# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **One year anniversary following the Declaration of a Climate Emergency** |
| **DATE** | **29 April 2020** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs** |

The coronavirus pandemic is a public health crisis, which has taken hold in just a matter of weeks. Whilst the climate emergency has taken hold over a much longer period, its impact on public health and our economy is no less significant. Tackling the climate emergency will also require serious and sustained action and collaboration both here in Wales and at a global level.

One year ago, the Senedd voted in favour of the declaration of a climate emergency, the first Parliament in the world to do so. Today, our response to the climate emergency remains a key priority. In repairing the damage to our society and our economy caused by the pandemic, we must ensure we consolidate the progress we have made in answering the climate emergency and take every opportunity to make sure a healthier and prosperous Wales is also a greener and more sustainable one.

My intention is to bring an Oral Statement to the Senedd in June, to follow shortly after the publication of our first supplementary budget, to outline how our planning for recovery aligns with our net zero ambitions and how we might go further and faster in realising them. We hope during the period between now and June, the Welsh Government can engage with Members of the Senedd, civil society organisations and the public to explore how Wales can deliver a recovery is based on the principles of social and environmental justice.

Today, I believe it is important to thank to those who, despite the severe impact of Covid-19, are continuing their vital work to respond to the climate emergency.

Natural Resources Wales has stated climate action remains at the top of their agenda. Their staff are under significant pressure, including from dealing with a series of devastating fires and serious pollution incidents inflicted on Wales’ natural environment during the lockdown period. As well as continuing to fulfil their vital regulatory role, they continue to manage forests and peatlands to store carbon and they continue to progress renewable energy projects on public sector land.

Renewable energy companies have had to cope with the closure of offices and factories and the disruption caused to their suppliers and their sources of finance. Still, they continue to develop and deploy new, cleaner technologies, as well as making important contributions to the development of the policy needed to accelerate our transition to a low carbon energy system. Indeed, the energy sector more broadly have connected important new infrastructure during the crisis including Wales’ newest hospitals.

Academics and expert advisors to Government are rapidly re-visiting their research and policy advice to prepare us for the new landscape we find ourselves in as a result of the pandemic. They continue to discover new evidence to ensure our plans to re-build economy supports a transition to net zero which delivers social justice and environmental growth.

Civil society and voluntary organisations have experienced significant disruption with loss of income and delays to essential conservation activities, which threaten years of patient and painstaking work. However, they continue to provide practical advice to inspire us to connect with nature from our own homes and in our own local area. This is supporting our wellbeing in the here and now and helping us to properly value nature so we make the right choices for the future. It has been really positive to hear reports of so many people discovering a new appreciation of nature on their doorstep and I hope this is something which will stay with us once lockdown ends.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to thank all of these workers and to Wales’ farmers, foresters and other land managers who continue their work in safeguarding our natural environment and delivering Wales’ response to the climate emergency. The Welsh Government and I hope all Members of the Senedd recognise and value their work at this incredibly difficult and challenging time.

Finally, today our thoughts are with those who are already suffering the effects of the climate emergency and are now also feeling the impact of Covid-19. The communities affected by the February floods, for whom following the Government advice to ‘stay at home’ is an even greater challenge than for others because of the catastrophic damage their homes have suffered and because so many of their possessions which could offer them comfort have been lost. The households who are struggling to afford the cost of energy and transport and who are now feeling even more pressure as they struggle to afford and access food. The many young people who have held onto the hope the collapse of the earth’s ecosystems can be halted and reversed in their lifetimes, are now grappling with a future that must seem so much more uncertain than before.

Our message must be we stand with you. We are determined the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic will accelerate, and not deter us from, the transition to a low carbon economy and a healthier, more equal Wales.