



FG Newsletter: the Well-being of Future Generations Act and its impact so far



Wales – where well-being isn't just a buzz word, it's the law

As I come to the end of my term as the first Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, I've been reflecting on the impact of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the people who are helping to make this happen.

A future-fit curriculum, solar panels saving a hospital £1m a year in electric bills, a road building freeze and hundreds of people receiving a basic income – these are just some of the changes Wales is making.

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

United Nations



I'm hugely proud of what's been achieved in the short seven years since the Act was passed, and while it goes without saying that there is still a lot more work to be done, people across Wales are already seeing many positive impacts.

And that is in large part due to the movement of change champions in all areas of our Country, in different sectors and organisations, with different budgets and backgrounds, who are acting today for a better tomorrow.

So, what are some of these positive changes?



The Act has helped create a **10-year national strategy for healthcare**, focusing on preventative measures and a long-term vision of keeping people well, not just treating illness.

Using the Act as a lens for how we view health also helps us recognise the impacts of poverty, housing, employment, environment, and education on our well-being.

From Isle of Anglesey County Council and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board working together to offer walks as a form of natural therapy, to Swansea Bay University Health Board's COVID-19 emergency response beds being repurposed to tackle child bed poverty; how we keep people well is intrinsically linked to our environment, economy and culture.

"It's satisfying to sense people connecting with nature, and often connecting with themselves and for a significant number of walkers, they have become a very looked-forward to healthy routine..."

The positive effect that walking has on our well-being is unmistakable and I'm immensely proud of the Well-being of Future Generations Act – it's sanctioned people's well-being and given official backing to finding new ways to help people improve their physical and mental health."

Wil Stewart, warden at Breakwater Country Park in Holyhead



As for how the Act is influencing **transport in Wales**, money is being invested in sustainable travel with a 63% increase in active travel investment in Welsh Government's last budget.

From stopping a motorway from being built through a nature reserve, to pausing new road building, Wales is leading the way in how we're moving away from carbon heavy transport options and instead prioritising low carbon, active travel.

Wales is already topping charts with the third highest recycling rate in the world, but we also have a target to be **zero waste by 2050** and if we're to achieve that, we need to scale up the pockets of incredible work happening across the country and make it the norm.

Some of the inspiring work already happening includes Welsh Government's ban on single use plastics, the repair cafes and libraries of things popping up all across Wales and the sustainably resurfaced road made with 4.3 tonnes of used babies' nappies on the A487 near Aberaeron.





In education, my calls for a review of GCSEs has helped to lead to a revamp of the exams, and Wales has now adopted a new purpose-driven curriculum with the Well-being of Future Generations Act at its core. The new curriculum puts an emphasis on mental health, eco-literacy and developing well-rounded ethically informed young people who are ready for the future.

“The Well-being of Future Generations Act helps us to think about the long-term. It’s made us all take a step back and ask what is truly important for our children.”

Peter Evans, Head Teacher at Ysgol Bro Banw in Ammanford

This is just a small flavour of how the Act is transforming our way of working and lives in Wales, but these small pockets of good practice across the country give me hope that putting well-being and long-term thinking at the heart of every decision will become our usual.

You can find more information on how the Act is making a difference in Wales on our website [here](#).

We still have work to do to make sure we fully meet the ambitions of the Act.

That’s why I’m asking you – **how are you acting today for a better tomorrow?**







Please join me and countless others across Wales to ***share how you're in on the Act.***

- **On social media?** Post how you, your community and/or organisation are acting today for a better tomorrow quoting *"I'm in / We're in on the Act"*.

- **In your newsletter or intranet?** Share how you're embedding the Act in your work or community, and how you're "*in on the Act*".
- **Or want to find out more?** Direct people to our webpage [futuregenerations.wales/impact-of-the-Act](https://futuregenerations.wales/impact-of-the-act) to learn more about the positive change the Act is inspiring.

Throughout December and January as I finish my term of Office, we will be shining a light on some of these fantastic new policies and projects, and on the people making them happen; and reflecting on how we can build on this into 2023 and beyond with the new Commissioner, who will start work in early 2023.

What might the world look like today if every country had a law protecting future generations?

That's what I asked global leaders, activists and policy makers while at COP27, the UN's Climate Change Conference.

The first time 'COP' (Conference of the Parties) has been in Africa; and this year's conference was different for a number of other reasons too, including the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, war in Ukraine and record number of displaced people across the globe.

Representing Wales, I highlighted how we're doing things differently with our Well-being of Future Generations Act; and was pleased to have the chance to talk to and learn from another countries about shared challenges and opportunities.

COP27 was also the first time a Youth Pavillion was present, where I joined Dr Omnia el Omrani (the first COP Youth Envoy) and Vladislav Kaim (UN Secretary General Youth Advisor on Climate Change) at The Climate-Health Nexus Panel – an event where I discussed how a future generations approach can help tackle the interrelated global threats of climate change and declining public health.





Green Health Wales liked



Tom Downs
@DrTomDowns

Great to be watching the virtual session at the resilience hub at #COP27 on the climate and health nexus, highlighting work from Wales! @sophiehowe @GreenHWales @omniaelomrani1

11:38 AM · Nov 8, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

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I also joined COP27's Blue Zone launch of the 'Resilience Frontiers Pavilion', an event bringing youth representatives together to highlight the role food plays in fighting the climate and nature emergencies.

An issue that was at the forefront of many peoples' minds was climate justice; defined as *"finding solutions to the climate crisis that not only reduce emissions or protect the natural world, but that do so in a way which creates a fairer, more just and more equal world in the process"*.

Climate justice is important because climate change is not a 'future issue' anymore; it's affecting the most vulnerable, and crucially, those who least contribute to climate change, now.

For example, in East Africa, 17 million people are estimated to be facing food insecurity because of drought.

In Wales, we are seeing increasingly frequent flooding and powerful weather events leaving over 245,000 homes and properties at risk from flooding and coastal erosion. That's 1 in 8 homes; a number that will only increase as sea levels rise.





These are just two examples, but we are seeing these difficulties worldwide, and they won't be stopping any time soon. The climate and nature crises are here, they're happening now – that's why every country in the world would benefit from a future generations approach.

We all have a duty to protect people not born yet, from the harm they'll suffer as a result of climate change. Because even though the priority at COP is increasing and acting on the commitments countries make to reduce emissions, the simple truth is that most governance systems across the world do not take account of the interests of future generations.

Every country, every politician every business should be required to demonstrate how their decisions affect the future – we have a framework to do that in Wales which the rest of the world is excited about and can learn from.



We cannot keep going on as we are “looking forward to the next conference”, failing to see the bigger picture and not turning ambition into real action.

COP is about action, it has to be.

Contact Us

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

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