



Comisiynydd  
Cenedlaethau'r  
Dyfodol  
Cymru

**Future  
Generations**  
Commissioner  
for Wales

# A government fit for **future generations**

A Review into Welsh Government's  
implementation of the Well-being of  
Future Generations Act

**Acting today  
for a better tomorrow**

[futuregenerations.wales](https://futuregenerations.wales)

12 / 12 / 2022





### **The Well-being of Future Generations Act sets in law a common national vision for well-being in Wales.**

It introduces the four dimensions of well-being (environmental, social, cultural and economic) which paint a holistic picture of well-being in Wales. The Act also creates the role of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. The Commissioner's main role is to help public bodies change their behaviours and follow the new requirements of the Act to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the people of Wales.

The duty of the Commissioner, as specified in law, is to promote the sustainable development principle (which states that public bodies should try to make sure that the needs of current generations are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs), act as the guardian of future generations needs and help public bodies to think long term. You can read more about the Act and the Commissioner [here](#).

1. Introduction
2. People and Culture
3. Process
4. Public Sector Leadership
5. Conclusion

# Introduction

**The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 came into force in 2016, setting out a duty for specified public bodies in Wales, including Welsh Government, to carry out sustainable development.**

Wales was the first country in the world that dared to enshrine its commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals into the law – a brave step for any government and it has rightly been commended internationally for it.

*"What Wales is doing today;  
the world will do tomorrow."*

**United Nations**

The Act represented a decisive step towards long-term decision-making and shifting away from short-termism, something that is endemic in decision-making across the world.

**The aim of the Act is to create a better, brighter future for our current and future generations and stop us from making decisions that can harm us both today and tomorrow.**

There is still a way to go to achieve the ambitious vision that the seven well-being goals set out for a sustainable Wales, but we have already come a long way from how things were before the legislation was first introduced. Over the last seven years, since the Act has been introduced, I have seen a positive shift in the way Welsh Government and public bodies are doing things; with many good examples of bold new policies and decisions aiming to address the needs of our current generations while protecting the needs of our future ones. Organisational culture is shifting from one of siloed short-term thinking to one that is aware of the need for integration and consideration of wider long-term implications.

The Welsh Government, positively, has chosen to integrate its commitments to the Act in the two Programmes for Government they have published since the passing of the law (these are the core documents that guide what Welsh Government does and the commitments it makes to the people of Wales). In Welsh Government's latest Programme for Government, they have committed to tackling big issues like climate change in an urgent and joined-up way. They are also attempting to pilot progressive new policies such as the Care Leavers Basic Income which aims to tackle the root causes of longer-term problems. They are developing policies in new ways, with an emphasis on involving citizens and partners, such as the new Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and the Social Partnership Council.

There has also been a marked change in the way Welsh Government is implementing the Act through a number of decisions and targets, for example, in the areas of decarbonisation, transport and waste.

While the Covid-19 pandemic has been a break and barrier to progress in many areas, it has also shown many ways in which progress can be expedited. The Act is a tool and a framework that can help us build adaptive and flexible civil service which is prepared for future crises. As we take our next step forward on Wales' journey towards sustainability, it is now necessary for us to see how we can build on the lessons we have learned.

It is very clear that the Act has traction within and beyond the public sector. This review has identified huge enthusiasm for both the vision it sets out and indeed the fact that it uniquely places Wales as a country that has its long-term vision set out in law. This is an attractive proposition for business, the public and voluntary sector as it mitigates the uncertainty of changing political priorities and provides the opportunity for organisations and leaders across all sectors to corral around a vision and consider how they can contribute to it as part of a 'Team Wales approach'. The power of this should not be underestimated and could be utilised further as a way of driving progress across all sectors in Wales.

The challenges and opportunities of the future will require a government of the future – one that looks for new ways to involve the public, understand their needs, and measures the impact of policies and decisions. It will need to be more adaptive, flexible and better prepared for crises, include a wider range of skills and expertise, and have a clear vision of what it wants for the future of Wales.



# Section 20 Review Findings

## Overarching findings

- The Act and the extent to which it has been embedded in the DNA of Welsh public policy development and delivery continues to be world leading.
- The reach of the Act, enthusiasm and commitment for what it aims to achieve has extended beyond those organisations who are covered by the legislation.
- Its success to date has resulted more from leadership and commitment than embedded processes.
- Clear leadership, continual communication and constant review will be needed for the government to move successfully to the next phase of implementation.

## Findings:

In the Methodology section below, I have set out the structure of this review around three key features – **People and Culture**, **Process** and **Public Sector Leadership**. These are the findings that were identified during this review in each of the three features:

### People and Culture



1. There is a sense of pride and enthusiasm in this world-leading legislation, but there is some discrepancy between the level of enthusiasm and commitment and a detailed understanding of application.
2. There is a plethora of learning materials around the Act – while some material is good, the government should seek to better understand what works and build on innovative approaches being adopted in some parts of government.
3. There are concerted efforts to embed long-term thinking across government, but the need to respond to multiple crises and capacity are often seen as barriers to civil servants fully applying this way of working.

### Process



4. The Act is driving changes in the ways policies are being developed, designed and implemented but it is not yet being consistently applied in a way which embeds all aspects of the Act, or across the whole organisation.
5. There are a range of accountability mechanisms to provide Ministers and senior colleagues with assurance that the Act is being embedded and implemented in how the government works, but they are not all utilised effectively.

### Public Sector Leadership



6. There is untapped potential for Welsh Government to work with the Welsh public sector and beyond to deliver the Well-being of Future Generations Act to mobilise, promote good examples, create resources, and share learning.

My recommendation to Welsh Government, which they have accepted is that:

**Welsh Government should continue to take action to continually improve how the Well-being of Future Generations Act drives its work to support Welsh Ministers deliver their well-being objectives, act in accordance with the sustainable development principle and, by doing so, maximise their contribution to the national well-being goals. In doing so, Welsh Government should publish a plan, setting out the improvements they will make, which address the findings and areas of improvement outlined in this Section 20 Report.**

**This should include timescales for the delivery of actions and arrangements for reporting annually, monitoring, and reviewing progress, and how it will collaborate with others (including the Commissioner's office) to ensure that Welsh Government can remain at the forefront of the well-being of future generations agenda. Welsh Government should work openly with the Commissioner to monitor the progress of this plan. Welsh Government should report on the progress of this plan alongside their annual report.**

Throughout the last seven years, hardly a week has gone by without myself, or my team, being told that people in Wales are proud of the Act; that those outside are envious that we have it; that they have decided to relocate to live and work in Wales because of it; or they are starting to use it as a framework within their organisations. The Act is giving inspiration to other governments in the UK and to those on the other side of the world, including the United Nations. It is acting as a framework for action for the Football Association of Wales who are setting a plan to become the most sustainable football association in the world; and it is driving Dŵr Cymru, the Principality, the South Wales Industrial Cluster, to name a few, on their journey to sustainability. It is informing the work of local authorities, health boards and housing associations in England, as well as social enterprises across Wales and it has become a vision which an increasing number of community groups are getting behind.

*The UN Secretary General's landmark report 'Our Common Agenda' recognises that young people must be at the heart of political processes at national and global level in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.*

*Our vision for a UN Special Envoy for Future Generations is inspired by the progress being made in some countries around the world, including Wales, which demonstrates that it is possible to legislate and take action to put the interest of future generations at the heart of government."*

**Jayathma Wickramanayake,**  
United Nations Secretary-General's  
Envoy on Youth

*"Working with the Future Generations Commissioner, we're committed to inspiring others and working together with people and organisations across Cymru today to make a better tomorrow. Gorau chwarae cyd chwarae. Let's work together. Likewise, we're integral to Welsh Government's vision for sport to be a part of Cymru's story as a globally responsible nation that cares. We'll also be working towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and engaging with UEFA's football sustainability strategy 2030. One brick at a time, we'll build a red wall at home and around the world."*

**Noel Mooney**  
Chief Executive of the Football  
Association of Wales

The challenge will be for the government to capitalise on this and ensure that they are leading, supporting and challenging others to continue to use the Act to guide difficult decisions and prioritisation of resources in the wake of economic challenges within the UK and the consequential cost-of-living crisis facing families across Wales. The government must use the Act to avoid placing temporary 'sticking plasters' on problems and instead seek to address root causes. They must invest limited resources in policies which address the current financial and social challenges facing families and communities, and also deliver longer-term benefits. The machinery and infrastructure of government must systematically apply the five ways of working, enshrined in the Act, to ensure that every policy is developed and implemented in a way which drives multiple long-term benefits.

For this to happen, we need to ensure government has in place mechanisms that enable innovation to continue and grow; to ensure that its processes and governance are constructively challenging the system to go further in applying the Act and that they are showing leadership by supporting others in their own learning and application of the Act.

This is why I decided to undertake a Section 20 review<sup>1</sup> into the systems and mechanisms behind the bold new decisions and policies of Welsh Government, to ensure that the machinery behind the vision is stretching itself to delivering properly. Should political will change or the inevitable pull of crisis management deepen, it will be for the machinery of government to ensure that the statutory duties of the Act are met. The machinery of government – the way it advises Ministers and the process by which it designs and delivers policies for Wales, the way in which it manages, supports, and considers the performance of the organisation and the way in which it models the behaviours the Act requires in its interactions with others – are all critical areas for the principles, approaches and behaviour enshrined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act to be used effectively.

Encouragingly, Welsh Government have started to work on their 'Future Generations Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan' at this time, which meant that my review's findings could be integrated to help ensure that the processes, culture and leadership in government are continually improving and working to deliver the Act.



Sophie Howe



"The whole concept of the future leaders and indeed legislating to ensure the well-being of future generations is something i would like to transfer directly across the Irish sea."

**Simon Coveney,**  
 Irish Foreign Minister

"We shouldn't be trying to adapt and adjust everything to fit GDP as a measurement. There are evaluation components and metrics that are far more dynamic than GDP. In Wales planned public sector projects are evaluated and appraised by the Future Generations Commissioner who mandated to make recommendations based on the impacts of those yet to be born."

**Mariana Mazzucato**  
 World renowned economist and adviser to the UN, OECD and World Economic Forum

## Why are we doing this review?

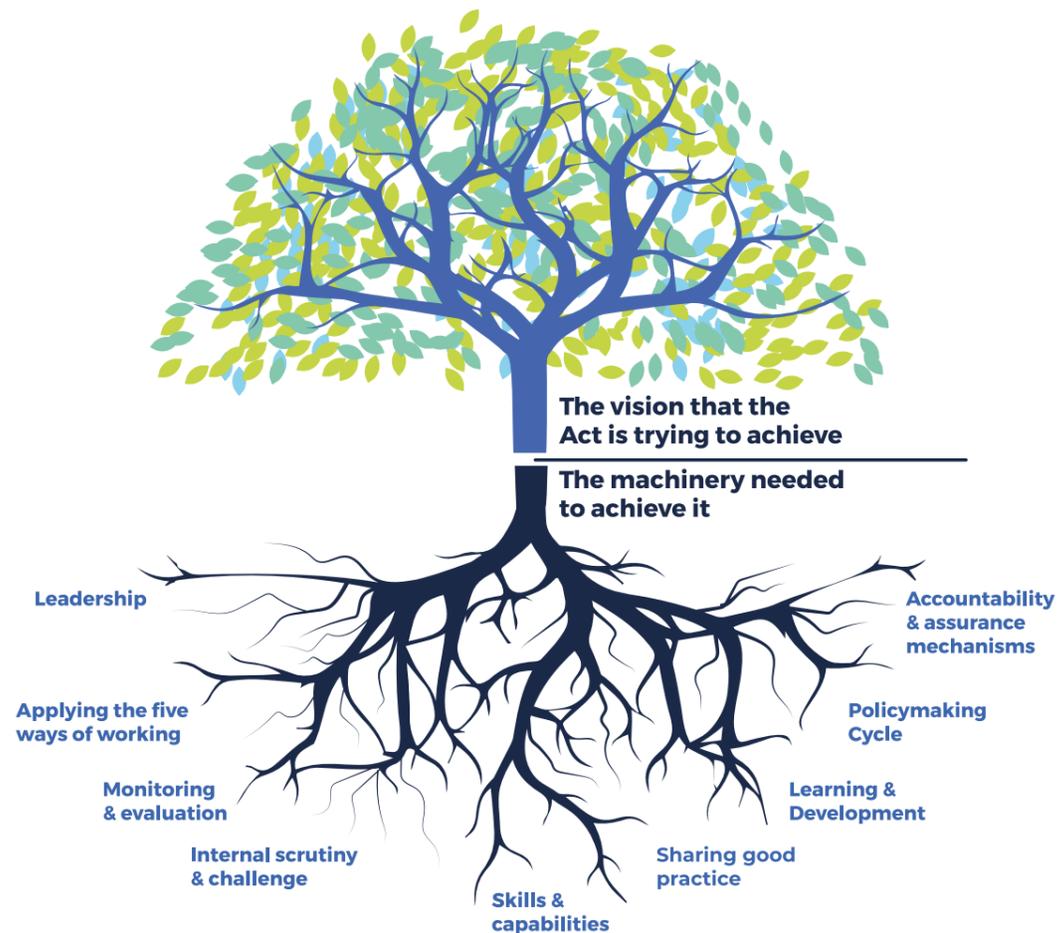
The Act was introduced to ensure that we create a better future for our current and future generations. One of its aims was to make sustainable development the central organising principle that guides how Welsh Government and public bodies operate. Therefore, the duties and vision of the Act aspire to drive better decisions but also better decision-making, meaning both the 'what' – (the policy and resource choices made) is being done and the 'how' (the way in which they are implemented in line with Act) are equally important.

While much has been said and written over the years about the various policies, such as Planning Policy Wales and the new Wales Transport Strategy, and actions Welsh Government is taking (such as the road moratorium) to implement the Act, the machinery behind decision-making, the 'how' behind the 'what' is being done, has not been explored as much.

The aim of this Section 20 review is to explore precisely this – how Welsh Government applies the Act and meets its duties in the design, development, and delivery of policy decisions. I was specifically interested to see the implementation of Welsh Government's well-being objectives set out in their Programme for Government<sup>2</sup>. The aim was to identify good practice and areas for improvements that may be required to continue the journey of embedding the Act into Welsh Government's processes, culture and leadership.

<sup>1</sup>The Act gives the Commissioner, under section 20, a power to carry out a review into the extent to which a public body is safeguarding the ability of future generations to meet their needs by taking account of the long-term impact of the things the body does under their well-being duty (section 3). In conducting such a review, the Commissioner may make recommendations and must publish a report of the review.

<sup>2</sup>Under the Act, Welsh Government and other public bodies are required to set and publish well-being objectives that maximise contribution to the seven national well-being goals. They must then take all reasonable steps to achieve them.



I have drawn on a range of evidence to determine that a review at this time will be helpful, including my own Future Generations Report (2020), which all highlighted barriers and areas for improvement associated with implementation of the Act within Welsh Government.

*"In the steps we reviewed, the Welsh Government was applying the five ways of working in various ways although we identified some common opportunities for improvement... The Welsh Government could improve its evidence of the long-term impact of the steps and build its understanding of prevention."*

**Audit Wales (2019)**

*"The implementation of the cultural change required by Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act has not been sufficiently resourced – both within government and for the public bodies they sponsor... In seeking to close this implementation gap, Welsh Government should be applying the ways of working in how they design, resource, deliver and evaluate the implementation of policy and legislation."*

**Future Generations Report 2020**

*"The Welsh Ministers were slow to implement and promote the Act in the years immediately after it was passed. Consequently, the Welsh civil service did not implement the Act well enough internally and did not make it clear to public bodies that it expected them to do so too. This has been a fundamental barrier to implementation, the impact of which is still evident across the public sector today."*

**Public Accounts Committee (2021)**

Through this review, we looked at how the Welsh Government is ensuring their **processes, people and culture** and **public sector leadership** act in accordance with the sustainable development principle and take greater account of the long-term impact of the things they do.

This review will also help me and my team to support other public bodies by drawing on the learnings from Welsh Government.

### Methodology

This review aims to explore how the machinery of Welsh Government is implementing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. I have drawn on multiple sources, including the United Nations Principles for Effective Governance for Sustainable Development and Welsh Government's Framework for embedding the Well-being of Future Generations Act, to identify the key governance features that can drive the implementation of the Act.

As the legislation is designed to permeate how government and public bodies work, I decided to focus this review on three key features to help draw out findings and conclusions that can support Welsh Government in how they continually improve their implementation of the Act in the future.

### People & Culture

The implementation of the Act goes beyond process and needs to be embedded in the organisational culture in order to ensure it is not seen as a mere tickboxing exercise.

### Public Sector Leadership

Good practice should be shared with others to enable them to also implement the Act.



### Processes

In order to establish the initial embedding of the Act, as well as consistency across the organisation and longevity that outlasts the change of staff and senior leadership, the right processes need to be in place to ensure the implementation of the legislation.

To allow me to deepen my understanding on how the Act is being implemented within the machinery of Welsh Government, the review looked at government mechanisms through the lens of Welsh Government's well-being steps relating to Apprenticeships. The review also drew on a limited number of other policy areas to enable me to make recommendations relevant to Welsh Government as a whole.

In line with the spirit of collaboration (as a way of working in the Act), I have conducted this review collaboratively with the Welsh Government. I have been encouraged by the commitment of the First Minister, the Permanent Secretary and the broader civil service to enter into this work in the spirit of learning and stretching the organisation. This approach has also meant that findings drawn from the review process have been able to be considered and, in some cases, resolved quickly instead of waiting for the final output.

## Approach



I undertook a literature review to identify the main themes I would like to explore with Welsh Government and ensure the review was building on existing evidence in relation to governance and capacity issues.

I signed a collaboration agreement with Welsh Government committing to sharing documents and working together on this review.

I requested information from government, including a list of mechanisms they use to implement the Act within the machinery of government.

I held sessions with 39 Welsh Government officials, including senior leadership and Ministers, and civil servants from the corporate and policymaking professions. I also had a session with 4 government alumni from the Future Generations Leadership Academy to get views on how implementation of the Act is going and how it may be improved.

I held 13 sessions with external stakeholders to test my findings, and ensure that I am not missing information other organisations might hold. This included conversations with representatives from public bodies and Public Services Boards, voluntary sector and the UN and the OECD.

The timescales and capacity, both of my team and Welsh Government colleagues, meant that I could only look at a selection of mechanisms and speak to a limited number of government colleagues. I sought to make this as wide as possible to ensure my findings do not reflect only a part of government and my recommendations can be applied across the organisation, and potentially by other public bodies.

I also worked with several researchers to bring in a long-term perspective. I worked with Trajectory on a Future of Governance output, with FLINT on involving people to understand current practice and the future of apprenticeships, and with the School of International Futures on a long-term workshop with Welsh Government.

This work was supported by an Expert Steering group made up of national and international experts on policy making, governance (including futures) and skills.

## How application of the Act can impact policy outcomes

The difference between applying the Act well or not at all can be significant for our current and future generations. This illustration shows how applying the ways of working to developing skills, training and apprenticeship policy could have positive and negative outcomes on people far beyond their education. For example, affecting levels of poverty, environmental resilience, societal inequality, culture, language, health and prosperity.

As the update to the Apprenticeships Framework is currently being developed, the below table does not aim to analyse or judge the actual policy approach but rather illustrate how the five ways of working can be applied and the outcomes we might expect to see in the apprenticeships context.

Information and examples from the deep dive in apprenticeships can be found throughout the other chapters in this report.

## Applying the five ways of working to apprenticeship policy

### What would this look like if done well?



#### Long-term

- Using future trends, scenarios and analysis of balancing short-term against long-term need. **E.g. the Apprenticeships team use Knowledge and Analytical Services and external partners to consider long-term trends.**
- A clear vision 25+ years ahead, aligned with Welsh Government's well-being objectives.
- Actions for short, medium and long-term timescales commit to the vision.



#### Prevention

- Analysis of the root-causes of current problems associated with apprenticeships and skills development and a plan to tackle them, with dedicated top-sliced resourcing. **E.g., the Apprenticeship team has held a prevention workshop but it is unclear how they are using the information raised there.**
- Policy to include analysis of the issues to be prevented and predicted effectiveness of preventative actions – with a plan for measuring progress.

### Possible policy outcomes of applying the Act well when designing policy

- Apprenticeship numbers in green industries grow.
- Investment in these industries is planned over the next century and integrated with education and skills pipeline of talent.
- More people from diverse backgrounds take advantage of apprenticeships as an advantageous career route, and diversity is grown in these industries, including in senior management.
- More apprenticeships are available through the medium of Welsh (and other languages) and the number of Welsh speakers grows.

- Analysis outlines root-causes of declining apprenticeship numbers and actions put in place to reverse this.
- Transition from carbon-intensive to greener industries is managed well – older workers are able to re-skill for new and adapting roles.
- Wales benefits from this talent pipeline and meets its climate emission reduction targets and makes good progress in halting nature decline.
- Analysis of the causes of inequalities in provision of apprenticeships and industries of the future. Actions put in place to prevent this.
- Children are actively encouraged to explore apprenticeships as a viable career route.
- Provision targeted at attracting under-represented groups into apprenticeships.
- Apprenticeships lead to long-term, sustainable and fair work. The economy and productivity grows, plan for measuring progress.

### Possible policy outcomes of not applying the Act well when designing policy Act

- Wales lacks the skills and numbers to meet climate emission reduction targets.
- Productivity continues to fall, and the rates of unemployment rise.
- Apprenticeships not seen as viable career choices and numbers drop.
- Industries that have traditionally employed apprentices moderately grow but, supply of qualified individuals outstrips demand as those industries decline to be replaced by greener, modern practice.
- Majority of apprentices are young, white males.
- Apprenticeships are mainly available in English, not contributing to increasing the use of the Welsh language.

- Lost opportunities to have a positive impact on the socio-economic outcomes and lives of future generations. The transition from carbon-intensive to greener industries is not managed well – too little action to reskill and upskill happens too late.
- Inequalities worsen as some groups benefit from the changing labour market, while others lack opportunities to access apprenticeships, skills provision, training and employment.
- The number of Welsh speakers declines and Wales suffers a 'brain-drain' as more young people leave to find education and employment elsewhere.
- Wales lacks the skills and numbers to meet climate emission reduction targets.

### What would this look like if done well?



#### Involvement

- The policy takes time to develop through involvement and co-design with the public. **E.g. the Apprenticeship team is strong in involving employers and providers but they can improve their involvement of apprentices.**
- Time and resources invested so the public can understand and contribute on an ongoing basis to the design, delivery and evaluation of the policy.
- Collaboration ensures involvement is far-reaching and prioritises seldom-heard voices.
- A feedback loop to show people the impact of their contribution.



#### Collaboration

- The policy takes time to develop through co-design with a range of stakeholders with expertise on all the national well-being goals. **E.g. the Apprenticeship team regularly collaborates with teams within Welsh Government and other stakeholders.**
- Policy actions are clearly defined and collectively owned by stakeholders.
- Budgets are ring-fenced for collaborative work only.
- Secondments from different sectors used to jointly deliver and evaluate progress.

### Possible policy outcomes of applying the Act well when designing policy

- Involving a wide range of people – including past, present, and potential future apprentices, workers of all ages and industries, community groups and seldom-heard voices – helps identify the incentives and disincentives of taking up an apprenticeship.
- The policy seeks to address the barriers and misconceptions about apprenticeships and numbers are growing and diversity improving.
- Continuous involvement helps monitor the success of the policy and tweaks to provision are made swiftly to ensure people are still benefitting.
- Involvement has encouraged public buy-in of the policy and people are much more aware of the benefits of apprenticeships, training and upskilling.

- Everyone in the system who has a part to play – from teachers, to training providers, to business leaders, to regional boards, to community leaders, to environmental and equality experts – understand the actions they are taking to increase the number of apprentices in green industries.
- Collective action is funded nationally, regionally and locally to swiftly provide provision in growing industries. Good integration and involvement means that local partners and community-based stakeholders encourage people to take advantage of apprenticeship opportunities, offering incentives and pathways that are easy to navigate.

### Possible policy outcomes of not applying the Act well when designing policy Act

- A consultation on the draft policy reaches a small number of professionals, but most people are unaware of the need to grow the skills and employment in green industries.
- The policy does not have the reach or impact expected. Wales lacks the skills and numbers to meet climate emission reduction targets.
- The policy is not successful in diversity in apprenticeship provision.
- The policy is not successful in improving the well-being of current or future generations.
- Many stakeholders disengage from the design, development and delivery of the policy.
- Frustration at a lack of strategic direction, tokenistic collaboration and overall barriers to communication places many regional and local partners in opposition to the policy direction.
- A chaotic, unequal distribution of provision exists across Wales – a 'postcode lottery' of opportunity to undertake learning (especially in a language other than English) – meaning those from white, affluent, urban backgrounds benefit the most from investment.

### What would this look like if done well?

#### Integration

- The policy is centred around the Act as a central organising principle, showing how it will contribute to the Welsh Government's well-being objectives (and the well-being goals) in an integrated way.
- Consideration is given to impact on all organisational well-being objectives and to impacts on the work of other teams. **E.g. the Apprenticeships team do challenge sessions with the wider Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning department.**
- Consideration is given to impact on the well-being objectives of other public bodies and Public Services Boards, with collaborative opportunities capitalised upon.
- Actions are cross-departmental with preventative, integrated actions and budgets allocated.

### Possible policy outcomes of applying the Act well when designing policy

- Skills and apprenticeship policy is aligned to investment priorities, which in turn, are aligned to the well-being objectives of government.
- Investment in green industries is planned over the next century and efforts are aligned to ensure there is an education, skills and employment pipeline to benefit Wales.
- Apprenticeship numbers grow in industries identified in Net Zero Carbon Wales.
- There are clear cross-departmental actions and integrated budgets to encourage entry into these apprenticeships of people from all backgrounds – dedication to the policy spans government and public bodies with a focus on progression into apprenticeships in the national curriculum, investment in lifelong learning, alignment with actions in the Race Equality Action Plan; the Agriculture Bill; gender equality etc.
- Actions are aligned with strategies in other areas.
- The number of Welsh speakers increases as provision of Welsh language apprenticeships grows and more people carry their skills into their work, community and day-to-day lives.
- Wales becomes renowned for its practices in global responsibility due to reducing carbon emissions, halting nature decline, learning exchange programmes and the sharing of policy that puts well-being at its heart on an international stage.

### Possible policy outcomes of not applying the Act well when designing policy Act

- Apprenticeship policy is developed in isolation from the long-term vision and government's well-being objectives and those of the wider public sector, the policy does not have the reach or impact expected.
- Lost opportunities to align investment with increasing the skills base. Wales lacks the skills and numbers to meet climate emission reduction targets.
- The policy is developed in isolation from other policies and strategies with little alignment - as a result, apprenticeships remain low, mainly occupied by young, white males and in industries that have declining prospects for future growth.
- The knock-on effect has implications for wider public services. For example, the demand on health and social care increases, with a lack of people to fill vacancies.
- The number of Welsh speakers stagnates and declines in some areas against the target of one million by 2050. More people move away to find employment and opportunity.
- Wales lags behind other countries in its global responsibility, with an economy based on heavy carbon-emitting industries and organisations that continue to use natural resources unsustainably.



## The Story So Far

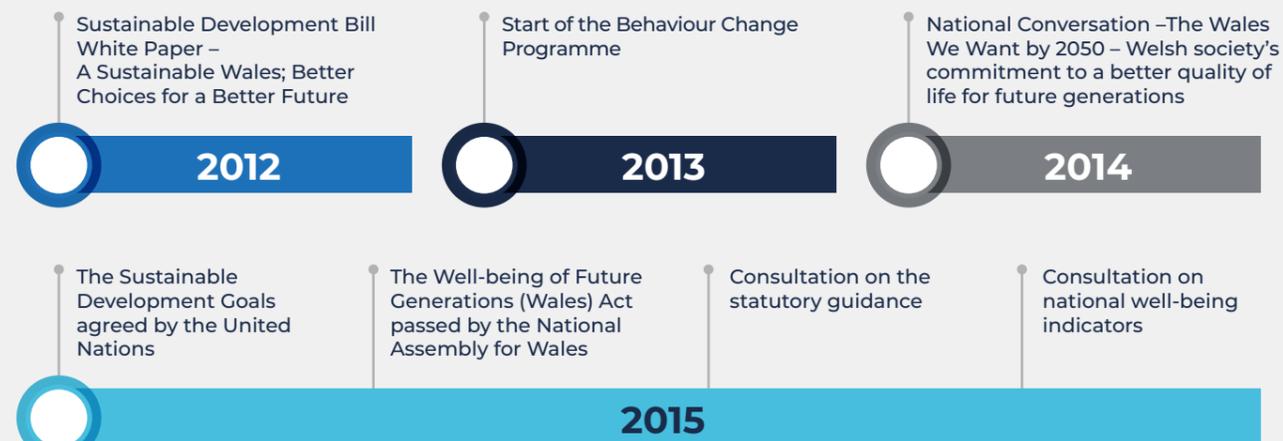
We cannot look towards the journey ahead without acknowledging and understanding the long path we have already walked towards sustainability in Wales.

The many positive changes the Act has brought about in the way Welsh Government and public bodies work are too long to list but there are some key turning points that have brought us to where we are today in the implementation of the Act:

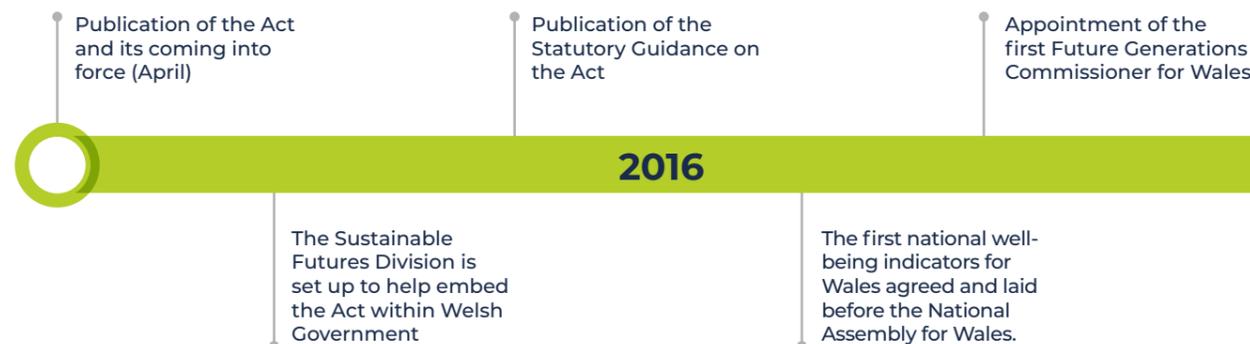
### Before the Act



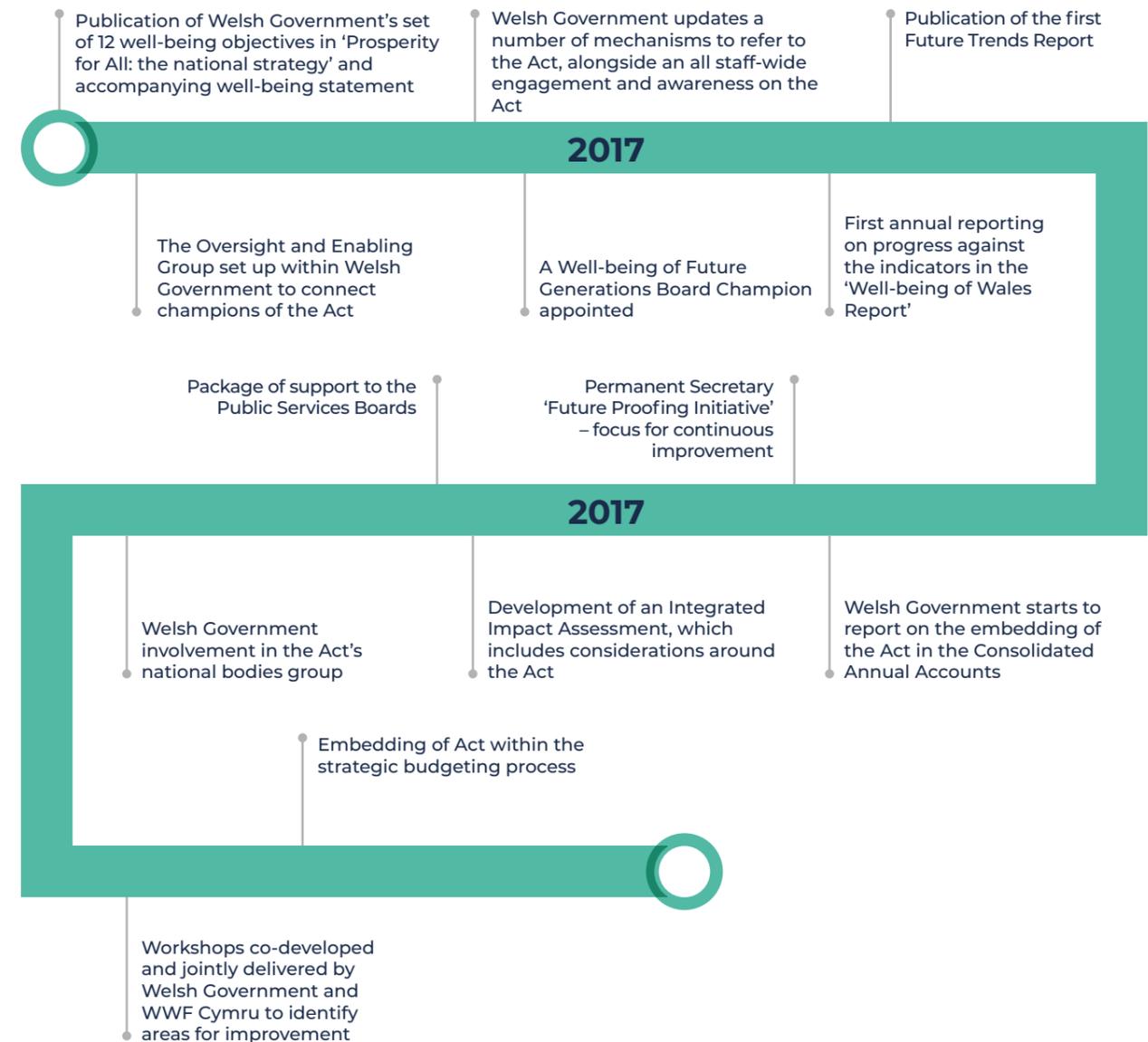
### Developing the Act



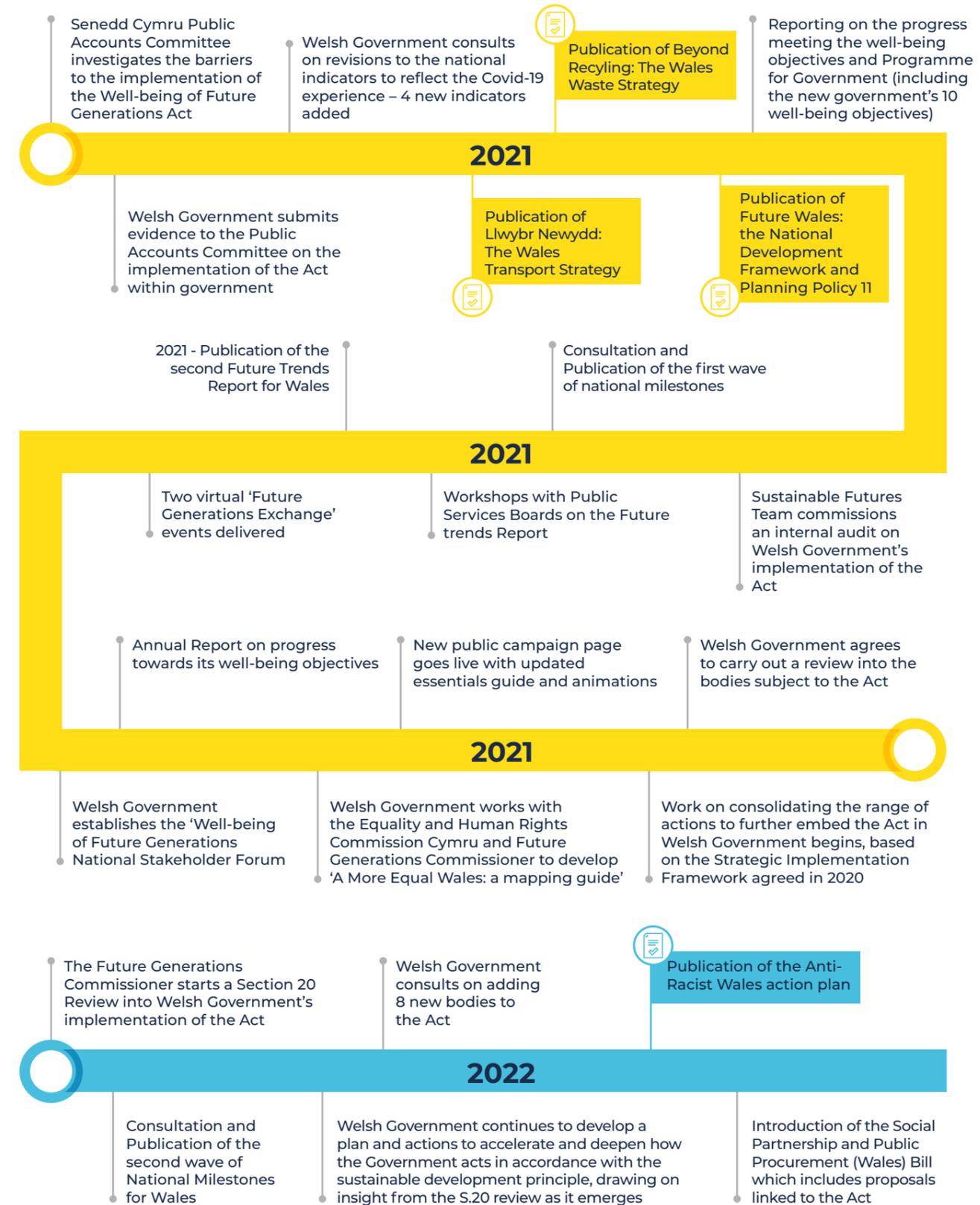
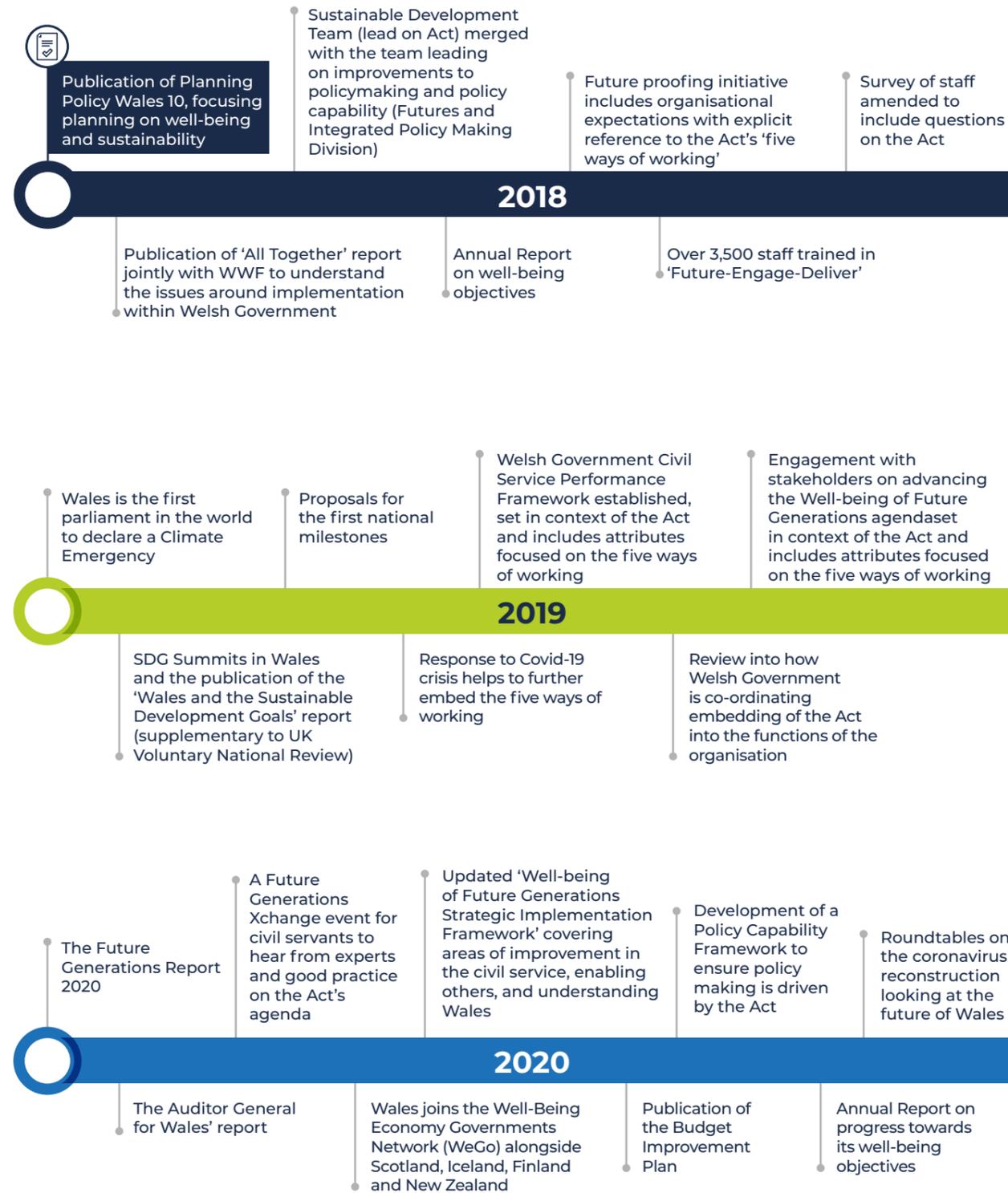
### Since the Act came into force



### Since the Act came into force



## Since the Act came into force





Comisiynydd  
Cenedlaethau'r  
Dyfodol  
Cymru

Future  
Generations  
Commissioner  
for Wales

# People & Culture



# People and Culture

## Why culture is important?

Never was a truer word spoken than the old adage, 'culture eats strategy for breakfast'. In all forms of transformation, creating the right culture in an organisation is more important than any other aspect of delivery infrastructure. The Act aims to drive the biggest cultural change in public services, that we have attempted in recent history. To deliver this cultural change in Wales, clear and purposeful leadership is needed, with every civil servant being on board, understanding and appreciating their role in achieving this vision.

Whatever processes or strategies may be in place, the outcomes that government seeks to achieve for Wales are dependent on the people using these processes and delivering those strategies, which is in turn, largely dependent on the leadership of the organisation. Officials need to be clear about the sustainable outcomes that can help improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and supported to take the right approach (using the five ways of working) to achieve them. They also need to understand and celebrate where this is happening well and learn from where it is not.

*“Organizational culture is out-rightly considered as the most fundamental and constant strength within any business and is associated with sustainability. Culture is also a significant division that cultivates an active organization. Organizational culture is one of the most critical factors, which control the company's capability, efficacy, endurance and success.”*

**Mujin Marwan Attar** (International Journal of Business and Economics Research)

There is enthusiasm and a good level of awareness within the Welsh civil service for the vision of the Act; a vital and not easily achieved first step of this journey. Major shifts in policy, outlined elsewhere in this report, indicate that there is a change in culture and, therefore,

approach in many parts of government, and that the Act and the five ways of working are being better understood and applied among civil servants.



“...the Welsh Government has matured because of the [Well-being of Future Generations] Act. It has provided a framework for how we develop and deliver policy. It's so interesting that internally, as well as externally... it is just... part of the DNA.”

“...in the organisation as a whole, there was a huge amount of enthusiasm, and commitment, and pride in what people were doing and they were coming to me and saying, “this is good, this is good.”

“...the reason that I joined the Welsh Government was because I am very passionate about the Well-being [of Future Generations] Act... I call it the BFG... the Big Friendly Giant of a [Well-being of Future Generations] Act that should wrap around the whole of public policy.”

“There is incredible pride in it, and the fact that we are still world leading.”

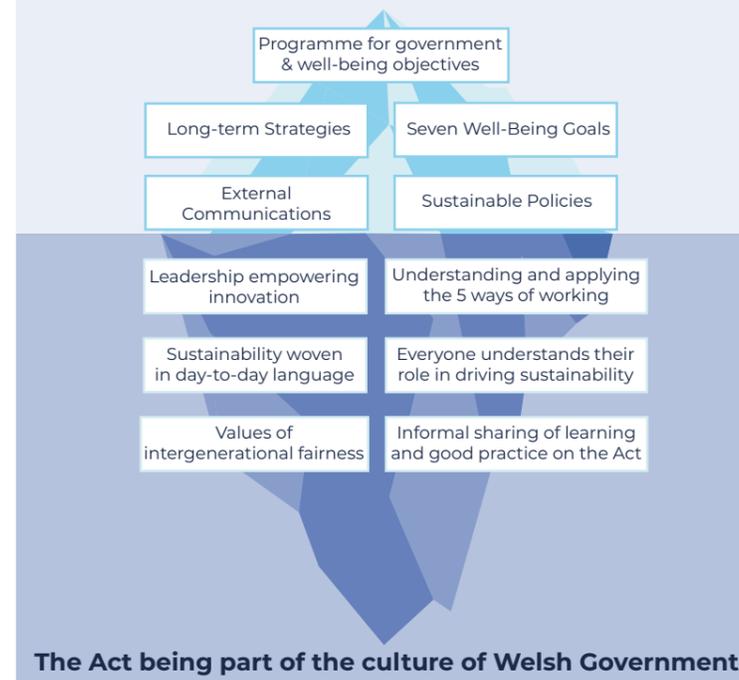
“...keeping staff up to date with thinking and actually presenting pieces of work through the future generations lens is really important so that people can see the connection between the piece of work that we're doing...”

“...having an understanding and an awareness of the [Well-being of Future Generations] Act overall is helpful and useful and I support that... I think senior officials should definitely have a good understanding of the [Well-being of Future Generations] Act and the responsibilities underneath within their areas.”

In recent years, the civil service in Wales has faced unprecedented workforce pressures as it has had to work (and continue to do so) through multiple crises and challenges such as Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine, and now the cost-of-living crisis. I have seen excellent examples of where the culture of the organisation - with the framework of the Act providing guiding principles - has been instrumental in dictating the way Welsh Government has responded to these challenges, setting the Welsh response apart from that of other countries. There have been some excellent examples of innovation and resilience that have come from the hard work of civil servants through the pandemic, which must be recognised and built on as government stretches itself even further on its journey to achieving the vision of the Act.

From establishing a creative freelancers fund and pledge, convening an active Social Partnerships Council and the roll-out of the Test, Trace and Protect service, to the Prosperous, Equal and Green Recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic papers, I have welcomed the innovative responses from government and across the public sector. The collaborative approach led by the former Counsel General and Minister for Brexit, Jeremy Miles MS, to engage on a Covid-19 recovery plan, drawing on a series of [roundtables](#) with voluntary, private and public sector stakeholders (including representatives of my Future Generations Leadership Academy) is an example of how working together, beyond silos, is necessary to identify short-term and long-term solutions. While the Covid-19 Reconstruction: Challenges and Priorities paper could have made clearer connections to the well-being objectives and steps (including a fuller narrative on each of the well-being goals) – it is good to see in a communicable product, the connections Ministers make between crisis response and the use of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

### Commitment on the Act being visible on the surface in:



*“...perhaps the most intriguing aspect of culture as a concept is that it points us to phenomena that are below the surface, that are powerful in their impact but invisible and to a considerable degree unconscious.”*

**Schein 2004**

I have found however that an understanding of the Act – its requirements and application – vary across the organisation. Officials do not always have an understanding appropriate to their role.

I echo the words of the Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice:

*“...there are issues in terms of culture change and implementation gaps and how we can address some of the discussion points we’ve had in the scrutiny, helping to make sure that the Welsh Government is futureproofed in terms of innovation and culture change and continuous improvement.”*

**(Equality and Social Justice Committee, 24th January 2022)**

The Well-being of Future Generations Act provides public bodies and government with a framework that can help continuously improve the ways in which organisations operate and do things, and enable them to make the connection between their actions now and the future. The Act gives an opportunity to be bold, innovate and take risks to drive long-term benefits and improve the well-being of Wales now and in the future. Some senior officials recognised the need to shift their risk perception and drive bold changes towards more sustainable decision-making. Civil servants need to be provided with more freedom to experiment, and assurance that mistakes are used as learning opportunities for wider activities. The Minister for Social Justice also recognised that:

*“We need to move from a risk averse culture as much as possible to deliver... on the goals in terms of prevention, integration, long-term. We have to take some risks in terms of policy development and implementation, or we wouldn’t be doing the things that we’re doing now.”*

The Welsh Government have developed a range of new approaches to support culture change in line with the Act through an extensive learning and development offer. Some of these approaches are designed to be delivered across the organisation, like the Future Proofing Initiative; others are tailored to specific professions, such as the Policy Capability Framework designed for all policymakers;

while others still have been developed by specific teams to aid their internal understanding and application of the Act.

While there is a plethora of initiatives to support awareness raising, understanding and application of the Act, it appears that some initiatives are not being implemented, others need to be developed further, and many need to be better joined up to provide better clarity around the learning offer. Clarity is also needed on the level of understanding around the Act needed for different roles and professions in government and the most effective way of achieving it. Welsh Government need to move beyond the creation of a set of materials and approaches to support change, and towards continuous internal shared learning around the outcomes these approaches deliver. They need to understand what works well and what they should stop doing. Welsh Government have recognised this need and have engaged in a collaborative way with my team throughout this review, with the desire to identify what works well and what can be improved further. Alongside this, there are opportunities to improve how the mechanisms join-up; which could be achieved with a clear future workforce strategy that is aligned with the Act, and which sets out a joined-up learning and development offer.

The Permanent Secretary is leading on a new plan for the Welsh civil service, WG 2025, which focuses on key themes such as the values and behaviours of the civil service; digital, data and technology; collaboration with partners; and improving efficiency. During this review, I heard positive feedback about the way the new civil service strategy (WG 2025) is being developed collaboratively with staff. I am told there were multiple opportunities to provide input: from an all-organisation event led by the Permanent Secretary with the involvement of my Deputy Commissioner, to workshops, and surveys. I have also heard many positive comments about the usefulness of hearing leadership discuss the Act in the context of WG 2025, which again highlights the importance of senior civil servants to be driving the change by raising awareness and reaffirming their commitment for the Act in various projects.

Encouragingly, there is a range of more organic and in-depth learning opportunities in use, such as departmental lunch and learns, and behavioural change networks. Some of these opportunities show real promise, going beyond the traditional approach to ‘training’ and encouraging sharing of learning and good practice between teams.

## Awareness, understanding and application of the Act

### Finding:

There is a sense of pride and enthusiasm in this world-leading legislation, but there is some discrepancy between the level of enthusiasm and commitment and a detailed understanding of application.

### Promotion and raising awareness

When the Act was introduced, much was done to promote and raise awareness, such as creating communication and branding tools, basic training packages and holding events for people to come together to discuss and learn about the legislation, its application in different contexts, and how it differs from previous duties to ‘promote’ sustainability.

While the approach taken to implementing the Act in the early years of its existence has not been the subject of detailed consideration in this review, I have concluded that political leadership around implementing the Act was lacking in the early years. I would, therefore, characterise the early approach to implementation as a mechanistic one, largely reflecting how you would expect a more traditional organisation to respond to a need to communicate new legislative requirements to a large workforce.

### In 2017, the then Permanent Secretary Shan Morgan wrote to all officials saying:

*“As Permanent Secretary I take our organisational commitment to sustainable and effective ways of working through the implementation of the Act extremely seriously. Whilst the Act is about how public bodies contribute to a shared vision of the wellbeing of Wales, as an organisation, the legislation also challenges us on how we make decisions.”*

To support the civil service to implement the new requirements of the Act, Shan Morgan established the Future Proofing Initiative, the Future Engage Deliver Programme, the Future Generations Awards, a set of challenge questions to test application of the Act at Welsh Government Board level, and a Board Champion to sit on the Welsh Government Board (see Chapter 2 on Process for more information). Some of these mechanisms have merit in my view but not all have been effectively utilised and more importantly they do not currently sit within an overarching workforce strategy that can support the implementation of the Act. Alongside Welsh Government 2025, however, a longer-term workforce strategy is currently being developed which provides an important opportunity to both consider the skills that the civil service of the future will need and to embed a comprehensive and joined up learning and development offer around the Act.

## Communication and Language

Welsh Government reference the Act in various internal and external communications materials and have also updated some of their resources on the Act (such as the essentials guide). Officials have told me, however, that there are still improvements needed to deepen understanding and embed the Act further and to communicate more clearly the expectations on different professions and roles within the civil service. There is also a need to re-engage Ministers and civil servants and remind them of the purpose, duties and practical steps required by the Act, to maintain and enhance momentum towards working in a more sustainable way and delivering the outcomes it envisages. This concern was echoed by alumni of the Future Generations Leadership Academy, who highlighted that the further down the Welsh Government hierarchy, the less people understand about the Act. As a result of this, there is a risk that the operational and frontline staff responsible for the Act's implementation are unclear on the organisation's duties.

The government also needs to be clearer on how the Programme for Government, which contains the steps 'it will take to meet its well-being objectives, links back to delivering its duty to maximise contribution to the well-being goals. The Act does not seek to dictate political narrative, but it is important for those implementing it to understand how political priorities and the Programme for Government are used to meet the statutory duty to set well-being objectives and take all reasonable steps to deliver them. The links between the Act and the Programme for Government need to be constantly emphasised if officials and the wider public sector are to consistently deliver against the long-term goals in their entirety rather than the shorthand seen in political narrative. 'Stronger, Fairer, Greener', for example, provides a shortened and more accessible narrative for communicating priorities to the public, but does not in of itself comprehensively link back to the statutory definitions and terminology introduced by the Act. There is no statutory definition of 'stronger', for example and therefore, there may be confusion around priorities and the specific requirements of the overarching and comprehensive long-term objectives of the Act, which sits beyond and political manifesto or a Programme for Government.

*"...it's about maintaining momentum as well, on the on the [Well-being of Future Generations] Act... there was quite a lot of work that had been done... in terms of getting the message out to the civil service about what the Act is, what it does, what it means for them. ...there's probably... a point in the near future where... it's ...time for us to ... go out and have another ...campaign...we're probably getting to the point where there'll be a group of civil servants who haven't had that proactively. And I think that as much as anything this is because of the Coronavirus pandemic... I suspect that there would have been an ongoing program, but it ... potentially wasn't the top [priority]"*

### Welsh Government civil servant

This is a basic but critically important need. The Act requires major transformation in the ways government and civil servants within it work and the need for ongoing clear communication, explanation and showcasing of practical application. Key Welsh Government officials told me that there have been attempts to improve the communication around the Act to help develop understanding of it inside and outside of government. The 'Shaping Wales' Future blog is an example of these efforts.

Enhanced and ongoing communication is important, but Welsh Government should also be careful not to assume that an awareness of the Act is enough, and that this automatically translates to correct interpretation of its requirements. Throughout the last six years as Commissioner and during this review I have seen and heard multiple examples of incorrect interpretation of the Act and its goals through policy development within the internal and external communications of government. I have also seen limited reference of the Act in remit letters for government sponsored bodies, in the terms of reference for advisory groups and boards and in day-to-day interactions between government officials and external partners.

This has sat alongside a range of different language used internally and externally to describe its requirements which can result in a lack of clarity of purpose. Government argues that application of the Act is implicitly required but my experience of interacting with boards, groups and arm's length bodies is that without clear and explicit reference, it is a 'hit or miss' and aligning the work to the Act depends on the knowledge and interest of those involved.

In contrast, I have seen good examples of the Act being specifically referenced in terms of references, for example the Welsh Government Budget Improvement and Impact Advisory Group and the Active Travel Board. Others, like the Roads Review Panel and the South East Wales Transport Commission, have not made a specific reference to the Act but reference future generations and use the framework of the Act, and others (for example, Cabinet Sub-Committee on Cost of Living and the Creative Skills Advisory Panel) make no reference at all to the Act or future generations. This finding is despite an internal audit highlighting this inconsistency and the need for the government to respond.

References and detail on the Act also vary in different external documents with some, like the Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd, and the Waste Strategy, Beyond Recycling, setting out clearly how they have considered different elements of the Act. Others, such as the recent National Immunisation Framework for Wales (October 2022) make a cursory reference to the Act and the goals of 'A Healthier and Resilient Wales'. It fails to explain, however, its relevance to A Resilient Wales, which could mean that, as is often the case, the officials understood this goal to be about personal resilience rather than the resilience of ecosystems.

The Welsh Government Awards include a Well-being of Future Generations Act Award, which looks at the projects that have best applied the five ways of working. While the criteria for this award should be improved to better include the integration principle, highlighting good examples of where the Act is being used (such as the Transport Strategy, the Waste Strategy and the Freelancers Fund in last year's awards) is helpful and a good step towards increasing understanding.

To move towards the next phase of implementation, the government should seek to strengthen, clarify and be explicit in its communication around the Act both internally and externally, and recognise that this communication needs to be ongoing.

As part of this learning journey and to show leadership, the government should seek to be more open in its communication on the Act, not just in highlighting good practice but also sharing internally and externally the instances where things may have not worked out, and how government are expected to prioritise because of social, economic, cultural and environmental factors.

### As the statutory guidance for the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 describes:

*"(the self-assessment and panel performance assessment) approach is intended to build on and support a culture in which councils continuously challenge the status quo, ask questions about how they are operating, and consider best practice in Wales and wider... My ambition is for a culture where all parts of a council always aim to do better in everything they do, no matter how well they are performing already. Honest and open self-assessment at all levels of a council will form a fundamental part of this."*

**(Foreword by Julie James MS, then Minister for Local Government & Housing)**

Improving clarity and transparency as to where government is on this journey can help increase buy-in and act as learning to other public bodies, whether this is through their statutory annual report or in some other form. There is value in being open with challenges in addition to successes. Whilst the response to this review has been positive thus far, it will be important and a challenging step for the government to report fully on the progress and outcomes from the Future Generations Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan.

## Understanding vs Application

Cultural change is one of the most difficult undertakings for any organisation, let alone one as large multi-layered and responsive as Welsh Government. Embedding the Act into the day-to-day work and language of the organisation was always going to be one of the most challenging elements of this journey. Raising awareness of the Act, while also maintaining and enhancing their enthusiasm for what it is trying to achieve it is a feat in and of itself but is only one step of the journey. The next step should be bridging the gap between awareness and implementation of the Act.

Evidence from this review and comments from stakeholders have confirmed observations I have had over the last six years that while there is a high level of awareness and support for the Act across the board, good examples of implementation and a renewed sense of leadership to drive this further, there are gaps in understanding the specific requirements of implementing it and these gaps are bigger in certain parts of government.

Encouragingly, Welsh Government have sought to review how well staff themselves understand the requirements of the Act and have built questions on this into their People Survey questions. This provides a basic indication of the level of understanding of the five ways of working among civil servants; which is useful as it can point out areas where people may need additional support and guidance.

The latest available data (People Survey 2020) identified that around 70% of officials have a high level of awareness of each of five ways of working. This, however, was not consistent across government. Policy officials generally reported higher levels of awareness, and those working in areas outside of the policy profession reported lower level of awareness.



While on the one hand this may seem an obvious and perhaps acceptable position, it is important to note that the Act applies not just to policy making, but to the corporate areas within government which support it, including procurement, financial planning, assets management, and workforce planning. This therefore represents an important area for Welsh Government to address through a renewed, and ideally, sector/profession relevant communication and implementation support package for officials working beyond the policy profession.

For those working in the policy profession, the evidence I have seen aligns with the findings of the People Survey in terms of 'awareness' being high but less so in terms of 'understanding'. I found that officials across the board were aware of the Act, its goals, and five ways of working. While there was variation across different departments and officials, including some excellent examples of application (see case study), when asked to describe what they understood prevention to be or how they had used long term trends in their policy work, only some were able to give clear explanations and examples.

A recent Welsh Government internal audit report supports this finding, identifying that when it comes to application rather than awareness of the sustainable development principle and 5 ways of working, a higher level of staff reported difficulties and a few stated that only some of the ways of working were applied in their work.

## Case Study: Ministerial Discursive Meetings, Transport Department



### Purpose:

Established in January 2022, this is a dedicated space to test policy ideas with the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, allowing constructive challenge, assessment of the evidence base, testing the success of proposals, and clarifying evaluation metrics. These have a direct impact on policy and are a necessary part of the policymaking process, not a bonus feature. It was cited that if these opportunities do not take place, they can often delay the progression of policy. They take place on roughly a monthly basis, and typically last 60-90 minutes. A preparation paper is produced for the Deputy Minister, outlining the data and evidence behind potential proposals.



### Membership:

Varies depending on topic. Typically, Deputy Directors and senior policy leads attend first, then critical external friends such as Public Health Wales are brought in. As a rule, no more than eight people attend to keep discussion focused.

**The Act:** Not explicitly referenced but aspects of it consistently are e.g. long-term thinking. This aligns with the ethos that the Transport Strategy aligns with the Act – being vigorously stress tested for this alignment – and so anchoring discussion through the lens of the Strategy puts the Act into a practical context.



### Impact on policy:

Piloting of flexi buses in rural areas was stopped, being determined that these only provide evidence of success in specific conditions and a more holistic view of what works was needed. As a result, focus has shifted to evaluating the evidence of what rural transport approaches work when scaled up to wider regional and national level, and to consider alternative transport modes and technologies (e.g., electric vehicles) while upholding accessibility.



### Continuous Improvement:

Work is ongoing to consider how these are structured and built into the wider policymaking process. Aspects being considered include: what kind of rolling discussions are needed; what critical friends would bring value; how could these be flexible in focus (e.g., agile enough to adapt to reactive developments and changing priorities). Members of the team are also keen to bring in pre-discursive meetings on a fortnightly basis, bringing together all policy leads to improve integration. I would encourage government to identify opportunities to bring other policy teams into these discussions.

During this review some senior officials suggested that not all civil servants need to have the same level of understanding around the Act, and that there are different expectations depending on teams and seniority. I am inclined to agree, however it is clear to me that if the government is to fully embed the Act in what it does and how it does it then all officials need at least a basic level of understanding. Moreover, there needs to be a clear view on who needs to know what, how they are supported to develop that knowledge and understanding and how this is best delivered.

*"And we might come back to awareness of the [Well-being of Future Generations] Act through the organisation. I...would be surprised if you found anybody, in... middle to senior leadership positions in Welsh Government who wasn't across the core principles of the Act and the ways of working. I regularly hear the Act referenced by policy colleagues. But it may be that awareness is less consistently strong ... among colleagues who work in more operational and administrative areas."*

**Welsh Government civil servant**

Based on the evidence from some officials who have indicated that they are less confident in applying some of the ways of working for example, I believe there is some discrepancy between awareness and application – awareness, enthusiasm and commitment being high but understanding of how to apply the different elements of the Act in practice being lower in some parts of government. That is not to distract or downplay the significant changes I have seen in government policy making where the

Act has been actively used and applied but the next stage in government's journey must be to capitalise on these good examples and use them to build a bridge between enthusiasm, commitment and application, reaching particularly into parts of government which have seen this less as their core business or where gaps in full understanding have been identified. It is not an easy step, but it is a necessary one to ensure the Act is used as guiding framework around everything government does.

## Building Capabilities

### Finding:

There is a plethora of learning materials around the Act – while some material is good, Welsh Government should seek to better understand what works and build on innovative approaches being adopted in some parts of government.

## Embedding Vision and Values

A commitment to the Act's vision, its well-being goals and ways of working are increasingly being supported and can be seen in the consciousness and values of the civil service. In more recent years, the language of the Act (albeit sometimes expressed in different ways) has been heard from political and organisational leadership and is clearly translating into new ways of operating within the civil service. The most recent iteration of these values and what they mean to civil servants is being seen through the Permanent Secretary's Welsh Government 2025 vision – a conversation he is leading in the organisation.

This is an important initiative which continues to embed the principles of the Act in the foundational behaviours of the civil service. Ensuring that the organisation is translating these values into action and goes beyond a mechanistic approach in their embedding of the Act, the organisation must also ensure that the capabilities that are needed amongst officials are understood that learning and development is effective and that civil servants need to be given the time, space and encouragement to get involved, learn and upskill on the Act.

*“Ensure that employees have the necessary resources to engage with the sustainability change. This includes time, information, moral support as well as technical and financial resources (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Once employees are encouraged to take initiatives and individually contribute to the organisation's sustainability vision, it is important to provide them with the resources to actually engage with sustainability. Without them employees' motivation and commitment may be difficult or may decrease in time.”*

Driving organisational culture change for sustainability,  
**Pietro Antonio Negro and Anamaria Vargas, 2019**

I have observed and heard about a range of innovative ways to increase capabilities and expertise pioneered in different departments and teams.

The Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning's monthly lunch and learn sessions, where different teams within the department get together to learn about areas of common interest. Examples include an external academic giving a talk and Question & Answer sessions around credit accumulation and transfer frameworks, and the roles these can play in lifelong learning. I consider this to be an effective and innovative approach to finding time and space to encourage critical discussions between teams and to give them the time and space to develop new knowledge and skills.

UX Lab Community is a part of the Future-proofing initiative, and its aim is to serve as a lever and enabler for wider cultural change to help embed the five ways of working and increase citizen involvement. If rolled out, it will help civil servants upskill, provide an in-house service and increase organisational capacity to involve people in the policymaking process and service development. I welcome this approach but believe this can further developed to serve as a point for ideas and views from the public to strengthen the democratic process and increase involvement in decision-making.

Through Welsh Government funding for my Future Generations Leadership Academy, several teams across government have sent representatives to be upskilled in sustainability and the Well-being of Future Generations Act. This is a great opportunity to upskill young people and ensure that in the long-term, government has a wider pool of skills and expertise within its leaders of the future.

The Land, Nature and Food Team within the Environment & Rural Affairs Department started a behaviour change network - monthly meetings open for anyone across Welsh Government interested in social and behavioural science. This is a welcomed organic approach, which should be encouraged elsewhere.

Several departments have mentioned securing research fellows to undertake in-house research and help increase capacity within the organisation. This is positive as it has brought research resource and capacity back within Welsh Government and reduced the need to outsource. But I would also like to understand how these research opportunities can be shared proactively with other public bodies.

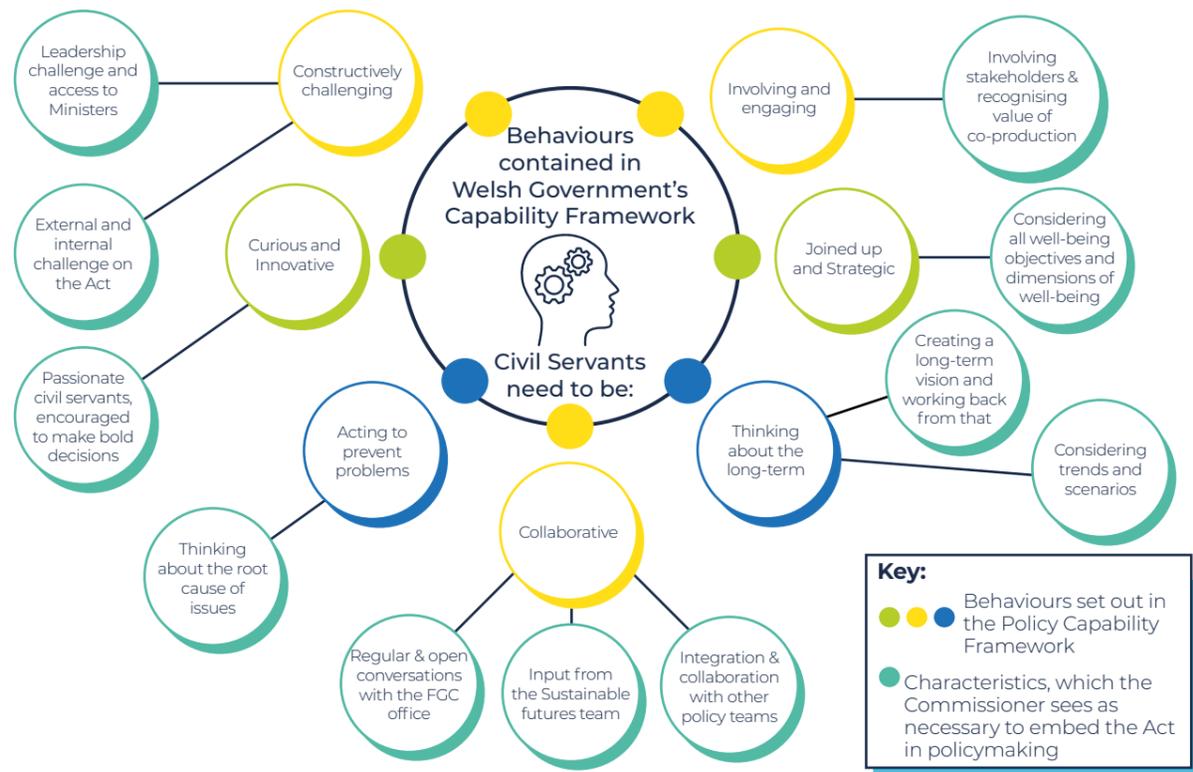
Secondments are one of the most important ways to build capacity and increase expertise in different teams and, where this has happened, it has been seen as useful and a good investment in the long-term. There is, however, a perception that this is not a widely-used practice due to workforce and capacity pressures, and sometimes due to a perception that if the team can do well without the seconded civil servant, the civil servant's role may be unnecessary. Such fears need to be dispelled as the aim should be to build resilience, expertise and capacity in the whole civil service so that people can ultimately be moved around as different needs, challenges and priorities arise.

The work of Academi Wales, which is an important offer for learning and development across the public sector, has been welcomed and officials have shared that this is appreciated particularly for its face-to-face opportunities and discussions, such as the Summer and Winter Schools. From this review and previous experience advising and working with Academi Wales, however, I believe there are opportunities to strengthen the links to the Act in some of the language used in course content, promotional materials and evaluations and that they better monitor and assess the impact of their content - and how they know it's driving the necessary change and implementation of the Act. I understand that Academi Wales is currently working on a strategy, which would provide good opportunities to address some of this. This is planned to only be a three-year strategy, which does not reflect the Act's long-term way of thinking and I would like to see better consideration of how such short-term documents integrate with long-term trends, scenarios and vision, as well as link with the long-term Welsh Government workforce strategy.

Encouragingly, the Welsh Government have developed a new 'Policy Capability Framework' which aims to support officials to develop the necessary level of knowledge skills and behaviours to implement policy in line with the Act. This is an important step in the government's journey to better understand and act to develop the necessary skills that a civil service of the future, which lives and breathes the Well-being of Future Generations Act. I welcome that this framework closely aligns with the type of behaviours and approaches I have identified over the last six years during the course of this review as being important to implementation.

Work remains to roll this framework out across the organisation. It is unclear how this approach supports the programme offered by Academi Wales. Nevertheless, the behaviours outlined in the framework link very closely to what I see as essential characteristics to embedding the Act in policymaking and provide a useful reference point for the organisation in taking the next steps in its implementation journey.

### Welsh Government's Policy Capability Framework compared to the Future Generations Commissioner's good characteristics to embed the Act in policy



However, the Commissioner thinks that to embed the Act in policymaking, policymakers also need:

- To be given sufficient time and space for policy development;
- Funding to be linked to strategies;
- To evaluate and consider previous strategies to ensure lessons learned are informing policy;
- To set clear milestones to measure implementation success.

### Where the behaviours described in the Policy Capability Framework are already in use:

#### Involving and engaging

- The Involvement Sub-Committee of the Well-being of Future Generations Multi-Stakeholder Forum is developing a series of principles based on taking a creative, kind and practical approach to involvement. This focusses on the how rather than the what of involvement and emphasises principles such as doing with not to, building relationship development into all activities, looking for what is strong not what is wrong and valuing what matters to people.
- The team working on the Anti-Racist Wales Strategy built involvement in right at the start of the process. The final document shows how views were acted on. Involvement included a futures exercise with communities imagining success in 2030, as well as pairing community mentors with policymakers.

Such examples of innovation in involvement need to be better communicated so that other teams can be inspired and emboldened to explore more creative methods of engaging with stakeholders. Moreover, they need to be consistent across teams as currently there are gaps in how, for example, the Apprenticeships team is involving apprentices in their work.

#### Curious and innovative

- WG to give us more info on policymaker that went and lived in a homeless shelter
  - Anything else?
- I would like to see such examples shared and proliferated as currently, my observations show that while there are such pockets of great practice, there is still a risk averse culture preventing civil servants from trying out new approaches.

#### Thinking about the long-term

- Increasingly, key government strategies and plans, such as the Transport Strategy and the National Development Framework present a vision for 20-years ahead in the future, while the Waste Strategy, Beyond Recycling, sets out a pathway and targets for the next 30-years, taking Wales to 2050.
- This, however, has been recognised by government as an area where they can do more. There is a section in this chapter dedicated to Long-Term and Futures, which you can read for more detail.

#### Joined up and Strategic

- The Minister for Education and Welsh Language and the Minister for Economy have a common team focusing solely on apprenticeships, and skills & Foundational Economy, with the intention that this ensures integration between the two portfolios is embedded within policy design.
- The Waste Strategy included a well-being assessment to show how it contributes to all well-being goals, for example how waste can help address issues in areas like loneliness, and community cohesion.

However good integration is not universal, and I have seen policy examples do not mention well-being objectives or do not consider well-being objectives and goals outside of the immediate area being discussed. As consideration of well-being objectives, both organisational and otherwise, are key to the integration way of working, I would like to see an increased emphasis on that.

#### Constructively challenging

- The Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning department holds challenge sessions on different areas of work to help integrate efforts between different teams within the department.
- The Transport department holds Ministerial Discursive meetings to test policy ideas with the Deputy Minister for Climate Change, constructively challenge, assess evidence base, test success of proposals, and clarify evaluation metrics.

Both of these examples are approaches that developed organically to help with integration and assurance through constructive challenge. Welsh Government needs to enable and encourage more similar practices in other teams.

#### Collaborative

- I have seen multiple examples of increased collaboration within Welsh Government in many areas such as the Transport Policy, Net Zero etc.
- The Social Partnership Council is another excellent example of collaboration being mainstreamed.
- The latest iteration of the Future Trends Report was co-produced, and a lot of good feedback received about that.

This way of working seems to be better developed than some of the others and, I have heard good feedback from stakeholders, public bodies and Public Service Board representatives that collaboration with Welsh Government is better than ever before.

#### Acting to prevent problems

- It has been difficult to ascertain how the prevention way of working is being understood and used. I have heard from multiple teams it is one of the hardest elements of the Act.
- Encouragingly, the Apprenticeships team told me they held a workshop on what prevention means within apprenticeships but approaches like this then needs to be clearly communicated in the actions and policy that comes out at the end of the process.

This is a challenge observed in other public bodies. More practical guidance and examples of good practice need to be shared to help civil servants better use this way of working.

Communicating the definition of prevention better, alongside practical examples can go a long way towards demystifying this way of working.

## Tools to drive the necessary skills, knowledge and behaviours

I understand the Welsh Government are developing a workforce strategy that is set to be published in 2022-23. Whilst a clear workforce strategy is not currently in place, there is a range of tools that are being used to increase people's skills and knowledge around the Act.

An induction pack and workshop (Towards a Brighter Future) has been developed to provide foundational knowledge about the Act but does not necessarily support officials in implementing the Act in practice. The workshop lacks reference to several key elements of the Act, such as the well-being objectives, and Welsh Government resources including the Future Trends Report. This appears to be the only mandatory training associated with the Act and it is unclear to me how officials already employed within Welsh Government are mandated to proactively participate in this training. Both the content and participation should be reviewed to include more detail on the different elements of the Act and

to provide more practical guidance on the use of the five ways of working, especially in the seven corporate areas of change identified by the Act's Statutory Guidance.

There is a range of online materials including those found on the Learning Lab and Academi Wales websites, which offer resources and quick tips on the Act, available for all staff to access. I welcome the open-source nature of publishing these resources for others to use beyond Welsh Government and I would encourage this approach further. The collaborative approach of designing some of the resources, like the quick tips, with colleagues who have used them in practice is also positive. These resources, however, sit on multiple platforms, which can sometimes cause confusion and a centralised system could improve clarity for staff.

Last year, the government introduced a new policy training offer:

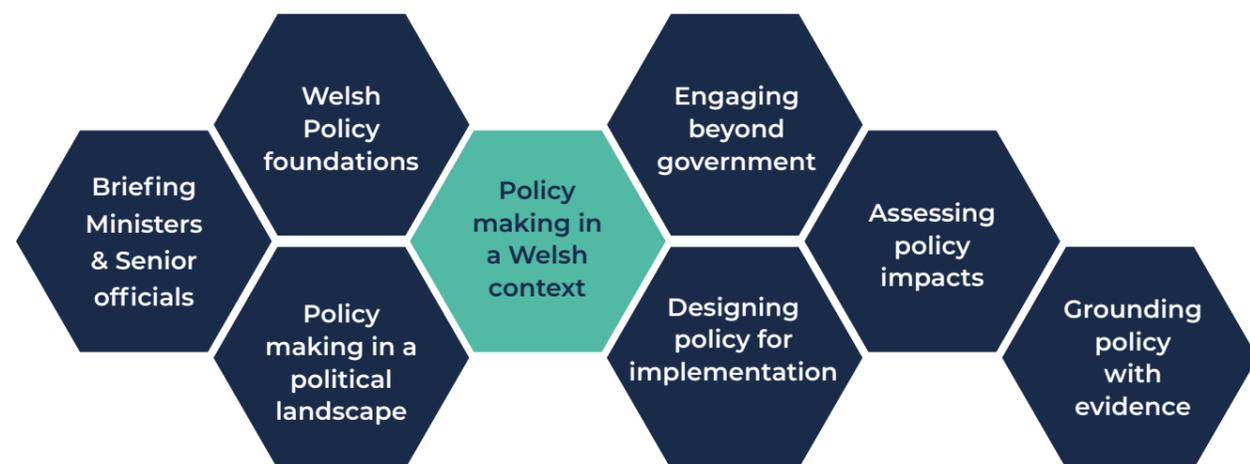
## Welsh Government's training offer for policymakers

### Policy Learning Online – available March 2021

Aimed at: Mid-level delegated staff (Higher Executive Officer to Grade 7)

Contains: 8 modules, which make a reference to the Act and its elements.

I was particularly impressed with the **Policymaking in a Welsh Context** module and think this is very good.



However, only 67 civil servants out of ~3,400 between the grades of Higher Executive Officer and Grade 7 (~2%) completed this module in 2021/22.

### Policy Basecamp – available March 2021

Aimed at: Senior Civil Servants (Deputy Director and above)

Contains: 6 modules, which make a reference to the Act and some of its elements.

**None of these modules cover the Act as thoroughly as the Policymaking in a Welsh Context module.**



36 senior civil servants out of ~166 between (~22%) completed this training in 2021/22.module in 2021/22.

Government has not assessed the effectiveness of this support. Officials we spoke to, however, told me they felt that it was a useful experience, particularly the Policy Basecamp training for bringing Welsh Government senior civil servants together.

Having looked at the different modules, I consider the materials, which have embedded the Act, particularly the 'Policymaking in the Welsh context' module, to be useful in that it accurately reflects the requirements of the Act, it is engaging and can inspire change.

This is not currently mandatory, however, and only a small proportion of civil servants and senior officials have completed it. It is my view that the Policymaking in the Welsh context module is essential basic training for anyone in the policy making profession, Ministers, the Welsh Government Board and ARAC and, as such, should be made mandatory.

There is also an argument that this training should be mandated for all officials as they are being moved to policy making from other professions, for example in managing Brexit and during the pandemic.

## Examples from public bodies:

Ceredigion Council has a mandatory training on the Act and the feedback from this has been that, at the very minimum, all staff are aware of the duties and vision the Act sets out.

Carmarthenshire Council in recent years has been sending their graduates on a Masters course, which includes a module specifically developed around the Act by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

It is also important to recognise the capacity issues the civil service is facing. Over the past few years, the civil service has been dealing with multiple crises and, understandably, some officials that I spoke with indicated that they struggle to find the time to access formal training, learning and development resources:

*"...my work tends to be terribly intensive that... I've not paid enough attention to my own learning, as I should do... my own personal learning seems to come a little bit lower down in the list of priorities."*

**Welsh Government civil servant**

I have also heard that resource and capacity constraints have prevented secondment opportunities both into and out of Welsh Government, as internal teams and outside organisations cannot afford to lose additional resource.

Building in time for civil servants to access training is vital to improving capabilities. Finding the time to upskill people and build in these capabilities is, understandably, challenging in a time of crises. Doing this, however, can help in the long-term to build resilience and enable government to be more adaptable as it faces new and complex challenges.



## Futures and Long-term

### Finding:

There are concerted efforts to embed long-term thinking across government, but the need to respond to multiple crises and capacity are often seen as barriers to civil servants fully applying this way of working.

While the work on Vision 2025 is welcome, I believe that there is also a need for a long-term strategy; specifically, around skills and capabilities needed in a future-fit civil service. Such a strategy can help create more resilience and increase expertise within the Welsh civil service; ensuring government is prepared for the challenges of the future.

Audit Wales' report on Welsh Government workforce planning and management found that government has faced staffing challenges and workforce pressures; making it difficult to achieve some policy ambitions and creating long-term challenges which need to be addressed in a workforce strategy. This is something that I understand the Welsh Government is currently working on. I agree with the Auditor General's recommendations that such a strategy would need to embed the sustainable development principle, and particularly cover long-term future workforce needs to deliver policy priorities. Also, a roadmap to bridge gaps between the current workforce size and capabilities, and the future needs is necessary.

There are very good examples, in various policy areas, of Welsh Government stretching beyond considerations of current challenges and thinking and planning for a longer-term future.

Increasingly, key government strategies and plans, such as the Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd, and the National Development Framework, Future Wales, present a vision for 20-years ahead in the future, while the Waste Strategy, Beyond Recycling, sets out a pathway and targets for the next 30-years, taking Wales to 2050.

The Employability and Skills Plan, A Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales, on the other hand, uses long-term measurements of success, in the form of the national milestones, which are set for 2050.

Welsh Government's latest Future Trends Report, (which they have to produce every five years in line the Act), shows a marked improvement from its previous iteration, with a narrative around relevant future trends, a guide on how to best use the report, a list of useful futures resources, and an infographic, that people can use for quick references.

Encouragingly, the Sustainable Futures Division has also secured a research fellow to gather information and examples on how the Future Trends report is being used by different teams in government. This is an important step to help the team learn lessons for the next version of the report, and also help with the practical application of the long-term way of working.

### Key points from what works well from our Long-term workshop with Welsh Government



- The Well-being of Future Generations Act is seen as a good example of supporting futures thinking through legislation.
- The Future Trends Report is a high quality and useful output written for the Welsh perspective with local implications in the narrative.
- Foresight in Welsh Government is taken seriously - joint foresight training with Public Services Boards, embedding foresight in Housing through live labs, there is a Head of Futures and a Sustainable Futures Division.
- The government is increasingly adopting a more holistic approach to policy making.
- The Welsh government has taken an intergenerationally positive step by giving 16- and 17-years olds the right to vote in local council elections.
- Efforts to consider infrastructure and urban planning and its impact on future and current generations more carefully.
- Welsh Government supporting Public Services Boards to think long-term in the development of Well-being Assessments.
- The government has also conducted useful explorations of the future of different issues, examples can be found in the Air Pollution in Wales 2020 Report (October 2021) and the Agriculture in Wales report (June 2019).

While these are very good examples of where things are going well with this way of working, other than the Future Trends Report, I have not seen any other resources specifically targeted at upskilling civil servants in embedding long-term thinking in their everyday practice and policy.

Good example from public bodies:

Monmouthshire Council are leading on Infuse - an innovation and research programme designed to build skills and capacity for innovative future public services across the Cardiff Capital Region.

I have also heard from some civil servants that it is difficult to apply and explain long-term considerations to people when the current challenges are so salient. This is an additional and complex dilemma for civil servants especially in current times when it is even more difficult to involve people in long-term vision and plans, while they are struggling with a pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. It is my belief, that governments globally will need to better understand how to apply long-term thinking in a continued VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world – as the intersection between crisis response and prevention, coexisting with one another, becomes the norm.

“when you’re speaking with people whose experience right now is of disparity and disadvantage... there’s a...sensitivity... as to how you have an appropriate focus on ‘actually, there is a right here, right now,’ significant disparity in outcomes... That has to be engaged with as a right now issue, before you earned the right to talk about future generations.”

**Welsh Government civil servant**

External organisations have also told me that the pressures of continual firefighting are holding back the ability for civil servants to practice and apply long-term thinking.

**Key points from on what the gaps are from our Long-term workshop with Welsh Government**



- Staff assessments reward individual contribution rather than group collaboration.
- Few of the datasets that government uses relate to long-term; record-keeping can be poor.
- Hierarchical organisational structure, which tends to reduce opportunity for divergent thinking around problems.
- Systems thinking is not yet the norm.
- There are limits of legislation in creating change - capacity building, infrastructure redesign, and change in everyday norms to create conditions for system-wide change are also needed.
- Welsh Government is short of people as a result of austerity. Time is a limited resource.
- Policy capability can also be weak in some areas, so merit in integrating development of futures capacity with approaches that also help reinforce policy capability.
- In crisis, much policy is directed towards immediate priorities - a need to find a way to articulate longer-term goals within the context of short-term pressures and priorities.
- Often technology systems can impose limits on shared collaborative approaches to policy.

Welsh Government colleagues have agreed with me that this is an area where improvements can be made. The live learning and sharing approach of this review has already mobilised work in this area between my office, the School of International Futures and Welsh Government – an internal futures workshop with officials from different Welsh Government departments was recently held to understand the gaps and opportunities to improve the consideration and use of foresight in government. Opportunities to do better that were identified in the workshop have been added to the Areas for Improvement sections in the relevant chapters of this report.

*“There are clearly improvements we can make around futures, and we’ve identified that as part of our Shaping Wales’ Future programme. We know that we want to use the future trends report, publication or update, as a mechanism to raise awareness of futures techniques and futures evidence...working with the [Future Generations] Commissioner in that space. I think there’s always improvements to be made in each of the five ways of working.”*

Combating short-termism in decision-making was one of the main aims of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and was heralded globally. Long-term is also one of the five ways of working, and as such, it is vital to the implementation of the Act.

There is agreement as to the importance of thinking long-term and a lot of enthusiasm for this way of working, which is key to its success. It is now time to stretch beyond enthusiasm and pockets of good practice and to arm all civil servants with the necessary tools and capabilities to embed this way of working more meaningfully and consistently. I look forward to working with the Welsh Government to understand how these areas for improvement can be taken further.

**Progress Made:**

- Significant enthusiasm across the organisation for the Act and its aims.
- There are good levels of awareness of the Act, especially in policymaking teams.
- Recognition of need to develop and enhance communication around the Act.
- Increased leadership around the Act at political and official level.
- Key training materials like induction, policymaking training and basecamp etc. include information about the Act, particularly the module ‘Policymaking in the Welsh context’.
- Development of the policy capability framework.
- Good examples of innovative approaches to increasing capabilities.
- Multiple good examples of applying the 5 ways of working and starting to think more long-term.

## People and Culture: Key elements of Implementation

Any organisation wanting to implement the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 or wanting to deepen their implementation of the Act should aim at:

### Long-term

- Ensuring people understand and recognise the value of long-term thinking, the need for multi-generational thinking and move away from making short-term reactive decisions
- Fostering and mastering the techniques of long-term thinking to seize long-term opportunities and mitigate both short and long-term risks
- Knowing when and how to apply long-term and multigenerational thinking to enable early intervention and prevention
- Sharing learning and moving towards co-production within the organisation's futures thinking capacity and ensuring gaps in knowledge and practice are filled

### Prevention

- Recognising the value of prevention and its different forms and levels
- Ensuring a clear understanding across the organisation of what needs to be prevented and of the root-causes of current and future issues and challenges
- Fostering and mastering the techniques of preventative work and shifting to preventative spend to break negative cycles and address intergenerational challenges
- Moving towards resilience beyond preparedness for crisis; having adaptive and resilient teams and human and environmental systems that can respond, prepare for and address challenges of the future as well as current ones

### Integration

- Creating an inclusive corporate culture and driving actions through an integrated vision of purpose and work internally, and where all the well-being objectives are clearly understood and reinforce each other
- Moving away from silo working to agile teams sharing of information and resources to avoid duplication and unlock synergies
- Ensuring the systematic consideration of the objectives, work and impact of other teams, public bodies and others, and sharing of good practice
- Ensuring people can see the impacts and dependencies of issues and of their work and take care to reinforce each other work and to avoid having detrimental effects
- Ensuring people are confident and willingly go above and beyond in their implementation of the Act
- Ensuring people understand and carry out their work so that the well-being Act is fully integrated across the teams, in their interactions and collaborations with others and ensuring the Act is fully integrated with other policies and legal requirements

### Collaboration

- Recognising the value of collaboration and need to move towards joint prototyping and innovation
- Ensuring collaboration happens at every opportunity within the organisation and with outside partners
- Ensuring people can identify relevant potential partners and are able to create effective partnerships and collaborations to unlock synergies
- Ensuring people know how to build strong relationships and effective feedback invitations that increase trust internally and with partners and enable cross-fertilisation of skills between teams and partners
- Moving towards delivery of the corporate plan done increasingly through joint funding and the delivery of joint projects

### Involvement

- Recognising the value of involvement and lived experience within a culture moving away from a blame and creating safe learning environments fostering innovation
- Ensuring the organisation promotes and encourages an ethos of kindness, trust and empathy where all staff feel involved and are prepared to constructively hold themselves to account because the organisational approach, governance structures and vision are owned by everyone
- Ensuring everyone reaches out to new people beyond the usual suspects and in new ways to ensure the views of the diversity of the people affected by the organisation's work are considered
- Enabling a shift away from consultation towards ongoing-two-way or multi-way conversations and co-design at every opportunity

### Areas for improvement

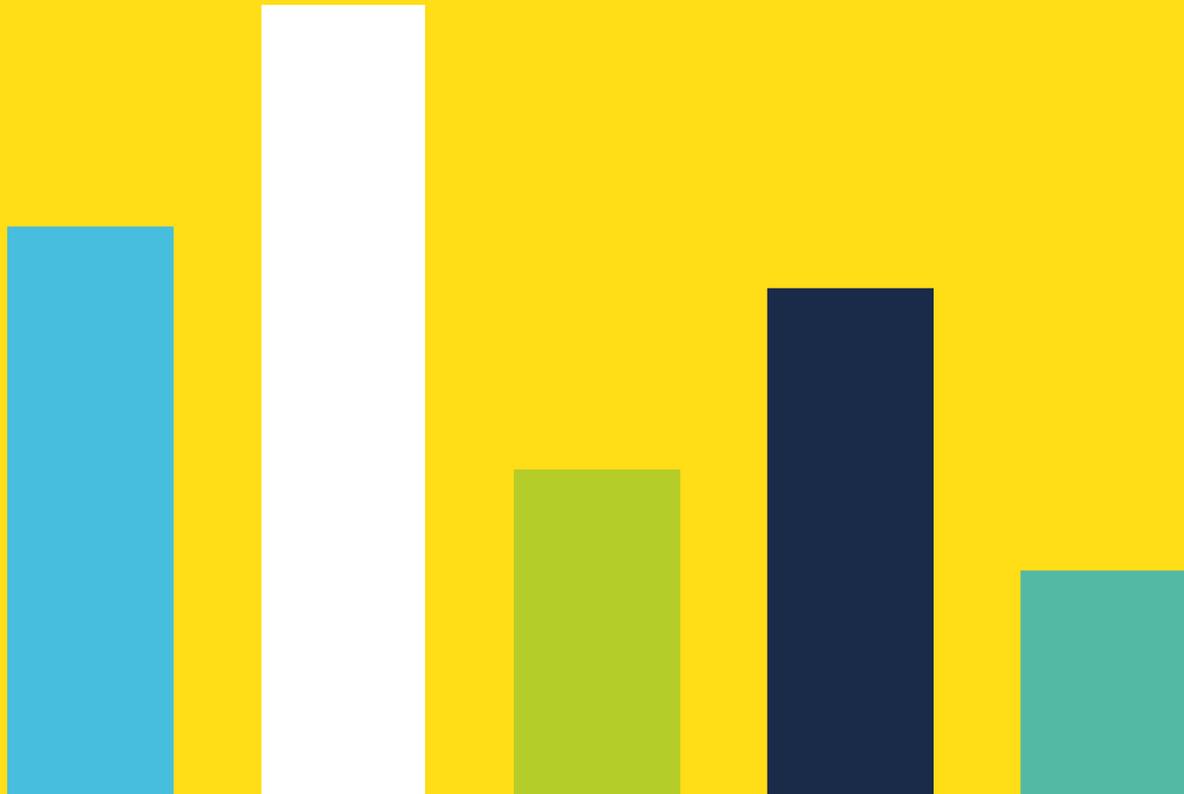
- Building on work already in training development of a long-term comprehensive strategy for helping the civil service further embed the duties and elements of the Act;
- Improving communication on the Act internally and externally and linking it to broader political and organisational narrative;
- Bridging the gap between awareness and understanding – identifying areas of lower understanding from People Survey and addressing at that level by providing civil servants with time, and opportunity to learn about the practical application of the Act;
- Building on and share good examples across the organisation of an innovation and initiatives led by civil servants to embedding the Act, (such as the good practice emerging in policymaking) to achieve results in other areas and professions. This should include both good practice and lessons learned;
- Increasing support for corporate teams to understand and apply the Act in practice to ensure sustainability is embedded in the 7 corporate areas of change in the Statutory guidance;
- Improving clarity and transparency on what is achieved and what did not work in annual reports or elsewhere;
- Clarifying the level or awareness and understanding of the Act according to job role and profession; and including a mandatory training element (such as Policymaking in the Welsh context but adapted to different professions) module;
- Improving knowledge and use of some ways of working like prevention and long-term;
- Helping political leadership foreground the long-term in their dealings with policy teams, for instance by making the long-term explicit in relevant routine meeting;
- Improving opportunities for building capacity in futures thinking in government and better communicate the long-term impacts of policies along with the short-term;
- Ensuring that there is a safe environment to try innovations that may sometimes fail but can be used as learning opportunities for the future.



Comisiynydd  
**Cenedlaethau'r**  
**Dyfodol**  
Cymru

**Future**  
**Generations**  
Commissioner  
for Wales

# Process



# Process

## Why process is important

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is driving change in the way Welsh Government do business; from the design, development and implementation of major policy initiatives to the day-to-day operations of funding grants, the training they deliver to staff and the ways in which they review their internal mechanisms and processes.

There are a number of policymaking tools, approaches, and assurance mechanisms that show progress in the way government do things. Examples of this include their internal research programme and evidence for policymaking, their Integrated Impact Assessment, Ministerial Deep Dives, and the Permanent Secretary Responsibilities. There are, however, other areas where the assurance mechanisms have fallen short of demonstrating how the Act is being implemented.

In many cases Welsh Government have gone beyond what other governments have been able to achieve in relation to sustainable development. For example, they continue to refine and implement an integrated approach that assesses the impact of policy, shaped explicitly by the well-being dimensions and ways of working in the Act. To continue to be world leading in this space, Welsh Government should now build on this innovation, continually improve its application and find ways to monitor and evaluate integrated policy making ensuring that the processes which support the Act are working as well intended. Welsh Government is currently looking at how it measures the effectiveness of its policy making function as part of their Performance Framework. This is drawing on the criteria from the Sustainable Governance Index.

In the Future Generations Report 2020 I recommended that:

**"**All public bodies and PSBs (inc. Welsh Govt) should ensure they move beyond paper-based exercises, increase staff understanding and provide constructive challenge to show how the Five Ways of Working have been applied, specifically how contribution to goals and objectives can be maximised.**"**

There is no guidance or 'off the shelf' approach to demonstrating impact on the Act, so there is flexibility for public bodies to showcase this.

**The Making Good Decisions guide by Welsh Government states that public bodies:**

**"**need to ensure they have a clear documentary record of their considerations, setting out a narrative of how the factors were considered and the conclusions the bodies reached, having weighed up the factors against each other and any other factors relevant to the decision.**"**

Welsh Government shared with me multiple mechanisms and areas they are applying the Act in their processes. I have focused this chapter specifically on 'Policymaking' and 'Accountability and Assurance' as the evidence suggests these are critical areas, that can ensure the effective application of the Act across the organisation.

## Policymaking

**Finding:**  
The Well-being of Future Generations Act is driving changes in the ways policies are being developed, designed and implemented but it is not yet being consistently applied in a way which embeds all aspects of the Act, or across the whole organisation.

It is clear from the evidence I have seen, including the raft of policy developments outlined throughout this report, that the Act is driving change in the system.

Policy teams are making efforts to apply the Act in the face of competing pressures and mounting workloads. I have heard that teams are continually assessing the wider impact of their policies on other sectors, and proactively making connections with other teams as a result.

The Act has been used as a tool to maintain a consistent balance between well-being goals; for example, by the transport team to ensure equality aspects are included alongside the push for decarbonisation.

I have identified a range of new approaches to apply the five ways of working and connect decisions and policies back to delivering the government's well-being objectives. Some of these can be found on the next page.



## Collaboration

- Wales Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd details how Welsh Government intends to collaborate with partners on the delivery of the strategy.
- For the Anti-Racist Wales plan, Welsh Government collaborate with ethnic minority stakeholder groups to develop the plan's actions.
- There was a close collaboration between the Transport and Planning Teams in the development of Llwybr Newydd and Future Wales.
- In the development of Net Zero Wales, Carbon Budget 2, the team did a lot of work to bring together various parts of Welsh Government. There is also a lot of focus on collaboration, in the form of a Team Wales approach, in the delivery of the plan.

## Involvement

- The Waste Strategy, Beyond Recycling, started with an extensive involvement of stakeholders and communities in various formats.
- Community involvement was at the heart of Anti-Racist Wales with policymakers being paired up with a community mentor.
- Wales Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd, recognised the value of co-production with stakeholders and multiple opportunities for involvement were given in the development of the strategy.



## Integration

- The Waste Strategy, Beyond Recycling, undertook a voluntary well-being assessment to map out its contribution across all goals.
- Planning Policy Wales maps out how its outcomes impact on the well-being goals.
- The National Development Framework, Future Wales, maps out on a page all of the duties and considerations (including the Act and the Programme for Government) to ensure integration.
- The Employability Plan uses the National Milestones as measures for success.

## Long-term

- Wales Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd, looks 20 years into the future and includes long-term ambitions.
- The Waste Strategy, Beyond Recycling, is a long-term pathway to 2050 and includes short-, medium- and long-term ambitions.
- The National Development Framework, Future Wales, is a 20-year spatial plan for Wales.

## Prevention

- Wales Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd, is focused on addressing issues arising from transport and preventing unnecessary car trips in the first instance.
- The Waste Strategy, Beyond Recycling, focuses on preventing further environmental, economic and social damage arising from the predominantly linear Welsh economy.

My evidence has shown, however, that there is variation in how effectively different teams use the ways of working. Collaboration, for example, seems to be more easily understood and applied than prevention and long-term. My deep dive into apprenticeships supported this observation.

## How the Apprenticeships team applies the five ways of working in policymaking

### Positively:



- Long-term thinking is being considered in apprenticeship policy, including through Knowledge and Analytical Services and external partners like Regional Skills Partnerships.
- To better integrate with other teams, the Apprenticeships Team has done challenge sessions with the wider Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning department, including ones focused on good practice and shared learning.
- Collaboration between Welsh Government teams seems high there is good effort to build and maintain good connections with other departments, such as the collaboration with the social care policy team and health boards; evidence of extensive collaboration with bodies such as Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and Regional Skills Partnerships.
- On prevention, the team told us they have undertaken a workshop to consider prevention in the apprenticeship context.

### Can build on current practice: ?

- The apprenticeship team have told us that Integrated Impact Assessment is part of the process but by no means the start of integration and long-term thinking - it is a way to test the policy approach. We would like to better understand what other methods of integration and long-term thinking the Apprenticeship team utilises.
- Involvement of employers and stakeholders is really strong. The team is committed to involving employers and stakeholders throughout the policy development and contract management processes. However, a few of our stakeholders felt this could be improved and strengthened specifically in the stage of policy design.
- The team is doing work to highlight and map out how apprenticeships contribute beyond the economy - to the social dimension of well-being. This can be stretched to include the cultural and environmental dimensions as well.

### Areas for improvement:



- The long-term view of the programme is predominantly market-driven, which needs to be addressed to take all four dimensions of well-being into account. For example, net zero - demand may not be there at the moment but we need to create future supply.
- Involvement of apprentices and those who may face barriers to apprenticeships needs to be improved, as well as how the apprenticeships team maintains an open and continuous dialogue with apprentices. The team could develop more creative methods to involve apprentices. The team can consider the Basque Country example and the European Commission's 14 criteria.
- More work needs to be done to ensure the prevention principle and different levels of prevention are understood and moved beyond workshops - to be applied and reflected in policy, decisions and communications.

My review identified a range of policymaking tools, which are contributing to the implementation of the Act. However, there are also a number of areas that could be improved to support officials in delivering greater consistency when applying the Act.

Tools available to Welsh Government officials include: the Integrated Impact Assessment, Policymaking Guidance, the Policy Capability Framework, Consultation Guidance, Policy Training, and Ministerial Deep Dives. My review of these tools identified that they have merit but, in some cases, miss opportunities to reference the Act and support its implementation. Some of them reference the Act as an additional duty, disjointed from others, rather than as a framework around everything that government does.

I have found that in some areas policymaking tools miss opportunities to develop learning and understanding. For example, it is not clear how the Consultation Guidance ensures the Act is present throughout consultations. In 2021, only 5% of consultations mentioned the Act in their questions, overlooking an opportunity to frame responses within the requirements of the Act.

Another example is the Integrated Impact Assessment guidance which could go further in supporting staff to understand the well-being goals and signpost officials to other support mechanisms. A full and proper understanding is necessary in completing this essential policymaking step. This review has found evidence to suggest that this is not always the case (see chapter on People and Culture).

The **Policy Delivery Guidance** (Policy Making Handbook) which supports civil servants to design and develop policies and strategies, could provide more depth in its discussion of the Act. When outlining approaches that should have long-term considerations, for example, there is no mention of future trends. In terms of prevention, more should be detailed on identifying and addressing root causes and seeking to find potential issues before they take hold. Additionally, while prevention is at the core of Integrated Impact Assessments, prevention needs to be considered at all stages of the policy cycle. Therefore, stating “this is what Impact Assessments are for” in the prevention section of the Policymaking Handbook could be misleading to officials. When communicating to officials the holistic nature of the Act with the fact the ways of working and well-being goals should be considered together, the sustainable development principle is omitted. This is a core part of the Act and should accordingly be given as much emphasis as the other parts when considering policymaking.

Welsh Government have been on a journey themselves in working to find the best suite of tools and processes to support and evidence the application of the Act. I identified positive developments in embedding the Act in the Business Information Reporting Tool, which is used by Deputy Directors to capture monthly updates for all Programme for Government commitments, including well-being objectives. This information is monitored monthly to ensure progress is made against all objectives and corrective action can take place if progress is not on track.

One of the key improvements in this system is the way in which it supports integration and collaboration. It can link activities to the well-being objectives and steps, showing connections between different commitments and policies; providing greater oversight of Welsh Government’s progress on achieving their objectives.

### The Business Information Reporting Tool:

Provides a simple and consistent means of recording, and reporting against commitments and priorities:

- Enables leaders at all levels to monitor delivery
- Standardises the management and reporting of risks so actions can be put in place to mitigate or control them
- Allows divisions and departments to report on the steps in a way that makes sense to them
- Has an intuitive user interface with flexible reporting tools
- Enables bilingual reporting and has improved accessibility
- Provides a single set of information on delivery progress

The majority of civil servants my team spoke with agree that BIRT is a positive improvement and is working well. However, I heard from one civil servant that sometimes, interventions are developed and completed too urgently to feature on BIRT.

Positively, I welcome ideas from some Welsh Government officials on how it could be improved further, beyond a management practice for example by embedding evidence contributions alongside policy objectives within the tool. To ensure the benefits of this system reach full potential, officials should be encouraged to proactively use this during policymaking to improve opportunities for integration, as I have heard some reports that it is sometimes used too simply. A tool to add information about one’s work without then looking across the civil service to see what others are doing and integrate work. Including dedicated time to check the tool within policymaking processes (with this being monitored by team leaders), as well as integrating it in team meetings would help address this.

I also found examples of new approaches being developed to create space for integrated long-term thinking.

### Example of good practice:

The Policy Forum brings together Deputy Directors from across the Health and Social Services Group to discuss projects they are working on in line with the Programme for Government commitments, including considerations around the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The civil servants organising this are trying to ensure integration and collaboration by inviting colleagues from outside of the group, and going to other groups to bring health and social services perspective. Recently, the Policy Forum undertook a horizon scanning exercise for Directors and Deputy Directors to think about longer-term trends and challenges. They used the Future Trends Report, joined this work with the themes set out in the report, and did a PESTLE analysis to ensure they are including foresight work in their day-to-day activities.



## Integrated Impact Assessments

Impact Assessments help policymakers ensure that relevant stakeholders and legal obligations are considered in their policy proposal. This, in turn, allows them to assess the potential impacts that their proposal could have, enabling them to prevent potential issues in the development stage.

My research and conversations with other countries and global networks suggests Welsh Government can be considered as innovative with their development of an Integrated Impact Assessment. The aim of the document is to compile the various duties and requirements that policymakers need to consider, such as the Act, in a holistic and comprehensive way. The five ways of working are central to this process, and officials are asked to explain how the proposal has or will apply each of them.

While Integrated Impact Assessments form a useful tool for compiling policy obligations, there are improvements that need to be made to ensure their ambitious purpose is realised in practice.

The duties of the Act are separated in their own individual section rather than integrated within and around other legislative duties. There are missed opportunities to remind civil servants of various elements of the Act. The Integrated Impact Assessments could demonstrate how they link with and further progress towards other duties, for example, the Equality Act 2010, and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

### This is echoed by the Audit Wales' Equality Impact Assessment report, which states

*"most integrated impact assessments involve collating separate impact assessments into a documents template."*

Integrated Impact Assessments are seen mostly as a positive improvement by the civil servants I spoke with during this review. I have, however, heard concerns from several senior civil servants that these assessments are used at the end, rather than at the beginning of the process.

Some policy officials also noted that the breadth of Integrated Impact Assessments is daunting, and the need to respond to challenges quickly can impact on the level of detail and time civil servants are able to put into this process.

My team looked at seven completed Integrated Impact Assessments to determine how they are used in practice. There is inconsistency how officials complete the template, including how much detail is included around the Act. There are many positive examples with a lot of detail and considerations of the Act, but there are others which overlook some of the elements of the Act. For example, several of the assessments shared with me by Welsh Government did not mention all the ways of working.

Some civil servants told me that it is challenging to complete an Integrated Impact Assessment for urgent interventions; in which case data has to be pulled together very quickly and, as a result, an assessment is not always completed. It is my view that more effective use of this tool occurs when evidence gathering and understanding of current and long-term issues, and their points of integration with other policy areas, is embedded in the day-to-day business of civil servants. This approach can more effectively lead to long-term considerations continuously informing policy approaches, as well as ensuring a better understanding of potential impacts.

*"... there's a big prize for us in actually getting this stuff really... locked into our systems, processes and doing; rather than having it as an overlay... success is not having a specific well-being future generations person at every meeting or a specific agenda item on well-being of future generations... It's to have the content and substance of it, fully embedded into what we are doing."*

**Welsh Government civil servant**

By developing and utilising Integrated Impact Assessments, Welsh Government have achieved something other international governments are struggling to. There are, however, still opportunities to increase its effectiveness both in terms of its content and its application which should form part of their Future Generations Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan.

New policies and guidance coming from Welsh Government are indicative of the positive evolution within policymaking tools and approaches that are designed to better implement the Act.

The next steps the government need to take are to ensure that there is a programme of continual improvement; clarifying how these tools are applied, how they are received, understood, and utilised across the organisation. The best examples of application should be showcased and shared, so other public servants can learn from it.

There is also a need to better evaluate the effectiveness of these tools and how their use translates into positive policy outcomes. For example, did the [Employability Strategy](#) achieved its intended impact in meeting the well-being objective to 'Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation' as anticipated? Are there any other non-economic objectives it could have contributed to, but did not? I could not find this level of policy evaluation within government. Both the government, and indeed the wider public sector, could benefit from the learning which could be gained from this sort of evaluation. Concerns have been raised that this lack of evaluation of policy impact can hamper the ability of civil servants to build on good precedence and learn from previous practice.

The young leaders of the Future Generations Leadership Academy noted similar concerns, with a risk of policy being seen as shapeless because it is difficult to monitor impact.

Encouragingly, my team were told that in some departments there is the practice of Ministerial Deep Dives; where the responsible Minister checks the historical development of a challenging target to better understand where any barriers may be. One example of this approach is the Trees and Timber Deep Dive. This Deep Dive included setting up a taskforce of experts in the field and holding a series of roundtables to involve those who are implementing policy. The purpose of the Deep Dive was to review the current evidence on potential drivers, barriers and solutions to woodland creation.

While, a thorough undertaking, this approach is not applied consistently across all portfolios. Currently, this approach appears to be driven by the leadership of the responsible Minister rather than a consistent mechanism that encourages deep dives.

Regular review and evaluation can help bridge the implementation gap between policy aspiration and delivery (see Future Generations Report 2020 and the chapter on Public Sector Leadership). Therefore, there is merit in embedding this approach within the system. This can ensure new policy builds on lessons learned from its previous iterations.

## Accountability and Assurance

### Finding:

Welsh Government have a range of accountability mechanisms in relation to the WFG Act, but not all are utilised effectively.

It is a challenge for governments to develop effective 'process mechanisms' that check the application of relevant legislation during policy development, as well as the governance of the organisation more generally. Welsh Government have made a lot of progress in attempting to apply such wide-ranging requirements into their governance accountability frameworks, but ultimately relying on process will only take them so far in their implementation of the Act.

These processes should (and in part do) provide prompts and evidence of how the Act is being applied. To improve implementation further it will require recognition of the limitations of process and a need to join this up more effectively. Developing civil servants' understanding as to why and how to apply the Act, as well as how to evidence and record it. While it is positive to see multiple assurance processes trying to embed the Act, it is currently unclear how effective these are in practice, since no evaluation of the general efficacy for mechanisms providing assurance around the Act has been undertaken.

There is a suite of assurance and accountability mechanisms which have developed over the last six years to provide assurance and oversight on the Act. I consider some, but not all, to be reaching their potential. The predominant reason is that some exist on paper but appear not to be operational. The level of understanding of those who are being asked to provide assurance could also be developed further.

Positively, many accountability and assurance mechanisms, such as the Internal Control Questionnaire, the Welsh Government Board Terms of Reference, the setting up of a Board Champion, and the Ministerial Briefings have been updated to reflect and embed the Act. There is more work underway to further strengthen and improve some areas like

continuous improvement and the functions of the Welsh Government Board ensuring that, when areas for improvement are identified by my Office or Senedd Committees, for example, this is addressed, tracked and monitored appropriately. There have been cases in the past when this has fallen short and it is encouraging that Welsh Government recognise and look to address these issues.

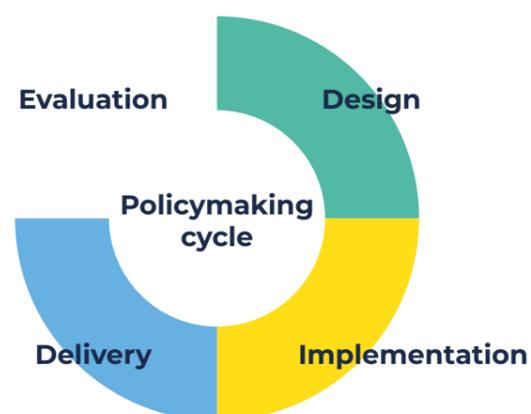
It's really important that public bodies establish mechanisms to understand the progress of objectives and steps. I welcome the introduction and purpose of the Cabinet Subcommittee for the Programme for Government, which was established to improve regular monitoring, and looks specifically at the well-being objectives and steps or commitments made by the government to deliver them. I was, however, unable to fully assess the effectiveness of this approach.

## Accountability structures and efficacy

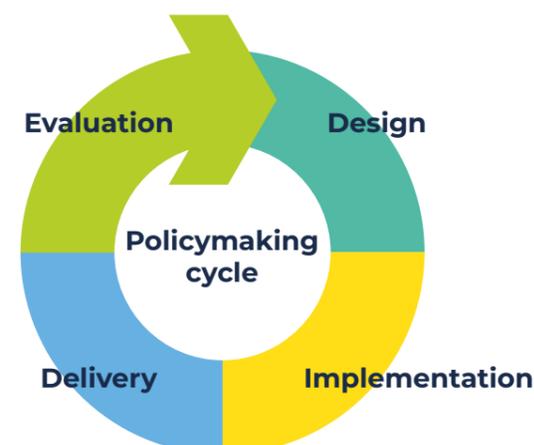
When the implementation of the Act began, the-then Permanent Secretary, Shan Morgan established a Well-being of Future Generations Oversight and Enabling Group - **'a cross government group comprising those responsible for statutory or operationally important elements of Welsh Government duties and responsibilities under the Act'**.

This Group is chaired by Welsh Government's Future Generations Board Champion, who also sits on the Welsh Government Board. The Board Champion and the Oversight and Enabling Group were highlighted in Welsh Government's response to the Public Accounts Committee Inquiry that looked at barriers to the successful implementation of the Act, as some of the key changes government has made to support the implementation of the Act.

### How it is



### How it should be



The Oversight and Enabling Group is expected to meet monthly. In reality, it has only met once during 2020 and once in 2021, as well as once since the start of this review. I have been told on multiple occasions that the Group will address various advice and recommendations I have given to Welsh Government in the past. For example, in their response to the self-reflection exercise undertaken by my Office and the-then 44 public bodies (covered by the Act in 2019), Welsh Government specified that many of the issues identified would be taken forward by the Oversight and Enabling Group. One of these issues was considering mechanisms for better integration and providing a mechanism to oversee progress in the seven corporate areas of change against the expectations of the Act and I still have not been assured that this has been the case.

Likewise, the Group should have considered the recommendations in the Future Generations Report 2020, but has only been convened twice since the publication of the report.

The role of the Champion is also not currently defined within the terms of reference of the Welsh Government Board.

*"...we need to review the role [of the Board Champion] coming out of... the pandemic experience... we need to satisfy ourselves about whether there is a different way of bringing... energy and insight to that role."*

**Permanent Secretary**

While some grace should be given due to the unprecedented disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic; as outlined above, during this period there were important matters relating to the governance of the Act within government. It is unclear how the advice, recommendations, and challenges I have outlined have been addressed.

On paper there is a positive link between this Oversight and Enabling Group, the Executive Committee and the Welsh Government Board. I have been told by Welsh Government officials that there is an appetite to reinvigorate the Oversight and Enabling Group as they believe it has a purpose and potential. I share that view and believe that with focused attention, leadership and a review of its purpose and terms of reference it could become effective.

*"... we've passed on from that stage; we've passed on some years ago from needing to kickstart the whole thing... we will probably need to think whether is this a role for the group as it is? And if so, what's the revised purpose? I don't think we need it in the form that it was originally intended to be."*

**Welsh Government civil servant**

*"... the joy of the Oversight and Enabling group, when it used to meet, was that it allowed lots of the structural parts of the Act to come together and... make sure that it was a Welsh Government way of doing these things in an integrated way Does it need refreshing? I think anything that hasn't met for that long, probably needs refreshing...the world around us has changed and the ecosystem in Welsh Government has changed. It would have to have a look at the context in which it works."*

**Welsh Government civil servant**

The Welsh Government Board (where the above-mentioned Board Champion also sits) is another key mechanism for accountability on the Act. It is not clear from its minutes that there are regular and consistent discussions around the Act. The Act has not been mentioned on the agenda since 13 March 2020, although there were some references to it by attendees on 16 July 2021. When questioned on this during the course of this review, officials told me that the minutes do not accurately reflect the discussion and the Act may have been mentioned. Given that a key part of the Board's role is to provide "strategic advice on the delivery of the Government's priorities in line with the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations Act", a may or may not have been considered is not good enough. It is necessary for a more accurate reflection of minutes to be recorded.

From the evidence provided, the effectiveness of the accountability and assurance mechanisms needs to be strengthened so as to assure me the Act is fully embedded within governance.

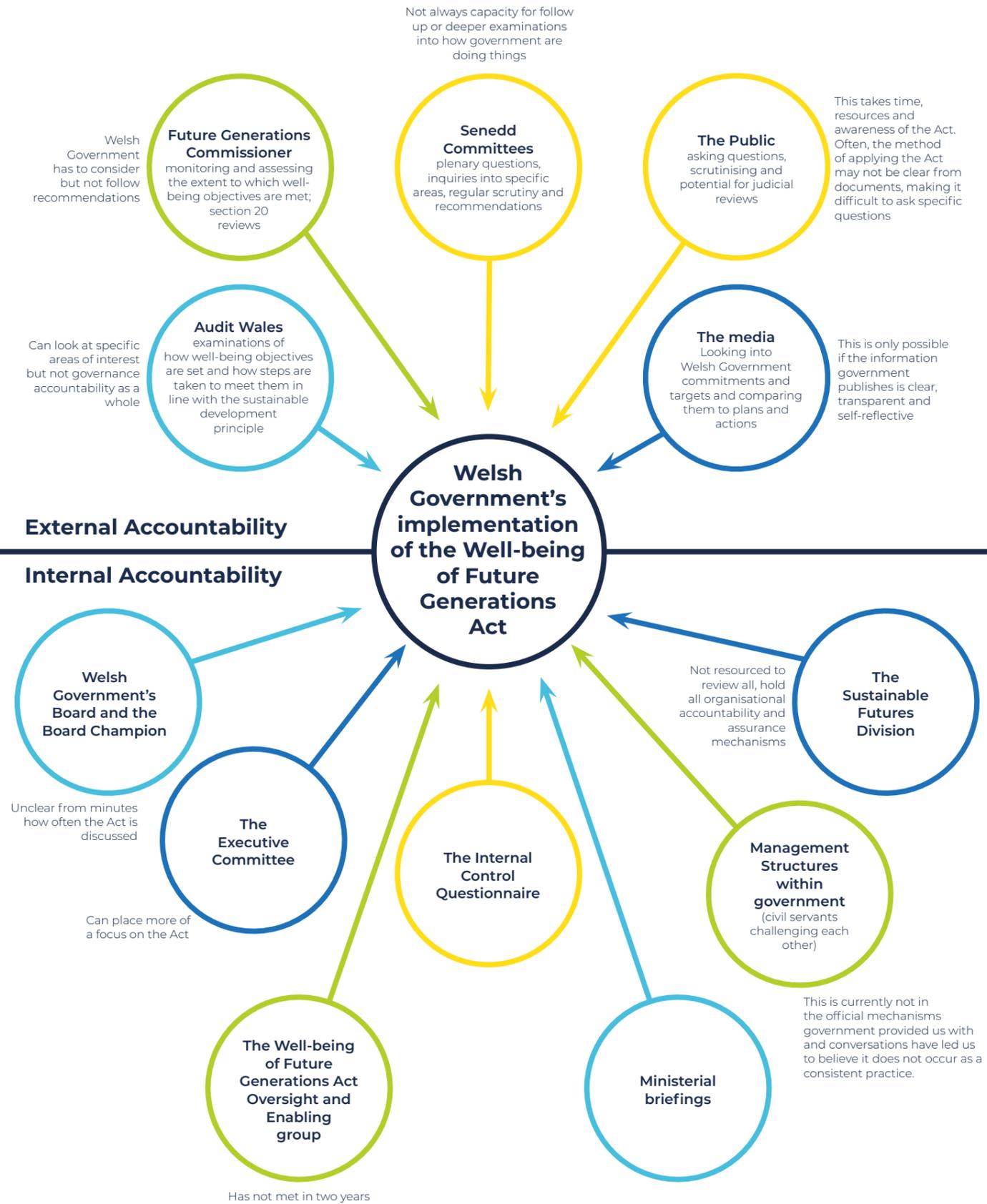
In contrast, the Shadow Board which in its current form was established in autumn 2021 is sponsored and led by the Welsh Government Board Champion. The Shadow Board provides strategic advice, challenge, and assurance to inform the work of the Welsh Government Board and has gone further towards ensuring there are a diverse range of voices being heard. 'Challenge questions' were developed by the Welsh Government Board Champion to support the Shadow Board in applying the Act. This shows effective integration and an example of what I would like to see in other accountability mechanisms.

**Welsh Government's initial written response to my questions noted that:**

*"We have sought to work on a distributed and delegated model for implementing the Act to avoid a central team being solely responsible for identifying, overseeing and delivering changes to policies or processes across the WG, and embedding changes in existing mechanisms. This is consistent with the intent behind the Act to avoid sustainable development being an 'add-on' activity."*

While I can see the merit in this, one of the main challenges I have identified was understanding the complex accountability infrastructure that Welsh Government has developed around the Act. To my knowledge, no mapping has been done to clarify how all of these accountability mechanisms integrate and interact with each other. Neither does it show clearly which mechanism reports to which and who should be regularly providing assurance around the progress for the Act. Communicating this infrastructure and how it interacts, would go a long way to provide clarity and transparency. Ultimately, helping Welsh Government ensure there are no gaps in its current accountability and assurance mechanisms.

# Well-being of Future Generations Act Accountability & Assurance relating to Welsh Government



## Internal Control Questionnaire

It is encouraging that Welsh Government have embedded questions on the Act in the internal assurance control framework through its Internal Control Questionnaire. The Questionnaire provides assurance that legislative duties and requirements are being met by different departments and is completed by Directors every year. The Internal Control Questionnaire team worked with the Sustainable Futures Division to increase and improve questions relating to the Act; a noticeable progress from the previous iteration of the questionnaire which only had one question around application of the Act.

Welsh Government supplied the Internal Control Questionnaire template for me to review. I also asked to see a selection of completed questionnaires, but was only presented with one. I considered the template and the completed questionnaire, and found that the new questions cover the elements of the Act well. However, a deeper consideration of the level of understanding for those completing the framework, and the senior officials providing oversight, may be needed. For example, one of the questions around the Act - **‘Your teams are fully aware and actively implementing the WFGA and Public Bodies directly funded by you have been provided with necessary support to carry out their responsibilities under the Act?’** - was not answered at all in as completed questionnaire; yet the section, which it was part of, was marked as having a ‘Reasonable Level of Assurance’. The levels of assurance for each section are turned into a heat map, which is then shared with the leads in each area (of assurance). In this case, the lead for assurance around the Act would have looked at the heat map and seen a ‘Reasonable Level of Assurance’ for this section, despite the above question on the Act not being answered.

I go into more detail about the issues of civil servants’ awareness and application of different elements of the Act in the People and Culture chapter.

While as a general assurance mechanism, the Internal Control Questionnaire, might work very well, when it comes to assurance around the Act this needs reviewing and strengthening.

*“Do I think that the [Well-being of Future Generations] Act is the most developed bit of the ICQ (Internal Control Questionnaire) process? No, it isn't... it's relatively new in the grand scheme of things. Some of the... core elements of the ICQ around governance and control – e.g., ‘have you put systems in place to prevent fraud?’ – have been there much longer and are better understood across the organisation. We can expect there to be developmental components to all this. But is an ICQ a good mechanism for this type of integrated assurance? Yes, it is.”*

**Welsh Government civil servant**

As detailed in this report, Welsh Government told me that they have carried out various training on the Act and have integrated it well within their processes. Undoubtedly, there is a level of understanding of what the Act requires and, on the whole, support from officials for the Act’s vision. However, I identified here and elsewhere some misinterpretations that there was lack of clarity and confidence among some officials. This could, and should, be addressed by appropriate learning and development; showcasing good practice and identifying learning opportunities from poorer.

## Other assurance mechanisms

It appears from a number of officials that they are confident that the assurance mechanisms are operating effectively. However, there are conflicting reports from Welsh Government officials about how some assurance processes work in practice, such as the Ministerial Advice process, for example. The Ministerial Advice Briefings are seen by some officials as the end point of the policymaking process, aggregating evidence after it has been refined and checked at earlier stages and presenting clear objectives and approaches for how a certain policy should be implemented for Ministerial approval.

Some senior officials have told me that the checking of these briefings is done at several levels of the organisation, including routinely at: Deputy Director level, sometimes at Director level, and potentially at Director-General level for sign off under a set of governance protocols including the Act, or where it constitutes a major departure from current policy. Alongside this, Operations Teams monitor what briefings are coming in, and random checks are done to look at these in more depth. However, senior officials have recognised that despite these assurance mechanisms in place, it is not possible for every briefing to be checked rigorously due to the volume of these coming through and competing time pressures.

This raises questions around whether current processes are effectively ensuring each element of the Act, particularly the five ways of working, are playing a central role in policy development. In the absence of spot testing and an overall evaluation of the efficacy of mechanisms, Welsh Government will find it difficult to identify and address areas where the Act may not be applied properly; where there is a lack of understanding by those applying it, or where the mechanism simply does not assist in providing assurance in practice.

The next step in the journey, therefore, will be to build constructive challenge and evaluation into the system in a way which stimulates learning from areas where the Act has been applied effectively, and where it can be improved.

### Deep Dive in Skills/Good practice:

Encouragingly, Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning have added an additional level of assurance by holding departmental challenge sessions where various teams hear about each other’s projects and can ask questions, make suggestions and ensure integration within the department.

One important area where I would like to see more clarity and assurance is the way in which Welsh Government sets and reviews their well-being objectives. I believe Welsh Government should develop and publish clear criteria for the setting and reviewing of well-being objectives. This can provide another level of internal assurance and enable external accountability and transparency.

I also note the findings of the Auditor General’s recent examination of the setting of Welsh Government’s well-being objectives, set out in this letter to the Permanent Secretary. The Auditor General’s findings included **“that while the Welsh Government is continuing to take steps to embed the sustainable development principle in its wider processes and practices, it has not provided clear supporting evidence to show how it has applied the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives”**.

The Auditor General also found that Welsh Government’s **“annual reports could also be strengthened to aid planning and support accountability. They describe achievements, grouped by cross-cutting theme, and the supporting annex sets out progress against programme for government commitments. However, this makes it difficult to evaluate overall progress against each well-being objective and identify what further or different action might need to be taken to achieve them.”** The evidence I have seen aligns with this finding.

These issues need to be addressed to ensure the use of the sustainable development principle and five ways of working is clear in the way Welsh Government, set, review and report on the progress of their well-being objectives and steps.

## Progress made

- Integrated Act in key policymaking tools and guidance
- Multiple good examples of the 5 ways of working being used in policymaking
- The Business Information Reporting Tool provides a tool for reporting on well-being objectives and Programme for Government commitments
- The Integrated Impact Assessment is world leading
- Shadow board being supported to constructively challenge on how the WFG Act has been applied
- The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee focusing on the Act
- People's survey asking questions about the five ways of working

## Process: Key elements of Implementation

Any organisation that desires to implement the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 or deepen their implementation of the Act should aim to:

### Long-term:

- Having a clear 25+ year vision, developed collaboratively, of the desired long-term future, with different timescales
- Having strong and easily usable future trends and tools, including different scenarios that enable early intervention and prevention
- Providing enabling infrastructure (e.g. communities of practice) and resources to support futures knowledge and know-how to seize long-term opportunities and address current and future challenges
- Using and developing tools to embed futures consideration in strategy and decision making to ensure intergenerational equity

### Integration

- Ensuring an understanding and taking account of interdependence and interconnections between issues and activities
- Integrating strategies, policies and actions with national goals and strong well-being objectives (of the organisation and of others), maximising contribution to the national goals
- Enabling internal integration and well-being consideration across the board, removing barriers especially in the operational factors like resource allocation, planning processes, skills development and audit/evaluation
- Investing in understanding connections of causes, issues and impacts, such as through Integrated Impact Assessments
- Integrating action and solutions by collaborating with others to unlock synergies internally and externally

### Prevention:

- Embracing and championing prevention and appreciating its long-term value
- Ensuring understanding and appropriate use of the different types of prevention to maximise its efficiency and impact
- Ensuring an understanding of the root-causes of things to target them and not the symptom, including agreement on what needs preventing included at the core of the corporate strategy
- Enabling early intervention including adopting preventative budgets and moving away from only providing acute responses

### Collaboration:

- Reaching out and listening to what others do in order to find opportunities to collaborate to unlock synergies and avoid duplication
- Collaborating and uniting forces to tackle long-term (common) challenges in an integrated way and contributing to the national goals
- Looking beyond the usual partners to develop multi-sectoral collaboration and bring others on the journey to sustainability
- Taking every opportunity to collaborate at planning and delivery levels

### Involvement:

- Understanding that involvement is more than consultation and seeing it as an ongoing 2-way conversation both internally and externally
- Identifying and reaching out to the diversity of people affected by policies and decisions so that they can help design your strategies and identify solutions
- Being open to real change to result, conducting meaningful and effective involvement, applying it from problem defining to delivery
- Using involvement to identify the needs of current and future generations and to define and achieve the long-term vision set out in the goals, and improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of current and future generations.

## Areas for improvement

- Review and test how well different tools and accountability mechanisms are achieving their ambition and helping to deliver the Act in practice. Some of these tools are:
  - Business Information Reporting Tool to include sections focusing on long-term objectives, which can be incorporated into departmental team meetings
  - Better integrate the five ways of working throughout the Integrated Impact Assessment
  - Review how the Internal Control Questionnaire is used to provide an overall assurance on the Act
- Consistent and more integrated reviewing and evaluation of policy needed to understand cumulative impacts on sustainability
- Review and clarify the expectations of the Welsh Government Board Champion with a clear remit set in the Terms of Reference of the Board
- Improve the flow of insight and assurance, as well as clarify the accountability and reporting lines between the Oversight and Enabling Group, Executive Committee and Welsh Government Board
- Ask more searching questions in the People Survey



Comisiynydd  
Cenedlaethau'r  
Dyfodol  
Cymru

Future  
Generations  
Commissioner  
for Wales

# Public Sector Leadership



# Public Sector Leadership

## Why leadership is important

The ambition of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is to change the way the entire public sector in Wales works and maintain Wales as a leader in sustainable development. We are all on this journey together and the only way for us to achieve the legislation's bold aspirations is by ensuring no one is left behind, and everyone is contributing to the vision set in the seven well-being goals.

This means that public servants from all public bodies need to be working together, and sharing best practice and lessons learned on the way to make the journey easier, faster and more joined-up than it would otherwise be.

My role was created to support the implementation of the Act, to monitor progress, and to encourage best practice. However, as outlined on numerous occasions the ability of my office to support the scale of the change needed is limited due to resources. It is important therefore to recognise that Welsh Government has significant levers and resources at its disposal to drive the changes needed internally and externally.

Welsh Government also has an important role to play as a national organisation bound by the Act, with powers to create legislation, guidance and policy that impacts other public bodies, private sector, voluntary sector and general public – all of whom contribute to this journey. Therefore, it is essential that Welsh Government create the right conditions for new ways of working and leading the way for other public bodies in demonstrating how the five ways of working can be best applied in practice. In addition, Welsh Government can encourage application by sharing its many resources, good practice examples and experience with the other 47 (at present) public bodies.

An important step has already been taken with the development and promotion of the One Welsh Public Service approach. This aims to have a single set of values which guide how the Welsh public sector works, changes culture and shapes the way the sector behaves. It is positive that these set of values were revised and re-written to embed the Act and the five ways of working specifically.

Welsh Government currently have several mechanisms to facilitate public sector leadership. At a senior leadership level, for example, policy development is being informed by a shadow Social Partnership Council (which is soon to be put on a statutory footing); a range of ministerial advisory boards and partnership forums; as well as ad-hoc and regular events such as: the Public Sector Leadership Forum and the All-Wales Continuous Improvement Community. These are useful ways of facilitating dialogue on common priorities, challenges and opportunities. They play a vital role in building consensus and action around a direction of travel in Wales, generally aligned with the Act, and are part of the collaborative approach required by the legislation. In my experience, however, of participating in many of these strategic policy forums, they are not necessarily places where more detailed consideration of the integration of well-being objectives, long-term trends, scenarios and the sharing of joint learning routinely take place. At a very basic level, this could be facilitated by those providing support and a secretariat being specifically tasked to bring long-term trends, links with other government and relevant aspects of policy development to the attention of members of these boards - many of whom have often been appointed for expertise in, or representation of, a specific area. As these types of collaborations and their status develops, Welsh Government need to address this issue and monitor the extent to which the requirements of the Act are being appropriately applied to policy development work in these arenas.

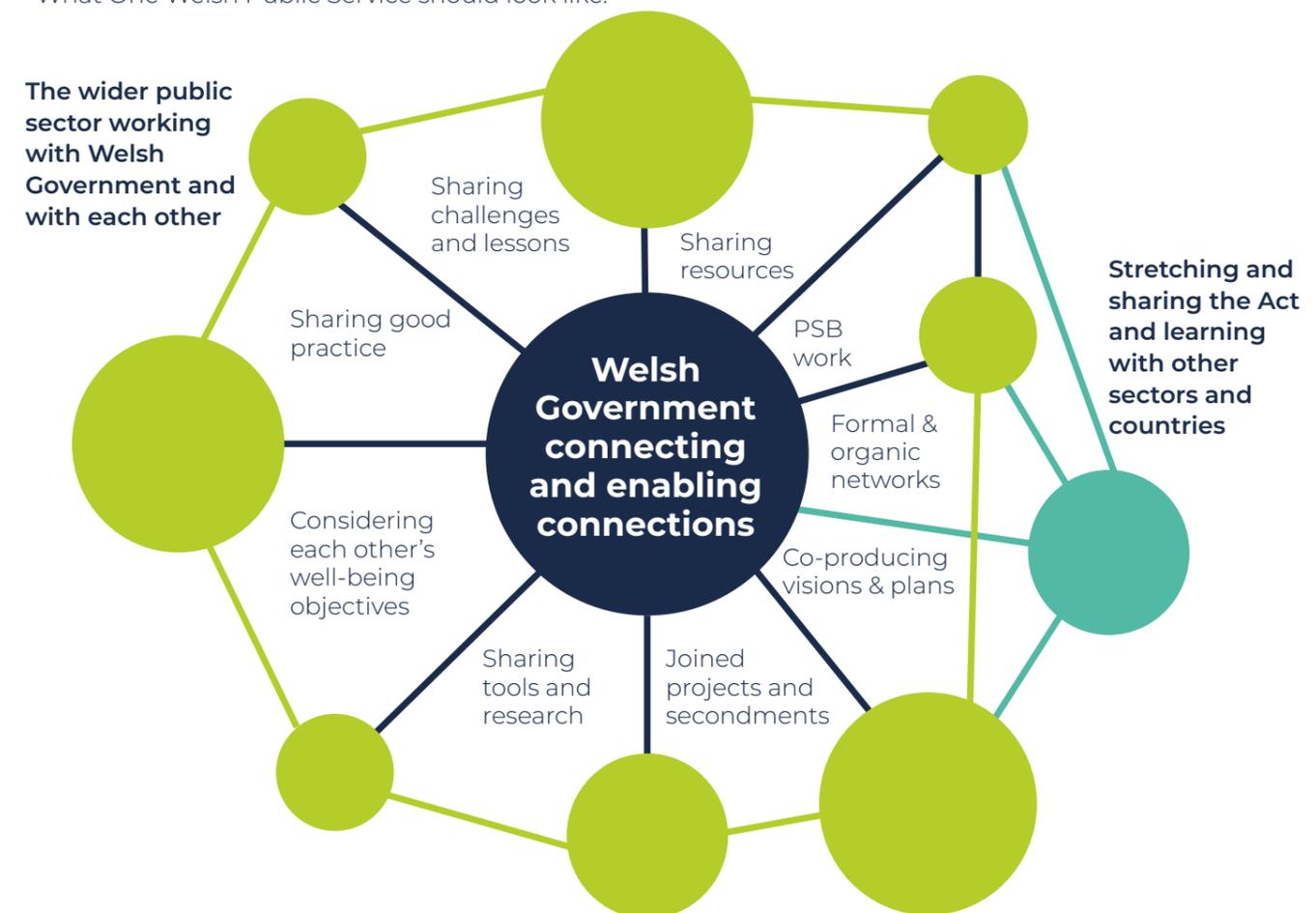
There are an additional number of forums where Welsh Government officials can interact with officials from other public bodies, such as: Academi Wales' Summer and Winter Schools; various networks convened by umbrella organisations (such as the Welsh Local Government Association, NHS Confederation etc); in the Sustainable Development Coordinators Cymru+ Network and through their representation on Public Services Boards. Although each of these bodies perform different functions, from advocacy and advice to learning and development, they present an opportunity for the government to share learning, promote the use of resources such as the Future Trends

Report and make connections between well-being objectives of the different bodies. There is, however, room to improve some of the ways these mechanisms are used in this regard.

I believe that there is rich learning and innovation to be found across the public sector (and beyond) on the implementation of the Act; and further efforts should be made to explore, scale up and encourage the wider adoption of these approaches. Over the years, my own team have been working to identify and share examples of good practice where possible, but the limitations of my role and resources mean that I am not always able to highlight all of the positive things happening across Wales. A targeted effort by Welsh Government to contribute to this can go a long way towards progressing the implementation of the Act.

## One Welsh Public Service

What One Welsh Public Service should look like:



## Enabling One Welsh Public Service

### Finding:

There is untapped potential for Welsh Government to work with the public sector and beyond to deliver the Well-being of Future Generations Act - to mobilise, promote good examples, create resources, and share learning.

The officials and stakeholders I have spoken with, both within and outside of Welsh Government, are enthusiastic about the vision and new ways of working that the Act has introduced; and have shown support for its vision and implementation.

It was also encouraging to hear from external stakeholders that their collaboration with Welsh Government has improved and the significant efforts to improve relationships over recent years has had an effect. Welsh Government's engagement with the Sustainable Development Coordinators Cymru+ Network has particularly been highlighted and seems to be working very well.

*"The relationship between Welsh Government Ministers, local government officers, and local government politicians has never been better. There's a huge amount of communication and shared good practice."*

**Public Sector representative**

Evidence sessions with the voluntary sector have also highlighted improved collaboration with Welsh Government, particularly with the Climate Change team through the Climate Cymru partnership, in the development of the new curriculum; the Taith programme (which is to replace the Erasmus programme); and the work of the Foundational Economy team.

*"There's a really open dialogue, they've got the Team Wales approach there. That dialogue has continued to grow and flourish, there's... an emphasis on seeking expertise and knowledge from the Climate Cymru partnership... there's a two-way dialogue which is very positive... Similarly, with the development of the new curriculum (the education curriculum) there was really good practice between the third sector and Welsh Government there."*

**Voluntary sector representative**

*"...the Foundational Economy team at Welsh Government ...have been brilliant... they've made the time to properly govern and manage this contract, but we feel that we are there as trusted partners with expertise... In other parts of Welsh Government, contract meetings have focused a lot more on process, about budgets. Seem to miss the essence, the important stuff."*

**Voluntary sector representative**

Representatives from Public Services Boards have also told me that the support they had from Welsh Government for this round of well-being assessments was much improved. Regarding the latest round of well-being assessments, officials told me that

*"...the level of support that we had [from Welsh Government], and the general working relationship was particularly good. They genuinely did play a role in helping us get to where we needed to be with our assessment."*

**Public Sector representative**

Sessions with stakeholders have shown that the term One Welsh Public Service is a widely used and powerful brand, and that public bodies and others see it as a much needed and welcome approach.

*"One Welsh Public Service is vital, isn't it? A lot of the problems we get are caused by artificial barriers. One, that is the organisational barriers, and another is the financial year barrier. It's those sorts of things you've got to overcome if you're going to move towards a more sustainable way of making decisions and delivering. There's so much in the public sector where we can do things jointly."*

**Section 20 stakeholder**

Well-being of Future Generations Multi-Stakeholder Forum convened by Welsh Government is seen as a useful space for those not currently covered by the Act to talk about their work in relation to sustainable development. Attendance, however, has varied, and I would like to see how this forum can interact directly with policy issues and the delivery of well-being objectives.

*"What we have found really useful is the Well-being of Future Generations stakeholder fora...we are part of a LinkedIn group that receives... blog posts and things like that. That's for... bodies who sit outside the [Well-being of Future Generations]... That's been really useful for us to have that sort of direct link in."*

**Public Sector representative**

Another useful and often referred to approach is the Future Generations Exchange. This comprised of three events over two years, organised by Welsh Government, to share practice and learning on embedding the Act across government and public bodies. Unfortunately, this is not something which is convened regularly and there are no current plans to organise further events.

Encouragingly, having recognised the international reach, interest, and potential that the Act has for the promotion of Wales globally; initially under the leadership of the then Minister for International Relations, Eluned Morgan MS; the International Team are leading the way in their use of the Act in their work with other countries through the development of an International Strategy - which has the Act as a core component.

This approach needs to be picked up by departments working with the private and voluntary sectors to seize the opportunities the Act presents to bring others on board in delivering a common and shared vision for the future of Wales.

Outside of this review, dialogue with stakeholders has revealed that there is appetite within the private sector in Wales to align and contribute to the seven well-being goals. I am working with several large companies to integrate the goals into their corporate strategies and community projects. Many private sector organisations have also shown their interest in the Act through their participation in the Future Generations Leadership Academy. Additionally, I am working with Business Wales on their guidance on the legislation for Small and Medium Enterprises. I have also reviewed Welsh Government's policy and finance instruments for business to identify how the Economic Contract, Business Wales and Development Bank Wales can establish a coordinated approach to incentivise investments by business in line with the Act.

As we encourage public bodies to raise the standards of their procurement strategies, there is an equal need to promote the provision of goods and services provided by the private sector in line with the well-being goals; and I look forward to working with Welsh Government to further the momentum developing within the private sector.

I am reassured by the approach the Grants Assurance Panel has taken to embed the Act within the external grants process. I understand that the application for grants includes a specific question on the Act; which requires officials to describe how they have applied the five ways of working in the development of the scheme, and how they will continue to apply them in the implementation and evaluation phases.

The Deputy Director of the Sustainable Futures Division is a member of the Grants Assurance Panel to ensure sufficient attention is given to the Act; as well as providing advice and guidance. Attention should be given to avoid members of this division alone becoming the voice of the Act on this panel, at similar boards and meetings, and externally with other public bodies. See the Chapter on People and Culture.

The work of Academi Wales, which is an important offer for leadership development across the whole public sector, is highly recognised and welcomed; particularly for its aim to bring leaders from across the civil sector together - such as the Summer and Winter School. I believe, however, that there are opportunities to strengthen the links to the Act in some of their content using language and highlighting more of the Act's products such as well-being objectives, the Future Trends Report and the work of Public Services Boards. Academi Wales can better monitor and assess the impact of their work and the content of their leadership development offer, so they know it is driving the necessary and intended change. I understand that Academi Wales is currently working on a strategy which would provide positive opportunities to address some of this; however, this is planned to only be a three-year strategy which does not reflect the Act's long-term way of thinking. I would like to see better consideration of how such short-term documents integrate with long-term trends, scenarios and vision.

While all of this is very positive and shows real progress in the way Welsh Government is collaborating and working with others, there is more room for government to improve in their role as a leader on the implementation of the Act. The reasons and opportunities for this are outlined in the sections below.

There are opportunities to work more closely, share resources, enable and empower innovation, and make better connections between well-being objectives across the public sector; as well as harnessing the willingness of those outside the public sector to use the Act as a framework for action to speed up progress and ensure everyone is a part of the journey towards sustainability.

## Public Services Boards

Public Services Boards provide a useful point of interaction with key public services and other partners within each region or locality.

While the support government has provided to Public Services Boards for this round of well-being assessments is welcomed, I have heard from stakeholders that some of the same challenges I have previously highlighted to government, in relation to Public Services Boards, still exist.

Funding challenges came across, as always, quite strongly in my evidence sessions; as well as issues like unequal contribution from partners and the complex landscape of partnerships and boards that exist across Wales. All of this has been detailed already in Chapter 2 of my Future Generations Report 2020, but these points need repeating as they have not yet been fully addressed.

*"...the challenge is... it's a virtual organisation with no budget. When you think about all the competing priorities that we've got... I've got to try and create the argument that we can collectively put some money into this, or some resource, but at the same time, we know how stretched public services are. ...I'm not quite sure what we can achieve at the moment..., but my plan is to work with the willing."*

**Public Sector representative**

The complex landscape of public service delivery still exists and is being added to. In this report, I have stressed the need for clarity in communication on the requirements of the Act - this applies both to understanding what implementation requires inside Welsh Government and what implementation needs in the other public bodies covered the Act. It is my clear view that in creating any new entities, the Welsh Government should explicitly set out how they connect to each other in terms of the setting and delivery of well-being objectives.

Moreover, Welsh Government need to consider what their role is in supporting and enabling Public Services Boards to achieve their ambitious purpose. Welsh Government representatives on each board, at this time, are seen as having quite a passive role and the Public Services Board Representatives Terms of Reference confirm this:

*"In practice, the role is slightly different to others involved in the PSBs, acting more in an observer capacity than as a local partner – making connections with the national context and providing constructive challenge."*

**Terms of Reference for Representing Welsh Ministers on Public Services Boards**

### Good practice from public bodies:

Natural Resources Wales is using their increased futures capacity and expertise to support Public Service Boards' well-being assessments and plans by offering to run 3 Horizons workshops on various topics selected by the Boards. They are also using these workshops as an opportunity to learn from Public Service Boards' work, expertise and visions and bringing back knowledge into Natural Resources Wales with a view to strengthen collaboration and integration, especially in relation to well-being objectives.

There is a missed opportunity for Welsh Government to take a more active role as a partner and contribute regularly to the work and efforts of Public Services Boards.

This will ensure close connections are being made between sustainability work on a national and local level. It is also not clear how information and intelligence gathered by Public Services Board representatives is used by government to inform relevant work streams. To my knowledge, there is no system or mechanism to regularly share information and good practice from Public Services Boards to various teams and departments across government.

*"I'd be quite interested in hearing about what happens at Public Services Boards level that Welsh Government could adopt... there tends to be commentary on what's going on within and between the Public Service Boards rather than concentrating on what can inform and improve Welsh Government... I haven't been looking for that. That's a blind spot on my part. I certainly hadn't had any comments along those lines. But I suspect the representatives haven't been looking for that. But very good point. We're very open to it."*

**Welsh Government civil servant**

Public Services Boards provide insight into the challenges and opportunities of reaching shared policy priorities and objectives locally and are the only mechanism in place which considers all aspects of public policy and services delivery holistically (as they are responsible for delivering a local well-being plan which contributes to all seven of the well-being goals). Without Public Services Boards, there would be a substantial gap in joined-up long-term planning across Wales. Welsh Government could do more to take advantage of this infrastructure, both in terms of how they share insight from and to the Public Services Boards in addressing gaps or challenges in implementation of government policy; in taking collective action towards well-being goals at a local level, and in drawing from good practice to assist in their own learning journey.

Welsh Government should, therefore, aim to clarify and refresh the role of Public Services Board representatives in order to improve the sharing of knowledge, expertise and concerns, and ensure these are fed back to all relevant departments in Welsh Government regardless of the individual representative's area of work. This is something I have previously recommended in my Future Generations Report 2020.

## Integration of objectives

In similar vein, there does not seem to be a mechanism to enable and encourage Welsh Government to consider the well-being objectives of other public bodies and Public Services Boards in their work; this is currently a gap in how Welsh Government are implementing the Act.

The Integration way of working in the Act is defined as:

*“the need to take an integrated approach, by considering how*

- (i) the body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals;*
- (ii) the body's well-being objectives impact upon each other or upon other public bodies' objectives, in particular where steps taken by the body may contribute to meeting one objective but may be detrimental to meeting another”*

I recognise that collating and organising all 48 public bodies' well-being objectives and steps and analysing how each of those impacts on one's own organisational objectives is a big task; however, it is key to ensuring that individual public bodies are co-ordinating their efforts and not undoing the contribution to the national well-being goals of others through their own efforts and steps.

It is important to note that the very existence of the seven well-being goals represents a common framework for action in Wales and that this is something powerful, which hardly any other country has been able to achieve. The United Nations, for example, have been encouraging cities and regions to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for action and reporting.

Cities and regions who have embraced this are seen as leading the way. In Wales, the translation of the Sustainable Development Goals into our seven well-being goals (which was done through an extensive involvement of people, communities and agreed by the Senedd) and the fact that the law requires annual reporting against these goals is a major step for our country.

There is more to be done, however, to ensure that the machinery of government is operating in the way envisaged by the integration principle set out in the Act by considering how their well-being objectives and steps impact upon other public bodies.

My office regularly goes through an exercise of collating all public bodies' well-being objectives and has shared that analysis with Welsh Government in the past; however, during this review, it has not become clear how this is used in decision-making or to analyse the impact other public bodies' objectives have on Welsh Government, and vice versa.

Being able to understand what other public bodies are doing to maximise their contribution to the well-being goals can help Welsh Government and others avoid duplication and explore opportunities for integrated and collaborative work.

## Applying the Act in the implementation of policy

It is recognised throughout this report that many of Welsh Government's national policies and strategies are designed to contribute to the seven well-being goals and clearly show how the five ways of working were used.

There seems to be a gap, however, between policy aspirations and their delivery. This **“implementation gap”** was also identified in my Future Generations Report 2020.

As I have highlighted before, Welsh Government has an overly optimistic view of what it takes to implement the ambitious policies they develop. It is often the case that a policy is published without a fully developed plan for the funding of implementation, including delivery capability, awareness raising, training and robust monitoring.

This results in a gap between the aspirations of Welsh Government and reality, due to a lack of capacity and increased confusion for local deliverers. Public bodies and Public Services Boards often tell me that expectations are unrealistic, they require increased capacity, additional resources, training, central government support and permission to undertake some of the changes proposed by Welsh Government. This is particularly the case where the new policy demands cultural change and/or there is a lack of explicit reference of how public bodies should integrate or cease existing practice with new requirements.

I have seen this 'gap' in the implementation of WelTAG 17, Planning Policy Wales 10, the NHS Planning Framework, and the Active Travel Act.

My sessions with stakeholders from the voluntary sector and representatives from other public bodies also raised similar concerns. I have heard from public bodies, for example, that while Welsh Government's ambitious aspirations such as the commitment to a National Forest are welcome, it is not always clear how and who would deliver these aspirations and how the gap in the skills needed can be addressed to achieve these commitments.

While this may be an issue that many governments face, this also has consequences on how the aspirations of the Act are delivered. Welsh Government can create a plethora of progressive policies that are designed to align with the Act and its goals, but if these are not effectively delivered on the ground, then they are not in reality contributing to the vision and aspirations outlined in the seven well-being goals.

Positively, efforts are being made in some parts of Welsh Government to take a deeper look at the implementation of this through Ministerial Deep Dives – for example, in the woodland creation area (see Chapter 1).

*“...Woodland Creation is a really good example of that... they give us Woodland Creation targets year on year... We never meet them, because what we need is more structural transformation in practice and implementation of a more integrated policy elsewhere... Ministers have just been doing Deep Dives into particular areas and Woodland Creation was one of them.”*

**Public Sector representative**

In seeking to close this implementation gap, Welsh Government should be applying the five ways of working in how they design, resource, deliver and evaluate the implementation of policy. If this is done well and the ways of working are applied properly, throughout the lifetime of a policy, then many of the issues contributing to the current implementation gap can be addressed – for example:

- Involvement and collaboration can ensure this is co-produced with the people that will actually be delivering the policy in practice and issues that can impede implementation can be flagged early on, addressed and prevented at the design stage. Any subsequent issues that may not be foreseen can be quickly flagged and resolved if an on-going conversation with stakeholders is happening throughout the whole policy lifetime.
- Public body stakeholders will be able to raise their own targets and well-being objectives, which the policy can integrate to ensure a joined-up approach at the implementation stage.
- An integrated, long-term vision co-designed with stakeholders to create a shared sense of ownership and ensure everyone is invested in the implementation of policies.

- Applying prevention can help understand the lifetime of a policy and its intended outcomes.
- Using long-term thinking, integration and collaboration would assist in understanding the implementation of the policy, its resource implications, and tracking delivery and evaluation of its effectiveness.

This implementation gap needs to be recognised by Welsh Government and addressed by working collaboratively with public bodies and other partners from the very start of the policymaking process to ensure any challenges are flagged at the design and development stages and reviewed throughout the process until delivery and evaluation.

### Government as a leader

There is a real opportunity to work collaboratively across public sector and beyond to improve the implementation of the Act.

Welsh Government has additional duties under the Act, more so than any other public body, in supporting the overall implementation of the legislation through duties such as: producing a Statutory Guidance, a Future Trends Report, an annual Well-being of Wales report, the national indicators and milestones.

While Welsh Government is clearly meeting their duties in that regard and has also improved the quality of reports being produced over the years, they should go further in proactively encouraging public bodies to draw on these materials. This can be done in collaboration with my own efforts to promote existing tools and resources to public bodies, Public Services Boards and other organisations.

Currently, Welsh Government is not entirely clear on how, for example, Public Services Boards are using the Well-being of Wales Report. As I have outlined in other sections of this report, for the Act to be fully implemented, the government must seek to stretch itself beyond simply ensuring the existence of resources to systematically assessing their use and effectiveness at delivering the intended outcomes.

**"** ... I think we have captured that in the past, but perhaps haven't routinely captured that in future. We do things like go along to... meetings of public service bodies, Public Service Board Representatives; to share updates and hear how they use the report. But that mechanism could probably be more formal, and in terms of capturing as well, how it's being used."**"**

**Welsh Government civil servant**

Communication about the existence and intended use of these materials can be more consistent and joined-up with other communication streams and networks to ensure the right people in public bodies and Public Services Boards are hearing about them and using them. Welsh Government can also look to share some more practical examples of the use of these materials.

**"** I'm quite keen... about how we think about how we really ... up our game around public communication on some areas of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Internally, there is a similar challenge ...but obviously there are better ways in because there are things that are relevant to particular policy areas that you can use as a hook. Perhaps we need to be better at ...sharing the good practice where people have done those things well; to think about how we can kind of spread that more widely."**"**

**Welsh Government civil servant**

Beyond promoting Act-specific materials, Welsh Government also has a broader role in supporting other public bodies in implementing the Act through sharing experience, expertise, evidence and data.

There is a lot of good practice in Welsh Government, both in terms of useful mechanisms and policy approaches, as detailed in other parts of this report. Government also produces a plethora of useful materials and research that can aid others in their aspirations and implementation of the Act.

At present, however, there does not seem to be an avenue or mechanism to enable the regular and consistent sharing of good practice, learning and resources between Welsh Government, public bodies and Public Services Boards.

More can be done, for example, to proactively encourage public bodies to use research developed in-house by Welsh Government, and government should also ascertain what research would be useful for the Public Services Boards and public bodies.

The One Welsh Public Service approach is a great opportunity to improve this and enhance collaboration and sharing of practice and learning between public bodies, but the Act needs to be clearly present within the communications and approaches around this work to maximise opportunities.

**"** There's a very clear role for Government as a leader, the signals that are sent by ministers in particular matter throughout the system but they need to be reinforced. I think it needs a restatement, from the top, that Well-being of Future Generations Act is central to the way we achieve the concept of a One Welsh Public Service culture."**"**

**Welsh Government civil servant**

### Progress:

- Collaboration with public bodies and Public Services Boards has improved a lot;
- Government is working well with external networks like the Sustainable Development Coordinators Cymru+;
- Well-being of Future Generations Multi-Stakeholder Forum is a useful space;
- One Welsh Public Service is a recognised and welcome brand;
- The Future Generations Exchanges are great events to promote the Act;
- International team and Grants Assurance Panel are great examples of how the Act should be used.

## Public Sector Leadership: Key elements of Implementation

Welsh Government should aim at:

### Long-term

- Setting a clear shared vision of the desired future for the nation to be achieved and tracking national progress
- Providing a reliable source of future trends
- Enabling capacity building and effectiveness of practices
- Having a long-term corporate strategy and implementing it

### Prevention

- Enabling shift towards prevention and early intervention
- Guiding and enabling capacity building; including funding of the shift towards prevention

### Collaboration

- Enabling collaboration and leading by example
- Collating and sharing of achievements and good practice
- Working in partnership

### Integration

- Enabling integration and promoting the Act in everything they do
- Integrating objectives
- Integrating the Act into existing systems and giving clear guidance for officials representing the Act

### Involvement

- Enabling involvement
- Evidence of involvement
- Improving involvement

## Areas for Improvement:

- Clarifying and refreshing Welsh Government's Terms of Reference for Public Services Boards Representatives;
- Considering how to support Public Services Boards to achieve their ambitious purpose – e.g., reviewing funding arrangements and current guidance to members to encourage more joint-up work and active participation;
- Improving the awareness and understanding of other public bodies' well-being objectives to ensure these are acknowledged - consideration of other bodies' well-being objectives is a part of the decision-making process;
- Co-producing policies with the people who will be implementing them to ensure challenges to implementation are addressed at the design stage;
- Support teams working with the private and voluntary sectors to better promote the Act and encourage others to use it;
- Finding ways to underline the value of the long-term in policy discussions, for example, around budget and in consultations.

# Conclusions

## A Collaborative approach

*Common position between Welsh Government and Future Generations Commissioner*

The approach to this statutory review of Welsh Government sought to work in the spirit of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and has explored how the Commissioner and a public body subject to the Act can collaborate so that a statutory review drives improvements in how that body (in this case, Welsh Government) safeguards the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

This process has enabled the Future Generations Commissioner's office to develop their knowledge and understanding of how government works, the wider context within which it works, and how the Act fits into that. It has also enabled Welsh Government to receive constructive challenge and support on the improvement actions it has taken and intends to take to embed the Act in the machinery of government. This has enabled use of early opportunities such as an all-staff event on the Act and a review of the role of a Board Champion, which commenced during the review period.

The Section 20 Review process has been a genuine attempt by officials in the Future Generations Commissioner's Office and Welsh Government to collaborate. We acknowledge that working collaboratively to drive and enable change is both challenging and productive. There is much to learn from this experience, and we hope this helps deepen the collaboration between our two organisations, given our shared duty to promote sustainable development in Wales.

Early in the review process both Welsh Government and the Commissioner agreed that that a key improvement opportunity would be to bring together the range of actions Welsh Government has taken and is intending to take to deepen their application of the Act, into a single coherent action plan, with associated arrangements for monitoring and reporting. The Permanent Secretary's Welsh Government 2025 initiative provided a timely and embedded opportunity to build these changes into the roles and responsibilities of Welsh Government officials.

The Commissioner has therefore drawn on this key overarching area of improvement to develop a single recommendation set out below.

The content of this Review Report remains the sole responsibility of the Commissioner while

the content of the Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan remains the responsibility of the Permanent Secretary and officials of Welsh Government. As part of the ongoing collaborative process draft versions of both documents were or will be shared between our two organisations.

## Recommendation

Welsh Government should continue to take action to continually improve how the Well-being of Future Generations Act drives its work to support Welsh Ministers deliver their well-being objectives, act in accordance with the sustainable development principle and, by doing so, maximise their contribution to the national well-being goals. In doing so, Welsh Government should publish a plan, setting out the improvements they will make, which address the findings and areas of improvement outlined in this Section 20 Report.

This should include timescales for the delivery of actions and arrangements for reporting annually, monitoring, and reviewing progress, and how it will collaborate with others (including the Commissioner's office) to ensure that Welsh Government can remain at the forefront of the well-being of future generations agenda. Welsh Government should work openly with the Commissioner to monitor the progress of this plan. Welsh Government should report on the progress of this plan alongside their annual report.

Accompanying this final report, I have also produced a maturity matrix that illustrates the steps I would like Welsh Government and public bodies to be taking to further advance on the journey to the seven well-being goals; and a glossary explaining the terms used throughout this report as these may not be readily understood by people outside of the Welsh Government and the civil service.

**You can find these products [here](#).**

## Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister of Wales

Recent years have brought to the fore the scale of the global challenges we face. Chief among these is the pressing need to work towards a more sustainable future. To deliver on our ambitions for a stronger, fairer, and greener Wales we need to continually ensure that the way we work in government is driving forward the positive vision we have for the future. This is a collective endeavour, and I am grateful to our network of partners who continue to support us and provide constructive challenge so that we can all put Wales on to a more sustainable path.

Through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 we have a framework for Wales' future. The Act puts long-term thinking at the heart of our work in government and provides a lens for Ministers to frame, steer and challenge the decisions we are making for the people of Wales today while helping ensure we leave a legacy for future generations that we can be proud of.

The publication of this Section 20 review report by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales provides a timely and welcome opportunity for us to take stock, reflect on what we have achieved so far, and to help us seize new opportunities in the years ahead.

Just as the Act asks us to do things differently, it also means looking differently at how mechanisms such as reviews are carried out. I am pleased that we have worked to explore how collaboration within the statutory review can deliver more meaningful relationships and outcomes and I am grateful to all those who have participated in this review.

## Andrew Goodall, Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Government

The Well-being of Future Generations Act affects all our work. It is a great privilege to be Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Government, using the Act as our guiding light during such challenging times. In my personal experience, the legal duties placed on us in the Well-being of Future Generations legislation, including the duty to collaborate and the framing of the well-being goals and ways of working, help to underpin a common purpose for all our public services. Whilst it is a legal duty, it is also a unifying force and positive example of what we can achieve collectively through working more sustainably. More than anything, the Act promotes a culture and mind-set that embraces positive change and supports better decision-making.

We continue to further our understanding of what the Act means in practice (including unlearning some of our old ways and further embedding those that are effective). Of course, there is always more to be done. I am grateful to colleagues in the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner and in Welsh Government for all the work they have put into the Section 20 Review.

We will embed our response to the review through our Well-being of Future Generations Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan, which we have developed in parallel. This plan will be central to my WG2025 change initiative and will allow us to communicate more effectively the progress we have made and our plans for future improvements. I look forward to sharing this plan with our partner organisations and using it as a platform for discussions for how we can collectively become a more sustainable and resilient country.





Comisiynydd  
**Cenedlaethau'r  
Dyfodol**  
Cymru

**Future  
Generations**  
Commissioner  
for Wales

Office of the Future  
Generations Commissioner  
for Wales

Tramshed Tech  
Pendyris Street  
Cardiff  
CF11 6BH

☎ 02921 677 400

✉ [contactus@futuregenerations.wales](mailto:contactus@futuregenerations.wales)

[futuregenerations.wales](http://futuregenerations.wales)

