

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Dear Torfaen Public Services Board members and support team,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide feedback on your draft Assessment of Local Well-being sent to the office in January 2017.

The first thing I want to do is to make it clear that I fully appreciate the challenges that you have faced in the development of the assessment this time around, and I congratulate your team on their hard work and efforts.

My primary focus in providing this feedback is to help you consider how well your work so far will help you to set your collective objectives and undertake well-being planning. For me Public Services Boards are one of the biggest opportunities for the public sector in Wales to change the way we do things in Wales and to collaboratively make decisions and deliver services that will benefit future generations.

Your assessment is a key part of this, and whilst I appreciate that it may not be a full picture by the time you publish it, it is important that it sets out a clear and informed picture of the well-being of Torfaen and your communities, that is relevant now and into the future. **Your assessment should enable you to clearly identify key challenges for your area and communities, and to develop collective objectives that address these challenges.**

I attach a document that gives you detailed feedback on your draft assessment, and what you should think about building on both in the short term as you move towards well-being planning and in terms of assessing well-being in the future.

During 2017-18 one of your key tasks will be to develop your collective well-being objectives as part of your Well-being Plan. The legislation requires you to seek my advice on how to take steps to meet your objectives in accordance with the sustainable development principle (five ways of working).

Below I set out some of the things I will be looking for as my office continues to work with you. In my view those PSBs who have showed they are already taking account of the five ways of working will be well placed to develop objectives and Well-being Plans, which will have benefits for all organisations involved in terms of maximising their collective contribution to the goals and addressing inter-generational challenges.

I was pleased to see that you have made a good start with your approach to **involving people and communities** in the development of your assessment, through your engagement work and the insightful questions you asked about what concerns people and what their aspirations are for the future. I would encourage you to build on this to make sure that you continue to provide opportunities for a broad range of stakeholders and

citizens to get involved in influencing the development of your objectives, and be able to demonstrate that their input has an effect on what you do.

It is clear that the amount of MSOA and LSOA data that you have collected provides a strong basis for your well-being planning. Some of the information you provide on demographics, health, the economic forecast, climate change and housing gives an insight into key issues for the future of Torfaen. I think there is potential for you to build on this to have a greater focus on the long term in your work going forward, and to explore which of your communities are particularly vulnerable to the long term trends you identify.

I think you have the opportunity of exploring further the **integration** between policy and challenges under the four themes (economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being), and making greater links with the seven well-being goals. This will be particularly important in thinking about the relative roles of your different organisations in **maximising your contribution** to the goals.

A key element of the legislation is the focus on **preventing problems** from occurring rather than just responding to them and I see this as a key priority for your well-being planning. This is an area where I would encourage you to give detailed consideration to what the data and evidence is telling you, in order to make sense of key challenges you have identified.

And **collaboration** is key to all of this – in Gwent you already collaborate regionally through the G7 and GSWAG and you now have the opportunity to take your partnership working to a new level, collaborating with resources and finding new ways to deal with old problems. Your assessment should be helping you to identify the most fruitful opportunities to do this.

Your support team have worked hard to develop this assessment and the people who support your well-being planning will need your full buy-in and support. Key features of this are likely to be the leadership you show and your willingness to give people space and permission to explore new ways of addressing old problems. This cultural change is what the Well-being of Future Generations Act is all about.

In anticipation of the requirement for me to provide advice on how you should take steps to meet your collective objectives I would like to see further detail of how you will use your assessment as you move towards well-being planning. I would appreciate you letting my office know how you have responded to our feedback. With this in mind it will also be important for you to provide my feedback to the scrutiny committee that has the lead for scrutinising the work of the PSB. The need for a more constructive approach to scrutiny has been identified as an important part of maximising collective action at the local level.

I hope that our feedback is clear and useful at this stage. However, I must reiterate that I don't see the development of your assessment as a one-off event. Going forward I will be providing opportunities for PSBs to share learning and best practice which I hope you will be involved in, in order to provide the best platform for you to fulfil your ongoing obligations under the Act.

Kind regards,



Sophie Howe,  
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

## Feedback from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner on

### TORFAEN Public Services Board Draft Well-being Assessment

#### 1. Introduction

The following report provides feedback to Torfaen Public Services Board from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner on the final draft of the *Torfaen Well-being Assessment Consultation Draft December 2016*. This feedback is based on our project team<sup>1</sup> reviewing the following key documents and discussions:

- Executive Summary - Torfaen Well-being Assessment Consultation Draft December 2016
- Part 1 - Torfaen Well-being Assessment Consultation Draft December 2016
- Infographics Drafts: Part 2 - Blaenavon; Part 3- Pontypool; Part 4 -Cwmbran; December 2016
- a discussion between the project team and members of the PSB team on 2<sup>nd</sup> February

It is intended that his feedback should be used to inform both the publication of the assessment in spring 2017 where possible and recognising the timescales that exist, but it is more important that it informs ongoing processes of developing your assessment and well-being planning.

The assessment has been reviewed by the project team using a set of criteria, developed specifically to focus on aspects of assessment production, methodology and analysis and the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. These criteria enable us to review the wide range of approaches to local assessment of well-being that have been used across Wales. This has also enabled us to provide bespoke feedback to PSBs, highlighting strengths and potential areas for improvement. This consistent approach will also enable the Commissioner to identify key issues and highlight opportunities for shared learning, at a Wales-wide level, for the wide range of public sector and other bodies involved in well-being planning.

While we understand that the Well-being Assessment is an ongoing process, and that further work will be undertaken in coming months, it is important that the following comments are noted and acted upon as the well-being assessment is developed, adapted and built upon to inform well-being planning across the PSB.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Alan Netherwood, Netherwood Sustainable Futures, Dr. Andrew Flynn, Cardiff University and Dr. Mark Lang, Mark Lang Consulting

## 2. National well-being goals

One of the issues we have considered is how effectively the seven national well-being goals have been reflected in the assessment as the WFG Act requires PSBs to demonstrate how they plan to maximise their contribution to the goals.

We understand that PSBs will develop different ways of reflecting well-being; in Torfaen's case between economic, social, economic and cultural well-being. It is important that there is a clear link between the data, its interpretation and our understanding of all aspects of well-being in our communities. The assessment has clearly set out a range of priority well-being issues for Torfaen and there is a lot of material in the assessment to aid our understanding of their impact. There is scope for greater consideration of the relationship between these initial priorities and the national well-being goals. Throughout the assessment there could be greater explanation of *how* the issues that arise in each section contribute or impact upon them.

While there is some reference to maximising contribution or the relevance of a goal to an issue, the contribution or relevance could be made more explicit, whereas at present it is often notional e.g. references to community cohesion and inequality. More emphasis could also be placed on the relationship between Torfaen's well-being and the resilience and global goals.

A section could be included in a future iteration of the assessment and within the Plan to increase our understanding of this relationship, how priority issues relate to and contribute to multiple goals, and how Torfaen's PSB intends to maximise its contribution to them.

## 3. Data content – area and place

The WFG Act requires well-being assessments to focus on the area and 'place' and reflect the variety of communities across your area. We have considered the extent to which the data content of your assessment does this. It is very positive that the introduction to the assessment highlights the importance of the place based approach.

The Lower and Medium Super Output Data provided for Torfaen as a whole and for the three community areas: Blaenavon, Pontypool and Cwmbran provide an excellent basis for the PSB to understand well-being in different localities and within localities. The information on deprivation is especially good in highlighting the differences and inequalities between and within communities. The phone conversation with the Torfaen team was useful in understanding the difficulty of gathering data at a very local level.

The three Infographics documents for Blaenavon, Pontypool and Cwmbran provide good information on community assets and key indicators on environmental, economic and social well-being. Inclusion of the material from the consultation provides a clear indication of

what is good and bad about living in the area and comparison across Torfaen and Wales adds to our understanding of the data. However, these community profiles could be improved by greater analysis of key challenges in each locality and commentary on how critical these issues are for each community area and Torfaen as a whole (see later points on *interpretation* of data). At present in many areas the data is descriptive, but could do more to draw attention to the key issues for the community e.g. how big a problem is long term unemployment? How vulnerable is the local economy given its reliance on manufacturing? Is the road infrastructure resilient to climate change? How critical is the voluntary sector to the community? Is flood management, energy supply and water supply resilient – or a key challenge? It is positive that there is an intention to enhance these as the work continues to show differences within and between communities. The Deep Place methodology clearly has merit and it will be interesting to see how this framework is populated with further data and interpretative analysis as well-being planning develops in Torfaen.

#### 4. Data content – public service needs

We think it is important that you have a clear picture of the different needs of people and communities now and in the future, and that the implications of these needs are understood. We have considered the extent to which the data content of the assessment focuses on public service needs, within communities and for particular groups of individuals.

A priority for my office is encouraging public bodies and PSBs to make sure that they are firstly involving people and communities in ways that give them greater insights into people's lived experiences of public bodies, and secondly acting upon these insights when they make decisions and deliver services. It is positive that a clear link has been made between the Population Needs assessment and this assessment in Section 2.8.

It is also positive to see the focus on public service needs in the consultation questions used in a range of fora across Torfaen. The questions to your community provide excellent data on what concerns people in their communities and what their aspirations are for the future. There is also good information on access to services. The assessment could be improved by summarising the potential implications of these concerns for *public services* in the three infographics documents at a community level, but also for Torfaen as a whole.

While projects and 'interventions' are listed throughout the summary documents - it is unclear what additional specific service needs are required, at what scale and how this differs across the area. While we understand this will be picked up in the response analysis and plan development, the narrative of the main document could be strengthened with some interpretation of the challenge to communities and public services. Are these issues currently managed adequately and in what areas might they need more collective action?

## 5. Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

We recognise the challenge of balancing data, insights and evidence to produce a rounded understanding of well-being of communities and individuals of the short, medium and long term. One of our main considerations has been the extent to which both quantitative and qualitative analysis and methods in assessments provide a broad picture of environmental, economic, cultural and social well-being, together with initial commentary on the implications of this 'picture' for communities. i.e. what really matters?

As discussed in point 3 above, the assessment provides excellent levels of data, good use but in general, there needs to be a better interpretation, analysis and synthesis of key issues. The well-laid out lists and tables need more interpretation to identify and communicate the critical and most significant issues for well-being at all levels. Qualitative data from the consultation has been used well in the detailed Infographic reports: but again, a lack of interpretation of this makes it difficult to determine what well-being issues are most critical to address. In general, the assessment could be improved by drawing themes or issues together and so present a much richer, narrative-driven picture of well-being (see example questions in point 3)

The following paragraphs provide more specific feedback on each theme.

*Social well-being* - This section provides data on the following issues: community safety and cohesion, crime, fire and road safety, housing and deprivation. The deprivation data is particularly good at illustrating inequalities across the area. It is also positive that there is a focus on community cohesion. However, this is one of the main sections which could benefit from much more interpretation to describe the significance of these issues to Torfaen. The narrative is generally indicator led. To this end, the sections on *community and social assets in 2.6 and 2.7* should be included within this Section (including excellent commentary on community assets, food banks, community asset transfer etc.) as part of a broader commentary on social well-being in the area e.g. social capital and networks; and the role of the non-monetary economy in social well-being and levels of unpaid care.

*Environmental well-being* – This section provides far more interpretation about what the data is telling us for Torfaen rather than describing the data. It is particularly clear about: why an issue is important; its UK and Welsh context and then, importantly, interpreting this in Torfaen. It is clear from this section what the critical issues are for the area and the PSB. Adopting this approach to the narrative could strengthen other sections of the assessment.

*Economic well-being* – This section sets out key indicators on employment, skills, pay, and qualifications. These are also indicator focused with minimal interpretation to enable us to understand what the critical issues are. It is very positive that there



has been good engagement with the private sector in the 'think space' sessions – are there plans for further engagement via business clubs, and other fora? Further improvements could be made by this section painting a broader picture of economic well-being in the area by: describing the inter-relationships of Torfaen with other local economies; the nature of the opportunities from the City Region project; an understanding of patterns of commuting and their role in local well-being<sup>2</sup>. While we understand that Brexit provides great uncertainty, the potential implications of Brexit, for example on funding, is a key issue which will impact on Torfaen across well-being themes. Some reflection on likely impacts on Torfaen's citizens should be included in the assessment as the PSB progress well-being planning.

*Cultural well-being* – it is positive that this section acknowledges the need to build understanding and data on Torfaen's cultural assets. At present the focus on sports, arts, museums, historic places and Welsh language data does not provide a clear and holistic view of cultural well-being in the area, and is clearly indicator focused. There is minimal interpretation in this section and this is an area where we would expect the assessment to improve.

## 6. Key challenges

It is important that well-being assessments, in assessing the state of well-being, focus on key challenges to well-being over the short, medium and long term, as well as the positive attributes and assets in the area. This includes the trade-offs between different well-being goals, tensions, and deficits within the area.

As described earlier points in this document, in Section 1 and 2, the assessment provides data on a range of indicators which illustrate key aspects of well-being, but there is generally a need for more interpretation to communicate the scale of the key challenges, trade-offs, tensions and how they impact on Torfaen. The approach taken in the Environmental well-being section to describing challenges and trade-offs, supported by indicators could be replicated throughout the document

Key challenges from a community perspective are provided in the consultation data from the three Infographic Documents, which list key concerns and challenges from the public and other stakeholders. This is good information which could be better reflected in the main document and Executive Summary.

Section 3 on Future Trends and Challenges, the Assessment develops a broader commentary on what matters in Torfaen over the long term. The sections on Demographics, Health, the Economic Forecast, Climate Change and Housing – in places, provide an excellent summary of why an issue matters, - the nature of the challenge and how this issue impacts Torfaen e.g. energy opportunities and housing. In others the challenges are spelt

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<sup>2</sup> (the section on transport, journey times and costs of travel 2.6.2 should be included within this section.)



out but could be better interpreted for Torfaen e.g. health and climate change. Again indicators are provided (e.g. health, emissions, ecological footprint) which need more narrative for us to understand their significance. There is some clear commentary in the Executive Summary on these sections which need to be included in Part 1 (e.g. ecological footprint)

It is positive that the PSB have identified that more work needs to be done on community assets to inform the assessment, these should include social, environmental, economic, cultural and built assets. Including these would help to build understanding of the 'assets' at Torfaen's disposal which can help to address the 'poor' well-being trends described in Part 1 of the assessment.

## **7. Engagement, involvement and collaboration**

The WFG Act clearly indicates that collaboration and involvement are two of the five ways of working which PSBs need to consistently apply to their work. As a consequence, we have been particularly interested in the level and method of engagement, involvement and collaboration across the partnership in producing the assessment, including engagement with communities, public, third sector and private sector organisations.

It is clear that the well-being questionnaire, resident's survey and the Deep Place studies have involved citizens, stakeholders and businesses to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to inform the assessment. It is also positive that there is clarity for stakeholders that there will be continuing engagement through the consultation period, and that the assessment is an ongoing process. The engagement with GSWAG and a commitment to develop a shared community risk register are two examples of good collaboration.

It is understood that a great deal of effort has been expended to inform the assessment through consultation and ground-truthing sessions with stakeholders – as highlighted in the Appendices. These are really positive efforts which should make much clearer how individuals and organisations have been engaged, what benefit this engagement has brought to the analysis and description of exactly how the information has helped to shape and inform the assessment. While there is an account of the methodology in Part 1 – the assessment needs to communicate this activity more clearly as part of the wellbeing planning *process*.

An example of where this could be done to better inform the reader is by summarising and analysing the Community Involvement data from the Infographic documents into the Executive Summary and Part 1 of the assessment. This should outline and interpret what this data from three areas in Torfaen tells us about well-being, and how this is being used to inform well-being planning.

The phone call with the PSB team included discussion of how this assessment has acted as a catalyst to develop collaborative working across the PSB, and that work has continued in February to explore the data sets. This activity and any key findings from the sessions should be highlighted in the Assessment if this is feasible before the final version.

## 8. Integration

One of the key aims of the WFG Act is to develop integration at all levels across the public sector. We believe it is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. As a result we have been keen to consider the level of integration between traditional policy and organisational silos in producing the assessment. It is important that the data listed in the assessment is explored across traditional policy and organisational silos, to interpret what this means for well-being in the area.

This is an area for you to give further consideration as you finalise your assessment for publication, and as you move toward well-being planning. There is scope for greater integration and more exploration of the relationship of policy/challenges between each theme – for example air quality and health, contaminated land and flooding, active enterprises and the potential of City Region. There is only limited evidence that data from each section (and within each section) has been considered alongside that of the others, or that the inter-relationships have been considered. These inter-relationships need to be explored as part of a wider effort to interpret the data gathered so far. This is something for the PSB to consider as an important issue as it moves towards well-being planning.

## 9. Foresight and future trends

One of the key challenges from the legislation is to consider the short, medium *and long term* well-being throughout the assessment and plan process. We are interested in the level of foresight and use of future trends analysis in producing the assessment and recognition of the well-being of future generations. It is noted from the phone call with the assessment team how challenging this has been.

As highlighted in point 6 (above) the section on Future Trends and Challenges begins, in parts, to create a stronger narrative around the potential impacts of future trends. This is commendable and should be developed. There are also good examples in the Assessment where long term data has been used on flooding, ageing population, housing and climate change to develop an understanding of future challenges in general. As stated previously this needs to be interpreted more clearly in terms of the implications and significance for Torfaen *specifically* and for the 3 community areas.

The assessment would benefit from more consistent attention being given to the potential impact of long term trends across the four themes for Torfaen as a whole and in Blaenavon,

Pontypool and Cwmbran areas, and this is something we would expect to see improve as the assessment and Plan is developed. A simple approach could be adopted to address this issue. Summarising the short, medium and long term challenges for each section, identifying where there are potential significant implications for the area, and gaps in your understanding of long term trends where further analysis is needed.

The Welsh Government will be producing their Future Trends Report in May 2017. The current plan is to include 6 key themes: Population, Economy, Natural Resources & Climate Change, Health, Land Use & Infrastructure & Societal Change. As it develops your assessment will need to take account of data included in this, but should aim to provide a clearer emphasis on long term challenges to well-being in the initial assessment published in the coming months.

## **10. Cross boundary issues**

Integration and collaboration are central to public bodies applying the sustainable development principle to their activities. One of our aims has been to review the extent to which the assessment has considered cross boundary issues for regional and national action.

We believe that a more detailed understanding and analysis of key regional and cross border issues which affect the Torfaen would be beneficial, to inform the well-being plan process. The assessment could provide a clearer explanation of the area's 'role' within the region. It will also be important for PSBs to consider the conclusions of neighbouring local assessments of well-being as planning develops.

Although there is reference to the City Region project it is unclear what the implications of this major, long term project might be for *all* aspects of community well-being across the Torfaen. Even if the specific impacts are uncertain at present, it will clearly have an influence on cohesion, equality, resilience and so on. The project's potential influence should be included for all sections of the assessment, beyond the 'Economic well-being' section, as it is likely to have multiple impacts across different parts of Torfaen. Greater insight could be provided on the significance of commuting patterns to well-being, critical issues for transport infrastructure regionally and the nature of inter-relationships with the G7 and other regional partners.

## **11. Data quality and data gaps**

The WFG Act intends that well-being planning will be a continuous process where the evidence base will be gradually improved over time, to enable public bodies and others to understand and plan for well-being in their communities. We are keen to understand the approach of PSBs to data quality and data gaps during the assessment and data issues moving forward.

It is really positive to see an analysis on 'Gaps' in section 6 in the Executive Summary and section 3.9 in Part 1. This clearly highlights national, regional and local issues in order to address these information gaps, and a list of specific data needs as the well-being process progresses. It is particularly good to see the link being made with the Local Development Plan and Population Assessment processes during 2017. It will be interesting to see how these data sources inform well-being planning in Torfaen.

The list of 'Gaps' could be improved by communicating which of these are critical to the development of well-being planning over the coming year and which would be developed over a longer time period. This would enable the PSB to build on existing work and plan for improving data quality during the next year and beyond, helping PSB partners to build in data research and management into their business and corporate planning. It would also provide an indication to Welsh Government, the Office and Data Unit Wales on PSB needs.

These sections could also be improved by: providing an explanation of how the list of gaps has been produced – is this from the ground-truthing sessions, or from the team producing the assessment? and instructions (or a hyperlink) explaining how consultees can flag up further data gaps to the PSB.

## 12. Use of the sustainable development principle

The statutory guidance places a responsibility on PSBs to *maximise* their contribution to the well-being goals by utilising the sustainable development principle in the way that they operate. We have been keen to understand how the sustainable development principle and five ways of working have been utilised during well-being assessments.

Clearly there are elements of your approach which show how the five ways of working have been considered as part of the process of assessment development. It is excellent to see these listed in Section 1.8.1. showing how the five ways of working have been used to shape the well-being assessment process. This table could be enhanced by providing explicit examples of the 5 ways of working and how utilising the principle has improved or added value to the approach. i.e. what has changed as a result of the five ways of working, and how has this improved your understanding of well-being in Torfaen?

- *Involvement* – is it the range or depth of involvement?
- *Collaboration* – has it resulted in new or enhanced collaboration?
- *Long term* – what are the challenges and benefits of using long term trends?
- *Integration* – where has data from one theme informed another
- *Prevention* – what preventative activities has the assessment highlighted?

Providing more information on this will help the PSB partners to understand the *change* that has resulted from utilising the principle to produce the assessment and build on this good work as you move towards well-being planning.

### **13. Looking forward to plan production**

A critical issue for our review of this assessment was whether the documentation was clear about how the work would be carried forward to develop local objectives and plan production.

Both the Executive Summary and Section 1 in Part 1 would benefit from being more explicit about: the next steps; how individuals and organisations can remain involved; the timetable; and what the Plan is intending to do. Importantly, this explanation needs to communicate how the material collected in the assessment is going to be used to formulate objectives for the PSB. As discussed in point 7 the recent work with partners to explore the data should be part of this narrative. Also noted from the phone conversation with the assessment team is the intention to develop a regional understanding of the implication of the data via GSWAG.

We believe that the Executive Summary and Part 1 of the assessment could be developed to be far more 'outward facing' as a communication tool to engage people, communities and partners in the well-being plan process in Torfaen. The Infographic approach for the three areas provides a much clearer indication of key data and is well presented. Adopting a similar approach to the whole suite of documents would help in communicating the key messages and engaging partners, communities and other stakeholders.

### **14. Overview**

The documentary analysis above has identified a number of areas where we believe the assessment could be strengthened, both in the short term, before its publication and over the medium term as the response analysis develops and you move towards well-being planning. In addition to this we organised a phone call to discuss the assessment with members of the PSB team who had been involved in the process. The aim of the phone call was to provide us with an opportunity to clarify/explore particular issues that our initial review has highlighted and to enable the PSB to flag up issues which are part of the broader context of assessment production.

A number of clear, recurring broad themes have emerged from our review and the conversation. It is clear that this has been a huge undertaking over a relatively short period of time, and that partners have put a great deal of effort into producing the draft assessment. The emerging work in Blaenavon, Pontypool and Cwmbran provides an excellent framework to further develop your understanding of well-being of particular communities.

We believe the following issues need to be tackled to improve the assessment, which are applicable to Torfaen as a whole and the individual community areas:

*Integration across themes* – a greater focus on the inter-relationships between the data gathered on the four themes and the implications of this for well-being

*Interpretation of the data* – more explanation of how the issues identified through the data impact on well-being of individuals and communities

*Challenges* – provide a clearer analysis of short, medium and long term challenges (and opportunities) to (for) well-being

*Regional context* – a greater understanding of the impact on well-being of Torfaen's place in the region and its inter-relationships with neighbouring areas and communities.

*Cultural well-being* – a broader understanding of cultural assets and their role in well-being across Torfaen

*Engagement, Involvement and Collaboration* – more focus on the positive work done on the assessment which has encouraged engagement, collaboration and involvement in the process

*Future Trends* – greater attention given to the potential impact of long term trends on well-being in Torfaen as a whole and in the three community areas

*Moving forward* – providing an outward facing Executive Summary as a communication tool for engagement throughout the well-being planning process.

It is recognised that some of these may be addressed in the PSBs proposed activities between now and the final publication of the assessment. It is positive that the partners are already exploring priorities based on this assessment utilising the 'scoring' matrix developed by Caerphilly PSB.

We hope that the issues raised above will inform this collaborative work so that these elements are reflected more strongly by the PSB in the final Torfaen Well-being Assessment and throughout the well-being planning process.