

# **Fit for the Future?**

## The Well-being of Future Generations Act ten years on

March 2026



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**Equality and Social Justice Committee**  
**Welsh Parliament**  
**Cardiff Bay**  
**CF99 1SN**

Tel: **0300 200 6565**

Email: **[SeneddEquality@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddEquality@senedd.wales)**

X: **[@SeneddEquality](https://twitter.com/SeneddEquality)**

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March 2026



# About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:  
[www.senedd.wales/SeneddEquality](http://www.senedd.wales/SeneddEquality)

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Current Committee membership:



**Committee Chair:  
Jenny Rathbone MS**  
Welsh Labour



**Mick Antoniw MS**  
Welsh Labour



**Jane Dodds MS**  
Welsh Liberal Democrats



**Altaf Hussain MS**  
Welsh Conservatives



**Julie Morgan MS**  
Welsh Labour



**Sioned Williams MS**  
Plaid Cymru

# Contents

<b>Chair’s foreword .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Recommendations and Conclusions .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1. Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2. Background and introduction .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Introduction.....	14
Evidence gathering.....	14
Background to the inquiry.....	15
What is the Well-being of Future Generations Act?.....	15
<b>3. Impact of the Act.....</b>	<b>18</b>
Overall impact.....	18
International impact.....	21
Other assessments of impact.....	22
Value for money.....	22
Evaluation by the Welsh Government.....	23
The Welsh Government’s view .....	24
Our view.....	24
<b>4. Implementing the sustainable development principle .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Grassroots awareness.....	27
The Welsh Government’s view .....	28
The sustainable development principle.....	29
Importance of involvement .....	29
A focus on prevention .....	30
Welsh Government’s view .....	32

---

Statutory guidance .....	32
Our view .....	33
<b>5. Public bodies, Public Services Boards and the partnership landscape .....</b>	<b>36</b>
The public bodies included in the Act .....	36
Welsh Government view .....	37
Public Services Boards (PSBs) .....	37
Partnership landscape .....	38
Welsh Government's view .....	40
Role and membership of PSBs .....	40
Scrutiny of PSBs .....	41
The Welsh Government's view .....	42
Our view .....	42
<b>6. Monitoring, plans, and reporting arrangements .....</b>	<b>45</b>
Planning and reporting requirements .....	45
Timescales within the Act .....	46
Welsh Government's view .....	47
Monitoring and the national indicators .....	48
The Commissioner and Auditor General's roles .....	49
Welsh Government's view .....	49
Our view .....	50
<b>7. Powers, enforcement and funding arrangements .....</b>	<b>52</b>
The debate around enforcement .....	52
The Commissioner's powers in relation to enforcement .....	53
Section 20 powers .....	55
Welsh Government's view .....	57

---

Our view .....	58
<b>Annex 1 : List of oral evidence sessions. ....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Annex 2: List of written evidence .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Annex 3: Summary of recommendations endorsed by the Committee from the Auditor General and the Commissioner, and the Welsh Government’s response .....</b>	<b>66</b>



## Chair's foreword

Few pieces of legislation have carried expectations as wide-ranging or as aspirational as the Well-being of Future Generations Act. As the Act enters its second decade, the sobering truth is that the challenges we face as a planet are becoming more pressing, not less.

The passing of the Act represented a moment of genuine innovation and ambition for Wales. It was the first attempt of its kind to place sustainable development at the heart of how public services go about their work. Our inquiry has found that this ambition is as important now than ever.

There is a consensus that while radical, and ambitious, implementation has been too slow, with progress, often mixed. Crucially there is more to be done to improve ways of working, particularly to embed prevention and involvement into mainstream practice.

We received a wealth of evidence from stakeholders and from citizens, with the latter taking part in an extensive programme of public engagement. Our report was greatly enriched by the many views and perspectives shared. We are grateful to everyone who contributed and hope that you will understand the thinking behind our conclusions and recommendations. We hope they offer a roadmap to make the Act fit for the future.

We urge the next Senedd and Welsh Government to commit to building something that will last, to take forward the Act so that it realises its full potential.

**Jenny Rathbone MS**

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

## Recommendations and Conclusions

**Recommendation 1.** The next Welsh Government must undertake a rapid review of the Act early in the next Senedd term to enable changes to be debated in Plenary and implemented before the next Senedd election in 2030. The overarching aim should be to confirm definitively the changes that the Welsh Government will make across the following categories:

- legislative changes;
- policy changes; and
- changes to guidance.

The draft findings of the review should be submitted to our successor committee for consideration within the first year of the new parliament and by no later than June 2027 with the Plenary debate following shortly thereafter. .... Page 26

**Recommendation 2.** The next Welsh Government must undertake a similar exercise to the ‘Wales We Want’ conversation as part of preparations for the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The exercise should be used to put the principles of the Act into practice and use involvement as a tool for increasing awareness and understanding of the legislation. This exercise should be ambitious in its reach and extend into communities across the country. The process should be completed no later than by the end of 2029..... Page 33

**Recommendation 3.** The next Welsh Government must takes steps to improve understanding and implementation of the prevention principle by public bodies and should reconsider the response given to the Auditor General’s recommendation in May 2025. We endorse that recommendation and its calls for the Welsh Government to work to:

- strengthen the understanding of the levels of investment in prevention and its impact;
- build on work to embed prevention in the budget process, considering, for example, opportunities to bring funding together across different parts of the system to support prevention;
- incentivise and protect preventative spend at a local level; and

- learn from others beyond Wales, for example, taking account of work that CIPFA is undertaking on understanding preventative spend.  
..... Page 35

**Recommendation 4.** The current Welsh Government should sets out a detailed timeline and scope of the work it has commenced to review structures and the alignment between existing partnerships and their functions. The next Welsh Government should take forward a comprehensive review and ensure that the process:

- is undertaken at pace, building on the extensive evidence that already exists that supports the case for change;
- maintains a clear focus on simplification, consolidation, and coherence, ensuring these are not undermined by vested interests or other priorities;
- is conducted in a timely fashion and completed within the first year of the next Senedd term (therefore no later than June 2027). ..... Page 43

**Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the Strengthening PSBs Progress Group considers options for strengthening scrutiny of the work of PSBs alongside action to improve the openness and transparency of PSB meetings including how they involve other participants such as TCCs, the third sector and grassroots organisations. This recommendation does not require legislative changes and should be completed within the first year of the new parliament and by no later than June 2027..... Page 44

**Recommendation 6.** The next Welsh Government must conduct a cross-government exercise to identify which planning and reporting requirements across different pieces of legislation can be harmonised in order to:

- Cut down on duplication and administrative burdens;
- Make it easier to track outcomes and monitor progress;
- Avoid unnecessary misalignment or unwanted clashes with, for example, electoral cycles.

The results should provide a basis for the Welsh Government to bring forward a narrowly-drawn Bill to give Ministers temporary or specific powers to amend statutory deadlines across a defined set of Acts using secondary legislation. The cross-government exercise should be completed within the first year of the new

parliament and by no later than June 2027 with legislation implemented before the next Senedd election in 2030. .... Page 51

**Recommendation 7.** The next Welsh Government should strengthen accountability measures in the Act and consider amending it to enable the Commissioner to initiate legal challenges where a public body’s decision are deemed contrary to the principles and goals of the Act.....Page 59

**Recommendation 8.** In the short term the current Welsh Government must find a solution to the accountancy issue which prevents the Commissioner from carrying over reserves in order to fund s20 reviews. In the longer-term the next Welsh Government should consider amending the Act to pass on responsibility for appointing and financing the Commissioner directly to the Senedd. Taking into account the timetable for appointment of the next Future Generations Commissioner, and to enable these arrangements to apply to the next postholder, the aim should be to complete the necessary statutory changes by the end of 2028/early 2029..... Page 60

**Conclusion 1.** We urge the Welsh Government to actively engage with the findings of both statutory reports by the Auditor General and Future Generations Commissioner. We formally endorse all of the Auditor General’s recommendations in No Time To Lose and the Commissioner’s recommendations 1, 2, 44, 45, and 47. These are published alongside a summary of the Welsh Government’s response are available in the Annex. .... Page 25

**Conclusion 2.** We agree that a review of the guidance is necessary and desirable and should take into account the findings of this, and other inquiries.....Page 35

**Conclusion 3.** It is frustrating to note that the picture remains largely unchanged since the Public Accounts Committee report on barriers to implementation in 2021. Back then they called for clarity on the interaction between different partnership structures and for a simplification and consolidation of these to reduce repetition and duplication..... Page 43

**Conclusion 4.** Enabling PSBs to hire staff would not necessarily improve their effectiveness. A move in that direction would undermine the argument for simplification and consolidation of structures. There is scope for PSBs to make better use of existing powers to pool staff, resources and budget and think that these should be explored in the first instance. .... Page 43

**Conclusion 5.** However, we agree with the FG Commissioner that now is not the time to review the national indicators and that it would be unwise to do so on a rolling basis. .... Page 51

**Conclusion 6.** We note the AGW’s comments relating to broadening and simplifying the AGW’s duties under the Act to look more broadly at how public bodies are implementing the Act. We support this viewpoint and hope that it can be taken forward as part of any future changes to the legislation. .... Page 51

**Conclusion 7.** It is unacceptable that the FG Commissioner’s ability to undertake s20 reviews is being compromised by technical issues relating to how the FG Commissioner’s office is funded. It is vital that these are addressed so that the FG Commissioner is able to act independently and without the risk of interference by the government of the day. Urgent resolution to the issue of funding for s20 reviews is required. We expect a response from the Cabinet Secretary on this matter before the Senedd dissolves in April 2026. ....Page 59

## 1. Executive Summary

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 was the first legislation of its kind anywhere in the world. Wales marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Act receiving Royal Assent in 2025.

- 1.** Our work builds on previous reports: many of the themes of those reports are still relevant particularly with regards to prevention, and post-legislative scrutiny. Welsh Government's take on evaluation remains unclear, and we call on the next Welsh Government to commit to a rapid review early in the next parliament.
- 2.** There is general agreement that the Act was both radical and aspirational but that implementation has achieved mixed results.
- 3.** There was agreement on the whole that the Commissioner represents good value for money. However, value for money considerations have been difficult to assess in the context of the legislation.
- 4.** Public awareness of the Act is low and there is much more to be done to ensure citizens are involved properly in shaping decisions.
- 5.** The need for public bodies to prioritise prevention is where substantial improvements are needed. To that end we endorse the Auditor General's 2025 statutory report recommendation and ask the Welsh Government to look again at its response and reasons for rejecting it.<sup>1</sup>
- 6.** In keeping with the 2021 Public Accounts Committee report findings, a complex partnership landscape continues to act as a potential barrier to success. We are clear that the emphasis needs to be on simplification and consolidation of these structures as a matter of urgency.
- 7.** Questions are being asked about the role, duties and effectiveness of Public Services Boards. The impact of PSBs is not always obvious and there were

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<sup>1</sup> The recommendation asked the Welsh Government to explore other, complementary, ways of encouraging investment in prevention including through improving understanding of preventative principles, embedding prevention in budget processes and looking beyond Wales at other examples of good practice. The full recommendation is available in **Annex 3**.

requests by other sectors for greater involvement and openness regarding their work.

**8.** Planning and reporting requirements are being adequately met. However, there is misalignment in timeframes for some of these processes and concerns around the impact of Senedd reform.

**9.** One of the liveliest discussions was around enforcement versus encouragement. The Act's "lack of teeth" was raised by sceptics and could be corrosive to public trust. The sense of frustration during our citizen engagement work at the failure of the Act to shift the dial in terms of their lived experiences highlights this risk. Not only does the Act need to start delivering, accountability mechanisms need to be strengthened to enable this.

**10.** Finally, section 20 reviews have provided the Commissioner with an effective way of holding public bodies to account but are undermined by the way the Commissioner's office is funded. We recommend exploring alternative arrangements such as direct appointment and funding of the Commissioner by the Senedd.

## 2. Background and introduction

Making laws for Wales and holding the Government to account are two of the Senedd's core functions. However, the Senedd has so far played a limited post-legislative role in relation to the Well-being of Future Generations Act. We sought to contribute to the debate in ways that complement the work of others.

### Introduction

**11.** This report sets out the findings of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's post-legislative scrutiny inquiry. The Committee agreed terms of reference which included looking at:

- how far the Act was achieving its objectives;
- what actions may be needed to improve implementation or effectiveness of the Act;
- the effectiveness of key provisions such as reporting requirements, guidance and enforcement; and
- whether the Act represents value for money.

**12.** The full terms of reference are available online.

### Evidence gathering

**13.** We gathered a significant amount of evidence from May to December 2025. This included written and oral evidence primarily from stakeholders, as well as an extensive programme of direct engagement with citizens. Full details of the evidence including links to transcripts and submissions can be found in the annexes.

**14.** We are incredibly grateful to everyone who contributed to our work. In particular we thank the children and young people who took part in our focus

groups for representing the views and frustrations of future generations with such enthusiasm and maturity. This report would not have been possible without you.

## **Background to the inquiry**

**15.** In 2021 the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the previous Senedd published a report on [barriers to the successful implementation of the Future Generations Act](#).<sup>2</sup> The report included a range of findings and recommendations focused primarily on implementation and recognised the need to consider post-legislative scrutiny of the Act during the Sixth Senedd.

## **What is the Well-being of Future Generations Act?**

**16.** Figures 1 and 2 outline the main aspects of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (the Act). In essence, the Act created new legal duties on public bodies, established seven well-being goals, and five ways of working; set-up Public Services Boards and the post of Future Generations Commissioner; and created a number of reporting duties to measure performance.

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<sup>2</sup> Fifth Senedd, Public Accounts Committee, [Delivering for Future Generations: the Story So Far](#). March 2021

Figure 1: The duties and goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act

## LEGAL DUTIES

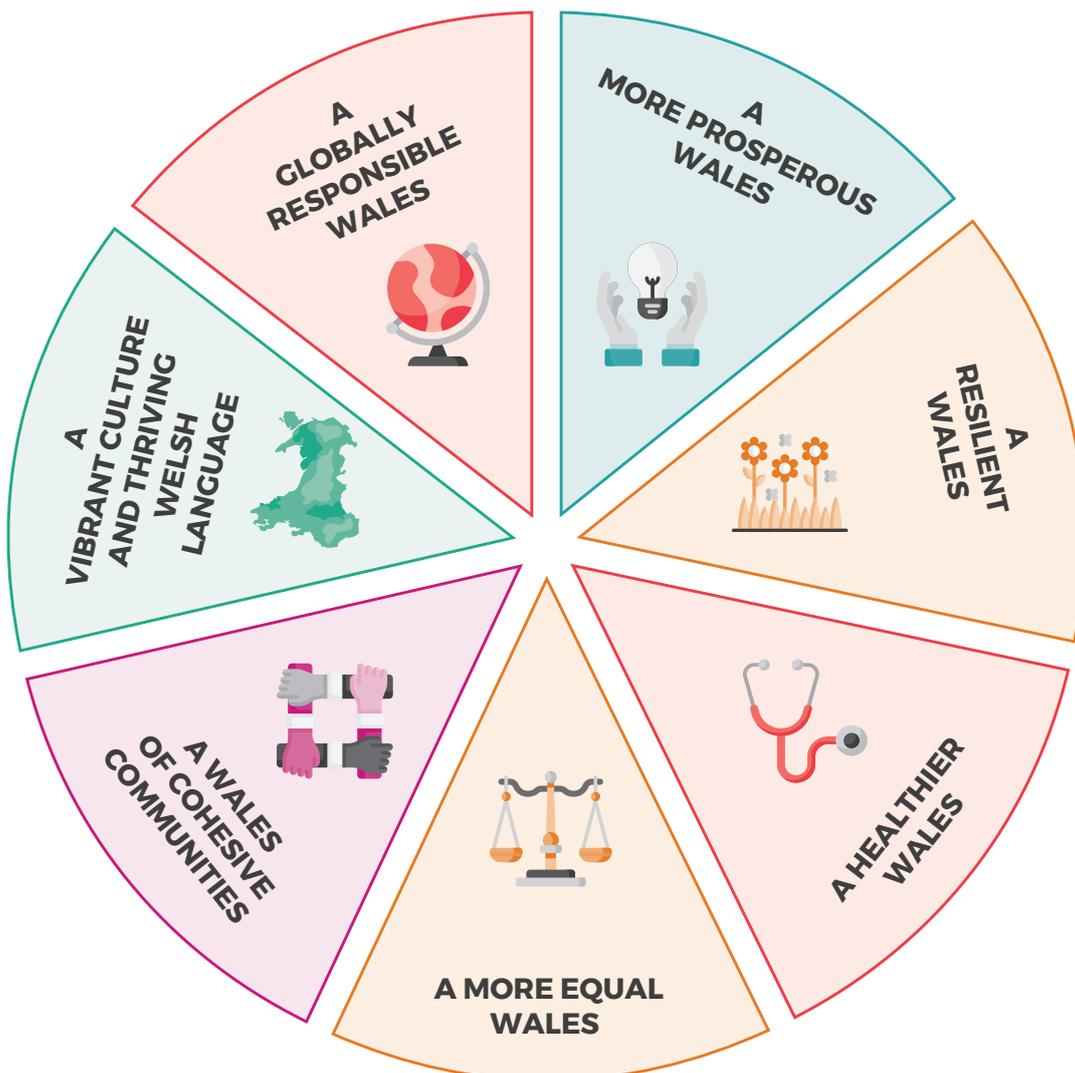


**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE:** Public bodies must meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations.



**THE WELL-BEING DUTY:** Public bodies must maximise their contribution to meeting the well-being goals.

## SEVEN CONNECTED WELL-BEING GOALS



**Figure 2: The five ways of working, the Commissioner, Public Service Boards and the national indicators**

## THE FIVE WAYS OF WORKING



**COLLABORATION:** Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.



**INTEGRATION:** Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.



**INVOLVEMENT:** The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.



**LONG-TERM:** The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the long-term needs.



**PREVENTION:** How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

## THE FUTURE GENERATIONS COMMISSIONER

It created the Future Generations Commissioner to provide advice, promote awareness, undertake research and review steps being taken by public bodies.

## PUBLIC SERVICE BOARDS

Public Service Boards bring together representatives in each local council area.



**LOCAL COUNCILS**



**HEALTH BOARDS**



**FIRE AND  
RESCUE  
SERVICES**



**NATURAL  
RESOURCES  
WALES**



## THE NATIONAL INDICATORS

A list of indicators that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the well-being goals.

### 3. Impact of the Act

The radical vision and aspirations contained within the Act have been both a key strength and a potential hindrance to progress with implementation. The picture is mixed: there are pockets of good practice but progress is taking longer than some might have hoped.

#### Overall impact

**17.** Overall, contributors to our inquiry were positive about the impact of the Act although many recognised that the nature of the legislation means that significant and lasting progress will take longer to achieve. Transport for Wales, Sport Wales and the Co-production Network for Wales all emphasised the positive ways in which they, and other organisations were implementing the overall spirit of the Act.<sup>3</sup>

**18.** The Future Generations Commissioner, Derek Walker, said:

*“While progress is being made, we are not on track to achieve our seven well-being goals...However...there is growing awareness and understanding of the Act, and as time goes on, public bodies are getting better at implementing it. Nonetheless, more action is needed.”<sup>4</sup>*

**19.** The National Infrastructure Commission said: “the Act retains strong political and institutional support” and had “contributed to a culture shift within Welsh Government and across public services, creating new teams, accountability structures, and decision-making processes that give greater prominence to long-term thinking and community outcomes”<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> SWFGA 15 Public Health Wales; SWFGA 23 Transport for Wales; SWFGA 50 Sport Wales; SWFGA 16 Co-production Network for Wales

<sup>4</sup> SWFGA 10 Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

<sup>5</sup> SWFGA 55 National Infrastructure Commission Wales

**20.** Several organisations argued that there was a gap between the aspirations of the Act and the actual impact it has had on specific policy areas.<sup>6</sup>

**21.** The Co-production Network for Wales said that “10 years may seem like a long time in some spheres, but [...] we’re really in the early stages”.<sup>7</sup> The Royal College of GPs Cymru (RCGP Cymru) emphasised that “we are relatively early in the term of office of only the second Commissioner” and analysing the success of the legislation should be viewed in this context.<sup>8</sup>

**22.** Climate Cymru was more critical: implementation of the Act often results in “tick-box exercises or greenwashing, with well-being goals treated as silos rather than interconnected pillars essential for a prosperous, equal, and healthy Wales, leading organisations to focus on projects over systemic change”<sup>9</sup>.

**23.** The Institute for Welsh Affairs (IWA) highlighted the risk of “future-generations washing” i.e. “speaking in the vernacular of the Act, whilst continuing to deliver in a manner which undermines it”.<sup>10</sup>

**24.** Our citizen engagement programme involved nearly 350 people and whilst its report found that awareness among participants of the Act was generally low, once explained, its ambitions were welcomed. Participants told us that whether they felt listened to, and included in decisions was the most important measure for judging impact of the Act. They highlighted work by Swansea Council and Torfaen’s volunteer-led coproduction network as examples of how collaboration could build trust and empowerment.<sup>11</sup> However:

*“these successes were described as exceptions. More often, participants felt their views were ignored, with consultations seen as tokenistic and decisions on housing, environment, or local services made without genuine involvement.”<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> Written evidence from: SWFGA 25 Tai Pawb; SWFGA 26 Race Equality First; SWFGA 32 Crisis UK; SWFGA 02 Asthma & Lung UK; SWFGA 41 Climate Cymru; SWFGA 42 OXFAM Cymru; SWFGA 19 School of International Futures, the Board of Bronllys Well Being Park, Asthma + Lung UK Cymru, and Climate Cymru; SWFGA 40 Welsh Language Commissioner

<sup>7</sup> SWFGA 16 Co-production Network for Wales

<sup>8</sup> SWFGA 09 Royal College of General Practitioners Wales (RCGPW)

<sup>9</sup> SWFGA 41 Climate Cymru

<sup>10</sup> SWFGA 11 Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA)

<sup>11</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Engagement Summary](#), November 2025

<sup>12</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Engagement Summary](#), November 2025

**25.** Former Sustainable Development Commissioner Peter Davies said the Act provided a common framework but:

*“the degree to which that framework has been effectively implemented has been dependent on the leadership required to embed within the culture of public bodies, as opposed to it being merely a compliance exercise. There are still cases where the requirements of the Act are complied with through a separate process, as opposed to being the basis of operational planning and reporting.”<sup>13</sup>*

**26.** Several contributors, stressed the importance of recognising the impact of external events and societal trends since the Act’s introduction. The Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, and the cost-of-living were all quoted as having created complex challenges for public bodies, often diverting attention from long-term goals.<sup>14</sup>

**27.** The difficulty of establishing a direct causal link, which demonstrate definitively that policies or decisions were made as a result of the Act or other factors, was noted by the IWA, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, the Welsh Language Commissioner, former Future Generations Commissioner, Sophie Howe and others.<sup>15</sup>

**28.** In his 2025 statutory report, the Auditor General for Wales (AGW) said while the Act “is changing conversations, influencing longer-term planning, and impacting day-to-day decision-making and working practices across Welsh public services” there are also examples where “public bodies have given little or no explicit consideration to the Act [...] and [...] the Act is not driving the system-wide change that was intended”.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Engagement Summary](#), November 2025

<sup>14</sup> SWFGA 15 Public Health Wales; SWFGA 18 Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA); SWFGA 36 Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust

<sup>15</sup> SWFGA 11 IWA; SWFGA 21 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA); RoP [para. 18](#), 30 June 2025; SWFGA 40 Welsh Language Commissioner

<sup>16</sup> Audit Wales, [No time to lose: Lessons from our work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act](#), 29 April 2025

**29.** The AGW said that practices vary within and between organisations and sectors, singling out the health system as having “some way to go in applying future generations thinking across its planning and delivery”.<sup>17</sup>

**30.** Several contributors referred to the Welsh Government’s recent announcement on becoming a ‘Marmot Nation’. Former Commissioner, Sophie Howe stated the “principles are absolutely core to the Future Generations Act. Let’s just do the Future Generations Act, and then we’ll have a Marmot nation”.

## **International impact**

**31.** The international impact of the legislation was highlighted by several respondents including the IWA; Professor Luci Attala, Swansea University; Nature Service Wales; and the Future Generations Commissioner.<sup>18</sup>

**32.** Foundations for Tomorrow – a youth-led non-profit based in Australia – suggested that the “Welsh model has sparked significant momentum globally”.<sup>19</sup>

**33.** Jane Davidson, former Minister and Assembly Member, and one of the original proponents of the Act said that the UK Foreign Office had described it as giving Wales “the biggest soft power” it has ever had.<sup>20</sup>

**34.** The IWA, Oxfam Cymru, Wrexham University, and our panel of academics highlighted the impact of the Act on bodies not legally bound by its duties, for example: universities, the Football Association of Wales; Bluestone and the Principality Building Society. The IWA said that this demonstrated “the broader impact that it has had on changing the conversation in Wales”.<sup>21</sup>

**35.** The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS, (the Cabinet Secretary) said:

*“At the foundation of the Act, it was acknowledged that it would take time to deliver its proposed outcomes and aims. That is why a 20-year programme of work was established to support the behavioural*

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<sup>17</sup> Audit Wales, [No time to lose: Lessons from our work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act](#), 29 April 2025

<sup>18</sup> [SWFGA.11](#) IWA; [SWFGA.05](#) Professor Luci Attala, University of Wales Swansea; [SWFGA.12](#) Nature Service Wales; [SWFGA.10](#) Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

<sup>19</sup> [SWFGA.03](#) Foundations for Tomorrow

<sup>20</sup> RoP [para. 36](#), 30 June 2025;

<sup>21</sup> RoP, 23 June 2025; [SWFGA.11](#) IWA; [SWFGA.08](#) Wrexham University;

*and cultural changes that would be needed and why the Welsh Government's Culture Change Service was established in May 2012."*

**36.** The Cabinet Secretary added "no government has yet successfully embedded sustainable development across all policy areas," and that this "was acknowledged, right from the word 'go'". Although the Welsh Government is "very proud" of the Act, she said "we're not content with the outcomes, we're not content with where we've got to in terms of national indicators".<sup>22</sup>

### **Other assessments of impact**

**37.** In 2021 the then Public Accounts Committee (PAC) looked at barriers to the successful implementation of the Act.<sup>23</sup> PAC's report drew on the findings of the first set of statutory reports by the Future Generations Commissioner, and the AGW published in 2020.<sup>24</sup>

**38.** The PAC report suggested post-legislative scrutiny should be undertaken early in the sixth Senedd.

**39.** In April 2025, the second pair of statutory reports were published by the Commissioner, Derek Walker, and the AGW, Adrian Crompton.<sup>25</sup> The Future Generations Report 2025 made 50 recommendations including that the Welsh Government "should initiate a post-legislative review" of the Act.<sup>26</sup> A recommendation that the Welsh Government "set out a scope and timetable for its own post-legislative evaluation and any changes to the Act" also appeared alongside three other recommendations in the AGW report.

### **Value for money**

**40.** There was general agreement that it is difficult to assess whether the Act offers value for money given the nature of the legislation.

**41.** The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) suggested:

*"There are two broad considerations around whether the Act represents value for money. Firstly, whether implementation costs are worthwhile compared to not having the Act. And secondly whether*

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<sup>22</sup> RoP [para. 3.93.127](#), 01 December 2025

<sup>23</sup> Public Accounts Committee of the Fifth Senedd, [Delivering for Future Generations: The story so far](#), March 2021

<sup>24</sup> [Future Generations Report 2020](#); Auditor General for Wales, [So, what's different?](#) May 2020

<sup>25</sup> [Future Generations Report 2025](#); Auditor General for Wales, [No Time to Lose](#), 29 April 2025

<sup>26</sup> [Future Generations Report 2025](#); Auditor General for Wales, [No Time to Lose](#), 29 April 2025

*activity pursued as a result of the Act delivers financial savings, service improvements or social-economic and environmental value.”*

**42.** BCT suggested that trying to measure the Act in terms of value for money misses the point of the legislation and that the benefits of the Act are not easily captured by short-term financial metrics.<sup>27</sup>

**43.** The IWA suggested that this is an area which requires more scrutiny. It said there is a need to scrutinise where resources within the FG Commissioner’s office are being spent and how this leads to outputs. It suggested Audit Wales or the Senedd’s Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee could undertake this work.

**44.** However, there was a broad consensus that the FG Commissioner’s support is valuable with Foundations for Tomorrow stating it “has achieved remarkable global impact with modest resources”.

**45.** WEL members consider the FG Commissioner’s office does provide value for money and its role should be supported and strengthened.

**46.** On resourcing the FG Commissioner’s office, Prof. Calvin Jones said:

*“Let’s remember we are trying to guide an almost £30 billion public sector with a body that is funded to the tune of £1.6 million per annum...I’d be delighted if this committee was to recommend that the Government ensure that there was a statutory mechanism of funding for the Future Generations Commissioner’s office.”<sup>28</sup>*

**47.** The AGW told us that it had not assessed the legislation from a value for money perspective and explained that doing so would be difficult, if not impossible given the nature of the legislation. The AGW emphasised, however, good data, clarity on the resources required to deliver various ambitions and the right performance measures as essential to improving the effectiveness of implementation.

## **Evaluation by the Welsh Government**

**48.** In May 2025, the Cabinet Secretary welcomed our inquiry and revealed that:

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<sup>27</sup> SWFGA 56 Building Communities Trust

<sup>28</sup> RoP para. 132, 23 June 2025

*“As part of preparations for a future evaluation of the Act, an Economic and Social Research Council policy fellow [has] joined the Sustainable Futures Division in Welsh Government to design an evaluation of the Act and deliver the first stage of what is likely to be a multi-year evaluation.”<sup>29</sup>*

**49.** Despite undertaking scoping work, the Welsh Government noted that it could not assume that a new Minister in a future Welsh Government would be in favour of the delivery of this evaluation.<sup>30</sup>

**50.** Commenting on this work, the Commissioner said he understood that initial scoping had “been done”, but he “would have expected to be much more closely involved in that piece of work”.<sup>31</sup>

## **The Welsh Government’s view**

**51.** The Cabinet Secretary confirmed that Dr. Adrian Kay had scoped a potential approach to an evaluation of the Act. She said the Welsh Government’s knowledge and analytical service is now looking at options and costs for a full evaluation, taking into account the findings of this inquiry.

**52.** On engaging with the Commissioner, she said “I would expect...that any future evaluation in its terms of reference and scoping has to meaningfully engage with [the Commissioner] and his office”.

**53.** An official for the Welsh Government provided an overview of three maps showing how the Act interacts with other legislation, the duties on public bodies and the powers of the Welsh Ministers, the AGW and the Commissioner.<sup>32</sup>

## **Our view**

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### **On the Act**

**54.** At the heart of the Well-being of Future Generations Act is a simple, yet radical idea: that we consider the needs of tomorrow when making decisions today. The Act represents the first attempt of its kind to make sustainable

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<sup>29</sup> [Paper to note 2.4](#), Equality and Social Justice Committee meeting, 9 June 2025

<sup>30</sup> [Welsh Government response to No Time To Lose](#)

<sup>31</sup> RoP, [para. 132](#), 10 November 2025

<sup>32</sup> [Welsh Government evidence paper for the Equality and Social Justice Committee’s post-legislative scrutiny inquiry](#)

development a central organising principle of the state. A groundbreaking piece of legislation, it has attracted widespread attention.

**55.** We were primarily motivated to conduct this post-legislative scrutiny inquiry because it is essential that this Act delivers on its ambitions. We have tried, where we can, to build on, and add value to the work of others in this space, and considered their findings when shaping our approach and conclusions.

**56.** Overall progress is mixed. There is good practice in some areas but system-wide change is proving to be elusive. In assessing its impact, it is important to be realistic about what one Act could achieve after only 10 years. Nevertheless, it is apparent that too often rhetoric around the Act has not matched the change that citizens are seeing in their local communities and in daily life.

### **On other assessments of implementing the Act**

**57.** The Commissioner's Future Generations Report 2025 and the Auditor General's No Time to Lose report set out practical recommendations and offer valuable insights that help structure the debate around implementation of the Act. Both reports have influenced our thinking and we urge the Welsh Government to actively engage with their findings. We think all four of the Auditor General's recommendations and several of the Commissioner's recommendations in this space are particularly important, relating to prevention, post-legislative evaluation, and public service partnerships.

**Conclusion 1.** We urge the Welsh Government to actively engage with the findings of both statutory reports by the Auditor General and Future Generations Commissioner. We formally endorse all of the Auditor General's recommendations in No Time To Lose and the Commissioner's recommendations 1, 2, 44, 45, and 47. These are published alongside a summary of the Welsh Government's response are available in the Annex.

### **On the need for post-legislative scrutiny**

**58.** Our post-legislative scrutiny has reinforced two main messages. The first is that this legislation is fundamentally important and needed and that if we are to maximise its potential in meeting the challenges of coming decades, it will need to be strengthened. Second, there is a compelling case for the next Welsh Government to conduct its own, focused review which would ultimately inform a comprehensive position on how to refresh the legislation to ensure it is fit for purpose and for the future.

**Recommendation 1.** The next Welsh Government must undertake a rapid review of the Act early in the next Senedd term to enable changes to be debated in Plenary and implemented before the next Senedd election in 2030. The overarching aim should be to confirm definitively the changes that the Welsh Government will make across the following categories:

- legislative changes;
- policy changes; and
- changes to guidance.

The draft findings of the review should be submitted to our successor committee for consideration within the first year of the new parliament and by no later than June 2027 with the Plenary debate following shortly thereafter.

### **On value for money**

**59.** Value for money was considered a difficult concept to accurately assess in the context of the Act. Some suggested that value for money considerations are antithetical to the Act's long term aims.

**60.** On the issue of resources for the FG Commissioner, we note the positive feedback received from stakeholders that the Commissioner and his office offer good value for money. We are concerned about the long-term suitability of funding arrangements for the Commissioner's office and cover these in more detail in our section on enforcement.

## 4. Implementing the sustainable development principle

To use the Act, people need to be aware of the Act. In implementing the sustainable development principle there is much more to be done to embed the ways of working, particularly prevention and involvement into the fabric of our public services.

### Grassroots awareness

**61.** One of the findings of our public engagement work was that public awareness of the Act is generally low, and of the five ways of working, involvement was the weakest theme. The report said:

*“From healthcare design and energy siting to cultural provision and local planning, many felt unheard or excluded—especially disabled people, rural residents, carers and low-income families. Fairness and genuine inclusion were seen as essential for the Act’s ambitions to succeed.”<sup>33</sup>*

**62.** The Building Communities Trust was one of several stakeholders who told us that grassroots awareness of the Act was low:

*“Many of the community groups we work with have little or no awareness of the Act despite almost all of their work contributing to wellbeing in one way or another. In this sense there is a very big divide between national third sector organisations who are among the Act’s biggest supporters and local community groups (the vast majority in Wales) who are largely ignorant of it.”<sup>34</sup>*

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<sup>33</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Engagement Summary](#), November 2025

<sup>34</sup> SWFGA 56 Building Communities Trust

**63.** Similarly, former Minister, Jane Davidson contrasted the considerable international interest in the legislation with the fact that “there are many, many, many people in Wales who still don’t even know that they have the legislation”<sup>35</sup>.

**64.** Voluntary sector representatives highlighted the importance of public involvement but felt “it’s less[...]about the general public knowing the ins and outs of the Act, and more about them seeing the ways of working in terms of[...]how public bodies work with them as community members”.<sup>36</sup>

**65.** The FG Commissioner acknowledged there was an issue around awareness, particularly “how public bodies involve the public in decision making”. The FG Commissioner emphasised that public awareness of what public bodies should be delivering was vital in order to hold them to account: “so we’re more likely to see the right decisions and the right action being taken right across the way”.<sup>37</sup>

**66.** The FG Commissioner shared the findings of a survey of stakeholders that suggested that nearly 80 per cent had fairly good, very good, or expert understanding of the Act. In contrast 1 in 5 had only basic or no awareness of the Act, 4 per cent of whom reported that they had never heard of the Act.<sup>38</sup>

**67.** The ‘Wales We Want’ conversation in 2014 that informed the drafting of the Act had helped with public awareness of the legislation according to the FG Commissioner and Peter Davies. They called for a repeat of the exercise looking at Wales in 2100”<sup>39</sup>.

## **The Welsh Government’s view**

**68.** The Cabinet Secretary agreed that raising public awareness of the Act is “crucial”. She referred to events in 2025 to mark the Act’s tenth anniversary but said “this should be a key point for evaluation[...]in terms of how we can make sure that there is more public awareness of the Act and its impacts”.

**69.** She said a national conversation “preparing for the UN 2030 sustainable development goals, will be vital” and agreed the Welsh Government would “want to replicate” the ‘Wales we Want’ conversation. She highlighted that officials are engaging with the UN, which sees Wales “at the forefront” of this.

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<sup>35</sup> RoP [para. 36](#), 30 June 2025

<sup>36</sup> RoP, [para. 385](#), 7 July 2025

<sup>37</sup> RoP [para. 24, 25](#), 10 November 2025

<sup>38</sup> [Paper to note 4.1: correspondence from the Future Generations Commissioner regarding stakeholder survey, 15 December 2025](#)

<sup>39</sup> RoP [para. 27](#), 10 November 2025

## The sustainable development principle

**70.** Section 5 of the Act outlines how public bodies must act to demonstrate they are working in accordance with the sustainable development principle. These are sometimes referred to as “the ways of working”: integration, collaboration, long-term, prevention and involvement.

**71.** According to its analysis the IWA:

*“found significant variance in the application of the different ways of working across our public bodies. Involvement and integration are the least frequently applied principles evident in their wellbeing strategies. This suggests that public bodies are still on a journey in delivering against the ways of working, especially those that have a higher bar to implement.”<sup>40</sup>*

**72.** Dr Lindsay Cordery-Bruce of the WCVA emphasised the need for long-term thinking particularly around funding:

*“The short-termism of charity sector funding is literally the antithesis of what we are trying to achieve with the Future Generations Act. We want to strategize long term; we want to take a longer-term view; we want to be responsible ancestors. But, if you don’t know whether you’re going to be here within six months’ time, it’s really, really difficult to do that, so that’s at the core of the strength of our response.”<sup>41</sup>*

## Importance of involvement

**73.** Our extensive engagement work identified considerable frustration at not being listened to, with a belief that the Act’s ambition for genuine involvement often failed in practice. As outlined in our summary:

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<sup>40</sup> SWFGA 11 IWA

<sup>41</sup> RoP, para. 376, 7 July 2025

*“Participants described campaigns against housing developments, concerns about sewage and rivers being ignored, and consultations that felt inaccessible or tokenistic.”<sup>42</sup>*

One participant stated:

*“The community tells the council what they want, and the council ignores them. They only listen when it’s about something minor, like picking benches for a park, never anything important. Our views on contentious issues make little difference.”<sup>43</sup>*

**74.** Several organisations including Children in Wales, Race Equality First, and the Children’s Commissioner, highlighted the need to improve “meaningful” involvement of certain demographic groups or specific communities including ethnic minorities, children and young people and the third sector.<sup>44</sup>

**75.** Research by Dr Anwen Elias of Aberystwyth University, highlighted that implementation of ‘involvement’ was especially weak: with evidence that “planning, decision-making and evaluation has failed to involve the communities affected”, and that “public bodies have made ‘no change’ or only ‘simple changes’ to their involvement processes” as a result of the Act.<sup>45</sup>

## **A focus on prevention**

**76.** Contributors complained about a lack of attention to prevention. They referred to short-term budget cycles and a failure to shift to more preventative spending.<sup>46</sup> These issues have been raised regularly in previous inquiries and reports relating to the Act.

**77.** The Welsh NHS Confederation encapsulated the problem:

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<sup>42</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Engagement Summary](#), November 2025

<sup>43</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Engagement Summary](#), November 2025

<sup>44</sup> [SWFGA 48](#) Children in Wales; [SWFGA 26](#) Race Equality First; [SWFGA 54](#) Children’s Commissioner

<sup>45</sup> [SWFGA 53](#) Dr Anwen Elias, Aberystwyth University

<sup>46</sup> [SWFGA 18](#) WLGA; [SWFGA 33](#) Welsh NHS Confederation; [SWFGA 07V](#) Newport City Council; [SWFGA 20](#) Vale of Glamorgan Council; [SWFGA 31](#) Older People’s Commissioner for Wales; [SWFGA 13](#) Welsh Sports Association; [SWFGA 57](#) The Arts Council of Wales, [SWFGA 11](#) IWA, [SWFGA 05](#) Dr Lucia Attla, Swansea University, [SWFGA 38](#) Care and Repair Cymru

*“The key challenge remains the tension between the Act’s long-term strategic vision and the immediate operational and fiscal pressures facing public sector bodies.”<sup>47</sup>*

**78.** The Welsh Sports Association said that decision-makers had failed to use the Act to make “truly different decisions” and too often relied on “cutting non-statutory services which deliver long term good, to deal with short-term financial pressures”<sup>48</sup>.

**79.** Issues with how budgets are managed and the need for more participatory and preventative approaches to budgeting were raised by Dr Eleanor McKillop and the Royal College of GPs.<sup>49</sup> Wales Environment Link (WEL) noted that an estimated 50% of Welsh Government spending was assessed as having a negative impact on the climate and nature.<sup>50</sup>

**80.** Citizens who took part in our engagement work also emphasised the lack of preventative, long-term thinking in respect of public finances:

*“Rigid rules and short-term budgeting cycles were said to encourage wasteful spending at the end of the financial year, rather than strategic investment. Many argued that giving authorities longer to spend money, or allowing them to save for larger projects, would lead to better outcomes. Others linked fragility to systemic risk, warning of collapse: “Every school, health board is in the red[...]before long, this is all going to fall like dominoes.”<sup>51</sup>*

**81.** Both the FG Commissioner and the AGW made recommendations relating to prevention in recent reports.<sup>52</sup> In the Future Generations 2025 report, the Commissioner called for preventative spending to be ring-fenced.<sup>53</sup> The AGW said that the Welsh Government should explore other ways of increasing investment in prevention which complemented this including:

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<sup>47</sup> [SWFGA 33](#) Welsh NHS Confederation

<sup>48</sup> [SWFGA 13](#) Welsh Sports Association

<sup>49</sup> RoP [para. 64](#), 23 June 2025; [SWFGA 09](#) Royal College of General Practitioners Wales; [SWFGA 33](#) Welsh NHS Confederation;

<sup>50</sup> [SWFGA 47](#) Wales Environment Link

<sup>51</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Engagement Summary](#), November 2025

<sup>52</sup> Audit Wales, [No time to lose: Lessons from our work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act](#), 29 April 2025

<sup>53</sup> [Future Generations Report 2025](#)

- increasing the understanding of prevention across public bodies;
- embedding prevention in budget processes; and
- learning from others beyond Wales.

**82.** Unlike the FG Commissioner, however, the Auditor General’s recommended approach did not mandate ringfencing of spending and leaves open the possibility of potentially de-hypothecated funding.<sup>54</sup>

### Welsh Government’s view

**83.** The Welsh Government rejected these recommendations from the FG Commissioner and the Auditor General and argued that it had a “longstanding principle [...] to avoid hypothecating funding as this can reduce the ability of institutions to manage their own budgets in line with their responsibilities”<sup>55</sup>.

**84.** We asked the Cabinet Secretary to expand on this:

*“...the thing is that it is quite difficult to isolate what funding would be for prevention and early intervention without undermining the broader approach to prevention, because a preventative way of working should influence every policy decision that you make.”<sup>56</sup>*

### Statutory guidance

**85.** The statutory guidance accompanying the Act has generally been seen as helpful.<sup>57</sup> However there were concerns from some including local councils, BCT, the WLGA, and others that it was overly prescriptive or emphasised process over outcomes.

**86.** There was a general consensus that it should be reviewed.

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<sup>54</sup> Audit Wales, [No time to lose: Lessons from our work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act](#), 29 April 2025

<sup>55</sup> [Welsh Government response to No Time to Lose and Future Generations Report 2025](#)

<sup>56</sup> RoP [para. 34](#), 1 December 2025

<sup>57</sup> SWFGA 15 Public Health Wales, SWFGA 36 Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust; SWFGA 56 Building Communities Trust; SWFGA 18 WLGA

**87.** Several organisations called for more specific guidance and for it to include practical examples and case studies.<sup>58</sup> TFW called for “tailored sector-specific support and practical examples” within the guidance to aid clarity.

**88.** The Co-production Network for Wales, and Building Communities Trust argued for the guidance to take better account of the role of the third sector, with BCT noting: “many third sector and community groups increasingly occupy spaces that were previously the sole responsibility of the public sector”<sup>59</sup>.

**89.** The AGW said:

*“There also seems to be an issue of the Act effectively providing dual sources of guidance, albeit with one source (the Commissioner) this is labelled as ‘advice or assistance’. It may be worth considering whether arrangements for guidance could be made more streamlined and more robust, so strengthening the position of the Commissioner. This could perhaps be done by transferring the Welsh Ministers’ function of issuing guidance[...]to the Commissioner.”<sup>60</sup>*

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## **Our view**

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### **On awareness and involvement**

**90.** If public bodies are to be held accountable for delivering the vision of the Act, then awareness among the public is key. Citizens need to be aware of the Act, to use the Act, and it is frustrating that levels of awareness are generally low. One useful way to raise awareness is through involvement. More progress is needed in respect of involving the public in decisions and empowering citizens across the board in an increasingly fractious world.

**Recommendation 2.** The next Welsh Government must undertake a similar exercise to the ‘Wales We Want’ conversation as part of preparations for the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The exercise should be used to put the principles of the Act into practice and use involvement as a tool for increasing awareness and understanding of the legislation. This exercise should

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<sup>58</sup> Local councils including SWFGA 44 Swansea Council, SWFGA 51 One Voice Wales, SWFGA 23 TFW, SWFGA 37 Rewilding UK and others

<sup>59</sup> SWFGA 16 Co-production Network; SWFGA 56 Building Communities Trust

<sup>60</sup> SWFGA 59 Audit Wales

be ambitious in its reach and extend into communities across the country. The process should be completed no later than by the end of 2029.

### **On prevention**

**91.** It is clear to us that the failure to embed prevention throughout decision-making is the most pressing challenge to address in terms of the future outlook for the legislation and public services in Wales. In response to the Future Generations Commissioner's report, the Welsh Government has argued that because prevention should be influencing every decision made by public bodies, it would be difficult to isolate spending on prevention and early intervention without undermining the broader approach. We do not accept this argument.

**92.** The Welsh Government prefers not to ring-fence spending due to the risks of what it sees as micromanagement and we acknowledge this viewpoint. However, both the FG Commissioner and the Auditor General's recommendations clearly underline the need to overcome this reluctance. The Auditor General's recommendation moreover, suggests a broader, more permissive approach which involves looking at other, complementary ways of investing in prevention. These may involve ringfencing though could equally involve the opposite in the form of greater funding freedom and less ring-fencing.

**93.** It is vital that the Welsh Government revisits its response to the Auditor General's recommendation and considers further the other complementary ways of encouraging investment (our emphasis) in prevention.

**Recommendation 3.** The next Welsh Government must takes steps to improve understanding and implementation of the prevention principle by public bodies and should reconsider the response given to the Auditor General's recommendation in May 2025. We endorse that recommendation and its calls for the Welsh Government to work to:

- strengthen the understanding of the levels of investment in prevention and its impact;
- build on work to embed prevention in the budget process, considering, for example, opportunities to bring funding together across different parts of the system to support prevention;
- incentivise and protect preventative spend at a local level; and

- learn from others beyond Wales, for example, taking account of work that CIPFA is undertaking on understanding preventative spend.

### **On the guidance**

**94.** We note that many contributors were positive about the statutory guidance issued under the Act and the Welsh Government is to be commended for how well-received it has been. Given that it is now over 10 years since it was published, there is a clear case for reviewing it to ensure that it stays up to date and to reflect the result of this, and other inquiries. We note the evidence calling for more practical examples and case studies and believe that this would be beneficial.

**Conclusion 2.** We agree that a review of the guidance is necessary and desirable and should take into account the findings of this, and other inquiries.

## 5. Public bodies, Public Services Boards and the partnership landscape

Collaboration by public bodies is key to the vision of the Act. Public Services Boards were designed to enable this to happen. They operate, however, in an increasingly complicated partnership landscape which is in need of greater coherence.

### The public bodies included in the Act

**95.** Following its extension to eight additional public bodies in 2024, a total of 56 public bodies are currently subject to the Act. The Cabinet Secretary highlighted how further public bodies may yet become subject to the Act as a result of legislation such as the Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Act 2025 and the Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill.<sup>61</sup>

**96.** The FG Commissioner had supported the inclusion of eight additional bodies in 2024 but argued “that should have happened as soon as they were set up, not as a mop-up exercise, after they’d been set up for a number of years”. He suggested that as soon as public bodies are set up they should come under the Act.<sup>62</sup>

**97.** The Commissioner explained that he had “written to Welsh Government to ask them to evolve their criteria so that more bodies could be included” and suggested bodies such as Estyn and Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (formerly the Planning Inspectorate) should come under the Act.<sup>63</sup>

**98.** The Welsh Government’s criteria cover four aspects: funding, impact on well-being, functions and whether the public body is auditable. Its previous consultation document stated:

*“Advisory bodies, tribunals and inspectorate bodies are not included as they do not have executive functions and are not considered to*

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<sup>61</sup> [Written evidence from the Cabinet Secretary](#), 1 December 2025

<sup>62</sup> RoP, [para.31](#), November 2025

<sup>63</sup> RoP, [para.35](#), November 2025

*pass the functions test of having strategic functions relevant to the WFG Act.”<sup>64</sup>*

**99.** In relation to those not included, Cwmpas suggested the role of the “third/social enterprise/not-for-profit sectors is essential” in delivering the ambitions of the Act but “as the sector is not legally bound” by it, the role of such organisations “as a key delivery partner is not strongly enough entrenched”.<sup>65</sup>

**100.** Similarly, Newport City Council stated:

*“...there are numerous third sector organisations and bodies that fall outside the scope of the Act and are not required to comply[...]This can affect the collaboration between the public bodies listed in the Act and these external organisations, particularly in areas such as service commissioning.”*

## **Welsh Government view**

**101.** The Cabinet Secretary said the four criteria used to determine whether to bring public bodies under the scope of the Act still stand and had not been reviewed.

**102.** On the role of the third sector, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed that “all PSBs have formal third sector representation, usually through local voluntary councils or umbrella organisations”. Third sector organisations were influencing the work of PSBs through a variety of mechanisms including: “statutory invitee status, equal membership rights, participation in sub-groups, and in some cases leadership roles”<sup>66</sup>.

## **Public Services Boards (PSBs)**

**103.** Part 4 of the Act creates Public Services Boards or PSBs whose statutory members are: the local authority; local health board; fire and rescue authority and Natural Resources Wales.

**104.** The following bodies must be invited to participate:

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<sup>64</sup> Welsh Government, [Consultation on the additional public bodies subject to the well-being duty \(Part 2\)](#), 14 July 2022

<sup>65</sup> SWFGA 17 Cwmpas

<sup>66</sup> [Correspondence from Cabinet Secretary](#)

- Welsh Ministers;
- Chief Constables;
- Police and Crime Commissioner;
- Relevant probation services;
- At least one body representing voluntary organisations.<sup>67</sup>

**105.** In addition, PSBs can invite others to participate, providing they exercise a public function. Some local authority PSBs have merged with other neighbouring PSBs, there are currently 13 in operation.

**106.** Other notable partnership structures exist and often operate with similar memberships to PSBs. These include Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) introduced by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) introduced by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.<sup>68</sup>

## Partnership landscape

**107.** A significant amount of evidence from environmental charities, universities, local councils, and other public sector bodies suggested that the current partnership landscape is too complex.<sup>69</sup>

**108.** The FG Commissioner highlighted that:

*“My predecessor and I have consistently called for [the] Welsh Government and public bodies to simplify the partnership landscape in Wales, which is complex and confusing, adding to capacity and resource pressures.”*

**109.** WAST described the landscape as:

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<sup>67</sup> Welsh Government, [Public Services Boards](#)

<sup>68</sup> ANAW4 Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014; ASC1 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

<sup>69</sup> SWFGA 07 Newport City Council; SWFGA 08 Wrexham University; SWFGA 12 Nature Services Wales; SWFGA 16 Co-production Network Wales; SWFGA 15 Public Health Wales; SWFGA 22 Conwy County Borough Council, SWFGA 21 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, SWFGA 28 Peter Davies; SWFGA 56 Building Communities Trust; Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Conwy County Borough Council, Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST), Welsh NHS Confederation (NHS Confed), Wales Environment Link (WEL)

*“cluttered”.*<sup>70</sup>

**110.** Pembrokeshire National Park pointed to different and inconsistent geographical boundaries as a barrier to partnership working which it described as:

*“challenging and ineffective”.*<sup>71</sup>

**111.** Public Health Wales, the WLGA and others suggested PSBs lacked influence compared with other structures such as RPBs or CJC. They highlighted the risk of duplication and called for greater clarity “around the role of each partnership, including updating guidance where necessary”.<sup>72</sup>

**112.** Robyn Lovelock of Denbighshire County Borough Council told us there “remains a lot of confusion around the aspect of economic well-being” and the interaction between the role of PSBs, CJC and the Act.

**113.** The FG Commissioner summarised:

*“We haven’t got the time or the capacity in Wales, with all the cuts that we’ve faced and all the demands that we’ve got, to be spending time on partnership arrangements that are not delivering. My perspective is that we’ve been adding structures—recently the corporate joint committees—without taking structures away.”*<sup>73</sup>

**114.** Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby expressed a view that she would not wish to see “amalgamation for the sake of it” but instead recommended taking a step back to ask what works:

*“Rather than having to collaborate, asking ‘What actually works?’, and allowing us to collaborate effectively in ways that really shift to thinking about the outcomes and impacts. [...] I think there is need for a very thoughtful conversation and deliberation around what the regional structure should look like, because one thing I think we all*

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<sup>70</sup> SWFGA 21 PCNPA; SWFGA 28 Peter Davies; SWFGA 56 Building Communities Trust;

<sup>71</sup> SWFGA 21 PCNPA

<sup>72</sup> SWFGA 18 WLGA, SWFGA 15 Public Health Wales, SWFGA 43 Anne Tubajdi, Swansea University

<sup>73</sup> RoP, [para 60](#), 10 November 2025

*agree on is that there are areas where working regionally is much better in terms of outcomes.”<sup>74</sup>*

## Welsh Government’s view

**115.** The Cabinet Secretary confirmed “work [is] being undertaken to review whether all the structures do appropriately align and whether their functions are appropriate”. She acknowledged “this is an issue we’ve got to seriously consider if it creates barriers and we need to streamline”.<sup>75</sup>

## Role and membership of PSBs

**116.** Questions around the role and effectiveness of PSBs were raised by several contributors. Former Commissioner, Peter Davies, said that the original aim of the PSBs was to deliver on the common vision of the Act but that they seemed overly process driven and had only a limited impact.

**117.** Denbighshire County Council described PSBs as a “valuable concept” and “essential” to the delivery of the Act but “without power or funding”, they had “little ability to influence decisions which are generally made elsewhere by bodies/ partnerships with funding”.<sup>76</sup>

**118.** The IWA said it was unclear “what their purpose is or indeed what they have achieved”.<sup>77</sup>

**119.** Several contributors including local councils, the FG Commissioner and Dr. Anwen Elias, Aberystwyth University noted that PSBs lacked a legal identity, were incapable of holding funds or employing staff.<sup>78</sup>

**120.** The Co-Production Network for Wales recognised that PSBs are sometimes “perceived as lacking sufficient mandate and authority”, and highlighted concerns around duplication of effort. However it suggested “while recognising that PSBs lack dedicated funding, many do not fully utilise any funds that are available to them” by virtue of the partners brought together.

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<sup>74</sup> RoP ~~para. 101~~, 7 July 2025

<sup>75</sup> RoP, ~~para. 60-61~~, 1 December 2025

<sup>76</sup> SWFGA 14 Denbighshire County Council

<sup>77</sup> SWFGA 11 IWA

<sup>78</sup> SWFGA 10 Future Generations Commissioner for Wales; SWFGA 20 Vale of Glamorgan Council; SWFGA 53 Dr Anwen Elias; SWFGA 43 Anne Tubajdi, Swansea University

**121.** In relation to the membership the Co-production Network suggested there is a relative lack of third sector representation as standard and that:

*“The statutory distinction between ‘members’ and ‘invited participants’ contributes to a perceived and actual hierarchy, which can exclude valuable experience and grassroots insight.”<sup>79</sup>*

**122.** This view was shared by the Building Communities Trust who noted: “the statutory guidance, if followed to the letter, means that any third sector organisation or community group...requires an invitation to participate in the PSB”.<sup>80</sup>

**123.** Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority said it is not clear how some national organisations such as Sport Wales, Amgueddfa Cymru and the Arts Council of Wales feed into the process and influence well-being plans. The Co-Production Network for Wales also suggested clarity is needed over the role of the Welsh Government and the Commissioner in relation to PSBs.<sup>81</sup>

**124.** One Voice Wales noted that only larger Town and Community Councils (TCCs) with precepts over £200,000 in each of the preceding three financial years are legally required to contribute to the work of PSBs. This can mean some TCCs come in and out of scope of the Act. On engagement between PSBs and TCCs, One Voice Wales said that PSBs “have either loosely engaged with or failed to engage with our sector”.<sup>82</sup> Wrexham University, and the FG Commissioner suggested the involvement of TCCs in PSBs should be looked at.<sup>83</sup>

## **Scrutiny of PSBs**

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**125.** Several contributors called for scrutiny of PSBs to be improved.<sup>84</sup>

**126.** In particular, the Co-production Network argued for more public-facing and participatory approaches highlighting that opening PSB meetings to the public had changed the culture and enabled “open, constructive dialogue”.

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<sup>79</sup> SWFGA 16 Co-production Network for Wales

<sup>80</sup> SWFGA 56 Building Communities Trust

<sup>81</sup> SWFGA 21 PCNPA; SWFGA 16 Co-production Network for Wales

<sup>82</sup> SWFGA 51 One Voice Wales; SWFGA 29 Llandough Community Council

<sup>83</sup> SWFGA 08 Wrexham University

<sup>84</sup> SWFGA 50 Sport Wales; SWFGA 15 Public Health Wales; SWFGA 45 WCVA; SWFGA 16 Co-production Network for Wales

**127.** The Co-Production Network also highlighted current scrutiny arrangements in relation to PSBs are: “primarily conducted through local authority committees, [which] may inadvertently reinforce existing power imbalances and do not always reflect the collaborative, partnership-based ethos at the heart of PSBs”.<sup>85</sup>

## **The Welsh Government’s view**

**128.** The Welsh Government described PSBs as “essential to localising Wales’ well-being goals”. On the question of funding, the Welsh Government told us that “it is for the PSBs to decide how they collectively resource their work – including pooling resources and funding”. However, pooling of funding has been achieved with only “varying degrees of success”.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless the Cabinet Secretary said that while “they don’t hold their own budgets or employ staff [...] they do bring people together. They do bring strengths and resources”.<sup>87</sup>

**129.** The Cabinet Secretary also highlighted the work of the “Strengthening PSBs Progress Group” which was formed to improve how PSBs operate, collaborate, and deliver impact. This would include developing new monitoring and evaluation guidance and developing resources to clarify their roles and increase visibility of their work.

**130.** In relation to the requirements on PSBs relating to well-being assessments and plans, the Cabinet Secretary said that the Welsh Government were looking at removing “overly prescriptive elements from guidance” but that changing the timelines “would require legislative changes”.<sup>88</sup>

## **Our view**

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### **On the broader public services landscape**

**131.** In the ten years since passing the Act the public services partnership landscape has continued to grow with very few structures being rationalised or simplified. The result has been an ‘alphabet soup’ of partnership arrangements that appear to lack any overarching coherence. Structures matter, and whilst the question of how to reform these was beyond the scope of our inquiry, it is obvious that the status quo is not sustainable.

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<sup>85</sup> SWFGA 16 Co-production Network for Wales

<sup>86</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Item 2, evidence paper](#), 1 December 2025

<sup>87</sup> Rop [para. 66](#), 1 December 2025

<sup>88</sup> ROP, [para. 77](#), 1 December 2025

**Conclusion 3.** It is frustrating to note that the picture remains largely unchanged since the Public Accounts Committee report on barriers to implementation in 2021. Back then they called for clarity on the interaction between different partnership structures and for a simplification and consolidation of these to reduce repetition and duplication.

**132.** The need to simplify partnership structures and replace them with a more coherent set of arrangements is compelling. Where bottom-up approaches have failed in the past, greater direction is needed from the centre. This should be a priority and we hope that the Welsh Government review will be pursued with vigour and urgency.

**Recommendation 4.** The current Welsh Government should sets out a detailed timeline and scope of the work it has commenced to review structures and the alignment between existing partnerships and their functions. The next Welsh Government should take forward a comprehensive review and ensure that the process:

- is undertaken at pace, building on the extensive evidence that already exists that supports the case for change;
- maintains a clear focus on simplification, consolidation, and coherence, ensuring these are not undermined by vested interests or other priorities;
- is conducted in a timely fashion and completed within the first year of the next Senedd term (therefore no later than June 2027).

### **On PSBs**

**133.** There needs to be a concerted effort to improve understanding of the role and purpose of PSBs. Clearly, there are differences in opinion on the value and effectiveness of PSBs. Some have argued that they play an important role and provide real added value but others have questioned their impact and consider other, potentially more influential forums, like CJsCs, as a priority.

**134.** The fact that PSBs cannot hold budgets or hire staff was cited as a barrier hampering the effectiveness of PSBs. Enabling PSBs to hire staff has been mooted as one potential solution. However, we fear that such moves would undermine our arguments in support of simplification and consolidation.

**Conclusion 4.** Enabling PSBs to hire staff would not necessarily improve their effectiveness. A move in that direction would undermine the argument for

simplification and consolidation of structures. There is scope for PSBs to make better use of existing powers to pool staff, resources and budget and think that these should be explored in the first instance.

### **On involvement and scrutiny of PSBs**

**135.** Barriers to participation by invited participants raised by representatives of the third sector and Town and Community Councils need to be addressed. We note that perceptions of a hierarchy in membership could be stymieing involvement of third sector, community and grassroots organisations.

**136.** Work is underway to strengthen the effectiveness of PSBs via the ‘Strengthening PSBs Progress Group’ We look forward to the Group’s consideration of how scrutiny of the work of PSBs could be strengthened.

**Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the Strengthening PSBs Progress Group considers options for strengthening scrutiny of the work of PSBs alongside action to improve the openness and transparency of PSB meetings including how they involve other participants such as TCCs, the third sector and grassroots organisations. This recommendation does not require legislative changes and should be completed within the first year of the new parliament and by no later than June 2027.

## 6. Monitoring, plans, and reporting arrangements

The Act introduced a swathe of planning, monitoring and reporting arrangements designed to ensure that public bodies were meeting their duties and delivering on the well-being goals. The challenge remains embedding these throughout their activities and ensuring that process is not prioritised over outcomes.

### Planning and reporting requirements

**137.** The Act places numerous requirements on the Welsh Ministers, the FC Commissioner, Audit Wales, public bodies and PSBs in terms of setting well-being objectives and reviewing and reporting on these. There was a general agreement that well-being objectives were being adequately planned and reported on but the key issue was what they were achieving. Several organisations expressed concerns that the Act prioritised process over outcomes. PHW asked us to consider whether the Act's requirements:

*"... have 'shifted the dial' to make us more focused on long-term outcomes or whether we have increased the number of reporting mechanisms but remain largely focused on short-term performance measures."<sup>89</sup>*

**138.** This was echoed by the Older People's Commissioner who stated that "more emphasis is now needed on outcomes rather than governance and processes".<sup>90</sup>

**139.** The WLGA said:

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<sup>89</sup> SWFGA 15 Public Health Wales

<sup>90</sup> SWFGA 31 Older People's Commissioner for Wales

*“while the reporting requirements are being met, there was a lack of engagement with them and that they are often ignored. Councils again underline the lack of engagement with PSB well-being plans and annual reports, and note that the work of PSBs is often not referenced in other strategic documents.”<sup>91</sup>*

**140.** There were also fears that the Act is overly prescriptive in relation to the requirements on PSBs to produce a well-being assessment and plan every five years. The WLGA highlighted it had “received substantial suggestions from councils in favour of reviewing the requirements”.<sup>92</sup>

**141.** Denbighshire County Council suggested “we are not seeing significant change over the five years such that the assessments are likely to be repetitive – while also being a huge amount of work”. This was echoed by Conwy County Council, while the Vale of Glamorgan Council said:

*“...the legislation’s five year cycle means in reality that nearly half of that period is spent on the preparation of an assessment and well-being plan which distracts from tackling ongoing and long-term issues.”<sup>93</sup>*

## **Timescales within the Act**

**142.** Several organisations suggested that variability in the timescales to which public bodies set their well-being objectives and plans, was a problem, with the issue becoming more prominent as new public bodies fall under the remit of the Act.<sup>94</sup>

**143.** Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for example pointed to misalignment between the timescales in the Act and other legislation:

*“...the Environment (Wales) Act’s Area Statements and the WFG Act’s Well-being Plans were intended to complement each other. In practice, implementation has suffered from misaligned processes*

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<sup>91</sup> SWFGA 18 WLGA

<sup>92</sup> SWFGA 18 WLGA

<sup>93</sup> SWFGA 22 Conwy County Borough Council; SWFGA 20 Vale of Glamorgan Council

<sup>94</sup> SWFGA 11 IWA, SWFGA 10 Future Generations Commissioner; SWFGA 27 Natural Resources Wales

*and reporting cycles, leading to inconsistent and sometimes duplicated efforts.”<sup>95</sup>*

**144.** The IWA also suggested that misaligned timescales cause significant challenges for the Commissioner’s office and the public to keep track of new well-being objectives. It highlighted that the periods that public bodies’ well-being objectives cover “vary greatly, with some covering over a decade, where others cover five years or less (in some cases due to political cycles)”. It also highlighted that there is no obligation on public bodies to involve the Commissioner when drafting well-being objectives.<sup>96</sup>

**145.** These points were echoed by the FG Commissioner who highlighted a lack of “a common framework for setting well-being objectives, steps and measuring them, meaning that the current piece-meal approach makes assessing the progress made towards well-being objectives impossible”. He suggested amending the Act to ensure there is “a mandated common framework by Welsh Government for every sector” arguing that this “would make it significantly easier for the AGW, the Commissioner, and members of the public to understand progress in implementing the Act”<sup>97</sup>.

**146.** Both the AGW and the Future Generations Commissioner highlighted concerns about the impact of Senedd reform and the move from 5 to 4 year terms. For example, timescales for the Future Generations report (required under section 23) and examinations by Audit Wales (required under section 15) are explicitly tied to Senedd elections. This will mean both organisations will need to complete these activities “in a shorter period and more frequently over time”.<sup>98</sup> It will also affect synchronisation issues and clashes with, for example, local government elections and the arrival of a new Commissioner.<sup>99</sup>

## **Welsh Government’s view**

**147.** The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged that the impact of Senedd reform on timescales was something that needed to be looked at but suggested this might be difficult as it would require “legislative changes”.<sup>100</sup> The Cabinet Secretary also suggested that the changes could “power up the well-being of future generations

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<sup>95</sup> SWFGA 27 Natural Resources Wales

<sup>96</sup> SWFGA 11 IWA

<sup>97</sup> SWFGA 10 Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

<sup>98</sup> Audit Wales, [No Time to Lose](#), 29 April 2025; SWFGA 10 Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

<sup>99</sup> SWFGA 10 Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

<sup>100</sup> ROP, [para. 77](#), 1 December 2025

office and the power of the legislation as well, because it will be very much, as it always has been, a part of the democratic timetable, and there'll be an urgency about this. Of course, it may have an impact on resources, though".

## **Monitoring and the national indicators**

**148.** One of the four recommendations made by the AGW in his statutory report was that "the Welsh Government should work with public bodies to take a fresh look at the assessment of performance and impact under the Act".<sup>101</sup>

**149.** The AGW said: "the Act's national indicators and milestones form the basis of reporting [...] [however] public bodies are not required to take account of these in monitoring their own progress and impact".

**150.** The FG Commissioner told us "the lack of alignment between national goals, indicators and well-being objectives" is a "key issue" as some public bodies do not link their well-being objectives to the national goals and performance indicators/milestones. He also suggested "the national indicators are not very visible" and "the annual Well-being of Wales Report deserves more attention from [the] Welsh Government, from public bodies, from the media and the Senedd too".<sup>102</sup>

**151.** A number of stakeholders questioned the effectiveness of the national indicators. Some questioned their effectiveness or the extent to which they drove change.<sup>103</sup> Others emphasised the need for a review or for them to include other sector-specific indicators.<sup>104</sup>

**152.** The FG Commissioner said that while the effectiveness of the national indicators was frequently raised with him, and that some could be improved, he would not advocate a review any time soon:

*"let's do that periodically, not on a rolling basis because, otherwise, we'll just keep moving the goalposts and we won't be able to assess progress and impact."*

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<sup>101</sup> Audit Wales, [No Time to Lose](#), 29 April 2025

<sup>102</sup> SWFGA 10 Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

<sup>103</sup> Such as the WLGA and BCT

<sup>104</sup> Such as SWFGA 47 Wales Environment Link SWFGA 35 Size of Wales; SWFGA 06 Platform

## The Commissioner and Auditor General's roles

**153.** The AGW and the FG Commissioner suggested there can be confusion and overlap between their roles. Dr Caer Smyth shared these concerns.<sup>105</sup>

**154.** For example an Audit Wales official stated “the difference between the Commissioner’s role in monitoring and assessing progress towards well-being objectives versus our work on examinations” is not always clear.

**155.** It was suggested that in practice, the respective offices had “bottomed out” these issues through a Memorandum of Understanding. However this was due to individuals involved rather than the Act itself. The AGW said:

*“...if you were starting with a blank sheet of paper, you wouldn’t necessarily, I think, design the duties as they are.”*

**156.** The AGW and his officials argued for a “broadening and simplification” of their duties under the Act:

*“At the moment, we’re restricted to looking at the extent to which public bodies are adhering to the sustainable development principle when setting well-being objectives and taking steps to meet them. That means that we’re really only looking at how they are setting objectives. We think it would be helpful if we could go a bit wider than that to look more broadly at how public bodies are meeting the legislation.”<sup>106</sup>*

**157.** The FG Commissioner advocated a number of specific amendments to his role including placing a duty on public bodies and PSBs to send the Commissioner a copy of their objectives, plans and annual reports. He said “this would make the monitoring of progress much easier and improve transparency”.

## Welsh Government's view

**158.** In its response to the AGW recommendations relating to reporting requirements, the Welsh Government accepted the AGW’s recommendation in principle stating that “the current assessment process for impact under the Act for

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<sup>105</sup> RoP, [para. 73 and 74, 108 and 109](#), 23 June 2025

<sup>106</sup> RoP, [para. 168](#), 30 June 2025

public bodies and [PSBs] needs to be reviewed and possibly amended”.<sup>107</sup> According to the Welsh Government, planned actions in response to this recommendation would include a review of the national indicators and changes to guidance.

**159.** The Cabinet Secretary’s written evidence suggested generally mixed progress towards the well-being goals based on the annual Well-being of Wales reports. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged a need to raise the profile of the Well-being of Wales reports and “show the impact of our national indicators”.<sup>108</sup>

## **Our view**

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### **On planning and reporting requirements**

**160.** In general, the evidence suggests that public bodies are adequately fulfilling their planning and reporting duties under the Act, but there are specific challenges relating to timescales that need to be addressed.

**161.** We note in particular the concern that a lack of consistency in how public bodies and PSBs set objectives, and prepare well-being plans coupled with the lack of information on timescales is making it difficult to monitor progress. Timescales also do not necessarily align with other corporate planning or reporting cycles or with requirements in other legislation (such as Area Statements under the Environment Act).

**162.** These problems will in all likelihood be exacerbated by the reduction in Senedd terms from 5 to 4 years. The frequency and volume of work will increase for both the AGW and the Commissioner thus placing a squeeze on their capacity to undertake other work. Further work on the implications of the move to 4 year terms is needed and we think this should include looking at whether different planning and reporting requirements across different pieces of legislation would benefit from harmonisation with the Future Generations Act (or vice versa).

**Recommendation 6.** The next Welsh Government must conduct a cross-government exercise to identify which planning and reporting requirements across different pieces of legislation can be harmonised in order to:

- Cut down on duplication and administrative burdens;

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<sup>107</sup> Welsh Government response, [No Time to Lose](#), April 2025

<sup>108</sup> Written evidence, [Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice](#)

- Make it easier to track outcomes and monitor progress;
- Avoid unnecessary misalignment or unwanted clashes with, for example, electoral cycles.

The results should provide a basis for the Welsh Government to bring forward a narrowly-drawn Bill to give Ministers temporary or specific powers to amend statutory deadlines across a defined set of Acts using secondary legislation. The cross-government exercise should be completed within the first year of the new parliament and by no later than June 2027 with legislation implemented before the next Senedd election in 2030.

### **On monitoring and the national indicators**

**163.** A significant amount of evidence questioned the usefulness of the national indicators and we think it is quite clear that more needs to be done to ensure that they are taken into consideration by public bodies when monitoring progress.

**Conclusion 5.** However, we agree with the FG Commissioner that now is not the time to review the national indicators and that it would be unwise to do so on a rolling basis.

### **On the Commissioner's and Auditor General's respective roles**

**164.** We note that according to the wording of the Act, there is potential confusion and overlap in the respective roles of the FG Commissioner and AGW. We commend both organisations for their foresight in tackling these issues via a memorandum of understanding and for the effective way in which they have approached their work since the Act came into force.

**Conclusion 6.** We note the AGW's comments relating to broadening and simplifying the AGW's duties under the Act to look more broadly at how public bodies are implementing the Act. We support this viewpoint and hope that it can be taken forward as part of any future changes to the legislation.

## 7. Powers, enforcement and funding arrangements

One of the central debates of this inquiry has been around the effectiveness of the enforcement powers in the Act. Views differed on the best model for ensuring this with some in favour of the current regime and others calling for stricter, legally enforceable arrangements.

### The debate around enforcement

**165.** We heard repeated criticism of the Act’s “lack of teeth” and the weaknesses of enforcement provisions including from a range of organisations and stakeholders.<sup>109</sup>

**166.** Wales Environment Link, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, and Climate Cymru highlighted the fact that the Act has not been successfully used to challenge decisions made by public bodies. Food Sense Wales argued that failed attempts to use the Act to challenge planning decisions in relation to fast food outlets are an example of this.<sup>110</sup>

**167.** On the other hand, others including the Welsh NHS Confederation, Fen Turner of Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Vale of Glamorgan Council and Dr Sumina Azam of Public Health Wales preferred the current approach noting that the current “collaborative approach” could be undermined in favour of a “compliance” regime if enforcement arrangements were stricter and of unintended consequences.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Including: Calvin Jones, Ben Hitchings, Rewilding Britain, the WLGA, Race Equality First, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA); Building Communities Trust, Denbighshire County Borough Council and others see: RoP [para. 26 – 31](#), 23 June 2025; SWFGA 01 Ben Hitchings; SWFGA 37 Rewilding Britain; SWFGA 18 WLGA; SWFGA 26 Race Equality First; SWFGA 45 WCVA; SWFGA 56 Building Communities Trust; SWFGA 14 Denbighshire County Council

<sup>110</sup> SWFGA 52 Food Sense Wales

<sup>111</sup> SWFGA 33 Welsh NHS Confederation, SWFGA 27 Natural Resources Wales; SWFGA 20 Vale of Glamorgan Council, RoP [para. 235 and 239](#), 7 July 2025

**168.** Dr Caer Smyth explained that despite a “perceived lack of enforcement mechanisms” there were some provisions in the Act that appeared “amenable to judicial review”. For example, Dr Smyth suggested the section 5(3) duty to take account of the five ways of working, and section 14(2) requiring public bodies to take into account guidance published by Welsh Ministers could be justiciable. Dr Smyth explained however:

*“The thing to note about this is that these are procedural duties, rather than substantive duties, so sometimes these duties have a limited scope for a judicial review. However, that’s true of many quite similar provisions in environmental law and things in the environmental impact assessment regime that have long been accepted as being amenable to judicial review. So, there are these very clear legal duties that are there in the Act.”<sup>112</sup>*

**169.** Some argued that the Act should not be seen in isolation, with others suggesting that the challenges with implementation stem from operational challenges rather than the need for stronger legal enforcement.<sup>113</sup>

### **The Commissioner’s powers in relation to enforcement**

**170.** Section 18 of the Act sets out that the FG Commissioner’s role is to “promote the sustainable development principle” and “encourage public bodies” to take account of long-term impact.

**171.** The FG Commissioner told us that the Act:

*“...represents a different kind of legislation—one that drives positive behaviours, innovation and shared responsibility rather than compliance through sanctions... This is a key feature that needs to be protected whatever enforcement mechanism is chosen this time round.”<sup>114</sup>*

**172.** The School of International Futures favoured the Act’s approach:

*“... another success [of the Act] seems to be the balance between constructive support versus scrutiny from the Commissioner’s office*

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<sup>112</sup> RoP 23 June 2025

<sup>113</sup> SWFGA 08 Wrexham University

<sup>114</sup> SWFGA 10 Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

*and Audit Wales - an area where most other international innovations have failed to get the balance right.”<sup>115</sup>*

**173.** WEL however said that whilst “advice and guidance was important in the first few years of the Act, while public bodies were getting used to their new duties, this must now change to ensure progress”.

**174.** Our panel of local authority representatives noted the positive impact that support from the FG Commissioner’s office had had on their work and of their local PSBs. Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby of Monmouthshire County Council did, however, say that “there is a greater role for the commissioner to challenge” and hold government to account.<sup>116</sup>

**175.** Accountability was also an important theme for contributors to our engagement work. The summary report noted that well-being goals were “undermined where consultations were inaccessible, poorly promoted, or tokenistic, and where disabled participants, carers, and those with limited time or resources felt excluded”. And that the question of whether commitments can be credibly delivered was challenged by concerns about transparency and accountability.

**176.** The WLGA argued that:

*“... the Act contains no obvious tools to test whether policy decisions made in Wales (across all levels of government) are actually advancing the well-being goals or not, and does not spell out any consequences for this not to happen.”<sup>117</sup>*

**177.** Several suggestions were made in relation to strengthening the Commissioner’s powers including:

- enabling the Commissioner to refer non-compliance to an independent process led by an ombudsman;
- granting the Commissioner the power to issue directives where public bodies fail to comply with the Act;<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> SWFGA 19 School of International Futures

<sup>116</sup> RoP, paras. 81 to 86, 7 July 2025

<sup>117</sup> SWFGA 18 WLGA

<sup>118</sup> SWFGA 05 Professor Luci Attala, University of Wales Swansea; SWFGA 10 Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

- empowering the Commissioner to initiate legal challenges where a public body's decision is contrary to the principles and goals of the Act and no reasonable steps are being taken to address it.<sup>119</sup>

## Section 20 powers

**178.** The strongest tools in the Commissioner's box are the powers set out in Section 20 to undertake reviews of public bodies. These have only been used twice to date, and on both occasions by the previous Commissioner, Sophie Howe.

**179.** Despite its status, the FG Commissioner told us:

*“Effectively, it's an ability to undertake an investigation, and public bodies are required to take part in that investigation, provide me with evidence, and then, when I make recommendations, they're obliged to respond to those recommendations. They're not required to deliver on those recommendations. So, it's not a strong power, but it is the strongest power that I have within my armoury.”<sup>120</sup>*

**180.** The IWA noted that the section 20 power is “rarely used”, resource intensive and where it has been used “it is unclear whether it has led to any change”.<sup>121</sup>

**181.** The Commissioner highlighted that his role “is designed in the Act to be a promoter not an enforcer...[and that]... this is the weakest type of Commissioner role”. The Deputy Commissioner Marie Brousseau-Navarro outlined her characterisation of the different types of Commissioner in Wales. A summary of the three types can be found in **Figure 3** below.

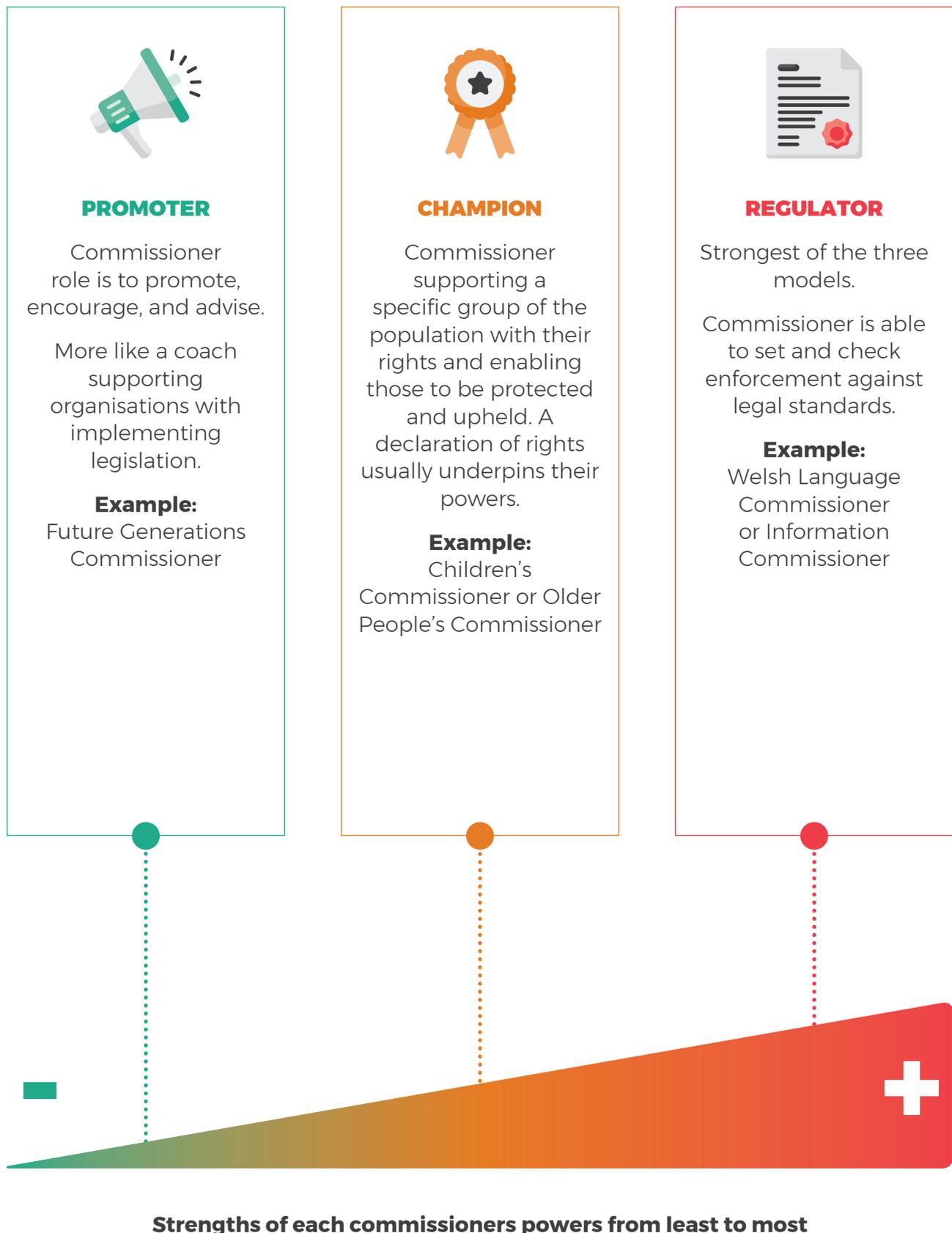
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<sup>119</sup> SWFGA 41 Climate Cymru; SWFGA 26 Race Equality First

<sup>120</sup> RoP para. 106, 10 November 2025

<sup>121</sup> SWFGA 11 IWA

Figure 3: The three different types of Commissioner and their approaches



**182.** Dr Suzanna Nesom and Dr Eleanor McKillop highlighted the risks of creating overly-powerful Commissioners citing the example of Israel’s Future Generations Commissioner who had considerable powers including the ability to delay legislation but this led ultimately to the post being disbanded after a single term.<sup>122</sup>

**183.** Several witnesses who perform or had performed pivotal roles in the context of the legislation, Jane Davidson, Sophie Howe, and the AGW, Adrian Crompton were supportive of the current model of incentivising culture change over strengthened enforcement.<sup>123</sup>

**184.** Jane Davidson was clear that she saw the Act as providing a “constitutional framework” and was opposed to the suggestion that individual penalties should be within it. She agreed that there could be greater use of the Act’s Section 20 powers.<sup>124</sup>

**185.** Sophie Howe agreed and outlined the way in which the threat of using s20 powers had led to action on occasion. The former Commissioner, however also highlighted that these reviews are “expensive” and that Commissioners were reliant on Ministers to provide funding to cover these.

**186.** Sophie Howe called for a small number of changes to the legislation which included new provisions to enable Commissioners to follow-up on s20 reviews with public bodies formally. In terms of compliance, she called for the inclusion of an additional power to enable Commissioners to make an application to the courts in instances where a public body was failing to comply with the requirements of a s20 review.<sup>125</sup>

## **Welsh Government’s view**

**187.** The Cabinet Secretary referred to the fact the Act does not provide “people with legally enforceable rights against public bodies” and described this as an “intentional policy choice”. She said the purpose of the Act is “how you can promote better, more holistic decision making”.

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<sup>122</sup> RoP, [para. 32-44](#), 23 June 2025;

<sup>123</sup> RoP [para. 262](#), 30 June 2025

<sup>124</sup> ROP [para. 91](#), 30 June 2025

<sup>125</sup> RoP, [para. 114](#), 30 June 2025

**188.** We asked whether the Government has considered strengthening certain aspects of the Act for example requiring public bodies to take action as a result of recommendations made under a s20 review, the Cabinet Secretary said:

*“...the section 20 powers that the Commissioner has got...can actually lead to change in terms of delivering on the Act and actually influencing other legislation, but I don’t think we see the need for any further change in respect of enforcement.”<sup>126</sup>*

**189.** When further pressed on whether the Welsh Government had considered some of the suggestions made on this issue during the course of our inquiry the Cabinet Secretary’s official confirmed that it had not done so.

**190.** However, the Cabinet Secretary added that “if we’re going to do full post-legislative scrutiny and evaluation as a result of your inquiry, the two reports that we’ve got, and future prospects, then these are issues that could be usefully included”. In relation to ensuring the Act’s accountability mechanisms are robust, the Cabinet Secretary said “I think there are things that have come out, even from this afternoon’s scrutiny, that I think just point the way”.

**191.** She also said that while the Welsh Government had not considered amending the s20 powers, “there may be adjustments in terms of the process [and] for example, for resourcing and funding”.<sup>127</sup>

**192.** Similarly, the Cabinet Secretary stated the Government had not considered whether models used for other Commissioners could be applied and was not aware of the evidence we had received on this matter.

## **Our view**

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### **On the debate around enforcement**

**193.** Mirroring some of the debates that were rehearsed when the Bill was first being developed, one of the areas that generated the liveliest discussion was the debate around enforcement. One of the arguments of sceptics is that the Act “lacks teeth” as it does not provide a legally enforceable basis to challenge decisions by Ministers or public bodies. According to supporters of the Act, this

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<sup>126</sup> RoP, [para. 101](#), 1 December 2025

<sup>127</sup> RoP, [para. 109](#), 1 December 2025

was never its aim. The Act was meant as a different kind of legislation, one which encourages better decisions and collaboration over compliance and sanctions.

**194.** We accept that both arguments have their pros and cons and note that views were fairly evenly split on this question. However, we are conscious that a lack of accountability can be highly corrosive to public trust and fuel frustration. This sense of frustration is laid bare in our summary of engagement findings where citizens expressed the view that; on a whole host of issues that matter to them from housing pressures, to river pollution, from declining town centres to access to the arts and culture (and many more); the Act is failing to shift the dial in terms of people's lived experience.

**195.** Clearly the issue of accountability and enforcement requires further attention. Having considered the different models available we have concluded that we favour an evolutionary approach. We think that strengthening enforcement powers too much would fundamentally change the relationship between the Commissioner and public bodies, possibly in a detrimental way. Instead we endorse a strengthening of accountability measures in the Act to enable the Commissioner to initiate legal challenges.

**Recommendation 7.** The next Welsh Government should strengthen accountability measures in the Act and consider amending it to enable the Commissioner to initiate legal challenges where a public body's decision are deemed contrary to the principles and goals of the Act.

### **On Section 20 powers**

**196.** Section 20 reviews are an important weapon in the armoury of the FG Commissioner and have been wielded effectively in the past. We note, however, that there are practical impediments to using s20 reviews all of which relate to finance. The first is that the FG Commissioner's office incurs additional costs when undertaking s20 reviews. In the past the Commissioner's office has been able to use reserves to provide funding for years when reviews were planned. The Commissioner told us that as a result of changes to accountancy rules, he is no longer able to hold reserves. Unlike the Auditor General, the Commissioner is funded by the Welsh Government – ministerial control of budgets is a potential vulnerability for both the office's independence and the candour with which Commissioners offer advice.

**Conclusion 7.** It is unacceptable that the FG Commissioner's ability to undertake s20 reviews is being compromised by technical issues relating to how the FG

Commissioner's office is funded. It is vital that these are addressed so that the FG Commissioner is able to act independently and without the risk of interference by the government of the day. Urgent resolution to the issue of funding for s20 reviews is required. We expect a response from the Cabinet Secretary on this matter before the Senedd dissolves in April 2026.

**Recommendation 8.** In the short term the current Welsh Government must find a solution to the accountancy issue which prevents the Commissioner from carrying over reserves in order to fund s20 reviews. In the longer-term the next Welsh Government should consider amending the Act to pass on responsibility for appointing and financing the Commissioner directly to the Senedd. Taking into account the timetable for appointment of the next Future Generations Commissioner, and to enable these arrangements to apply to the next postholder, the aim should be to complete the necessary statutory changes by the end of 2028/early 2029.

## Annex 1: List of oral evidence sessions.

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed on the Committee’s website.

Date	Name and Organisation
<p><b>23 June 2025</b></p>	<p><b>Professor Calvin Jones,</b> Economist</p> <p><b>Dr Caer Smyth,</b> Cardiff University</p> <p><b>Dr Suzanna Nesom,</b> University of York</p> <p><b>Dr Eleanor Mackillop, Wales Centre for Public Policy,</b> Cardiff University</p>
<p><b>30 June 2025</b></p>	<p><b>Sophie Howe,</b> Former Future Generations Commissioner</p> <p><b>Jane Davidson,</b> Chair of Wales Net Zero 2035</p> <p><b>Adrian Crompton, Auditor General for Wales,</b> Audit Wales</p> <p><b>Catryn Holzinger, Well-being of Future Generations Manager,</b> Audit Wales</p> <p><b>Martin Peters, Head of Law and Ethics,</b> Audit Wales</p>
<p><b>7 July 2025</b></p>	<p><b>Councillor Mary-Ann Brocklesby,</b> Leader of Monmouthshire Council</p> <p><b>Wayne Tucker, Senior Policy &amp; Partnership Officer,</b> Newport Council</p> <p><b>Robyn Lovelock, Insight, Strategy &amp; Delivery Manager,</b> Denbighshire County Council</p> <p><b>Fen Turner, Integrated Approaches to Natural Resources and Climate Change Team Leader,</b> Natural Resources Wales</p>

Date	Name and Organisation
	<p><b>Philip Daniels, Executive Director of Public Health,</b> Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board</p> <p><b>Sumina Azam, National Director of Policy and International Health,</b> Public Health Wales</p> <p><b>Geoff Ogden, Chief Transport Planning and Development Officer,</b> Transport for Wales</p> <p><b>Nathalie Rees, Head of Sustainability and Climate Change,</b> Transport for Wales</p> <p><b>Philip Blaker, Chief Executive,</b> Qualifications Wales</p> <p><b>Dr Lindsay Cordery-Bruce, Chief Executive,</b> WCVA</p> <p><b>Rachel Wolfendale, Programme Manager,</b> The Co-Production Network</p> <p><b>Hazel Lloyd Lubran, Chief Officer,</b> Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations (CAVCO) and Chair of the Ceredigion Public Services Board and West Wales Regional Partnership Board</p>
<p><b>10 November 2025</b></p>	<p><b>Derek Walker, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales,</b> Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales</p> <p><b>Marie Brousseau Navarro, Deputy Commissioner and Director for Health,</b> Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales</p> <p><b>Heledd Morgan, Director of Implementation and Impact,</b> Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales</p>
<p><b>1 December 2025</b></p>	<p><b>Jane Hutt MS, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip,</b> Welsh Government</p> <p><b>Rae Cornish, Deputy Director, Sustainable Futures,</b> Deputy Director, Sustainable Futures, Welsh Government</p> <p><b>Juliette Selby, Senior Sustainable Development Policy Manager,</b> Welsh Government</p>

## Annex 2: List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All Consultation responses and additional written information can be viewed on the Committee’s website.

Reference	Organisation
<b>SWFGA 01</b>	Ben Hitchings
<b>SWFGA 02</b>	Asthma & Lung UK
<b>SWFGA 03</b>	Foundations for Tomorrow
<b>SWFGA 04</b>	National Youth Advocacy Service Cymru
<b>SWFGA 05</b>	Professor Luci Attala University of Wales, Swansea
<b>SWFGA 06</b>	Platform
<b>SWFGA 07</b>	Newport City Council
<b>SWFGA 08</b>	Wrexham University
<b>SWFGA 09</b>	Royal College General Practitioners Cymru (RCGP)
<b>SWFGA 10</b>	Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
<b>SWFGA 11</b>	Institute for Welsh Affairs (IWA)
<b>SWFGA 12</b>	Nature Service Wales
<b>SWFGA 13</b>	Welsh Sports Association (WSA)
<b>SWFGA 14</b>	Denbighshire County Council
<b>SWFGA 15</b>	Public Health Wales (PHW)
<b>SWFGA 16</b>	Co-production Network for Wales
<b>SWFGA 17</b>	CWMPAS
<b>SWFGA 18</b>	Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)
<b>SWFGA 19</b>	School of International Futures
<b>SWFGA 20</b>	Vale of Glamorgan Council
<b>SWFGA 21</b>	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA)

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
<b>SWFGA 22</b>	Conwy County Borough Council
<b>SWFGA 23</b>	Transport for Wales (TFW)
<b>SWFGA 24</b>	Play Wales
<b>SWFGA 25</b>	Tai Pawb
<b>SWFGA 26</b>	Race Equality First
<b>SWFGA 27</b>	Natural resources Wales (NRW)
<b>SWFGA 28</b>	Peter Davies
<b>SWFGA 29</b>	Llandough Community Council
<b>SWFGA 30</b>	Wales arts Health and Wellbeing Network
<b>SWFGA 31</b>	Older Peoples Commissioner for Wales
<b>SWFGA 32</b>	Crisis UK
<b>SWFGA 33</b>	Welsh NHS Confederation
<b>SWFGA 34</b>	Caerphilly County Borough Council
<b>SWFGA 35</b>	Size of Wales
<b>SWFGA 36</b>	Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust (WAST)
<b>SWFGA 37</b>	Rewilding Britain
<b>SWFGA 38</b>	Care and Repair Cymru
<b>SWFGA 39</b>	TUC Cymru
<b>SWFGA 40</b>	Welsh Language Commissioner
<b>SWFGA 41</b>	Climate Cymru
<b>SWFGA 42</b>	OXFAM Cymru
<b>SWFGA 43</b>	Annie Tubadji, Swansea University
<b>SWFGA 44</b>	Swansea Council
<b>SWFGA 45</b>	Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)
<b>SWFGA 46</b>	Mudiad Meithrin
<b>SWFGA 47</b>	Wales Environment Link (WEL)
<b>SWFGA 48</b>	Children in Wales
<b>SWFGA 49</b>	Food Policy Alliance Cymru
<b>SWFGA 50</b>	Sport Wales

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
<b>SWFGA 51</b>	One Voice Wales (OVW)
<b>SWFGA 52</b>	Food Sense Wales
<b>SWFGA 53</b>	Dr Anwen Elias, Aberystwyth University
<b>SWFGA 54</b>	Children's Commissioner for Wales
<b>SWFGA 55</b>	National Infrastructure Commission Wales
<b>SWFGA 56</b>	Building Communities Trust (BCT)
<b>SWFGA 57</b>	Arts Council of Wales and Wales Arts International
<b>SWFGA 58</b>	Board of Bronllys Well Being Part CLT LTD
<b>SWFGA 59</b>	Audit Wales

## Annex 3: Summary of recommendations endorsed by the Committee from the Auditor General and the Commissioner, and the Welsh Government’s response

Recommendation	Welsh Government response
<p><b><u>No time to lose: Lessons from our work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act</u></b></p>	
<p>1) The Welsh Government should now clearly set out a scope and timetable for its own post-legislative evaluation and any changes to the Act.</p>	<p>Accept in principle - Due to current timescales, and the fact that this Government cannot commit future Governments to action, no post-legislative evaluation will be decided upon nor agreed by Welsh Government until after the election in May 2026.</p> <p>However, following the ESJ Committee’s inquiry findings officials in the Welsh Government will begin determining the possible options for scope and design of a future [evaluation].</p>
<p>2) The Welsh Government should work with public bodies to explore and agree what can reasonably be done to minimise funding uncertainties and aid their medium and longer-term planning where possible.</p>	<p>Accept in principle - This action already forms part of the Welsh Spending Review (“WSR”) and is considered annually as part of the Welsh Government Budget setting process.</p> <p>We agree in principle that Welsh Government should work to minimise funding uncertainties however this must be subject to the specific constraints in which we operate. The timing of UK Fiscal events, the UK Government election cycle and the Senedd election cycle all have</p>

Recommendation	Welsh Government response
	significant impact on our ability to deliver multiyear settlements.
<p>3) The Commissioner has recommended that the Welsh Government ringfences funding for prevention, which increases over time. This reflects calls from several organisations at a UK level. The Welsh Government should also explore other, complementary, ways of encouraging investment in prevention. This should include working with public bodies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ strengthen the understanding of the levels of investment in prevention and its impact;</li> <li>▪ build on work to embed prevention in the budget process, considering, for example, opportunities to bring funding together across different parts of the system to support prevention;</li> <li>▪ incentivise and protect preventative spend at a local level; and</li> <li>▪ learn from others beyond Wales, for example, taking account of work that CIPFA is undertaking on understanding preventative spend.</li> </ul>	<p>Reject - There is a longstanding principle that the Welsh Government tries to avoid hypothecating funding as this can reduce the ability of institutions to manage their own budgets in line with their responsibilities. For example, local government partners have repeatedly made the case for funding to be moved towards the revenue support grant specifically so that funding is not ring-fenced and enables them to make the best decisions for their specific locality.</p> <p>Moreover, it is very challenging to effectively and equitably isolate funding for prevention and early intervention without undermining the broader approach to prevention. There needs to be a balance between the immediate provision of services and being able to plan long term to prevent the need for those services to be accessed</p>
<p>4) The Welsh Government should work with public bodies to take a fresh look at the assessment of performance and</p>	<p><b>Accept in principle</b> - The Welsh Government agrees that the current assessment process for impact under the Act for public bodies and Public</p>

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Welsh Government response</b>
<p>impact under the Act. This work should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ how best to measure the impact public bodies are having and their contribution towards the well-being of Wales; and</li> <li>▪ how assessment of performance and impact can promote the aims of the Act and reinforce the need to work preventatively and collaborate.</li> </ul>	<p>Services Boards (“PSBs”) needs to be reviewed and possibly amended.</p>
<p><b><u>Future Generations Report 2025</u></b></p>	
<p>(1) Welsh Government should commit to a post-legislative review of the Well-being of Future Generations Act to strengthen its impact and to prepare for updates to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in 2030. This review should include a public dialogue to engage people across Cymru in shaping the future of well-being policy.</p>	<p>Considering positively for the future - The Equality and Social Justice Committee is currently holding an inquiry into this subject. Following the findings of this inquiry, and internal evaluation design and costings considerations, the Welsh Government will consider this requirement further.</p>
<p>(2) Welsh Government must assess and streamline partnership structures to reduce complexity and improve coordination across Wales.</p>	<p>Accept in principle - National governance of PSBs has been renewed and we plan to review streamlining the PSBs relationships with RPBs + CJsCs. Increased engagement with public bodies’ leaders including discussions on the Act. Reviews will determine acceptance of this recommendation.</p>
<p>(44) Welsh Government should ring-fence funding for prevention which increases over time.</p>	<p>Reject - Hypothecating funding reduces institutional budget autonomy. Isolating prevention funding equitably is difficult and risks</p>

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Welsh Government response</b>
	undermining broader prevention efforts and responsibilities institutions must manage effectively.
(45) Welsh Government should bring forward the budget setting process and produce multi-year funding settlements	Accept in principle - We support reducing funding uncertainty but must operate within constraints. UK fiscal events and election cycles significantly affect our ability to deliver multiyear settlements, limiting flexibility and long-term planning.
(47) Public bodies should use the agreed definition of prevention between Welsh Government and my office to map their preventative spend and invest progressively more upstream towards primary prevention.	Accept in principle - While we support the principle of prevention, mandating a single mapping approach may not reflect the diversity of public services. We continue to promote flexible, context-specific approaches to prevention across sectors.