A Journey to

A Wales of Cohesive Communities

1: People active in their communities: Creating the conditions where people and communities can do the things that matter to them

2: Connected communities: Supporting communities to be well connected and safe

3: Access to key well-being services: Supporting vibrant foundational economies

4: Community anchor organisations: Valuing the role and potential that community anchor organisations can play in building cohesive communities

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In the Well-being of Future Generations Act, this goal is defined as

"Attractive, safe, viable and well-connected."

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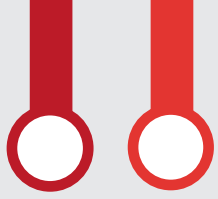Dyfodol
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Defining the goal

American writer Meg Wheatley wrote: "there is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about." Despite that, less than 25% of people across Wales think they can affect decisions made locally.

When communities are cohesive, they're well-connected (including digitally), can adapt to change, and are focused around the well-being of the people who live there with good access to key well-being services such as education, health, housing, retail and transport, and that people can do the things that matter to them.

Cohesive and connected communities are an important part of people's individual well-being. The World Health Organisation identified that lack of agency, trust, belonging and insecure neighbourhoods explain 19% of the gap in poor health between the top and bottom average incomes for men & women in Europe.

A key feature is the presence of strong, locally based institutions - often called 'community anchor organisations' – such as development trusts, social enterprises, coops, housing

associations and town or community councils. They're important because they understand local communities and have a long-term commitment to the area they serve.

Cohesive communities also place well-being at the heart of local economic development. The Foundational Economy is about the universal basic services that support everyday life, such as health, care and retail. As these services make up approximately half of all local employment, are relatively stable and resistant to economic shocks, public bodies can value and strengthen them by opening space for conversations to maximise their potential, creating the conditions to help them make a bigger contribution.

Eg

Case studies
Throughout the document you will find a number of reports relating to the topic subject. Please read the link if you see this symbol.

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Defining the goal

Where to focus action in contributing to this goal

Create viable communities where people can do the things that matter to them
(See cohesive communities Wales journey topic 1: People active in their communities)

Support communities to be well-connected
(See cohesive communities Wales journey topic 2: Connected communities)

Support access to key well-being services in communities
(See cohesive communities Wales journey topic 3: Access to key well-being services)

Value the role of key organisations in building cohesive communities
(See cohesive communities Wales journey topic 4: Community anchor organisations)

Understand the role of housing in cohesive communities
(Journey topic to be explored further in next phase)

Create communities where people feel safe
(Journey topic to be explored further in next phase)

Enable communities to be digitally connected
(Journey topic to be explored further in next phase)

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Other statutory requirements in relation to this goal

Active Travel Act 2013 requires local authorities to map and continuously improve routes and facilities for "active travel" – defined as walking and cycling for a purpose, like accessing work or services, rather than for leisure.

Planning Policy Wales is significant in moving us towards a low carbon, resilient society, building well-connected environments for everyone in Wales that improves our lives, health and well-being. It introduces the concept of placemaking, a holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focussed on positive outcomes. It draws upon an area's potential to create high quality development and public spaces that promote people's prosperity, health, happiness and well-being.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 imposes duties on local authorities, health boards and Welsh Ministers that require them to work to promote the well-being of those who need care and support, or carers who need support. The principles of the Act are: to support people who have care and support needs to achieve well-being; that people are at the heart of the new system by giving them an equal say in the support they receive; partnership and co-operation drives service delivery; and services will promote the prevention of escalating need and the right help is available at the right time.
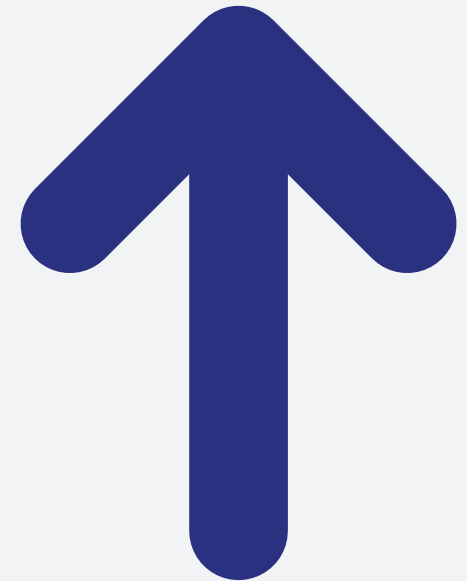
St Some of the suggested steps and actions in this document complement the policies set out in legislation - specific steps and actions that adhere to these are highlighted in orange and with an 'St' symbol.

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Enablers

Achieving this goal is **more likely to happen** when…

- **Public bodies create the best conditions to help communities do what matters to them.**

- **Public bodies embed 'what matters' to people conversations into how they work (see the [Journey to Involvement](#)).**

- **There is creative use of key funds and local budgets.**

- **Community anchor organisations which can give a voice to local people, are supported to hold assets and build resilience.**

- **There is support for community leaders, activists, entrepreneurs and volunteers.**

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Disablers

Achieving this goal is **less likely to happen** when…

- **Public bodies work in silos and don't take 'place-based' approaches to what matters to people.**

- **Public bodies take a deficit view of communities, focusing on perceived weaknesses and ignoring strengths.**

- **Funding opportunities are short term and fragmented.**

- **Attitudes to community ownership of assets are constrained by a view that public bodies are the 'natural place' for assets to be held and community ownership only becomes a possibility when public bodies cannot afford them.**

- **Public bodies talk about involvement and co-production but don't invest in doing it properly.**
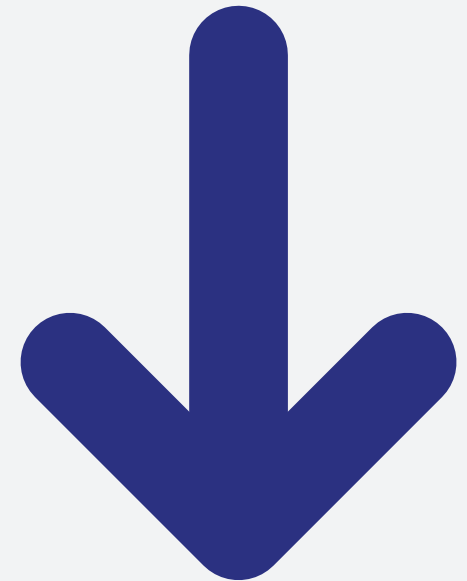
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Valuing the role and potential that community anchor organisations can play in building cohesive communities

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4: Community anchor organisations

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Defining the issue

Cohesive communities need strong anchor institutions, including development trusts, social enterprises, co-operatives, housing associations and town or community councils, who understand local communities and have long-term commitments to the area they serve.

Communities that are well served by community anchor organisations often say the work that these organisations do is not fully appreciated by public bodies. Dialogue between groups actively promoting well-being activities on the ground and public bodies with a commitment to the well-being of communities will make it easier for local people to do more of the things that matter to them.

We need community based organisations who seek out and listen to the needs and views of local people, championing and advocating on their behalf, and providing services and activities for the community, working closely in partnership with public, private and third sector organisations locally.

Synergies and connections to other journeys

Journey to Involvement
Topic 3: Impact and communication of involvement

Journey to a Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language
Topic 3: Culture as a mechanism for change

Journey to a Prosperous Wales
Topic 3: Local economies

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Making **Simple** Changes

Map the community anchor organisations in your area – in partnership with **Community Voluntary Councils, Development Trusts Association Wales, Wales Co-operative Centre** and **Wales Council for Voluntary Organisation.**

Ensure your organisation understands the strengths and possibilities within community anchor organisations working in your area, and how they can help you meet your well-being objectives and steps.

Find ways of involving community anchor organisations to strengthen their ability to work with local communities on the things that matter to them, using a variety of accessible, inclusive engagement methods and formats.

Support existing peer support and learning programmes that bring community anchor organisations together with partners to share best practice and be honest about challenges and failures. Learn from and contribute to case studies that have been created from this peer learning.

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Being More **Adventurous**

Support and empower communities to acquire assets that matter to local people. Have conversations about possibilities framed around 'what matters' to communities, and less about austerity and public sector funding cuts.

Eg

E.g. Community owned assets - Ebbw Vale Institute.

Learn lessons from projects like Skyline which bring Valleys community anchor organisations together to seek to reconnect people and landscape. Empower the community to generate ideas for new community use of natural resources and propose options for management of landscape for multiple community benefit.

Support housing associations leading the development of mixed-use sites to explore the need for community facilities that could be used by community anchor organisations.

Consider 'meanwhile use' by communities of underutilised public and private assets.

Eg

E.g. Meanwhile use possibilities – Regeneration Wales.

Explore non-funded ways of supporting community anchor organisations. For example, pro bono legal advice, energy advice, technical advice with surveys to buildings, shared insurance, asset management, access to shared staff training. Examples of shared access to staff training are hard to find. **Can your organisation pilot new ways of collaborative training here?**

Look to become a 'Transition Town' that nurtures sustainable community based projects.

Explore opportunities to support community anchor organisations with capacity to host time credit schemes.

Encourage community anchor organisations to explore community share opportunities if they are seeking to acquire and manage local assets.

Eg

E.g. **Community Shares Scotland** - Community Shares Scotland.

Eg

E.g. Portal to support community anchors to develop community assets.

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Owning your **Ambition**

National or collaborative actions

Arts and culture are used as a major opportunity to contribute to the regeneration of our towns and communities.

Learn from the experience of Scottish community anchor organisations and development trusts who are a major force for change. Especially how they have used the Scottish Land Reform Act 2003 and Community Empowerment Act 2015 to unlock this energy. There are impressive case studies across the country.

Community ownership of assets should be the normal and realistic option for communities to acquire land and assets. Learn from recommendations being made in Scotland. We need to learn how to move to this position in Wales.

There is coordinated community development work across town and community council areas, delivered in partnership.

Organisational actions

Support key community anchor organisations to lead town centre regeneration programmes, including housing associations.

Eg E.g. **Coastal Housing Group work with Volcano Theatre.**

Eg E.g. https://youtu.be/k5FChgA0bcY

Public bodies work with community anchors to identify long-term stable ways of supporting anchor organisations that are building social capital and delivering on a wide range of well-being objectives.

Target funding at strengthening communities, explicitly building action learning sets, communities of practice and peer learning into the design and delivery of the funding programmes - to maximise the learning between funded groups and with wider partners.

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Other examples and resources

A map of development trusts working in Scotland.

Resources **on local economic development** and asset-based community development (theory and practice).

Coastal Housing Association - Cultural Quarter investment.

Scottish Community Right to Buy case studies.

Examples of use of natural resources:

Llynfi – community woodland on NRW managed land.

Community woodland group in Anglesey.

Golygfa Gwydyr – Social enterprise based in Llanrwst, working on NRW managed land.

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