

Gwynedd's public buildings get top marks in energy efficiency

Public buildings in Gwynedd have been rated the most energy efficient in Wales for the second year in a row.

Gwynedd Council owned buildings have come out on top for local authority-owned buildings – and as well as retaining its position, the authority has even beaten its overall score from last year.

Figures are based on the average Display Energy Certificate (DEC) score for each local authority's public buildings that have an area of more than 1,000 square metres.

The certificate shows a building's energy performance based on its actual energy consumption over the last 12 months. DECs provide an energy rating from A to G – with A being the lowest CO₂ emissions (best) and G being the highest (worst).

Over the last 12 months, the average Gwynedd Council building's score has improved by 11.2%, from 74.6 to 66.2, placing it firmly within the C band, which is well above the national average of 86.5 (D).

The improvement in Gwynedd's performance is thanks to a major project which has seen nearly £ 3.75 million invested by the council in upgrading its buildings and services to improve their energy efficiency, under its ambitious Carbon Management Plan. The plan, which was implemented in 2010, has managed to reduce the carbon footprint of the authority's buildings by 30% over the past five years.

Some of the work carried out within the buildings includes: upgrading lighting; insulating heating pipes; upgrading boilers; upgrading heating controls; cavity wall insulation; installing Voltage Optimisation Units; installing Combined Heat and Power Units (CHP) and IWEMS (Integrated Water and Energy Management System) in swimming pools; as well as installing PV solar panels on the roofs of 54 council-owned buildings, including schools, leisure centres, offices and residential care homes.

Councillor John Wynn Jones, Gwynedd Council's Cabinet Member for the Environment, said:

"As a Council, we're dedicated to reducing our carbon footprint and the impact we have on the environment for the sake of future generations, and the improvement of the overall DEC ratings of our buildings is proof of this commitment."

"Over the next five years, our aim is to build on this success by continuing to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings and services for the benefit of the people of Gwynedd."

Since 2010, the Carbon Management Plan has managed to save more than £ 2.2 million in energy costs across the council.

Now in its second phase, Carbon Management Plan 2 will aim to reduce the Council's carbon emissions by a further 10% by 2021 with £ 3.26 million capital investment, resulting in annual revenue savings of £ 645,000.

While the projects under the new plan will include further investment to improve buildings, street lighting and renewable technologies, the primary focus will be raising awareness among staff to ensure employees as a whole are proactive when it comes to saving energy, with the introduction of new meter systems allowing staff to monitor and manage the energy consumption within their buildings more effectively.