



Cynulliad Hinsawdd
Climate Assembly

Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly

FAQs document

Updated 23 March 2021

Introduction to Climate Change

Answers provided by Chris Blake

1. Can I see emissions broken down by sector and what is the progress on meeting emissions targets in Wales?
2. What impact can changes in Blaenau Gwent have nationally and internationally?
3. With Blaenau Gwent being a formal coal mining area, do all the slag heaps etc still make a difference to pollution? Are post coal mining areas still causing climate change?
4. What is biomimicry and could this be applied in Blaenau Gwent?
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Climate change and questions of fairness / behaviour change

Answers provided by Lorraine Whitmarsh

1. How can we educate adults as well as children on Climate Change?
2. Is there something we can do to bridge the generational gap and learn from each other?
3. How can we get people to change behaviour?



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The Just Transition to Net Zero

Answers by Julie Froud

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2. Do we know what the figures of emissions v income are in relation to local area?

Young People and Climate Change

Answers by Darcey Howell and Mara Moruz

1. Can they identify what made them interested in this?
2. What was the tipping point that made them take it seriously (compared to other classmates)?

Gwent Energy

Answers by Phil Powell, Gwent Energy CIC

1. Who is installing and supports and maintains them (the panels) if it goes wrong -do Gwent Energy CIC maintain them?
2. You sell the energy back to the grid, what % is subsidised by taxpayer?
3. Government has reduced funding for solar panels, is this true, and is there any way we can persuade BLAENAU GWENT local authority to bring back funding for this?

Fuel Poverty

Answers by Ben Saltmarsh, NEA

1. What can the community do to help people in fuel poverty?



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Housing - Retrofit

Answers by Catrin Maby

1. How can you reassure social tenants that retrofitting work will benefit them? e.g. some tenants still have issues with damp.
2. Is retrofitting enough or do we need to change the heat is sourced? Do we still need to do more?

Answers by Paul Gibson

1. Is he willing to take on apprentices?
2. The focus is on Housing Association/Council - does he work with private housing?
3. How can we bring the cost of heat pumps down?

Housing – New Build

Answers by Neil Robins, United Welsh

1. How many of the new homes have already been built from Welsh factories?
2. Are the houses you build durable, they seem a bit flimsy. MMC involve huge amount of plastics, how do you align that with climate change?

Housing – Jobs and Skills

Answers provided by Julie Froud

1. General theme of more information/communication needed about opportunities available and for whom?
2. How long term are the retrofit jobs?

Transport

Answers provided by Neil Lewis

1. Can Neil tell us more about the electric car club scheme? How do you set it up? What are the costs?



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2. What is the reality of home charging at terraced properties?
3. Will technology be able to keep up with our plans for greater low carbon infrastructure?
4. How would they encourage people to share a car instead of each having one given people's dependence on them/scheduling issues?
5. How do we make EVs affordable?

Nature and Green Space – Globally Responsible Wales

Answers provided by Barbara Davies-Quy and Kevin Rahman Daultrey, Size of Wales

1. We would like to know what products containing sustainable palm oil look like? What certifications should we look for?
2. How can more ethical food products be made more affordable for all?
3. How do we encourage our Council to purchase more ethical products?
4. How can we recognise other sustainable products?
5. What do you suggest in terms of education around coffee /chocolate and other things around purchasing? What does it mean locally in BG?

Nature and Green Space – Management in Wales

Answers provided by Fen Turner, NRW

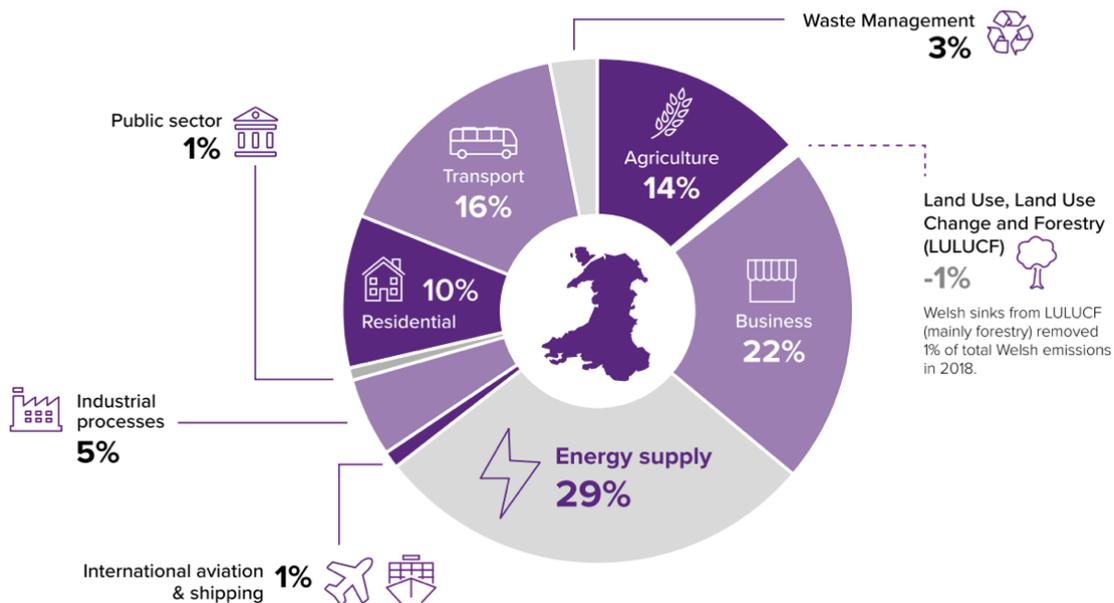
1. How do we balance the need for new houses being built using timber whilst protecting our existing green spaces? Housing target of 5000 new homes - where's the space? How are competing priorities balanced?
2. Does NRW manage the forests in Wales?
3. Biodiversity - Are green spaces also about bringing nature back and animals that are no longer here or not in the numbers they should be? What part do green spaces play in that?
4. Is there a Welsh strategy for planting trees for timber?
5. How can we improve accessibility for people in BG?

Introduction to Climate Change

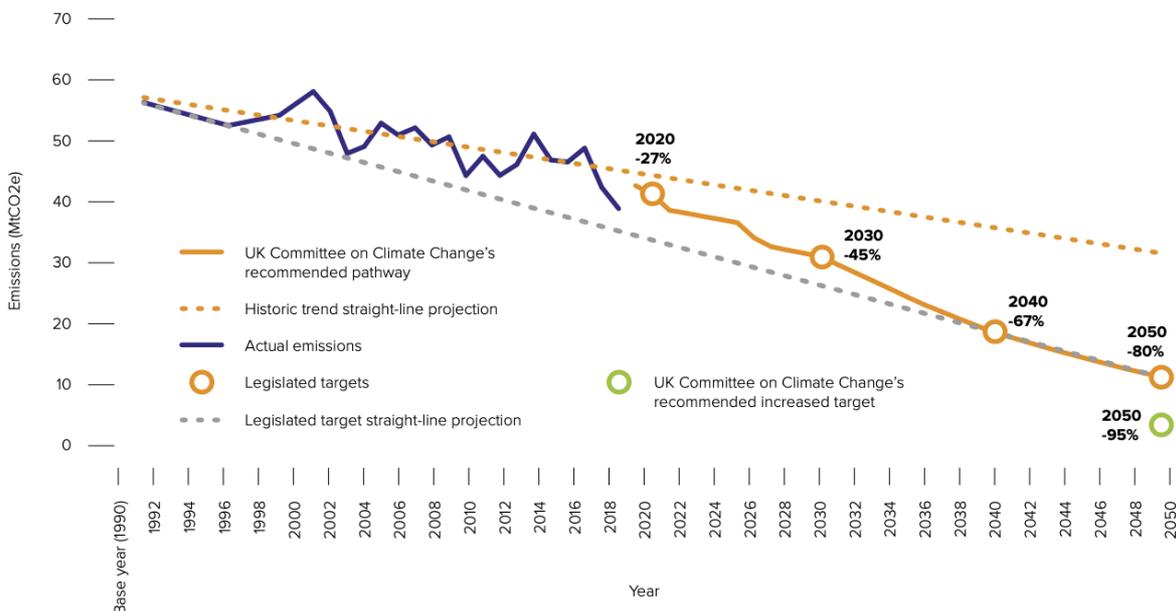
Answers provided by Chris Blake

1. Can I see emissions broken down by sector and what is the progress on meeting emissions targets in Wales?

Wales' greenhouse gas emissions 2018



Progress made in meeting Greenhouse Gas Emissions targets in Wales





2. What impact can changes in Blaenau Gwent have nationally and internationally?

Very roughly - the carbon emissions per person in BLAENAU GWENT are about the same as the global average.

BLAENAU GWENT - 70,000 people - 400,000 tCO₂e / per person per year. World 7,000,000,000 people. 40,000,000,000 tCO₂e / per person per year! So, BLAENAU GWENT is about 1/100,000th of the world's population and about 1/100,000th of the world's emissions. So, if the people of BLAENAU GWENT can get to net zero - and everyone else can, then we can keep global warming to under 2 degrees.

But part of the reduction in gas emissions places like Wales has been because our industry has closed. We now import steel (and most things) from China so a large part of China's gas emissions are due to our demands. So, we have to think not just about what we can do locally, within BLAENAU GWENT, but also the impact of our choices has on global emissions.

3. With Blaenau Gwent being a formal coal mining area, do all the slag heaps etc still make a difference to pollution? Are post coal mining areas still causing climate change?

This is a really interesting question and made me do some research.

First the good news. Slag heaps can actually absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere! The chemistry of the process is being researched at Cardiff University. Capturing carbon from the atmosphere is called sequestration. It seems slag heaps can help reduce carbon dioxide levels. <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/news/view/739751-slag-heaps-could-help-pull-carbon-from-the-atmosphere>

But the old mines workings continue to leak methane into the atmosphere. Methane is trapped in the coal seams and the surrounding rocks. The mine shafts and old workings allow this methane to get into the atmosphere. There are projects that try to capture this escaping methane from disused mines and burn it - producing carbon dioxide. This does reduce climate change because methane is about 70 times more powerful as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/coal-mines-emit-more-methane-than-oil-and-gas-sector-study-finds>

It is the methane in the rock that fracking tries to reach. Coal mine methane has to find its way through cracks and shafts. The fracking industry push water under pressure into the earth to create small cracks (fractures) in the rock which forces the methane out. There is evidence that fracking does result in a large amount of methane escaping into the atmosphere. Fracking can also pollute water and cause earthquakes but is not permitted in Wales.

4. What is biomimicry and could this be applied in Blaenau Gwent?

According to the Biomimicry Institute, biomimicry can be defined as



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“an approach to innovation that seeks sustainable solutions to human challenges by emulating nature’s time-tested patterns and strategies. The goal is to create products, processes, and policies—new ways of living—that are well-adapted to life on earth over the long haul.”

Biomimicry is often thought of as an inspiration for design - copying the passive cooling used in termite nests for buildings, for example. But it can also refer to using agricultural systems. Permaculture is a set of design principles centred around whole systems thinking, copying the patterns and observed in natural ecosystems. The plans that Welcome to Our Woods have developed (Ian Thomas - witness, Saturday 6th) with the community would use mixed woodland and grazing to replace block forestry.

5. Natural vs manmade solutions - which are better? e.g peat bogs vs technical solutions?

My quick response to this is that the challenge is so great that we need both - natural and technical solutions. To get from more than 40 GtCO₂e annually to net zero in thirty years is the biggest and fastest shift I think the globe has ever seen. Net zero means that we are going to have to capture carbon in as many ways as we can. This will include restoring peat bogs, planting trees, re-wilding, restoring sea grass and much more besides. This will need governmental support to landscape managers to change current practices and also a change in behaviour in food producers and consumers. Re-wetting peat bogs, reducing the land available for grazing animals (and a reduction in meat consumption). As well as the carbon benefits this can also bring about much needed habitat improvements which can improve biodiversity.

We may need technical solutions to carbon capture as well. There is an in-depth analysis in The Guardian today which talks about all aspects of getting to net zero including technical carbon capture.

"The “net” in net zero, therefore, acknowledges that some leftover emissions will have to be offset, through a vast restoration of nature’s carbon storage – soils and trees – across an area three times the size of California alongside a ramp-up in manmade versions, with about 1,000 industrial facilities fitted with technology to capture their emissions. This will be a mind-boggling undertaking, involving the construction of 110,000km of new pipelines – an “interstate CO₂ highway system” – to convey the trapped carbon dioxide to be injected underground in rock formations found in the south-east, midwest and west coast.

The full article link is below and it includes an analysis of what we have to do by 2050 for America to meet its Paris commitments.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/mar/15/race-to-zero-america-emissions-climate-crisis>

6. What can we actually do rather than what we should do? What is the next step with the resources available?

My main message is that there is a lot that we can do - just by making simple choices.

The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) published just a few months ago a proposed pathway for Wales to net zero. I had this chart as one of my slides in my presentation on the 6th but there wasn’t time to go into what it means (chart copied below). Everyone will have to play



their part - consumers (us), business, and government (national and local). The things that we can do as consumers include:

- Reducing demand (just buy less stuff, take fewer flights), something we can all do and also buying things that are produced locally. Paul Allen in his talk about Zero Carbon Britain has a great quote which applies to some extent to all of us - “we buy things we don’t need, with money we don’t have, to impress people we don’t like”!
- Improve efficiency - better insulated homes, less waste.
- Electrification - electric cars and electric heat pumps (we can choose but will need governments to support us)
- Low carbon electricity generation - PV on the roof or buy green electric tariffs but again a big role for national government.
- Offset emissions using land - this will need us to think about what food we buy. More food that is locally produced, in season, and including more vegetables and less meat, less dairy. These changes we can make will allow farmers to grow more trees.

There are things in the list that we can’t directly influence such as carbon capture from the fossil fuel industry and hydrogen technology.

What this shows is that we can get there but we all have to work together. We do have a lot of power as both consumers and voters. And every time a consumer makes a choice it sends a message to business to change where they invest. So, a double benefit!

As voters we need to tell all political parties that these things matter - that tackling climate change needs the focus that we see in war time. We need governments to help us change how we heat our homes, generate the electricity in the grid, and make electric cars affordable and easy to use, promote hydrogen and low carbon electricity.

So I think there is more that we can do than it sometimes seems!



7. Can peat bogs be created/developed or is it only a natural occurrence?

There is a very good summary of the importance of peat bogs to climate change here.

<https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/peatlands-and-climate-change>

Peat bogs hold an enormous amount of carbon. The biggest priority is stop the carbon that is already in the bog from being released. This means stopping draining, converting to farmland, burning or otherwise damaging peat bogs.

If we manage peat bogs well then they will continue to grow and take in more carbon dioxide. As the link reports - there are over 3 million square km of peat bogs worldwide so rather than try to create new ones I think the priority should be to restore and enlarge the ones we have.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has presented 10 strategic actions that can ensure peatlands contribute their full potential to global agreements such as the Paris Agreement on climate change and Sustainable Development Goals. These include:

- assessing the distribution and state of peatlands
- measuring and reporting emissions from peatlands
- protecting and restoring peatlands with targeted financial support
- stimulating market-based mechanisms to support peatlands
- engaging and supporting local communities
- sharing experience and expertise on peatland conservation, restoration and improved management.



Climate change and questions of fairness / behaviour change

Answers provided by Lorraine Whitmarsh

1. How can we educate adults as well as children on Climate Change?

There are various ways we can provide information to inform people's decision-making. Citizens' assemblies are one example, but we can also make information more widely available (e.g., information campaigns and web resources) and at the points that people are actually making decisions. So, things like labelling on products that shows the carbon emissions is one way (though can be quite complex to calculate). Workplace training (e.g., carbon literacy courses) can also help inform people about how they can take action in their professional roles. Information is most effective when it relates to what people care about (e.g., telling people about the health and financial benefits of walking, as well as the environmental benefits).

2. Is there something we can do to bridge the generational gap and learn from each other?

Having structured discussions and debates with diverse groups - including citizens' assemblies, workplace fora, and community meetings - can help bring people together who might not otherwise get many chances to learn from one another. We know people of different ages have different views on climate change but also on consumption, and so ensuring younger and older groups are included in decisions relating to climate change is very important. But also showing what we have in common across age groups - such as valuing nature and avoiding waste - can help show that the generational differences aren't as great as they may seem.

3. How can we get people to change behaviour?

There are lots of things we need to do: educating people can help but by itself tends not to be very effective. We also need to change prices/costs so low-carbon products/services are cheaper than high-carbon ones (e.g., by taxes/charges and subsidies/incentives); and change rules and laws so that low-carbon choices are more available, attractive, and 'normal' than high-carbon ones. One example is changing travel behaviour - getting people out of their cars and walking/cycling or using public transport more involves educating people about the various benefits of these alternatives (e.g. health, saving money, convenience), but also making it harder to drive or park in cities whilst also making public and active transport easier, safer, cheaper etc. For more info see: <https://cast.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CAST-briefing-01-Engaging-the-public-on-low-carbon-lifestyle-change-min.pdf>



The Just Transition to Net Zero

Answers provided by Julie Froud

1. Can we have clarity on types of jobs which could be lost and could be created?

The just transition will lead to three kinds of changes in terms of jobs.

1. Some kinds of jobs will be lost. This is most likely to be those involved in making products or using technologies that will be phased out. E.g. a shift from carbon based energy like coal and oil will reduce jobs in those industries; or, less use of steel or concrete in construction. This is likely to be gradual as most aspects of the transition are about change over time not big bang. It's also fair to say that in countries like the UK, many of these jobs (e.g. in steel production or coal mining) have been declining for many years, quite unrelated to climate change mitigation.
2. Some new jobs will be created making or using technologies and products that produce less emissions. For example, making solar panels or wind turbines for renewable energy. Or constructing timber frames for new buildings. Retrofitting homes will create many jobs.
3. Probably the largest change will be in reskilling existing jobs over time. This is most obvious in construction, but also in many manufacturing jobs where new processes may be required to reduce energy use or waste. For example, a shift from petrol or diesel powered vehicles to electric vehicles in the same factory will require reskilling of workers.

There have been some calculations of the possible scale of new green jobs. For example [Wales TUC have proposed large scale investment in infrastructure across Wales to create up to 59,000 jobs](#), including in construction, energy, transport and land management. This depends on significant investment of £6 billion.

There have been few detailed studies which compare likely job losses with job creation at an area level. Some new jobs could be created all over Wales: for example homes everywhere need retrofit so there are opportunities to create jobs. Other jobs like in new energy technologies will be concentrated in a few places (and not necessarily in the same places that jobs are lost).

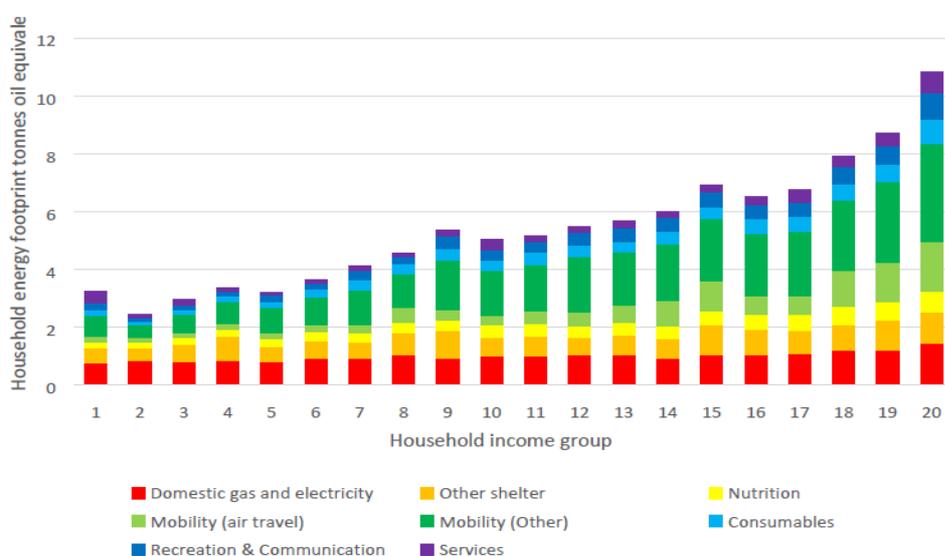


2. Do we know what the figures of emissions v income are in relation to local area?

It's a good question which we can think about in the following way.

Emissions in a local authority area like Blaenau Gwent will depend on two things:

1. Industry use - emissions are very uneven across local authority areas because this depends on how much oil/gas or coal based electricity generation takes place, as well as production of energy intensive products like steel. Production of these products and the emissions they produce is quite concentrated, but they are distributed to other areas. So a relatively low income local authority area with a large power station will produce a lot of carbon, but much of the electricity generated goes into the national grid and is consumed elsewhere.
2. Household use - During the first weekend of the Climate assembly, Lorraine Whitmarsh shared a graph of household energy use by income level which shows that as household income rises, so does energy use overall. As average household income in Blaenau Gwent is low, relative to Wales or UK averages, it is likely that energy use will probably be lower than average too.



If you are interested, you can find a map of carbon dioxide emissions by local authority area in this publication:



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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/894785/2005-18-local-authority-co2-emissions-statistical-release.pdf

The maps are on pages 24-28 and show emissions overall and from industry, transport and land use.



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Young People and Climate Change

Answers by Darcey Howell and Mara Moruz

1. Can they identify what made them interested in Climate Change?

Darcey: I had learned about it previously in school and I was a bit scared about the fact that my children, grandchildren and future generations from there would suffer with what is happening now.

Mara: Since learning about Climate Change in school in more depth I became more aware of the changes that I had to make to become more carbon friendly. When this opportunity came through the Youth Forum I jumped at the opportunity and to see where it would take me.

2. What was the tipping point that made them take it seriously (compared to other classmates)?

Darcey: I saw it plastered all over Social Media and thought wow if so many people are doing this then it must be big cause. Many people in my age group would just be like whatever and just keep scrolling but I stayed and wanted to know more about it.

Mara: Knowledge about the cause is what made me change most. Compared to other students when I heard the word 'irreversible' it scared me and motivated me to change as I knew that it was my children and grandchildren that would suffer as a consequence of what my generation are doing without knowing.

Gwent Energy

Answers by Phil Powell, Gwent Energy CIC

1. Who is installing and supports and maintains them (the panels) if it goes wrong -do Gwent Energy CIC maintain them?

Gwent Energy will be installing the panels and will be the counterparty of the power purchase agreement and roof lease agreement required for the systems. Gwent Energy will design the system and procure the panels and will be providing full warranty for the period of agreement. After this the panels have the remainder of a 20-year warranty, and the inverters have the remainder of a 10-year warranty. In the event of failures or repairs not covered by warranty these would be met from the income before community benefit is given.



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2. You sell the energy back to the grid, what % is subsidised by taxpayer?

The intention is to use as much of the power on site as possibly because selling to the grid is a very poor return and may not cover the metering costs.

There is no taxpayer subsidy for generating solar power or power sales. The system installation and running costs must be met entirely from the power sales to the building hosting the system. It will be important to get a reliable host with a long-term future, not all sites will pass this test.

3. Government has reduced funding for solar panels, is this true, and is there any way we can persuade BLAENAU GWENT local authority to bring back funding for this?

A new feed in tariff would de-risk the scheme considerably but it's unlikely to occur under a tory government who removed the previous tariff support 2 years ago.



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Fuel Poverty

Answers by Ben Saltmarsh, NEA

1. What can the community do to help people in fuel poverty?

If someone you know is having difficulties – e.g. struggling to afford to keep their home warm, or in debt with their energy supplier – please encourage them to get support. Help is available. There are a number of free, confidential services which can support with things like gas and electricity accounts, setting up affordable repayments, getting the best energy deal, saving energy at home, maximising income, or accessing grants and emergency hardship funds. This might mean reaching out to a local support organisation, Citizens Advice office, Care & Repair, housing association or NEA's own ['Warm and Safe Homes' Advice Service](#). These organisations provide one-to-one support and sometimes run group community workshops too. And as the way we use and buy energy changes in the future, there may be other ways the community can support people in fuel poverty. You may have solar PV panels on your roof, for example, and be able to pass on spare energy you've generated to a neighbour.

Housing - Retrofit

Answers by Catrin Maby

1. How can you reassure social tenants that retrofitting work will benefit them? e.g. some tenants still have issues with damp.

This is probably best answered by the social housing providers, but this in case it is helpful this is what I would say if I was advising someone:

There are several possible causes for damp – it can be rainwater getting in through leaky roof, pointing etc, gutters needing maintenance, rising damp. A more energy efficient home is usually easier to heat, and so can help to dry out a house after such problems are fixed. Damp from condensation (water vapour produced by everyday living condensing on cold surfaces) is often improved by energy efficient retrofit, because of warmer interior surfaces, more affordable heat and more manageable ventilation. The risk of actually causing a new damp problem through retrofit that I am most familiar with is where ventilation is reduced without getting the rest right (so it's still cold in the home but less well ventilated)– although there can also be problems where insulation isn't done right (such as cavity insulation in a wall that is already damp).

There are various clues to whether a damp problem has been caused by condensation or rainwater penetration – such as where the damp is, what it looks like and what kind of weather affects it.

2. Is retrofitting enough or do we need to change the heat is sourced? Do we still need to do more?



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The term retrofit usually applies to adding to an existing building – so it could mean adding a new heating system, as well as fabric measures (insulation and ventilation/draughts). And to achieve the big carbon savings we need to either get the fabric so good that no or very little heating is needed, or to retrofit a low carbon heating source, such as a heat pump powered by renewable electricity. In either case, a heat source for hot water will also be needed too.

Housing - Retrofit

Answers by Paul Gibson, Gibson Specialist Technical Services

1. Are you willing to take on apprentices?

Gibsons take on two or three apprentices every year.

At the moment 90% of our work is for social housing bodies with the remaining 10% split between universities and private clients.

2. The focus is on Housing Association/Council - does he work with private housing?

At the moment 90% of our work is for social housing bodies with the remaining 10% split between universities and private clients.

3. How can we bring the cost of heat pumps down?

I believe heat pumps will decrease in price as the number of units available on the market increases, similar to that experienced with solar panels which decreased in price by 40% over a period of five years.

Housing – New Build

Answers by Neil Robins, United Welsh

1. How many of the new homes have already been built from Welsh factories?

I don't know how many homes have being built in total, but can confirm in 2018 Welsh factories manufactured around 3240 units, of which 1340 were built in Wales, figures for 2016 were 1210 and 2017 1170 units (Source: Egan Consulting "TIMBER FRAME HOUSING MANUFACTURE IN WALES ITS CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY March 2019")



2. Are the houses you build durable, they seem a bit flimsy. MMC involve huge amount of plastics, how do you align that with climate change?

All homes are built to last a minimum of 60 years using sustainable materials such as structural timber which has low embodied carbon, we would aim to avoid any materials that were not sustainable.

Housing – Jobs and Skills

Answers by Professor Julie Froud

1. General theme of more information/communication needed about opportunities available and for whom?

In the next few years, most of the opportunities for new jobs in retrofit will be the result of the housing associations because they have been tasked with developing processes for retrofit of social housing quite quickly. Housing associations will need to find contractors to do this work. The housing associations have said that they are keen to work with local firms in Blaenau Gwent, as they have already been doing. As retrofit scales up, the extent to which they can do this depends on several things, including how many local businesses are interested in taking on this work including developing new skills and what support these firms and their workforce are given to make this possible.

2. Lots of unused buildings in town centres. Can these be reused/repurposed for homelessness? Or to a better standard?

The re-use of buildings in town centres depends on planning permissions and availability of funding from local authorities, housing associations and other organisations. There is a lively debate going on across Wales about how to make better use of town centres, including locating more services there and building and/or repurposing to provide more homes, including for older people.

There is a good example in Bangor of a housing association (Adra) creating flats for homeless people right on the high street. In this case it is a new building on an empty site (a building had been knocked down a few years earlier); but in another location it could be a conversion or repurposing. You can see this story here:

<https://www.northwaleschronicle.co.uk/news/18929611.bangor-homeless-flats-approved-amid-claims-citys-gentrification/>



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3. How long term are the retrofit jobs?

It will take many years to retrofit the 1.4 million homes in Wales. The current plan is to do this by 2050, starting with social housing. While these jobs won't last for ever, a twenty year time frame is long enough for businesses to plan and for it to be worthwhile to think about reskilling. Even when all the homes are retrofitted, there will be an ongoing need for maintenance and upgrading, as with any home.

The Construction Industry Training Board estimates the need for 12,000 new jobs in Wales by 2028 to meet the net zero target by 2050. This is similar to other estimates:
https://www.business-live.co.uk/enterprise/thousands-new-construction-jobs-needed-20114783?utm_source=twitter.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=sharebar

Nature and Green space – Globally responsible Wales

Answers by Barbara Davies Quy and Kevin Rahman Daultrey, Size of Wales

1. We would like to know what products containing sustainable palm oil look like? What certifications should we look for?

Products that contain sustainable palm oil may include the RSPO logo on their packaging.



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Chester Zoo have an excellent sustainable palm oil shopping list which lists the brands that use sustainable palm oil for the following products – biscuits, bread, cakes and baking, cereals, chocolate and sweets, dairy and spreads, desserts, energy bars, meat, seafood and substitutes, pet food, pizza, pies and pastries, rice, pasta, boodles, grains and pulses, sauces, stock and seasoning, savoury snacks.

https://www.chesterzoo.org/app/uploads/sites/3/2019/11/Chester_Zoo_Sustainable_Palm_Oil_Shopping_List_v5_Oct_2019.pdf

[Some supermarkets use their own sustainable palm oil logos, for example Sainsburys. Check the back of the packet of goods to see if they highlight what type of palm oil they use. You can often also check manufacturers website for details on their sustainability.](#)

2. How can more ethical food products be made more affordable for all?

We believe that there should be greater subsidies for farming and incentives for farmers who switch to nature-friendly farming systems (e.g. reducing dependency on soy animal feed that might be causing deforestation of rainforests in South America). In doing so, we hope to create a sustainable farming system that can provide good food for all which meets the highest standards of animal welfare and environmental protection.

By reducing the quantity but improving the quality of meat that we eat, this can have a positive impact, not just on the environment, but also on our health too. Whilst organic meat might cost more, if you are eating less meat the cost is the same.

We should also be looking at how much food we consume and ensure that we cut down on food waste. There are huge benefits to promoting community growing projects for people to learn how to grow healthy, organic food to help supplement their diet. By ensuring a more local supply, we can also reduce the financial and environmental costs associated with the transportation of food.

3. How do we encourage our Council to purchase more ethical products?

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) puts in place seven well-being goals that public bodies, such as Blaenau Gwent Council must work towards achieving. By putting in place clear commitments to becoming a deforestation free Council, Blaenau Gwent will not only contribute to the goal of being globally responsible, but also a prosperous, resilient and healthier nation.

- A Prosperous Wales by procuring locally-sourced, organically produced beef, supporting local economies and setting the standard for other Welsh public authorities



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- A Resilient Wales by reducing its impact on tropical forests and helping to protect and conserve biodiversity, reducing pressure on complex ecosystems and ecosystem services. Removing imported deforestation could also help contribute to the S6 biodiversity duty (Environment (Wales) Act 2016)
- A Globally Responsible Wales by ensuring sustainable social and environmental practices are used e.g. through certification schemes such as Fairtrade, building on Wales' status as a Fairtrade Nation, and Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). Having a preference for locally- produced organic beef, would also reduce the carbon emissions associated with transport i.e. the fuel needed to import from tropical regions
- A Healthier Wales by eating less but better quality meat and eating less processed food (that may contain palm oil and beef from overseas). Furthermore, whilst the current COVID-19 pandemic cannot be attributed to deforestation, previous disease outbreaks can¹ and this is also one of the growing areas of concern in terms of likely impacts of climate change. There is growing evidence that stopping deforestation can prevent pandemics² - to reduce the risk of future COVID-19 like pandemics, we must address deforestation.

The Wales Procurement Policy Statement issued in 2012 set a clear definition of value for money in Wales, taking a holistic view of public procurement as a driver of social, economic and environmental benefits. Community Benefits is a requirement of the policy statement and a principle in its own right, reinforcing its importance. Wales is already on the road to deforestation free procurement having become a Fairtrade Nation ten years ago. By adopting a deforestation approach, Blaenau Gwent Council will also embed social value into the commissioning and procurement of food, complementing the new National Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) Framework for Measuring Social Value.

Size of Wales is currently developing a deforestation free procurement toolkit for public sector bodies to help them assess their global deforestation risk and putting together online modules that can help procurement teams understand how to source ethical goods.

Blaenau Gwent Council should:

- Commit to a deforestation free approach in its public procurement practices across the council. See point 4.
- Train procurement teams to improve ethical sourcing.
- Use some of the resources produced by Size of Wales (toolkit and online modules) to strengthen its capacity on deforestation free procurement.
- Show climate leadership by committing to work towards being the first deforestation free Council in Wales and show global leadership in the run up to COP26. We are already seeing other countries and states introducing commitments on deforestation. The French Government have produced a zero deforestation guide for public procurement. The State of California (sixth largest economy in the world) has introduced the California Deforestation-Free Procurement Act. We think this would be an excellent opportunity to share learning and experiences internationally and show how Wales and Blaenau Gwent can put into practice its commitment to

¹ Nature (2017) Recent loss of closed forests is associated with Ebola virus disease outbreaks [online] <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-017-14727-9>

² Scientific American (2020) Stopping Deforestation Can Prevent Pandemics [online] <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/stopping-deforestation-can-prevent-pandemics1/>



being a globally responsible nation in the run up to COP26 and join a global movement of governments that want to tackle the global deforestation crisis.

4. How can we recognise other sustainable products?



BEEF	Buy locally produced beef that is 100 per cent grass fed or organic. Reducing our meat consumption will also help.	
SOY	Buy organic soy-based products and buy grass and corn fed animal products.	
PALM	Buy products that contain sustainable palm oil and are certified by the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil.	
COCOA & COFFEE	Stick to Fairtrade which includes a no deforestation criteria.	
OTHER DRIVERS	Stick to recognised certification processes such as FSC for timber and Fairtrade for sugar.	

Current forest risk commodity certification schemes are an important step forward however they do have their limitations including the challenge of monitoring, disclosure and enforcement. There is no substitute for rigorous mandatory due diligence by companies on their supply chains.

As part of our deforestation free nation pledge, we are also suggesting that people should eat less but better quality meat and consider eating more plant based foods e.g. *Meat free Mondays*.

[Giki](#) is a free to download mobile app that provides ethical and sustainability information about more than 250,000 products in supermarkets. The 13 'badges' that are awarded to products based on how ethical, sustainable or healthy they are. They can tell you anything from whether the packaging is recyclable to whether ingredients were sourced responsibly or if it is a healthier option for you.

More and more people are buying ethically sourced goods. Prices for organic food for example have been falling dramatically over the last five years as more and more organic food is sold.

A lot of retailers are taking action on deforestation. For example, in October 2020, M&S announced that it had eliminated soy feed from the production of all its milk. In 2017, the Co-op became the first UK retailer to source all the cacao used as in ingredients on Fairtrade terms. All its own brand coffee is Fairtrade.

5. What do you suggest in terms of education around coffee /chocolate and other things around purchasing? What does it mean locally in BG?



Size of Wales believes we should further strengthen teaching on climate change, nature and deforestation within the new curriculum and support educators towards achieving this goal. It is important to inspire and inform young people who are our future leaders.

Size of Wales is also committed to producing toolkits and online training modules for public sector procurement teams and companies in order to help them identify if they might be buying products that could be contributing to deforestation overseas and look at alternatives.

We must take into account the 'true cost' of food - the often unseen environmental and social impacts that mass food production creates. Although unsustainable foods may be cheaper at the supermarket, they ultimately have a higher 'true cost' in their negative impact on people and planet. Blaenau Gwent has an opportunity to source ethical goods and also support local economies bringing about a more resilient, prosperous, healthier and globally responsible Wales.

Pension Funds

Often overlooked is our contribution through investments to unethical and unsustainable practices. Pension funds for Blaenau Gwent local authority could be inadvertently funding deforestation overseas. While there has been a movement towards divestment from fossil fuels across pension funds in Wales, there is still more that needs to be done to ensure our investments are not driving deforestation. Climate change presents a material financial risk to investment funds and therefore investing in practice driving climate change does not make for sound investments. Blaenau Gwent Local Authority should ask their investment advisors and managers to conduct a risk assessment to assess the level of investment in forest risk companies. Based on the risks this presents, then develop an action plan for engaging with or divesting from those companies over time to mitigate the risks.

Nature and Green Space – Management in Wales

Answers provided by Fen Turner, NRW

- 6. How do we balance the need for new houses being built using timber whilst protecting our existing green spaces? Housing target of 5000 new homes - where's the space? How are competing priorities balanced?**

Response from BGCBC Development Planning Team:

The Local Development Plan is the Council's land use plan that establishes where and how much development will take place. It also identifies which areas are to be protected from development. The Plan responds to the needs of a growing and regionally important economy making provision for jobs, homes and infrastructure. It also ensures the well-being of communities is maintained, and the impacts of the development and use of land are sustainably managed. It guides funding and investment



programmes whilst providing for the enhancement and protection of the environment and environmental qualities.

Housing targets are the number of houses that are identified as being required to be built over a development plan period, normally 15 years. The figures are often reported as annual requirements. The current Local Development Plan target is 233 per annum (2006-2021). However, the emerging Replacement Local Development Plan (2018-2033) proposes a figure of 117 per annum. The overall housing target is identified through projecting the future population and converting this into a housing requirement (target). Population Projections are based on historic data of natural change (difference of births and deaths) and migration which are then projected forward. These trends can be replaced with different assumptions. However, the Welsh Government principal projections forms the starting point, though an authorities policy intentions for an area and its need for affordable housing identified in the Local Housing Market Assessment can also be taken into consideration. The overall requirement is then apportioned to settlements based on an [assessment of the sustainability](#) of each settlement. This involves an assessment of the transport and accessibility, availability of facilities and services and employment opportunities in each of the settlements. They are then ranked to create a hierarchy of settlements and the most sustainable settlements are apportioned a greater level of growth.

The actual sites for development are identified through a Call for Candidate Sites. These sites are then assessed against a robust [methodology](#) which includes:

- The use of the land (greenfield/brownfield)
- How Accessible the land is to transport and facilities
- Possible impact on the historic environment
- Physical constraints such as flooding, contamination
- Economic benefits
- Availability and deliverability

Where there are competing priorities for the same site, the assessment identifies the most sustainable use for the land. It should also be noted that there is a preference for the use of brownfield land before greenfield sites are released.

Candidate sites can include sites for protection of open space.

The opportunity to identify sites for the new plan is currently on hold but will reopen once lockdown is lifted.

All of this work is subject to an [Integrated Sustainability Appraisal](#) and [Habitat Regulation Assessment](#) and public consultation.

Prior to being tested at an Examination into the soundness of the Plan



7. Does NRW manage the forests in Wales?

Not all of them. NRW manages the Woodland Estate on behalf of Welsh Government. It extends across Wales covering an area of approx. 126,000 hectares. Of this approx. 70% is productive forest that is harvested for timber and 30% is land that is managed primarily for conservation objectives. It represents nearly 6% of Wales' total land area and around 40% of the total Welsh Forest Resource.





8. Biodiversity - Are green spaces also about bringing nature back and animals that are no longer here or not in the numbers they should be? What part do green spaces play in that?

Well managed quality and healthy greenspaces can provide vital habitats for some of our key species. The key to allowing nature to flourish is to ensure that the habitat is healthy enough to support them.

Well managed high quality greenspaces can contribute to biodiversity in the following ways:

- They can provide a wide range of protected and rare species make use of green infrastructure in urban areas.
- Urban green infrastructure provides 'stepping stones' of habitat and greater permeability of urban areas between habitat patches.
- Providing new and linking existing habitats or natural features, to allow species movement
- reducing pollution through use of SUDS and buffer strips
- protecting aquatic species through appropriate management of waterside habitats
- preventing fragmentation of habitats allowing diverse habitats to be created which are rich in flora and fauna

However Green Infrastructure isn't just about greenspaces such as parks and open spaces, it also includes blue infrastructure such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), swales, wetlands, rivers and canals and their banks, and other water courses. The figure below illustrates the breadth of 'green infrastructure'.



9. Is there a Welsh strategy for planting trees for timber?

Yes. Here it is: [Woodlands for Wales \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/woodlands-for-wales) This sets out a 50 year vision for all woodlands and trees in Wales

10. How can we improve accessibility for people in BG?

Spending time in nature is great for health and wellbeing. It decreases stress levels, provides a space for exercise, restores concentration levels, and makes us happy! However, there is evidence to show that these benefits are not equally available to everyone, and that access to the countryside and green spaces is not evenly shared across society. People living with disabilities and older people are especially impacted by physical barriers to access, while low income groups generally have much less green space close to home. And societal barriers such as concerns about personal safety and uncertainty about feeling welcome are often reported by visitors who are female or from a black and minority ethnic group for instance ([By all reasonable means – The Sensory Trust / NRW \(2017\)](#))

So when we're thinking about improving accessibility in Blaenau Gwent, we need to consider everything from why people decide to visit a site, their journey and arrival, their experience in the outdoors, and the return home.

An important stage to make accessible, is the decision where someone chooses to head outdoors and spend time in greenspace. The three most common barriers for people are: lack of knowledge, lack of confidence and lack of experience ([Come Outside! Programme – NRW \(2012-16\)](#)) So this decision can be influenced by good promotion and communication of 'where to go' and 'what you can do there'. For example, this could be through social media posts, on the radio, in community centres, or on interpretation boards. People like to know what to expect, so it's good to share things like accessibility for disabled people or the length/difficulty of walking routes. Those who are most disadvantaged but have the most to gain from outdoor activity, might need a more targeted approach, but can be reached through the community, health and social care sectors– for example, through green prescribing programmes.

The journey to and from a site needs to be short and sweet! Not everyone can access a car or bike, so while car parks and cycle paths are important, often it's places close to home that bring the most benefits for people. In December 2020, the Future Generations Commissioner recommended in her Manifesto for the Future that "people in Wales should be able to access nature four minutes from where they live" and that urban greening be a priority across Wales. Creating safe, urban greenspaces will make nature accessible for those who most need it. [Green spaces are important – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales \(2020\)](#)

On site, all outdoor spaces should be designed with the principle of 'Least Restrictive Access' in mind. This means considering every feature on a site and putting in the option that is as least restrictive as possible. For example: Could there be a gate, rather than a stile that restricts access for the disabled or elderly? Or could the interpretation boards show the site being used by people of different ages, gender, ethnicity and ability to demonstrate that everyone is welcome?



Equality isn't about treating everyone the same, it is about respecting the differences and finding ways to make everyone feel welcome and supported. At its root, what is most needed is a positive, open attitude and a welcoming approach combined with good communication and understanding.

There are over 300 kilometres of Public Rights of Way in Blaenau Gwent, linking towns and villages to the diverse countryside and landscape of the county. The Council is responsible for the management of this access network, which consists of 300 kilometres of Public Rights of Ways. There are also a number of promoted routes ranging from Community walks to regional trails. Blaenau Gwent Council produces and oversees a Rights Of Way Improvement Plan for the borough which you can access here: [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Public Rights of Way \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://Blaenau Gwent CBC: Public Rights of Way (blaenau-gwent.gov.uk))

Transport

Answers by Neil Lewis, TrydaNI

1. Can Neil tell us more about the electric car club scheme? How do you set it up? What are the costs?

Co-wheels car Clubs require around £15,000 per vehicle to set up for two years. If it's used 6 hours per day at £5.50 per hour it will easily cover this and make a small profit to be reinvested in the scheme in e-bikes etc.

2. What is the reality of home charging at terraced properties?

Home charging for residents without off-street parking is a challenge.

Applies to flats and terraces-40% of people in Wales.

Where there is a resident buying an EV-or better still-more than one. The cost of installing a charge point nearby can be recouped. Also-TrydaNi would endeavour to sell the electricity cheaper than commercial operators. There are many types of charge points, lamp posts, pop-ups, stand-alone and in nearby car parks. Otherwise they can use rapid charge points as we do now with petrol. (Take 30 minutes at present)/. Much depends on useage patterns. For most people the car will only need to be charged once/twice weekly.

3. Will technology be able to keep up with our plans for greater low carbon infrastructure?

Smart charging and vehicle to grid (V2G) will enable charging with current infrastructure and enable a greater reliance on renewables

4. How would they encourage people to share a car instead of each having one given people's dependence on them/scheduling issues?

Sharing a car will need a change in mind-set that will need to be engrained gradually. Hopefully the financial benefits and convenience will more than compensate for the new scenarios. May also strengthen community cohesion through car-sharing etc. Also a low-risk way of experiencing an EV.



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5. How do we make EVs affordable?

Re affordability. My current car cost £8k and saves me around £2k p.a. on fuel alone. It's 4 years old and has extremely low running costs-Very few mechanical elements to repair. E.g no exhaust etc
After 9 years I'm wondering how people can afford to buy petrol!