

Dear Minister

The section 6 biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty

Thank you for your letter dated 4 November 2019 about the enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty, 'the section 6 duty for public authorities'.

I note that under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 my Office must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of my statutory functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems.

To comply with the s6 duty I am required to embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into my day to day business activities including planning, policies, programmes and projects.

I am also required to report on what I have done to comply with this duty before the end of 2019 and before the end of every third year after 2019.

My approach to reporting this year

I welcome your suggestion that, wherever possible, reporting should be as part of my ordinary reporting systems and should be proportionate to the size and nature of an organisation. With this in mind I have decided to publish this short report to comply with the end of 2019 deadline and embed a fuller report in my 2019-20 annual report which will be published in the summer of 2020.

I note from the guidance that the activities of my office fall under the minimum reporting category and I am required to report on NRAP objectives 1, 4, 6.

I have pleasure in providing this short report on my actions and activities under these 3 objectives and where relevant I will continue to lead, support and challenge my team and public bodies to embed the s6 duty in all our future activities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sophie Howe', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Sophie Howe

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

December 2019



Comisiynydd
**Cenedlaethau'r
Dyfodol**
Cymru

**Future
Generations**
Commissioner
for Wales

Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales report on Environment (Wales) 2016 s6 duty

Context - Us and our space

We are a small team of approximately 20 people located on the third floor of leased accommodation in an office building in the centre of Cardiff with no access or responsibility for land or outside space. Whilst my statutory functions are not directly connected to biodiversity and/or land management I recognise that indirectly my Office has a big part to play in supporting and challenging public bodies on their contribution to improving biodiversity and promoting the resilience of ecosystems. I also recognise that even if in only a small way I can lead by example by promoting a culture and working practices in my Office that support the requirements of the Act.

What my office does for Wales

As [Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#), my general duty is to promote the sustainable development principle. I am a coach and a critical friend for public bodies, public services boards and anyone who can help contribute to the achievement of the national well-being goals. I support and challenge public bodies to embrace their duty and improve all aspects of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being for the whole population of Wales.

I have chosen to use my general duty to make a difference over my term by setting four strategic purposes:

Purpose 1 - Highlighting and acting upon the big issues and challenges facing future generations

Purpose 2 - Supporting and challenging public bodies to use the Well-being of Future Generations Act

Purpose 3 - Creating a movement for change

Purpose 4 - Walking the talk – being the change that we want to see in others.

What does my duty include?

Promoting the sustainable development principle (including the five ways of working), in particular to act as a guardian of the ability of future generations to meet their needs; and encourage public bodies to take greater account of the long-term impact of the things they do.

For that purpose, monitoring and assessing the extent to which well-being objectives set by public bodies are being met.”

To carry out my general duty, I have a range of specific [functions and powers](#):

- Section 18 (a) General duty – Promote the sustainable development principle
- Section 18 (b) General duty – Monitor and assess the extent to which well-being objectives set by public bodies are being met
- Section 19 (a) Power - Provide advice or assistance to public bodies (which includes providing advice on climate change)
- Section 19 (b) Power - Provide advice to the Auditor General Wales on the Sustainable Development principle
- Section 19 (c) Power - Provide advice to a public services board in relation to the preparation of its local well-being plan
- Section 19 (d) Power - Provide any other advice or assistance to any other person who the Commissioner considers is taking steps that may contribute to the achievement of the Well-being Goals
- Section 19 (e) Power - Encourage best practice in public bodies in taking steps to meet their well-being objectives in accordance with the Sustainable Development principle
- Section 19 (f) Power - Promote awareness amongst public bodies of the need to take steps to meet their well-being objectives in accordance with the Sustainable Development principle
- Section 19 (g) Power - Encourage public bodies to work with each other and with other persons if this could assist them to meet their well-being objectives
- Section 19 (h) Power - Seek the advice of an advisory panel in relation to the exercise of the Commissioner’s functions
- Section 20 to 22 - Power to conduct reviews and to make recommendations

I also have a duty to provide advice to public services boards on their well-being assessments and draft plans and powers to receive copies of reports and to be consulted on different occasions.

Progress on meeting NRAP objectives so far in 2019, how my team lead by example and promote a culture and working practices that support the requirements of the Act.

As explained above, the nature of my Office set up and business activities mean much of the suggested reporting guidelines are not applicable to our circumstances. I have, however, reviewed the reporting guidance and commented and provided examples of our contribution to the s6 duty under each relevant objective below.

NRAP Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels.

Raise awareness across your organisation about how you are contributing to action as an organisation

Two of my four strategic purposes are: *Purpose 3 - Creating a movement for change* and *Purpose 4 - Walking the talk – being the change that we want to see in others.*

I expect all my team to have a good understanding of the work we are doing to promote Wales' progress toward the well-being goals and to use every opportunity to personally do their bit. To help with this at our monthly whole team meetings we run through our key publications to increase knowledge and share ideas for what each of us is doing or can do to contribute to the movement for change and walk the talk of our Act. In 2019 this has included discussions on our publications '*Journey towards 'A Resilient Wales'*' and '*10 Point plan to fund Wales' Climate Emergency*'.

NRAP Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

As part of my work this year my office has reviewed the objectives of 44 public bodies in Wales and has provided advice and guidance on steps that they should be taking to meet the goal of a resilient Wales. The advice to each public body is available on request

My Future Generations report is currently being drafted and will include further recommendations on meeting this goal.

This year I have also worked with the Government to reform planning policy in Wales ensuring that the new framework takes the resilient Wales goal into account. Furthermore I have supported officials in the criteria and assessment of the Housing Innovation Programme which now include a number of pilot schemes which support the creation of homes for people and for nature.

You will also be aware of my intervention in the issue of the M4 relief road in which I used my powers to provide advice and challenge to the Government on the negative impact building this road would have in the goal of a resilient Wales

Whilst my office functions does not include the direct provision of ecosystems services we recognise the link between healthy ecosystems decarbonising, reducing, reusing and recycling resources:

On decarbonising, reducing, reusing and recycling resources:

- I have measures in place to reduce and report on how I am decarbonising my work in my annual report each year.
- Overall my office generated 21 tonnes of greenhouse gases through waste, electricity and travel in 2018-19. 70% of my team's carbon emissions is as a result of travel for work. I offset our carbon emissions by making a donation each year to the Woodland Trust and the Size of Wales charities to highlight the good work of these schemes and demonstrate our commitment to actively managing carbon emissions responsibly.
- Encouraging paperless working – we run a cloud based office IT system and our volume of printing is decreasing year on year.
- Supporting modal shift - In 2018-19 Car mileage decreased by 44% while business mileage from public transportation increased by 41%
- Supporting staff to lease Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles – In 2018-19 I introduced this policy to assist staff
- My Office has a pool bike and space for cycle storage – many of my staff cycle to work on a regularly basis
- I have had an 'Anytime Anywhere working' policy in place since day 1. This reduces team need to travel unnecessarily.
- In 2019 I signed my Office up to Cardiff's Healthy Travel Charter led by Cardiff Public Services Board
- Outdoor and walking meetings are a regular feature of our office culture. They keep us active, help our well-being and our connection to nature.

- We look for ethical supply chains when sourcing goods and services for our office such as for my electricity supply and office cleaning contract
- We have a Fair Trade honesty shop in my office.
- We supported Public Health Wales with the procurement of Fairtrade cotton T Shirts for an Annual Conference on Decarbonisation.
- We have no outdoor space but we have filled our office with plants and a 'green wall'.

NRAP Objective 6: Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery

As Commissioner and Accounting Office, the responsibility for governance rests with me. I have delegated responsibility for ensuring the s6 duty is monitored and reviewed to my Director of Finance and Corporate Governance who reports to me on a regular basis.

In addition to intensive involvement and engagement with experts and third sector organisations representing nature and biodiversity on specific pieces of work I have also established a third sector panel (including WWF) who provide input to my work.

With regard to my own workplace policies we have a volunteering policy and in 2020 it has been suggested that we use this Policy to encourage and support volunteer participation in action for biodiversity in local communities. I will report further on this in my 2019-20 Annual Report.

Other contributions my Office have made to promoting biodiversity and ecosystem resilience to Wales and the world

- **A partnership with Wildlife Trusts Wales as part of my Art of the Possible programme to develop the Journey towards 'A Resilient Wales'.**

This comprehensive resource has been 18 months in the making and provides a one stop shop for public bodies looking to do their bit to contribute to this well-being goal.

It defines the goal and how it links to other statutory requirements including the Environment (Wales) 2016 Act

It includes specific sections on :

- 1: Biodiversity and Soil: Maintain and enhance the natural environment through managing land appropriately to create healthy functioning ecosystems
- 2: Natural Green Space: Support social resilience and community well-being
- 3: Knowledge of Nature: Increase awareness of the importance of a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems
- 4: Water and Air Quality: Support ecological resilience, making the environment healthier for wildlife and people
- 5: Using Natural Resources: Be adaptive to a changing environment where there is a need to use resources efficiently

It sets out enablers and disablers that will impact on the speed of progress to achieving the goal.

It suggests things a public body can do – simple changes, how to be more adventurous and owning their ambition together with examples and case studies.

It provides links to other examples and resources.

Full details on the Journey to a Resilient Wales can be found here

<https://futuregenerations.wales/a-resilient-wales/>

- **We have developed a 10 Point plan to fund Wales' Climate Emergency**

This paper presents a starting point for those discussions – for experts, other public bodies, individuals and importantly the Government to set out what sort of investment they think is required. Immediate work must be undertaken to match the required level of investment this year and more detailed work should be undertaken in parallel to identify a longer-term funding and investment model. Following this advice the draft budget had proposed a significant increase in funding for the climate and nature emergency including an allocation of an additional £50 million for nature

Full details here:

<https://futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/10-Point-Plan-to-Fund-Wales-Climate-Emergency-Detailed-Report.pdf>

- **We have worked with Wildlife Trusts Wales on guidance ‘Green Infrastructure – A catalyst for the Well-being of Future Generations in Wales’**

This special report by Wildlife Trusts Wales included:

A Green Infrastructure Vision for Wales, examples of Green Infrastructure, highlighting how investing in green infrastructure can be a good way to contribute to all the well-being goals.

Full details here:

http://www.wtwales.org/sites/default/files/green_infrastructure.pdf

Review of s6 duty

My team meet annually each January to agree our work programme and priorities for the coming financial year. This will be a natural opportunity to discuss how we will further embed our s6 duty into our business activities.

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