



Wales must prioritise low-carbon technology development and green investment even in tough economic times, a wide-ranging environmental report has warned.

The first annual Climate Change Commission for Wales report published today said Wales was “well placed to play a leading role” in the development of a global low-carbon economy but that the Welsh Government faced a number of key challenges that required “urgent and collective action”.

The report – the first annual report on the country’s performance in reducing emissions – came up with more than 30 recommendations.

See also: Consultation on environment launched

The Welsh Government launched its Climate Change Strategy for Wales last year. It includes a commitment of 3% annual emissions reduction in areas of devolved competence from last year onwards.

While praising the direction taken by the Welsh Government, the commission recommended that it should look to secure energy supplies, improve air quality, make homes more comfortable and incentivise business to develop products and services using low-carbon technology.

The report also said there needed to be a more “ambitious, large-scale retrofit” project to insulate homes, to replace the “successful but relatively small scale” Arbed and Nest projects, and that reforms of the planning process should support delivery of low-carbon projects such as renewables and transport infrastructure. The Welsh Government should also set a reductions target for the public sector, it said.

The chairman of the commission, Peter Davies, said the overall message of the first report was that Wales was generally on the right track, but that the progress needed to be “accelerated” if goals were to be met.

Mr Davies, who is also commissioner for sustainable futures, said: “With only around one third of emissions reductions within the Climate Change Strategy for Wales expected to come from policies solely under the control of Welsh Government, we need urgent, radical and sustained action from all sectors of society.

“The Welsh Government is already demonstrating that it is on the right path towards tackling climate change and annual reduction targets are comparable with the more ambitious reduction plans globally.

“However, it is essential that we not only ensure these targets are delivered, but that the ambition levels of these targets are kept under review.”

He added that the country had the potential to be a “leading light” in creating a low-carbon economy.

He said: “[We] have the potential to deliver jobs and to make ourselves better-placed in the future to be more resilient in terms of employment.

“The opportunity we have got is to tackle climate change as a means of really reinvigorating the

economy and have a low-carbon economy going forward.”

Environmental group WWF Cymru said the report showed Wales needed to “up its game” on climate change and, in particular, insulation.

It said the Welsh Government had made “some good progress” but said that it needed to expand its insulation schemes, pointing out that a fifth of Welsh homes still had the two worst energy-efficiency ratings.

It said that while its energy efficiency measures had been effective, they had benefited a “tiny proportion of homes”, equating to around 0.5% of the housing stock, and that the Welsh Government needed to act to insulate more homes, and quicker.

The call comes as the UK Government prepares to implement its “Green Deal”, which ploughs savings from energy bills into improving homes.

Anne Meikle, head of WWF Cymru, said: “While the Welsh Government’s current home insulation schemes have helped a small proportion of homes, it now needs to radically up its game.”