

**Minutes of the Climate Emergency Taskforce
(virtual teleconference)
26 July 2021 (6.00pm – 8.00pm)**

Present:

Apologies: Cllr Christine Warner, Adam Briggs, Ged Barlow, John Egan, Clare Olver, Paul Nolan, Andrew Lewis, Laurence Ainsworth, Melissa Crellin, Charlotte Harris

- Councillor Christine Warner
- Adam Briggs (NFU)
- Ged Barlow (NZNW)
- John Egan (HyNet)
- Clare Olver, Mersey Forest
- Paul Nolan, Mersey Forest
- Andrew Lewis, Chief Executive
- Laurence Ainsworth, Director of Public Services Reform
- Melissa Crellin (LEP)
- Charlotte Harris

1 Welcome and introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the teleconference meeting.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Christine Warner, Andrew Lewis, Charlie Seward, Laurence Ainsworth, Clare Olver and Mike Gardner.

3 Declarations of interest

Cllr Matt Bryan declared the following interests

- Kijani Carbon Limited - Ethical offsetting in emerging voluntary carbon markets.
- Ecores Partnerships LLP - Sustainable property construction built to minimum PassivHaus standards.
- Vice Chair - Mersey Forest.

4 MINUTES

DECIDED: That

(1) the minutes of the Climate Emergency Taskforce held on 4 November 2020 be approved. Cllr Gina Lewis proposed the minutes, and Cllr Paul Bowers seconded the minutes.

5 Public Questions

The Chairman had been notified of one request to speak from a resident, Mr Chris Copeman:

Mr Copeman described that he was a passivhaus consultant and had retrofitted his house to passivhaus standard, alongside completing a commercial passivhaus project. He discussed opportunities to improve buildings standards within Cheshire West and Chester, referencing the opportunity for local authorities to set higher building standards. He discussed the difficulties of retrofit compared to building to higher standards at the start. Mr Copeman proposed that Cheshire West and Chester should lift energy efficiency standards by 31% in line with other local authorities. He discussed the need to not over-rely on carbon capture and storage, and raised concerns about scope 3 emissions from HyNet and gas leakage from sub-sea storage. Following this, Mr Copeman discussed the opportunity to use materials with lower embodied carbon in construction such as glued laminated timber as opposed to steel. He concluded by raising concerns that HyNet was an opportunity to continue the un-abated use of fossil fuels.

Cllr Bryan discussed that in relation to the point regarding planning, that the Council would be inviting views on its local plan and opportunities to raise standards later in 2021. Cllr Bryan also noted that the points regarding HyNet would be picked up by John Egan in his presentation later in the agenda.

6 Climate Emergency Taskforce – Progress to Date and Next Steps

Will Pearson presented an item regarding the Climate Emergency Taskforce's progress since the declaration of a climate emergency in May 2019, the achievement of publishing the Climate Emergency Response Plan in February 2021, and the next steps for the Climate Emergency Taskforce.

Will discussed the scale of the challenge within Cheshire West, noting its annual emissions of 3.6m tons of CO₂ per annum, and the need to achieve reductions of 14% per year to adhere to Tyndall carbon budgets. Consultation and engagement to date was referenced, noting that the Taskforce has conducted a range of engagement exercises such as the Public Evidence Session, Conference and a public consultation on the Plan. The importance of community stakeholders was noted. He discussed that there were 64 actions and 19 indicators that would be used to track progress against the plan.

Information on the refreshed terms of reference were presented. This involved merging the Taskforce with the advisory panel, meeting on a quarterly basis, and set out the purpose of the group as "Supporting the delivery of the Climate Emergency Response Plan, developing coalitions and partnerships among the key stakeholders represented on the group, commissioning and collating appropriate evidence relating to: the borough's carbon budgets, practical recommendations to effect direct change, recommendations on how the Council can exert local and national influence to promote change, within the categories of mitigation, adaptation and behaviour change".

The forward plan for the Taskforce was shared, involving a Transport meeting in July, a pre-COP26 meeting in September, a Housing meeting in November, a Land Use, Adaptation and Climate Repair meeting in February 2022, a business premises meeting in May 2022, a Waste and Recycling Meeting in August 2022, and a further meeting in November 2022.

Will then described the Energy Action updates within the Climate Emergency Response Plan, noting that a number of the actions had progressed well, such as the purchase of renewable electricity for the Council, the development of a Climate

Emergency Fund, and publication of the Mersey Dee Alliance's Energy Prospectus.

Following this, the Taskforce discussed the contents of the presentation. The importance of engaging with an NFU representative was noted and discussed as being in-progress. It was recommended that at least two young people were engaged in the Taskforce. The forward plan was agreed. In relation to the action updates, an area of development was discussed as assigning carbon values to actions where possible, and if unavailable, to indicate whether actions offered high, medium or low carbon reductions.

7 Net Zero North West

Ged Barlow described the work of Net Zero North West (NZNW), setting out that it was a partnership between energy intensive businesses and the public sector, and that it included representation from the North West's five Local Enterprise Partnerships on its board. NZNW's aspiration to become the world's first low carbon industrial cluster by 2030 and world's first net zero industrial cluster by 2040 was set out. The need for a joined up approach between the public and private sector to tackle the 40m tons of emissions from industry within the NW was discussed. A cluster plan is being developed which will bring together these strands of activity in to one central vision for the region. Major projects within the region were described as including HyNet, Mersey Tidal and Protos. The benefits of NZNW were outlined as including 33,000 jobs being created, 10m tons CO₂ saved, £4bn in investment, and reductions in energy costs. Ged discussed the work of Invest Net Zero Cheshire, which has mapped low-carbon investment opportunities across Cheshire and Warrington. This involved more than 150 hours of stakeholder engagement with 25+ businesses, the assessment of project investment potential and CO₂ reduction opportunities, regional modelling to understand and address the gap to net zero, and a collation and presentation of these opportunities. A project pipeline of £1bn+ has been identified via this process.

Following the presentation, Cllr Bryan raised a question regarding how the skills level within the region could be raised in STEM subjects to ensure that NZNW's ambitions could be delivered. Ged described that Chester University were participating in the Cluster plan and were delivering the skills element of the cluster plan, and would be consulting with industry around the region on their skills needs, working with further education (FE) colleges and training institutions. Separately, NZNW are working with Manchester Metropolitan University to develop university courses and FE courses to meet skills development needs.

Niall MacFadyen asked a question regarding the opportunities linked to other clusters shipping CO₂ to the NW for burial in Liverpool bay. He asked how much economic benefit there would be in the burial of circa 9m tons CO₂ in Liverpool bay from other regions. Ged discussed that John Egan would cover these questions, and noted that HyNet had calculated the job creation potential of the HyNet project including these opportunities. Niall discussed the opportunities linked to industries co-locating near to CO₂ pipelines, and Ged agreed that there would be opportunities to tap into this infrastructure as the project progresses.

Ashley Rogers discussed the Mersey Dee Alliance fiscal stimulus package request to BEIS for funding for skills of £7-10m as COVID recovery funding. Ashley raised a question regarding the reliance on Mersey Tidal for decarbonisation – Ged noted

that NZNW was not dependent on Mersey Tidal for decarbonisation. Ashley secondly discussed the need to ensure that Welsh businesses benefit from the disposal of CO₂ via a pipeline which runs through North Wales.

Councillor Paul Bowers asked Ged whether he trusted the stakeholders involved, which include fossil fuel producers and large-scale consumers, to fully decarbonise as swiftly as possible. Ged discussed that these organisations had a number of motivations for wanting to rapidly decarbonise. These motivations include self-interest, as the increasing cost of carbon requires industry to decarbonise or become uneconomic, resulting in the loss of these industries and jobs in the UK. JGed described that many of the technologies planned to be rolled out were well-tested, such as Solar PV, Wind, and Heat networks, and that Blue Hydrogen was necessary as a transitional measure with a view to the development and roll out of Green Hydrogen in the medium term.

8 HyNet

John Egan, Rachel Perry and Amy Bodey were invited to present an update regarding the progress of the HyNet project. John discussed that HyNet had progressed well since an update had last been presented to the group, securing £72m in investment, £33m from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and £39m from HyNet consortium partners. The scale of industrial emissions in Cheshire West were described – noting that without this intervention, by 2045 70m tons CO₂ would have been added to the atmosphere. John discussed that the UK Hydrogen Strategy is due out shortly, that a consultation on Low Carbon Hydrogen Business models was due out in Q2 2021, and that a consultation on a £240m Clean Hydrogen fund and £1bn Carbon Capture and storage infrastructure fund was expected soon.

HyNet's potential for carbon capture and low carbon hydrogen production was set out as offering almost 80% of the UK's low carbon hydrogen production and carbon capture and storage requirements by 2030. In terms of progress to date, John noted that in addition to the £72m funding secured, the CO₂ pipeline consenting process had started, a joint venture with Essar and Progressive Energy had been announced for the development of the hydrogen production plant, a CO₂ storage license had been granted to ENI for Liverpool Bay oil and gas fields, and Cadent had secured an 'opener' funding agreement for pipelines. The consenting process for CO₂ and Hydrogen pipelines was discussed, and that these were nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIP) and therefore fall under the Development Consent Order (DCO) process in which the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) examines the application, and the Secretary of State is the decision maker. It was noted that Local Authorities and communities were essential stakeholders in this process. In relation to this engagement process – it was discussed that the consultation process for pipeline routing options would start on 9 June, and that briefings with borough Councillors and Parish Councils would start on 7/8 June, and that 3 public webinars had been set up.

The final part of the presentation discussed the UK Government's Cluster Sequencing approach in which two regions will be selected as 'Track 1' CCUS clusters which will be supported to go live in 2025. It was described as being essential that HyNet is selected on track 1 to support NZNW and Cheshire West and Chester Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan.

In response to earlier questions regarding the transition to Green Hydrogen, John discussed that this was in-scope for HyNet in the medium term while also referencing the constraints which make Blue Hydrogen an essential part of the UK's medium term plan, such as the lack of surplus renewable energy to make Green Hydrogen and insufficient supply of electrolyzers for the production of green hydrogen. Charlie Steer raised a question regarding the cost of storing carbon in Liverpool bay. John stated that there were two elements of the cost – the cost of capture and the cost of transport. The capturing process was estimated at £40-£60 per ton for large industrial processes, and the CO2 transport and storage elements were estimated at sub £25 per ton for HyNet. This was contrasted against the £50 per ton cost of carbon on the Emissions trading scheme. John also addressed a question from Cllr Bryan regarding the issue of grey/brown Hydrogen – Hydrogen production from natural gas without carbon capture. John noted that this was not an option supported by UK Government, as low carbon was a requirement for hydrogen.

Cllr Eardley raised a question regarding the pipeline infrastructure, as much of it is projected to pass through this ward, and specifically the extent to which compulsion would be used to secure access to the land required. He also discussed the need for in-person engagement to ensure all age brackets have the opportunity to have their questions heard and addressed. Finally, Cllr Eardley asked whether the pipeline would be underground and overground, and also asked whether the pipeline/infrastructure would be new or repurposed.

John discussed that the pipeline from Stanlow to Flint would be new, and that from Flint onwards the pipelines would be repurposed existing infrastructure. The CO2 and hydrogen pipelines required would be underground. John discussed that they would review opportunities for in-person engagement where possible given restrictions. On compulsion, John emphasised that a very good effort would be made to avoid compulsory purchase and reach agreement with landowners.

Cllr Houlbrook asked about the role that Cllrs would play in engaging with communities, and that a Q&A pack for Cllrs would be useful to address questions raised by residents. Cllr Bryan built on this to agree with Cllr Houlbrook, and noted that showing people the infrastructure that already exists underground would be a good demonstration of the low impact that this has on visual amenity. John thanked Members for these questions and discussed that there would be Q&A packs, leaflets and brochures addressing these questions. John discussed that they wanted Cllrs to feed questions back to Progressive Energy as they wanted to hear and respond to this feedback meaningfully.

John addressed a question from Catherine Green in the chat function regarding the viability of the gas fields as a CO2 storage mechanism. He discussed that Liverpool bay fields could store 200m tons of CO2. It was discussed that this was a temporary solution to meet immediate decarbonisation requirements. Steven Hughes raised a question regarding whether hydrogen production was dependent on carbon capture/track 1 status. John confirmed that this was the case. Steven also asked when HyNet would develop their approach to green hydrogen technology. It was discussed that Progressive energy would not develop technology, but would license existing technology for Green in the same way that Blue technology had been licensed. He would not speculate on when this would be, but recognised that the Hydrogen strategy would be key in understanding when this transition would need to occur.

Ashley Rogers raised questions relating to the integrity of the gas fields and secondly whether Liverpool's Freeport bid would accelerate the development of HyNet. John discussed that there was massive knowledge on how to manage offshore oil and gas reserves, and that this knowledge could be applied to CO2 storage, noting that the integrity of the reservoir was proven by the gas staying in situ for millions of years. On Freeports, Progressive have reached out to Freeports to bring these agendas together.

Niall MacFadyen asked whether the cluster sequencing proposals were fixed as supporting two areas. John confirmed that it was set as two primarily but that there was potentially the opportunity to stretch to three if funding allowed, and that the 2030 tranche could potentially be brought forward to 2027 – but emphasised that this would still be a steep cliff-edge for projects.

9 Next Steps:

Cllr Bryan discussed that the next meeting would be on Transport in July, and that this would be followed by a meeting in September focused on pre-COP26 activity.