

SUBJECT: Climate & Nature Area of Focus Progress Report

MEETING: Gwent Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 18 June 2025

MEETING: Gwent Public Services Board

DATE: 26 June 2025

Report written and submitted by:

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1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) and PSB Scrutiny Committee with an update on progress relating to the 'Climate & Nature' Area of Focus (AoF): *That everyone lives in a climate-ready community where their environment is valued and protected*, and to provide recommendations for progressing this AoF.

2 Background

At the December 2024 meeting of the PSB the Climate & Nature Update Report (Appendix One) was presented by Steve Morgan, PSB Lead for this AoF, and the following recommendation was approved:

To bring together service leads/senior managers from across the PSB membership (early 2025) to explore how a Climate & Nature sub-group of the PSB could be established to 'add value' at a regional level, and to maximise the potential opportunities identified in the report. The Sub-group would sit between the PSB Executive and the GSWAG officer group. It would provide cross-sector, regional steer through a prioritised 'programme of focus' to 2028.

3 Assessment of Progress

- 3.1 A workshop was held at University South Wales in Newport on 11th March 2025. The aim of the workshop was to identify the strategic priorities shared by PSB organisations on nature recovery, climate risk management and decarbonisation, and to understand the collaborative work needed, Gwent-wide, at a PSB level, to co-ordinate and integrate resources and activities across partners and existing partnerships. The session was facilitated by Netherwood.

Sustainable Futures and Well-being Planner – experienced consultants on environmental governance, and organised by the PSB Engagement Officer.

- 3.2 PSB member organisations provided contact details for their relevant senior managers/service leads, who were all invited to the workshop. However, there were inconsistencies, and some invitees delegated their attendance to their relevant team leaders/officers. The workshop therefore brought together a combination of service leads, team leaders and officers.
- 3.3 During the workshop, participants were provided with a critical friend ‘think piece’ from Dr. Alan Netherwood on the current public service delivery context; current partnership and corporate activity on climate risk, nature and decarbonisation; and a critical challenge on work undertaken so far by PSB partners and opportunities going forward. This stimulated discussion which identified the outputs summarised below (see Appendix 2 for the full workshop notes).

3.3.1 Climate Risk Management

- A collaborative climate risk assessment should be conducted for the whole of Gwent, sharing approaches, intelligence and resources.
- PSB organisations should share aims, goals and outcomes on climate adaptation/resilience.
- There was support for a Gwent Climate Adaptation Plan, with localised delivery plans.

3.3.2 Nature Recovery – responding to the Nature Emergency

- A critical analysis of activity and funding for nature recovery in Gwent is needed, including green finance and a strategic assessment of how land is used in Gwent. This would inform the work of the Corporate Joint Committee’s Strategic Development Plan, Regional Transport Plan and approach to economic regeneration.
- There should be a collective approach and reporting to maximise efforts for biodiversity gain, through asset/property management across the PSB organisations.
- Resources should be shared to update the Gwent State of Nature Report and deliver on the Regional Nature Recovery Action Plan.

3.3.3 Decarbonisation

- A Gwent-wide approach to decarbonisation to 2050 is needed to inform strategic direction, maximising efforts for decarbonisation across asset/property management, through collaboration beyond organisational borders, with regional reporting.
- There’s a need for a Gwent-wide awareness campaign and local engagement - targeting the public, and groups that work with the public.

3.4 Workshop Conclusion

3.4.1 The workshop attendees, as a group, recognised and acknowledged that they did not have the authority to make the required strategic decisions or to commit resources to enable these outputs to be taken forward regionally and collaboratively.

3.4.2 The group identified the PSB as the regional Board which could provide the leadership needed to address Gwent's climate and nature emergencies, in an equitable way, through delivery of its Well-being Plan and Building a Fairer Gwent recommendations. This aligns with feedback at the PSB workshops in Feb-Mar 2024, and officer-level discussions in November 2024, which informed the Gwent Wellbeing Plan Update Report (Appendix 1).

3.5 Wider context supporting these conclusions

3.5.1 The [Future-Generations-Report-2025.pdf](#) makes the following recommendations for the public sector:

- Recommendation 12. *From 2025, public bodies must prioritise climate resilience, net benefit for biodiversity, and pesticide reduction in how they manage their estates, including their buildings, tenant farms, parks, roadside verges and other land assets.*
- Recommendation 14. *Climate resilience and adaptation must become a core public service priority. By the end of 2027, Public Services Boards should assess climate risks for their communities, updating their findings every five years as part of their well-being assessments. Public bodies must integrate these findings into their corporate and strategic planning.*

3.5.2 [The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty | Audit Wales](#) report – overall conclusions include: *The nature emergency has not been a high enough priority for public authorities, and many have failed to comply with the duty's key planning and/or reporting requirements.*

3.5.3 Eleven of Wales' fourteen PSBs are currently planning or delivering their area's climate change risk assessment and adaptation/resilience planning using the Climate Change Risk Assessment Framework for Public Services Boards, developed by Welsh Government, Public Health Wales and Natural Resources Wales (shared with the PSB in March 2023).

3.6 Proposed Next Step

Deliver a PSB Climate & Nature workshop for PSB organisations' relevant service leads/senior managers in early Autumn 2025. Its purpose would be to explore the findings and key messages to date, and identify shared priorities to enable collaboration on delivery of the Climate & Nature elements of the Well-

being Plan (Step 3) and inform the next well-being assessment. Critically this would provide senior leadership insight and drive to help resource, deliver and monitor this approach.

Questions to explore in this workshop (amongst others) are:

- Levels of appetite amongst service leads/senior managers to respond to these insights – have they the time and influence to make these things happen within current working contexts?
- Whether collaborative delivery would happen without PSB intervention at a senior level, a co-ordinated effort, and with regular reporting and scrutiny from the PSB?
- What approach to governance within the PSB could help to achieve these outcomes?
- The existing resources that could be re-aligned to deliver shared priorities?
- How this approach could be incorporated into future service business planning and budgets?

4 Recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that the Gwent Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) Note and discuss the progress update relating to the Climate & Nature Area of Focus.
- (ii) Provide comments and/or recommendations for the PSB to consider.

4.2 It is recommended that the Gwent Public Services Board:

- (i) Note and discuss the progress update relating to the Climate & Nature Area of Focus.
- (ii) Approve the proposed next step (3.6) and provide the leadership needed to support and enable a PSB Climate & Nature service leads/senior managers workshop in early Autumn 2025, to start improving the effectiveness of collaborative delivery to address the climate and nature emergencies in Gwent.

Background Documents

Appendix 1 – Gwent Wellbeing Plan Update Report (December 2024)

Appendix 2 – Gwent PSB Climate & Nature Workshop Note (March 2025)

