

Gwynedd Leisure Centres race to reduce carbon footprint



Leisure Centres in Gwynedd have succeeded in dramatically reducing their carbon footprint by 10% over the space of three years, saving more than 123,000kg in CO₂ emissions in the last year alone.

Back in 2015, a pilot project was launched, which saw Gwynedd Council's Energy Conservation Unit and 12 Leisure Centres work in partnership to try to reduce energy consumption. This was done by appointing an Energy Champion within each centre, who would be responsible for saving energy within their building, with the support of the Council's Energy Team.

So far, the project has involved replacing old boilers with more energy efficient combined heat and power units, installing sensors and upgrading lighting, improving insulation, installing energy saving pool covers, installing solar 'PV' panels and draught exclusion.

But as well as investing in capital projects, the Energy Team also focused on changing attitudes and behaviours and encouraging staff to behave in a more environmentally friendly way. As part of this, Energy Champions were given the skills to use software to closely manage and adjust their centres' heating systems.

In contrast, Leisure Centre staff previously had to rely on the Energy Team – who are based at the Council Headquarters in Caernarfon – to do this remotely for them.

Steve Smith, Projects and Quality Officer for Leisure, said: “Over the past three years, the Energy Champions and the Leisure service as a whole have really committed to the project, and the Champions themselves have been proactive in saving energy within their centres.

“We have worked on the belief that no-one knows these buildings better than they do, and so their knowledge has been vital in identifying new opportunities to make further energy savings.

“From our service users’ perspective, enabling Leisure staff to manage the heating of their own buildings has in fact had a positive effect on customers’ experience. For instance, now if we receive comments that a studio or room is too warm or too cold, we’re able to adapt temperatures to their needs more quickly.

“We look forward to continuing to work together to reduce energy consumption even further in future.”

The project forms part of the Council’s Carbon Management Plan, which was launched in 2010 as part of the Council’s commitment to reducing the impact it has on the environment. To date, the plan has reduced the authority’s carbon footprint by 34.5% and saved more than £4,000,000 in revenue costs. Its next goal is to reduce carbon emissions by 40% by 2021.

Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Gwynedd Council’s Cabinet Member for Environment, added: “Leisure Centres generally take a lot of energy to run, especially those with swimming pools. Our Healthy Living Centres in Gwynedd account for roughly 17% of the total amount of energy consumed by the Council, so supporting them to reduce their consumption not only has huge benefits in terms of our carbon footprint, but also our energy costs.

“We’re very proud of what has been achieved by this project so far; it’s a great example of how working together can create positive outcomes for everyone.”

For more information about the Carbon Management Plan, go to:

www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/carbonmanagement

PHOTO: Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member for the Environment, with Energy Champions Darren Anthony and Neil Owen outside Arfon Leisure Centre