

5 .3 QUESTION BY MS K LANGDON TO CLLR C CAMPBELL, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS

“What are the Council doing to encourage (a) a common approach to biodiversity, sustainable conservation and sharing of best practice. And (b) encouraging community education, action and involvement (which is surely a key part of the biodiversity process?)”

The Authority has a dedicated Conservation Section that has always worked across all departments to provide biodiversity advice where needed via a range of officers, including planning, on ecology, trees, common land and rural conservation issues. The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 has formalised this through a duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity through all our functions. We have a Forward Plan to demonstrate how we are embedding this duty and our first report to the Welsh Government has been published. We have also recently employed an ecologist who is embedded in our design and engineering section to provide ecological input into the council’s larger schemes from an early stage. Internal guidance notes have been provided on protected species and training when necessary, e.g. water voles, dormice, otters, bats.

We have provided guidance to all Town and County Councils on how to manage their public open space for people and biodiversity and worked with National Botanic Garden for Wales to provide a day’s workshop to complement this guidance.

In terms of Community Education, the Conservation Section does not have a-specific environmental education officer but we have provided biodiversity seminars for sixth forms, and outdoor education opportunities as part of our Bogs Project and using our Local Nature Reserves. Where possible we also work with individual schools. Pembrey Country Park has a volunteer and education officer who leads on providing environmental education opportunities for schools and leading local volunteer parties.

The Carmarthenshire Nature Recovery Plan (in draft) will provide ideas for individuals, communities, businesses on how to carry out practical action for biodiversity.

As an example of the type of conservation project the Council’s runs, its Caeau Mynydd Mawr Marsh Fritillary Project, run by the Rural Conservation Section won first prize in the Natural Environment category of the UK’s Royal Town Planning Institute’s Planning Awards in 2018. The project has been also used as an exemplar project by RTPI in Wales in 2018 and by the Association of Local Government Ecologists in 2019. The project sets out a common approach to managing the impact of development on biodiversity in the Cross Hands area consistent with the EU Habitat Regulations. It is recognised as demonstrating best practice, and works with local landowners to enhance the conservation value of their marshy grassland

5.7 QUESTION BY DR A BELLAMY TO CLLR C CAMPBELL, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS

“We face a climate crisis of global significance in which "business as usual" will no longer be adequate nor possible. Until now "best value" for land has always been interpreted as the highest financial bid. In the context of the climate emergency, is it time to redefine best value to prioritise value to the local community?”

The Council's actions in disposing of land are subject to statutory provisions, in particular to the overriding duty on the Council, under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, to obtain the best consideration that can be reasonably obtained for the disposal of land. This duty is subject to certain exceptions referred to as 'the General Disposal Consent'. The General Disposal Consent (Wales) 2003 makes provision for the Council to dispose of land at less than full market value, known as an 'under-value'. Specified circumstances must apply as follows:-

- a. The Council considers that the purpose for which the disposal is being made is likely to contribute to the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the whole or part of its area, or any person resident or present in its area.
- b. The difference between the unrestricted or market value of the land to be disposed of and the consideration for the disposal does not exceed £2 million.

Carmarthenshire County Council will continue to take advantage of these provisions, to dispose of land at less than market value, where the appropriate specified circumstances apply.

In addition the Council in certain circumstances will require the consent of the Welsh Ministers to dispose of land e.g. the disposal of land by a local authority which is held for housing purposes.

5.9 QUESTION BY MS S WEAVER TO CLLR C CAMPBELL, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS

“Given recent research findings (Science 05 July 19: Vol 365, Issue 6448, pp 76 - 79) that a trillion trees could be planted globally to mitigate two thirds of anthropogenic carbon emissions to date - without encroaching on crop land or urban areas - and that this is the cheapest and most powerful method of all proposed solutions to the climate emergency:

- what plans does the council have to support community tree planting in the next year by making land and funding available?”

Officers from across the authority met to discuss the opportunities for tree planting on Council managed land in January 2020 and a number of actions are being pursued. We have—submitted an Expression of Interest to WG for such projects last month. As an authority we are aware that tree planting is only the very first step in establishing more woodland in the county. New woodland planting needs maintenance, at the establishment stage and until the trees are at least 25 years old, as they may be vulnerable to damage by grey squirrels. CCC is also aware that the right trees need to be planted in the right place. Areas with an existing biodiversity value, such as marshy grassland (which support invertebrates, etc. that are dependent on grassland plants) should not be planted with trees. These habitats currently sequester carbon and the contribution these areas already make to reducing our carbon footprint should not be over looked. CCC is well placed to develop new woodland as it already employs a Coed Cymru officer who has advised private landowners on woodland planting and management.

5.16 QUESTION BY MS C LAXTON TO CLLR C CAMPBELL, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS

“Considering that in addition to well-known concerns, council contractors are known to use Glyphosate inappropriately and that they don’t always use safety equipment, is it time to ban its use?”

The County Council’s Highways Service carry out weed-spraying only where necessary and undertake all weed-spraying operations in-house. The same principle also applies to the Grounds Service, but occasionally specialist qualified contractors are used for some aspects of our work.

All of our highways and grounds operatives are appropriately trained and qualified in the use and application of herbicides and all operatives have an annual refresher training each April.

Guidance on the use of Glyphosate has been issued to all local authorities by Welsh Government and our supplier has confirmed that the product supplied meets strict regulatory standards and does not pose a threat to human or animal health or the environment. This is a national position agreed with Public Health Wales.

5.19 QUESTION BY MR R THOMSON TO CLLR C CAMPBELL, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS

“To evaluate the net zero carbon strategy there will be a need to measure the change in renewable energy output, requiring an inventory of power sources. For example, how many roofs provide solar power in Carmarthenshire and what is the power output?”

The Net Zero Carbon Plan sets out a route to enable the Council to become a net zero carbon local authority by 2030. Measurement is a key factor in the Plan. This is reflected by the focus on Council Services where carbon emissions are (currently) measurable i.e. from the Council’s (1) non-domestic buildings; (2) street lighting; (3) fleet mileage, and (3) business mileage. Increasing renewable energy generation will be a key component in enabling the Council to become a net zero carbon local authority by 2030. Measuring the change in the Council’s renewable energy output is thus an integral part of the Action Plan.

In terms of your specific question I can confirm that the roofs of 33 Council non-domestic buildings, including schools, provided solar power in 2018/19. These solar PV systems generated 979,071 kWh of electricity.

5 .20 QUESTION BY MS H GRIFFITHS TO CLLR C CAMPBELL, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS

“Is the Dyfed Pension Fund now disinvested from the fossil fuel industry? In particular has it disinvested from Blackrock whose Investments in ExxonMobil, Chevron, Royal Dutch Shell and BP were responsible for 75% of Blackrock’s \$90bn losses over the last decade (reported in 2019).”

The Pension Fund investments are the responsibility of the Dyfed Pension Fund Committee, who act on behalf of in excess of 50 scheme employers, therefore I am unable to answer directly.. However, I am aware the pension committee is currently considering investments in ex-fossil fuel/lower carbon index solutions with various investment managers, divesting from any investments can be costly when initiated at an inappropriate time in the market cycle. The Dyfed Pension Fund has already increased its allocation to investments in renewable energy projects over the last 12 months and will continue down this path.

You will also have read in the press recently that Blackrock has announced a number of initiatives to place sustainability at the centre of its investment approach, including making sustainability integral to portfolio construction, exiting investments that present a high sustainability-related risk such as thermal coal producers and launching new investment products that screen fossil fuels.

5.21 QUESTION BY MR B DOYLE TO CLLR C CAMPBELL, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS

“Having spent decades religiously recycling and recently finding out that it may quite well have been shipped all the way to Malaysia, only to end up being dumped in a river and eventually making its way to the ocean. There it threatens huge amounts of marine life and humanity with contaminated food chains. It would have been better sent to landfill. So, is there any way that people can gain some insight into where and how our recycled items are processed?”

Recyclable materials are processed by CWM Environmental Ltd at the Materials Recycling Facilities (MRF) at Nantycaws, Carmarthen, where the content of our blue bags are separated into different materials/products (e.g. paper, cardboard, plastics, steel, aluminium etc.) through a combination of mechanical and manual systems. Depending on outlet availability and market value, the recovered and separated materials/products are transferred to various specialist re-processors where they are used to manufacture new products. Where recycling material demand is low in the UK, or there is limited capacity at a particular time, some products have to be exported. Due diligence checks are carried out on all merchants/outlets. It is important to note that we are sending recycled products to specialist re-processors for the manufacture of specific products, hence the materials at that stage are no longer considered a waste product, but a viable alternative to virgin or raw materials that are of use/value to the manufacturer.

My Recycling Wales is a website that allows you to browse Welsh local authorities and see what happens to your waste across the UK, and even around the world, and a list of our 2018-19 destination data can be found via the following link:-

https://myrecyclingwales.org.uk/local_authorities/carmarthenshire