

**South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Energy Sub-Committee**

**(Via Microsoft Teams)**

**Members Present:**

**27 February 2024**

**Chairperson:** **Councillor P.Miller**

**Councillors:** A.Owen, A.Lewis, J.Hurley and R.Sinnett

**National Park  
Representatives:** S.Alderman and L.Bickerton

**Officers In  
Attendance:** N.Pearce, S.Brennan, G.Bacon, A.Moss,  
R.Moxey, K.Davies, S.Aldred-Jones, G.Jones,  
K.Tillman, D.West and C.Plowman

**External Advisors:** V.Camp, J.Lewis and J.Baker-Edwards

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1. **Chairs Announcements**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interests**

The following declaration of interest was received:

Liz Bickerton

General declaration - As she is a freelance consultant, who undertakes a number of evaluations for third sector organisations, some involving energy efficiency. Energy efficiency is one of the priorities of the Energy Sub Committee.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2023, were approved as an accurate record.

4. **Forward Work Programme**

The Energy Sub Committee Forward Work Programme was noted.

5. **Delivery of Local Area Energy Planning in South-West Wales**

The Committee were advised on the progress of delivery of the Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) within the Region.

It was explained that the LAEPs formed part of Welsh Government's commitment to achieve a Net Zero Wales by 2050. Members were informed that Welsh Government had funded the development of the LAEPs in each of the 22 counties across Wales. It was mentioned that several Local Authorities, including Pembrokeshire, were part of a pilot project; and therefore, already had their LAEPs delivered. It was confirmed that the LAEPs for the remaining 18 counties were currently being produced in conjunction with the service providers; City Science were delivering the LAEPs for Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, and Carmarthenshire. It was mentioned that City Science were endeavouring to ensure that the four LAEPs had a synergy between them, to reflect the regional emphasis.

Officers confirmed that Welsh Government had funded the appointment of three support staff to assist in this process; interviews were held in November 2023, and two out of three posts were filled. It was confirmed that these posts were the Energy Project Manager, and the Energy Project Officer; the third post was currently vacant, however the job was out for advert and Officers were hoping to fill this post in the near future.

Members were informed that the funding for the LAEPs was due to end in March 2024; the three remaining LAEPs for the region were on target to be produced by the end of February 2024. It was highlighted that the drafts were currently with each Local Authority for internal comment, and utilities for the technical modelling comments.

A presentation was provided by City Science. It was explained that Local Area Energy Planning was a detailed, comprehensive process designed to identify the most effective pathways to Net Zero for the local energy system.

It was stated that the Regional Directors Group, which reports to the Corporate Joint Committee, was the regional steering group for LAEP sign off; whilst plans were local, they had been developed using

regional collaboration and themes aligned with the four regional energy strategies.

Reference was made to the extensive stakeholder engagement programme that had been held during the development of the LAEPs; which was ensuring that they were aligned with the different thematic and regional themes, to ensure collaboration and a regional approach to development.

It was noted that whilst many of the scenarios and levers were local, a large number were regional (skills, transport, housing, infrastructure); therefore, Officers have ensured the LAEPs remained connected and transparent with regional governance structures.

Following the completion of the LAEPs, it was explained that there will be an exercise undertaken by the technical advisors to Welsh Government, to align and consolidate the findings; this will then inform the further development and strategic direction of regional actions, and lead to the creation of a Wales-wide National Energy Plan.

An update was provided in regards to the progress through the stages of the LAEP; action plans had now been developed for each of the LAEPs. It was explained that this will create a robust trajectory for all of the implementation steps that had been identified within the LAEP process, to create a Net Zero energy system in the future. Officers highlighted that they started with baseline modelling to understand the current energy system, before then developing different scenarios to test what the future might look like, and then setting out actions that can support reaching Net Zero by 2050.

It was highlighted that since completing the actions plans, the LAEP documents had been drafted; and as previously mentioned, they were currently being reviewed by each Council, Welsh Government, and the Energy Service. Once feedback had been provided, it was noted that City Science will make the relevant amendments and send off the final versions; stage eight will then commence, which consisted of corporate briefings and Cabinet sign off.

The presentation detailed information regarding the stakeholder engagement that had occurred during the process; all engagement for stages one through six had been completed. It was explained that the last piece of engagement for stage seven was to provide a presentation on the final report to wider group and stakeholders, and

then to this Energy Sub Committee. Reference was made to how the engagement activities influenced and fed into the final LAEPs.

City Science provided an overview of what the LAEP documents look like, and how they were structured. It was noted that each LAEP consists of two documents; the main LAEP report which was more accessible, easy to understand and engaging, as well as a technical annex covering all of the technical detail. It was mentioned that both documents followed the same structure; therefore it was easy for the reader to reference different sections in the technical annex as and when they feel that they want to get more information. It was stated that the documents firstly covered the local context and energy system, then shared the vision and future energy scenarios, before looking at interventions, and then finally the action plan.

Members asked if there were going to be any workshops or similar, that will provide a regional overview of the individual LAEPs in order to find the common themes and areas where the regions can collaborate. It was confirmed that after the LAEPs are published, there will be a session to get everyone together to look at the Plans on a regional basis; the action plans identify instances where some actions sit across the region. It was added that the new recruitments, as previously mentioned, will help align the LAEPs and the Energy Strategy to make sure that the themes were working in the right way.

Officers highlighted the importance of the regional and national approach, and the need to obtain a consistent view from Welsh Government in order drive this work forward.

Following the discussion, the report was noted.

## 6. **Regional Skills Partnership (Verbal Update)**

Officers provided a verbal update in regards to the work that the Regional Skills Partnership had been undertaking, in the South West Wales region, in order to identify skills needs and skills gaps.

It was explained that through the City Deal Skills and Talent Programme, Officers had been undertaking a piece of work around a skills barometer in order to identify current gaps in skills, and what future skills would be required, for both industry and Public Sectors; across the five key areas of digital, energy, construction, manufacturing and health. It was noted that the barometer was complete; however, it would continuously be updated as new opportunities emerged.

Members were informed that this work highlighted the current provision, and how the provision needed to be updated going forward; for example, some of the courses and opportunities delivered through colleges, universities and schools were outdated, and needed to be refreshed. It was stated that the work also looked at new skills coming through, as a result of the projects that had been supported through the City Deal, the FLOW Accelerator project, and the Celtic Freeport opportunities. It was noted that although it was important to educate young people in schools and colleges of these opportunities, it would also be vital to upskill the existing workforce to transition into these new jobs as they developed; some of these jobs would be long term, however the workforce needed to be ready in order to meet the upcoming challenges.

Reference was made to energy and construction, which were key areas for new skills; the Regional Skills Partnership were looking at how the workforce, within the construction sector, can be upskilled to meet the necessary demands.

Officers expressed the importance of ensuring that colleges were also delivering these new skills within the existing courses and apprenticeships on offer. It was mentioned that there were new vocational qualifications being developed, which will be introduced to schools in 2027; this will hopefully bring through opportunities for young people to look at construction, engineering, manufacturing within the school programme.

Through the Regional Skills Partnership work with the Skills and Talent Programme, it was noted that Officers had been able to support some of the pilot projects; utilising funding from the programme. The Committee were provided with examples of some of the pilot projects that had taken place in schools and colleges.

It was noted that the Regional Skills Partnership had nine specific cluster groups, eight Private Sector and one Public Sector, which looks at specific areas of concern and how these concerns could be solved.

A discussion took place in regards to specific courses available to increase knowledge, across the Public Sector, in regards to sustainability; these courses were free of charge and available to all Public Sector bodies.

Other key areas that were highlighted through the Public Sector group were ecology and planning; Officers were trying to identify how

awareness of these opportunities could be increased, and encourage people to think about studying in these areas.

The Committee was informed of the four county reports that will be published at the end of March 2024, which provided detail about specific skills requirements for each county.

Reference was made to TATA Steel, and the issues that the closure will bring; particularly regarding staff losing jobs both within TATA and the supply chain. Members were assured that the Regional Skills Partnership had been working hard to try and mitigate these concerns, and ensure that the staff and their skills would be kept within the region; a mapping exercise had been undertaken to assist with this.

Officers provided information regarding a user experience project within the digital sector, which was a course that had not yet been delivered anywhere in the UK; the course had been written and approved, and was now being delivered as a level two, three and four apprenticeship through Gower College. It was added that the degree apprenticeship through Trinity St David University had also just started.

Following the discussion, the report was noted.

## 7. **Investment Prospectus**

A report was provided to the Committee setting the scene on factors and governance structures influencing regional energy policy, and outlining known developments in regional energy; as well as the need to seek additional financial resource required for the next steps.

Officers had been working with Net Zero Industry Wales to develop an investment pack to support the energy work stream; along with specific activities and feasibility studies on prioritised projects. Further to this, Officers were seeking to bring in additional resource to enable South West Wales to surge forward in terms of the opportunities that present themselves. The Committee were informed that all other regions across Wales were looking at carrying out similar work to this.

It was explained that the project had been sectioned into three 'Sprints'; the first Sprint was detailed as an appendix to the circulated report. Officers highlighted that this stage would take all of the relevant regional information (Regional Energy Strategy, FLOW projects, Celtic Freeport project, Local Area Energy Plans), along with

information from the Private Sector, and identify the scale of the opportunity for South West Wales region.

Members were informed that the next part would identify and engage with a contact point within each Regional Structure; before then creating a list of regional projects contained within Regional Structures, and build an investment prospectus and narrative that describes the scale of opportunity. Officers hoped that by the end of the process, a useful and dynamic resource will be created.

The circulated report detailed the request of £120,500 be utilised from the Corporate Joint Committee reserves, in order to support this work.

A discussion took place in regards to the funding concerns. It was highlighted that the Energy Sub Committee had been allocated £20k, from the Corporate Joint Committee, to undertake the work; there was a need to try and secure additional funding to Welsh Government, as without funding Officers could not progress delivering the aspirations of this work stream.

The Committee recognised that the Corporate Joint Committee will have the issue with balancing competing funding priorities, as there were three other work streams within the Corporate Joint Committee.

It was mentioned that the Corporate Joint Committee were in the process of writing to the Minister in relation to the Regional Transport Plan and Strategic Development Plan funding constraints and felt that Energy could also be included within the correspondence.

It was supported that a letter be written to Welsh Government in regards to additional funding.

**RESOLVED:**

That the request for the draw down of £120,500 be passed to the Corporate Joint Committee for decision.

**8. Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items received.

**CHAIRPERSON**

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