



Comisiynydd  
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Dyfodol  
Cymru

**Future  
Generations**  
Commissioner  
for Wales

# **The Future Generations Report 2020: Executive Summaries**



**Let's create the future together**

# Housing

Having a good quality home that meets our needs is vital. It influences our physical and mental well-being, our communities and the environment around us. Poor-quality housing is strongly associated with inequality, poverty and limited life chances. The buildings we live in typically exist for a century or more and so, the decisions we make today will have a profound impact on the well-being of future generations – both directly on their living conditions and more broadly, on Wales’s carbon emissions, our landscape, economy and communities.

The current renewed focus on housing is UK wide, and is being driven by the public, as well as political leadership. This is due to the obvious need to decarbonise our homes to meet emission targets. It is also because housing shortages are impacting many more people than before - unaffordability, lack of social housing, the insecure private rented sector and homelessness are issues that have become more visible and arguably have arisen because long-term thinking and a focus on preventing problems from occurring has been absent or not done effectively.

## Policy Recommendations

### **Welsh Government should find a way to fully incorporate the principles of the United Nations-enshrined Right to Adequate Housing into Welsh housing Policy.**

Welsh Government should...

Within the next, year set out a long-term plan on how they will fund the decarbonisation of homes in line with carbon emissions targets.

Ensure that Design Quality requirements should be updated to reflect the future in terms of smart-homes and assisted living technology.

Work with organisations and communities to set a vision and long-term strategy for the future of housing in Wales.

Require all publicly funded housing developments to be carbon neutral and demonstrate how they are meeting the broader requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

As part of this vision and strategy, implement the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Review, the Independent Review on Decarbonising Welsh Homes and the report from the Homelessness Action Group.

Explore the use of financial levers through the Social Housing grant and Housing Innovation programme to encourage innovation in developing intergenerational housing, and communities, and use taxation levers to incentivise intergenerational house-sharing.

Support and scale up the development of social enterprises to provide jobs and skills in new methods of construction based on models established by Down to Earth and Cartrefi Conwy.

For my process recommendations for both Welsh Government and Public Bodies, please see my full report or its individual chapters.



## Advice on setting well-being objectives for all public bodies and boards covered by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (including Welsh Government)

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Please refer to the chapter on Setting Good Objectives, but in setting their objectives specifically in relation to housing all public bodies and boards covered by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (including Welsh Government) should:

- Ensure they reflect future trends especially demographic changes and the climate and nature emergencies.
- Clearly demonstrate the connections between their well-being objectives and steps on housing and other areas, such as tackling inequality and poverty, the natural environment, fair work, skills, health and well-being.
- Consider the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Review, the Independent Review on Decarbonising Welsh Homes and the report from the Homelessness Action Group.

In setting their steps, public bodies and boards covered by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (including Welsh Government) should focus on the following areas and should:

- Set out how their steps to meet their objectives on housing can align with their objectives on skills, particularly in relation to the construction industry, and development of skills in modern methods of construction, including low carbon build.





**“Sometimes when we talk about housing, we get caught up in the technicalities- the regulations, the planning and specifics, we forget that what we’re really talking about is home.”**

Twitter interaction

## Where are we now? My assessment of housing in Wales

**Action on bringing empty properties back to use is stalling and more needs to be done to support local authorities to address empty properties as a means of meeting their well-being objectives and national goals.**

**Welsh Government should use financial levers through the social housing grant and Innovative Housing Programme to encourage innovation in developing intergenerational housing and communities and use taxation levers to incentivise intergenerational house sharing.**

**Welsh Government have developed a suite of progressive legislation, but challenges remain.**

Devolved housing policy, together with the requirements and ambitions set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, gives Wales the chance to be innovative and bold in overcoming the housing crisis and choosing an approach which is fit for the future. However, the challenges of the housing crisis continue to cause difficulties - for those in need of a suitable, affordable home and those building homes.

**Recent policy reviews have set out how Welsh Government can make more progress on delivering the aspirations in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. They provide an important set of actions which the Government should take to meet a wide range of wellbeing objectives and goals.**

For example, the Independent Review of Affordable Housing Supply, the Decarbonisation of Existing Homes in Wales report and the recent report by the Homelessness Action Group.

**Homelessness remains a significant problem but actions being taken under the Well-being of Future Generations Act have the potential to prevent it.**

Both the Welsh Government Homelessness Strategy and the report of the Homelessness Action Group reinforce the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. An important way for government and public bodies to address these root causes of homelessness is for them to apply the definition of preventative spend.



**Public bodies and Public Services Boards are increasingly recognising the connections between housing and some of their well-being objectives, but more could be done to join all the dots. In particular, more could be done to make the connection between housing and skills.**

44% of small and medium-sized house builders say that a shortage of skilled workers is a major barrier to their ability to build more new homes and yet, few well-being objectives on skills recognise the opportunities to develop skills to meet demand, particularly in terms of modern methods of construction and low carbon housing.

**The housing sector is embracing innovation and making a wider contribution to well-being through the lens of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in its work.**

Good examples include, the regeneration scheme at Tre Cwm estate in Llandudno, the 'Welcome to our Woods' partnership project in Rhondda and 'The Old School Masters House' partnership in Llanrwst.

**Planning Policy Wales 10 provides the right context to build communities not just houses.**

There is no question that if we are to change people's travel habits and reduce our carbon emissions, we need homes in communities that are fit for the future, so well-being objectives on 'housing' should really be about well-connected environments, that help people more around their communities sustainably.

**The Innovative Housing Programme is providing a framework for new ways of building houses in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.**



I advised Welsh Government that they were missing opportunities for broader innovation to address a number of issues simultaneously and as a result, they adapted the criteria to seek innovative ideas that would 'maximise their contribution to all the goals.'

**Parts of the construction industry are embracing the requirements of the Act.**

For example, Constructing Excellence in Wales have gathered the sector together to agree a Declaration that would see them adopt the principle of becoming the 45th body/sector to consider the Act within its operations.

**The public sector needs to demonstrate how it is using all the levers available to it to support zero-waste, including construction.**

The public sector is responsible for between 45-55% of annual construction spend; therefore, the role of public bodies in driving best practice in terms of waste in construction is significant.

**There is evidence of improved collaborative working between the public sector and construction companies but there is still scope for better collaboration.**

A good example is a project taken forward by Flintshire County Council, Wates Residential, North East Wales Homes, the Design Commission for Wales and local town and community councils. The project involved the replacement of a 1950's deck-access maisonettes with 92 council-built, affordable, energy efficient homes in the heart of Flint.



**Housing is recognised a key area in which action must be taken to prevent, adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change.**

In Wales, our 1.4 million homes are responsible for 27% of all energy consumed and 15% of all demand-side greenhouse-gas emissions.

**Welsh Government has put in place policy and legislative commitments, which require the decarbonisation of homes,**

such as the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Environment Act, along with the priorities outlined in 'Prosperity for All'.

**The Independent review of Decarbonising Existing Homes in Wales sets out a series of recommendations which should be adopted,**

such as Welsh Government setting ambitious housing targets to meet its ambition of achieving net-zero by 2050, and putting in place the right quality system and delivery mechanisms across all tenures to help achieve these targets.

**The age and condition of Wales housing stock presents a particular challenge for decarbonisation.**

Wales has the oldest and least thermally-efficient housing stock in the UK, with over a quarter of homes built before 1919. Despite improvements in average energy efficiency, only 47% of homes in Wales were considered to have adequate energy performance.

**In 2020, Wales is still building homes, which do not support our carbon emission targets.**

**The cost of meeting the decarbonisation of housing is significant but it will deliver significant benefits across a number of well-being goals.**

The Institute of Welsh Affairs estimate that £5 billion is needed over 15 years, but that this would generate an increase in Gross Value Added to the Welsh economy of £2.2 billion., saving approximately £67 million in savings to the health service.

**There are excellent examples across Wales of what can be delivered in the social housing sector,**

such as Coastal Housing Association's collaboration with Swansea Council to deliver a zero-carbon development of almost 150 new homes on the outskirts of Swansea.

**Jennings Building, Porthcawl**

This project involved a partnership between: Bridgend County Borough Council, ABA Holdings Ltd (developer), WYG, Austin Partnership, Ellis Williams Architects and Cadw. This scheme secured a sustainable use for a well-known but under-used Grade II listed building - the former abandoned Jennings Warehouse. The building has been redeveloped to provide a restaurant, cafe and live work units, to form an active hub on the Porthcawl seafront. The project's ethos was to bring this building back into active use for locals and visitors alike and, since its opening in September 2017, it is now also providing a catalyst for future regeneration of this area. The Jennings Building is a good example of collaborative working between the developer, project team, the council and stakeholders. A particular challenge was the listed status of the Jennings, coupled with the neighbouring operational nature of the RNLI Lifeboat Centre. A good working relationship was therefore essential and was established early on between the developer, the Harbour Master and the RNLI. There was a significant pre-application discussion between Bridgend County Borough Council and Cadw. The Civic Trust were also heavily involved.



### **Yr Ysgwrn, home of Hedd Wyn**

The partner organisations involved in the Scheme were [Snowdonia National Park Authority](#), [Purcell UK](#) and [Cadw](#).

The scope of this project was to conserve and develop Yr Ysgwrn, home of Hedd Wyn - one of Wales' most sensitive and significant cultural sites - into a sustainable visitor destination. Hedd Wyn, one of Wales' most well-known poets, was killed at battle and was posthumously awarded the bardic chair at the National Eisteddfod 1917.

There was a strong involvement of both Cadw and planners from start to finish. The conservation input was clearly instrumental to the whole process. Its National Park location meant that the team wanted to show an exemplar solution to what is possible in a National Park by combining traditional with modern. The embedding of the development into the landscape was key to its success.

People's experience was at the heart of the design of the project, not an add-on. Gaining and maintaining the trust of the family and local community was, and remains, key to the success of this project. The Community remain involved today by volunteering at the cafe, children having classes at Yr Ysgwrn, and annual open days – there is a true sense of community ownership.

[Coastal Housing Association and Pobl Living, Gwynfaen](#): The scheme will deliver a mixed tenure development of 165 low/zero carbon homes overlooking the Loughor Estuary. The development will enhance the opportunities for the supply chain to achieve economies of scale for the materials and components necessary to achieve zero carbon homes. It will include a new neighbourhood, designed around strong rural design principles, maximising the environmental and health benefits of green infrastructure and landscape. Streets and spaces will incorporate plants and soft landscaping and offer a setting for residents that will encourage walking, cycling and outdoor activities.

## **Below are the areas I recommend that all public bodies, including Welsh Government, should focus on:**

- Increasing the supply of the right type of affordable homes
- Rising to the challenge of the housing crisis
- Seeing housing as a driver of well-being
- Improving the way we plan and design houses
- Decarbonising our homes

For my full evidence, assessment, key findings and advice please see the section on Housing in Chapter 5: Areas of Focus of the Future Generations Report.

