and the emphasis on the need to significantly improve the design, quality and climate impacts, of private developments and all new build

homes in Wales in the future.

DTA Wales are a partner with Wales Cooperative Centre in the Communities Creating Homes Project, funded by the Welsh Government and the Nationwide Foundation, which provides access to information, support, advice and technical expertise to organisations across Wales. We have particularly supported and provided mentoring, for first steps, local communities and organisations, interested in exploring community-led housing schemes in their area. A number of these have also expressed a specific positive intent for developing energy efficient, low impact community led housing and one planet developments and have wider environmental objectives, linked to sustainable land ownership and management, biodiversity and food production.

Town Centre Regeneration

We agree that securing the long term sustainability of our town and city centres is fundamental, due to their significant climate impacts but think that the committee should also look at this in the context of the whole built and natural environment and impacts of development, planning and regeneration schemes.

As well as driving footfall and making them attractive places to be, there is a bigger opportunity for the Committee to look at, to revision and reclaim Town Centres and Cities, as healthy, low impact traffic free environments, as community spaces and maximise opportunities for community asset ownership and management, enabling more sustainable, enterprising, productive and creative use of neglected, empty spaces , buildings, land and greenspaces by community enterprises, social and cultural entrepreneurs and SME's.

The Transforming Towns programme is a step in the right direction but needs further investment and better access and involvement of communities and locally owned enterprises and social entrepreneurs, focussed on improving biodiversity and green infrastructure, repurposing neglected properties, increasing flexible working and living space and providing access to services and leisure.

DTA Wales for many years, has supported a number of its members and other organisations, to secure (through CAT or purchase) and develop community owned assets, in Towns and Cities, housing areas and rural communities, across Wales, with some significant and innovative achievements but not without many obstacles in acquiring the assets. Many have also put sustainable design, energy efficiency, renewable technology, and biodiversity at the heart of their developments, not just as a requirement.

Examples include PLANED, who have always had sustainable development as their core mission, who were the original lead and inspiration behind the regeneration of Narberth Town and its development and revitalisation, as an independent business, food and local produce destination.

Galeri Caernarfon development trust are an exemplar of what can be achieved, with high quality, community owned development and regeneration. Galeri originally started in 1992 as Cwmni Tref, with a focus on Town Centre regeneration, within the walled town, where more than 50% of the properties were completely derelict. They now own and have regenerated more than 28 properties within the Town and surrounding areas as retail shops, cafes, a Pub, bookshop, craft outlets etc with live above the shop community housing too. Their aims for economic, cultural, environmental and social regeneration and bringing local people and visitors back into the walled town has been a huge success and independently evaluated. This led to development of the award winning, sustainably designed, Galeri creative enterprise centre, on the Victoria Dock side, which put Caernarfon and the region on the map, as a cultural destination and hub. This was followed by a large private sector retail, hotel and housing development, alongside Galeri, by the construction company involved with Galeri and inspired by this to invest in high quality development. Galeri are currently involved in another major waterfront redevelopment, as Project Manager, adjacent to the castle.

Open Newtown, a Town Centre CAT Project in Powys, (mentioned above as well under Nature and Biodiversity) who have worked in partnership with the town council, are another innovative example we have supported and mentored, as part of the National Lottery Community Fund CAT Programme. In Newtown greenspaces and natural assets have been the driver for sustainable regeneration and a base for community owned economic development and management of 130 acres, for biodiversity, habitats and conservation, cycle networks, food production, recreation and riverside visitor facilities and linked to a circular economy hub in the Town Centre.

Other examples we have supported are the CAT and development of the former Town Halls in Llangefni, by Menter Mon and in Llandeilo by Menter Bro Dinefwr, the Cynon Linc Community Hub in Aberdare, by Age Connects Morgannwg and Llanrumney Hall Trust, in Llanrumney and Grangetown Pavilion Centre, in Grangetown, Cardiff.

Food and Farming

Food production and supply and Farming are a priority which are not currently included, which we recommend the Committee should consider, in terms of the context of its cross cutting impacts on emissions, climate change, our economy, food security, health and wellbeing.

In this regard we would endorse the response and recommendations to the Committee by the Food Policy Alliance Cymru.

As an example of good practice, that can be built upon, DTA Wales are a partner in a recently approved collaborative Resilient Green Spaces project, led by UK and Wales charity Social Farms & Gardens, which will pilot alternative and re-localised food systems using communities and their green spaces as a driving force for change across Wales. This

innovative partnership project will empower communities across Wales and lead the way for change, for the benefit of growers, consumers, and the climate.

It has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.