

## **Consultation response by XR Cymru to the Welsh Government Draft Public Engagement and Action Strategy, December 2022**

### **Ministerial Forward, pages 7-8**

What we like / agree with in this section:

We support the Welsh Government in pursuing this approach to public engagement'

We appreciate the leadership of the Minister, in stating clearly that the Welsh Government supports ambitious policies, social justice, leading by example, and learning from the Covid-19 pandemic.

What we think is missing or should be changed:

In the opening paragraph, the Minister speaks of the 'legal commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050', which is, we now know, hopelessly inadequate on its own as a response, given the latest science published in IPCC reports, the UN and elsewhere.

[WGII Summary for Policymakers Headline Statements \(ipcc.ch\)](https://www.ipcc.ch/summary-for-policymakers-headline-statements)

The need to make major changes and drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by the end of this decade, must be included in this document if this government programme and approach is to be underpinned by telling the truth to the public and acting now. The public will not be helped to understand the true position and urgency of the climate emergency, by the suggestion that a distant target of 2050 is all that's needed, together with an assumption of net zero, which does not bend the trajectory of climate emissions downwards rapidly and limit atmospheric CO2. It's not WHEN we stop emitting that matters - it's HOW MUCH we emit before we stop.

### **The Challenge, pages 9-11**

#### **Q1 – Does this introductory section set out the challenges and opportunities this programme presents or is it missing any key points?**

What we like / agree with in this section:

It makes strong statements that:

- the evidence is clear;
- the climate emergency requires urgent action across all areas of society to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience;
- the transformation presents an opportunity to resolve some existing inequalities in society; visioning a more sustainable future is important;

- engaging the public in decision-making will provide a stronger basis for societal behaviour change;
- success will rely on understanding people’s worries and concerns
- tackling the emergency will require a national effort on a scale never seen before.

What we think is missing or should be changed:

In the opening paragraph, page 9 – “The climate emergency ... presents possibly one of the biggest challenges that humanity has ever experienced. ” - this wording, particularly the word “possibly” is far too weak and out of kilter with the rest of the section. Surely it is “unquestionably” the biggest challenge humanity has experienced, as acknowledged explicitly by leading scientists and commentators in these issues?

It should say that science has made the scale of the challenge clearer, so we now know we cannot assume that a distant target of net zero by 2050 is on its own sufficient. We need to explain that drastic cuts are needed by the end of the decade – 2030 - due to the lack of progress made by all countries in cutting carbon emissions, and the most recent science, (including in the IPCC report and elsewhere). Credible, authoritative sources describe climate change as happening faster and in more extreme ways than predicted and that unpredictability is intensifying as global tipping points are now being exceeded. The public will not be helped to understand the true position and urgency by the suggestion that a distant target of 2050 is all that’s needed.

## **Engagement: Shaping the Strategy**

### **Consultation: Co-Designing the Final Strategy**

#### **Q2 Do you agree with the approach we have taken to engagement and consultation on the strategy?**

What we like / agree with in this section:

- Welsh Government intention to lead and fund climate action where it can;
- Government aims to increase momentum
- Government action alone cannot deliver ambitious targets
- We appreciated being involved in the early engagement exercise

What we think is missing or should be changed:

1. The “Team Wales approach” needs an explanation in this document, beyond just giving links to other documents, as many people reading this won’t know what it is, and it takes

away clarity and readability. There are also accessibility issues, given time pressures of the public with other commitments.

When you do follow the links in the Strategy, or do an online search for Team Wales, it still isn't very enlightening. One result says that the Partnership Council for Wales leads the Team Wales approach to climate change, but the last recorded meeting of that Partnership on the Welsh Government website was February 2022, which does not sound promising.

Another link takes you to a definition in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2022-2026, which gives this definition :

“The Team Wales approach is where the Welsh Government, public bodies, businesses and communities across Wales work together to tackle the shared challenges of the climate and nature emergency.” This implies everyone in Wales; is this feasible or realistic? or aspirational?.

This Strategy document describes Climate Week this year as for Team Wales **delivery organisations and trusted messengers** to come together to discuss this strategy and explore collaborative delivery programmes. The Fringe events were for partners to bid for funds to deliver workshops with targeted groups, and listen to their views about how we might shape and deliver policies that will affect them.

We think an online event where the Welsh Government clearly communicated this intention to their chosen delivery organisations and trusted messengers, at a much earlier stage, would have been helpful and made this exercise feasible and inclusive of diverse communities. A discussion about how to do this, would have helped the planning of events in a more timely, effective and informed way.

2. The document states that stakeholders such as us were brought together in workshops to determine important factors. This was not the case for us – we were engaged as an organisation on our own, in a series of meetings over several months. We would have welcomed a workshop approach involving a range of stakeholders working together. We also feel that such an approach would have improved the lengthy, protracted nature of the development of the strategy. We did not feel that the process we were in, reflected the urgent need to inform the general public, and begin to involve them.

**Q3 Do you have any ideas around how we might broaden the consultation process and are you interested in organising any deliberative consultation events with your own networks during Wales Climate Week?**

What we like / agree with in this section:

- Well-being of Future Generations Act used as a basis for the strategy
- your intention to conduct a range of deliberative consultation events
- your intention to listen to new voices, particularly those not typically engaged in climate conversations

- your aspiration to build public trust
- your wish to seek a genuine and meaningful contribution from young people.

What we think is missing or should be changed:

1. You say the events will begin shortly. We are concerned that partners who you expect to facilitate these events, may not have enough time to prepare. The deliberative consultation events you hope to see, and the work needed to reach the wide range of people you aspire to, typically need a 2-3 month lead-in time in order to get the best results in terms of identifying and contacting people, especially those not normally engaged in climate conversations.

2. We are also concerned that, whilst you state that you want widespread feedback from stakeholders and society, particularly those who are currently disengaged, the strategy document is not fit for purpose to enable that to happen. Its length, style and format seem to us to be aimed at people already engaged at a significant level, and knowledgeable about the issues. Even then, we have found it a complex read at times. For these reasons, we believe this format and content is not inclusive for those not generally involved in the climate and environmental movements and campaigns.

Thus, if stakeholders do conduct events, they will have to be relied on to re-interpret the strategy consultation to make it suitable / digestible for other audiences. This could lead to inconsistencies and potentially dilute messages.

One possibility is that you could offer a short film or slideshow to present the ideas you want people to discuss at a number of deliberative events. We are unaware of whether this has already been done for Climate Week. This accessible, digestible format would enable consistency across a range of events and diverse audiences.

3. You say that the purpose of this consultation is to:

“...test levels of acceptability and support for policy ideas and proposed approaches contained within this strategy.” We assume you mean testing views on putting the 4 ‘Es Framework into action, as outlined in pages 22-26. This is achievable for consulting with organisations already engaged with you. However, we think this will be difficult using this document as a tool for engaging with the public.

4. You also say the purpose of the consultation is to “build public trust and demonstrate that change is being managed fairly ..... provide a steer ..... where the public do, and do not, have appetite for change and the form they would prefer to see that change take.” Again, unless there is a more user-friendly, accessible version of the Strategy, it is hard to see how this consultation will achieve these aims.

Or do you mean a future, more public iteration of this consultation? It's confusing.

## Strategy on a page

### Q4 Do you find the 'Strategy on a page' useful and is it missing any important points?

What we like / agree with in this section:

- We think it is a good and helpful idea to have this.

What we think is missing or should be changed:

We would like to see a plain language version for the public, along with appropriate translations for key immigrant communities, which would optimise climate conversations and deliberative consultation.

### Q5 Do you have any views on the proposed vision, aims and strategic objectives of this strategy? Do you think these should be changed, or are there any missing?

What we like / agree with in this section:

- We support the sentiments, values and principles behind the vision, aims and objectives.

What we think is missing or should be changed:

We would like to see plain, accessible language used to minimise readers being put off or alienated

The vision is quite complex in its language and a little unclear.. There needs to be much more emphasis on working together to take collective responsibility for **decarbonisation**. This is preferable to the more nebulous words climate action. This should be the first statement.

The term future generations should be removed from the vision as it suggests this is a future issue. The first sentence, which we're suggesting becomes the second, can stand without reference to future generations. We're also a little concerned about the emphasis on resilience.

The main focus of the strategy as we understand it is mitigation by decarbonisation. It is true that Welsh citizens will also need some support to deal with adaptation to climate change, but that should not be the focus here.

The objectives listed seem to us to be higher level, aspirational objectives rather than strategic objectives, which we believe should be more specific and measurable. These therefore need more clarity in our view, for effective resource deployment and impact.

## Sustainable Development Principle

### Q6 What are your views on the alignment with the Well-being of Future Generations Act Sustainability Principle and 5 ways of working?

What we like / agree with in this section:

We agree that the 5 ways of working, aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations Act Sustainable Development Principle, should be used.

We agree with your statement that the longer action takes the more expensive and difficult the changes are likely to be.

We support your proposal of a new national climate campaign to support and unify climate-related policies and programmes already being delivered in travel, diet, energy saving, consumption and waste. This will help enormously to frame the debate for the public. How this is done could be crucial to bringing the public up to speed on climate action in Wales.

We welcome your intention to use climate action to help address and resolve existing inequalities - fairness is essential. Climate action can also redress historic inequalities.

We think your commitment in your Programme of Government to 'embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do' is key, and would like to see Ministers from all departments of government making the case for climate action, and demonstrating their own actions, to their stakeholders and the public.

We think it is essential that you build on your 'Team Wales' approach as part of the collaboration that is needed. As you see this as crucial, it is vital that the concept and operation of Team Wales is much more dynamic and much better understood. See also our comments above under Q2.

We agree with your aim to prioritise involvement with those most affected ... and ... provide young people with a genuine role in shaping their future.

We sincerely hope that, as you say, "the consultation on this draft strategy is the first important step in our approach to encouraging a participative society with two-way dialogue on climate change." We see deliberative democracy as a key plank of the participative society you want to see, and look forward to working on this with you and other partners in the future.

What we think is missing or should be changed:

You discuss your cross-government approach (bottom of page 19) "over the critical weeks, months and **decade ahead**". We don't have a decade ahead. This should read the decade we are in. The decade we are in has been called "the decisive decade" and it started in 2020. The clock is ticking and we are partway through it. We have to cut carbon emissions

in half by the end of the 2020s, according to numerous experts, including Christiana Figueres, one of the negotiators of the Paris agreement. [Christiana Figueres on the climate emergency: 'This is the decade and we are the generation' | Christiana Figueres | The Guardian](#) )

## **Framework Approach**

**Q7 Do you believe our 4 Es framework approach of Exemplify, Engage, Encourage, Enable provides a useful structure for the design of our public engagement programme?**

- What we like / agree with in this section:
- We agree that these four aspects are essential to the strategy.

What we think is missing or should be changed:

If we aspire to a participative society with two-way dialogue on climate change, we should / will also Empower. That is an important way to help the public deal with the 'doom and gloom' narrative that many people associate with the climate emergency This includes practical options, support infrastructure and solutions that build confidence in capacity to influence change at a local, national and even international level.

## **Strategy for Public Engagement**

**Q8 Do you have any comments to make on the strategy for public engagement?**

What we like / agree with in this section:

- your intention for Welsh Government to show leadership by example and be visible
- you will find ways to share good examples to inform and inspire others
- you will encourage two-way dialogue and facilitate meaningful climate conversations
- you will explore further deliberative approaches, particularly with people and audiences anticipated to be affected most .... And young people whose future we aim to help safeguard
- you will engage behaviour change practitioners and researchers, opinion-formers, trusted messengers and influencers - we need everyone!
- action is going to be supported at national and local level

What we think is missing or should be changed:

Page 23 seems too late in the document to set out what your intentions are for engagement and action. We would like to see a summary of these at the front of any future document, in a brief and accessible plain language format.

Overall, we would have liked to see a shorter, more succinct document expressed with greater urgency and in plain language, addressed to the climate-concerned general public, rather than addressing this consultation to Team Wales delivery partners.

We think that you could have done this, based on the estimated 9 months of extensive engagement with Team Wales partners, which included ourselves, based on the fact that organisations with a deep interest and commitment to this issue have already given their comments and suggestions.

You say you will invest further in the pledge campaign. This campaign does not seem to us to have much visibility or gain much traction with the public, though there may be evidence to the contrary that we are not aware of. If this is to be something to be relied on, it needs a complete relaunch and rebranding. The rainbow symbol, visible everywhere to signify support for the NHS during Covid pandemic comes to mind as an example. Such a symbol could be specific to Wales' culture and history, including diversified communities.

Your mention of providing resources for engagement at national level is welcome, and we would like to see this include support for deliberative democracy, embedded in the participative approach that Wales seeks to embed. Two ideas we would like to put forward are:

1. To consider the feasibility of commissioning several deliberative processes as a country / group of local authorities if similar events were held. This could lead to shared costs or economies of scale. We have started to explore this with a contact from the Sortition Foundation.
2. To consider whether a group of people in Wales, perhaps based on an existing not-for-profit organisation, could be skilled up as a resource for the whole country. They could be set up to support deliberative / participatory democracy processes for Wales. Not-for-profit organisations can seek UK wide funding, thereby bringing additional resources into Wales rather than depleting Government funds.

## **Strategy for Public Action**

### **Q9 Do you have any comments to make on the strategy for public action?**

What we like / agree with in this section:

- making the right thing to do the normal, easy, attractive and routine thing to do
- addressing the knowledge-action gap
- investing in climate change awareness and carbon literacy training for government, stakeholders and society to deepen understanding of the climate emergency and the measures needed



- using behavioural science and social research
- a new national Government-led campaign to build knowledge, present reliable, positive and unifying messages to the public on the benefits of different climate choices
- your intention to convey the seriousness of what we face, whilst also presenting the co-benefits of change
- working with the creative sector to support people in how to act now, and vision the future
- working with the media and influencers to boost public understanding of climate change

What we think is missing or should be changed:

You say that messages will not be alarmist, but many people are very alarmed and that needs to be acknowledged. In our experience, if that sense of alarm is denied, minimised or not addressed, it can lead people to feel deep gloom and foreboding and a sense of 'giving up' on climate action. In the experience of Extinction Rebellion, it is through collective action that a sense of empowerment and optimism is returned to those otherwise feeling negative, disempowered and apathetic. We see this as the 'antidote'. That message of community, collaboration and collectivism gives people a sense of purpose and mutual support.

This is a particular problem for young people. - see [Government inaction on climate change linked to psychological distress in young people - new study \(bath.ac.uk\)](#)

It is truly welcome that you intend to focus on young people; it would be brilliant if young people in Wales felt that the Government is alongside them in the future they face. The strategy needs to take on board research like this, with specific messaging for young people, mechanisms for engagement and specific attempts to measure success among this demographic.

## **Critical Success Factors**

### **Q10 Do you think we have missed out any critical success factors?**

What we like / agree with in this section:

- We broadly agree with what you have written in this section.

What we think is missing or should be changed:

A gap could be Health and Well-being; i.e. acknowledge that the climate emergency is a public health issue for people experiencing climate impacts and extremes, a mental health issue for people at risk of anxiety and depression due to feeling overwhelmed about the prospect of catastrophic climate breakdown, and a safeguarding issue for all children and

young people. The CEE will impact every aspect of legislation, intensifying over time, particularly if solutions are implemented later, rather than sooner. The WHO is clear that climate change is the biggest health threat to humanity.

## **Delivery Route Map**

### **Q11 Do you have any comments to make on the outline delivery route map?**

Most issues in this section have already been addressed in our previous comments.

The launch of a new Wales Climate Digital Hub in early 2023, to give trusted advice and information and the impact of choices people make, is very welcome.

We assume that this is an on-line one-stop-shop for:

- information about all aspects of taking action on the climate emergency, including travel, energy, home heating and insulation, food and diet;
- success stories and ideas for innovation;
- links to Welsh Government and local government activity
- Involvement in deliberative and participatory events