

## **The Proposed Climate Change Commission for Wales**

**11 December 2007**

### **Jane Davidson, the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing**

I am pleased to announce that the Climate Change Commission for Wales met for the first time yesterday in the Senedd. I take this opportunity to thank all parties in the Assembly for their co-operation in establishing the commission and all the organisations that are represented on it.

Everyone has nominated expert individuals, recognising the importance of this issue. I hope, and the evidence of yesterday's first meeting suggests, that it will be possible for us to work together positively to create and drive forward an innovative and effective programme of action on climate change. Yesterday's first meeting, fulfilling a 'One Wales' commitment, began the process of establishing the commission's role, which will be to provide strategic leadership and a cross-Wales consensus for action on climate change. In a very full three hour meeting, the commission was presented with a stark analysis of the scale and urgency of the challenge that we face, from Dr Kevin Anderson of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, who is a commission member. It was against this stark backdrop that the commission agreed its role, terms of reference and outline priorities. What was evident throughout was the commitment and passion that all the members have to work together on addressing climate change in Wales, and to do so quickly.

The commission will inform Assembly Government policies and programmes, but it is about much more than that. The commitment that members indicated bodes well for them playing a key role in mobilising action by the public sector, by business and by voluntary organisations. The commission will not be working alone, because it will be supported by four thematic sub-groups. The commission yesterday started to consider the key issues on which the sub-groups will need to work. For the emission reduction sub-group, these included advising on the priority areas to deliver emission savings and achieve our 3 per cent emission reduction target. For the communications sub-group, they included agreeing on shared and consistent messages on climate change and informing the development of a wider communication campaign. For the adaptations sub-group, they included making the best use of the data from the new UK climate impacts programme, UKCIP08, and how best to communicate and support action on an issue where risk management and uncertainty are key features. For the research sub-group, they included agreeing priorities for future research, and developing a toolkit of methods and approaches to assist in understanding climate change and addressing it in different organisations and businesses. These groups will consist of a much broader range of stakeholders, and will carry out detailed work and report to the commission.

The Climate Change Bill is beginning its passage through Parliament, and provides an important mechanism for driving action on emissions reduction. Statutory targets will be set for reducing carbon dioxide emissions, and the Bill establishes a new system of legally binding, five-year carbon budgets, set at least 15 years ahead, to provide a clear pathway for emissions reduction. It will also establish a new statutory body, the committee on climate change, to provide independent expert advice and guidance to the UK Government and devolved administrations on achieving their targets and staying within their carbon budgets. The Assembly Government, alongside the UK Government and the other devolved administrations, will appoint and sponsor the committee on climate change.

We have taken the opportunity of the Climate Change Bill to introduce a number of provisions in relation to Wales. There is a clause requiring Welsh Ministers to lay before the Assembly a report on their objectives, actions and priorities in relation to greenhouse-gas emissions and the impact of climate change in Wales. An amendment to the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006 has the effect of transferring to Welsh Ministers the responsibility for publishing guidance on climate change for local authorities in Wales. There are powers to make trading schemes in relation to

activities that can cause environmental pollution; a power to seek expert advice from the committee on climate change; and an express power to allow the purchase of offset credits.

Tackling climate change is not just about what we can do as a Government, or the organisations represented on the commission. There is a vital role to be played by individuals and communities, and a number of recent initiatives aim to support the groundswell of local action that is developing. Our young climate change champions competition, which closed last month, saw hundreds of excellent entries from all over Wales. The semi-finalists will be interviewed for the final places this week, and the champions will provide a voice for young people in the deliberations of the Climate Change Commission. Two weeks ago, in the Pierhead building, the big green challenge was launched by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, offering a £1 million pound prize fund to encourage community groups to come up with new ways to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions. On 1 December, I participated in a community event at the University of Glamorgan on climate change; it was organised by the Assembly Government and the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action, and supported by a range of partners. This oversubscribed event was a chance for community groups to network, to learn from each other and to showcase success. It also allowed me, my officials and our partner organisations to improve our knowledge of activities in Wales and the support that is needed by community groups involved in tackling climate change. We will hold similar events in north and west Wales next year.

There is a lot of enthusiasm and good practice out there, which I am keen to foster. The Cynnal Cymru-Sustain Wales website will become the hub for connecting all these activities, enabling local groups to share best practice.