



Future Generations Newsletter August 2022



Foreword

Our children are growing up in a vastly different world to the one I grew up in. In many ways I was lucky that I didn't grow up with climate anxiety, the pressures of social media and the increasing worry around cost of living and access to decent work.

I didn't grow up thinking about the constant danger our planet was in, or if my years in school would teach me the right skills for the future, or if I'd have a say about what happens in my community. But this is the reality for young people today.

This month saw A-Level and GCSE results day for thousands across Wales and with exams being cancelled the last two years due to the pandemic, those sitting their exams this year have been at an inherent disadvantage; not only because of the disruption to their education, but also because exams only test a small part of your skills.

Simply, our obsession with exams is failing to equip young people with the right skills to ensure a green and just recovery for Wales.



1 - Schoolchildren studying in 1947.



2 - Today. Have we really changed how we teach future generations?

Since 2019 I've been [calling for reform to exams](#) with a move to more skills based assessments with greater focus on local and global issues including democracy, solidarity and climate change. I'm pleased that changes to the new Curriculum for Wales are providing some solutions and my team

are advising Qualifications Wales on [Qualified for the Future: re-imagining GCSEs](#), but we need to do more and faster.

Last May, [my work with NEF and Wales TUC](#) showed that a low carbon, biodiverse and equal future depends on having the right skills and training in place for green jobs and skills. As the economy and our behaviours change, the demand for many traditional skills in Wales will no longer exist and industries that have kept Wales afloat will be drastically different.

We must ensure the people of Wales are ready for the green revolution of employment which will not only improve quality of life but help to tackle the climate and nature emergencies.



My team have been advising Welsh Government on the upcoming Net Zero Wales Skills Action Plan. Working with an expert panel of equality organisations and net zero carbon advisors, we're encouraging collaborative and integrated policy-making that seeks to create a green and equal future.

We are also advising Government on how the [Young Person's Guarantee](#) and other employment and training programmes can be focused on skills that are fit for the future of life and work.

UK Research and Innovation recently published a report, [Insights for urban systems](#), where they engaged with 250 young people from across the UK to hear their views about the changes that were important to them and that they think would help their locality to achieve net zero.

Young people and our future generations are the inheritors of our towns, cities and communities. And they deserve to be involved and have their voices heard as we develop them.



That's why I've been asking the Government to:

- *Ensure young people and adults are eco-literate*
 - *Apply a culture-based approach for city, town and community regeneration*
 - *Create a National Nature Service and invest in key infrastructure projects in green industries and nature restoration*
 - *Invest and increase opportunities for retraining, reskilling and transitioning to changing industries*
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As part of ensuring I walk the talk and involve young people in my work, I've taken on four young people as paid interns to work with me over the Summer on:

- My Section 20 work around how Welsh Government are implementing the WFG Act; and

- My work collaborating with One Voice Wales to identify examples of how Town and Community Councils have implemented the WFG Act.

Keep an eye out in next month's newsletter for a feature from them on what they've been working on!

And if you're a Parish and Town Councillor, or just interested in how Councils and local communities can embed the Well-being of Future Generations Act in everything they do, sign up to join '[Playing a Key Role in Creating Green and Resilient Communities](#)'. An online course over 3 evenings, you'll learn how local government structures can make neighbourhoods and homes more sustainable and build community resilience. Find out more, including how to buy tickets, [here](#).

Movement for Change

This month my team spoke to Rhiannon Freshney from Velindre University NHS Trust about their green social prescribing work with Ray of Light Cancer Support and how they're enabling local communities to connect with nature, develop their eco-literacy and engage with their local communities.



Ray of Light Cancer Support

Velindre Cancer Centre and Ray of Light Cancer Support have formed a partnership to provide weekly free green social prescribing sessions in a non-judgemental space for anyone affected by cancer. The attendees range from staff, patients, carers and families who are all enabled to connect with nature and their local community, with each session ending in a mindfulness activity.

The weekly groups are restorative and provide a supportive space to engage in crafts with natural and found materials, embedding the circular economy through activities such as working with paints made from vegetables, whittling found wood and weaving baskets with branches found on a nature walk.

The partnership aims to embed each well-being goal, notably A Healthier Wales with Cohesive Communities, by building a new supportive community for service users that have their own experiences with cancer.

The sessions are all outdoors, surrounded by nature and facilitate service users to meet people face to face, an important factor during an especially stressful time following COVID-19's isolative measures.

Another key element of the project was inclusivity, contributing to A More Equal Wales. During cancer treatment, many patients will suffer financial difficulties and by partnering with a charity, the sessions are able to be provided free of charge, reducing economic barriers to participate. There is no requirement for a GP or doctor referral and each activity is fully adaptable to meet any and all needs, ensuring the sessions are as inclusive as possible.

A core aim of the project is to educate about biodiversity, contributing to a Resilient Wales. The sessions provide information and interesting facts about local flora and fauna and maintains and enhances biodiversity through activities, aligning with Section 6 of the Environment Wales Act.



By introducing a bespoke green social prescribing session for people specifically affected by cancer, it addresses both social isolation but also addresses fears of isolation from people who have not experienced the same as you.

Rhiannon noted that the response and feedback from attendees *“has been emotional, humbling and overwhelming at times”* with attendees opening up about their personal experiences or experience supporting others.

Engaging with local community groups Hybs, primary schools, shops alongside continual promotion on social media and websites has successfully promoted the sessions, ensuring that each session is well attended.

“One attendee had lost her husband the week before and it was the first time she had left the house, she had seen our poster and has always connected with nature when stressed and finds a reprieve in creativity.

Within five minutes of getting emotional, the attendee was laughing again, which illustrates why this partnership is so important.

Although there is potentially a lot of emotion, support and connection with others inevitably always ends in laughter and enjoyment.”



There has also been significant engagement with clinical teams across the Trust. Following enthusiastic approval from the Senior Leadership Team there has been extensive engagement with senior medical teams, nursing, occupational health and most importantly our Patient Liaison Group and Dignity Group, all with patient and union representatives.

Positive to see that feedback from attendees has been hugely positive, with many commenting on the difference it has made to their overall well-being while connecting with others who share similar experiences.

“Many a friend has been made over a cup of tea!”

Find out more about Velindre’s work with Ray of Light Cancer Support and how you can get involved on their [website](#) or via their social media: [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).



Spotlight on Public Bodies

The pandemic has showed us just how important accessible high-quality parks and green spaces are to our communities and well-being with its positive impact on air quality, benefits to our mental and physical health and helping to reduce inequality.

Earlier this month the Green Flag Award Winners were announced with numerous Welsh local authorities and public bodies receiving an award.

The benchmark for parks and green spaces in the UK and beyond, the Green Flag Award is awarded for exceptional parks and green spaces. Flags are awarded for areas that have excellent visitor facilities, high environmental standards and commitment to delivering great quality green spaces.

Which is why it's great to see local authorities from across Wales receiving awards in recognition of their hard work. 248 sites across Wales have been awarded in total with 145 of those being Community Awarded sites.

Wales still holds more than a third of the UK's Green Flag community sites, which are maintained and run by volunteers.



Flintshire Council has now been awarded 3 Flags which will be flying at Wepre Park, Bailey Hill and Greenfield Valley in recognition of their excellent visitor facilities, high environmental standards, and commitment to delivering great quality green space.

“The diverse range of wildlife and historic features of these parks are of great interest to residents and tourists and are a credit to Flintshire and something to be proud of. They have become a hub for local people and visitors, and are held in high regard within our local community and to receive this Award for 2022/23 is an honour.”

Cllr David Healey, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Countryside and Economy



3 - Alyn Waters Country Park, Wrexham County Borough Council

Eight areas in **Wrexham County Borough Council** have retained their coveted Green Flag Award. These areas include:

- Acton Park
- Alyn Waters Country Park
- Bellevue Park
- Ponciau Banks Park
- Tŷ Mawr Country Park
- Wrexham Cemetery
- Maes y Pant (Community Award)
- Plas Pentwyn (Community Award)

Ten of their country parks are also protected for future generations under the Open Green Spaces initiative operated by Fields in Trust which ensures they will remain areas the public can enjoy for generations to come.



The **Vale of Glamorgan Council** has won a Green Flag award for 10 sites, emerging as one of the top performing authorities in Wales.

Cosmeston and Porthkerry country parks both received the accolade, along with Romilly Park, Alexandra Park and Windsor Gardens, Barry Island Seafront and Friars Point, Belle Vue Park, Central Park, The Knap Gardens, Victoria Park and Gladstone Park.

16 prestigious Green Flags have been awarded to parks and green spaces managed by **Cardiff Council**. With 19% of the city now publicly accessible green space, Cardiff is home to many beautiful Green Flag sites.

CLlr Jennifer Burke-Davies, Cabinet Member for Culture, Parks and Events said *"The fact that Cardiff has more Green Flag spaces than anywhere else in Wales is a credit to the hard work, passion and commitment of our teams, and all the Friends groups and volunteers who help care for our fantastic green spaces."*



4 - Grange Gardens, Cardiff Council

Bridgend County Borough Council received awards for seven green spaces across the county borough in recognition of their high environmental standards and commitment to delivering great quality green space. Coychurch Crematorium won its Green Flag for the 13th consecutive year, while Tremains Wood has been awarded the accolade for a second year running and received praise from the judges for their high quality of work in a short space of time, after only beginning the project in 2019.

Merthyr Tydfil Council was awarded a record number of Green Flags for Council and community-run parks and gardens, currently ranking it sixth in the table of 22 local authority areas across Wales! A total 16 green spaces – three CBC parks and Aberfan Cemetery and 12 community projects – were given or retained the prestigious awards.

You can find the full list of awarded sites in Wales [here](#) and learn more about the importance of accessible high quality green spaces [here](#).



5 - Tremains Wood, Bridgend County Brough Council

Meet the Team

Each month we will be publishing a Q&A with a member of my team who will share their insights into their time with my Office.

This month it's Colleen Cluett, our Change Maker Support. As the Point of Contact for several national public bodies and local public bodies in South East Wales, Colleen supports our work with public bodies in Wales in addition to her work responding to the numerous requests our office receives.



When did you start with the office?

June 2021

What are your current priorities?

I am part of our Public Bodies and Public Services Boards (PSB) Team. Within this team my work focusses on providing and coordinating our advice and assistance to public bodies and public services boards; being a named contact to organisations in South East Wales and nationally and contributing to our consultation work with PSBs on their well-being plans. I also support our people and culture work.



What changes have you noticed over the years?

Over my year in the Office, I've noticed the shift as we look towards the end of Sophie's term, reflecting on the impact of the Act, Sophie's legacy and the work of the Office, and preparing for the next commissioner.

What has been your proudest moment?

Seeing and hearing about how public bodies and others are embracing the Act to do things that improve life for people in Wales now and in the future is a privilege. It makes me very proud to contribute to that.

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

Always go back to the five ways of working!



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

That we see the public sector in Wales, the Welsh public and others continue to be inspired by and use the Act to change their business as usual and achieve sustainable development and that this is a beacon for change globally.

What advice would you give to new team members?

Be curious, reach out to colleagues and projects that interest or inspire you and be patient! It takes a while to get your head around everything happening in the Office at any one time (I'm still figuring that out 14 months in!)

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

Exciting

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:

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