

By email

29/09/17

Advice from the Future Generations Commissioner to Monmouthshire PSB

Dear Monmouthshire Public Services Board and supporting officers,

Thank you for seeking my advice on how you might take steps to meet your draft well-being objectives, which currently are:

- Providing children and young people the best start in life.
- Respond to the challenges associated with demographic change.
- Protect and enhance the resilience of our natural environment whilst mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change.
- Develop opportunities for communities and businesses to be part of an economically thriving and well-connected county.

My team have found that talking to you regularly and seeing your work as it progresses has given them a valuable understanding of how you work together. Thank you for arranging these opportunities and I hope you have also found these regular touch-points helpful in giving you advice along the way.

As my team will have discussed with you, I was keen that my advice would be useful to you and the context within which you work. So, I would encourage you to read this in conjunction with my response to your well-being assessment. I was keen that my reviews of the assessments were 'feed-forward', rather than 'feedback', helping you to consider how to approach continuous assessment and well-being planning. As you know, I have also recently published ['Well-being in Wales: Planning today for a better tomorrow'](#), which highlights key findings and recommendations for all PSBs and public bodies on the key areas of change needed to make better decisions for future generations. Both resources are also intended as advice to you.

The purpose of this advice is not to give you my opinion on your well-being objectives or your draft plan. These are determined and owned by you, as a collective PSB. Instead, this advice is intended to help you challenge the way things are done and demonstrate how you are doing so through your well-being plan. Therefore, the first part of my advice is about how you might work together differently, apply the sustainable development principle and use the five ways of working to challenge business as usual. The second part of my advice is based on your

draft objectives and provides prompts, resources and contacts to help you demonstrate through your well-being plan that you have used the five ways of working and seven well-being goals to shape your steps.

Adopting different ways of working to take steps to meet your draft objectives:

Setting objectives and steps is not business as usual. I have said to every PSB that I would like to understand what this means for their area specifically and how this is different to what has been done before. By this, I mean what services will be affected, what commitments you have made and how things are changing for the people of Monmouthshire. Achieving the ambitions of this Act is about the 'what' and the 'how' i.e. what are you doing to contribute to our shared vision of the seven national well-being goals? The goals acknowledge that sustainable development connects the environment in which we live, the economy in which we work, the society in which we enjoy and the cultures in which we share, to people and their quality of life, so what are you going to do differently together? And, how you are applying the sustainable development principle to shape your actions for Monmouthshire?

To adapt your ways of working in this way requires a fundamentally different approach. You need to give yourselves the time and space as a PSB to question whether current approaches to public service delivery are fit for the future and explore key pressures and tensions in delivery for each of your objectives. Practically, this means setting aside meetings or creating sessions to use the five ways of working below, build understanding and respect for each other's professions and debate your motivations. I have made the recommendation in '[Well-being in Wales: Planning today for a better tomorrow](#)' that we move away from seeing PSBs as a local authority-led committee meeting – as a place of action, not a place of interesting presentations. The PSB should be about a new way of working, not driven by any one organisation's culture. The Chair of the PSB, how and where meetings are held and how the PSB is supported can all shift mindsets and allow for healthier challenge to 'business as usual'.

In taking the time and space to consider your steps, I would advise that you will need to demonstrate how your PSB has considered the following in relation to each of your objectives:

- **Long-term:** What do you understand about the long-term trends, opportunities, risks and likely scenarios for this issue? What are they and have you explored their impact on your steps? Are there current gaps in your data or understanding? What fore-sighting or future trends information do you need to understand this issue better? What capacity, confidence and expertise do you need to fill gaps in knowledge? To inform the action you take, you will need to adequately map and consider the future trends for each of your objectives. I'm aware the Council has undertaken some 'Future Monmouthshire' mapping and that your PSB is part of the collaborative bid across Gwent for future foresighting and I will be interested to hear the results and how they are used. My office is working with others to build capacity in this area, and as your support team are aware, Welsh Government have been adding to the 'Future Trends' report resources, which you should make most use of by accessing through Objective Connect or by contacting

David Thomas. [The Oxford Martin 'Now for the long-term'](#) report shows global and national future trends that we all need to react to in carrying out sustainable development.

- **Prevention:** In considering this issue, do you have an understanding of what you are trying to prevent? What are the root causes of the issue and when would be the best point to intervene? Are you clear on whether it is primary prevention i.e. seeking to prevent something before it has even occurred; secondary prevention i.e. preventing something from getting worse; or tertiary prevention i.e. softening the impact of something that has ongoing effects; that is needed? This is the difference between encouraging someone to wear a bicycle helmet (primary prevention of head-injury); putting someone in the recovery position if they have fallen from their bike (secondary prevention of the injury worsening) and counselling after the accident (tertiary prevention to help ongoing injuries from worsening). Many PSBs haven't used their assessments to fully understand both the current situation and the scale and nature of the response required. At the moment, it is not clear how services and resourcing will change in Monmouthshire to be more preventative. I appreciate you might not know the full picture yet, but I want to see all PSBs exploring how they break cycles and dig deeper into data to see the implicit messages in the data to better understand the causes and effects of key issues and trends to inform your steps.

- **Collaboration:** It is important that the people who sit around the PSB table can bring the best range of insights, constructive challenge, data and solutions to the PSB. Have you got the right people around the table, at the right level to make decisions around this issue? Who else might you need to be collaborating with to better understand this? As recommended in my report on the Well-being Assessments, now is a timely opportunity to review the invited membership of the PSB and consider who are the 'unusual' suspects that you may need to work with to take steps to meet this objective? I have been impressed by the links your support team are making internationally and their proactivity is to be praised. What can other organisations do to support this research and grasping of opportunities?

In delivering the steps, how might your organisations collaborate? You will need to demonstrate how your PSB is considering the steps that need to be taken together and across organisational boundaries in order to effectively meet your objectives. This could include jointly funding support, co-locating staff, breaking down traditional structures, arranging job-swaps and secondments and, importantly, pooling resources. I will want to see how you have considered these benefits and how the steps you will take move you towards achieving this collaboration.

- **Integration:** For each objective, how are you going to stop just doing something that meets the objective, and instead, demonstrate that you are taking steps which maximise your contribution to each of the goals? Instead of looking at this issue in a traditional and general sense, have you looked at the definition for each of the goals to widen your understanding of well-being for this issue and the opportunities which might exist for meeting these goals through each of your objectives? How well do you understand the

contribution your organisation makes at the moment to this objective? And do you understand how different is the contribution you will need to make going forward for this objective?

How can you plot what's going on elsewhere in your organisations, the strategies and plans at a regional or a national level, to connect and lead with others on achieving this objective? My team have spoken positively about the work being undertaken at a Gwent wide level and I will be really interested to understand the benefits of this as we move towards delivering well-being plans. As a PSB, have you yet acknowledged the barriers or tensions that have arisen and what steps can you (or others) take to remove them? Who else is needed around the PSB table to help you interconnect decision-making and improve well-being for this issue?

- **Involvement:** I acknowledged the engagement undertaken through 'Our Monmouthshire' for your well-being assessment and I have been advising other PSBs to visit 'Monmouthshire Made Open' as an example of involving people in a way that is convenient to them. I want to see a demonstrated continued focus on involving people for all PSBs. In fulfilling this, how are you taking steps to understand the lived experiences of people in your area and how is this shaping your actions? How are you actively seeking better ways of involving people in decision-making? How can you collaborate with members of the community in meeting these steps? As with the Social Care Wales Board, what options are there for involving people with lived experience on Boards and partnership groups?

I know you have used the goals to form your objectives, but they are also there to help you to explore the tensions and opportunities of working together to achieve a better public service for Wales. Over the next few months, I want to see PSBs demonstrating how all members can maximise their contribution to, for example, a low carbon society, healthy functioning ecosystems, safe and well-connected communities or protecting the Welsh language through the objectives and steps they have set. You will need to take leadership and consider how your organization currently contributes to the goals and how you can take all reasonable steps in the exercising of the organisation's functions to meet the PSB's objectives. I appreciate that during the first phases of implementation of the Act this may be challenging, as the objectives of individual public bodies have been set. But, whilst I am sympathetic to the needs of PSBs and public bodies to have time to work towards alignment I will want to see that the work of the PSB is not seen as something separate to the priorities of its member bodies.

For your organization to truly own this plan and ensure the steps you set are understood, acted upon and undertaken by your staff through using the five ways of working is a challenge – but vital to the success of improving well-being for future generations. This requires your leadership at PSB level to be permeating through every level of your organization. As leaders, I am sure that you are part of many partnership structures, meetings and initiatives, but the PSB is meant to be the opportunity for integration and collaboration at a senior and influential level. How can other partnerships be sorted out and tasked with collaborating to take steps to help you meet your objectives? Communicating why the work of the PSB matters to your own senior management teams and using the well-being plan to challenge current practices within your own departments is crucial to creating the culture change your draft plan advocates. Across Wales, I have been hearing that this particularly applies to

middle management, who are perhaps struggling to compromise current frameworks with the Act. I have a role to recognise and mitigate barriers, but so do you – as senior leaders, in challenging your managers to work differently and be 'safe to fail'.

It follows that co-ordinating this work needs to be recognized by all of you as members of the PSB. I am interested in how different PSBs are supported and it appears that when support is multi-agency, resourced and committed to by different partners, collaboration and integration across departments and structures becomes easier. Some PSBs are already adopting closer working arrangements, a multi-agency virtual team with a senior leader or more formal secondments and co-location. There are several resources that may be of use, such as [Designing Multi-Agency Partnerships](#); [Leading Culture Change](#) and [Stepping up: a framework for public sector leadership on sustainability](#). This will require you, people in positions of leadership, to play your part and be brave in driving the changes needed. I hope you continue to lead an intelligence-based approach to finding different solutions to how things have been previously done.

This advice should be taken by all PSBs, but I appreciate every PSB has taken a different approach to drafting their well-being objectives and will be going about delivering their well-being plan in the context that is right for them. The second section my advice seeks to help you demonstrate through your well-being plan that you have used the five ways of working and seven well-being goals to shape your steps.

Advice on how you might take steps to meet your draft objectives:

From the regular conversations you have had with my team, I know your supporting officers have worked hard over the summer to draw on your assessment findings, prioritise issues through engaging with you and engaging with others to gather professional knowledge to draft your objectives and steps. As I said in my feedback to your well-being assessment, I think it will be important to explore particular challenges and opportunities in the communities you have defined; interpreting their significance for Monmouthshire and why they impact on particular areas. e.g. What local services will be impacted if you redirect investment? Are there long-term trends for particular communities that you believe will get worse if you don't take action? Which communities would benefit and how? What can you do differently that contributes to each of the seven goals? You will need to demonstrate that you have thought about these things in considering the steps you take to meet your draft objectives.

This provides some advice for how you frame the workshop you have planned to define the problem, the opportunity, the solution and measure the impact of your draft objectives. I understand your focus throughout the year will be in further understanding the nuances. I suggest you show these workings, making them explicit in your well-being planning. As I have said to all PSBs, I appreciate you don't have all of the answers yet and I would encourage you to describe some of the work (such as the collaborative work with Gwent Strategic Well-being Assessment Group (G-SWAG)) you are doing to explore possible solutions now and beyond publication of the plan. I hope my advice below helps you to explore some of these in relation to each of your objectives.

- *Providing children and young people the best start in life.*

You have rightly identified in your assessment that children who experience stressful and difficult childhoods are more likely to have poor well-being later in life. Most PSBs have drafted objectives linked to this topic and I would like to understand, in taking steps to meet their objective, what's going to change at all levels to make this happen? How will services aimed at prospective parents and families change in Monmouthshire to provide children with the best start in life? What local evidence will you use to understand the successful service models and the preventative interventions that work? Who might you need to involve to understand this better? Who needs to be around the table to make it happen?

The long-term impact of not taking a preventative approach can be enormous – to an individual's life, your organisations and the public purse. [Late intervention services for young people are estimated to cost England and Wales £17bn per year](#) (£6bn on child protection and safeguarding, £5.2bn on crime and anti-social behaviour, £3.7bn on youth economic inactivity, £680m on school absence and exclusion, £610m on child injuries and mental health problems, and £450m on youth substance misuse). Of course, this objective is about prevention and breaking the cycle, which not only relates to children yet to be born but those families already in need and young people likely to become parents. I am also encouraging PSBs to think about what this draft objective means in the context of the seven well-being goals. The Public Health Wales' [First 1000 days](#) work shows how investing in a child's life from the very beginning can have benefits to all areas of their well-being. What would have to change if you applied this work to Monmouthshire? How might local services be impacted if you redirected investment towards the first 1000 days? Public Health Wales have established a national 'Health and Sustainability Hub' to co-ordinate their own work around the Act and, through your PSB representative, you might find it useful to link with the national team for further evidence and knowledge.

Steps to meet this objective have to be much wider than what early years, education or health services can do. Many things impact on the life chances of children and young people. For example, a [2013 review carried out by the London School of Economics for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) found that children in lower-income families have worse cognitive, social-behavioural and health outcomes. Crucially, this study demonstrated that it was in part because they are poorer, not just because low income is correlated with other household and parental characteristics. One of the main challenges you have identified is in how people live in poverty in the shadow of relative affluence in Monmouthshire. Your assessment states that the areas around Abergavenny are the most deprived in the county, but inequalities exist elsewhere. How can the PSB collaborate with others to improve the economic well-being of families across the region? How can these communities, in particular, be focused on? If we know that by the time children in some areas reach reception class in school, the circumstances of where they live already affects well-being, then we need to be intervening at a much earlier stage in responding to these trends.

As such, it is time that we stopped seeing pregnancy and early years purely as a 'health' issue, and explore the opportunities that exist in challenging current service delivery with this objective as a focus and the seven national well-being goals as a guide. Children live within families, that live within communities and they access many services. As you have acknowledged, many factors exist outside the health of a family that impact on giving

children the best start in life. The [New Economics Foundation 'Backing the Future' report](#) highlights how we have a role in addressing both material well-being and external circumstances – such as housing, poverty, and schooling – as well as psychosocial well-being and inner resources.

Poverty, abuse, discrimination and other forms of disadvantage can have long-lasting effects on children and young people's well-being and can severely impact their prospects of securing a prosperous, healthy, safe and socially active future. Childhood is a key window of opportunity and the positive interventions Wales puts in place now to protect and provide for children will help to secure a more prosperous, healthy and cohesive future for Wales. I have been working with the Children's Commissioner to advise that public bodies and PSBs should give a greater focus to children's rights and well-being in their ongoing assessment work and well-being planning. A focus on children's rights can help PSBs in consultation, decision-making and programme-planning. This would include developing a children's rights policy focus, enabling children to learn about their rights and empowering them to play an active role in their communities. To support this work, a toolkit is being tested and will be available before the end of the year. The Children's Commissioner's office would be happy to advise on engaging with children and young people and taking a child-rights approach to securing well-being for future generations.

We are often dealing with the symptoms of disadvantage later in life, whether it be unemployment, housing problems, health issues or more serious consequences like substance misuse, mental illness and criminal behaviour. Like with many areas across Wales, Monmouthshire has seen a rise of children cared for by the Local Authority. At the time of your assessment, domestic abuse featured in the households of 26% of children receiving support from social services in Monmouthshire. Likewise, parental substance misuse or alcohol misuse featured in a quarter of households receiving support. It is also worth acknowledging that these are known cases and the true number of children living in households where either of these two issues are prevalent is likely to be higher.

The work on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) provides us with the evidence to show how children's long-term well-being is affected by events of situations in their childhood. Taking a preventative approach means shifting resources to deal with root causes. Although having workforces that are ACE-aware, able to spot warning signs and provide some support is important; this goes beyond that to making sure that services people access are integrated to break the cycle. As a PSB focusing on early years, you need to review initiatives that focus on mental health, substance misuse, criminal justice, housing services and others to ensure they are preventative, joined up and actively seeking to better situations for families and for future parents.

Currently, we deal with people in neat 'service-user' categories, such as 'domestic abuse victim', 'anti-social behaviour perpetrator', 'substance misuser', 'problem tenant'. This way of working means we fail to join up the dots, to integrate and to spot signs of a worsening situation. Understanding someone's lived experiences in this context is often shocking and gives a fresh perspective to shaping preventative services. What public services think they're getting right is often far different for the people on the receiving end. The five ways of working are intended to challenge how we currently do things and provide a different lens as a whole public service for dealing with problems. Involving people is central to challenging the system because only by listening to people can we design services that are fit for current and future generations. This example ['Why poor people don't plan](#)

[long-term](#)' provides an insight into the barriers people face in overcoming inequality and the case studies [contained in this report by Locality](#) demonstrate the financial and social costs of not taking this holistic and preventative approach to people's lives.

Alyson Francis, Director of the ACE Support Hub, has recently worked with my office to write to you outlining that ACEs are not another thing to do, but an opportunity to reconsider how we deliver services together that make sense for the families receiving them. The ACE Support Hub could also act as a central place for PSBs to share practice, as most PSBs have identified draft objectives connected to early years, giving children a good start in life and preventing ACEs. Alyson Francis and I are also on the panel of the [Good Practice Exchange Wales webinar on understanding ACEs](#) on the 7th November, which may be helpful to you in considering your steps for this objective.

- *Respond to the challenges associated with demographic change.*

Your well-being assessment identifies how much of an asset the older population are to Monmouthshire in terms of caring, volunteering and contributing to the economy. As the area with the highest life expectancy in Wales, almost a quarter of people living in Monmouthshire are over 65 years old and you have projected how much the number of older people is likely to increase over the next generation. By 2039, your assessment states 37% of your population will be over 65 years old and 9% will be over 85. As you are rightly acknowledging, this is both an opportunity and a challenge. The work of the [Older People's Commissioner](#) is particularly helpful in exploring the steps you could take to meet this objective and includes her recent guidance to PSBs. At the same time, the number of children and young people is decreasing and this creates different pressures.

Now that you have draft objectives and are considering your response, I would advise that you dig deeper into the data. This is a complex issue that demands you look at the differences across Monmouthshire, the current integration of services and external factors like rurality or public transport, listen to what people have told you about the situation and collaborate to find solutions using the seven well-being goals. Ask yourselves if current provision is appropriate to manage this growing issue? Are these issues currently managed adequately and in what areas might they need more collective action? What is the impact of rurality? How fit for the future is IT provision? What are the limitations on public transport provision? How do levels of volunteering differ across the county? How involved are the many volunteers in the work of the PSB? Understanding the lived experiences of people could give you an important insight into how different communities are functioning and where your services would be most helpful. For instance, are there ways the PSB could encourage and reward this community activism in ways that would help you meet your objectives in particular areas? The Royal Town Planning Institute's report on ['Poverty, Place and Inequality'](#), includes several recommendations around why place-based approaches are key to tackling inequality between and within communities.

You have already identified that rurality of some parts of Monmouthshire and limited public transport suggests that isolation can be an issue for older people, affecting their mental and physical health. Research [by Ageing Well](#)

[Wales](#) has shown this and suggests that loneliness in older people is both about how connected people are to their communities physically and about feeling purposeful in society. Although technology is not going to provide all of the answers to isolation in rural communities, think about the long-term impact it could have on our population. The older people of tomorrow are the younger people of today, who have far more technological skills at their fingertips. You have a good track record in Monmouthshire of employing technological solutions to problems, with the example of 'Monmouthshire Made Open' a potential platform to bring people together, preventing social isolation. In our sharing economy, could there be solutions around carpooling or community transport connected to social media? Plus, there are already examples of drones delivering medical supplies, video calling instead of GP appointments and virtual classrooms happening now. The '[Hypervillage](#)' concept developed by FutureScape imagines villages connected by their assets, [encouraging people in rural communities to capitalise on technology](#). How have you thought about the long-term possibilities of employing technological solutions for this issue?

How are you considering your own roles in responding to the challenges of demographic change? I am keen to see PSBs looking at preventative and asset-based approaches to their draft objectives. Currently, social services and health are barely dealing with the current demand and, unfortunately, many are looking at traditional models of resourcing 'crisis' intervention to deal with this. This is where the five ways of working should be challenging your thinking and I will be interested in seeing how you influence and task the Social Services and Well-being Regional Partnership Board in delivering your response to your objectives. [This report by the Young Foundation](#) provides inspiration on 'Innovating better ways of living late in life', challenging the traditional siloes we are working in. Creating flexible and age friendly communities and environments can prevent people from needing social care, from becoming isolated, from suffering ill-health or having an accident at home.

You have a role in planning, housing and transportation of creating places that are adaptable and able to change for at least the next two generations. Wales has an opportunity to develop housing that better meets demographic change, adopting technology to allow people to live independently for longer. The [Welsh Government has launched a £20 million innovative housing fund](#). Over the next two years, the fund will support both the supply of affordable housing and the improvement of the quality of housing that is delivered. PSBs should be seeking to influence how this fund is utilised and understand the impact it has on Wales to inform their long-term steps on housing. Programmes like the [World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Cities](#) initiative have encouraged and recognised those cities that have made themselves more age-friendly adapting buildings, transport and planning rules, which enable older people to stay healthy and connected to things that matter to them for longer; [Laguna woods](#), the first city exclusively for older people in the US and the Marjala suburbs in Finland are examples of design suited to multiple abilities. As well as responsibilities around planning and designing infrastructure, there are numerous innovative global projects encouraging co-housing, supported housing and homeshares. [Students are living rent free in nursing homes](#) in exchange for socialising and providing basic care to the older residents; Australia and New Zealand have introduced '[HomeShare](#)' schemes, and, as part of their national government's demography strategy, [Germany](#) has introduced intergenerational housing for older

people and young families in need. In Singapore, young people are given a \$50,000 grant if they move within 1km of their aged grandparents. These are all innovations that are proving to have an impact.

This demonstrates the intrinsic link between your community environment and your well-being. As the Ageing Well in Wales research states, isolation is as much about being physically alone as feeling a part of something. Some research suggests that [just 5% of those over 65 years old](#) have any form of structured contact with younger people. [Intergenerational projects are shown to have benefits](#) for young and old, with both older and younger people taking on the role of mentor. How can you collaborate to create more opportunities for people to come together? It is really encouraging that volunteering is high in Monmouthshire and projects to encourage volunteering, such as 'A County that Serves' and the befriending schemes of 'Community Connections'. How can increased involvement improve the health of older people in your area? The recent report '[Health and Wellbeing in Rural Areas](#)' produced by Public Health England and the Local Government Association highlights issues of rurality in England, but also includes several useful case studies, such as the Fish Well Improvement project in Norfolk, that aims to improve health and well-being in these local areas. [Solva Community Council](#) in Pembrokeshire are an interesting example of how volunteers and older residents have benefited from a scheme to reduce isolation and improve well-being. In some parts of Wales, the third sector are acting as community connectors (funded through the Intermediate Care Fund) to help vulnerable people of all ages access things in their community and prevent the need for statutory services. There are many good examples of projects that seek to bring people together to learn new skills, socialise and build their resilience in later life, like [Men's Sheds Cymru](#), happening across Wales that the PSB could encourage and support.

Continuing to learn through life has been proven to have benefits for people's mental and physical well-being, as well as social well-being. There is a real opportunity here for you to consider how you maximise your contribution to the well-being goals. How can you encourage activities that promote art, culture, learning the Welsh language, caring for natural habitats, creating community food growing initiatives, for instance, that help with people's well-being? Looking to the long term, how can these activities prevent some of the preventable ill-health people are suffering that compromises their independence? [The Arts Council for Wales' strategy, which](#) outlines some of the benefits involvement in creative activity can have on the health, cohesion and skills of the population could help you recognize how projects can have multiple benefits for your organisations. The [Cultural Commissioning Programme, funded by Arts Council England](#) seeks to help commissioners of public services understand how they can improve outcomes by integrating arts and cultural activities into a range of services, including mental health and well-being, older people and place-based commissioning. The Welsh Language Commissioner's team have been working with my office, considering how they can best help PSBs to consider the role they can play in growing the Welsh language, as set out in '[Cymraeg 2050](#)'. Please let my team know if you would like to connect with relevant individuals in these organisations.

Other PSBs with similar objectives include Conwy / Denbighshire, Neath Port Talbot, Ynys Mon and Gwynedd and Newport.

- *Protect and enhance the resilience of our natural environment whilst mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change.*

As your assessment and engagement recognises, the natural environment of Monmouthshire is an asset and has a positive effect on people's well-being. The Gwent levels, parts of the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Wye Valley provide a beautiful place to live, signify people's heritage, sense of belonging and provide important habitats and ecosystems. The economic value of your environment is also an asset; tourism, agriculture, forestry and fishing are a significant sector for the county. The threat of climate change and extreme weather events, therefore, should be an important focus for the PSB.

As I said in 'Well-being in Wales: Planning today for a better tomorrow', many PSBs quoted worrying trends for their areas but continue to engage in safe and non-contentious issues. Climate change will have negative impacts on water quality, tourism, grassland productivity and fuel costs in Monmouthshire. The effects of climate change are likely to cause droughts in the summer, meaning a shortage of water, declining bio-diversity and a knock-on effect for one of your economic pillars of agriculture. I want to see PSBs using the definitions of the seven well-being goals to frame their approach, as this can help all partners understand their contribution to this significant issue. The long-term vision of some of your communities could be that they are eroded into Severn, flooded, cut off from fresh water supplies and isolated from resources. I would suggest you need to look at critical infrastructure at risk from flooding. Are current approaches adequate to cope? How can you use scenarios to imagine what preventative action you could take to protect agriculture, water supplies and transportation in the event of extreme weather? [Zero Carbon Britain's recent 'Making it Happen'](#) report sets out what responsibilities we all have to future generations to act on climate change now.

I commended your well-being assessment on looking at the five community areas across the county and your focus on the environment in each one. I suggest you continue to build on this intelligence, use the upcoming regional future scenarios work across Gwent and involve people in understanding the resilience of those communities to a changing climate. As your assessment has already identified, in Monmouthshire, areas of each main town are at risk of coastal or river flooding, with around 1,400 people and almost 300 properties at high (1 in 30 year) or medium (1 in 100 year) risk of flooding. Flooding has already affected Monmouth several times in the last five years and with annual damage to residential properties is [estimated to be £22 million](#), plus, adverse impacts on people's well-being, considering an integrated response to this is crucial. Flooding will place increased pressure on the availability of clean drinking water. Although the River Wye and Usk are of good quality, your assessment has identified water pollution as a particular concern in parts of the county, largely due to agricultural practices and urban pollution. Who are you involving in understanding the root causes of this issue? Has a representative of the farming community been involved in PSB discussions? Understanding different perspectives can often offer different solutions to the way we have always done things. Can you collaborate with farming communities and businesses to find preventative solutions together? Projects such as ['Rainscape' through Dwr Cymru](#) also suggest ways that working with communities can help to mitigate the effects of floods; there is an ongoing project in Grangetown, Cardiff.

Your own responsibilities as organisations needs to be clear in the steps you take to meet this objective. How can you, as senior officers, create organisations that are more globally responsible and contributing to a resilient Monmouthshire? How can you seek to protect the natural environment whilst delivering your other objectives and statutory responsibilities? Natural Resources Wales and Brecon Beacons National Park are well suited to help other partners understand their contribution to this objective and connectivity to your other objectives. I am speaking at the National Parks Wales seminar next week, where topics to be covered include the challenges facing rural Wales, how national parks work with other public bodies and the scrutiny of their management plans. Creating a globally responsible Monmouthshire starts with you – how you procure local goods, invest in FairTrade, seek to reduce your carbon emissions and increase your energy efficiency as public organisations.

Together, you also have a large amount of public sector estate and how you plan, design and locate future developments (as part of your Local Development Plan) can lead to positive outcomes for the resilience of the natural environment and prove your global responsibilities as organisations. [The Closing the Circle](#) report on the circular economy and the Welsh Environment is a useful report by Constructing Excellence in Wales, giving practical examples of where the public sector can look to minimise waste and resources in future projects. You can also take inspiration from some of the projects mentioned in the recent [Constructing Excellence Awards](#), such as the Active Classroom. Having a consideration of how 'green' these buildings are, both in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable construction, is a quick win for you as a PSB. The [Wildlife Trust in Wales report into green infrastructure](#) outlines how green infrastructure delivers a wide range of proven, tangible, and cost-effective economic, social and environmental benefits. The [Design Commission for Wales](#) also has case studies and resources on design that focuses on users, maximises energy efficiency and has been shown to significantly improve patient recovery in health.

Your assessment has highlighted the impact of traffic on air pollution, creating a current problem for Monmouthshire, particularly in urban areas and areas with high vehicle emissions, such as Usk and Chepstow. Air pollution impacts negatively on people's health and particularly affects children, linking to your objective to provide children with the best start in life. Partly this is about behaviour change – encouraging people to use their vehicles less frequently, heat their homes more efficiently and use less materials. The [WWF environmental footprint calculator](#) serves a sharp reminder to us all of our potential to impact change and [NESTA has a guide](#) to working with communities to tackle climate change, including the 'Big Green Challenge', where participants changed their lifestyles to reduce their carbon footprint. What can you do to encourage this behaviour change? Some PSBs are considering installing electric charging points for vehicles across the county; introducing electric pool cars for staff and incentivising active or public transport travel.

You are also uniquely placed to influence emissions far more widely in areas such as transport of goods and people, use and investment in energy, land use and procurement. We have clear commitments to meet in terms of carbon reduction, the UK has pledged to have zero emissions by 2050, but despite Wales being a place of great potential in providing natural energy, only 10% of Wales' electricity in 2013 was provided through renewable energy. This week, Lesley Griffiths AM has set a target of 70% by 2050. Smart Energy GB have produced a report

on ['A Smart Energy Future for Rural Areas'](#), giving examples and case studies of rural areas across the UK who are making that transition. Your well-being assessment identified potential for growing renewable energy schemes locally. What more can you do to encourage this? The [Welsh Government recently published](#) carbon emission levels subdivided by Local Authority and released a [Call for Evidence](#) to explore the most effective mechanisms for achieving a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. I will be hosting an event on the 9th November, in partnership with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales to: explore how the public service in Wales can involve people in collaborating and integrating their work, to take greater account of the long-term carbon implications of their activities, and help prevent the effects of climate change becoming even worse.

For many of the issues identified in your assessment as threats to the natural environment, restoring woodland and tree planting appears to be a viable solution. There is an identified lack of woodland connectivity in some parts of the county, as well as a recognition that trees mitigate the effects of flooding, emissions and help to increase biodiversity. [China is currently planting trees](#) to create a "Great Green Wall" that may halt erosion, capture carbon, and provide economic benefits to the People's Republic. By 2050, the nation aims to plant 88 million acres of woodland with the aim of protecting and restoring habitats threatened by desertification. Similarly, in [Myanmar](#), they are employing drones to speed up the process of planting millions of trees that aim to safeguard a disappearing ecosystem.

Other PSBs seeking to protect their environment and undertake further work to understand the risks for their communities include Blaenau Gwent; the Vale of Glamorgan; Powys; Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion.

- ***Develop opportunities for communities and businesses to be part of an economically thriving and well-connected county.***

It is important that you recognise the interconnections between your well-being objectives and demonstrate that objectives maximise your contribution to each of the well-being goals. Rurality and transportation are clearly themes running through your objectives and the PSB should take time to consider its input and influence here. As you acknowledge, Monmouthshire is an affluent county, with great potential. Although wages within the county are, on average, lower than across Wales, people enjoy living in Monmouthshire and commuting to high paid work outside of the county. In my feedback to your well-being assessment, I encouraged you to be more explicit about how you are considering cross-boundary and cross-border issues. This particularly applies when seeking to take steps to meet this objective.

I have previously spoken about the opportunity presented by the Cardiff City Region. There is clear interest at the PSB about taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the region and I would advise that, as people in positions of leadership, you need to influence the current negotiations with your draft objectives for Monmouthshire in mind. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimates that poverty costs the whole region £2.2 billion per year. Increasing GDP has little impact on reducing inequalities, and in eight out of the ten Local Authority areas in the region, child poverty is above the Welsh average. I would therefore advise you to

encourage that value within the City Region is not just placed on economic growth but on developing patterns of employment and work that are fit for the future, investing in the most deprived communities to encourage skills in technology, creativity and problem-solving to break inter-generational patterns of poverty. I am also keen to see how the Board are considering creating a well-connected region, akin to this draft objective. [I also recently commented on the work of city regions](#) in response to Dr Mark Lang and Professor Terry Marsden's recent report "[Re-thinking Growth: Toward the Well-being Economy.](#)"

In general, I would advise that as public service leaders, you consider what actions you can take or influence to meet this objective and maximise your contribution to each of the seven well-being goals. How can you involve people from the more unequal communities in Monmouthshire to seek their advice on creating opportunities? How can your organisations offer apprenticeships for all ages? As I advised above, consider how procurement policies can be the maximum of what you can do to contribute to a globally responsible Monmouthshire and how can you work across the PSB to achieve this? As an area with a high number of micro businesses and start-ups, can your organisational policies seek to help sustainable local businesses, cutting down on transporting goods, rather than focussing on cost alone? [Forum for the Future](#) have published reports on this and my office are working with [Value Wales](#) to pilot new approaches to procurement in the context of the Act, of which Monmouthshire Council are part of. I advise the Local Authority bring this learning actively into the PSB.

You have acknowledged the need to better involve businesses and local business people in the work of the PSB. Collaborating with them could mean multiple benefits are realised for your draft objectives. For instance, what social responsibilities do the businesses have to their communities? How can the PSB take advantage of these to meet their objectives? How can you champion equality together by attracting talent back or into the county? How can your organisations seek to grow the Welsh language in the area? Alun Davies AM [announced funding for growing bilingual small businesses](#) recently to increase visibility of Welsh in our communities. Can you adopt a business support system based on businesses maximising their contribution to the seven well-being goals?

As such, in approaching this objective, you should consider what innovative approaches you can take. I have been impressed by the innovation your support team and the Council has adopted in the past. You have already recognised there is potential here in linking digital solutions to the way the economy works in the county through linking micro business to the 'gig economy', taking advantage of increasing technology to cut down on journey times and improve people's connectivity to other parts of the world through super-fast broadband available in your area. Looking to the long term is important in considering the steps you might take to meet this objective, because the future of work and patterns of employment is quite different to the jobs we are familiar with now. The [Future of Work report](#) predicts that 65 percent of the children who are now starting school will find themselves working jobs as adults that don't even exist yet. [And, according to McKinsey](#), technology could automate 45 percent of the tasks people are currently paid to do. How can you act for the long term now and seek to instill skills in young people that are fit for the future? They themselves have pointed out that teamwork, communication and confidence are as valuable to young people as good grades when entering the workplace (in the [Prince's Trust recent Results for Life report](#)). Your Welsh medium primary schools are reaching capacity, so

what action can you take now to equip children, young people and adults with Welsh language communication skills? In accordance with the Welsh Government's targets, this is becoming increasingly important for employment.

In approaching this, you must involve schools, Coleg Gwent, nearby higher education institutions in Cardiff and Bristol, local employers and organisations like the Department of Work and Pensions to collaborate on taking innovative solutions together. This will inevitably mean stopping some things, but your well-being assessment is intended to show you where the focus for public services is needed now and in the long term. For instance, what action can you take now, as public service providers, to encourage learning and jobs in the foundational economy, around local care, retail and food industries, which are jobs less likely to be automated in future and good for the local economy? A [recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) highlights the value of the social economy in creating jobs, strengthening skills and employability. How have you considered these long-term trends in setting your steps and enabling people to adapt their skills for future earning? This relates to your draft objective around demographic change and making the most of the activism that exists in your area. In the future, work / life balance will become more important and a recent [World Economic Forum blog](#) asks 'What is the meaning of work?' and quotes: "I believe in a future where the point of education is not to prepare you for another useless job, but for a life well lived."

Monmouthshire benefits from a thriving tourism economy, with expenditure amounting to £186.64m and support of nearly 3,000 full-time jobs. How can you encourage sustainable tourism for the area in growing a well-connected county? How can the communities around Abergavenny (who particularly see tourists) be involved in finding active travel routes; creating small and local business opportunities? Encouraging a focus around the culture and language of the area can also help you maximise your contribution to all of the goals. Other rural communities are considering how to retain young people over the long term, as [a trend being seen across Wales](#) is younger people leaving the county for opportunities elsewhere. Rural communities in Japan and Canada have seen a recent upsurge of younger people staying in their place of birth, both with improved technologies but also by celebrating the way of life and introducing sustainable tourism. [This World Economic Forum article](#) suggests that some of the answers may lie in bottom-up community initiatives, where young people take a sense of pride and ownership in telling others about their heritage and environment, starting small scale businesses that benefit from visiting tourists. These already exist in Monmouthshire and should be involved in understanding how the PSB can foster growth through its influence; as your draft plan suggests, could this involve young people undertaking apprenticeships or training?

Several other PSBs are drafting similar objectives and steps include Powys; Cardiff; Ceredigion; Newport; Pembrokeshire; and Caerphilly.

I hope you have found this advice helpful in moving forward towards publishing a well-being plan for formal consultation. Please get in touch with my team if you want further contact details for any of the organisations and reports mentioned in this letter.

I am also learning the best ways to advise, support and monitor how public bodies are seeking to apply the five ways of working and maximise their contribution to the seven well-being goals, so I would welcome any feedback from you, supporting officers and the Monmouthshire PSB Scrutiny Committee, on how I have chosen to approach this statutory duty and the advice I have given.

I look forward to receiving your draft well-being plan and please keep in touch with me and my team.

Yours sincerely,



Sophie Howe