



Future Generations Newsletter February 2022



This month we heard the very sad news that Welsh Language Commissioner Aled Roberts had passed away.

Aled was a man both passionate and practical and a real champion for the Welsh language and for social justice.

Aled was a member of my statutory Advisory Panel, I enjoyed working with him and he will be greatly missed.

Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this time.



Foreword

“The pandemic has given us an opportunity to do things differently - to change the way we treat people, young people especially, and the way we set up society for people in the future –let’s take it.”

Joel McCauley, co-owner of Slunks hair salon, Cardiff.

When most people think about a typical working week, they think of 9 to 5, they think of Monday to Friday, indeed this pattern of labour hasn't changed in 100 plus years.

Yet this system of regimented set hours and presenteeism simply doesn't fit with how we now live our lives, work has changed rapidly. Change is long overdue.

Future trends mean we need to rethink how we work in order to support better mental health through work-life balance and also caring responsibilities.

To not consider these elements of people's lives is to exclude a large number of capable and talented employees from the work force and we have then lost these people's vital perspectives from the decision-making table.

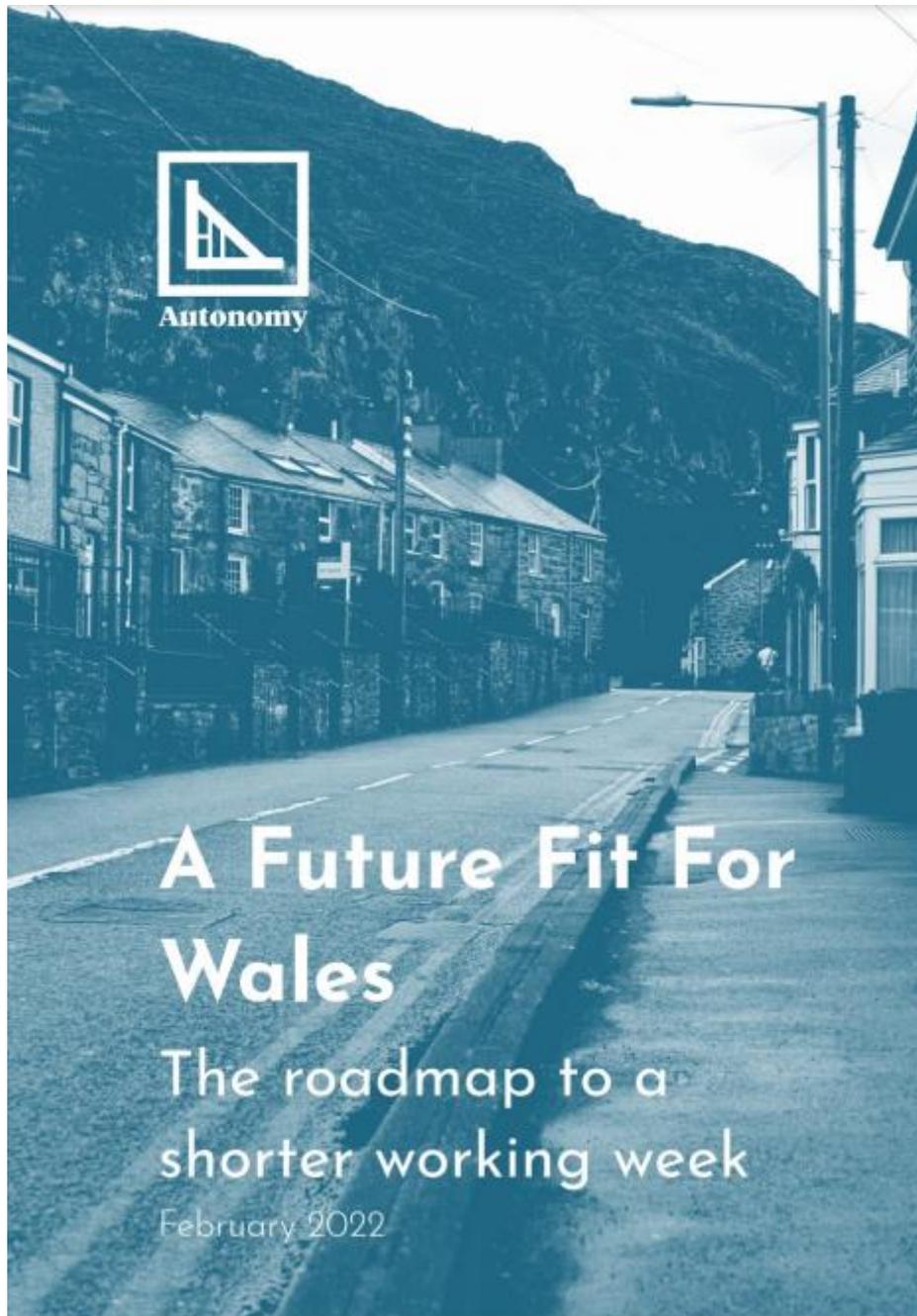
A reduced working week is also better for the planet and can reduce carbon emissions by 30 percent.

In light of this [I have called on the Welsh Government to launch a shorter working week trial](#) which would mean the Welsh public sector could lead the way in this work with people re-evaluating their life priorities following the pandemic.

A [new report](#) by myself and think-tank, Autonomy, shows major appetite for a working time reduction in Wales, with the move also creating potentially 38,000 jobs in Wales.

[It also found:](#)

- *76% of the Welsh public would support the sharing out of work so that everyone can have a good work-life balance.*
 - *62% of the Welsh public would ideally choose to work a four-day working week or less.*
 - *57% of the Welsh public would support the Welsh government piloting a scheme to move towards a four-day working week.*
-



The new report, [A Future Fit for Wales: The roadmap to a shorter working week](#), advocates trialling shorter working hours in parts of the public sector, encouraging and supporting private sector firms to transition to shorter hours and collaborating with and empowering trade unions so they can negotiate shorter hours across diverse workplaces.

Will Stronge, co-director of Autonomy said:

"All the evidence suggests that a shorter working week with no loss of pay would be a win-win for both workers and employers in Wales."

Countries across the world including Scotland and Ireland have already launched four-day week trials and a radical Welsh Government should be leading the way on this too.

Moving to a four-day week would boost productivity and workers' well-being, and create tens of thousands of new jobs in the Welsh public sector. The potential benefits are too large to ignore."

It's clear that following the pandemic, people across Wales are re-evaluating their priorities in life and looking for a healthier work-life balance.

The escalating demands of caring for loved-ones due to an ageing population and an increase in mental health issues exacerbated by working long hours are just some of the factors which make a shorter working week more appealing.

A shorter working week can result in increased productivity which will be of huge benefit to employers for a happier, healthier workforce.

The working week has not changed for more than 100 years, and now seems the perfect opportunity for the Welsh Government to commit to a pioneering trial and build evidence for greater change across Wales.



[Our story: Slunks hair salon](#)

Staff at Slunks hair salon in Cardiff have been working a four-day week without a reduction in pay, since the beginning of the pandemic – and productivity, well-being and turnover have improved, says its co-owner.

Joel McCauley believes passionately that the 38 hours working norm is having a detrimental impact on our mental health, and supports a trial that he says would see Wales lead on the move to a 'healthier way of working'.

Joel left school aged 12 and worked in salons for most of his adult life, where he experienced high stress levels and an 'unhealthy' work-life balance in an industry where he says anxiety is 'rampant'.

"Covid-19 has been incredibly stressful for industries like hairdressing, but it's highlighted some of the issues that have always existed - you can be in a perpetual cycle, work, food, sleep," said Joel, 38, who lives in Newport.

"People don't always realise but working in hairdressing can be extremely draining. I've worked in salons where we were worked like dogs.

I've seen young people in the industry turn to drugs and alcohol because they're exhausted and they don't have the time to make changes to their life.

Six-day weeks, back-to-back clients, moving from job-to-job because they have no time to think or plan what you're going to do next. Anxiety is rampant in the industry and I've suffered with anxiety and depression and it can mainly be attributed to the amount of hours I was working. I got burnt-out."

When Joel opened his own salon in 2011, he wanted to do things differently and set out a long-term plan to move to a shorter working week, and this was accelerated by the pandemic.

From March 2020, all full-time members of staff swapped to a four-day week with no reduction in pay. Part-time members of the team have had pay rises and nobody has had a decrease in pay and the only team members not working four days are apprentices, who will be offered the benefit once they qualify.

"The salon is happier," said Joel.

"This is simply a better, healthier way of working. I genuinely think we aren't meant to work full-time – how many people do you know who are constantly over-worked and unhappy about it?"

"When you have more time, you can think about life in a different way.

At work, you're likely to have more energy and fewer non-productive days.

Outside work, you can be a better person, a better parent, a better member of the community."

"Society isn't working. The current system is broken and based on old-fashioned capitalism."

Joel says he finds it frustrating that other workplaces are slow to change and encourages others to join a movement for the sake of future generations of employees.

He said: *"Thanks to a four-day week, I feel better, staff feel better – we're all working better. We're making more money at busier times, customers love it because they know we appreciate our staff.*

The pandemic has given us an opportunity to do things differently - to change the way we treat people, young people especially, and the way we set up society for people in the future – let's take it."



Chelsea Thompson, salon manager, 28, Tonyrefail, agrees:

"I live a 45-minute drive away from work, so I'm commuting less and when I'm in work, I'm definitely more focused.

Since we've started the four-day week, everyone says they're happier. People feel well-rested, mentally prepared.

That extra day is for me. I go for long walks, listen to a podcast, see friends who don't have weekends off.

It's sad that society has got to the point where people feel like they're working to live.

Time is precious – I really hope other workplaces follow and we can all start leading a more balanced life."

Bradley Ashton, a graduate stylist from Cardiff who has worked there for more than two years, said:

"Having the extra day off helps me stay motivated in my personal life and with fitness, which really helps my mental state.

I'm more motivated at work and I enjoy work a lot more. I'm not so tired and stressed which makes me feel better and I feel really positive at work, and makes me want to do more.

I have a Sunday and Monday off, then I alternate my Tuesday and Wednesday off. I treat my Sunday and Monday days off as my weekend, then I use the other day to get jobs done.

It's really helped me become a much calmer person and I'm a lot happier.

I'm not as stressed as I used to be. I'm all round happier in myself and better mentally.

I definitely think my family and my partner have seen a big change in my mood since I've been on a four day work week."

LGBT+ History Month

This month is LGBT+ History Month – an opportunity to raise awareness of the history of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people.

2022 also marks 50 years since the first Pride event in the UK.

We talked to councillor [Elliott King](#), who is [Swansea Council's Councillor Champion for LGBT+](#), about his role and how it helps support residents.



Can you describe your role as councillor champion for LGBT and how it originated?

Swansea Council has a number of councillor champion roles which have been developed so that each champion has a role to ensure that the particular issue or group are taken into consideration when developing Council policy and taking decisions.

As part of my specific role I Chair the Swansea Bay LGBT forum which brings together lots of organisations and individuals across the region to share experiences and developments in our different organisations.

What kind of feedback have you had from residents on how having a councillor champion has helped or supported them?

I often am contacted by residents who need some specific support and feel more comfortable talking to me, specifically when this is related to an LGBT issue, such as housing needs or an issue with Council services.

I am then able to support a resident through their issue and also help to make a positive change in the Council.

Having a champion also makes the issues visible within the Council and I get requests for advice and support from Council staff as well around LGBT issues.

I helped set up an LGBT staff network within the Council and support staff with specific issues they wanted to raise in the council.

The support can also involve supporting residents to liaise with the Police and other services when they have been subjected to hate crime.

What progress have you see during your time in the role?

The Swansea Bay LGBT forum has really grown in strength and focused on the networking and sharing information areas which I think has really helped organisations across the region communicate with each other and share best practice.

We have also developed a more informal approach recently with engagement walks and chats.

I was also able to support a restart of Swansea Pride in 2018 which has gone from strength to strength.

Overall the Council has been supportive and proactive in supporting LGBT issues, with venues across the Council supporting programming and listening to the needs of residents who identify as LGBT.



During the pandemic I was able to participate in an all Wales Zoom call with various LGBT organisations to identify and respond to specific LGBT issues during the pandemic and raise these locally.

Where is there more work to be done? What is your vision for a future Wales?

We have a great opportunity at the moment with the Welsh Government bringing forward an LGBT action plan for Wales and my hope is that this will continue to embed LGBT rights across Wales for the future.

I want to see a Wales that is free from hate crime, which has sadly been increased, so that everyone can just be who they want to be.

I also hope that locally we can continue to do the same and develop a local action plan for LGBT.

How can people get involved in your work as councillor champion or find out more information?

Look out for the events the [Swansea Bay LGBT forum](#) holds, everyone is welcome to join us.

I have a [Twitter](#) page as well where I share things.

Finally get involved with Swansea Pride which is back on 30th April this year.

Movement for Change

“The young people who took part in the workshops were articulate, passionate and committed.”

My team talked to **Aimee Parker** a freelance consultant who worked with Cwm Taf and Bridgend Public Service Boards (PSBs) on a futures exercise with young people in the region.

“Unless we can visualise and really ‘feel’ a better future then it is unlikely that we will achieve or create it.”

This premise underpinned a recent project led by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) – The Better Futures Wales Project (in partnership with the School of International Futures) which used futures thinking to stretch the shared imagination about possibilities for the future.

We featured the work of the WCVA in our [June](#) and [July](#) newsletters.

Most recently Cwm Taf and Bridgend Public Service Boards, who are currently working on their well-being assessments, used this approach as they wanted to hear from young people to understand the future they want and importantly, what they think needs to change in order to secure it.

The PSB's worked with myself and Dafydd Thomas, also a freelance consultant, to take participants on a journey starting with 'dreaming big' using positive 'Seeds of Change'.

This exercise enabled the co-creation of the following 'Preferred Futures Statements' representing the future that the young people would like to see. This included:

1. **The environment is clear of pollution and climate change is taken very seriously.**
2. **Well-being and positive mental health are prioritised and not stigmatised.**
3. **People feel connected and have strong supportive networks.**
4. **Everyone has equal access to opportunities including skills, training and employment. Education is about celebrating diversity and different ways of learning.**

The [three horizons methodology](#) was used to encourage workshop participants to consider how these 'Preferred Futures Statements' compared to the world they live in today.

They also went on to explore the challenges and obstacles they currently face in achieving the preferred future.

The sessions were an opportunity to explore some of the issues of interest to the young people in Cwm Taf and Bridgend Public Service Board areas.

The young people who took part in the workshops were articulate, passionate and committed.

They participated fully and appeared to enjoy the experience and the opportunity to articulate what was important to them.

This project represents the start of a conversation and the insights from it can now be used as a springboard for further conversations and debate in the development of the respective Well-being Plans.

Meet the Team

Each month we will be publishing a Q&A with a member of the team who will share some insights into their time with the Commissioner's office.

*This month, it's **Eurgain Powell** who started with the team back in 2016.*



When did you start with the office and what was the first piece of work you did in your new role?

I started working for the office on 1 April 2016 when I was transferred across from Cynnal Cymru – Sustain Wales.

The first few months were spent setting ourselves up, recruiting staff, but also going out to meet with all the 44 Public Bodies so I attended a few of those meetings with Sophie.

The first big piece of work I got my teeth into was writing our evidence to submit to the Public Inquiry on the M4 relief road!

What changes have you noticed over the years?

There have been lots of changes over the last 6 years – both in our office (lots of staff coming and going) but also in how the Act is being understood and implemented by Public Bodies as well as other stakeholders in Wales.

We're very much still on the journey but I feel that since the pandemic there seems to be a lot more appetite for changing things for the better and exploring new ways of working.

I'm hoping that people will continue to explore these opportunities and not revert back to the 'old ways of working'.

What has been your proudest moment?

I've had quite a few proud moments during my time at the office so it's hard to choose one!

A few stand-out moments include the decision from Mark Drakeford MS as First Minister to cancel the M4 relief road in June 2019, and I was chuffed to be asked to sit on the Roads Review Panel set up recently by the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS.

I also feel fortunate to have been able to attend COP26 in Glasgow last year which was an amazing experience. I feel proud of all the reports I've written since being at the FGC office



([10-Point Plan to Fund Wales' Climate Emergency](#), [Transport Fit for Future Generations](#), [Procuring Well-Being in Wales](#), [Homes fit for the Future: The Retrofit Challenge](#)) but the stand-out proudest moment is probably listening to the [speech](#) delivered by Sion Sleep at the launch of Welsh Government's first Low Carbon Plan at the Coal Exchange in March 2019. It was the first time he'd ever spoken in front of so many people, and he was so nervous, but delivered a cracker!

What has been your biggest piece of learning in your time with the office?

Everything is connected!! We have such a huge opportunity in Wales with the Act – a legal duty that also gives us all a really clear purpose – to make things better for people now as well as for our future generations.

But we still see people carrying on doing things without really questioning why. We still have too many silos, pockets of people working on things but not connecting up with others, so ultimately making things more confusing.

Collaboration can be difficult and time-consuming, but it is SO worth-while. As the saying goes - *You will go faster alone, but we'll go further together.*

So I would encourage everyone to lift their heads up, look around, and start making new connections because we will achieve so much more when we see the bigger picture and we work together!

What is your foremost hope as the work of the office continues into the future?

We've still got a big job to do!

The remit of the Act and the Commissioner is vast, and we're only a very small office, so it's always been a huge challenge to try and work across all 44 Public Bodies on all the areas we could support, as well as speaking to all those with an interest in adopting the Act as well!



We've seen lots of impact from our work already so I hope this will continue, and I hope that we will continue to 'build a movement' to connect and help mobilise all the Future Generations champions that there are across Wales, so that they're able to influence better decision making locally to improve well-being of people and communities.

I worry about lack of action to address the Climate Emergency so I hope we can bring an ongoing focus to that. It's also very exciting to see other countries, including the UN, interested in adopting the Act so it'll be interesting to watch the global movement develop too.

What advice would you give to new team members?

Gosh this is a tough question!

Our office is incredibly fast-paced so I can imagine new members might feel it's difficult to keep up.

And I realise it's so much harder when we're not in an office together where you can have more informal conversation to keep up with what's going on.

So my advice would be to keep asking questions (don't be willing to accept the status quo!), keep exploring issues, ideas and solutions that have worked elsewhere, look for those connections (because there'll always be some) and join the dots as often as you can.

It's an ongoing challenge!

One word that sums up your time at the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales:

Roller-coaster!



We're recruiting!



WE'RE RECRUITING!
HEAD OF FINANCE

find out more on our website:

futuregenerations.wales/careers

Can you ensure an organisation is fully compliant with statutory requirements while also walking the talk of the WFG Act and finding innovative solutions to problems?

[We're looking for a Head of Finance to join us!](#)

Closing date: Thursday 17th March 2022

Are you passionate about achieving change in Wales' public sector and have expertise in policy areas relating to nature, climate change and decarbonisation?

[We're looking for a Change Maker \(Nature, Climate Change and Decarbonisation\) to join us!](#)

Closing date: Friday 18th March 2022



Have your say on the future of Wales's natural environment

With the world experiencing a climate and a nature emergency, we urgently need a **national conversation** about the future of our natural resources, and to do something about it, before it's too late.

Nature and Us provides an opportunity for everyone in Wales to have their say on the future of our natural environment. What needs to change about the way we live our lives – especially the food we grow and eat, the way we travel and how we generate and use energy? How can we help reduce the effects of climate change and reverse biodiversity loss? We want practical ideas for governments, organisations and individuals to focus on, so we can all work towards sustainability together.

The national conversation will examine our relationship with nature and our food, energy and travel systems – and explore how they all affect climate change and the natural environment.

Nature and Us is an opportunity to share your thoughts today and help decide what path Wales takes towards a more sustainable future. Have your say today at

<https://freshwater.eventsbase.com/EN/Natureandus>



Contact Us

Want to catch up on previous issues of the newsletter? You can find them on our website [here](#).

For more information get in contact here:

futuregenerations.wales / futuregenerations2020.wales

contactus@futuregenerations.wales

@futuregencymru

Please note the office is currently closed and the best way to contact us is via our email address above.

