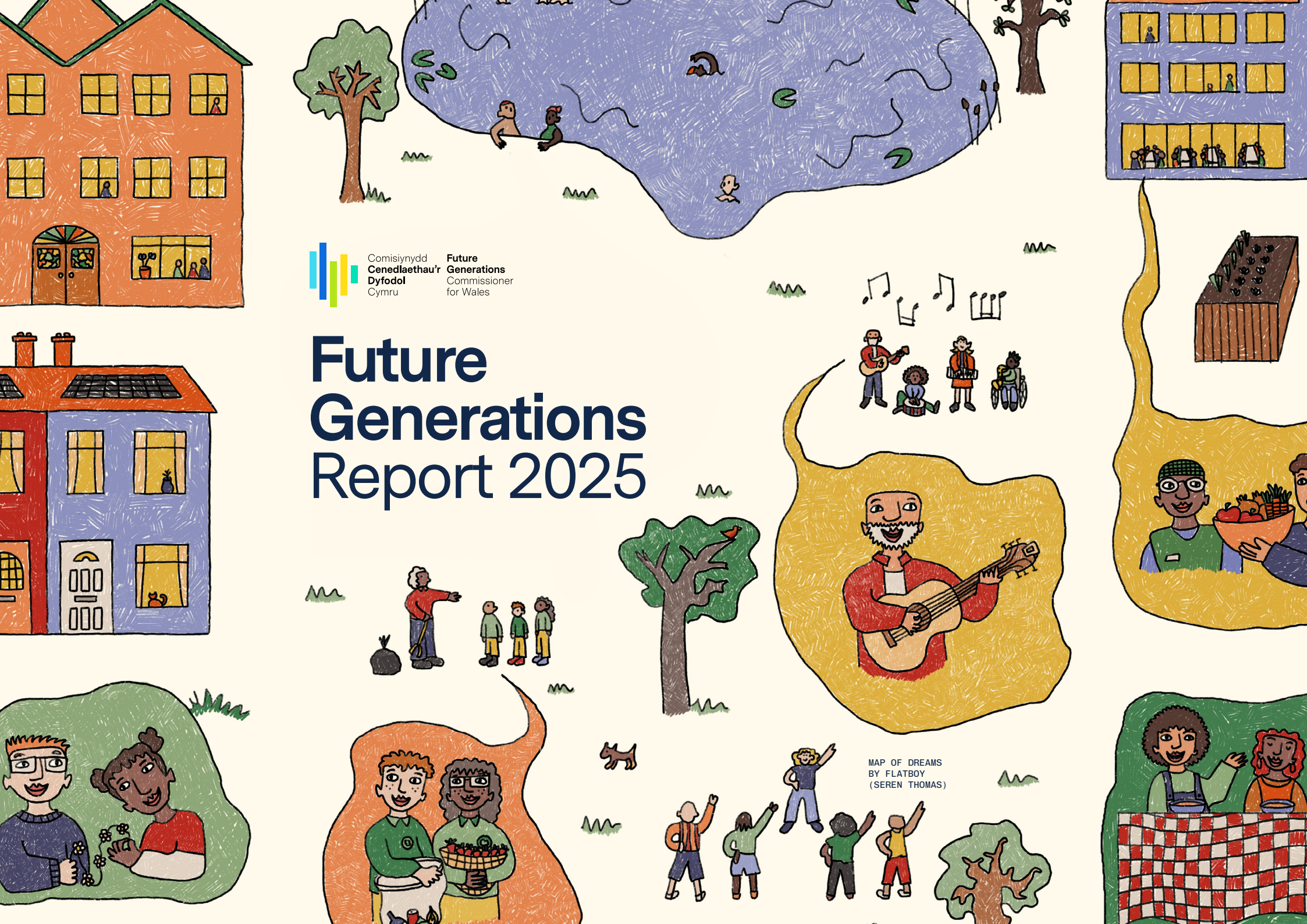
Comisiynydd Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol Cymru

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Future Generations Report 2025



FOREWORD

By Derek Walker

Croeso

The climate and nature crisis, along with growing inequality, are threatening the well-being of our children and grandchildren.

Without urgent action, we'd be on track for an unrecognisable future, where the choices we have before us today are taken away, or made more difficult than we could ever imagine.

Our Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act), provides us with a pathway for positive change, ensuring that the commitments Cymru has made to improving lives — both now and for future generations — are realised.

In upcoming Senedd and local government elections, politicians must set out not only their commitments for the next five years but also their vision for the next 50.

This means clearly outlining how they will:

- Reverse nature loss
- Reduce carbon emissions
- Alleviate poverty
- Decrease inequality
- Prevent ill health
- Fix our broken food system
- Protect and enhance cultural well-being

As we debate our future, we must be responsive to arguments that are misleading and divisive, or that ignore long-term consequences, features of recent elections around the world.

With trust in public institutions in decline, we must listen more, engage meaningfully with people's concerns, and involve them in decision-making. Without this, trust will continue to erode.

Cymru has chosen a different path, one that looks to the future and prioritises well-being, and we must stick to it. Every action we make together makes a difference.

I am aware how challenging it is to work in a public body today and how difficult it can be to make the necessary, urgent and transformative change for people across Wales, including the voiceless yet-to-be-born. Years of austerity have come at a heavy price. I too recognise the difficulties public services have faced because of external and global factors beyond their control such as COVID-19 and conflict.

This statutory Future Generations Report, published on the 10th anniversary of the WFG Act, is designed to support politicians and public body leaders in making life better for people now and in the future.

FOREWORD

By Derek Walker

Croeso

Inside this report, you'll find:

- An assessment of progress so far
- Targeted advice
- Examples of positive change already happening in our public services

This report is based on extensive evidence, including:

- Research and analysis of Well-being of Wales reports
- Engagement with hundreds of public body representatives
- Two in-depth WFG Act Section 20 reviews
- Close collaboration with Audit Wales

I have listened to public sector organisations, the private and voluntary sectors, communities, individuals, and subject experts to understand what action is needed.

Through my strategy, Cymru Can, my team and I have set out a plan for reaching 2030 with better implementation of Wales' well-being commitment. This report extends the support we are already providing to public bodies in pursuit of that ambition.

There is much to be proud of on Wales' well-being journey over the past decade.

Inspired by First Nations Iroquois teachings, the WFG Act has helped drive significant change, including ambitious transport policies, the vision for an anti-racist Wales, a progressive school curriculum, and even a United Nations declaration.

People in the future will ask, what did we do to make Wales and the world better.

We must be able to say we did everything we could.

So let's move faster, go further, and always remember — what we do today will profoundly shape the lives of those born tomorrow.

Derek Walker, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

CONCLUSIONS

The overall conclusions of this report.

People in Cymru are rightly proud that we have a shared vision for the Wales we want for future generations.
The Well-being of Future Generations Act provides a framework for this vision.

The challenges we face are significant, but they are not insurmountable.
Since committing to this journey 10 years ago, Cymru has made progress—from free school meals for primary pupils to being the second-best country in the world for recycling. But much more needs to be done. We are in a climate and nature emergency. Poverty levels remain unacceptably high. The solutions exist; we need to implement them.

Delaying action makes change more expensive and difficult. Future generations will live with the consequences of our decisions.
Change will happen, by crisis or by choice. We must act now.

A UK Government economic strategy focused solely on growth puts well-being at risk.
Cymru has chosen a different path, which prioritises economic growth for a purpose, which is the well-being of people and planet. We must stay the course and ensure national and regional economic plans aim to achieve Wales' well-being goals.

The Welsh public sector's net zero target for 2030 is an important driver for change, but many public bodies will not meet it without additional resources.

Prevention budgets are being cut, and essential activities deprioritised.
As a result, the NHS is increasingly overwhelmed with preventable diseases and accidents. This is an act of collective self-sabotage. We continue to treat the symptoms rather than addressing root causes.

Our food system is unsustainable.
Cymru cannot achieve its seven well-being goals, net zero targets or improved public health without ensuring equal access to local, affordable, healthy and sustainable diets.

Culture is in crisis.
It is often among the first areas to face cuts, yet culture is not a 'nice to have,' it is vital to our well-being.

Trust in our public institutions is declining.
Discontent is growing, inequality is increasing, and voter turnout is low. If people's voices are not being heard, trust will continue to erode.

The capacity of the Welsh public sector is at breaking point due to rising demand and years of austerity.
Without investment, our public services will not be there when we or our children need them.

Partnership and funding structures are too complicated.
Public bodies repeatedly highlight that funding arrangements are short-term, inconsistent and unclear, adding pressure when capacity is already so stretched. Partnerships established by Welsh Government often lack long-term planning and coherence.

CALLS TO ACTION

What I am asking politicians and public bodies in Wales to do.

- **No more short-term fixes.**
  Politicians and public bodies must commit to the long-term future of Wales, setting out plans not just for the next five years, but the next 50.
- **Supercharge actions with multiple benefits.**
  Decarbonisation can cut costs, nature restoration improves public health, and buying local creates jobs. In tough financial times, we must focus on win-wins.
- **Unlock private sector finance.**
  Welsh Government should establish an expert team to help public bodies prepare investment-ready proposals that can attract private finance for nature recovery and net zero projects.
- **A Real Living Wage commitment.**
  Every public body must commit to a plan, within two years, outlining a timeline to achieve Real Living Wage accreditation.
  So far, only 13 of 56 public bodies have done so. This is a critical step in tackling poverty.
- **Ringfence prevention funding.**
  Welsh Government and public bodies must protect and increase prevention budgets each year, and move towards long-term funding arrangements.
- **A national food resilience plan.**
  Welsh Government must develop a long-term plan to improve Wales' food security and ensure equal access to local, affordable, healthy and sustainable diets.
- **Culture must be protected.**
  Welsh Government should introduce a Culture Bill in the Seventh Senedd (2026–2030), making culture a statutory requirement for public bodies and safeguarding our cultural rights.
- **Rebuild trust in decision-making.**
  Public bodies must renew their efforts to involve people in shaping policies, reducing the gap between policymakers and citizens.
- **Invest in public services.**
  The UK and Welsh Governments must increase public service funding year on year. Austerity has driven severe cuts, leaving services struggling.
- **Simplify partnerships and funding.**
  Welsh Government must review and streamline partnership structures across Cymru to improve efficiency and reduce bureaucracy.
- **Review and strengthen the WFG Act.**
  Welsh Government should initiate a post-legislative review of the Well-being of Future Generations Act to enhance its impact and to prepare for the United Nations' updated Sustainable Development Goals in 2030. This review must include a public dialogue on the Wales we want for future generations.

ARTIST COMMISSIONS

Imagining a positive future

In this report, I recognise that artists and creatives have an important role to play by using their skills and experience to shape the development and delivery of public services, to support innovation in all areas of public life. Artists and creatives can not only connect us and communicate complex issues, but can also inspire, challenge and help us to imagine the positive future we are striving towards. As part of my commitment to explore innovative approaches to expand how we engage cultural freelancers across our work, I have commissioned five artists to respond creatively to the issues and themes of the Future Generations Report 2025.

Paskaline Maiyo, Flatboy (Seren Thomas), Kyle Stead, Teulu von Flap and Rightkeysonly were selected via an open call and invited to develop their work expressing their own views. I've been enlightened by the vibrant and powerful ways in which they've brought some of the issues the report considers to life, grounding them in the real-life experiences of communities in Wales and offering both inspiration and challenge to those delivering public services.

- Paskaline Maiyo's "Tik' Tok' (Living Canvas for Climate Change)" is an evocative artwork that transforms the human body into a visual narrative, illustrating the progression of a day, from morning to evening, to convey the causes, impacts, and solutions related to climate change.
- Flatboy (Seren Thomas) created a "Map of Dreams" which captures the artist's hopes for what a Wales which fully understands and operates on a social model of health could one day look like. I have used a version of this work on the front cover but you can find the full artwork on page 71.
- Set against the dramatic backdrop of the Rhondda Valley from Maerdy Mountain, Kyle Stead delivers a powerful spoken word piece that demands action. He highlights the critical need for improved mental health support, greater investment in arts and culture, and a renewed appreciation for nature's healing power.
- Teulu von Flap's "Balancing Act" is a performance to film in which Teulu Von Flap play a physical balancing game exploring the factors that contribute to their family health and well-being, such as climate, culture, food inequality, the housing crisis, health and culture.
- Rightkeysonly's track "Mi" addresses climate action from a disability accessible perspective. Combining samples of birds, bellowing wind and tree branches with synth bass lines and electronic strings, Keys was able to embed nature as a strong collaborator within the track, gifting the natural world with a voice it does not often have.

  You can view the artists' work and their statements all together on our website.

Artist commissions

CONTENTS

Cymru Can: Missions and Areas of Focus 09

IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT 12
CLIMATE AND NATURE 27
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 47
CULTURE AND WELSH LANGUAGE 65
A WELL-BEING ECONOMY 84
FOOD 100
BUDGET SETTING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS 110

01 →

The Future is Now

03 →

Our support for wider implementation 136

04 →

Setting good well-being objectives and steps 118

02 →

Annexes 140

05 →

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (WFG Act) sets out Cymru's vision for a sustainable future. It requires public bodies in Wales to consider the long-term impact of their decisions, work collaboratively with people, communities and each other, and take action to prevent persistent challenges such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

The WFG Act defines sustainable development in Wales as: *"The process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals."*

To ensure a shared purpose, the WFG Act sets out seven well-being goals. Public bodies must work towards **all seven goals**, not just selected ones.

The WFG Act also defines five ways of working that public bodies must follow to achieve the well-being goals. These ways of working encourage innovation, reflecting the way we live and what we expect from public services.

- Long-term
- Involvement
- Prevention
- Collaboration
- Integration

In April 2024, the WFG Act was amended by the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act. This amendment replaced 'decent work' with 'fair work' in the definition of a A Prosperous Wales well-being goal.

Who is covered by the WFG Act?

The WFG Act applies to **56 public bodies** in Wales, as well as to many **town and community councils** which must take steps to meet the objectives outlined in their **local well-being plans.**

Each **local authority** also has a **Public Services Board** (**PSB**), responsible for:

- **Assessing** local well-being.
- **Setting objectives** for improving well-being in their area.
- **Developing a plan** that contributes to the national well-being goals.

Future Generations Commissioner

The WFG Act establishes the role of **Future Generations Commissioner for Wales**, who is appointed by the First Minister of Wales. The Future Generations Commissioner's role is to be the guardian of future generations. This means helping public bodies and those who make policy in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions. As well as providing advice, the Commissioner monitors and assesses the extent to which well-being objectives set by public bodies are being met.

Auditor General for Wales

The **Auditor General for Wales** is required to carry out examinations to assess the extent to which public bodies have applied the sustainable development principle when setting well-being objectives and taking steps to meet them. Where practical, the examinations have been integrated wih his wider powers and duties.

You can find the Auditor General's five-year report on their website.

01

Cymru Can: Missions and Areas of Focus

01

Cymru Can: Missions and Areas of Focus

My strategy, Cymru Can, is built around five interconnected missions:

- Implementation and Impact
- Climate and Nature
- Health and Well-being
- Culture and Welsh Language
- Well-being Economy

These missions reflect the key areas where the public sector must focus its collective efforts to drive the transformation needed to achieve Wales' seven national well-being goals.

Alongside these missions, Cymru Can identifies cross-cutting areas of focus, such as the food system, which link different missions together. You can read more in my Cymru Can strategy.

This report is structured around these missions because progress in each maximises our contribution to all well-being goals. The missions offer a framework for tackling Wales' integrated challenges, highlighting where different well-being objectives overlap and guiding public sector action toward long-term change.

By working collectively through the lens of these missions and areas of focus, we can address the deep-rooted and interconnected challenges that impact our communities. This ensures every decision contributes to a shared vision of well-being for current and future generations.

I encourage you to explore each section in this report, regardless of the sector you work in. An issue in health may help solve a problem in culture, while an example in climate and nature may provide ideas for strengthening the well-being economy.

KYLE STEAD SPOKEN WORD ARTIST

01 1.1

INTRODUCTION

Implementation and Impact

“We hope that what Wales is doing today the world will do tomorrow. Action, more than words, is the hope for our current and future generations.”

Nikhil Seth, Former Head of Sustainable Development at the United Nations.

Implementation and Impact, or ensuring the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (WFG Act) fully delivers on its promise to improve lives now and in the future, is the core mission of my strategy, Cymru Can.

This section assesses the progress public bodies have made in implementing the legislation and driving impact.

I want to ensure that public bodies and other organisations have the support, resources, expertise and capacity needed to create change at scale and at pace.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the WFG Act in 2025, we must use this moment to:

- Assess progress so far.
- Accelerate implementation of the WFG Act.
- Deepen impact by building on bold policies and decisions from the past decade.

If we continue making decisions focused only on today, we will fail to improve the well-being of Cymru tomorrow. This report makes clear that action is urgent, but Cymru has the power to meet these challenges and drive meaningful change.

01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

MEASURING A NATION'S PROGRESS

The Well-being of Wales Report tracks our collective progress towards the national well-being goals using national indicators. These indicators provide insight into how effectively we are implementing the WFG Act. Independently produced by the Chief Statistician for Wales, the report contains official national statistics that assess whether we are moving closer to achieving our well-being goals and national milestones.

I believe public bodies and Public Services Boards should draw on the report when setting their well-being objectives and steps.

The latest report presents a mixed picture:

- Some indicators have improved, such as the overall employment rate, participation in sport by adults, and police recorded hate crime dropped by 4% compared to the previous year.
- Many indicators have worsened, including life expectancy in Wales, reflecting rising poverty, inequality, and preventable illnesses.

The national milestones are targets, covering several of the national indicators at once. Some show progress, including:

- A 27% reduction in direct carbon emissions since the WFG Act was introduced in 2015 (data up to 2021).
- Percentage of people volunteering.

However, many milestones have remained stagnant or declined. This national analysis highlights a growing divide in well-being. While conditions may be improving for some of the most affluent in Wales, they are worsening for people and communities facing barriers and multiple disadvantages.

The Auditor General for Wales has examined how well public bodies are applying the sustainable development principle. He concluded:

- 10 years in, the WFG Act has increased in prominence.
- Notably, there is still much to do to apply the WFG Act to functions such as workforce planning, asset management, and financial planning.
- Accelerating progress under the WFG Act starts with prioritising prevention.
- Delivering change will require action from all public bodies individually. Public bodies will need better data, a clearer picture of resource implications and means of understanding impact if they are to make further progress.
- But that will not be enough. Public bodies are working in an environment that does not always promote that change. There is action that government could take to create the conditions for progress.

WAYS OF WORKING PROGRESS CHECKER

Ways of Working Progress Checker is a tool designed for teams, individuals and organisations to assess how well they are applying the five ways of working:

- Long-term
- Involvement
- Prevention
- Collaboration
- Integration

This tool helps organisations evaluate these principles across their processes, people, and culture.

Most public bodies have completed the tool, found it useful and shared their results with my team. Transport for Wales used the tool collaboratively, involving all staff through a series of workshops.

My team is available to facilitate sessions for public bodies that need support in completing the Progress Checker.

01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

FINDINGS 1

FINDING 1:

There is strong support for the Well-being of Future Generations Act across the public sector. Public servants are committed to doing the right thing for the long-term.

Senior leaders and officers in every public body and Public Services Boards across Cymru report that applying the WFG Act is the right thing to do. The innovation and dedication demonstrated by people striving to improve social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being is evident throughout this report, and extends beyond the public sector. Many voluntary organisations and private businesses are also actively working to improve well-being now and for future generations.

Over the last decade, there has been a fundamental shift in how Welsh Government and public bodies operate, leading to the creation of dedicated sustainable development teams, and new decision-making processes aligned with the five ways of working and the well-being goals. It has also led to the introduction of progressive policies, including Llwybr Newydd (2021), the Curriculum for Wales (2021) and Beyond Recycling (2021).

800

The number of requests for advice and assistance my team monitors and responds to on average a year. We regularly track the progress of public bodies and Public Services Boards.

Local government has incorporated understanding of the WFG Act into its new self-evaluation process under the Local Government and Elections Act (2021). Many public bodies have adapted or introduced integrated impact assessments to reflect the WFG Act. National public bodies are working beyond their usual remit to collaborate and integrate their work with others.

01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

FINDINGS 2

FINDING 2:

Trust in public institutions is declining, and voter turnout remains low. If people do not believe their voices are being heard or their concerns addressed, trust levels will continue to erode. However, people are not being consistently involved in decision-making as they should be.

When communities are meaningfully involved in decision-making, public services are delivered more effectively, and outcomes improve. While public bodies increasingly recognise the value of involvement and have improved their processes, they are still not involving people consistently. Meaningful involvement means going beyond consultation.

It means:

- Engaging with people **at the earliest opportunity.**
- Ensuring **transparency and access to information.**
- Clearly demonstrating **how their involvement makes a difference.**
- Informing people **about the impact of their contribution.**

Sustainable change can only be achieved through consensus-building.

Guidance on how to involve people meaningfully includes the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales and how we define co-production. Good practice includes examples like The Swansea Poverty Truth Commission, led by Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS). It worked with 10 people with lived experience of poverty as 'Community Commissioners' to inform policy and services.

Swansea Poverty Truth Commission

01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

FINDINGS 2

In receiving around 200 pieces of correspondence a year, I hear from individuals, community groups and others who describe planning, decision-making, and evaluation that has failed to involve the communities affected. Children and young people remain underrepresented in decision-making. Given the low levels of engagement among young people, ensuring meaningful participation must be at the heart of efforts to improve well-being. The benefits of involvement – as well as the frustration of being excluded – are consistent themes in my conversations with voluntary organisations, community and town councils and members of the public.

Public bodies recognise they can do better. Around half of the respondents to our Ways of Working Progress Checker said they had made 'no change' or only 'simple changes' to their involvement processes. Others felt more confident, describing effective steps they had taken to improve.

The Auditor General for Wales found that while few county councils provided senior leaders with insights from a service user perspective, this information would be valuable in measuring whether public bodies are delivering their well-being objectives, and recommended that councils should strengthen the collection of service user data and ensure decisions are informed by lived experience.

01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

FINDINGS 3

FINDING 3:

The corporate centres of public bodies remain a barrier to fully implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act due to conflicting processes and requirements.

The statutory guidance, Shared Purpose, Shared Future 1, outlines how embedding the WFG Act into corporate functions is essential to delivering meaningful change. These corporate areas of change include:

- Corporate planning
- Financial planning
- Workforce planning
- Asset management
- Procurement
- Risk management
- Performance management

While some public bodies have successfully integrated the WFG Act into their corporate culture and processes, my analysis suggests that many staff responsible for these areas have low awareness of the WFG Act and some actively work against the Act, blocking progress.

This is evident in situations where:

- Local planning decisions fail to consider long-term impacts or meaningfully involve people.
- Financial planning continues to prioritise GDP and short-term financial return over well-being.
- Changes to services lack a collaborative or preventative approach.

Since the introduction of the WFG Act, some legislation, guidance, and policy have evolved, but many key policies remain unchanged. As a result, those working to implement sustainable development often face:

- Conflicting legal requirements that create uncertainty.
- Outdated policies, processes, and attitudes that undermine progress.
- A gap in awareness and commitment between leaders and their teams, leading to inconsistency in implementation.

If public bodies are to fully realise the potential of the WFG Act, these systemic barriers must be addressed.

“Tackling long-term issues such as inequality, demographic change and net zero is enormously challenging when purse-strings are so tight. But it must be done if public services are to escape from a spiral of short-term firefighting.”

Auditor General for Wales, 2024

01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

FINDINGS 4

FINDING 4:

The well-being objectives and steps set by public bodies and Public Services Boards are not always being used to guide their work.

Well-being objectives and steps are the mechanism through which public bodies meet their legal obligations under the WFG Act.

Public bodies and Public Services Boards (PSBs) are required to:

- Set and publish well-being objectives and steps.
- Measure progress against these objectives.
- Report annually on their achievements.

These objectives should guide everything a public body or PSB does and demonstrate their contribution to the national well-being goals, indicators, and milestones.

While public bodies often refer to their well-being objectives in their corporate plans, there is not enough evidence to suggest they are consistently using them to guide decision-making.

For example, well-being objectives are not embedded across all corporate areas of change – and at senior management, Cabinet, and Board Level, objectives are not consistently influencing financial decisions, reprioritisation of resources, service delivery, performance management and risk assessment.

01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

FINDINGS 5

FINDING 5:

Partnerships have been introduced by Welsh Government seemingly on an ad hoc basis, without a long-term vision or clear coherence. As a result, many Public Services Boards are not operating effectively due to a lack of resources and support for implementation.

Public bodies repeatedly report that partnership structures are complex and confusing, adding to capacity and resource pressures.

Partnerships include Regional Partnership Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, Corporate Joint Committees as well as Public Services Boards. The latter were introduced by the WFG Act to improve collaboration across all public services in each local authority area.

However, it is not always clear how these partnerships relate to one another. Many public body leaders express frustration over the number of meetings they must attend, with some structures described as 'talking shops' that lack real impact.

Despite these challenges, without PSBs, Cymru would lack a coordinated approach to long-term planning. However, PSBs struggle due to:

- Lack of resources, capacity, and prioritisation.
- No significant dedicated funding.
- Dependence on short-term grant funding for projects or positions.

Multiple reports, such as those from my team, Audit Wales, Welsh Government, and the Senedd over the last decade highlight consistent challenges and recommendations, including:

- Greater recognition by senior leaders – Board members must collaborate more effectively across partnership structures like Regional Partnership Boards and Corporate Joint Committees.
- A 'One Welsh Public Service' approach – breaking down false divisions between services could improve outcomes for people and ease resource and capacity pressures.
- Geographical alignment of partnerships – to help senior leaders prioritise PSBs, new policy, legislation, and guidance from Welsh Government must reinforce their importance and avoid adding complexity.
- Public sector budgets and grant funding should emphasise the ways of working, particularly collaboration, to ensure partnerships have sufficient resources.

Examples of partnerships across Wales

01 1.1

Name	Examples of partnerships across Wales	Geography / Footprint
Public Services Boards (PSBs)	Local (non-national) public bodies that come under the WFG Act, and invited members such as police and crime commissioners and voluntary organisations	A mix of single or joint local authorities. They never cross multiple health-boards. Please see the list on our website for further information. There are currently 13 across Wales.
Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs)	Health Boards, Local Authorities, third sector, carers, citizens	Health Boards
Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs)	Local Authorities, National Park Authorities	There are four CJCs: North Wales, Mid Wales, South West Wales and South East Wales
Community Safety Partnership	Local authority Social Services, Health Board, Public Health Wales, Police, National Probation Service, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Housing, Third Sector Organisations	Broadly Health Board, the exception is that there is one Regional Safeguarding Board which covers Mid and West Wales, on the footprint for Powys Teaching Health Board and the Hywel Dda University Health Board
Adult's Safeguarding Partnership	Local authority Social Services, Health Board, Public Health Wales, Police, National Probation Service, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Housing, Third Sector Organisations	As above
Children's Safeguarding Partnership	Local authority, Health Board, Public Health Wales, Police, National Probation Service, Office of the Police Crime Commissioner, Housing, Third Sector Organisations	As above
Regional Housing Support Collaborative Groups	Local authorities, Health Board, Probation, Policy and Crime Commissioners, Area Planning Boards, VAWDASV Regional Partnerships, Service User Voice, Service Providers and Landlords	As above
Area Planning Board	Local authorities, Local Health Board, Substance Misuse Service Providers, Police, Youth Justice, Probation Service, the Crown Prosecution Service	Health Boards
Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)	Local authorities, Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Health Boards, Wales Ambulance Service Trust, Probation Services, Registered Social Landlords, Fire and Rescue Service, Safeguarding Boards, VAWDASV specialist sector partners and voluntary sector organisations	Same as Community Safety Partnerships
Mental Health Partnerships	Local Health Boards, local authorities under each Health Board footprint, and a range of other partners	Health Boards

01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

WHAT IS ONE WELSH PUBLIC SERVICE?

One Welsh Public Service is a set of values that reflects how we work in Wales, underpinned by the WFG Act. This definition was agreed by representatives across the public and voluntary sector in 2023:

"One Welsh Public Service reflects our shared approach in delivering public services that result in the best possible outcomes for the people of Wales. Citizens are at the heart of our collective efforts, not the interests of our own individual organisations. We will genuinely collaborate to achieve the best results possible."

Our lives, our needs, and our wants do not fit neatly into one area of public service. Increasingly, we need to be behaving and delivering services as One Welsh Public Service, improving well-being for the people of Cymru.

01 1.1 IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

FINDINGS 5 CASE STUDY

Movement 2025

PSB members across North Wales have successfully brought together public, private and voluntary sector representatives to drive collective action. Through the North Wales Research and Insight Partnership and the 2025 Movement, they have built trust, integrated objectives and developed joint projects such as the Children's University.

01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

FINDINGS 5

PUBLIC SERVICES BOARDS - WHAT WORKS?

Cymru's 13 Public Services Boards are now well-established. My statutory duties advising PSBs have shown that those which collaborate well tend to:

- Spend time explaining each organisation's perspective, values, aims and strategies.
- Take practical action by taking small actions together, building momentum, trust and success.
- Hold meetings in different venues, have sessions where each member organisation hosts and "take away the boardroom table" with space for an open agenda of conversation, trouble-shooting and collaborative problem-solving.
- Use a systems-thinking approach, leveraging collective assets, strengths and networks across organisations.

01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

FINDINGS 6

● FINDING 6:

Leadership approaches in Wales needs to change to successfully implement the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The WFG Act is not about creating an extra layer of process for public services. Where I see exceptional implementation of the WFG Act, bold leadership in support of brave decisions, at all levels of an organisation, is a strong and recurrent theme. But this is not happening across Cymru.

Successive First Ministers have demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainable development and to the WFG Act over the past decade. This top-level leadership must continue to encourage the bold leadership needed across our public bodies.

The United Nations Inner Development Goals highlight how shifting leadership behaviours in line with the ways of working can lead to applying the WFG Act more effectively, and better outcomes.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES ON THE WFG ACT

I have collaborated with the Welsh Government and the Open University to develop an open-source e-learning module on the WFG Act: You, me and the future of Wales. Public bodies can use this to raise awareness about the WFG Act among staff and their communities.

My team have also worked with the WJEC to produce qualifications centered on the themes of the legislation: Sustainability in Action.

01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

FINDINGS 6

FUTURE GENERATIONS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

My own Future Generations Leadership Academy is a programme that champions diversity and youth leadership. Young leaders have access to online and in-person learning and development, plus a growing alumni network. Graduates have gone on to management positions, become board members and trustees, and excelled in their careers. They are taking the model of leading for future generations into every sector and community. An alumnus of the Future Generations Leadership Academy has even gone on to establish an academy on Leading Modern Public Services, delivered through the Centre for Digital Public Services.

With the expansion of the Academy, we could see more changemakers across Cymru. To learn more, please contact contactus@futuregenerations.wales.

RECOMMENDATIONS 01 1.1

Implementation and Impact

Welsh Government:

01. Welsh Government should commit to a post-legislative review of the Well-being of Future Generations Act to strengthen its impact and to prepare for updates to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in 2030. This review should include a public dialogue to engage people across Cymru in shaping the future of well-being policy.

02. Welsh Government must assess and streamline partnership structures to reduce complexity and improve coordination across Wales.

03. Welsh Government should ensure the responsibility of implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act remains with the Prif Weinidog / First Minister.

Public bodies (including Welsh Government) and Public Services Boards:

04. Public bodies must ensure that staff responsible for corporate areas of change understand the Well-being of Future Generations Act in a way that improves the quality and consistency of implementation through mandatory training and capacity development.

05. Public bodies must increase engagement with the public to build trust, strengthen consensus, and bridge the gap between policymaking and citizens.

Recommendations

01 1.2

INTRODUCTION

Climate and Nature

"Why can't we stand up for the people and wildlife that live on our planet?"

"The health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide".

Sir Robert Watson, The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Chair

The climate and nature emergency is the defining challenge of our generation, impacting everyone, from flood-hit communities to our public services managing the costs of extreme weather.

The scale and speed of nature's decline, coupled with the magnitude of global crises like climate change and pollution, threatens human well-being and life on Earth.

Climate change is no longer a distant risk, but it is a clear and present danger. We have a closing window of opportunity to prevent the potentially irreversible decline of key ecosystem functions that sustain life.[1]

These global environmental challenges are interconnected and as a result, amplify and accelerate one another – a crisis within one system (e.g. food, health, climate, water, biodiversity) affects the other systems, so they need to be handled in a combined way.[2] We need the joined-up approach that the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act) provides.

The impacts of climate change, nature loss and pollution are not felt equally. Those who are economically and socially disadvantaged will suffer most.

A transition towards a net zero and nature-positive Cymru must bring tangible benefits to people, communities and business. While Welsh Government, its agencies, and Welsh local authorities should lead action, they cannot and should not act alone.

1 Ecosystem functions are the capacity of natural processes to provide goods and services that satisfy human needs like fisheries, mineral resources, compounds for industrial and pharmaceutical use, carbon capture and storage, and climate regulation.

2 The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

Despite the alarming trends, I am optimistic and inspired by the people of Wales and beyond who are acting today for a better tomorrow. However, we must do more and act sooner.

Key reports concur, such as Zero Carbon Britain (2019), the UK Climate Change Committee Progress Report for Wales (2023), and the Interim State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR, 2024).

The 2006 Stern Review, the 2021 Dasgupta Review and more recently, the Climate Policy Initiative in 2024 show that taking preventative action on climate change and nature loss is more cost-effective than doing nothing. In fact, delaying action by 10 years is estimated to be twice as expensive as acting now.[3]

I have made it my mission to support public bodies on their journey towards net zero, climate resilience and nature recovery. This is a complex challenge, and many organisations are still learning what is achievable and by when. I will challenge them to prioritise this agenda and lead action that balances environmental, social, economic and cultural benefits.

The situation in Cymru:

- Air quality is improving nationally but remains a major issue in some communities.
- Wales has the second-best recycling rate in the world, but challenges remain in packaging waste and residual waste streams.
- Renewable energy capacity is increasing and Cymru's global footprint per person is decreasing but we are still far from meeting our target of using only our fair share of the world's resources by 2050.
- Cymru is one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth and one in in six species in Wales are at risk of extinction, including the Atlantic salmon and curlew.[4]
- 60% of rivers protected for nature fail to meet their water quality targets including the Usk, Wye and Cleddau[5] and there are increased pressures on the marine environment due to pollution, climate change, invasive species and historic over-fishing.
- 273,000 homes are currently at risk of flooding[6], a figure projected to double within 100 years[7].
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people are disproportionately affected by climate change and environmentally damaging practices[8].

[3] The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)
[4] State of Nature Report Wales, 2023
[5] Water quality in river Special Areas of Conservation, Natural Resources Wales, 2023
[6] Flood Risk Management Annual Report 2022-2023, Natural Resources Wales
[7] Statistics for Wales – Environment and Countryside / Flooding, Welsh Government
[8] Anti-racist Wales Evidence Report Climate Cymru BAME Welsh Government, 2024

* Source: Well-being of Wales Report 2024

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 1

FINDING 1:

A whole organisation approach to climate risk and nature recovery is essential. However, not all public bodies have reflected this in their well-being objectives.

Through my conversations across sectors, it is clear that organisational culture and behaviour change are key to delivering a liveable planet for future generations. The setting of well-being objectives and steps is a powerful tool under the WFG Act, with the potential to radically transform public service delivery.

I was encouraged to find in my analysis of well-being objectives, that almost all public bodies had objectives and/or steps that relate to this mission: 84% of public sector organisations and PSBs covered decarbonisation, and 68% covered nature. These included commitments to decarbonise their operations, typically in line with the aspiration for the public sector to be net zero by 2030.

However, there is a lack of objectives and steps relating to key areas such as climate risk and adaptation, biodiversity gain, land carbon, Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions and being globally responsible.

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 2

FINDING 2:

The 2030 net zero aspiration has been an important catalyst for action. However, many public sector organisations are concerned about their ability to meet emission targets and need significant additional resources.

Wales has committed to achieving net zero by 2050, using statutory carbon budgets to track progress. The First Carbon Budget (2016-2020) has been achieved, but the UK Climate Change Committee report that we are not yet on track to meet our targets for the second half of this decade and beyond.[9]

In 2021, Welsh Government set an aspiration for the public sector as a whole to be net zero by 2030. This has been a catalyst for action, leading to greater focus on decarbonisation in public sector decision-making, and reductions in Scope 1 and 2 emissions. However, Scope 3 emissions remain a significant challenge.

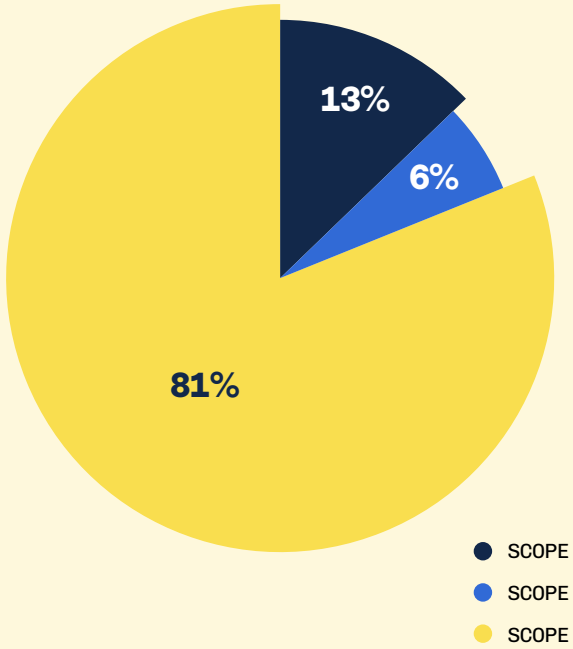
WHAT ARE EMISSION SCOPES?

Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions from sources owned or controlled by an organisation.

Scope 2 are indirect emissions from the energy it buys in, like electricity from the national grid.

Scope 3 are all other emissions associated with the goods and services they buy or distribute.

NHS WALES CARBON FOOTPRINT BY SCOPE 2018/19



[9] Progress Report: Reducing Emissions in Wales, UK Climate Change Committee, 2023

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 2

Public bodies want to act but lack the necessary funding and resources to deliver on their commitments. This is reflected in comments from local authority cabinet leads:

"It's a strategic priority but not a funding priority".

"I have been struck by the commitment of officers to the climate and nature work. There is genuine concern and frustration though in relation to our ability to deliver, regardless of our motivation, for example the lack of available finance for the longer payback measures for buildings, and the uncertain supply chain for decarbonising the fleet".

Public bodies need to establish realistic, achievable medium-term pathways to achieve net zero, aligned with the third carbon budget 2026-30.

Tackling emissions from supply chains (Scope 3) and sequestering carbon through land use are important areas to progress going forward.

The public sector must exercise its influence so that contracts to build new schools and houses, buy hospital equipment, provide public transport, and deliver social care, contribute to the journey towards net zero. The Welsh Government Energy Service, NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan and the WLGA's Climate Change Support Programme, are proving a welcome source of support.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board has undertaken detailed climate change risk assessment, and as a result members are now working together on their approach to the priority areas identified for an adaptation strategy with a focus on leadership and collaboration.

The National Infrastructure Commission for Wales (2024) sees climate change as a national security threat with major implications for public health and the economy. It has advised that 'worst case' scenario planning and a focus on the costs of inaction are essential; and recommend avoiding development on flood risk areas, incorporating nature as a key stakeholder within decision-making, and the creation of a new climate change adaption and resilience fund.

Despite technical challenges with the UK-wide emission reporting methodology, there is an opportunity for the public sector to continue to decarbonise as quickly as possible, improving data quality and monitoring to support decision-making.

Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn shows how this can be done through its Net Zero Dashboard which supports managers by providing granular and up-to-date emissions data, and a platform to develop realistic targets for becoming a Net Zero Council in coming years. The data will also be utilised to make informed strategic investment decisions.

01 1.2 CLIMATE AND NATURE

FINDINGS 2 CASE STUDY

Local green energy powering Wales

The Welsh Government Energy Service supports the public sector and community enterprises to reduce energy use, generate locally owned, renewable energy and reduce carbon emissions. Since 2018, it has invested £210 million in more than 400 projects including wind farms, rooftop solar installations, low carbon heating schemes, hydropower and zero emission fleets and EV. This will achieve an estimated £367 million in local income and savings in their lifetimes and will have prevented us burning nearly 300,000 tonnes of coal.

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 3

FINDING 3:

There is no statutory target for nature recovery in Wales which means it is not given sufficient priority by public sector organisations.

Wales currently has no statutory target for nature recovery. Instead, the National Milestone aims to 'reverse the decline in biodiversity with an improvement in the status of species and ecosystems by 2030 and their recovery by 2050'. To date, at best only 10% of land and 4% seas fit this criterion in Wales.[10]

To align with the Global Biodiversity Framework, the UN states that governments must address the social, economic and cultural drivers of environmental degradation. However, not all Welsh Government and public body departments prioritise nature recovery as a core commitment. A statutory incentive is therefore required to ensure that nature recovery is built into decisions on infrastructure, housing, flood prevention and pollution control, for example.

This would strengthen the approach alongside Section 6 commitments under the Environment Act (2015), which require public authorities to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems. An Audit Wales report (2025) says half of Welsh public bodies have never even complied with the requirement to publish a biodiversity plan.[11]

Welsh Government is currently progressing legislation to embed environmental principles into Welsh law, establishing a new environmental oversight body for public authorities, and introducing a biodiversity targets framework to address ongoing nature decline. This primary legislation should include a headline statutory target for nature's recovery by 2050, with further targets reflecting the Global Biodiversity Framework in secondary legislation.

Michiel Vos / Ocean Image Bank

[10]COP 16: Biodiversity from Cali to Cymru, Senedd Research, 2024

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 3

TAKING A SYSTEMS APPROACH

If we are going to address the root causes of unsustainable practice, public bodies must work within a cohesive legislative framework, ensuring that the WFG Act, Planning (Wales) Act (2015) and Environment Act (2016) work together effectively, and action is taken at a systems level rather than in silos. The key policy instruments from these pieces of legislation, such as the national development framework A Future Wales, the State of Natural Resources Report, Local Development Plans, Area Statements, and well-being plans need to align more clearly.

Natural Resources Policy, which applies across the Welsh cabinet, should also steer policy decisions. However, it lacks the necessary detail to drive action and has not been updated since 2018. I recommend that Welsh Government publishes an updated Natural Resources Policy, which would trigger a new set of Area Statements, from Natural Resources Wales, to implement it.

Resource constraints mean that monitoring by regulators is often inadequate. This is particularly evident in land use planning, where local authorities report difficulties in ensuring compliance with planning conditions, and monitoring new developments for environmental impact. Research in England has found for example, that new housing developments delivered only half of the legally binding ecological features set in their planning permissions. Many renewable energy schemes in Wales preclude any payment to the local planning authority for monitoring implementation of the conditions for long-term habitat management.

To improve enforcement against damaging activities such as water pollution, NRW has advocated for the same regulatory powers as their counterparts in England for example, the power to be able to use civil sanctions, such as orders to stop polluting activities or to impose fines. Sanctions would strengthen the regulation of pollution in Wales with easier cross-border enforcement where these powers have been used since 2016.

At a community level, Local Places for Nature and Local nature partnerships play an important role.

The Gwent Green Grid is a good example of a regional collaboration between local authorities (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen) and Natural Resources Wales to deliver resilient ecological nature networks, and health and well-being benefits.

The initiative supports local nature partnerships to co-ordinate improvement projects for pollinators with nature based solutions, whilst connecting art, nature and health, and supporting green skills development with volunteers and local schools.

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 4

FINDING 4:

Climate resilience, nature recovery and decarbonisation are not at the centre of decisions about land and marine use, but they should be.

Nature is an essential ally in the fight against climate change. Woodlands, seas, wetlands, grasslands and peat act as carbon sinks, absorbing and storing carbon from the atmosphere. When they are lost, climate change speeds up. At present, climate resilience, nature recovery, and decarbonisation are not systematically embedded in land and marine use decisions — but they must be.

Public bodies face increasing tensions between balancing competing land uses, for example, housing and infrastructure, renewable energy deployment, food production, nature recovery and economic growth. Stakeholders have told me that Wales needs a smarter, more joined-up approach to land use decisions, one that ensures that carbon emissions, nature recovery and food resilience are considered in every decision. Offshore renewable energy also highlights the urgent need for more strategic, spatial planning for the marine environment too, if climate and nature recovery goals are achieved in tandem.

At a regional level, catchment approaches to land management can be effective at bringing different interests together to balance multiple objectives such as food production, water quality, biodiversity and public health, rather than prioritising one at the expense of another.

01 1.2 CLIMATE AND NATURE

FINDINGS 4 CASE STUDY

The Usk Catchment Partnership

The Usk Catchment Partnership is a coalition working to restore the health of the River Usk, using a whole-catchment approach that considers the impact of soil health, upland streams, human activity, and climate change. With a long-term action plan that places the voice of nature at the heart of decision-making through the appointment of a Nature Guardian, Tom Johnstone (pictured), the partnership is focused on improving river health while working closely with farmers and land managers, such as the **Beacons Water Group**, to demonstrate how agriculture can align with ecological restoration.

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 4

“Nature connection is not naturally seen as a cultural or political priority in the UK. Yet in other cultures, such as the Sami in Sweden, the First Nations in Canada, and the Māori in New Zealand, nature’s voice has long been a central part of decision-making. For the UK, there is a cultural shift to be made, one that I believe is already underway with the Well-being of Future Generations Act as a step in the right direction”.

Tom Johnstone, Nature Guardian, Usk Catchment Partnership.

With over 80% of Wales’ land used for farming and 15% covered by forestry, landowners play a key role in achieving sustainability. Intensive farming can be a major cause of biodiversity loss and pollution, while agriculture itself is increasingly vulnerable to climate change, with storms and droughts affecting crop yields, soil stability, and financial resilience.

The Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) offers an opportunity to balance agricultural production with nature recovery, climate resilience and improved public health.

Supporting sustainable farming and forestry practices will be critical so I endorse recommendations by the Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group (2024) to introduce a long-term and increased agricultural support budget from 2026-2035, and Optional and Collaborative tier actions by 2026.

Local authorities and public bodies in Wales own and manage significant land assets, including parks, woodlands, tenanted farms and roadside verges. However, many asset strategies do not fully account for climate resilience or net biodiversity gain. Planning Policy Wales (2024) supports these objectives, but stronger implementation is needed.

Public bodies, including corporate joint committees (CJCs), must place nature recovery, decarbonisation and climate risk management at the heart of their strategic development, housing, transport and economic regeneration over the next decade. This means preventing ecosystem losses caused by development while also investing in green infrastructure schemes. Every infrastructure project should deliver a net benefit for biodiversity and, as part of this approach, incorporate nature-based solutions like protecting wetlands and floodplains, restoring peatlands, installing green rooves, or increasing tree cover.

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 4

SEQUESTERING CARBON

Nature recovery is currently the best way for Wales to sequester more carbon and increase resilience to climate change effects.

- **Up to 30 tons** (per hectare per year)
  the amount of CO2 released by damaged peatlands, equivalent to a car driving 100,000 miles.[12]
- **7.5%** (approx. 2.5 million tons)
  the estimated proportion of Wales' carbon emissions that could be sequestered annually through nature restoration across land and sea.[13]
- **140** (litres per day)
  the amount of seawater a single native oyster can filter and clean each day.[14]
- **£265 million** (in 2022/23)
  the cost of climate change to food production and farm livelihoods in Wales.[15]

As we move towards electrification of our energy system, we have a major challenge in ensuring the transmission and distribution system is fit to serve our communities' and businesses needs for the future. This is as much a social issue as a technical and environmental one, with public concern about overhead lines and pylons and growing calls for infrastructure to be located underground where possible.

The Government's Independent Advisory Group on Future Electricity Grid for Wales is currently reviewing the costs and impacts of new electricity infrastructure and is working to produce a set of agreed principles for determining the most appropriate solutions for Wales.

[12] Climate Change and Technology Led Peatland Restoration, Environment Systems Evidence and Insights, 2022
[13] Quantifying the Potential Impact of Nature-based Solutions on Greenhouse Gas Emissions from UK Habitats, The Wildlife Trusts, 2022
[14] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6p5VnFjV4q0
[15] Extreme weather and its impact on farming viability in Wales, WWF-Cymru

01 1.2 CLIMATE AND NATURE

FINDINGS 4 CASE STUDY

Peatland Restoration

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is using **Section 106 Agreements** to attach peatland restoration requirements to renewable energy projects. The largest is for Pen y Cymoedd wind farm, a £3 million, 25-year peatbog and habitat restoration programme, co-managed with Neath Port Talbot. This initiative also supports local projects through a community fund.

Powys County Council has conducted **biodiversity audits** on county farms and integrated these findings into tenancy agreements.

On a smaller scale, the management of roadside verges, grass-cutting regimes and reducing pesticides is also important. **Monmouthshire County Council** is reducing the use of pesticides in public open spaces and is on a journey to go **pesticide-free.**

Dr Rhoswen Leonard
National Peatland Action Programme Project Manager

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 5

FINDING 5:

There's a need to enable community involvement in decision-making on climate and nature, to power-up citizens who want to act and reach out to those who don't feel listened to.

Achieving net zero will be slower and more difficult if householders, politicians and financial institutions are not fully engaged. The World Economic Forum identifies ecosystem-related risks as the top four global threats over the next 10 years – but warns that in the short term, the biggest risk is misinformation.

Local authorities must take a leadership role in engaging communities and businesses.

This means explaining how nature recovery, decarbonisation and climate adaptation will impact where people live and work; making climate action tangible and relevant by showing direct benefits; and building momentum through small, local actions that contribute to larger, systematic change.

A place-based approach brings decision-makers and communities closer together to listen to concerns and alternatives, and enable people to take the lead where it matters to them (like the Lawrence Western project in Bristol and Race to Zero.)

Communities experiencing lower environmental quality and weaker climate resilience face greater social and economic risks. Climate action must recognise and address differences in lived experiences based on protected characteristics, and the specific needs of vulnerable groups in Wales.

The Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group recommends participative democracy and citizens' assemblies that involves a diverse range of people in the decision-making process through discussion and debate. Welsh Government's Climate Conversations has been beneficial in broadening participation.

FINDINGS 5 CASE STUDY

GwyrddNi

GwyrddNi is a community-led movement, bringing people together from five areas in Gwynedd to take action on climate change. Delivered by **Datblygiadau Egni Gwledig, Partneriaeth Ogwen, Yr Orsaf, Cwmni Bro, Ynni Llŷn** and **Cyd Ynni**, GwyrddNi has led community assemblies to co-produce local action plans; worked with more than 600 school children to bring their ideas for a greener, more sustainable future to life; and are supporting action around a wide range of projects including repair and re-use, active travel, community energy, retrofit, and nature restoration.

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 5

Emphasis should also be on growing publicly owned and community energy sectors. Involvement of the community can often overcome opposition to new energy infrastructure because people are more likely to be supportive of something that directly benefits and empowers them. In Bethesda, a community-owned micro-hydro turbine generates electricity from the local river that is sold to the grid, with profits reinvested back into the community.

> "If community energy could be expanded to include all communities, not only would people be able to withstand the worst effects of the tightening of public spending budgetary belts, but we would also see a marked improvement in energy resilience and potentially vastly reduced energy bills".
>
> **Leanne Wood, Co-director of Community Energy Wales.**

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 6

● FINDING 6:

The scale of investment available to meet climate and nature goals is inadequate.

The Green Finance Institute and Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group highlight the financial gap in meeting Wales' climate and nature goals. Wales Environment Link estimates that £438 million annually is needed to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030.[16]

There is understandable caution about placing a financial value on nature, but mobilising private, philanthropic and crowdsourced funding must be a priority. Welsh Government must lead on developing a diverse financial ecosystem that supports a just transition to net zero and nature recovery.[17] The Sustainable Investment Principles and the British Standards Institution's Nature Investment Standards Programme are creating the foundations for well-being aligned investment.

Private investors often hesitate due to the small scale of many projects. To attract investment, Wales must create pooled opportunities across several local authority areas.[18]

Partnerships with trusted third-sector organisations, such as the collaboration between the Wildlife Trust and Aviva, could also unlock high-integrity green finance. Without leadership, investment may not deliver inclusively and fairly and will lack the scale and momentum needed within the tight timelines available to us.

The cost of inaction must also be understood as part of business-as-usual scenario planning.

[16]Pathways to 2030, Wales Environment Link

[17]For example, the Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group (2204) and the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment Committee (2025)

[18]A local authority-led transition to net zero, Wales Centre for Public Policy, 2024

01 1.2

Climate and Nature

FINDINGS 6

> "'In-year funding' requires 'in-year results', but this doesn't always work for nature recovery and climate risk where the benefits are realised over decades rather than months".
>
> **Local authority cabinet member**

The current short-term nature of many grants means that investments are not always geared to those with longer payback.

Determined effort is now required to ensure that corporate centres like financial and workforce planning, procurement and asset management, enable progress instead of acting as a barrier due to conflicting processes and requirements.

Integration across policy areas remains a key issue. I would like to see greater attention focusing on how to change and develop systemic and institutional decision-making processes across all sectors to better support net zero and nature recovery. We need to increase the strategic capacity of leaders across all public body departments to achieve a joined-up approach, where they understand the contribution that they need to make on climate change and nature recovery at scale and pace. The climate leadership seminars, delivered by the Welsh Local Government Association between 2022-2024 has helped more than 500 people from local authorities explore how decarbonisation and climate risk should be addressed at strategic, operational and community levels. Officers found it to be an accelerator for change.

We must continue to act and make change happen. After all, we are the first generation to fully understand the devastating impact of the climate crisis, and the last generation to be able to do anything significant about it.

WAMPÍS NATION

I met with the Wampís Nation leaders from Northern Peru in during their visit to Wales in 2024, when they called on global governments to support their protection of the Amazon and commit to a fossil fuel and deforestation-free Wales. The Wampís' forest is vital to the global fight against climate change, yet extractive industries are causing deforestation. Their territory spans nearly 1.4 million hectares and is a world-renowned hotspot for biodiversity. In only two years, it is estimated to absorb the same amount of carbon as Peru's entire 10-year carbon reduction targets. Welsh charity Size of Wales has been supporting the Wampís since 2016 to monitor land use, challenge illegal activities, and strengthen the community's voice.

RECOMMENDATIONS 01 1.2

Climate and Nature

Welsh Government:

06. Welsh Government should introduce a headline statutory target for nature's recovery by 2050 in primary legislation by 2026, with further targets reflecting the Global Biodiversity Framework in secondary legislation, a clear plan of action and long-term funding arrangements.

07. Using our land wisely matters more than ever. Following its next 5-year review of A Future Wales, Welsh Government should develop an integrated land and marine use framework that balances commitments to restore nature, support food production, improve climate resilience and deliver new housing and infrastructure. The framework should be accompanied by guidance and toolkits to support local decision-making.

08. Building on the investment in nutrient management boards and existing coastal and river forums, Welsh Government should expand their catchment remit as trusted decision-makers in river restoration. These partnerships should bring together a diverse range of stakeholders to co-create shared action plans, while enabling regulators such as Natural Resources Wales to work more collaboratively and drive positive, long-term change.

09. Within the next Government term, legislation is needed to give Natural Resources Wales the same regulatory powers as its English counterpart, including the authority to issue civil sanctions, such as stop orders and fines for polluting activities.

10. Welsh Government should establish an expert and cross-sector team, to support public bodies in preparing investment-ready proposals that can attract private sector finance for nature recovery and net zero, ensuring alignment with sustainable investment principles.

11. Welsh Revenue Authority should be tasked with ringfencing environmental fines and charges to directly fund climate and nature action.

Public bodies (including Welsh Government) and Public Services Boards:

12. From 2025, public bodies must prioritise climate resilience, net benefit for biodiversity, and pesticide reduction in how they manage their estates, including their buildings, tenant farms, parks, roadside verges and other land assets.

13. Local renewable energy, including community and publicly owned energy has a pivotal role to play in achieving net zero. There is a need for more resourcing and support nationally. Public sector organisations should increase their collaboration with local energy projects by releasing land for joint ventures and committing to purchasing the electricity.

14. Climate resilience and adaptation must become a core public service priority. By the end of 2027, Public Services Boards should assess climate risks for their communities, updating their findings every five years as part of their well-being assessments. Public bodies must integrate these findings into their corporate and strategic planning.

15. The public sector must become deforestation-free by 2028, ensuring supply chains do not contribute to global deforestation, habitat loss or human rights violations, including child labour and the abuse of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Recommendations

PASKALINE MAIYO, BODY ARTIST CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE BODY

01 1.3

Health and Well-being

INTRODUCTION

“There can be no more important task for those concerned with the health of the population than to reduce health inequalities. Review what can be done to reduce health inequalities and then do it. Social justice demands it.”

Sir Michael Marmot, 2019

“Why can’t we take action now to protect my future grandchild – so they can have a happy, healthy life?”

I have made it a mission to transform how public bodies in Wales keep people healthy, shifting the focus towards prevention and long-term well-being. Public bodies must work together and with communities to tackle the root causes of ill-health and reduce health inequalities.

Good health is more than hospitals and waiting times—it is shaped by the wider social and environmental factors known as the building blocks of health or wider determinants of health.

However, Wales’ essential health and social care services are under strain due to an aging population, workforce challenges, and limited resources.

Health and social care were among the top three areas of concern raised with me when setting my priorities in 2023. The NHS remains one of our most valued institutions, accounting for around half of Welsh Government’s budget. Yet, medical care contributes only 10% to our overall health outcomes.

The biggest influences on health are social, cultural, economic, and environmental conditions — factors that all public bodies and employers must help address.

01 1.3

Health and Well-being

A healthier Cymru requires action from all sectors, not just the NHS. Welsh Government's policies and funding, local authorities' work on the economy, land use planning, housing, and social care, and the role of Natural Resources Wales and national parks all shape health outcomes.

Businesses also play a crucial role. Employers across all sectors must actively support employee health and well-being. The NHS alone employs over 112,000 people across Wales, while social care employs around 84,000. Their workplaces and activities as anchor institutions must be part of the solution.

Wales cannot afford to keep treating preventable diseases without addressing their underlying causes. We must prioritise long-term, prevention-based solutions to build a healthier, more resilient Cymru.

The situation in Cymru:

- Life expectancy has fallen for the second consecutive period, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthy life expectancy has also declined, while deaths from all causes have increased in the last year. The gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas is remaining stable.*
- In Wales, around one in four adults aged 16 and over are living with obesity. 32% of pregnant women are now experiencing overweight or obesity.*
- Wales has the highest percentage of people living with diabetes in the UK. Currently, 220,000 people have diabetes. 10% of NHS funding is already spent on diabetes, yet most Type 2 diabetes cases are preventable.*
- Life satisfaction and anxiety levels among adults are worsening.*
- Children's mental well-being has declined.*
- 21% of all people in Wales lived in relative income poverty between 2021 and 2023. Wales has a higher percentage of workers earning below the real living wage compared to some other parts of the UK.*
- 29% of children in Wales live in poverty.*
- 13% of people in Wales report loneliness, with higher rates among those experiencing material deprivation, mental health conditions, or poor general health.*

* Source: Well-being of Wales Report 2024

01 1.3

Health and Well-being

Challenges:

- The pandemic further exposed deep-rooted health inequalities at both global and national Levels.
- Health inequalities remain high in terms of both access to healthcare and health outcomes.
- People report difficulties accessing the care they need, highlighting barriers in availability, waiting times, and service capacity.
- Higher rates of obesity increase further the risk for preventable diseases, including cancers and disabilities.
- Demand for physical and mental health services continues to rise significantly as our population continues to grow, age and change.

The future of health in Wales:

- By 2025, we can expect to spend, on average, the last 20 years of our lives in ill-health.*
- By 2038, the number of people over 80 in Wales will double. Currently, 21.6% of the Welsh population is over 65, compared to 18.6% in the UK as a whole.*
- A significant proportion of NHS and social care staff will retire in the next decade, with fewer young people entering the workforce.
- By 2034, hospitalisations are projected to rise by 20,000 and diabetes cases by 22%.

What is working:

- Heart attack incidence has declined, and smoking levels continue to fall.
- We have celebrated the 70th birthday of NHS and are seeing national policies embrace system thinking and equality needs – in particular 'A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care', ' Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales' and the Mental Health and Well-being strategy.
- More health public bodies are coming under the WFG Act, widening the commitment to sustainability, well-being with its four dimensions and future generations.

* Source: Well-being of Wales Report 2024

01 1.3

Health and Well-being

FINDINGS 1

FINDING 1:

The focus of well-being objectives varies in relation to the wider determinants of health. Public bodies are not maximising contribution to health across all well-being goals.

There is significant variation in how public bodies incorporate population health and the wider determinants of health into their well-being objectives. Some take a comprehensive approach, considering future generations, the environment, staff well-being, and budget allocation, while others remain too narrow in scope and/or missing opportunities for collaboration and long-term impact.

An analysis of well-being statements shows that only 15% of objectives explicitly reference health and well-being. This suggests many public bodies, particularly non-health organisations, are not fully addressing the social determinants of health within their remits.

While health bodies often blend the 'social model of health' with the medical model, some remain overly focused on secondary care, failing to align with the preventative ambitions of the WFG Act. There is not enough focus on building community resilience or proactively promoting good health at population level.

Public bodies are also not consistently aligning their objectives with the priorities outlined in well-being assessments from their Public Services Boards (PSBs), the Population Plans of their Regional Partnership Boards, or Natural Resources Wales' Area Statements. This lack of alignment means that major health challenges—such as obesity, mental health issues, unemployment, and nature degradation—are not being consistently prioritised, even in areas where they are most pressing.

The gradual deterioration of mental health in Wales, which began before COVID-19 and is expected to worsen, is not reflected in well-being objectives. Despite the scale of the issue, only 1.5% of well-being steps referenced mental health in both 2018/19 and 2022/23.

Overall, the well-being objectives of public bodies, including those in health and care, are not fully contributing to all well-being goals. There is minimal focus on community cohesion, nature recovery, or Wales' global responsibility. If well-being objectives are to drive meaningful progress, they must be broader, more integrated, and regionally responsive. See Section 3 on well-being objectives for more support.

AI IN HEALTH AND CARE

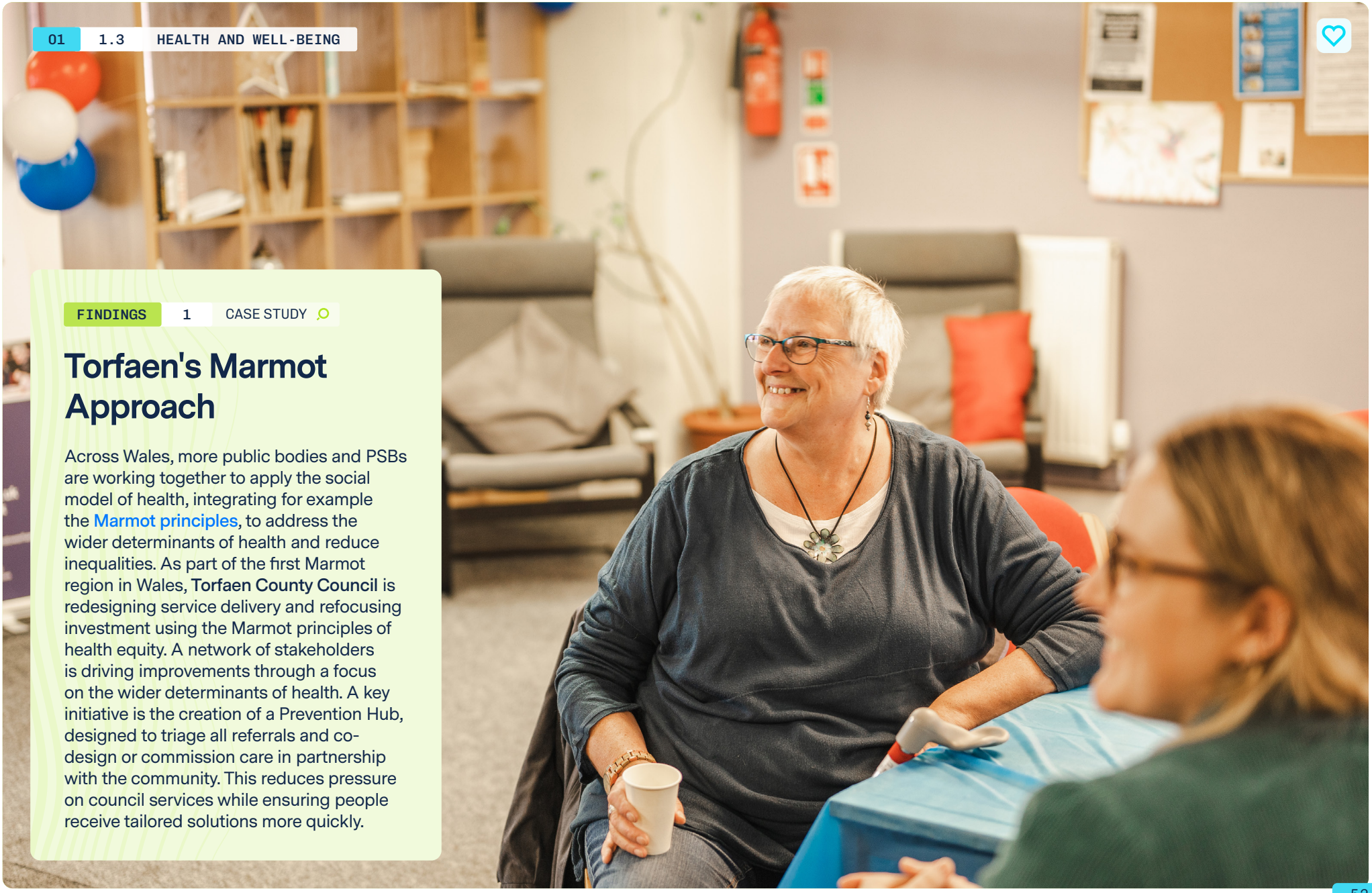
Artificial intelligence and digital technology are transforming health and social care, offering opportunities to improve service delivery, enhance integration, strengthen outbreak preparedness, accelerate research, and improve health outcomes. Several bodies have been created to find ways to deliver services using technological advances, for example the AI Commission for Health and Social Care in June 2023 or Digital Health and Care Wales. But more needs to be done to ensure the sector and its partners fully leverage technology while avoiding the risk of systemic inequality. AI models must be designed and implemented responsibly, ensuring the reduce risk, rather than reinforce them.

01 1.3 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

FINDINGS 1 CASE STUDY

Well North Wales

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board's Well North Wales partnership is placing communities at the heart of health transformation. This multi-agency approach works to address health inequalities and the wider determinants of health, embedding prevention across all planning and delivery. By taking a joined-up approach, Well North Wales is ensuring that services are shaped by and for the communities they serve, leading to better, more sustainable health outcomes.



01 1.3 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

FINDINGS 1 CASE STUDY

Torfaen's Marmot Approach

Across Wales, more public bodies and PSBs are working together to apply the social model of health, integrating for example the Marmot principles, to address the wider determinants of health and reduce inequalities. As part of the first Marmot region in Wales, **Torfaen County Council** is redesigning service delivery and refocusing investment using the Marmot principles of health equity. A network of stakeholders is driving improvements through a focus on the wider determinants of health. A key initiative is the creation of a Prevention Hub, designed to triage all referrals and co-design or commission care in partnership with the community. This reduces pressure on council services while ensuring people receive tailored solutions more quickly.

01 1.3

Health and Well-being

FINDINGS 2

FINDING 2:

Health and social care in Wales remain heavily focused on acute needs, making it difficult to shift towards the preventive and long-term approach needed for a sustainable system. Despite widespread agreement that prevention is essential, investment does not go far enough and, in some cases, is moving in the wrong direction. Cuts to public sector funding, including the infrastructure that keeps people well — such as leisure centres and green spaces — are storing up future problems. The lack of investment in prevention already has a huge cost.

"Investing in prevention not only keeps people healthy, it helps reduce health inequalities and is value for money."

Public Health Wales, 2025.

01 1.3

Health and Well-being

FINDINGS 2

Prevention is better than cure. Public bodies and PSBs support the principle of prevention, but struggle to prioritise it at the scale required. At an event organised by my office in 2024, 17 health stakeholders, including directors of planning and finance, estimated that prevention should account for 10-40% of a public body's overall budget. Yet, the Office of National Statistics estimates that only 5% of UK NHS spending is directed towards prevention, most of which falls under tertiary prevention, focused on managing existing health conditions rather than stopping them from occurring.

Despite these challenges, there are positive developments. Some local health boards and local authorities are investing in early years programmes and initiatives aimed at ensuring the best start in life, which are crucial for reducing inequalities.

Other preventative efforts, such as Hywel Dda University Health Board's Arts and Health Charter, show a growing commitment to holistic well-being.

However, funding for prevention is often short-term or piecemeal, as driven by financial pressures and annual budget cycles. Local health boards report that Welsh Government's performance and assurance demands, and annual budgeting requirements reinforce a short-term focus, making it difficult to embed long-term thinking and resource planning into their strategies.

We have worked closely with Welsh Government officials and stakeholders across the health sector to make prevention a strategic priority. This led to new Welsh Government guidance for health authorities, published December 2024, which gives greater prominence to prevention and population health in Integrated Medium-Term Plans (IMTPs). I am pleased 'Population Health and Prevention' is now a strategic priority, requiring local health boards to allocate resources and report on progress. If properly implemented, this should help reduce demand for health and care services in the long run, and my office will closely monitor its impact. But the 'metrics' and 'enabling actions' directed by Welsh Government published with the new guidance need to be better aligned to the prevention priority going forward.

Crucially, public bodies also told us they struggle to track and demonstrate how much funding goes to prevention.

To address this, my office will work on improving budget transparency over the coming years. A shared definition of prevention levels was agreed between Welsh Government and my office to support better tracking of preventative spending and action. Public bodies have volunteered to use the definition to map their budgets, and I have written to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, urging that prevention funding be ring-fenced and increased annually across all ministerial portfolios. A sustained financial commitment is essential to shifting resources towards addressing the social determinants of health and reducing unsustainable demand on health and care services.

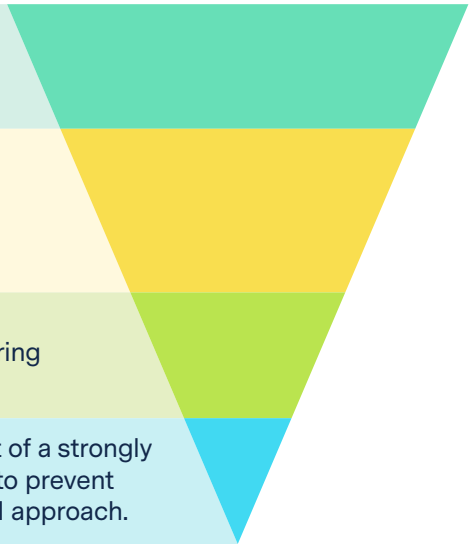
01 1.3

Health and Well-being

FINDINGS 2

DEFINITION OF PREVENTION AGREED BY WELSH GOVERNMENT AND THE OFFICE OF THE FUTURE GENERATIONS COMMISSIONER

Primary prevention:	Building resilience – creating the conditions in which problems do not arise in the future. A universal approach.
Secondary prevention:	Targeting action towards areas where there is a high risk of a problem occurring. A targeted approach, which cements the principles of progressive universalism.
Tertiary prevention:	Intervening once there is a problem, to stop it getting worse and prevent it reoccurring in the future. An intervention approach.
Acute spending:	Spending, which acts to manage the impact of a strongly negative situation but does little or nothing to prevent problems occurring in the future. A remedial approach.



The purpose of tertiary and secondary prevention is to enable existing demand to be sustainable, prevent worsening of existing poor health and improvement in independence wherever possible. The purpose of primary prevention is not only to stop the future flow of preventable disease and demand for services but also to build community resilience and well-being.

There is an opportunity to embed prevention into clinical pathways, ensuring that primary prevention is a core component of care delivery. Performance measures should reflect this approach, shifting the focus from whether the NHS can cope to how the wider system is making people unhealthy — and how we can fix it.

A lack of investment in prevention is already causing avoidable pain and hardship for many people across Wales. It is also costing the NHS and society as a whole.

Welsh Government's budget

Since 1998, the proportion of the Welsh Government's budget allocated to health has increased significantly, reducing investment in other areas that support the wider determinants of health and population resilience (see Budget Setting for Future Generations on page 110).

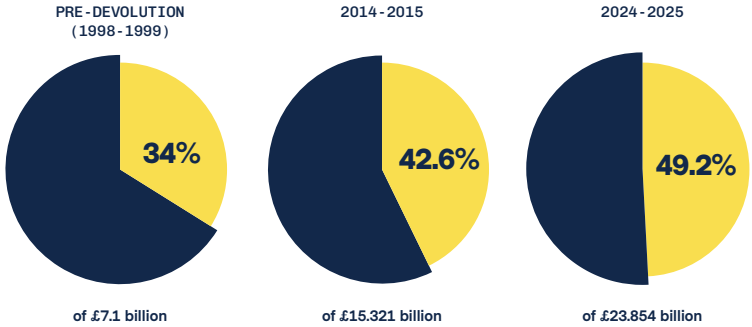
01 1.3

Health and Well-being

FINDINGS 2

How has funding for the NHS in Wales changed?

PER CENT OF OVERALL BUDGET FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE:



WELSH GOVERNMENT BUDGET - CAPITAL AND REVENUE (CASH TERMS)

Welsh Government allocate **50% of its budget on our health and social services** (draft budget 2025-26) - but based on WHO findings, these services **only account for 10% of what impacts our health.**

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- PHW: Investing in a Healthier Wales's report shows that prevention programmes deliver a significant return to the public purse.
- Research by the NHS Confederation shows that for every £1 invested in the NHS, the economy gets £4 back in gross value added (GVA) and that, for every £1 spent on primary and community care, there could be increased economic output (GVA) by £14.
- Sports Wales analysis found that for every £1 invested in sport in Wales in 2021/22, £4.44 worth of social impacts are generated.

Source: NHS Confed

01 1.3

Health and Well-being

FINDINGS 3

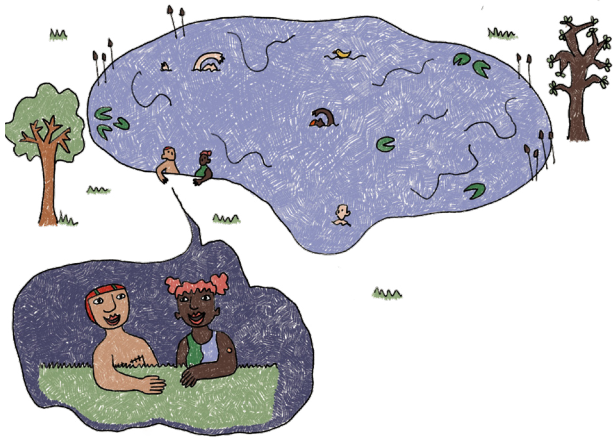
FINDING 3:

Systems thinking is gaining traction across public bodies and aligns closely with the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. However, its implementation remains fragmented, limiting its potential to tackle health inequalities and improve social determinants of health.

WHAT IS SYSTEMS THINKING?

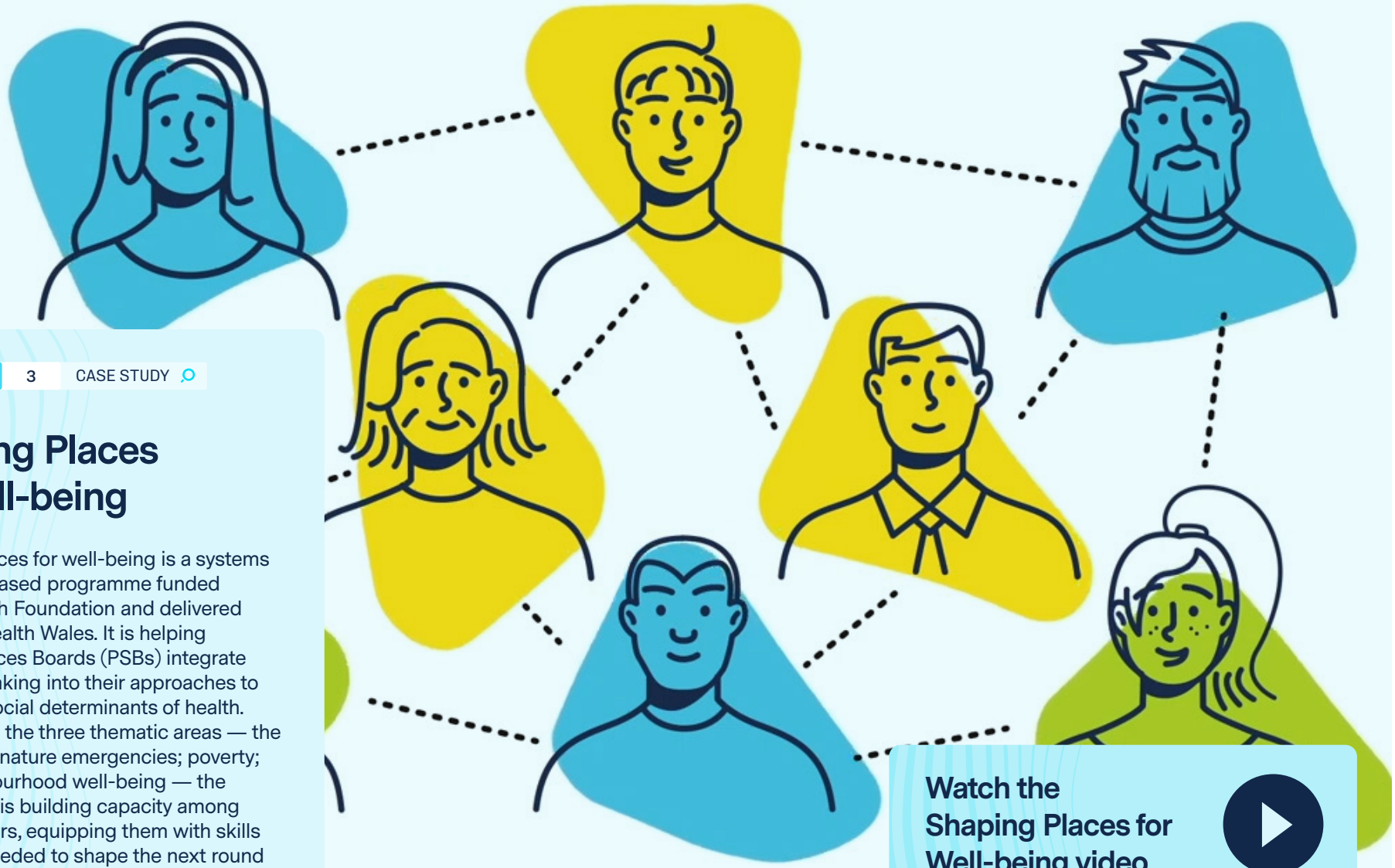
Systems thinking is a holistic approach that examines how different parts of a system interact and influence one another. In health and care, this means understanding relationships between people, organisations, policies, resources, and interventions. Key elements of systems thinking include:

- Recognising interdependencies between different services and sectors.
- Considering contextual factors that shape overall system performance.
- Using collaborative decision-making that includes diverse perspectives, ensuring marginalised voices are heard.
- Identifying the most effective leverage points for change.



Systems thinking approaches are already being applied at national and regional levels. At a national level, it is embedded in strategies like Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales and the upcoming Mental Health and Well-being strategy. Regionally, it is central to Gwent's Marmot Region initiative. Other place-based approaches are emerging, such as the Shaping Places for Well-being project led by Public Health Wales and the Health Foundation; or the rise of well-being hubs, which bring together physical and mental health services, financial support, and housing assistance.

01 1.3 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



FINDINGS 3 CASE STUDY

Shaping Places for well-being

Shaping Places for well-being is a systems and place-based programme funded by the Health Foundation and delivered by Public Health Wales. It is helping Public Services Boards (PSBs) integrate systems thinking into their approaches to tackle the social determinants of health. Focusing on the three thematic areas — the climate and nature emergencies; poverty; and neighbourhood well-being — the programme is building capacity among PSB members, equipping them with skills and tools needed to shape the next round of well-being assessments and plans.

Watch the Shaping Places for Well-being video

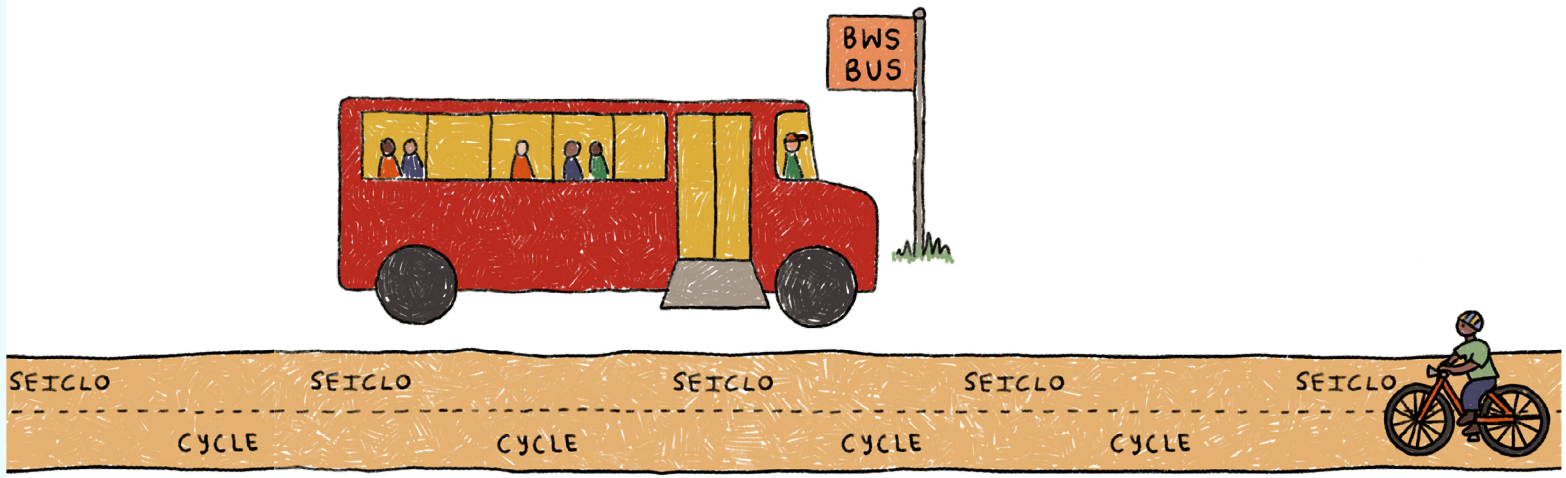
01 1.3

Health and Well-being

FINDINGS 3

By embedding systems thinking, public bodies and PSBs can take a more effective and sustainable approach to reducing pressure on health and social services. This model enables them to:

- Tackle root causes by addressing the wider determinants of health that current systems struggle to manage, especially under financial and resource constraints.
- Improve collaboration across sectors, regions, and generations, ensuring a joined-up response to complex challenges.
- Empower communities by co-designing services—such as support programmes, sports, arts, and nature-based initiatives—that build resilience and well-being.
- Engage industry as active partners in workplace and community well-being, ensuring businesses contribute positively to employee health and local economic sustainability.



01 1.3

Health and Well-being

FINDINGS 4

FINDING 4:

Entrenched inequalities in Wales are exacerbated and inequality gaps are still growing.

Health inequalities in Cymru remain stark, and the gap in health outcomes between the most and least deprived communities continues to grow.

I welcome the commitments made by Welsh Government to address persistent inequalities through their Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan and the forthcoming Disability Equality Action Plan. It is clear that implementation of these plans requires cross-sector collaboration and close monitoring.

According to the ONS (2022), 22.7% of all deaths in Wales were considered avoidable (8,114 of 35,694 deaths). Avoidable deaths were almost twice as common, in the most deprived communities compared to the most affluent areas. In 2020, 37% of all male deaths in the most deprived areas of Wales were avoidable, compared with 18.9% in the least deprived areas. For females, the figures were 25.7% and 14.1%, respectively.

Public Health Wales highlights the cumulative impact of Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and climate — referred to as the Triple Challenge — on health, well-being, and equity. These factors have exacerbated existing inequalities, particularly for those in economically deprived communities and marginalised groups.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) 2023 report showed a mixed picture regarding inequality trends in Wales since 2018. Additionally, more work is needed to fully implement the Social Model of Disability and ensure equal access to health and care services.

01 1.3 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

FINDINGS 4 CASE STUDY

Inverse Care Law

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board's Inverse Care Law (ICL) programme is pioneering a whole systems approach to reducing local health inequalities. Recognising that social, economic and environmental factors play a crucial role in, often beyond the NHS' direct control, the programme supports multi-agency collaboration and community engagement. Key initiatives include:

- **Stroke Prevention Team**, in partnership with MIND's mobile health bus, delivering community-based health checks to reach those most at risk.
- **Flintshire County Council**, working with **Good Food Flintshire**, tackling food poverty and improving access to healthy, affordable food.

01 1.3

Health and Well-being

FINDINGS 4

My involvement work with public bodies has shown the need for widespread adoption of best practice to improve equity and diversity in the health and care sector:

- Embed inclusion from the start, designing policies and services with all communities rather than for them.
- Foster diverse leadership and actively work to reduce biases in recruitment and service delivery.
- Ensure a culturally inclusive healthcare service and workforce, using data to shape responsive, equitable services.
- Integrate services across sectors, reducing fragmentation and improving access to holistic, person-centred care.

Addressing the **wider determinants of health** — as identified by the World Health Organisation — is critical to tackling health inequalities at their root. These include:

- Education
- Income and social protection
- Food security and nutrition
- Working conditions
- Housing and built environment
- Environmental factors

People in the most deprived communities experience cumulative disadvantages affecting every aspect of their health and well-being including in accessing health and care service and in terms of health outcomes.

Research shows that just under half of the health gap can be attributed to material deprivation, with social capital and income security accounting for the largest share of disparities. Access to healthcare itself contributes the least, reinforcing the need for cross-sector action.

The Welsh NHS Confederation, supported by 47 health and social care organisations, has formally called on all Welsh Cabinet Secretaries to outline their role in reducing the impact of poverty and inequality.

Progress is being made—all NHS bodies are now legally required to consider the socio-economic duty when developing new policies. From 2025, Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) will become mandatory, ensuring health equity is embedded across all policies and services.

01 1.3

Health and Well-being

FINDINGS 5

FINDING 5:

The health and care landscape is still too complex to ensure accountability and to improve outcomes for people.

Conversations with health bodies across Wales have highlighted significant complexity in the current health and care system. This includes overlapping frameworks, governance structures, and unclear accountability, leading to duplication, inefficiencies, and wasted resources.

Many public bodies have reported that the complexity:

- Creates confusion about responsibilities and decision-making.
- Slows progress in delivering integrated, person-centred care.
- Leads to inefficiencies that could be reduced through a more streamlined system.

Reports, such as the Bevan Commission's 'Let's Not Waste', suggest substantial savings could be made by eliminating duplication and waste, aligning with the One Welsh Public Service approach. Other countries provide models for reform. Finland, for example, merged its health and social services on a regional basis in 2023, creating a more integrated and accountable system.

Recognising these issues, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care commissioned an NHS Wales Accountability Review Task and Finish Group, which reported in April 2024. The group concluded:

"There is an urgent need for simplification. A number of previous reviews, including the Parliamentary Review, have drawn the same conclusion. There is an array of frameworks, duties, and standards. It needs to be easier for Boards to establish exactly what they will be accountable for."

Welsh Government must now implement these recommendations, simplify the health and care landscape and ensure greater clarity, efficiency and accountability in service delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS 01 1.3

Health and Well-being

Welsh Government:

16. Welsh Government should commit Wales to becoming a Marmot nation, adapting the Marmot model with tailored principles aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations Act, to help reduce inequalities and improve the well-being of our population.

17. Welsh Government and the NHS Executive should ensure prevention is embedded at the start of all clinical pathways start, with performance measures adjusted to reflect this shift.

18. Welsh Government should develop a plan to halt the rise in obesity within five years, reverse it within ten and create a Wales that supports healthy weight by default by 2035, reducing inequalities. (see our Food recommendations on page 109).

Public bodies (including Welsh Government) and Public Services Boards:

19. Public bodies and Public Services Boards should work together, along with the private and voluntary sectors, to implement the social model of health, placemaking and/or the Marmot principles to improve action on the wider determinants and reduce inequalities in their areas.

20. Public bodies should include prevention as a core strategic objective in corporate strategies and planning.

21. Public bodies and Public Services Boards (PSB) should use the PSB well-being assessments and Regional Partnership Board population needs assessment to identify the most significant inequalities in their populations and develop targeted plans to close the equity gap in health outcomes.

Recommendations

01 1.4

INTRODUCTION

Culture and Welsh Language

"Why can't we look after our planet while we paint, while we play, while we sing?"

"Culture and sport are vital threads in the fabric of what makes life worth living: they enrich the human experience, and [are] not merely luxuries to be enjoyed during times of plenty. Without significant changes, Wales risks being left behind in cultural and sporting achievements, endangering our national character and the well-being of our communities."

Delyth Jewell MS, Senedd Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Cymru is the only country in the world to recognise cultural well-being as part of a statutory definition for sustainable development. By placing culture on an equal footing with social, economic and environmental well-being, Cymru acknowledges how deeply culture shapes our identity, sense of belonging, and vision for a better world. Culture in Wales is not static – it evolves and grows with new ideas, perspectives and experiences.

I have made it my mission to support public bodies in championing culture, creativity and the Welsh language, ensuring they enrich the fabric of our communities and bring people together. The Welsh language belongs to everyone in Wales, regardless of background.

However, the cultural and creative sectors face significant disruption. The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with substantial cuts has taken a heavy toll on the sector. Wales now ranks third from bottom of European countries for spending per person on recreational and sporting services and second from bottom for cultural services. In addition, cultural assets, heritage sites, and the Welsh language face growing threats from climate change and nature loss, requiring urgent and bold action.

01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

There are, however, positive signs. Welsh Government is developing new strategic priorities for culture, which I hope will be matched by investment, cross-government collaboration, and action from public bodies to embed culture in decision-making and ensure its long-term sustainability.

The situation in Cymru:

- 7 in 10* people take part in arts and cultural activities (2022-23).*
- 64% of people attended an arts event (2022-23), down from 70% prior to the pandemic.*
- 82% of children aged 7 to 18 attended an arts event* (2023), down from a peak of 89% in 2019.*
- 31% of people visited a museum in the last year (2022-23). This number has fallen since pre-pandemic times.*
- 39% increase in adults participating in sport three or more times a week (2022–23)*. This is the highest rate recorded by the National Survey for Wales.*
- 39% of pupils took part in organised sport outside of the curriculum three or more times a week (2022). This was a 9% decrease from 2018 when the School Sport Survey was last carried out and is the lowest figure ever recorded by the survey.*
- 9% of listed buildings are considered to be at risk. There are currently just over 30,000 listed buildings in total in Wales.*
- 41% of scheduled monuments are deteriorating.*
- 36,960 people are employed in arts, culture and creative industries in Wales—a 28% increase over the past decade. (Source: Arts Council of Wales)*
- 38,345 are directly employed in sport (Source: Sport Wales).*
- 26% rise in reported hate crimes linked to religion.*
- 22% rise in reported hate crimes linked to transgender status.*
- 4% decrease in overall recorded hate crimes in Wales (2022–23).*
- 538,000 people (17.8%) reported being able to speak Welsh in 2021, down from 562,000 (19.0%) in 2011. (Source: Census 2021)*

* Source: Well-being of Wales Report 2024

01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

FINDINGS 1

FINDING 1:

Funding for cultural well-being is often one of the first areas to be cut during budget reviews, despite its contribution to preventing ill-health and reducing inequality.

> "We are currently covering gaps left by reduced funding using SPF [Shared Prosperity Fund] grants. When this funding comes to an end later this year we face a cliff-edge in terms of local provision. It is likely that cultural and sports activities such as our groups for young people (in libraries, family centres, leisure centres and theatres), afterschool and holiday provision and our groups for adults, will largely come to an end. We have strong evidence of the positive impact these groups are having on mental and physical well-being, thus reducing impacts for CAMHS, our local health board and social services."
>
> Conwy Council, 2024

- **£1** invested in the arts in Wales = **£2.51** generated in economic return
- **25%** = how much government support for the Arts Council of Wales has decreased since 2010
- **40%** = Cuts to local authority funding for culture and related service

The financial pressures on public bodies have made arts, culture, and leisure services particularly vulnerable, even as demand for health, social, and education services grows. Without statutory protection, cultural services are often among the first to be cut when budgets are reviewed.

These financial pressures are leading to:

- A shrinking cultural sector, limiting access to the arts for many communities.
- Job insecurity and redundancies across the creative and cultural workforce.
- Cuts in academic cultural courses.
- Higher entrance fees, reduced opening hours, and reliance on volunteers in venues and cultural sites.
- Public funding being withdrawn from key cultural landmarks, such as Llancaiach Fawr Manor in Caerphilly.

While I welcome the uplift in funding announced in Welsh Government's Budget 2025/26, a long-term, sustainable funding model is essential to protect and grow the sector.

01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

FINDINGS 1

> **"The recent turbulent years, from the pandemic to the cost-of-living crisis, have exacerbated many long-standing challenges for charitable leisure and culture trusts. The impact of [...] a reduction in budgets for the delivery of sport, leisure and culture by trusts in Wales means the risk of worsening health inequalities is acute as the cuts result in direct impact on service provision and specific programme delivery."**
>
> Jennifer Huygen, Head of Policy and Strategic Partnerships, Community Leisure UK

The Senedd Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee has backed my recommendation that Welsh Government should introduce a 'preventative' category of spending across all departments, recognising the vital role culture plays in well-being, economic growth, and social cohesion (see recommendation 44 on page 117).

In 2024, Arts Council of Wales published research on an 'Economic Impact Assessment' to illustrate the economic value of the culture and arts sector.

This research highlighted that in 2023/2024, for every £1 received by Arts Council of Wales, £2.51 went back into the economy.

Similarly, Sport Wales conducted a study showing that in 2023/2024 for every £1 received by Sport Wales, £4.44 went back into the economy.

Addressing inequality must be a priority

Cultural activities and the arts are key drivers for social mobility and help reduce inequality. However, when public services are cut, access to culture becomes disproportionately difficult for certain communities, particularly:

- Rural communities with limited access to venues and events.
- Low-income households where affordability is a barrier.
- Communities with poor public transport links, making participation in cultural and sporting activities harder.

For the Deaf community, access to performances, cultural venues and sporting events that provide British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation and transcription remains inconsistent and often project-dependent, rather than being embedded as standard practice.

01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

FINDINGS 1

Sport Wales warns of a significant undermining of progress on inclusivity with cuts that have been received and say further cuts will likely impact on ability to maintain a broad sporting offer. This is a situation the sport sector cannot afford given that there is already recognised underrepresentation by race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability and deprivation.

FOUNDATION 4 SPORTS COACHING

A Midnight Ramadan event by the Foundation for Sports Coaching attracted more than 400 people over three nights.

01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

FINDINGS 2

FINDING 2:

Welsh culture and language need to be a priority for all our public bodies and Public Services Boards if they are to thrive, but that is not yet the case.

My analysis of public body and Public Services Board (PSB) well-being objectives highlights a lack of strategic focus on culture and the Welsh language. Only 10.5% of public body well-being objectives relate to these areas, with most of these objectives set by organisations that have a statutory cultural role, such as the Arts Council of Wales and the National Library of Wales.

Among PSBs, just 8% of objectives address cultural well-being, with noticeable regional disparities. Public bodies operating in areas with higher proportions of Welsh speakers tend to place greater emphasis on culture and language, while others overlook these aspects in strategic planning.

A review of PSB Well-being Assessments (2022) found that many assessments failed to capture the challenges and opportunities related to culture and the Welsh language. Stronger strategic consideration is needed to ensure culture is fully embedded in local and national policy.

> **"PSBs don't feature culture highly in conversations."**
> Public sector representative

Welsh Government representatives, as invited participants of PSBs, have a leadership role in improving collaboration and ensuring cultural well-being is a core part of decision-making. PSBs could enhance their approach by inviting representatives from arts, heritage, and language organisations to contribute more actively to their discussions and strategies.

While national public bodies have made greater strides in embedding cultural well-being—such as the NHS Confederation and Arts Council of Wales linking culture to public health—many Welsh Government and local government policies still fail to fully integrate culture and language.

There are some positive examples of policy alignment with cultural well-being:

- The Climate Adaptation Strategy for Wales includes actions to support the arts and heritage sectors in adapting to climate change, although Welsh language considerations are minimal.
- The Draft Mental Health and Well-being Strategy 2024-2034 recognises the role of cultural assets and the Welsh language in strengthening community cohesion and mental health support.
- The Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy highlights the role of cultural infrastructure in preserving Cymru's unique identity and supporting the Welsh language.
- Llwybr Newydd (Wales' transport strategy) identifies Welsh language, arts, sport, and culture as central to well-being ambitions.

While these policy commitments are encouraging, there remains a gap between policy and implementation. Consistent attention, adequate funding, and stronger integration into decision-making at all levels are needed to deliver meaningful progress.

01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

FINDINGS 2

CULTURE, ARTS AND EDUCATION

The relationship between culture, arts, and education in Wales is well-documented. The Lead Creative Schools Scheme, funded by Arts Council Wales and Welsh Government, encourages creative learning by embedding artists and practitioners into schools. Expanding this model across public services could enhance creativity and innovation, and cultural participation.

I welcome the national curriculum's four purposes, which aim to develop 'enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.' However, this ambition needs dedicated local authority plans and funding to ensure equitable access to local cultural experiences for all learners.

FLATBOY (SEREN THOMAS) MAP OF DREAMS

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FREELANCERS

Collaboration with creative freelancers strengthens policymaking across all sectors, yet many local artists feel excluded from decision-making processes. To address this, I am co-developing guidance with the Arts Council of Wales, freelancers, and trade unions to help public bodies work effectively in partnership with creative freelancers. This builds on best practice from the COVID-19 pandemic, when freelancers played a key role in delivering cultural and community projects.

01 1.4 CULTURE AND WELSH LANGUAGE

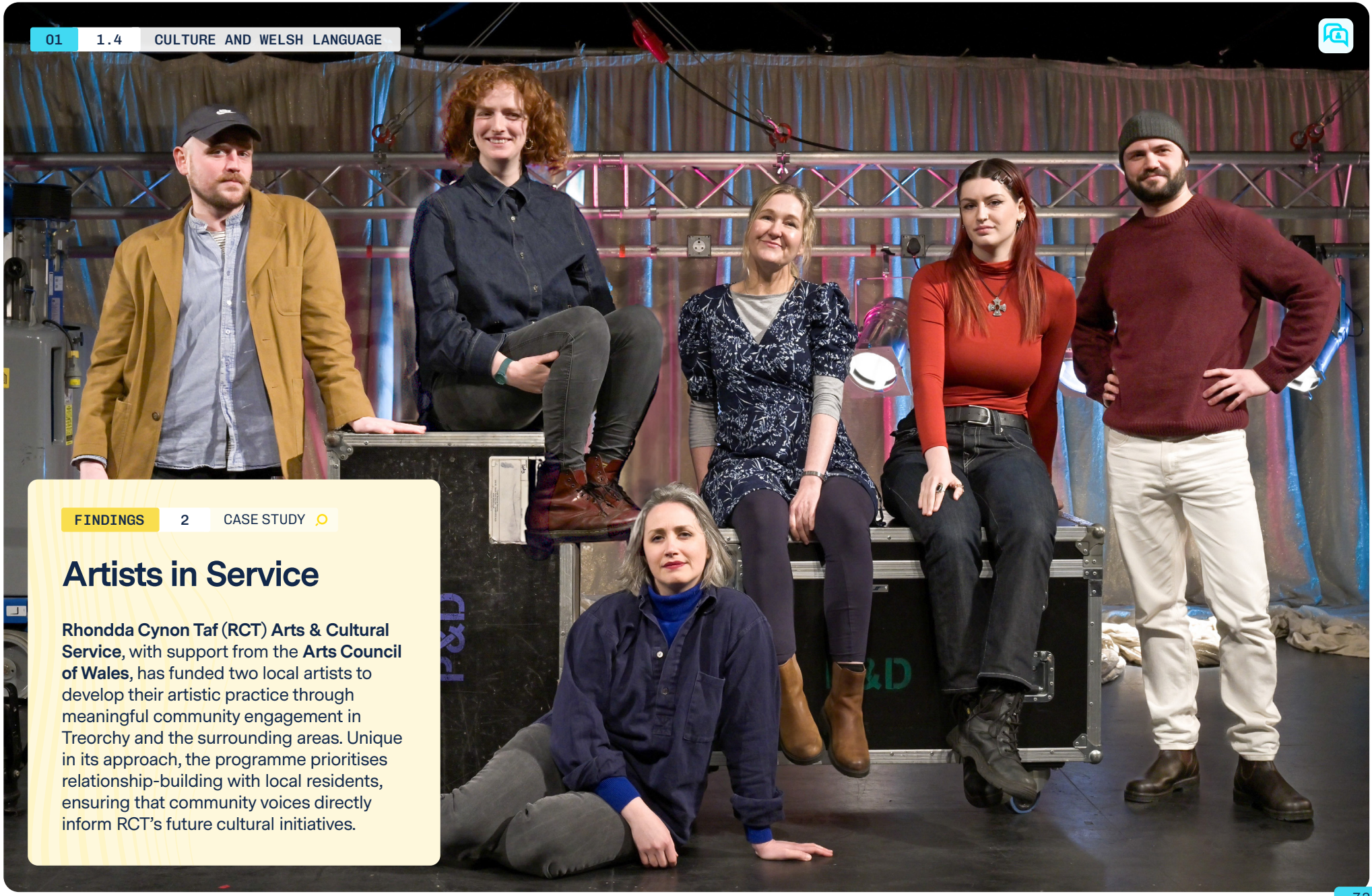
FINDINGS 2 CASE STUDY

Bringing Caerphilly together through the arts

Caerphilly County Borough's Arts Development team is strengthening community connections by integrating arts projects into public life. The team has:

- Partnered with care homes to encourage participation in creative activities.
- Developed an apprenticeship scheme focused on key areas such as music and health.
- Hosted silent discos, creative workshops for staff, and art sessions for older residents to encourage intergenerational storytelling and skill-sharing.

These initiatives showcase how cultural investment can enhance well-being, social cohesion, and economic opportunities, reinforcing the need for stronger cultural commitments in public sector planning.


01 1.4 CULTURE AND WELSH LANGUAGE
FINDINGS 2 CASE STUDY
Artists in Service
Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Arts & Cultural Service, with support from the **Arts Council of Wales**, has funded two local artists to develop their artistic practice through meaningful community engagement in Treorchy and the surrounding areas. Unique in its approach, the programme prioritises relationship-building with local residents, ensuring that community voices directly inform RCT's future cultural initiatives.

01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

FINDINGS 2

Opportunities to raise the ambition and leadership in support of the Welsh language

Welsh Government is committed to achieving one million Welsh speakers by 2050. Cymru can achieve this. The Welsh Language Commissioner expects public bodies to go beyond compliance and actively create bilingual workplaces where staff can operate fully in Welsh. Expanding Welsh language capacity in workplaces and services is essential to embedding the language into everyday life.

All local authorities and national parks must produce five-year Welsh language promotion strategies. These should align with the Welsh Language Commissioner's guidance and clearly outline their contribution to Cymraeg 2050.

The Welsh Language Commissioner's 2024 report noted improvements in compliance with Welsh language standards, with some organisations offering high-quality Welsh services. However, consistency remains a challenge, and further efforts are needed to ensure that Welsh language provision is seamlessly integrated across all public services.

There are many Welsh language voluntary and community organisations who are able to share resources and expertise with you.

'Leading in a bilingual country' is an organisational development programme run by Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 and Academi Wales divisions in which senior leaders discuss how to create a bilingual culture within organisations. Participants don't need to be able to speak Cymraeg to join, only an open mindset and enthusiasm for discussion. The goal is to champion an organisational leadership culture that supports Cymraeg 2050.

01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

FINDINGS 3

FINDING 3:

There is limited action across public bodies to harness the role culture and arts can play in placemaking. More can be done to realise its potential.

We can do more in Wales to regenerate, neighbourhoods, towns and cities to reimagine our communities with culture and language at the centre.

Placemaking is a concept about the planning, design and management of places, particularly public spaces and communities. Placemaking sits at the centre of national planning policy.

There are a range of national resources available including the Placemaking Wales Charter and Placemaking Guide (2020). Welsh Government requires local authorities to develop Placemaking Plans for town centres in order to qualify for Transforming Towns Funding. These plans provide a strategic vision for sustainable development, ensuring that projects contribute meaningfully to community cohesion. The evaluation of these plans and activities should ensure that the WFG Act is meaningfully embedded (including alignment to well-being objectives and national indicators).

While over 100 organisations have signed up to the Wales Placemaking Charter, only 15 public bodies covered by the WFG Act are signatories.

Effective placemaking is done in partnership with all parts of the community, including underrepresented groups such as the Roma, Gypsy Traveller Community; Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people and disabled people.

I welcome efforts made by local authorities to embed culture and languages in placemaking plans but believe more can be done to maximise the opportunities creativity and culture play in regeneration.

Many of the things we love about our communities —from cinemas, music venues, football pitches, and places of worship to community orchards and street art — are rooted in culture, arts, and sport. Existing and new cultural assets must be protected and developed as key drivers of social cohesion, environmental resilience and economic regeneration.

PLACEMAKING WALES CHARTER

The Placemaking Wales Charter aims to provide a common understanding of the range of considerations that go into placemaking. The charter outlines six placemaking principles that cover the range of considerations that contribute to establishing and maintaining good places.

1. People and Community
2. Movement
3. Public realm
4. Location
5. Mix of Uses
6. Identity

"Our culture and history are far more diverse than just castles and choirs, and we will ensure that the history and culture of our Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities are properly represented by our infrastructure investments."

Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy

01 1.4 CULTURE AND WELSH LANGUAGE
FINDINGS 3 CASE STUDY
Llais y Lle
Arts Council of Wales' Llais y Lle programme funds creative collaborations with communities, focusing on language, land, and cultural identity. One project, 'We No Longer Talk', led by artists Rhiannon White and Ffion Wyn Morris, explored relationships with the Welsh language and in working-class communities in north and south Wales. The project used film and storytelling in Arabic, English, Somali and Welsh, reflecting Wales' linguistic and cultural diversity.

01 1.4 CULTURE AND WELSH LANGUAGE

FINDINGS 3 CASE STUDY

Caerphilly's Vision 2035

Caerphilly's Placemaking Plan is placing community and culture at the heart of new developments. Key initiatives include:

- Ffos Caerffili market, with over 20 independent traders, supporting small businesses and local food producers.
- Affordable, energy-efficient housing and business spaces redeveloped from underused buildings.
- Revitalisation of the Workmen's Hall, transforming it into a cultural centre for the community.

01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

FINDINGS 3

> "The Transforming Towns programme has supported the development of 53 placemaking plans, with a further 10 in the pipeline for potential support this financial year. Culture, arts and the wider creative industries are immensely important to us here in Wales, and I'm eager to ensure that we leverage the power of cultural and community assets in unlocking town centre regeneration."
>
> Jayne Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government - December 2024

Giving local communities a greater say over land and buildings would help them preserve heritage sites, develop local food projects, and repurpose spaces for cultural activities. Strengthening the role of town and community councils in these processes, alongside increased access to funding and expertise, would ensure that assets remain at the heart of thriving, resilient communities.

Welsh Government's Perthyn scheme provides small grants for new social enterprises and community-led housing projects, supporting economic opportunities, affordable housing, and Welsh-speaking communities.

The Senedd's Local Government and Housing Committee in summer 2022 conducted an inquiry into community assets, leading to the establishment of Welsh Government's Community Asset Commission (2024). This commission aims to reform community asset transfer processes, making it easier for communities to take ownership of heritage buildings and cultural spaces.

Scotland and England provide greater rights for communities to protect local assets through policies like the Community Right to Buy (Scotland) and Community Right to Bid (England). Wales should consider similar legislative reforms to empower communities in shaping their local environment.

01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

FINDINGS 4

FINDING 4:

Social polarisation poses a significant challenge to long-term well-being, highlighting the need for greater efforts by public bodies to foster cohesive and inclusive communities.

Polarisation — whether cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, or political — undermines trust in institutions, weakens social harmony, and disrupts collective action.

For Wales to thrive, public bodies must prioritise fostering cohesive and inclusive communities, ensuring that everyone feels a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

While the percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area is increasing in Wales – the figure remains too low. According to Carnegie UK, Wales has the lowest democratic well-being score in the UK.

Levels of public trust and satisfaction in public institutions is declining across the UK. While I recognise the efforts made by the Senedd and Welsh Government to strengthen democracy in Wales such as introducing votes at 16 and 17, and Senedd Reform, more must be done to rebuild trust and foster meaningful involvement.

Efforts to address social polorisation would also support tackling levels of loneliness and isolation in Wales. In 2022-23, 13% of people in Wales were found to be lonely, the same as in the past 2 years (2021-22 and 2020-21).

Those who identify as Black, Asian, or part of a Minority Ethnic group had higher levels of self-reported loneliness in 2022-23 at 24% compared to 12% for those who identify as White.

Public spaces and community assets—from libraries and cultural hubs to leisure centres and parks—are essential for reducing loneliness and for social cohesion. These ‘venues for good’ should be protected and prioritised in public spending to create places where people can connect, collaborate, and build relationships across differences.

"The Multicultural Hub helps us to be together with other cultures and understand better their background, what they're doing, what they're facing. [it] helps us to network to see how we can embrace our activity together as a member of the community of Wales."

Member, North East Wales Multicultural Hub

01 1.4 CULTURE AND WELSH LANGUAGE

FINDINGS 4 CASE STUDY

The Talking Shop

Supported by cross-sector partners and funding, Omidaze Productions established The Talking Shop — public spaces designed for creative, cultural, and democratic discussion. Over 13,000 people, aged six months to 96 years old, have taken part, using the spaces to share experiences, learn new skills, and engage with their community and democracy. These spaces provide an accessible, inclusive setting for people from all backgrounds to connect and contribute to shaping their local communities.

Find out more about The Talking Shop

01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

FINDINGS 4

Public bodies must play a leadership role in designing and implementing inclusive policies that strengthen social unity. This requires:

- Fostering meaningful dialogue between diverse groups.
- Empowering community-led initiatives that celebrate diversity.
- Embedding principles of equality and social justice into all decision-making processes.
- Working in collaboration with faith groups, trade unions, voluntary organisations, community and town councillors, academia and businesses.

Volunteering also plays a vital role in building cohesive communities. Volunteers contribute to public services, well-being initiatives, and community projects, creating stronger, more connected local networks.

While the milestone attributed to volunteering in Wales has already been met in the short-term, with the right planning and support for volunteering, there is scope to exceed this milestone and improve the quality of the volunteering experience for those who volunteer and those who benefit from it. Strong leadership, a supportive infrastructure, and partnership working between the public, private and the voluntary sectors will be important in achieving that.

RECOMMENDATIONS 01 1.4

Culture and Welsh Language

Welsh Government:

22. Welsh Government should introduce a Culture Bill to the Seventh Senedd Term (2026 - 2030), to make culture a statutory requirement for public bodies. This will strengthen the role of culture in national well-being and ensure culture receives the recognition and investment it deserves.

23. Welsh Government should commit to a Community Right to Buy Act to empower communities to take ownership of valued local buildings, land, and community assets, ensuring they remain at the heart of thriving communities.

24. The next Welsh Government should appoint a Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Arts and Sport.

Public bodies (including Welsh Government) and Public Services Boards:

25. All public bodies in Wales should develop a clear plan to increase the internal use of Welsh within public bodies. This will allow staff to live their working lives increasingly through the medium of Welsh, fostering a stronger bilingual culture in the workplace.

26. All public bodies and Public Services Boards should sign up to Placemaking Wales Charter and integrate its principles into their work.

27. All public bodies should produce an organisational volunteering strategy in partnership with employees and the voluntary sector to boost volunteering across the country.

"Muddy waves,
Consume the homes
we've made,
Because the Earth
is getting tired."

MI, RIGHTKEYSONLY

Listen to Mi by Rightkeysonly

01 1.5

A Well-being Economy

INTRODUCTION

“For over 70 years economics has been fixated on GDP, or national output, as its primary measure of progress. That fixation has been used to justify extreme inequalities of income and wealth coupled with unprecedented destruction of the living world. For the twenty-first century a far bigger goal is needed: meeting the human rights of every person within the means of our life-giving planet. ”

Kate Raworth, Doughnut Economics

“In the future - there will be people like us whose lives are richer because of what we did today.”

I am committed to playing my part in ensuring Wales transitions to a well-being economy that prioritises people and planet. This shift requires governments at all levels, businesses, and communities to take collective action to ensure our economy is focussed entirely on achieving Wales’ well-being goals.

For much of the 20th century, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth has been the dominant measure of economic success in the UK and Wales. Despite this focus, Wales continues to lag behind the rest of the UK in key economic metrics such as productivity and competitiveness. Economic growth alone has failed to reduce inequality or address the climate and nature crises.

Since devolution, Wales has lacked a clear answer to the question: what kind of economic growth do we want?

A well-being economy provides an alternative model—one where economic development serves the well-being of people, planet and future generations, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act).

01 1.5

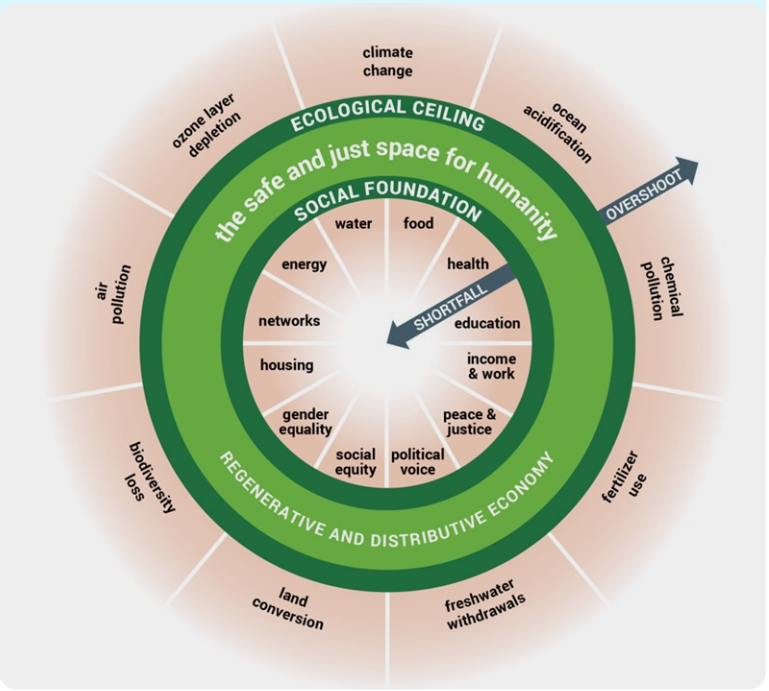
A Well-being Economy

Defining a well-being economy

A well-being economy is a framework that prioritises social and environmental outcomes over traditional economic indicators. It moves beyond GDP to consider a broader basket of indicators, measuring success based on well-being, fairness, and sustainability. A well-being economy aligns with Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics model, which envisions an economy that:

- Ensures no one falls below the social foundation—the basic requirements for a healthy and fulfilling life.
- Respects the ecological ceiling, staying within planetary boundaries to avoid environmental collapse.
- Creates a safe and just space for all, where economic policies promote prosperity without harming people or the planet.

Doughnut Economics: A social foundation of well-being that no one should fall below, and an ecological ceiling of planetary pressure that we should not go beyond. Between the two lies a safe and just space for all.



The situation in Wales:

- Only 64% of workers in Wales earned the Real Living Wage in 2023, the lowest percentage in a decade (down from 68% in 2022).
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees earned, on average £1.93 (13.8%) less per hour than White employees in 2023.
- There were approximately 2,828 social enterprises in Wales in 2022, a 22% increase since 2020.
- While 67% of working age adults have achieved Level 3 or higher in the National Qualifications Framework, inequalities in skills outcomes remain. Welsh boys have the lowest levels of participation in higher education in the UK and young people from working-class backgrounds in Wales are the least likely to be in employment in the UK.
- Wales' global footprint remains over twice the size of our estimated biocapacity. If the world lived like Wales, humanity would need 2.08 Earths to sustain itself.

* Source: Well-being of Wales Report 2024

01 1.5

A Well-being Economy

FINDINGS 1

FINDING 1:

The Welsh Government Economic Mission and Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) regional economic strategies must align with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Welsh Government's Economic Mission emphasises net zero and fair work, but it does not yet fully align with the WFG Act and does not sufficiently address Wales' nature emergency.

While progress has been made in promoting a foundational and circular economy, these approaches are not yet central or overarching priorities across government. Instead, 20th-century economic strategies, such as growth and competitiveness, continue to be used as core measures of success without clearly articulating their purpose in improving the well-being of people and planet. Welsh Government economic policy continues to follow the UK Government's direction.

However, as a member of the Wellbeing Economy Government Network (WeGo), Wales should be leading the field in transitioning to a well-being economy. Finland, a WeGo member, has committed to making carbon-neutral circularity the foundation of their economy by 2035.

Despite the WFG Act being in place for almost a decade, there is still no central plan from Welsh Government to outline Wales' national well-being goals as the guiding mission for business. Ministers have not yet established a coordinated approach to leverage economic tools, incentives, and investments to guide private sector contributions toward these goals.

The WFG Act cannot be achieved by the public sector alone—a whole-economy approach is needed.

The next iteration of Welsh Government's Economic Mission and the emerging CJC regional strategies must prioritise the challenges of the 21st century, including:

- The climate and nature emergency
- Widening inequality
- Retaining wealth within communities

Economic policies, incentives, and investments must be explicitly designed to close the gaps in achieving Wales' well-being goals, and ensure Wales consumes only its fair share of the planet's resources.

A just transition to a low-carbon and digital economy will not be possible without an urgent plan to tackle inequalities in skills and qualifications. This plan must actively involve private sector leaders and skills providers to ensure fair opportunities for all.

A well-being economy must also address the hidden subsidy provided by unpaid care, which disproportionately falls on women. According to Oxfam Cymru, up to 96% of care work in Wales is unpaid, primarily carried out by women. Care underpins all economic activity and yet remains undervalued. While this report does not explore the issue in detail, it is crucial that Wales considers the role of care work in its transition to a well-being economy.

01 1.5

A Well-being Economy

FINDINGS 2

FINDING 2:

Implementation of the Real Living Wage and Living Hours amongst public bodies requires urgent prioritisation.

The Real Living Wage is a key pillar of Welsh Government's fair work agenda and is critical in addressing inequality. Unlike the UK Government's National Living Wage, the Real Living Wage is based solely on actual living costs. Accreditation requires employers to pay all staff the Real Living Wage and to have a plan for third party contracted staff.

Since 2016, around 20,400 additional people in Wales have been uplifted to the Real Living Wage, adding £141m in additional income for low-wage earners. Almost 600 employers have been accredited.

However, the number of people in Wales earning the Real Living Wage in 2023 is 64%, the lowest in over a decade, and down from 68% in 2022. This is comparable to regions in the North of England, and substantially behind Scotland, where 91% of workers receive the Real Living Wage.

Despite Welsh Government's commitment to fair work, only 13 public bodies subject to the WFG Act have achieved Real Living Wage Employer accreditation. Only three out of 22 local authorities are accredited. However, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has shown that phased implementation over six years is possible.

The UK labour market has evolved over recent years, with working hours becoming a key factor around reducing inequality. Payment of the Real Living Wage is an important foundation, but a satisfactory hourly rate remains problematic if working hours provided are low or erratic. The Living Hours accreditation is available to Living Wage Employers to address this and should be sought by public bodies.

Living Wage and Living Hours accreditation support for public bodies, private and voluntary sector organisations is available from the Real Living Wage team in Wales.

FINDINGS 2 CASE STUDY

Cardiff Council and Real Living Wage

Cardiff Council has developed a multi-stakeholder campaign to increase Living Wage accreditation – becoming the second city in the UK to achieve Living Wage City status. This has generated a £65 million boost to the local economy and ensured 13,000 people have been uplifted to a Real Living Wage. Through initiatives like **The Ffair Jobs Community Jobs Compact**, Cardiff Council works with employers to ensure fair work opportunities in deprived areas.

01 1.5

A Well-being Economy

FINDINGS 3

FINDING 3:

The foundational economy approach in Wales is gaining some traction – through growing the social enterprise and cooperative economy more communities can generate, circulate and retain wealth locally.

Welsh Government's foundational economy approach, which focuses on strengthening the 'everyday economy', has helped redirect public sector spending into Wales. For example, NHS Shared Services increased procurement spending within Wales from 40% in 2020 to 43% in 2024. Welsh Government's Transforming Towns funding is successfully supporting town centre regeneration, such as Caerphilly's 2035 Plan (see page 77).

However, a foundational economy approach is not yet fully embedded across Welsh Government or the wider public sector, and many public bodies report a lack of awareness of policy levers and metrics to further embed a foundation economy approach at local level, beyond procurement.

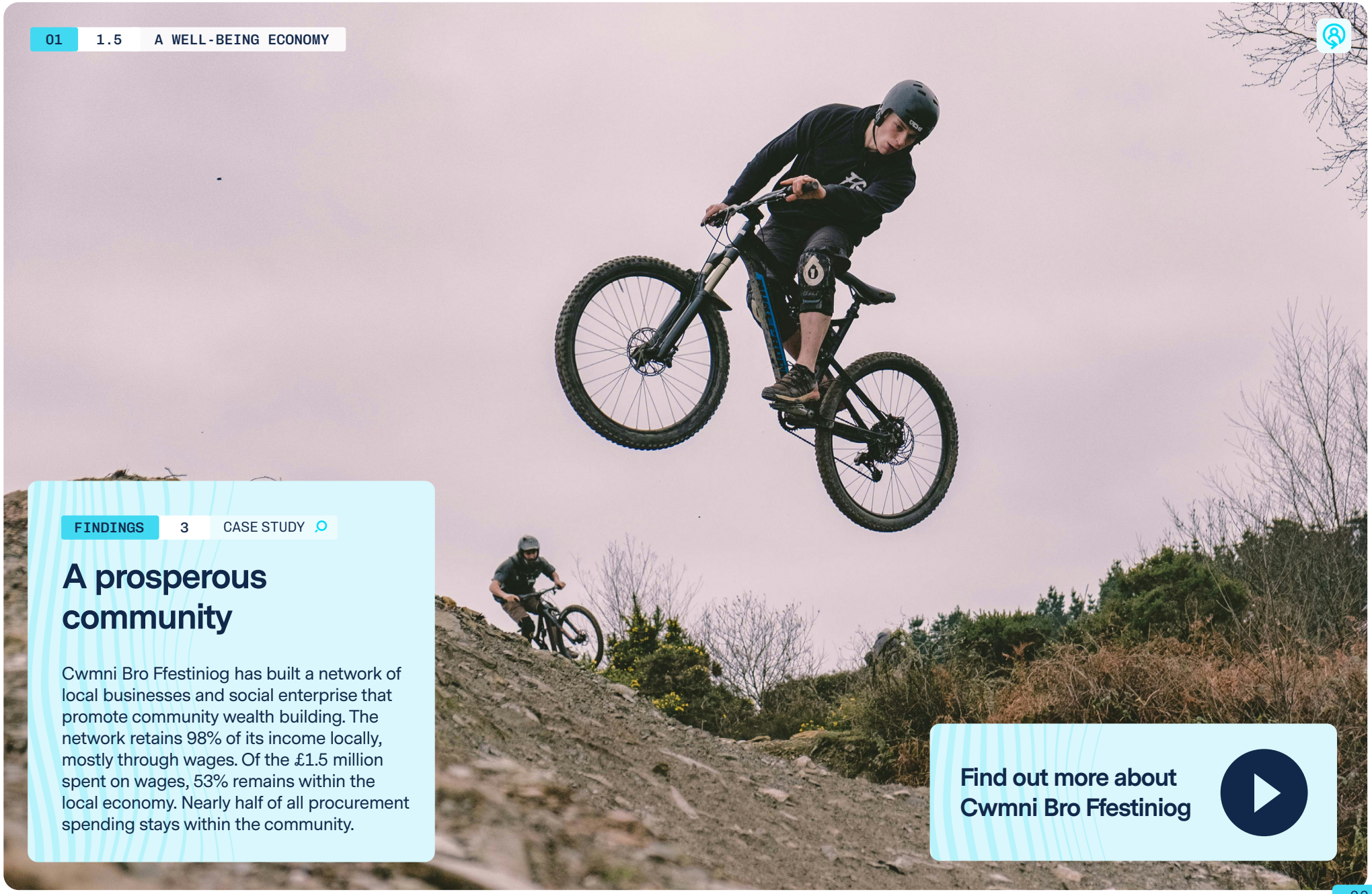
Community Wealth Building takes the foundational economy's focus on procurement further by prioritising the promotion of social enterprises and cooperatives in local economic development plans.

These enterprises, along with employee-owned business, retain wealth within communities, involve employees and residents in decision-making, and prioritise social and environmental well-being over profit.

Social businesses are more likely to pay the Real Living Wage, tend to outperform traditional businesses in terms of productivity and 75% of social businesses in Wales can operate in Welsh, reinforcing their cultural and economic impact.

Encouragingly, the social business sector is growing due to specialist finance and business support from Welsh Government. Between 2020 and 2022, the sector grew by 22%, with a quarter of businesses being new start-ups. Transport for Wales partners with a social enterprise to manufacture its uniforms.

01 1.5 A WELL-BEING ECONOMY



FINDINGS 3 CASE STUDY

A prosperous community

Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog has built a network of local businesses and social enterprise that promote community wealth building. The network retains 98% of its income locally, mostly through wages. Of the £1.5 million spent on wages, 53% remains within the local economy. Nearly half of all procurement spending stays within the community.

Find out more about Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog

01 1.5

A Well-being Economy

FINDINGS 4

FINDING 4:

Wales can grow more green jobs, but urgent action is required to address the inequality of skills and qualifications outcomes to ensure Wales achieves a just transition to a low carbon well-being economy.

Developing a pipeline of green skills and supporting reskilling, through collaboration between Welsh Government, skills providers and industry is essential for major decarbonisation projects such as the electric blast furnace in Port Talbot, offshore wind farms in the Celtic Sea and nature-based jobs in peatland restoration, forestry, and marine conservation.

Research indicates that 50% of Wales' marine area is suitable for kelp cultivation, to support a seaweed industry which could generate £105 million in revenue and create 1,000 new jobs in food production, packaging, and agriculture. The Nature Service Wales is a model which can support apprenticeships and reskilling to support people to access nature jobs.

Wales is not yet prepared to meet the demand for green jobs. Apprenticeship and training numbers remain low in key sectors where job growth is expected. Women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people are underrepresented in sectors most likely to see green job growth, meaning targeted policies are needed to ensure equitable access.

Wales has the potential to create 60,000 green jobs in sectors such as construction, heating, electrical installation, manufacturing, engineering, and nature restoration.

Research suggests that 20% of current jobs in Wales will be directly impacted by the shift to a zero-carbon economy. An estimated 150,000 jobs (10.3%) are already transition-aligned, while 140,000 (9.6%) will require reskilling.

01 1.5

A Well-being Economy

FINDINGS 4

Demographic analysis of green sector workforce	Social housing, Construction and Housing Retrofit	Agriculture, Forestry, Nature restoration and related trades	Electric installation, Broadband, Electric Vehicles and Solar Panels
Female % of workforce	27%	25%	29%
Non-white % of workforce	5%	<1% (0.76%)	6%
Female & of apprenticeship starts	3%	n/a	2% (in electrotechnical apprenticeships)

Inequality and Skills

The Well-being of Wales Report 2024 indicates progress towards the 75% milestone of working-age adults achieving Level 3 qualifications by 2050, with 67% reaching this level in 2023. However, deeper labour market analysis from EPI highlights persistent inequalities that, if unaddressed, will hinder Wales' ability to achieve a just transition.

- Young people from working-class backgrounds in Wales have poorer education and labour market outcomes compared to the rest of the UK. Only 56% achieve A-level equivalent qualifications, lagging behind the 60-65% seen in other UK nations.
- Employment rates for young people from working-class backgrounds in Wales are also the lowest in the UK, with just 71% in employment, compared to 74-78% in other nations.
- Fewer apprenticeships are taken up by young people in England and Wales compared to Scotland and Northern Ireland. Only 20% of apprenticeships in England and Wales are started by 16–18-year-olds, whereas in Scotland the figure is 37%, and in Northern Ireland, it is 52%.
- Welsh boys have the lowest levels of participation in higher education across the UK.

01 1.5

A Well-being Economy

FINDINGS 5

FINDING 5:

Our economy is currently using Earth's resources at a faster rate than they can be replenished. This is unsustainable. Wales can create more jobs in repair and reuse.

Wales' global footprint is more than double its estimated biocapacity — meaning we are consuming natural resources at a rate the planet cannot sustain. If the global population lived like Wales, we would need 2.08 Earths.

To transition to a well-being economy and become a globally responsible nation, we must allow natural resources to regenerate at an equal or faster pace than their consumption.

Despite having the second highest recycling rate in the world, Wales continues to operate within a take-make-use-dispose model. Across industrialised countries, this model of resource use contributes to 45% of global emissions. A culture of repair and reuse is essential to ensuring that economic activity does not overshoot planetary boundaries.

Welsh Government is committed to scaling re-use and repair hubs to 80 towns by 2026 through its Beyond Recycling strategy.

Ensuring every community has access to these hubs will accelerate Wales' transition to a circular economy. Investment in recycling and circular practices is already generating economic benefits, such as the £1bn investment in Shotton Mills to process 25% of the UK's cardboard waste into recycled paper.

If repair and reuse practices increased by just 25%, it is estimated that 27,705 new jobs would be created within the circular economy.

01 1.5 A WELL-BEING ECONOMY
FINDINGS 5 CASE STUDY
Beyond Recycling with Repair Café
Repair Café Wales is helping shift communities from a throwaway culture to a repair-first mindset. A network of over 120 repair cafés across Wales provides free repairs for clothes, electronics, toys, and household items. Over 21,858 items have been repaired since 2017, saving communities £1m and reducing waste.
REPAIR CAFÉ WALES

FINDINGS 5 CASE STUDY

Beyond Recycling with Benthyg Cymru

Benthyg Cymru is creating Libraries of Things across Wales, allowing people to borrow items instead of buying them, reducing both costs and environmental impact. Since 2020, Benthyg Cymru has facilitated 18,000 'borrows', saving households £500,000 and reducing carbon emissions by 220,000 kg.

RE:MAKE NEWPORT

01 1.5

A Well-being Economy

FINDINGS 6

● FINDING 6:

Wales cannot achieve our well-being goals through the public sector alone. Mobilising the private sector is critical to the transition to a well-being economy.

The public sector alone cannot deliver the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Businesses have a crucial role to play. After ten years of the legislation, Welsh Government does not have a national plan to involve businesses in achieving Wales' well-being goals and does not apply a consistent set of WFG Act actions which businesses should be required to meet when in receipt of Welsh Government support.

A handful of large companies—including Bluestone, Dŵr Cymru, Principality, and the Football Association of Wales— are aligning their corporate strategies to the WFG Act, but the vast majority of businesses remain unaware of how they can contribute. A review in 2022 by my team found low awareness of the WFG Act among small and medium sized enterprises.

Welsh Government must lead in organising business around its well-being goals. Ministers can set clear expectations for the role business can play in a transition to a well-being economy. A set of clear actions required from business to support the well-being goals could be applied consistently across the Welsh Government's Economic Contract, Business Wales programme and trade support. These requirements can then align to the finance available from The Development Bank of the Wales, which has incorporated the WFG Act in its investment criteria.

The new Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act will require private sector suppliers to the public sector to align with the WFG Act. Businesses require support to understand how to support the well-being goals and I have developed a WFG Act toolkit for businesses. This advice should be scaled up across Welsh Government programmes which interact with business.

01 1.5

A Well-being Economy

FINDINGS 7

FINDING 7:

The Welsh public sector is not adequately prepared to harness the benefits and manage the risks of artificial intelligence.

Public services worldwide are increasingly deploying artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance efficiency, decision-making, and citizen outcomes. As highlighted in the Welsh Government Future Trends Report (2021), AI presents both opportunities and challenges for delivering on the WFG Act. These range from AI-driven climate modelling that can predict extreme weather events, to concerns over privacy or carbon emissions from energy-intensive data centres that power AI systems.

AI systems can also perpetuate or amplify discrimination, for instance to disabled people or Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people, by reinforcing biases, limiting access to services, and perpetuating discrimination in decision-making processes.

Despite the rapid development of AI, Welsh public bodies and Public Services Boards (PSBs) have not integrated AI into their well-being objectives. This absence raises concerns about the public sector's readiness to both harness AI's benefits and manage its risks. There is an urgent need for strategic leadership to ensure AI is used ethically, sustainably, and equitably in Wales.

Some organisations are beginning to explore AI's role:

- The **Centre for Digital Public Services** (CDPS) is driving digital innovation in public services and hosts an AI Steering Group, where my office contributes to developing AI and WFG Act guidance.
- Wales **TUC** is examining AI's potential impact on the workforce, including job security and fair employment practices.
- **Estyn** is beginning to assess AI's implications for education and learning outcomes.

However, there is no co-ordinated approach to AI deployment across the Welsh public sector. AI should be factored into each of the corporate areas of change, such as procurement (monitoring social value), climate adaptation (predicting risks more accurately), and long-term workforce planning. Given AI's transformative impact, public bodies must be proactive in harnessing the benefits and managing the risks of AI.

RECOMMENDATIONS 01 1.5

A Well-being Economy

Welsh Government:

28. Welsh Government should identify key sectors where the private sector falls short in implementing the Real Living Wage – and develop plans to implement the Real Living Wage with businesses in these sectors.

29. The Welsh Government should ensure all businesses receiving Welsh Government support meet a standard set of commitments aligned to the Well-being of Future Generations Act. This should include Real Living Wage accreditation as a baseline requirement.

30. Welsh Government should set a target to double the size of the social business sector in Wales by 2035 and continue support to Social Business Wales and Social Investment Cymru to achieve this.

31. Welsh Government should work with the wider public sector to launch a Co-operative Development Hub and support social enterprises in expanding into public and private sector supply chains.

32. Welsh Government should urgently develop an action plan by 2027 to ensure Wales has the skills to achieve a just transition to a low carbon well-being economy, and at the same time improves post-16 educational outcomes and reduces inequalities.

33. Welsh Government should establish a commission to examine AI's impact across public services, workforce planning, and digital infrastructure, and set out a clear national direction for ethical and responsible AI deployment.

Public bodies (including Welsh Government) and Public Services Boards:

34. Welsh Government's economic mission and all four regional economic strategies of Corporate Joint Committees must fully embed the Well-being of Future Generations Act as the framework for designing economic development strategies and in implementing and measuring progress.

35. By 2027 all public sector organisations must commit to a plan on how they will achieve Real Living Wage accreditation.

36. Welsh Government and public bodies should ensure every community in Wales has access to a local repair and re-use hub by 2035.

Recommendations

Watch 'Balancing Act'
by Teulu von Flap

01 1.6

Food

INTRODUCTION

“We cannot simply keep the success and resolve the failures in a benign ‘trade off’. The hard reality is that current food practices – how we resource, grow, process and consume food – are undermining present let alone future generations’ capacity to feed themselves decently, healthily, and in a way which not only protects but positively enhances the natural world on which we all depend.”

Tim Lang, Feeding Britain

Despite increasing awareness of food insecurity, the challenges facing farmers’ livelihoods, diet-related health issues and the environmental impact of food production, Wales lacks a comprehensive food resilience plan that aligns with its well-being goals. This means that efforts remain fragmented across multiple policy areas—agriculture, public health, education, and the climate and nature emergencies.

Wales has made important progress in implementing universal free school meals for primary schools but lacks a long-term vision for improving access to local, affordable, healthy and sustainable diets.

A national approach is essential to ensure food is produced sustainably, improves Wales’ food resilience and supports farmers and local economies.

The current food system is failing Wales.

Most food grown in Wales is exported as high-value goods, while the nation remains heavily dependent on imports. This reliance exposes Wales to climate-related disruptions, global market instability, and rising costs. Without a shift towards local and diverse food production, future generations will face increasing risks to food security.

01 1.6

Food

A national food resilience plan would:

- Integrate food security, healthy and sustainable diets into the Well-being of Future Generations Act, ensuring they become key measures of national progress.
- Align food policies across agriculture, health, education, climate, nature and economic strategies.
- Involve farmers in efforts to improve the sustainability of farming practices and increase Wales' food self-sufficiency.
- Support communities to improve local and national food resilience.
- Ensure access to local, affordable, healthy and sustainable food for all, particularly those in food poverty.

Across Wales there is growing momentum within communities and public bodies in developing local solutions to the challenges of the food system. Setting a national food resilience plan and integrating food into the WFG Act would provide communities and public bodies with the support they need to sustain and scale the development of local, community food plans – and integrate food across their well-being objectives.

Without urgent action, rising food insecurity and unhealthy diets will continue to place an unsustainable and unacceptable burden on public health and the economy. A national food resilience plan must be developed to ensure that current and future generations in Wales can access local, affordable, healthy and sustainable diets.

01 1.6

Food

Food and the Well-being Goals

A prosperous Wales	**Healthy diets lead to a healthy economy. Investing in horticulture can improve Wales' food self-sufficiency and grow more jobs in rural Wales.** · The cost of obesity to society and the economy in Wales is estimated to rise to £2.4 billion by 2050. · Only 0.1% of farmed land in Wales is used for horticulture. Wales produces around 20,000 tonnes of fruit and vegetables per year, equivalent to approximately ¼ of a portion of fruit and vegetables per day per person. · Supplying Welsh vegetables into all primary schools in Wales could result in nearly 1,000 new jobs on farms and nearly £15m of sales.
A resilient Wales	**Climate change is already impacting Wales' food security, sustainable diets will help Wales to achieve its net zero targets.** · Climate change is already impacting food production and farm livelihoods in Wales. WWF Cymru estimates additional costs of £265 million in 2022/23. · Wales is highly dependent on imports of food supplies, particularly fruit and vegetables, which are increasingly vulnerable to shocks caused by climate change and global conflict. · The greenhouse gas emissions from wasted food and drink in Wales accounted for approximately 950,000 tonnes of CO2 equivalent in 2021/22.
A healthier Wales	**Food insecurity and low-quality diets present a huge cost to the Welsh NHS and to the health of our children.** · Almost one in three children starting primary school in Wales are overweight or obese. · Diabetes costs the Welsh NHS £500 million a year. · In 2024 27% of people in Wales are food insecure – experiencing reduced quality of diet and/or reduced food intake – with an additional 15% of people experiencing marginal food insecurity. · Research into the impact of insufficient intake of nutritious food in the UK found that the average height of children aged 5 is now declining.

01 1.6

Food

Food and the Well-being Goals

A more equal Wales	**Disabled people face a higher risk of food insecurity in Wales than others while Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children with no recourse to public funds are disproportionately impacted by restrictions to free school meals.** • Last year the Trussell Trust found that food bank usage is at an all-time high in Wales, while research shows that in Wales nearly half of households experiencing food insecurity and more than two thirds of people referred to food banks are disabled people. • Rising food costs have meant disabled people are unable to afford three meals a day in Wales. • The Bevan Foundation has estimated that up to 1,500 children in secondary schools in Wales face restrictions from accessing free school meals because they are from households with no recourse to public funds. This disproportionately affects Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children and results in discrimination.
A Wales of cohesive communities	**The people most at risk of food insecurity in Wales are living in areas facing barriers.** • Research in 2023 found that one in four people in Wales are eating smaller meals or skipping meals in their entirety as a result of the cost-of-living crisis.
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	**Our farming and agricultural communities are critical to a thriving Welsh language.** • 43% of agricultural workers speak Welsh, compared to a national average of 20%. My engagement with farmers has told me that young people often struggle to enter agricultural professions. Enabling young people to gain access to the required skills and resources can help maintain thriving rural communities for the longer term.
A globally responsible Wales	**The food we consume and import must contribute to global well-being, that means becoming a deforestation-free nation and promoting Fairtrade.** • A land area equivalent to 40% of the size of Wales is used overseas to grow Wales' forest-risk imports. Imported palm oil is the commodity most likely to come from countries with a serious risk of deforestation and social exploitation. Wales imports a massive 190,000 tonnes of soy a year, and nearly 80% is fed to livestock. • 2023 saw UK sales of Fairtrade products generating £28m in Fairtrade Premium for farmers and workers.

01 1.6

Food

FINDINGS 1

FINDING 1:

Welsh citizens want stronger action on food policy.

Public demand for food system reform is clear. Insights from the Food, Farming & Countryside Commission highlight widespread public support for policies that prioritise sustainability, health, and resilience in Wales' food system.

- **Support for sustainable farming** – 69% of Welsh citizens want the government to provide financial support to help farmers adopt sustainable farming methods.
- **Banning ultra-processed foods (UPFs) in public settings** – 73% support banning UPFs in schools and hospitals, while 64% back restrictions on junk food advertising to improve public health.
- **Food education reform** – 77% believe children should leave school with a strong understanding of the food system, including skills to grow and cook healthy food.
- **A national food resilience plan** – Citizens are calling for cross-government leadership and a dedicated Food Minister to drive forward a National Food Resilience Plan for Wales. They want a co-ordinated approach across the UK while ensuring that Wales' unique needs and long-term interests are at the forefront of food policy.

These findings show that Welsh citizens want urgent action to improve food security, promote healthier diets, and align food policy with the WFG Act.

01 1.6

Food

FINDINGS 2

FINDING 2:

Wales lacks a national, long-term food resilience plan, making it an outlier in the UK.

While the UK Government, Scottish Government, and Northern Ireland Executive have all developed or are implementing food strategies, Wales has yet to establish a national, long-term food resilience plan.

- In 2024, the UK Government announced plans for a UK food strategy.
- Scotland is implementing the Good Food Nation Act, ensuring food policy is legally integrated across government.
- Northern Ireland has developed a food strategy framework.

In contrast, Wales has no long-term, legally binding food plan, despite growing risks from climate change, global food shocks, and food insecurity. A National Food Resilience Plan for Wales could provide a cohesive, cross-government approach, aligning policies on agriculture, public health, climate, and the economy.

Such a plan should:

- Build on Welsh Government's Food Matters strategy and the proposed Community Food Strategy, ensuring better coordination across government to support local food production and community food-growing initiatives.
- Strengthen Wales' resilience to global food shocks, such as those experienced during COVID-19 pandemic, climate-related disasters, and rising global food prices. This should involve the Wales Resilience Forum, public bodies, and civil society.
- Ensure the Sustainable Farming Scheme supports Wales' food security by:
  - Increasing self-sufficiency in food production.
  - Prioritising food diversification and horticulture, including organic production.
  - Helping farmers phase out imported livestock feed linked to global deforestation.
  - Incentivising nature-friendly and climate-resilient farming methods such as organic, agroecological, and agroforestry systems.
- Be part of a future land and marine use framework, integrating food production with energy and nature recovery targets.

Without an integrated, long-term approach, Wales risks falling further behind in securing a sustainable, resilient, and equitable food system for future generations.

01 1.6

Food

FINDINGS 3

FINDING 3:

Food and diets are largely absent from Wales' well-being goals and public body objectives.

Food is not defined in Wales' seven well-being goals and is only partially measured in national indicators through two broad sub-indicators on healthy lifestyles. There is no dedicated food systems indicator, making it difficult for public bodies to prioritise food in their well-being objectives.

Analysis co-produced with Food Sense Wales in 2024 found that:

- Only eight local authorities, two health boards, and eight Public Services Boards (PSBs) have integrated food into their well-being plans.
- The lack of a national food resilience plan and the omission of food and diets from the WFG Act contributes to this gap.

Despite food being overlooked in national policy, local food partnerships are emerging as key drivers of change. Most local authority areas now have a Local Food Partnership Coordinator, supported by Welsh Government. These partnerships bring together public bodies, community food growers, and the voluntary sector to develop local solutions for food resilience.

- Bwyd Sir Gâr and Torfaen Local Food Partnerships are creating local food plans and supporting a growing network of community food growers.
- Ten food partnerships in Wales have been recognised by Sustainable Food Places, with seven more working towards this accreditation.

I will continue to support local food partnerships to collaborate with public bodies and PSBs to ensure food is properly integrated into well-being objectives.

Some public bodies are taking proactive steps to embed sustainable food systems into their strategies:

- Vale of Glamorgan and Torfaen councils have employed dedicated sustainable food systems officers.
- Velindre NHS Trust and Monmouthshire Council have adopted organisation-wide food strategies, setting measurable targets for procuring and providing local, healthy, and sustainable food.

For Wales to achieve greater food resilience and expand community-led food initiatives, Welsh Government and public bodies must develop long-term, coordinated food plans.

Embedding food into the WFG Act will provide a clear mandate for public bodies to take action and measure progress.

01 1.6

Food

FINDINGS 4

FINDING 4:

People in Wales do not have equal access to a local, affordable, sustainable and healthy diet. Public bodies can use levers around planning and the promotion, procurement and provision of food to improve diets.

Welsh Government's universal free school meals for primary school children is a crucial step in tackling hunger, improving behaviour and academic performance, and reducing stigma. However, means-tested free school meals in secondary schools leaves many children hungry and at a time when daily fruit and vegetable intake among young people in Wales is declining. The Bevan Foundation has reported on the number of children from households with no recourse to public funds missing out on free school meals in Wales.

To equip future generations with the skills for lifelong healthy eating, Wales should expand food literacy programmes like Nutrition Skills for Life, which teaches children the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to plan and prepare nutritious meals. Norway offers a strong example, where nutrition education is embedded in the national curriculum through a dedicated "Food and Health" subject, alongside national guidelines for school food provision, including vending machines.

Initiatives like Cardiff's Planet Card show how targeted support can help families afford fresh fruit and vegetables. Inspired by the Alexander Rose fruit and vegetables voucher scheme, which has increased fruit and veg intake by three portions a day for participating households, similar programmes could be expanded across Wales to reach communities most in need while supporting local growers.

One of the biggest barriers to growing more local food is access to land. Local authorities should look to Powys' Rural enterprise planning policy, which supports small-scale horticulture businesses by providing planning guidance for rural enterprise dwellings. By adopting similar policies, councils can unlock opportunities for new horticultural enterprises, shorten supply chains, and promote community-supported agriculture (see recommendation 23 on page 82).

Public bodies can improve diets by restricting the advertising and promotion of food groups which can be categorised as being both 1) ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and also 2) high in fat, sugar and salt. These foods are linked to rising obesity and diet-related diseases. Transport for London's healthier food advertising policy led to a 20% decrease in sugary product purchases—a model that could be adopted in Wales, particularly in public spaces, transport networks, and local authority-controlled advertising (see recommendation 18 on page 64).

01 1.6 FOOD

FINDINGS 4 CASE STUDY

Welsh Veg in Schools

Public procurement policies can stimulate local food production and improve diet quality. At the start of 2024, 94% of vegetables served in Welsh schools were imported and none were organic. The Welsh Veg in Schools initiative is changing that by increasing the supply of locally produced organic vegetables in school meals. In 2024 the project worked with seven local authorities, local growers, Castell Howell, and Farming Connect Horticulture. This programme is proving that local food procurement can work — benefiting schools, Welsh farmers, and children's health.

WELSH VEG IN SCHOOLS

RECOMMENDATIONS 01 1.6

Food

Welsh Government:

37. The next Welsh Government should develop a national food resilience plan to ensure equal access to local, affordable, healthy, and sustainable diets. Food and diets should be integrated into the duties, goals, and indicators of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

38. Welsh Government should expand Free School Meals to all children up to age 16, ensuring every child in Wales, including children from households with no recourse to public funds, have access to healthy and sustainable food at school.

39. Welsh Government should scale up the Nutrition Skills for Life programme across all schools in Wales, ensuring that every child leaves school food literate, with the skills and knowledge to maintain a healthy and sustainable diet.

Public bodies (including Welsh Government) and Public Services Boards:

40. Each Local Authority should develop a local food resilience plan in collaboration with Local Food Partnerships and Public Services Boards. Welsh Government should ensure that the proposed Community Food Strategy provides long-term support to develop these plans.

41. Welsh Government and local authorities should ensure all free school meals contain at least two portions of locally and sustainably produced seasonal vegetables. Local authorities should join the Welsh Veg in Schools programme to build resilient local horticulture supply chains.

42. All public bodies should reduce or eliminate the provision of food groups which can be categorised as both 1) Ultra-Processed Foods (UPF) and also 2) high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) from their premises, such as schools, hospitals, leisure centres and care homes. Public bodies should ban the advertising and promotion of these food groups from all publicly owned advertising and marketing spaces.

43. Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards should collaborate to introduce a Welsh fresh fruit and vegetable voucher scheme for low-income households, helping families afford nutritious food while supporting local food growers.

Recommendations

01 1.7

Budget Setting for Future Generations

The Welsh Government well-being objectives must be central to the budget-setting process to ensure long-term planning. While this is the ambition, it is not always clear how effectively this is being implemented.

As the guardian of future generations, I support and challenge public sector organisations on how to use the five ways of working to shape their budgets. Many public bodies have shared their experiences, and I am grateful for their insights.

I am particularly focused on how the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act) is applied from the earliest stages of budget-setting and how funds are allocated as a result. Each year, I have provided evidence to the Senedd Finance Committee to scrutinise the Welsh Government draft budget.

Is the WFG Act making a difference?

The WFG Act has influenced the Welsh Government's budget process, but progress remains slow and inconsistent. While there are some examples of good practice, embedding the five ways of working is a long-term challenge, and Wales risks falling behind other nations in well-being budgeting.

For the past two years, I have assessed how well the five ways of working have been applied in budget-setting, using my Ways of Working Maturity Matrix. My assessment of the draft 2025/26 budget was as follows:

Collaboration	Welsh Government is making the most progress here. Engagement with the Budget Impact Improvement Advisory Group (BIIAG), which includes voluntary and public sector representatives, has helped to steer the Budget Improvement Plan.
Integration	Progress remains limited. The introduction of Integrated Impact Assessments and Strategic Integrated Impact Assessments is a step forward, but there is still a lack of transparency on how WFG Act principles inform decisions.
Long-term	Some progress has been made through ten-year capital investment plans, but this needs to extend to future skills and workforce planning to ensure prosperity and ambition are achieved. The Welsh Spending Review (2024) presents an opportunity to embed long-term thinking more effectively.
Prevention	The budget does not yet prioritise prevention to stop existing problems from worsening and to limit preventable future challenges. Welsh Government should use the Prevention definition agreed in 2016 as a framework.
Involvement	There are positive steps, such as creating a young people's version of the Budget Improvement Plan, holding 'Discover Economics' events to engage underrepresented groups, and consulting Future Generations, Welsh Language, Children, and Older People's Commissioners. However, genuine participatory involvement is still lacking, and we are far from a truly inclusive budgeting process.

01 1.7 BUDGET SETTING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

CASE STUDY

Newport City Council

Newport City Council is empowering residents to decide how a portion of the council's budget is spent. Local groups and organisations submit proposals for funding, and Newport residents vote on the projects they want to see funded. This **participatory budgeting approach** not only enhances local democracy but also raises awareness of the services being funded.

Find out more about Newport's Participatory Budgeting

01 1.7

Budget Setting for Future Generations

Failing to embed the five ways of working into budgeting limits strategic decision-making and reinforces short-termism. Financial uncertainty remains a major challenge for public service delivery, and a long-term, preventative approach is critical for ensuring sustainable investment that benefits future generations.

Is the national budget focused on delivering the well-being goals?

Every expenditure in the national budget should contribute to Wales' long-term mission as set out in the well-being goals. Where this is not the case, budget lines should be deprioritised, particularly funding that promotes international flights, high food miles, or unsustainable practices, instead of local supply chains, sustainable transport, and green alternatives.

I have created a snapshot analysis of how well the Draft Budget for 2025/26 aligns with the national well-being goals. The table below shows the proportion of the budget that supports, is neutral towards, or potentially harms each goal.

	How well would the latest proposed national budget deliver on the well-being goals? [Based on Draft Budget 2025/26]						
	A prosperous Wales	A resilient Wales	A healthier Wales	A more equal Wales	A Wales of cohesive communities	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	A globally responsible Wales
% of the budget positive	87.7%	7.3%	86.4%	78.1%	38.6%	8.8%	7.3%
% of the budget neutral	8.0%	12.2%	12.7%	18.7%	52.5%	85.5%	39.5%
% of the budget harmful*	0.0%	50.4%	0.0%	1.2%	1.0%	0.0%	1.7%

*Potentially

The national indicators and my mission focus

This section evaluates whether the 2025/26 draft budget aligns with my mission priorities and the national indicators linked to them. Using the same approach as my assessment of the well-being goals, I have analysed whether the latest budget proposals support, are neutral towards, or potentially hinder their delivery.

	Cymru Can Missions				
	Implementation & Impact	Climate & Nature	Health and Well-being	Culture and Welsh Language	A Well-being Economy
% of the budget positive	82.4%	8.7%	90.4%	40.4%	54.5%
% of the budget neutral	13.0%	12.4%	1.5%	54.3%	17.6%
% of the budget harmful*	1.7%	50.4%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%

*Potentially

01 1.7

Budget Setting for Future Generations

Climate and Nature

My analysis suggests that only 8.7% of the budget is likely to positively impact climate change mitigation, adaptation, and nature recovery. While some of this may be due to limited transparency around what budget actions will fund, this figure is alarmingly low.

The Well-being of Wales Report 2024 and the Climate and Nature section of this report highlight urgent challenges for Wales' biodiversity and emissions. However, the Local Places for Nature fund—crucial for local authorities—has been cut in the latest draft budget, and other nature conservation funding remains static.

Most concerning is that 50.4% of the budget is potentially harmful to climate and nature, significantly impacting the A Resilient Wales well-being goal.

I also see little attention paid in areas that would have considerable leverage such as NHS Services, with its substantial carbon footprint. Spending on the economy does better to leverage action for climate and nature, especially through skills training relevant to the net-zero transition, development of renewable energy, or support for the decarbonisation of cultural sites. But more could be done to clearly embed climate considerations into business support programmes.

01 1.7

Budget Setting for Future Generations

Health and Well-being

The NHS in Wales receives half of the annual Welsh Government budget, equating to around £12bn a year. Yet, despite this substantial allocation, it fails to meet the rising demand for healthcare services. This unsustainable trajectory highlights the urgent need to rethink how health and well-being is funded in Wales.

As set out in the Health and Well-being section of this report, the key factors that keep people well are largely determined outside of the health system. The health budget has grown from a third to half of the annual Welsh Government allocation, yet this increase has not significantly improved health outcomes.

The Well-being of Wales Report 2024 shows that mental health is deteriorating for both adults and children, yet the latest draft budget has reduced funding for mental health policies and legislation. This will worsen existing inequalities, as those most in need will find it even harder to access timely support.

Demand for care services is increasing, but many of these conditions could be prevented with the right support. Chronic illnesses linked to poor diet, inactivity, and inequality are driving up healthcare costs. Without a shift to prevention, the system will struggle to cope.

I wrote to Finance Minister Mark Drakeford MS earlier this year, alongside the Welsh NHS Confederation and the Health Foundation, calling for ring-fenced allocations for prevention across all devolved areas. This would ensure that preventative action is prioritised and funding increases year on year.

To secure the long-term sustainability of health and social care, we must shift investment towards prevention, ensuring Wales focuses on keeping people well rather than simply treating illness.

Culture and Welsh Language

My analysis shows that around 40% of the national budget this year could positively impact culture and the Welsh language.

While no budget lines directly threaten progress in these areas, they remain a low priority in overall government spending. There is little evidence that cultural well-being is being supported holistically across policy areas.

While some funding supports culture, heritage, and the Welsh language, investment remains relatively low—similar to funding for arts, sports, and recreation.

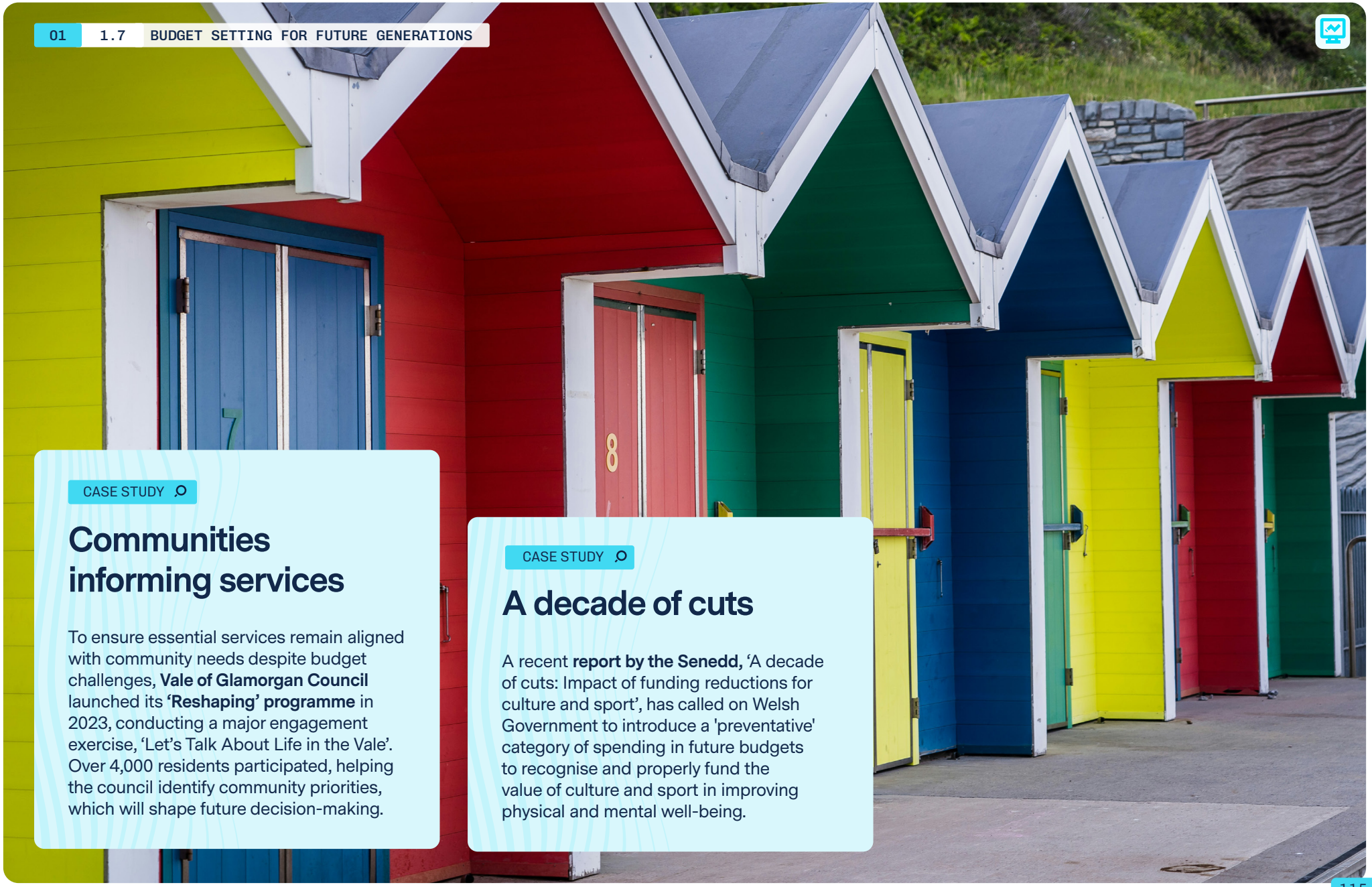
Positively, elements of the climate and nature budget acknowledge nature as part of Welsh heritage, with funding allocated to national parks and conservation efforts. However, climate change remains a major threat to cultural preservation and community activities, and more action is needed to safeguard Wales' cultural future.

A Well-being Economy

My analysis finds that over half of the national budget could positively impact Wales' achieving a prosperous economy, with no harmful effects identified for this mission or the A Prosperous Wales goal, but we are still falling short of a well-being economy which puts people and planet first. Economic development remains a key feature of the budget.

The national indicator milestone aims for 75% of working-age adults to achieve Level 3 or higher in the National Qualifications Framework by 2050. Progress is on track, reaching 67% in 2023, with budget allocations reflecting investment in skills, training, education, and job opportunities.

Another key indicator is the Real Living Wage, and the uplift across sectors is a step in the right direction to ensuring fair pay.


01 1.7 BUDGET SETTING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
CASE STUDY
Communities informing services
To ensure essential services remain aligned with community needs despite budget challenges, **Vale of Glamorgan Council** launched its **'Reshaping' programme** in 2023, conducting a major engagement exercise, 'Let's Talk About Life in the Vale'. Over 4,000 residents participated, helping the council identify community priorities, which will shape future decision-making.
CASE STUDY
A decade of cuts
A recent **report by the Senedd,** 'A decade of cuts: Impact of funding reductions for culture and sport', has called on Welsh Government to introduce a 'preventative' category of spending in future budgets to recognise and properly fund the value of culture and sport in improving physical and mental well-being.

01 1.7

Budget Setting for Future Generations

Well-being budgeting around the world

Wales risks falling behind other nations in well-being budgeting, despite having the WFG Act. Welsh Government should adopt a clear methodology to assess and report annually on how the budget aligns with national well-being goals. This information must be transparent and central to decision-making, not buried in internal processes.

Some international examples include:

- **Malta** codes all budget requests against the Sustainable Development Goals, using the data to inform better decision-making and reporting.
- **France** focuses on green budgeting, producing a Green Budget database and an annual report on the environmental impact of government spending.
- **Ireland** tags budget programmes that support the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy.

Gender Budgeting

Wales is performing well in gender budgeting, assessing the impact of budget proposals on women and girls. In Australia and Ireland, this approach also includes wider diversity considerations. Welsh Ministers currently analyse policy impacts through a gender equality lens, contributing to the A More Equal Wales well-being goal.

RECOMMENDATIONS 01 1.7

Budget Setting for Future Generations

Welsh Government:

44. Welsh Government should ring-fence funding for prevention which increases over time.

45. Welsh Government should bring forward the budget setting process and produce multi-year funding settlements.

Public bodies (including Welsh Government) and Public Services Boards:

46. Public bodies must set their annual budgets against the national well-being indicators of Cymru (following similar models in the Republic of Ireland and the City of Strasbourg).

47. Public bodies should use the agreed definition of prevention between Welsh Government and my office to map their preventative spend and invest progressively more upstream towards primary prevention.

02

Setting Good Well-being Objectives and Steps

02

Setting Good Well-being Objectives and Steps

INTRODUCTION

All public bodies and Public Services Boards must set well-being objectives to demonstrate how they contribute to Wales' seven well-being goals.

What is a well-being objective?

A well-being objective is a long-term ambition, outlining how a public body or Public Services Board (PSB) will improve well-being in Wales.

What is a step?

Given the ambitious nature of well-being objectives, the Well-being of Future Generations Act requires them to be supported by specific steps. These steps define concrete actions, timelines, and responsibility for delivery, ensuring objectives are practical and achievable.

How do public bodies and PSBs set well-being objectives?

The way that public bodies and PSBs set well-being objectives follow different processes.

Public Services Boards must conduct a well-being assessment of their local area to identify the current state of environmental, cultural, social, and economic well-being. This assessment informs the development of a well-being plan with objectives and steps designed to improve well-being across these four dimensions. The assessment must be published a year before the well-being plan. The PSB well-being planning cycle operates on a five-year basis, with the most recent assessments published in 2022 and plans in 2023. Larger town and community councils are also required to contribute to their local well-being plan.

Public bodies must set their well-being objectives within a statutory period but have the flexibility to review and adjust them according to their own planning cycles. These objectives can be published separately or integrated into broader corporate planning documents. Public bodies must report on their progress annually, ensuring they use both quantitative performance indicators and qualitative insights from public and service user feedback to track their impact.

02

Setting Good Well-being Objectives and Steps

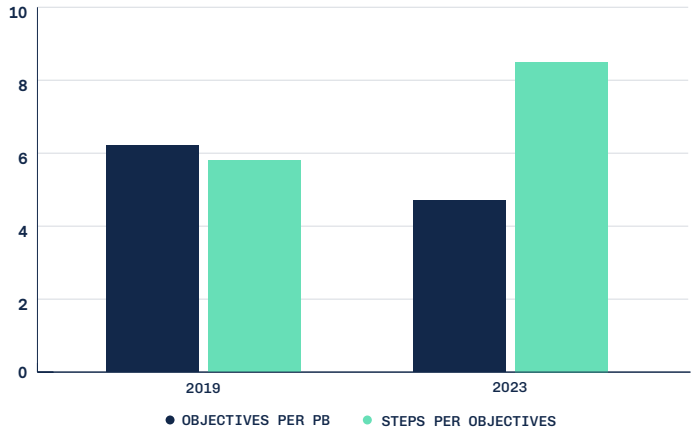
INTRODUCTION

Collaborating with the Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA), my office has analysed the well-being objectives and steps of public bodies. The findings show that public bodies are setting fewer objectives overall but are supporting them with more detailed steps, allowing for greater focus and clarity. Similarly, our internal analysis of PSBs has shown that they have reduced the number of objectives per board, from an average of 4.9 in 2018 to 3.7 in 2023, while the number of steps per objective has remained relatively stable at around six.

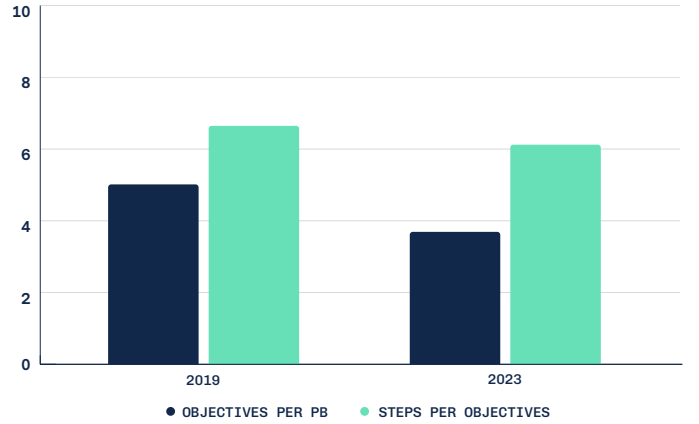
To ensure well-being objectives remain effective, public bodies and PSBs should strengthen their approach to monitoring and learning by using evidence-based methods beyond traditional performance metrics. Insights from public engagement and collaboration with external stakeholders, such as the voluntary sector, should be central to tracking progress.

This section will explore best practices and lessons from public bodies and PSBs to support more effective well-being planning.

OBJECTIVES PER PUBLIC BODY, AND STEPS PER OBJECTIVES, 2019 AND 2024



OBJECTIVES PER PSB, AND STEPS PER OBJECTIVE, 2018 AND 2023



02

Setting Good Well-being Objectives and Steps

FINDINGS

FINDING 1:

Public bodies and Public Services Boards must do more to set, monitor, review and communicate their well-being objectives and steps.

Some public bodies lack clarity on how their well-being objectives fit within their corporate strategies. This makes it difficult for partner organisations and the public to support implementation or hold them to account. Additionally, some well-being objectives are published without any corresponding steps, leaving their practical application unclear.

FINDING 2:

Public bodies are failing to demonstrate action in their well-being objectives and steps towards culture and Welsh language, and towards becoming more globally responsible.

Analysis of well-being objectives and steps shows an imbalance in how public bodies align their plans with the seven well-being goals. Only 3.4% of objectives focus on being Globally Responsible, while 10.5% relate to Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language. In contrast, A Prosperous Wales accounts for 25.8% of all steps.

Many organisations struggle to define and implement ‘cultural well-being’ beyond statutory requirements for the Welsh language. Similarly, considering global impacts remains a challenge, particularly when organisations focus on local well-being and shortening supply chains.

These gaps suggest that further guidance is needed to help public bodies integrate these priorities more effectively.

02

Setting Good Well-being Objectives and Steps

FINDINGS

FINDING 3:

Public bodies and Public Services Boards are struggling to set steps that embed involvement, but are setting more longer term, and preventative steps.

An analysis of how public bodies and PSBs apply the five ways of working within their well-being steps reveals that PSBs generally use these principles more consistently than individual public bodies. However, application remains uneven.

Involvement is the least applied way of working, representing only 9.4% of steps in public bodies and 18.8% in PSBs. Audit Wales has similarly found that public bodies do not consistently engage communities in setting their well-being objectives. Many cite financial pressures as a barrier to meaningful involvement, but co-production and community engagement remain crucial to ensuring objectives are effectively delivered and have real benefits for the people of Wales.

Integration is the second least applied way of working, accounting for 12.7% of steps in public bodies and 30% in PSBs. Given that challenges such as climate change, health inequalities, and well-being require integrated solutions, this lack of alignment is concerning.

Long-term thinking is incorporated into around 15% of steps in public bodies and 32% in PSBs. Most long-term objectives relate to the climate emergency, with commitments to carbon reduction and sustainability targets.

Prevention and collaboration are the most widely applied ways of working across both public bodies and PSBs. Prevention is most often linked to climate action, though this approach could also be applied more effectively to other areas, such as health and social care. Given the collaborative nature of PSBs, it is unsurprising that 35% of their steps focus on working together. Public bodies also demonstrate collaboration in nearly 20% of their steps, particularly in partnerships with the voluntary sector and regional networks.

The uneven application of the five ways of working has significant implications for the sustainable development principle and the effectiveness of well-being objectives. This section provides insights into how public bodies and PSBs can strengthen their approach to setting objectives and steps, ensuring they are meaningful, actionable, and aligned with long-term well-being goals.

02

Setting Good Well-being Objectives and Steps

FINDINGS

PROCESS

How to set good Well-being Objectives and Steps

In the Future Generations Report 2020, we set out a process for public bodies and PSBs to follow in setting strong well-being objectives. Based on engagement with public bodies, we have refined this process to make it more concise and reflect the continuous cycle of review, learning, and improvement that we encourage.

02

Setting Good Well-being Objectives and Steps

FINDINGS

01 Review and Reflect

Taking time to assess progress, impact, and lessons learned ensures that well-being objectives remain relevant and contribute meaningfully to the seven well-being goals. Internal reviews or interactive sessions with teams, departments, or organisations can use the following guiding questions:

- What has worked well, and what hasn't, since the last well-being objectives were set?
- Have you drawn on the latest Well-being of Wales and Future Trends reports?
- Has your role or remit changed, or is it expected to change? How has the external context evolved?
- Have you considered how the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act (2023) affects your duties?
- What is your long-term vision for the next 50 years, and how can you go further?
- How will you share your review findings with the public and other public bodies?
- Where are there opportunities for stronger collaboration (e.g., with other public bodies, the private sector, voluntary organisations, or organisations representing marginalised groups)?

02 Apply the Five Ways of Working

The five ways of working—long-term, prevention, collaboration, involvement, and integration—are central to delivering sustainable development. Public bodies should actively embed these principles by:

- Thinking long-term about solutions beyond short-term funding cycles.
- Focusing on prevention to address root causes and reduce future challenges.
- Collaborating with other organisations, including trade unions and voluntary groups.
- Involving the public and members of staff meaningfully in shaping decisions, paying particular attention to those who have been traditionally excluded from decision making positions – such as people who are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, LGBTQIA+, and disabled.
- Integrating efforts across policy areas, recognising how different dimensions of well-being are connected.

02

Setting Good Well-being Objectives and Steps

FINDINGS

03 Be Bold and Challenging

The WFG Act is unique and ambitious. Public bodies must embrace this by raising their aspirations and being open to rethinking traditional approaches.

- Financial pressures are real, but the need to prioritise well-being for people and the planet is urgent.
- Organisations should step out of their comfort zones, ask difficult questions, and seek innovative solutions.

04 Publish: Be Clear and Transparent

Public bodies sometimes struggle to collaborate due to inconsistent language. For example, 'resilience' may refer to nature and biodiversity in one organisation and community well-being in another. Jargon-heavy language can also alienate the public.

Clarity is essential for communication, collaboration, and scrutiny. To ensure transparency, public bodies should ask:

- Are objectives and steps clearly defined and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)?
- Have you clearly outlined how each objective contributes to the seven well-being goals?
- Are objectives and steps distinct from one another and easy to understand?
- Can people understand what you are trying to achieve and why?
- Can you demonstrate how the five ways of working have been applied?
- Are objectives and steps easily accessible on public-facing platforms?

05 Implement and Continuously Improve

Sustainable development is an evolving field. Public bodies must regularly review their objectives and steps, document successes and challenges, and share insights to foster a culture of learning.

By embedding transparency, involvement, and collaboration, organisations can enhance their impact and continuously refine their approach to achieving Wales' long-term well-being goals.

03

The Future Is Now

Taking Greater Account of the Long-Term Impact

03

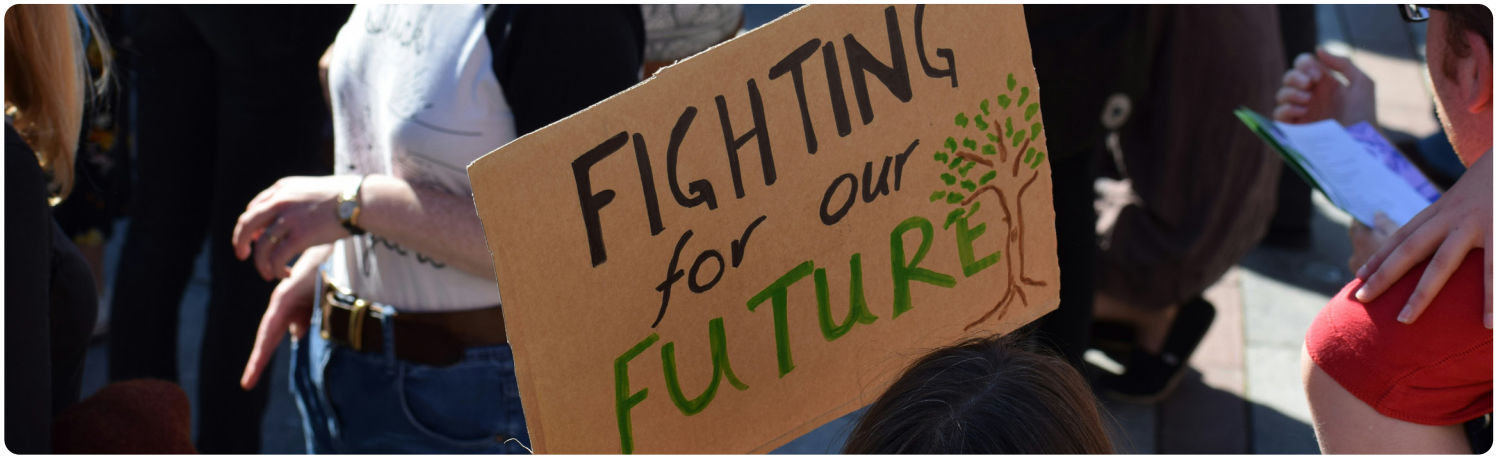
The Future Is Now

Taking Greater Account of the Long-Term Impact

INTRODUCTION

“Cof yw dychymyg doe, dychymyg yw cof yfory.”

Dic Jones



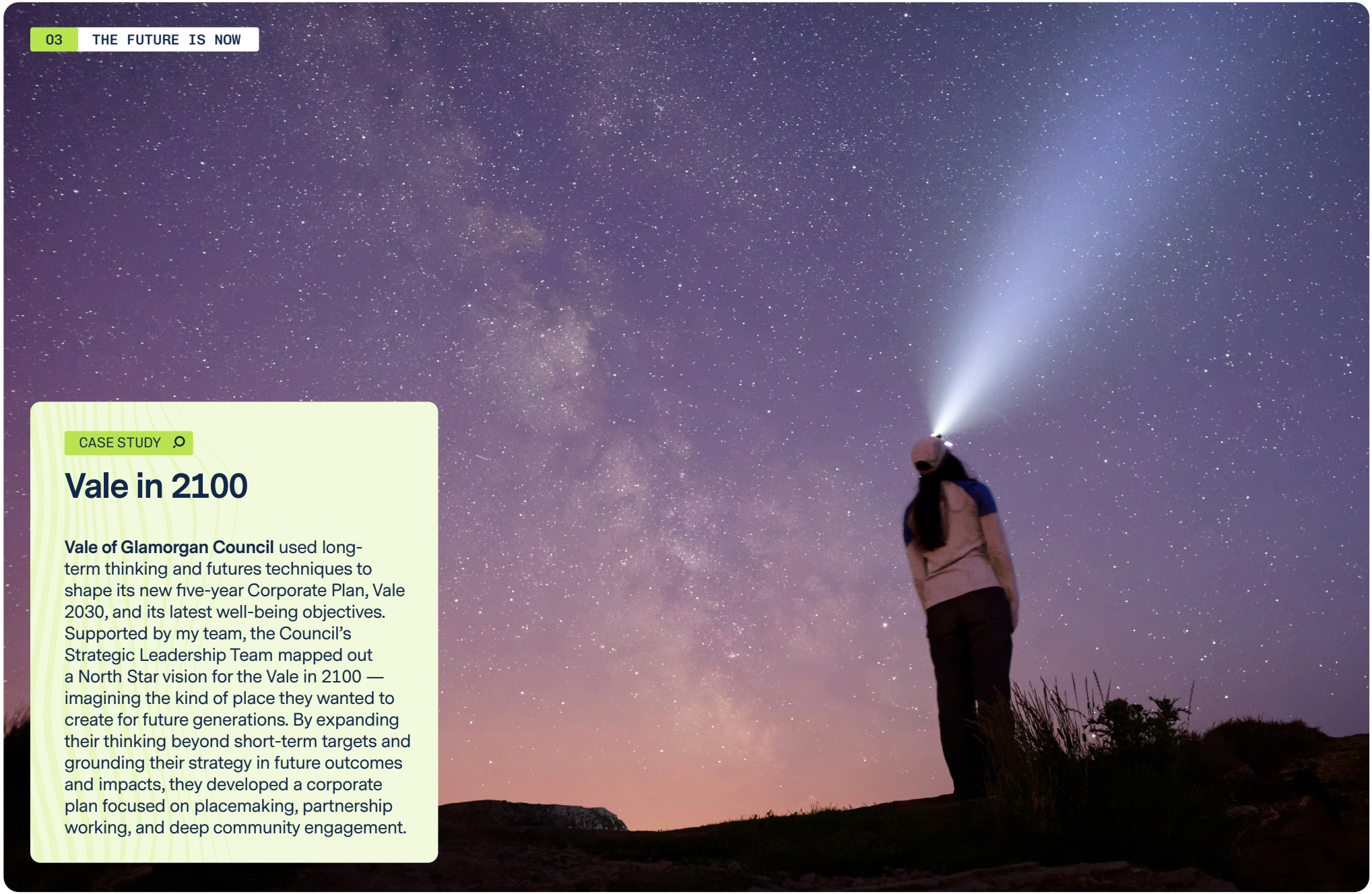
We are shaping the future with every decision we make. Yet, as this report highlights, we are caught between long-term trends and cycles of urgent challenges that risk making it harder for future generations to thrive. It is time to be intentional about building the future—working with our communities to create a more positive and sustainable path forward.

We must consider the true cost of our decisions. If issues remain unresolved today, how much will they cost future generations in economic, social, environmental, and cultural terms? Likewise, how much value could we create by acting now?

Even when looking purely at economic costs, research from the London School of Economics estimates that, with current policies, the cost of climate change to the UK could rise from 1.1% of GDP today to 3.3% by 2050 and at least 7.4% by 2100. However, strong global action now could reduce that cost by around 5%—down to 2.4% of GDP by 2100.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act) identifies long-term thinking as one of the five ways of working, alongside prevention, collaboration, integration, and involvement. Long-term decision-making only works when these approaches are applied together. This ensures we do more than just prevent future crises—we actively shape a future that tackles entrenched inequalities and secures well-being for all.

03 THE FUTURE IS NOW



CASE STUDY

Vale in 2100

Vale of Glamorgan Council used long-term thinking and futures techniques to shape its new five-year Corporate Plan, Vale 2030, and its latest well-being objectives. Supported by my team, the Council's Strategic Leadership Team mapped out a North Star vision for the Vale in 2100 — imagining the kind of place they wanted to create for future generations. By expanding their thinking beyond short-term targets and grounding their strategy in future outcomes and impacts, they developed a corporate plan focused on placemaking, partnership working, and deep community engagement.

03

The Future Is Now

Taking Greater Account of the Long-Term Impact

How to be a futurist in a public body?

I have developed these prompts to help public body officials embed long-term thinking in every decision.

Mindsets	Behaviours
Be flexible, curious, creative and willing to explore – the future is not set in stone	Creating a vision and working backwards from that at the start of projects
Focus on preparedness, not predictions	Consistently notice and search for future trends
Be conscious of how we use foresight, hindsight, and insight to have more choice	Involve others to foster agency and co-produce visions of the future
Focus on good enough and continuous improvement - test, learn, iterate, rather than striving for perfection	Share your learnings with others to increase the prominence of futures thinking in Wales
Think about the impact your work will have in 10, 25, 50 years in the future	You use multiple foresight techniques in your work
Fostering a cathedral mindset and thinking beyond your career or lifetime	Always bring the future back to the present

03

The Future Is Now

Taking Greater Account of the Long-Term Impact

FINDINGS 1

FINDING 1:

Many public bodies, including Welsh Government, are embedding long-term thinking, but this approach is not yet consistently integrated in the design and delivery of services.

There is a growing awareness of long-term thinking across the public and voluntary sectors in Wales. This shift is evident in well-being objectives and steps set by public bodies and Public Services Boards (PSBs), as detailed on page 123.

Analysis of well-being objectives shows that 14.7% of all steps (319 out of 2,138) commit to long-term goals. Encouragingly, PSBs are becoming more targeted and ambitious in their futures work. Through my review of recent PSB well-being assessments and plans, I have noted:

- A better understanding of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act) and the major issues facing Wales and the world.
- Improved use of future trends analysis and foresight tools.
- Strong examples of partnership working in futures workshops.
- Greater use of Welsh data, alongside global trends, to inform decision-making.

Despite these improvements, we are not where we need to be after ten years of the WFG Act. Public bodies remain largely focused on short-term crisis response rather than long-term prevention.

Insights from my Ways of Working Progress Checker, based on responses from 23 public bodies, show that while some organisations have begun embedding long-term thinking into their internal systems and policies, most are still at the early stages of cultural and behavioural change.

Welsh Government faces similar challenges. In 2021, my team conducted a review into how the WFG Act was being implemented across government. It found that while there were clear efforts to embed long-term thinking, civil servants were often constrained by capacity issues and the need to respond to multiple crises.

Following this review, Welsh Government developed its Well-being of Future Generations Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan, followed by a Progress Update in 2024. These documents provide a valuable framework for the wider public sector, as many of the actions and approaches can be replicated in other organisations.

On a positive note, I have observed a rise in long-term policy commitments from Welsh Government, with more national strategies extending their ambitions to 2050. Examples include:

- Llwybr Newydd (2021)
- Beyond Recycling (2021)
- Future Wales (2019)
- Cymraeg 2050 (2017)

This progress is encouraging, though the pace of change remains too slow. To further support public bodies, I will launch **Hwb Dyfodol** (**Futures Hub**) this year—a dedicated initiative to build capacity for foresight and futures thinking across the Welsh public sector.

03

The Future Is Now

Taking Greater Account of the Long-Term Impact

FINDINGS 2

FINDING 2:

Public bodies often cite short-term budgeting and reporting processes as the biggest barriers to long-term thinking.

Public bodies struggle to plan for the long term when operating on one-year funding cycles. Many organisations do not know if posts or programmes will exist in the coming years, making it difficult to commit to long-term strategies.

Budget allocations are often based on outdated information, further limiting the ability to invest in the future. My section on budget setting provides a deeper analysis of these challenges and potential solutions.

The Senedd Public Accounts Committee's inquiry into the implementation of the WFG Act (March 2021) found that even small variations in public bodies' budgets can determine whether projects continue or end. The challenge is heightened when organisations receive their budget allocations shortly before the next financial year, leaving little time for strategic planning.

Short-term funding also influences how success is measured. Current performance measures prioritise immediate results rather than long-term impact. Cathedral thinking—the idea of building something that may not be completed within our own careers or lifetimes—is not embedded in our systems.

While some organisations, such as Natural Resources Wales and Public Health Wales, have dedicated roles to focus on long-term thinking, most lack protected staff time to plan for the future. Even where futures thinking exists, translating it into action is another challenge. Many organisations acknowledge major risks such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and shifting demographics, but struggle to implement necessary changes due to institutional inertia.

Public perception is a key factor. Communities must be engaged in long-term decision-making so that leaders feel confident taking bold, forward-looking actions. Misinformation and short-term political pressures can make it difficult to act decisively, which is why transparency and meaningful involvement are essential. More insights on involving communities can be found in the Involvement annexe of this report.

Shifting towards long-term budgets is critical. Financial planning is one of the seven corporate areas of change, and it must move beyond annual cycles. However, budgets alone are not enough—we must also rethink performance measures, evaluation methods, and organisational cultures to make long-term thinking the norm in Wales.

CASE STUDY

Back to the Future — Bannau Brycheiniog

Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority is pioneering creative futures storytelling in its planning. It has used visions of hope, “postcards from the future,” and even a time machine to engage school children in discussions about the future of food. These approaches shaped its long-term strategy, Dyfodol y Bannau, helping communities imagine alternative futures and take ownership of their long-term well-being.

03 THE FUTURE IS NOW

The Nature and Us Vision for Wales 2050: Society and nature thriving together

Natur a Ni
Nature and Us

CASE STUDY

Natur a Ni

To develop a shared vision for Wales in 2050, Natural Resources Wales' led a **national conversation, Nature and Us**, asking people across the country, 'what future do we want for our natural environment?'. People's visions included commitments to protecting nature, greener transport and better access to green spaces for health and well-being., The insights gathered have directly shaped NRW's Corporate Plan 2023-2030 and will continue to guide its work in the years ahead.

Noddir gan **Lywodraeth Cymru**
Sponsored by **Welsh Government**

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Natural Resources Wales

03 THE FUTURE IS NOW

CASE STUDY

Foresight in Government

To better integrate long-term thinking into policymaking, Welsh Government's Sustainable Futures team worked with Dr Laura De Vito to explore foresight in three different policy teams. This project provided a granular perspective on to enhance implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and ensure policies align with future challenges and opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS 03

The Future Is Now
Taking Greater Account of the Long-Term Impact

Welsh Government:

48. Welsh Government should develop a vision and plan for the Welsh public sector workforce of the future, identifying the skills needed to deliver services effectively in a changing world.

Public bodies (including Welsh Government) and Public Services Boards:

49. Every public body should create a long-term vision and plan for the future of each organisation, co-designed with partners and communities.

50. Each public body should appoint a Futures Champion in every public body to engage with the Hwb Dyfodol, embedding futures thinking across their organisation.

Recommendations

04

Our support for wider implementation

04

Our support for wider implementation

My team and I are committed to supporting a nationwide shift in how public bodies plan and deliver their work — ensuring policies and processes are not just reactive but proactively shaping and enabling a better future for everyone.

One of our core functions is to **provide advice, assistance, and encourage best practices** in delivering **the sustainable development principle. We actively engage with public bodies, Public Services Boards (PSBs), the voluntary and private sectors, and academia**, offering guidance, training, and resources to support implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act).

Our support includes:

- Free training sessions on the WFG Act and its application in scrutiny and governance.
- Hwb Dyfodol, our new futures hub, designed to embed long-term thinking in public decision-making.
- Participation in key conferences and networks to foster collaboration across sectors.
- Advocating on behalf of public bodies by raising challenges, blockages, and successes directly with Cabinet Secretaries, government officials, and senior leaders.

04

Our support for wider implementation

We act as a **network convenor**, bringing together public bodies, PSBs, senior leaders, and Sustainable Development Co-ordinators Cymru Plus to share best practices, identify challenges, and promote innovation. Our role is to encourage integration across different sectors and to champion a stronger focus on improving well-being across Wales.

All our guidance, training opportunities, and resources can be found on our **newly refreshed website**, including:

- Mission-specific guidance tailored to key policy areas.
- Upcoming training sessions to build capacity within organisations.
- Core guidance on your duties under the WFG Act to ensure compliance and impact.

We are here to help you embed the WFG Act in a meaningful way—so that **together, we can build a Wales that works for both present and future generations.**

Please email us with your enquiries: contactus@futuregenerations.wales

04

Our support for wider implementation

Team Future Generations Cymru

Alice Horn – Sustainable Development Advisor
Cara Rogers – Executive Assistant to the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
Claire Rees – Lead: Communications
Colleen Cluett – Sustainable Development Advisor
Derek Walker – Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
Heledd Morgan – Director: Implementation and Impact
Helen Nelson – Director: Strategic Planning and Climate & Nature
Hollie Leslie – Communications Coordinator
Jacob Ellis – Director: External Relations and Culture
Jennifer McConnel – Sustainable Development Advisor
Jonathan Tench – Director: Well-being Economy and Programmes
Judith Musker Turner – Sustainable Development Advisor (Maternity Cover)
Korina Tsioni – Programme Lead: Future Generations Leadership Academy
Lisa Pitt – Director: Finance & IT
Louisa Neale – Director: People and Facilities
Marie Brousseau-Navarro – Deputy Commissioner and Director for Health
Mariyah Zaman – Communications Coordinator
Najma Hashi – International Programme Coordinator
Natalie Jenkins – People Assistant
Ola Mohamed – Team Support Administrator
Osian Andrew – Events and Communications Coordinator
Petranka Malcheva – Policy Lead: Health, Long-term Thinking, Prevention
Rebecca Leyla – Future Leaders Academy Support
Rhiannon Hardiman – Policy Lead: Climate, Nature, Economy & Food
Sandy Clubb – Policy Lead: Involvement, Collaboration, Culture
Sang-Jin Park – Finance & Corporate Governance Officer
Sonia Urbaniak – Events and Communications Coordinator

ANNEXE 01

Involvement

ANNEXE 01

Involvement

Involvement is central to the Sustainable Development Principle and at the core of delivering Cymru Can. In order to walk the talk on the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act), my aim is to ensure that we are leading the way on how we involve and hear from others in our work.

I have engaged with organisations, groups and individuals across all sectors in Wales to shape our work and understand what matters most to them. This includes detailed involvement in projects, policy work, and tailored engagement during the drafting of this report. The Our Future Focus project, which shaped our new strategy Cymru Can, was a key part of this.

Continuous learning and improvement

We have reflected on our own involvement practices using the Ways of Working Progress Checker, exploring new methods, and sharing our learning with others. We are also embedding the practice of the inner development goals to strengthen how we apply the five ways of working.

What the WFG Act requires me to do

Under the Well-being of Future Generations Act, I have a statutory duty to consult with specific groups of stakeholders during the reporting period of the Future Generations Report.

Public bodies

I have met with chief executives of public bodies covered by the WFG Act since taking up my role in March 2023. My team has also engaged with public body staff, testing our draft findings through online workshops with public and voluntary sector stakeholders.

Voluntary sector

We have worked closely with voluntary sector organisations, holding regional events, roundtables, and network meetings with groups such as Wales Environment Link and our equalities stakeholder group. We also collaborate with the WCVA, convening biannual meetings with voluntary organisations.

Business representatives

The private sector contributes through quarterly networks, roundtables, and direct engagement with organisations like the Federation of Small Businesses. Businesses such as Principality Building Society, Castell Howell, and Dŵr Cymru participate in our Future Generations Leadership Academy.

ANNEXE 01

Involvement

Trade unions

We have engaged trade unions through roundtables, the Wales TUC General Council, and hosted workshops exploring links between the WFG Act and the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act. Trade Union representatives have also had an opportunity to inform specific sections of the report.

Elected representatives

My engagement with elected representatives has included individual meetings with ministers and Senedd members, as well as via committee meetings. My team also engage with local Government representatives across the Cymru Can missions, such as local authority portfolio leads for climate and nature, and with Town and Community Council representatives via events such as the One Voice Wales annual conference.

My Advisory Panel

Members of my Advisory Panel have continually provided me with their expertise via our biannual meetings, alongside collaborative work between offices of individual panel members such as joint projects, letters and press releases.

Others with an interest in achieving the well-being goals who have contributed:

- Academia
- Housing associations
- Supporting Organisations Network, including Academi Wales, WLGA, and Co-production Network Cymru
- Over 750 letters from the public and representatives
- Annual conferences and forums, such as One Voice Wales, TPAS Cymru, and the Wales Real Food and Farming Conference

Young People

Young people's voices are crucial to our work. We have engaged with them through:

- Future Generations Leadership Academy, now with 100 alumni
- Partnerships with Omidaze including our work with Democracy Box young co-creators to communicate the WFG Act
- Community projects such as L4K and Beacons Music Project
- School visits

ANNEXE 02

Summary of Evidence and Activity

ANNEXE 02

Summary of Evidence and Activity

As Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, I am required by law to include a summary of the evidence gathered and activities undertaken during the reporting period (December 2021 – May 2025). I succeeded Sophie Howe on 1 March 2023, following the completion of her seven-year term.

Our statutory Annual Reports provide detailed information on activities, financial statements, and governance arrangements:

ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021

ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2022 – MARCH 2023

ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024

Since the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) Act was established in 2015, Cymru has made significant progress, including scrapping a £1bn motorway project to avoid future debt, promoting the Real Living Wage, and achieving the second-best recycling rate in the world. Read more about the impact of the Well-being of Future Generations Act on our website.

Activities undertaken during the reporting period

Advice and Assistance: Increased support to the 56 organisations covered by the legislation, to improve implementation. My team has provided over 2,300 pieces of expert advice and assistance on issues covering procurement, health, food systems, decarbonisation, equalities, long-term planning and prevention. Those who I help - from government departments, local authorities to the NHS and others - say they find my support invaluable.

Futures: Strengthened long-term thinking within public services since the launch of Hwb Dyfodol. In collaboration with Public Health Wales, this has provided training, expert advice, and created a community of practice in a much-needed area.

Section 20 Review: Undertook a Section 20 Review – the strongest use of my powers - into how Welsh Government is implementing the WFG Act. Extensive research, analysis, and over 40 evidence sessions led to the following review findings, and recommendations on workforce, leadership and processes:

01. The WFG Act and the extent to which it has been embedded in policy and delivery, continues to be world leading.

02. Enthusiasm and commitment have extended beyond those organisations covered by the legislation.

03. Success to date has resulted more from leadership and commitment than embedded processes.

04. More leadership, communication and review are needed to move successfully to the next phase of implementation.

ANNEXE 02

Summary of Evidence and Activity

Welsh Government developed the Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan (CLIP) to address the report's recommendations. Significant progress has been made. My office also created an interactive Ways of Working Progress Checker to help public bodies assess their implementation of the WFG Act.

Welsh Government budget: Scrutinised how the WFG Act is applied during budget setting. The budget is the single biggest set of decisions that is taken by a public body in Wales each year which significantly affects well-being across Wales. As a result of my evidence to the Senedd's Finance Committee over a period of several years, the WFG Act has shaped the national budget setting, helping to drive innovation, increase collaboration and re-think the way services are delivered.

Monitoring and assessing: Completed my statutory duties to advise Public Services Boards on their well-being plans, which were published in 2023, and supported them with the delivery of their well-being objectives and steps. Monitored 236 public body well-being objectives (and 2,052 steps to meet them) including comparing how they have changed since the first set in 2018. I have also worked with Auditor General for Wales on our respective statutory duties.

Publications: Published tailored resources and research to influence policy and practice:

- Inequalities in a Future Wales (December 2021)
- Manifesto for the Future to inform local elections (March 2022)
- Communities and Climate Change (June 2022)
- Cost of Living (November 2022)
- International Toolkit (May 2023)
- Ways of Working Progress Checker (February 2024)
- Preventing health inequalities (March 2024)
- Culture and Climate Risk (June 2024)
- Business toolkit (October 2024)

Involvement and collaboration: Established better involvement processes and engaged with and drawn on the insights of over 2,500 people to shape my work. I have helped to grow a movement for change nationally and internationally, as the implementation of the WFG Act will require collaboration and hard work beyond the public sector. The Changemaker 100 list features many of the inspiring people that we have worked with over the years.

Future Generations Leadership Academy: Created the Future Generations Leadership Academy and supported more than 120 young leaders between 18-30 years of age. Engineers, feminists, marine biologists, artists, students, graduates, retail workers, environmentalists, civil servants, lawyers and more, have made up the four brilliant groups of diverse Welsh participants.

International: Wales inspired the United Nations to adopt the Declaration of Future Generations, a milestone in the global movement for long-term decision-making. This comes almost 10 years after the UN said, 'what Wales is doing today, the world will do tomorrow'. We have worked closely with the United Nations, and countries such as Finland, Ireland, Scotland, France and India, to guide a global approach to future generations.

Walking the Talk: Have promoted the use of Welsh at work; trialled reduced working hours; committed to being net zero through a carbon reduction action plan; rolled out an internal programme of race equality training; and created apprenticeships and development opportunities for young people, including on my audit committee and advisory panel.

ANNEXE 03

List of Organisations Subject to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

ANNEXE 03

List of Organisations Subject to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Local Authorities

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
- Bridgend County Borough Council
- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- Cardiff Council
- Carmarthenshire County Council
- Ceredigion County Council
- Conwy County Borough Council
- Denbighshire County Council
- Flintshire County Council
- Gwynedd Council
- Isle of Anglesey County Council
- Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
- Monmouthshire County Council
- Neath Port Talbot Council
- Newport City Council
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Powys County Council
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
- Swansea Council
- Vale of Glamorgan Council
- Torfaen County Borough Council
- Wrexham County Borough Council

Health Boards

- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
- Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
- Hywel Dda University Health Board
- Powys Teaching Health Board
- Swansea Bay University Health Board

NHS Trusts

- Public Health Wales
- Velindre University NHS Trust
- *Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust

Health Authorities

- *Digital Health and Care Wales
- *Health Education and Improvement Wales

National Bodies

- Arts Council of Wales
- *Centre for Digital Public Services
- Medr - Commission for Tertiary Education and Research
- National Library of Wales
- National Museum of Wales
- Natural Resources Wales
- *Qualification Wales
- *Social Care Wales
- Sport Wales
- *Transport for Wales
- Welsh Revenue Authority

Fire and Rescue Services

- Mid and West Wales
- North Wales
- South Wales

Corporate Joint Committees

- North Wales
- Mid Wales
- South West Wales
- South East Wales

National Park Authorities

- Bannau Brycheiniog
- Eryri
- Pembrokeshire Coast

Public Services Boards

- Gwynedd and Anglesey
- Cardiff
- Carmarthenshire
- Ceredigion
- Conwy and Denbighshire
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg
- Flintshire and Wrexham
- Gwent
- Neath Port Talbot
- Pembrokeshire
- Powys
- Swansea
- Vale of Glamorgan

Other

- Welsh Ministers

*These 8 public bodies were added by regulations to the Well-being of Future Generations Act in June 2024.