



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP**

**14 JUNE 2021**

**UPDATE REPORT ON KEY ENERGY GENERATION PROJECTS AND RELATED ISSUES**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE ESTATES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET'S CLIMATE CHANGE CHAMPION (COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS) AND THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES.**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide a further update to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group with regards to the work underway on the development of renewable energy projects and certain other Carbon Reduction related issues.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet Steering Group:

- 2.1 Note the contents of this update report as part of the ongoing work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group.
- 2.2 Receive a further report on the Whole System Building Research Innovation for Decarbonisation (WBRID) if successful at the next stage.
- 2.3 Receive further reports in 2021 providing further update on progress.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The contents of this report provide background information and key updates on the current situation with regards to the issues covered by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group. It provides an update on the proposals for the Council to build and finance potential solar and wind schemes that will make a significant contribution to the Council achieving its Net Zero Carbon target. It also provides an update on other key strategies and plans to reduce the Council's Carbon impact.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Corporate Estates Energy team has previously reported on the ongoing work to investigate the potential of using RCT owned land for the development of major renewable energy projects for both wind and solar generation, with the assistance of the Welsh Government Energy Service (WGES). These are projects which would be primarily developed by the Council and as such would both contribute to the increase in the renewable energy provision and carbon reduction in the area and also make a positive economic contribution to the financial situation of the County Borough which could then be invested in further related improvements or other services for the benefit of citizens.

#### **5. UPDATE ON RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS**

##### **5.1 5MW Solar Farm Installation.**

An outline timeline has now been discussed and amended with the assistance of the WGES, and is now with their advisors, under review.

A HV specialist has been appointed to advise on the Private Wire connection to a local facility and also a Geotechnical / Topographical Specialist to explore, examine, analyse and report on the ground conditions at the site. Lawyers have also been appointed to draft heads of terms for the private wire connection.

Due to new enquiries resulting on further capacity constraints at Upper Boat, the National Grid has initiated a capacity enquiry to WPD. If infrastructure improvements are required all applicants will be advised on the status of their applications. This may present a Risk to the project financially but may also unlock capacity that has been held over by other developers. We need to wait until this is completed before making any further substantial investment. We should know the outcome during the Summer of 2021.

##### **5.2 Taffs Well Thermal Spring**

This project has now merged with the project delivery team for the Ffynnon Taf Primary School. The team will ensure delivery of the new school extension, together with the heat network projects, and the refurbishment of the park pavilion (following recent flood damage).

The final design and all aspects of the heat network installation has been finalised and agreed with Kensa Contracting, who will be installing the operating system.

Contracts are being finalised and all necessary insurances, etc. are being exchanged. The current project programme states that the installation is set to start first Week of July 2021, with completion by February 2022.

The Pavilion refurbishment section is already underway and heat pumps to serve this aspect will be installed as part of the first phase.

### **5.3 The WBRID Challenge**

As previously reported, we were recently successful in obtaining a Welsh Government (WG) Whole System Business Research Innovation for Decarbonising (WBRID) grant of £100,000.00. The challenge was advertised on Sell to Wales and submissions received to reduce the carbon footprint at Ty Elai, as a contribution towards our overall Net Zero goal.

If our chosen 'Challenge' is successful at the next stage, there is a potential £500k in further funding available to 'pilot' the chosen solution. This additional funding is subjective to approval from the WBRID Board that would receive, assess, and review our presented proposals.

The final proposal has been identified to design a system that delivers the buildings base load energy provided by an array of Hydrogen fuel cells with a control link combining the energy generated by the buildings solar PV arrays. However, additional financial support (match-funding) may be required and a cost benefit appraisal is currently being considered.

The next WG-WBRID project board interviews are scheduled for 18 June 2021.

### **5.4 1.5MW Wind Turbine**

A 1.5MW wind turbine at Nant Y Gwyddon is being developed by Amgen and their development partner 'Infinite'. Infinite already has planning consent for the overall scheme and is ready to proceed subject to legal agreements between themselves, RCT, Amgen and other interested parties.

Legal representatives have now been appointed for all parties, to agree lease terms together with the novation of the grid access agreement.

The aim is to have the turbine in place by spring 2022.

### **5.5 9MW Windfarms**

Notwithstanding the barriers to progress, an outline timeline and has now been established, for one of the two proposals at this stage to determine the duration and high level costs of the development phase of the projects. This has been discussed and amended, with the WGES, and the document is now with WGES advisors, under review, along with a cost plan proposal.

Discussions are ongoing with National Resources Wales (NRW) with regards to the possibility of a joint development of larger wind farms on adjacent sites.

A meeting took place between representatives of RCTCBC and NRW on 18 May and whilst several issues were clarified during this discussion, several issues remain unresolved. However, we will continue to work with representatives of NRW in an attempt to establish a clear view of the options available to us all, and the viability of the partnership options.

## **5.6 3MW Windfarm**

Discussions are ongoing with an adjoining developer, with regard to the final size and form that the overall project will take. There are 4 main options that will need to be discussed in detail and then will be presented for further approval, before we are able to proceed to the next stage of the project.

## **5.7 ULEV Project**

We are still awaiting the final report from the Welsh Government Energy Service (WGES) - ULEV Team. WGES have clarified, during May 2020, that the reports are still under development, with no expected date given. In the interim, WGES are asking if there any particular issues that we would want to be reflected, and this now needs to be discussed further and agreed with the RCT Fleet team.

## **5.8 Carbon Reduction Programme**

Work has now started on delivering the programme for financial year 2021-22. The works include a wide range of proposals including such schemes as New and Extended Solar Energy projects, LED Lighting and Boiler Upgrades, etc. The programme for 2021/22 is valued at over £1.2M and could generate estimated annual savings of 3,112,345 kWh which is the equivalent to circa. 611 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annual savings.

## **5.9 Carbon Footprint Project**

A project to calculate RCT's 2019/20 Carbon Footprint commenced in January 2021 and the first stage of gathering and analysing data across the range of direct RCT activities produced a draft/preliminary Emissions Report in April 2021, giving a comprehensive analysis of the RCT Carbon Footprint for 2019-20.

The second stage, of the overall process, will focus on the wider impact and future pathway recommendations with a final Insight and Recommendations report, due later in June 2021.

It is planned to now implement a Phase 3 reporting stage which will move on to consider our Carbon Footprint for the year 2020-21, and thus reveal the impact of the Global pandemic on our overall activities in this area.

## **6. ASSOCIATED STRATEGIES AND PLANS UPDATE**

### **6.1 Climate Change Working Group**

The Climate Change Working Group was set up to support the work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group. First meeting was held on 23 March, the second meeting on 12 May, and there is another meeting planned for June (date to be confirmed). Attendance at the Group comprises key officers from across all Service Groups and feedback has been really positive to date.

### **6.2 Electric Vehicle Charging & Transportation Working Group**

This group has now had its first two meetings on 23 April and 18 May following the presentation of the 'Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure: Driving Change' report at the last meeting. Public consultation via a Web based system has been used to support the work of the group and to receive and collate feedback from members, the general-public and staff. The preliminary report has now been made available to Corporate Estates.

### **6.3 Natures Assets Working Group**

The group are addressing Carbon Capture and pulling together data on RCT's peat bogs, wooded areas and grasslands for the purpose of restoration projects. Sequestration projects will have an impact on the council's carbon footprint as well as improving air quality and also assisting with ground water management.

The team are looking at carbon capture opportunities by restoring failing peat bogs and naturalising areas, to also improve ecology and biodiversity. The group are also looking at sequestration opportunities as well as greening our town centres by introducing rain gardens and the more recent Queens Green Canopy initiative.

The inaugural meeting was held on 28 April with the most recent meeting held on 19 May. The next meeting is scheduled for 22 June 2021.

## **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 7.1 This supporting report is for the purpose of update and consequently an Equality Impact Assessment is not required with regard to this report.

## **8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 This supporting report is for the purpose of update and consequently Welsh Language Impact Assessment is not required with regard to this report, however a copy can be made available in Welsh if requested.

## **9. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 9.1 There are no consultation requirements at present with regards to this supporting report.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 10.1 All existing 'live' projects are currently funded through relevant cost centres and an existing enabling budget so there are no further financial implications aligned to this interim report.
- 10.2 As mentioned in para. 5.3 above, additional match funding may be required for the WBRID grant funding and if necessary, a separate report will be produced for this particular project.

## **11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 11.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report

## **12. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 12.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an interim update report relating to the work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group with regards to the work underway on the development of key renewable energy projects and certain other related issues. Any future actions that arise as a result of the recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group report will be considered by the Council's Cabinet and it will take full regard to the seven national wellbeing goals.

## **13. CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 This report provides background information and an update on the current situation with regards to the issues covered by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group. It provides updates on the proposals for the Council to build and finance potential solar and wind schemes that will make a significant contribution to the Council achieving its Net Zero Carbon target. It also provides key updates on some other associated strategies and plans to reduce the Council's Carbon impact.

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