**Could Wales ever be Carbon Neutral?**

Being ‘Carbon Neutral’ is a key term in our current economic climate. Companies’ large and small strive to prove to their customers and the wider business community that they are ethically responsible with regards to their carbon footprint.

The best practice for organizations and individuals seeking carbon neutral status entails reducing and/or avoiding carbon emissions first so that only unavoidable emissions are offset. Carbon neutral status is commonly achieved in two ways:

* Balancing [carbon dioxide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_dioxide) released into the atmosphere from burning [fossil fuels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fossil_fuel), with [renewable energy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renewable_energy) that creates a similar amount of useful energy, so that the carbon emissions are compensated, or alternatively using only renewable energies that don't produce any carbon dioxide.
* [Carbon offsetting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_offset) by paying others to remove or sequester 100% of the carbon dioxide emitted from the atmosphere or by funding '[carbon projects](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_project)' that should lead to the prevention of future greenhouse gas emissions. While carbon offsetting is often used alongside [energy conservation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Energy_conservation) measures to minimize energy use, the practice is [criticized](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_neutrality#Offesetting) by some.

As carbon neutrality comes almost the ‘norm’ in some arenas, the public’s attention is turning towards both the public sector (such as schools and hospitals) as well as to their own daily lives.

To be carbon neutral, you need to calculate how much carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases you emit into the atmosphere based on your lifestyle, and then take actions to remove an equal amount of emissions from the environment, essentially creating a neutral or zero impact. But could a nation come together and achieve this as a whole?

Copenhagen hopes to become a carbon-neutral city by 2015. It intends to replace coal with biomass, to add more wind and solar electricity to the grid, to upgrade energy-guzzling buildings, and to lure even more residents onto bikes and public transit. Clearly, Copenhagen's plans face significant challenges, especially since city planners expect Copenhagen to add more than 100,000 residents by 2025. But at stake is the notion that a growing, modern city with more than a half-million inhabitants can systematically wring carbon from its economy. The battle to slow climate change will be won or lost in cities, which are responsible for more than 70 percent of global CO2 emissions and two-thirds of worldwide energy consumption.

 But what of Wales? Should we as a nation be looking at this situation home by home or county by county? Could it be a focus for one city at a time or a single street? The threat of the current apathy amongst us as a nation is that we could end up doing too little, too late, with disastrous consequences for future generations.