

# Sixth Senedd Legacy Report

April 2026



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Welsh Parliament

**Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee**

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# Sixth Senedd Legacy Report

April 2026



# About the Committee

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

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Current Committee membership:



**Committee Chair:  
Llyr Gruffydd MS**  
Plaid Cymru



**Janet Finch-Saunders MS**  
Welsh Conservatives



**Delyth Jewell MS**  
Plaid Cymru



**Julie Morgan MS**  
Welsh Labour



**Carolyn Thomas MS**  
Welsh Labour



**Joyce Watson MS**  
Welsh Labour

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## Chair's foreword

It has been a privilege to Chair the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee for the last five years. Looking back, I believe we can be proud of how much we have achieved in a relatively short period. We have undertaken a substantial programme of work across the breadth of our remit, examining issues ranging from biodiversity and buses to water quality and waste. While our work has been guided by our strategic priorities (climate change, sustainable communities and protecting and enhancing the natural environment), we have also remained reactive to emerging issues and events. Inevitably, with such a broad remit, there are some areas to which we have not been able to do full justice. Looking ahead, we trust that our successor committee will take account of this when determining its priorities and work programme in the Seventh Senedd.

Our approach to scrutiny has been both rigorous and measured. We have challenged robustly where necessary, while also giving recognition where it is due. Reflecting on work, our outputs have been considered and constructive, and our recommendations proportionate and purposeful. Our aim has been to help shape future policy and to press for progress in implementing and delivering existing policy. I believe we have achieved that aim. Our legislative scrutiny, in particular, has been impactful, resulting in substantive changes to Bills that will enhance the quality and robustness of future Welsh law.

As we look to the Seventh Senedd, we are mindful of the challenges that lie ahead. Tackling the dual climate change and nature crises remains a significant and enduring challenge, with crucial targets to meet at the end of this decade. The current water reform proposal, if progressed, will be a major undertaking, requiring new Welsh law. Major changes to Wales' transport system are due to be implemented, with a phased roll-out of bus franchising, alongside planned rail reform. And the growing imperative for a secure, sustainable and affordable energy future highlights the need to accelerate the pace of the clean energy transition. We trust that our successor committee will maintain strong and focused scrutiny of these, and the other priority issues identified in this report.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank all those who have engaged with our work over the course of this Senedd term. This includes stakeholders, who have provided expert knowledge and insight, and the communities and individuals who have shared their lived experience with us. Their contributions have been invaluable in shaping and strengthening our scrutiny.

Finally, I would also like to thank Committee Members, past and present, for their hard work and commitment, and for their constructive approach to working across political differences.



**Llyr Gruffydd MS**

Chair, Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** In determining remits of committees in the Seventh Senedd, Business Committee should aim to limit the number of ministerial portfolios within each committee’s remit, and ensure remits are both manageable and workable to enable effective scrutiny. ....Page 14

**Recommendation 2.** Our successor committee should consider embedding a robust and systematic approach to follow-up within its ways of working. This could be achieved by building follow-up into inquiry planning from the outset and establishing a clear, consistent process for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of recommendations. ....Page 27

**Recommendation 3.** To inform its priorities for the Seventh Senedd, our successor committee should undertake public and stakeholder engagement. It should also consider reviewing its priorities at an appropriate point in the Senedd term to ensure they remain both appropriate and relevant to emerging issues. ....Page 27

**Recommendation 4.** In determining its priorities for the Seventh Senedd, our successor committee should consider our suggestions for priority areas of work set out in paragraph 79. ....Page 27

**Recommendation 5.** Our successor committee should maintain robust scrutiny of TfW and NRW throughout the Seventh Senedd. It should also aim to sustain a constructive working relationship with both bodies, to facilitate mutual trust and effective engagement. ....Page 32

**Recommendation 6.** Our successor committee should engage with the Welsh Government early in the Seventh Senedd to seek clarification on its plans for the future of the NICW, including any intended changes to the body’s status, role or remit. ....Page 32

**Recommendation 7.** Our successor committee should take full advantage of the opportunity to play an active role in the appointment of the OEGW’s non-executive members and first Chief Executive. ....Page 32

**Recommendation 8.** Our successor committee should consider pursuing with the Seventh Senedd Business Committee:

- what more can be done to ensure that responsible committees are notified further in advance of the timing of introduction of Bills,
- the benefits for committees of receiving an in-confidence copy of the draft Bill and Explanatory Memorandum to enable more meaningful consultation on proposed scrutiny timetables,
- how timetabling can be improved to ensure it does not negatively impact scrutiny. .... Page 41

**Recommendation 9.** Business Committee in the Seventh Senedd should consider the merits of reviewing the process and procedures for scrutiny of Legislative Consent Memoranda with a view to satisfying itself that they are fit for purpose.....Page 41

**Recommendation 10.** Our successor committee should maintain oversight of the implementation and delivery of the primary legislation scrutinised by this committee during the Sixth Senedd.....Page 41

**Recommendation 11.** Our successor committee should include post-legislative scrutiny among its priorities for the Seventh Senedd and consider early work on the Planning (Wales) Act 2015.....Page 41

**Recommendation 12.** In addition to scrutinising the Welsh Government’s draft budget, our successor committee should ensure that financial scrutiny is integrated into its wider work.....Page 45

**Recommendation 13.** Our successor committee should continue to press the Welsh Government to:

- improve the information provided to support robust and timely scrutiny of draft budgets, including increasing detail and clarity on spend and allocations within budget lines,
- provide written responses to the committee’s reports in sufficient time to inform the final budget debates. .... Page 45

**Recommendation 14.** Our successor committee may wish to explore options for strengthening cross-committee working when scrutinising the Welsh Government draft budget.....Page 45

**Recommendation 15.** Our successor committee should seek opportunities to:

- undertake engagement activity to ensure that a broad and diverse range of perspectives inform its work, and
- strengthen its external perspective through visits, within available capacity and resources. .... Page 49

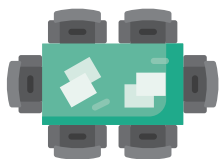
**Recommendation 16.** Our successor committee may wish to consider using mechanisms such as ARIs to access academic expertise, including at the start of the Seventh Senedd when considering its priorities and developing its work programme..... Page 49

**Recommendation 17.** Our successor committee should continue to seek opportunities for collaborative and joint working with other Senedd committees, particularly on cross-cutting issues where this would enhance the effectiveness of scrutiny, for example climate change.....Page 50

**Recommendation 18.** Our successor committee should further develop and strengthen existing links with equivalent parliamentary committees across the UK and seek opportunities for cooperative and collaborative working on areas of common interest.....Page 50

**Recommendation 19.** Our successor committee should reflect on the report and relevant recommendations of the Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament Review Board in agreeing its ways of working.....Page 50

## The Committee in the Sixth Senedd



**HOW MANY FORMAL COMMITTEE MEETINGS WERE HELD?**

**104**

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**HOW MANY WITNESSES GAVE EVIDENCE TO THE COMMITTEE?**

**380**

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**HOW MANY STAKEHOLDER EVENTS/ VISITS WERE UNDERTAKEN?**

**5**

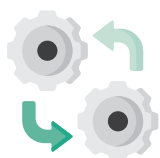
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**HOW MANY BILLS WERE CONSIDERED BY THE COMMITTEE?**

**6**

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**HOW MANY LEGISLATIVE CONSENT MEMORANDA (LCM) WERE CONSIDERED BY THE COMMITTEE?**

**29**

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**HOW MANY REPORTS WERE  
PRODUCED?**

**61**

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**HOW MANY DEBATES WERE HELD?**

**23**

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**HOW MANY INQUIRIES WERE  
UNDERTAKEN?**

**16**

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**HOW MANY RESPONSES TO  
CONSULTATIONS WERE RECEIVED?**

**579**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.** This report provides an overview of our work during the Sixth Senedd. It highlights what we consider to be our key achievements and the lessons learned in the course of fulfilling our scrutiny function. Drawing on this experience, we make recommendations and highlight potential priority areas for our successor committee in the Seventh Senedd.
- 2.** To inform our report, we took evidence from Cabinet Ministers whose responsibilities fall within our remit, and from relevant Welsh Government arm's length and advisory bodies. Further details of these sessions can be found at **Annex 1**.
- 3.** Due to time constraints, regrettably, we were not able to engage stakeholders or the public to inform our legacy work. This report, therefore, represents the views of current Committee Members.

## 2. Role, remit and priorities

### Role

**4.** The Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee (the Committee) was set up by the Sixth Senedd to scrutinise policy and legislation in a range of areas, including climate change, the environment, energy, planning, transport and connectivity.

**5.** We consider that dual-function committees offer clear benefits. Combining policy and legislative scrutiny enables Members to develop expertise across both functions, which in turn can strengthen the quality and depth of scrutiny. We hope that an increase in capacity in the next Senedd will reduce the need for Members to sit on multiple committees, allowing Members to specialise, with consequent benefits for scrutiny.

**6.** Our inquiries into bus and rail transport and nature recovery provided valuable context and insight that enhanced our scrutiny of the [Bus \(Services\) \(Wales\) Bill](#) and the [Environment \(Principles, Governance and Biodiversity\) Targets \(Wales\) Bill](#). However, balancing our policy and legislative scrutiny responsibilities has at times been challenging. Our legislative workload, particularly in the latter half of this Senedd term, has limited the time available for policy inquiries and wider external engagement.

### Remit

**7.** At the start of the Sixth Senedd, our remit broadly aligned with the portfolio of the then Minister for Climate Change. Following reconfiguration of the Welsh Government Cabinet in March 2024, our remit covered areas across four ministerial portfolios. This prompted our request for Business Committee to reconsider the remits of policy committees.<sup>1</sup> Following consultation with other committees, Business Committee agreed minor changes to our remit.<sup>2</sup> However, the number of ministerial portfolios covered by our remit remained the same. A further change in Cabinet roles in September 2024 reduced the number from four to three.

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<sup>1</sup> [Letter from the Committee Chair to the Chair of Business Committee, dated 19 May 2024](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Letter from the Chair of Business Committee to the Committee Chair, dated 23 July 2024](#)

**8.** Scrutinising such a wide range of portfolios has proved challenging, particularly during the latter part of this Senedd term when our legislative workload has been substantial.

**9.** We acknowledge that committee remits in the Seventh Senedd will be a matter for its Business Committee. We believe that consideration should be given to ensuring clear lines of ministerial accountability within committee remits, while retaining sufficient flexibility to enable cross-cutting scrutiny. This could be achieved by seeking to limit the number of ministerial portfolios within each committee's remit. However, we would caution against continually reconstituting committee remits in response to changes in ministerial portfolios.

## Our priorities

**10.** At the start of the Sixth Senedd, to help inform our priorities, we held a public consultation and a series of thematic evidence sessions with stakeholders. We subsequently agreed three strategic priorities:

- Climate change
- Sustainable communities
- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment

**11.** These priorities have guided our work throughout this Senedd term.

## Recommendation

**Recommendation 1.** In determining remits of committees in the Seventh Senedd, Business Committee should aim to limit the number of ministerial portfolios within each committee's remit, and ensure remits are both manageable and workable to enable effective scrutiny.

## 3. Policy scrutiny

**12.** The Committee’s remit is broad covering diverse and substantial policy areas. In developing our work programme for the Sixth Senedd, we aimed to ensure that our choice of inquiries spanned the breadth of our remit. While we have achieved this to an extent, our substantial legislative workload has meant that certain areas have not received the attention they merit, for example, the planning system. We have, however, used general scrutiny sessions to focus on emerging issues within those areas.

**13.** As well as planned inquiries, we have completed several pieces of work in response to emerging issues. These ranged from one-off evidence sessions to more substantive inquiries conducted over several weeks.

**14.** Examples of our policy inquiries are provided below, grouped according to our three priority areas. A full list of inquiries can be found at **Annex 2**.

### Climate change

#### Decarbonisation of housing

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**15.** In determining our priorities for the Sixth Senedd, we agreed to undertake an [inquiry into decarbonisation of Wales’ existing housing stock](#). Following scoping work, and informed by stakeholder evidence, we agreed to focus our inquiry on the private housing sector.

**16.** We held a public consultation during summer 2022. We also commissioned the Citizens Engagement Team to conduct in-depth interviews with private landlords and homeowners to further understand the real and perceived barriers to retrofitting their properties with energy efficiency measures.

**17.** In early autumn term 2022, we took evidence from a range of stakeholders, including representatives of the private-rented sector, the financial sector, and housing specialists.

**18.** We heard that the Welsh Government’s focus on the social housing sector was being pursued at the expense of the private sector, with the latter described as “the elephant in the room” in the context of achieving the net zero target. Our [report](#) (February 2023) concluded:

*“The Welsh Government needs to provide stronger strategic direction to help drive progress in the privately-owned sector. In the absence of a long-term housing decarbonisation strategy, and with firm policies and programmes to support the sector to decarbonise yet to be brought forward from the Welsh Government, industry and property owners are left struggling to know whether to act, and how and when they can best play their part.”*

- 19.** In responding to our report, the then Minister for Climate Change indicated her intention to develop a residential housing decarbonisation route map, which key stakeholders had no previous knowledge of.
- 20.** On the matter of financial support for home energy efficiency, we pressed the Welsh Government to accelerate work on the Nest replacement scheme and sought a commitment to ensure that no gap in provision arose between the end of the current scheme and the launch of its successor.
- 21.** Other key issues raised in our report included: the importance of combining fiscal incentives and regulatory standards to drive retrofit activity; and the need to grow the supply chain and address skills shortages.
- 22.** We followed-up on progress towards implementation of our recommendations in summer 2023 and again in spring 2024. We continued to pursue this policy area through our wider scrutiny work.

### **Restoration of opencast mining sites**

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- 23.** In summer term 2024, we held an inquiry into restoration of opencast mining sites. The inquiry was triggered by issues arising from the closure of the last opencast mining site in Wales, at Ffos-y-Fran in Merthyr Tydfil, during 2023.
- 24.** In undertaking the inquiry, we sought to gain a deeper understanding of the restoration picture at Ffos-y-Fran and other opencast mines across Wales, to identify lessons learned.
- 25.** The central focus of our report (August 2024) was the need to ensure appropriate protections for local authorities and communities. We made a series of recommendations to the Welsh Government, including: a review of the Minerals Technical Advice Note for Coal (MTAN2); the introduction of statutory guidance on restoration liabilities assessments; and an independent review to assess funding need to restore opencast sites to an “acceptable level”.

**26.** Since our report, the Welsh Government has committed to establish a Mining Legacy Working Group, with stakeholder representation, to support the long term strategic aim of ensuring that mining legacy sites, including opencast sites, “become beneficial assets for communities, supporting local economies and the wider environment”.<sup>3</sup>

**27.** We also called for the Welsh Government to clarify and strictly enforce policies on coal extraction within the context of remediation, in response to concerns raised about the potential for coal tip remediation to lead to new coal mining operations. We continued to pursue this during our scrutiny of the Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Bill. This led to a commitment by the Welsh Government to amend The Town and Country Planning (Notification) (Coal and Petroleum) (Wales) Direction 2018 so that ‘coal development’ explicitly includes operations connected to disused coal tips. The amended Direction is due to be introduced before the end of this Senedd term.

**28.** At the time of writing this report, the future of Ffos-y-Fran has yet to be determined and remains an issue of considerable public interest.

### **Storm response**

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**29.** In the space of a few weeks in late 2024, storms Bert and Darragh hit Wales. Communities across Wales experienced flooding, landslides, and severe winds. In November 2024, we received correspondence from Andrew RT Davies MS and Heledd Fychan MS, requesting that we undertake an inquiry into the Welsh Government and relevant agencies’ responses.<sup>4</sup> This prompted us to consider the current storm preparation and response framework in Wales, using Storms Bert and Darragh as case studies.

**30.** In spring term 2025, we held evidence sessions with forecasting bodies, public authorities, energy suppliers and water companies. In addition, the Citizen Engagement Team undertook an engagement programme to hear the experiences of individuals from communities most affected by storms Bert and Darragh.

**31.** Key themes of our report (September 2025) included: the adequacy of forecasting and warnings; the legal and strategic framework for emergency

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<sup>3</sup> Plenary, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 142, 2 February 2026

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Andrew RT Davies MS to the Committee Chair, dated 25 November 2024, and letter from Heledd Fychan MS to the Committee Chair, dated 27 November 2024

response; support for communities and individuals; the resilience of infrastructure; and long-term planning for an increase in extreme weather events.

**32.** In examining the strategic framework, we raised concern that, despite the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events, the Welsh Government's Flood Response Framework had not been updated since 2016. Following our recommendation to review and revise the Framework, the Welsh Government committed to publishing an updated version in spring 2026.

**33.** Alongside these system-level considerations, our inquiry also highlighted the crucial role of communities. Community resilience emerged as one of the most important factors impacting storm resilience. We called on the Welsh Government to explore opportunities to provide sustainable funding for community resilience groups, and to embed community participation in flood resilience planning processes, including through citizen forums and co-designed local plans. In response, the Welsh Government provided additional revenue funding to support the National Flood Forum's work in Wales.

**34.** Despite this strong community response, the human impact of flooding remains a significant concern. During our inquiry, we heard about the emotional toll of repeated flooding on residents. We emphasised the need for wellbeing considerations to carry equal priority to physical infrastructure repair, calling for mental health support to be embedded in local flood response strategies and made accessible through community-based services and partnerships.

**35.** The condition and clarity of responsibility for culvert and drainage infrastructure was another important theme. We called for a nationally coordinated approach to culvert management, including clear guidance on riparian responsibilities for landowners, alongside mapping tools and support to improve compliance and reduce disputes.

**36.** Finally, we highlighted nature-based solutions as a key component of effective flood risk management. We pressed the Welsh Government to prioritise scaling-up nature-based solutions and ensure that appropriate levels of funding are available for this purpose. We subsequently pursued this issue during our scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget 2026-27.

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## Sustainable communities

### The future of bus and rail

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**37.** We have consistently scrutinised Welsh Government policy relating to bus and rail services. In 2022, we held an [inquiry on the future of bus and rail](#), which explored priorities for post-covid recovery of Welsh bus and rail services, progress towards modal shift targets and proposals on bus and rail reform.

**38.** Our inquiry was informed by extensive stakeholder and public engagement. We took oral evidence from a wide range of stakeholders and held a stakeholder event, which was attended by 20 stakeholders covering several areas of interest, including passenger representative groups from across Wales. We also commissioned the Citizen Engagement Team to hold focus groups and interviews with service users.

**39.** In autumn 2023 we took [evidence from rail passenger groups](#) following concerns raised with us on rail delivery, performance and passenger experience. This informed our subsequent [scrutiny and report on Transport for Wales](#).

**40.** These inquiries set the foundations for our work on bus and rail reform, namely scrutiny of the Bus Services (Wales) Bill and of the [Legislative Consent Memorandum for the UK Government Railways Bill](#). It also informed our ongoing scrutiny of Transport for Wales (TfW).

**41.** Significant changes to bus and rail services in Wales are due to be implemented in the coming years. We would urge our successor committee to continue to scrutinise Government and TfW as these take effect.

### Waste

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**42.** During summer term 2024, we undertook a [one-day inquiry into waste](#). The purpose of the inquiry was to consider progress towards delivery of the Welsh Government's circular economy strategy, [Beyond Recycling](#) (March 2021), including the 2025 targets. To inform our work, we took evidence from policy experts, representatives from the waste management and business sectors, and the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs (the Cabinet Secretary).

**43.** The inquiry was wide-ranging, covering: current and future recycling targets; progress towards a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), funding arrangements for

Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging; accelerating action on reuse and repair; tackling avoidable food waste; and littering and fly-tipping.

**44.** We wrote to the Cabinet Secretary to set out views on key issues raised during the inquiry.

**45.** We have continued to advocate for a DRS, pressing the Welsh Government to clarify its intentions on scope and approach, and to accelerate progress towards the introduction of the scheme in Wales. In February 2026, The Deposit Scheme for Drinks Containers (Wales) Regulations 2026 were laid, with a debate scheduled at the end of March. Subject to the approval of the Regulations, the DRS will commence from 1 October 2027, ensuring alignment with the rest of the UK. We would encourage our successor committee to maintain oversight of the implementation of DRS during the Seventh Senedd.

## Protecting and enhancing the natural environment

### Marine environment management

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**46.** In autumn 2021, we undertook a ‘snapshot’ inquiry into management of the marine environment, which covered: marine planning, marine renewable energy, consenting and licensing, evidence gathering and data gaps, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and blue carbon.

**47.** We held evidence sessions with a range of stakeholders, including Natural Resources Wales (NRW), representatives from the offshore renewable energy industry and environmental NGOs.

**48.** One of the key themes of our report (February 2022) was whether the Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) was fit for purpose given the expected medium-term increase in offshore renewable energy development. Following concern from stakeholders that the WNMP lacked a “spatial component or development control policies”, we recommended that an external analysis of the WNMP should be undertaken to inform the first statutory review of the plan, due in November 2022. The Welsh Government agreed to this approach, but for the subsequent review due in 2025.

**49.** In September 2024, the Welsh Government appointed Arup to undertake an independent review of marine planning approaches in Wales. The review considered “how Wales can further develop the Welsh marine planning framework to provide greater spatial clarity and direction for marine development, balancing support for renewable energy whilst protecting and

enhancing the marine environment”. The review report contained nine recommendations.

**50.** In [responding to the review](#), the Cabinet Secretary announced plans to undertake a detailed spatial assessment of Welsh seas:

*“This spatial analysis will be developed in collaboration with we partners, including leveraging evidence from The Crown Estate’s Whole of Seabed mapping, bringing together the best available evidence to inform marine planning. It will increase we understanding of marine natural resources as well as mapping potential conflicts and synergies between key marine sectors and also with nature.”*

**51.** We have continued to pursue marine policies during general Ministerial scrutiny and in draft budget scrutiny. We are concerned by recent assessments finding 50 per cent of MPAs in unfavourable condition, that there are no up-to-date management plans for these important sites, and that commitments to designate new MPAs will not be fulfilled this Senedd term. We would encourage our successor committee to ensure the next Welsh Government gives sufficient priority to protecting and enhancing the marine environment.

### **Water quality: sewage discharges**

**52.** Following changes to the law in England aimed at reducing the impact of sewage discharges from storm overflows, and continued public concern about sewage pollution in Wales, we completed a short [inquiry into storm overflows](#). The inquiry sought to establish the extent of sewage discharges and how existing arrangements aimed at addressing their impact were working.

**53.** In our [report](#) (March 2022), we called for “action from the Welsh Government in its leadership role, to ensure that the number and volume of discharges is reduced as a matter of urgency”. We made several recommendations aimed at: enhancing monitoring arrangements to better understand the impact of discharges on receiving water; improving transparency around discharges; and tackling unpermitted storm overflows.

**54.** A key recommendation was for water companies to aim to report on discharges from storm overflows “within an hour of the discharge beginning”, to align with new statutory requirement on water companies in England. Since then, both Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) and Hafren Dyfrdwy have launched near real-time storm overflow maps.

**55.** In our report, we highlighted that managing demand on the sewerage system, and encouraging more efficient use of drains and sewers, will be essential to reduce the frequency of sewage spills in the longer-term. This will require cross-sector considerations, including interventions in planning to better address ‘urban creep’.

**56.** We have maintained a strong interest in the water sector and its regulation in the ensuing years. In our [report](#) on DCWW’s performance (February 2024), we raised concern that the sector was facing a crisis and its future was uncertain. The publication of the Welsh Government’s [Green Paper](#) on the future of water governance was therefore a welcome and timely development. However, given the timing of publication, we have been unable to consider the proposals in any meaningful way. We suggest that our successor committee may wish to prioritise water reform as part of its early programme of work.

**57.** Although sewage discharges have been the primary focus of our work on water quality, we acknowledge that there are other significant sources of water pollution in Wales, including agriculture. We would encourage our successor committee to reflect on this in any future work in this policy area.

### **Proposals for a Sustainable Farming Scheme**

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**58.** In setting its priorities for the Sixth Senedd, we agreed to consider Wales’ new arrangements for agricultural support from an environmental and sustainability perspective. In spring term 2024, we undertook a [short inquiry](#) into the Welsh Government’s [proposals for a Sustainable Farming Scheme](#).

**59.** We held a stakeholder event, which was attended by representatives from the agriculture, food, and environmental sectors. Roundtable discussions focussed on identifying and agreeing solutions to the challenges arising from the proposals. We also took evidence from the farming industry, environmental NGOs and academics.

**60.** We published our [report](#) in July 2024. Our key ask was that any changes made to the proposals to address concerns raised by the farming industry, in particular in relation to the 10 per cent tree cover and habitat management requirements, should not compromise the Scheme’s environmental ambitions. Recommendations accepted and subsequently implemented by the Welsh Government included:

- to fairly reward farmers for maintaining Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) land under the Scheme’s Universal Actions, and

- to ensure that social value is incorporated in the Schemes payment methodology from the outset.

**61.** In our report, we highlighted the importance of the Scheme’s Collaborative and Optional layers in delivering the more ambitious outcomes for the environment. These layers are currently in development. We would encourage our successor committee to keep a watching brief on these options, as well as maintain oversight of the Scheme to ensure that it delivers the intended environmental outcomes.

### **Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030**

**62.** 18 months on from the adoption of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (GBF), and ahead of the highly anticipated Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill (the EPGBT Bill), we undertook an [inquiry](#) to consider how the Welsh Government was responding to the challenge of halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030.

**63.** Our [report](#) (January 2025) featured in Audit Wales’ report, [The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty](#) (March 2025) and the [Explanatory Memorandum](#) (EM) to the EPGBT Bill. The EM included our findings to highlight the disbenefits of maintaining the current legislative and policy framework obligations supporting biodiversity.

**64.** We raised concern that the Welsh Government was not on course to meet the GBF [‘30 by 30’ target](#). We emphasised the need to accelerate action, calling for a credible plan to support target delivery. We recommended that, as a starting point, the Welsh Government should publish the criteria it will use to determine whether an area counts towards the target. We called for the criteria “[to] make clear that protected sites should be monitored to identify baselines and assess progress, have a management plan in place, and should be in favourable or recovering condition to count towards the target”.<sup>5</sup>

**65.** The Welsh Government accepted our recommendations and, in June 2025, published its [30 by 30 Framework for Wales](#), setting out its overall approach to target delivery. The Framework included criteria that aligned with our recommendation.

**66.** We acknowledge the Welsh Government’s efforts to support biodiversity action, including through Local Places for Nature, Project Seagrass, the National

<sup>5</sup> [Report on Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030. January 2025](#)

Peatland Action Programme, the Nature Networks Fund and beaver re-introductions. We would encourage our successor committee to keep a watching brief over investment in and outcomes of these programmes and initiatives as part of its on-going scrutiny work.

**67.** We are aware that the environment NGO sector's [2025 UK-wide progress report](#) on the 30 by 30 target suggests Wales is projected to miss the target by some way. It is clear that significant challenges lie ahead for the next Welsh Government if it is to deliver on current biodiversity commitments. We would urge our successor committee to consider scrutiny of progress towards delivery of these commitments as a priority area of work.

### Follow-up work

**68.** Due to time and capacity constraints, we have had limited opportunity to undertake follow-up work to assess progress towards implementation of our recommendations. However, we have sought updates on progress through general Ministerial scrutiny sessions. We would encourage our successor committee to consider embedding a robust and systematic approach to follow-up within its ways of working.

### General scrutiny

**69.** In determining our priorities at the start of the Sixth Senedd, we agreed to hold regular general Ministerial scrutiny sessions. These have enabled us to question Ministers on emerging developments, implementation issues, and policy delivery that fall outside planned inquiry work.

**70.** We have persistently pursued a range of matters, including:

- implementation of circular economy measures, including Extended Producer Responsibility, Deposit Return Scheme, workplace recycling obligations and new statutory waste targets;
- development of cross-sector work on water quality;
- increasing tree-planting rates, and the development and publication of a Welsh Government [Timber Industrial Strategy](#);
- management of the Marine Protected Area network and proposals for designation of new Marine Conservation Zones;
- active travel;

- the default 20mph speed limit policy;
- pavement parking and road maintenance;
- taxi/private hire vehicle reform;
- electrical vehicle charging.

## Progress towards climate change commitments

**71.** During the course of the Sixth Senedd, we have held several sessions dedicated to scrutinising the Welsh Government’s progress towards its climate change commitments.

**72.** Following the publication of [Net Zero Wales](#) in October 2021, we held an evidence session with the then Minister for Climate Change to explore the policies and proposals within the plan. We have since held several sessions to assess progress towards delivery of Carbon Budget 2 (CB2, 2021-25) and wider carbon emissions reduction targets.

**73.** We scrutinised the then Minister for Climate Change on the [Final Statement for Carbon Budget 1](#). This was informed by evidence received from the UK Climate Change Committee (UK CCC).<sup>6</sup>

**74.** Although final territorial emissions data are not yet available for 2024 and 2025, current estimates indicate that the Welsh Government is on track to outperform CB2. That being the case, the next Welsh Government will enter the next carbon budget period (2026-2030) from a comparatively strong position. However, Carbon Budget 3 (CB3) is significantly more challenging and future decarbonisation will become increasingly dependent on policy action in devolved areas, including agriculture and transport. We would encourage our successor committee to scrutinise the next carbon emissions reduction plan early in the Seventh Senedd, and to consider scrutiny of progress towards CB3 and the 2030 interim target as priority areas of work.

**75.** We have maintained a positive working relationship with the UK CCC throughout this Senedd term. We have met formally and informally with the Chairs of the UK CCC’s Mitigation and Adaptation committees, and with its Chief

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<sup>6</sup> The UK Climate Change Committee is the Welsh Government’s statutory independent adviser on climate change.

Executive. We would encourage our successor committee to continue this relationship in the Seventh Senedd.

**76.** Our work, spanning water quality, biodiversity, storm events and opencast mining sites underlines the increasingly visible and damaging impacts of climate change, and the imperative to accelerate adaptation efforts. The UK CCC's upcoming Climate Change Risk Assessment – Impact Assessment (CCRA-IA4) will provide an opportunity for our successor committee to examine Wales' evolving climate risks. We would encourage the committee to take account of this when determining its priorities for the Seventh Senedd.

**77.** At the time of writing this report, the Welsh Government has yet to respond to the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales' climate adaptation report, [A Perfect Storm](#) (October 2025). We acknowledge that implementation of the NICW's recommendations will be a matter for the next Welsh Government. We would encourage our successor committee to follow up on progress towards implementation during the Sixth Senedd.

## Priorities for the Seventh Senedd

**78.** As outlined earlier, our priorities for the Sixth Senedd were informed by a public consultation and thematic evidence sessions with stakeholders. We would encourage our successor committee to consider a similar approach. Further, the committee may wish to consider reviewing its priorities at an appropriate point in the Senedd term to ensure they remain both appropriate and relevant to emerging issues.

**79.** While we recognise that it will be for our successor committee to determine its priorities, we would ask that it considers the following:

- protecting and enhancing the marine environment;
- the future governance of the water sector;
- delivery of environmental outcomes from the Sustainable Farming Scheme;
- progress towards delivery of global and domestic biodiversity commitments, in particular the 30 by 30 target and development of new statutory biodiversity targets;

- the Welsh Government's new carbon emissions reduction plan, and progress towards delivery of Carbon Budget 3 and the 2030 interim target;
- progress in adapting to climate change;
- renewable energy delivery;
- bus franchising and rail reform;
- the need for reform of taxi and private hire vehicle licensing and regulation;
- delivery of Regional Transport Plans and the effectiveness of the Regional Transport Fund;
- the need to address pavement parking and the roads maintenance backlog.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 2.** Our successor committee should consider embedding a robust and systematic approach to follow-up within its ways of working. This could be achieved by building follow-up into inquiry planning from the outset and establishing a clear, consistent process for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of recommendations.

**Recommendation 3.** To inform its priorities for the Seventh Senedd, our successor committee should undertake public and stakeholder engagement. It should also consider reviewing its priorities at an appropriate point in the Senedd term to ensure they remain both appropriate and relevant to emerging issues.

**Recommendation 4.** In determining its priorities for the Seventh Senedd, our successor committee should consider our suggestions for priority areas of work set out in paragraph 79.

## 4. Scrutiny of Welsh Government arm's length and advisory bodies

**80.** Scrutiny of Welsh Government arm's length and advisory bodies has remained a core element of our work programme. We have conducted annual scrutiny of:

- Transport for Wales (TfW);
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW);
- National Infrastructure for Wales (NICW);
- Interim Environmental Protection Assessor for Wales (IEPAW).

**81.** In line with established practice, we have conducted pre-appointment hearings with the Welsh Government's preferred candidates for the Chairs of TfW, NRW and NICW.

**82.** Our reports can be found on the [Senedd's website](#).

### Transport for Wales

**83.** Our scrutiny of TfW's corporate processes has focused on a range of issues, particularly the budget setting process, transparency, reporting of corporate and rail KPIs, as well as diversity and the gender pay gap.

**84.** We have consistently pressed TfW to develop a clear suite of corporate KPIs and to improve the clarity and transparency of their reporting, while also challenging whether its KPIs are appropriate and sufficient. In relation to rail, we have pressed TfW to publish data at route level to enable the public to better understand where services are performing well and to hold the organisation to account. TfW has committed to doing this.

**85.** We have sought to ensure a greater focus on diversity within the organisation, particularly by improving gender balance and addressing the gender pay gap.

**86.** We have consistently pressed TfW on its processes to determine where to cancel or terminate services at short notice. This followed concerns about passenger safety arising from reports of trains being terminated at stations with no onward transport options or in isolated locations. We also highlighted the need for decision-making processes to take account of seasonal variations. TfW

committed to consider these matters. At our most recent [annual scrutiny session](#), TfW reported that:

*“... there are a number of areas around the network where we have chosen to give different instructions to the control team when they have to abandon a service, which typically means that they abandon a service where there are staff and premises available, not, as you described earlier, where people are left in the middle of nowhere.”*

**87.** We have also urged TfW to improve its planning, alongside Network Rail, around provision of rail services for major events. We found provision to be “inadequate”, in particular around Welsh national football matches. This has led to extra carriages, later departures and improved planning of engineering works around major events.

**88.** Our role and influence has been acknowledged by both TfW and the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales. In giving [evidence](#) to the us at the end of the Sixth Senedd, the Cabinet Secretary asserted:

*“The recommendations of the Committee have proved invaluable in developing our governance of TfW including scrutiny of TfW’s funding during the draft budget, the publication of KPIs, and development of the Performance Board.*

*Your recommendations on TfW’s draft budget contributed to the additional funding to deliver the bus franchising. This challenging and complex programme is now supported by a new joint sponsorship group attended by senior leaders from both organisations.”*

**89.** We would encourage our successor committee to foster a challenging but positive approach to scrutiny of TfW. We would urge the committee to scrutinise TfW on the implementation of bus franchising and of the UK Government Railways Bill (if enacted), particularly the effectiveness of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Welsh and UK Governments and development of partnership arrangements with Great British Rail.

## Natural Resources Wales

**90.** In scrutinising NRW we have examined its governance and delivery of its business plan commitments, and a range of pressing policy issues. We have consistently highlighted resource and capacity constraints across its portfolio.

**91.** During this Senedd term, NRW has undergone several significant internal reviews aimed at better aligning its priorities, resources and statutory obligations. This included a 'baseline review', the Adfywio/Renewal programme, and more recently the 'Case for Change'. We have taken a close interest in these reviews and have raised concerns regarding reductions in staffing, closure of visitor centres, and changes to enforcement practices.

**92.** We have pressed NRW to ensure that all unpermitted storm overflows are brought within the regulatory regime, and to improve its investigation of, and response to, pollution incidents.

**93.** We have taken a keen interest in the development of NRW's commercial activity, including timber production and onshore wind developments. We have consistently highlighted the constraints on NRW's ability to manage commercial income and make longer-term investment decisions due to the Welsh Government's annual budget cycle.

**94.** NRW has experienced a turbulent few years, but is now entering what we hope will be a more stable period. We are keen for a strong and consistent emphasis on delivery, with continuous improvement embedded into ways of working. We would expect our successor committee to maintain focus on scrutiny of NRW.

## National Infrastructure Commission for Wales

**95.** An emerging theme in our scrutiny of the NICW has been the effectiveness of the current Commission model, including whether it will remain fit for purpose in the coming years. In anticipation of the planned review of the NICW's status, remit, and objectives, we made several recommendations to the Welsh Government in our [April 2024](#) report. These recommendations featured prominently in the [Welsh Government's internal audit review of the NICW](#).

**96.** One of our key recommendations was that the Welsh Government consider the merits of requiring a future Commission to undertake a national infrastructure assessment of Wales' long-term infrastructure needs. Prompted by our recommendation, the NICW is currently conducting a 'mini-infrastructure

assessment'. The outcome of this work is intended to inform the Welsh Government's decision on whether a more comprehensive assessment would be appropriate and offer value for money.

**97.** In our June 2025 [report](#), we called on the Welsh Government to provide clarity on the future of the Commission. This led the NICW to publish its discussion paper, [Options for the evolution of NICW](#) (September 2025). We acknowledge that decisions about the Commission's future will fall to the next Welsh Government. We would expect the next Government to give careful consideration to the matters raised in the NICW's discussion paper when reaching its decision.

### Interim Environmental Protection Assessor for Wales

**98.** In agreeing our priorities for the Sixth Senedd, we committed to scrutinise the on-going operation of the interim environmental protection measures until such time as permanent environmental governance arrangements are put in place. This took the form of annual scrutiny sessions with the Interim IEPAW.

**99.** Our first [report](#) (September 2022) included recommendations for the IEPAW to improve transparency and increase visibility of the service, and to strengthen stakeholder engagement. In accepting our recommendations, the IEPAW said:

*"[They] provide an important package of improvements to ensure that the IEPAW can deliver its functions effectively until a permanent environmental oversight body is in place".*

**100.** Other positive outcomes arising from our scrutiny of the IEPAW and interim measures include:

- an increase in budget allocation for the IEPAW (see Chapter 6);
- strengthened arrangements for monitoring and reporting on the impact of the interim measures;
- formalisation of arrangements for the Welsh Government to respond to IEPAW reports, including Written Statements to notify the Senedd of a response; and
- production of the IEPAW's Lessons Learned report to help inform detailed proposals for the new environmental governance body for Wales.

**101.** Looking ahead, subject to Royal Assent of the EPGBT Bill, the Seventh Senedd will see the establishment of the Office of Environmental Governance Wales (OEGW). We would urge our successor committee to keep a close watch on progress towards the OEGW's establishment.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 5.** Our successor committee should maintain robust scrutiny of TfW and NRW throughout the Seventh Senedd. It should also aim to sustain a constructive working relationship with both bodies, to facilitate mutual trust and effective engagement.

**Recommendation 6.** Our successor committee should engage with the Welsh Government early in the Seventh Senedd to seek clarification on its plans for the future of the NICW, including any intended changes to the body's status, role or remit.

**Recommendation 7.** Our successor committee should take full advantage of the opportunity to play an active role in the appointment of the OEGW's non-executive members and first Chief Executive.

## 5. Legislative scrutiny

### Primary legislation

**102.** We have had a substantial legislative workload this Senedd term, scrutinising six Bills - more than any other policy committee. The subject matter of these Bills has spanned the breadth of our remit. A list can be found at **Annex 3**.

**103.** Uncertainty regarding the timing of Bills, coupled with changes to programming, has made strategic work planning difficult. In most cases, we have only been made aware of the imminent introduction of a Bill when consulted by Business Committee on the proposed scrutiny timetable. As a result, we have had to reprioritise our work to ensure we can meet our legislative scrutiny commitments.

**104.** While we welcome consultation by Business Committee on proposed scrutiny tables, we have had limited information on the content and complexity of Bills to be able to reach a fully informed view.

**105.** Scrutiny timetables have been challenging and restrict opportunities for meaningful engagement. As standard practice, we have undertaken public consultation to inform Stage 1 scrutiny. The written evidence we have received has been invaluable in understanding the impact of Bills and any potential unintended consequences, among other things. However, consultation periods have been necessarily short (usually no more than six weeks), which can be a barrier to engagement.

**106.** We shared our reflections on legislative scrutiny with Business Committee and the Chairs' Forum to help inform their work to prepare for the Seventh Senedd.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, we suggested Business Committee may wish to:

- explore what more can be done to ensure that responsible committees are notified further in advance of the timing of introduction of Bills;
- consider the benefits for committees of receiving an in-confidence copy of the draft Bill and Explanatory Memorandum to enable more meaningful consultation on proposed scrutiny timetables; and

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<sup>7</sup> [Letter from the Committee Chair to the Chair of Business Committee, dated 30 April 2025](#), and [letter from the Committee Chair to the Chair of the Chairs' Forum, dated 3 November 2025](#)

- engage with the Welsh Government early in the next Senedd to discuss how timetabling could be improved to ensure it does not negatively impact scrutiny.

**107.** We would encourage our successor committee to continue to pursue these matters in the Seventh Senedd.

### **Addressing scrutiny challenges**

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**108.** We have engaged constructively with the Welsh Government, negotiating practical solutions to challenges while seeking to safeguard the integrity of the legislative scrutiny process.

### **Preventing a ‘scrutiny deficit’**

**109.** In announcing his intention to bring forward the Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Bill, the then First Minister indicated he would be seeking Business Committee agreement for an accelerated scrutiny timetable (i.e. for the Bill to by-pass Stage 1 scrutiny). The rationale for this was to allow the Bill to be used by the Welsh Government as a practical example in support of its legal challenge to the UK Internal Market Act 2020.

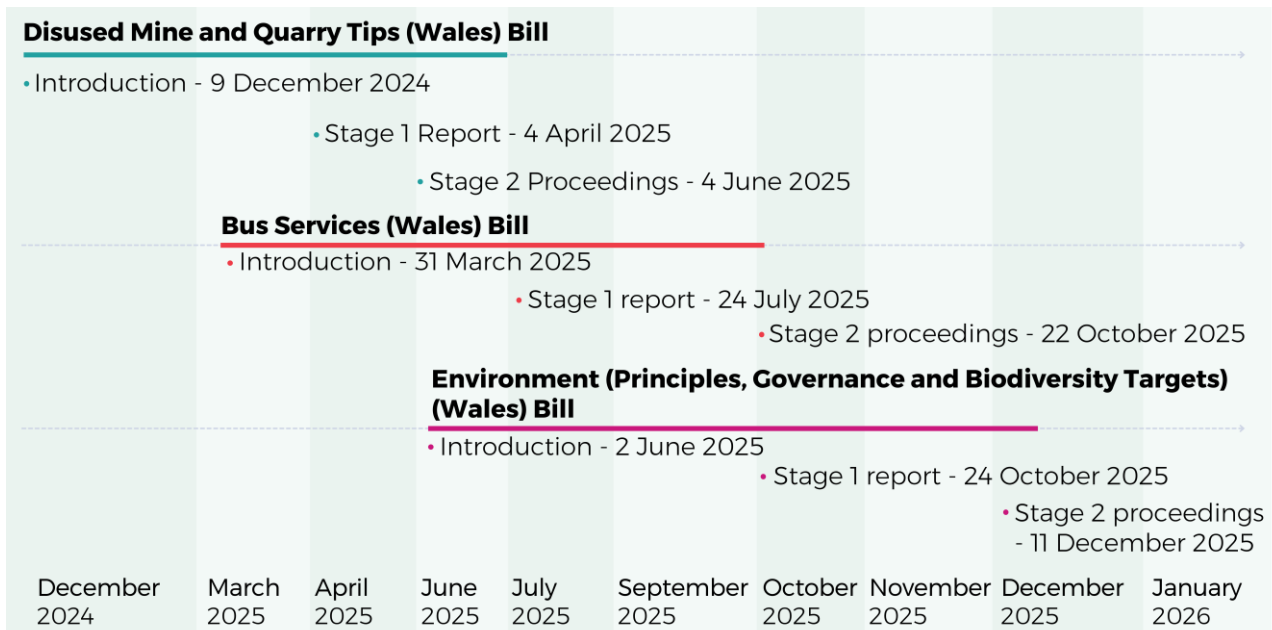
**110.** We wrote to Business Committee setting out our initial views on the proposed approach. Concerned about the risk of a scrutiny deficit within an accelerated timetable, we negotiated an agreement for the Welsh Government to publish the Bill in draft ahead of introduction to enable examination outside the formal Stage 1 process.

**111.** We consulted on the draft Bill, receiving 34 responses, and subsequently took evidence from a range of stakeholders. Our report was published ahead of the Stage 1 debate to inform the Senedd’s decision on whether the Bill should progress.

**112.** Recommendations made in our report resulted in the Bill being amended, e.g. to include requirements for statutory guidance to support implementation and consultation on any future regulations to add items or exemptions to the list of banned single-use plastics.

### **Concurrent Bill scrutiny**

**113.** Three Bills were referred to us in quick succession during the latter part of the Senedd term, with considerable overlap between scrutiny timetables. This necessitated concurrent scrutiny, which was a significant challenge.



*Diagram illustrating concurrent scrutiny of three Bills*

**114.** In order to effectively manage concurrent scrutiny of the Bus Services Bill and EPGBT Bill, we agreed to front-load evidence taking on the latter. To ensure that key stakeholders had sufficient time to prepare ahead of oral evidence sessions, we secured an agreement with the Welsh Government to provide them with early sight of the Bill and Explanatory Memorandum. Our approach was commended by stakeholders and helped ensure comprehensive, high-quality evidence to support scrutiny.

**115.** While we do not consider that undertaking concurrent scrutiny of Bills adversely affected the quality of our scrutiny, we believe that, wherever possible, it should be avoided.

### **Influencing Welsh law**

**116.** Our legislative scrutiny provides some of the clearest examples of the impact of our work. Our Stage 1 reports have directly influenced the amending stages and led to substantive changes in future Welsh law.

### **The Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill**

**117.** Since the start of the Sixth Senedd, we have been persistent in our pursuit of a Bill to address the post-EU exit environmental governance gap and set biodiversity targets.

**118.** The EPGBT Bill was introduced to the Senedd on 2 June 2025 and referred to us for scrutiny.

**119.** Our [report](#) contained 42 recommendations, 36 of which were for amendments to the Bill. Amendments to give effect to 20 of these were tabled and subsequently agreed at Stages 2 and 3.

**120.** Key changes made to the Bill as a result of our recommendations include:

- introducing Senedd scrutiny of the environmental principles and integrating environmental protection statement – a key document that will establish how the four environmental principles should be interpreted within the Welsh context;
- clarifying the new environmental body’s independence from the Welsh Ministers;
- further strengthening the body’s independence, e.g. by ensuring a Senedd member can sit on the appointment panel for the body’s non-executive members and first Chief Executive;
- inserting a sunrise provision to ensure the body becomes fully operational no later than two years after Royal Assent (unless the Senedd determines otherwise);
- refocusing the body’s general purpose;
- introducing a rights-based approach enabling citizens to make representations on matters relating to environmental law;
- setting a more ambitious timeframe for both short and long-term biodiversity targets;
- providing independent oversight of progress towards the delivering those targets and wider biodiversity action.

### **The Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Bill**

**121.** The [Disused Mine and Quarry Tips \(Wales\) Bill](#) was introduced to the Senedd in December 2024 and referred to us for scrutiny.

**122.** A key theme of our [report](#) was the reliance on future discretionary guidance to determine policy detail. Noting that the new coal tip safety regime would not take effect until 1 April 2027, we asserted:

*“it will be a matter for the next Welsh Government to determine the policy detail, and whether to issue guidance. There will be no obligation on any new government to meet commitments made by this Welsh Government in relation to giving guidance, or the content of it... leaving the policy detail to guidance means that significant changes can be made in future, which could impact on the effectiveness of the new regime, without consultation or Senedd scrutiny.”*

**123.** We concluded:

*“guidance has a role to play in ensuring the effective implementation of the Bill. But it should not be used to fill in important policy details that we would expect ordinarily to be set out in legislation, providing proper democratic oversight.”*

**124.** We made a series of recommendations aimed at ensuring that a more appropriate balance was struck between the detail included in legislation (either the Bill or future regulations) and that left to guidance. For example, ‘management plans’ for disused tips were described by the Cabinet Secretary as “absolutely crucial” to the new regime. Despite their importance, these plans would be non-statutory, delivered solely through guidance. We concluded:

*“The omission of management plans is a key weakness of the Bill. It leaves a significant and undesirable gap in the legislative framework for the management of disused tips.”*

**125.** We recommended amending the Bill to place a duty on the Disused Tip Authority for Wales to develop management plans for ‘high-risk’ tips and to enable the Authority to develop them for other tips.

**126.** We also called for a requirement on the Welsh Ministers to give guidance on key elements of the new regime, including preliminary and full assessments, and monitoring and inspections, rather than leaving the provision of such guidance to the discretion of future Welsh Ministers.

**127.** 9 out of 15 recommendations for amendments were accepted by the Welsh Government, including those outlined above, resulting in substantive changes to the Bill.

## Other positive scrutiny outcomes

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**128.** Achieving changes to Bills is not the only positive outcome of legislative scrutiny. In response to our recommendations, we have secured Ministerial commitments on a wide range of matters, for example:

- an ongoing programme of education and publicity to raise awareness about the need to reduce plastic pollution (following scrutiny of the Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Bill);
- strengthening Welsh Government guidance on Local Air Quality Management (following scrutiny of the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Bill);
- notifying the Senedd when designating infrastructure policy statements under the [Infrastructure \(Wales\) Bill](#);
- publishing a policy statement on how learner travel will be supported under the Bus Services (Wales) Bill;
- development of a Passenger Bus Charter in conjunction with key stakeholders, including those representing users with protected characteristics;
- a Memorandum of Understanding between the Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and local authorities to help deliver the ambitions of the Bus Services (Wales) Bill.

## Legislative Consent Memoranda

**129.** The volume of UK Bills being used to legislate in devolved areas during this Senedd term has been notably high. We have considered 29 Legislative Consent Memoranda (LCMs), which include Supplementary Memoranda (SLCMs) – more than double the number of our predecessor committee in the Fifth Senedd. A list can be found at [Annex 4](#).

**130.** As outlined in our [first LCM report](#) of the Sixth Senedd:

*“The legislative consent process involves the Senedd being asked to agree to the UK Parliament legislating on its behalf in areas of devolved competence. The need for adequate scrutiny of any such proposals must not be understated.”*

**131.** In that report, we highlighted concerns about compressed timetables constraining scrutiny. Although there has been variation in the time available for scrutiny, this has remained a recurring theme in our subsequent reports.

**132.** Scrutiny timetables have restricted opportunities for stakeholder engagement, which has impacted our ability to undertake evidence-based scrutiny. While we have carried out targeted consultation, for example, on the [LCM for the Water \(Special Measures\) Bill](#), this has been the exception rather than the norm. In addition, compressed timetables have not allowed for oral evidence sessions with Ministers. Instead, we have relied on written correspondence to inform our work. This approach is less than optimal for effective scrutiny.

**133.** Timetables for SLCMs, in particular, have been impractical and, in some cases, unreasonable. The timetable for the [SLCM \(Memorandum No. 3\) on the UK Infrastructure Bank Bill](#) provided us with fewer than three working weeks in which to consider and report on it. In the case of the [SLCM for the Environment Bill](#), just one week was provided, meaning scrutiny was impossible.

**134.** In addition, there have been occasions where compressed timetables, combined with capacity constraints, have prevented us from undertaking scrutiny. For example, several SLCMs were referred to us when we were already concurrently scrutinising two Bills.

**135.** At the start of the Sixth Senedd, we suggested Business Committee may wish to review the LCM process to ensure that it is fit for purpose.<sup>8</sup> We believe such a review warrants further consideration.

## Post-legislative scrutiny

**136.** Post-legislative scrutiny provides assurance that laws function effectively in practice, achieve their intended outcomes, and do not give rise to unintended consequences. It promotes accountability and supports better law-making. As the body of Welsh law continues to grow, post-legislative scrutiny becomes ever more important.

**137.** At the start of the Sixth Senedd, we highlighted post-legislative scrutiny of the [Planning \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) as a priority area of work. Regrettably, given our substantial legislative workload, we were unable to progress this work. There have been further developments during this Senedd including the [Infrastructure](#)

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<sup>8</sup> [Committee Report on the Legislative Consent Memorandum for the Environment Bill, September 2021](#)

(Wales) Act 2024, the planning consolidation Acts, and the Welsh Government's initiatives to increase capacity and skills in the planning system. We would encourage our successor committee to include scrutiny of the Welsh planning system, including post-legislative scrutiny of the Planning Act, as an early priority for the Seventh Senedd. In doing so, it may wish to consider the adequacy of public sector planning resources.

## **Environment Wales Act 2016**

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**138.** As part of our inquiry on halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030, we considered the implementation and impact of key provisions in Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

**139.** When it first became law, the Act was considered forward thinking and innovative, putting in place a framework to support the development and implementation of policies to manage Wales' natural resources sustainably. However, we found the Act has not bedded in as intended and key components have been largely ineffective in driving action for nature. Since the Act, the nature imperative has grown, with the Senedd's declaration of a nature emergency, and new biodiversity commitments arising from the GBF.

**140.** We concluded that the problems with the Act were twofold: weaknesses in the drafting of certain provisions and ineffective implementation. We recommended that the Welsh Government use the planned EPGBT Bill to address the weaknesses identified.

**141.** As outlined earlier, our findings were referenced by the Welsh Government in the EM to the EPGBT Bill. Our consideration of the Act provided valuable context and insight to support our scrutiny of that Bill.

## **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 8.** Our successor committee should consider pursuing with the Seventh Senedd Business Committee:

- what more can be done to ensure that responsible committees are notified further in advance of the timing of introduction of Bills,
- the benefits for committees of receiving an in-confidence copy of the draft Bill and Explanatory Memorandum to enable more meaningful consultation on proposed scrutiny timetables,

- how timetabling can be improved to ensure it does not negatively impact scrutiny.

**Recommendation 9.** Business Committee in the Seventh Senedd should consider the merits of reviewing the process and procedures for scrutiny of Legislative Consent Memoranda with a view to satisfying itself that they are fit for purpose.

**Recommendation 10.** Our successor committee should maintain oversight of the implementation and delivery of the primary legislation scrutinised by this committee during the Sixth Senedd.

**Recommendation 11.** Our successor committee should include post-legislative scrutiny among its priorities for the Seventh Senedd and consider early work on the Planning (Wales) Act 2015.

## 6. Financial scrutiny

### Scrutiny of Welsh Government's draft budget

**142.** We have undertaken annual scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budgets in so far as it relates to our remit.

**143.** Scrutiny timetables have remained challenging, particularly since our remit covered areas across multiple ministerial portfolios. Due to time constraints, we were not in a position to hold oral evidence sessions with Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning. Instead, we wrote to the Cabinet Secretary with questions on budget allocations relevant to our remit. As outlined earlier, this approach is less than optimal for effective scrutiny.

**144.** Key themes we have identified during our financial scrutiny have included:

- How the Welsh Government budget addresses the challenges of achieving model shift towards more sustainable modes of transport (particularly public transport and active travel) and securing value for money.
- Scrutinising the affordability of bus and rail services, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic, and seeking to ensure transparency in the support provided to these modes.
- How Welsh Government allocations support decarbonisation of transport as well as modernisation of fleets, including value for money.
- The need to address maintenance backlogs on both the local highway network and the Strategic Road Network.
- How the move to Regional Transport Planning and devolution of funding streams to local government working regionally through Corporate Joint Committee will be managed, including transparency on expenditure and how these budgets will be prioritised.
- The need to increase public funding and unlock private investment to address the 'nature funding gap'.
- How the response to the nature emergency is integrated across government departments and how biodiversity is embedded into the Welsh Government's budget process.

- The need to maintain and/or increase funding for key initiatives aimed at supporting biodiversity action, including Local Places for Nature and the Nature Networks Programme, recognising they deliver multiple benefits.
- How the Welsh Government is engaging the UK Government to secure adequate funding for the long-term remediation and reclamation of Wales' disused coal tips.
- The need to scale up investment in flood risk management to meet the long-term challenges of climate change, and to increase investment in nature-based solutions.

**145.** We have identified several areas for improvement to support budget scrutiny, including:

- transparency regarding the impact that the draft budget has on policy areas within each Committee's remit;
- quality of written evidence provided by the Welsh Government;
- timeliness of Welsh Government responses to the Committee's reports.

**146.** We highlighted these matters with Finance Committee to inform its on-going work to continuously improve the draft budget scrutiny process.

## Financial scrutiny in our wider work

**147.** Alongside Welsh Government draft budget scrutiny, we have integrated financial scrutiny into our wider work, which has contributed to positive outcomes.

### Improving transparency for transport funding

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**148.** Scrutiny of TfW's budget processes has contributed to moves to simplify budget setting, and has led to greater transparency during the Welsh Government draft budget scrutiny process. We have addressed this both through draft budget scrutiny, but also through scrutiny of transport for Wales.

**149.** While transparency and simplification of TfW's budget has been a key focus, we have sought to ensure improved clarity around wider budgets, particularly for bus services and active travel. In addition, we have sought commitments from the Welsh Government that budget and expenditure information will remain clear

following the devolution of funding to local authorities via the new Regional Transport Fund.

### **An increase in budget for NRW**

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**150.** At the start of the Sixth Senedd, we set out a clear expectation in relation to funding for NRW:

*“Between its inception in 2013 and 2020, NRW’s funding fell in real-terms by 35%. The impact of this on NRW’s ability to carry out its role and responsibilities effectively was a matter of ongoing concern for our predecessor committee. Our recent work on priorities for the Sixth Senedd provides a clear indication that stakeholders from across sectors share this concern.*

*The Sixth Senedd coincides with a critical period in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss. NRW will be expected to be at the forefront of action to respond to these challenges. It must be fully resourced to do this.”<sup>9</sup>*

**151.** Since then, we have repeatedly raised concern about resource and capacity constraints within NRW, emphasising that its budget was not commensurate with its functions and statutory responsibilities. We have consistently pressed for changes in the way NRW is funded, highlighting that core funding for its baseline functions had not kept pace with its increasing responsibilities.

**152.** In 2025-26, the Welsh Government increased its Grant in Aid for NRW to £141.4m (from £124.4m the previous year).

**153.** While NRW is now on a more stable financial footing, we would urge our successor committee to continue scrutinising the sufficiency of NRW’s budget throughout the Seventh Senedd.

### **Additional resource for the IEPAW**

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**154.** In our first [report](#) on the operation of the interim environmental protection measures (September 2022), we raised concern that capacity and resource constraints within the IEPAW had led to delays in reporting on key matters relating to the functioning of environmental law. We therefore called on the

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<sup>9</sup> [Letter from Committee Chair to Minister for Climate Change, dated 14 December 2021](#)

Welsh Government to undertake an urgent review of the resources available to the IEPAW.

**155.** The Welsh Government accepted our recommendation. Following the review, the IEPAW received an uplift in funding. This resulted in the recruitment of two Deputy Assessors, which subsequently led to more timely publication of reports.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 12.** In addition to scrutinising the Welsh Government's draft budget, our successor committee should ensure that financial scrutiny is integrated into its wider work.

**Recommendation 13.** Our successor committee should continue to press the Welsh Government to:

- improve the information provided to support robust and timely scrutiny of draft budgets, including increasing detail and clarity on spend and allocations within budget lines,
- provide written responses to the committee's reports in sufficient time to inform the final budget debates.

**Recommendation 14.** Our successor committee may wish to explore options for strengthening cross-committee working when scrutinising the Welsh Government draft budget.

## 7. Ways of working

### Engagement activity

**156.** Effective scrutiny depends on drawing from a broad and diverse evidence base. We have sought opportunities to involve service users, citizens and community representatives in our inquiries, through both formal and informal routes. A list of engagement activity can be found at **Annex 5**.

### External engagement events

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**157.** External engagement activities, including visits and events, are valuable elements of committee work. Such activities provide important context that cannot be gained through traditional evidence gathering, and can significantly impact thinking around policy and legislation.

**158.** Our visit to Transport for Greater Manchester was invaluable in understanding the practical considerations around bus franchising ahead of our scrutiny of the Bus Services (Wales) Bill. Likewise, our visit to Ffos-y-Fran opencast coal mine allowed us to gain a fuller understanding of the issues explored during the inquiry, including the history of the site, the work undertaken by successive site owners, and the development of proposals for a revised restoration plan.

**159.** We consider that our engagement activity has been constructive, purposeful and of tangible value to our scrutiny work. However, we recognise that there remains scope for further improvement. Our successor committee may wish to explore ways to broaden and diversify citizen engagement, and to strengthen its external perspective through visits, particularly early on in the Seventh Senedd. When undertaking visits, the committee may wish to consider extending an invitation to external partners/stakeholders, as appropriate.

### Areas of Research Interest

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**160.** In September 2022, we were the first committee in the Senedd, and in devolved legislatures across the UK, to launch Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) as a new way to improve committees' engagement with the research community, and diversify the evidence it receives.

**161.** Between 2022 and the end of the Senedd, we ran a total of four ARIs:

- Sustainable communities;

- Modal shift and active travel;
- Behaviour change in response to the climate emergency; and
- Environmental governance, principles and biodiversity targets.

**162.** Further details can be found at **Annex 6**.

**163.** Across all the ARIs the input received from the research community diversified evidence received beyond the ‘usual suspects’, helped to fill knowledge gaps and shape thinking and identify written and oral evidence witnesses. The ARIs proved an effective mechanism to access academic expertise. Our successor committee may wish to consider the merit of using mechanisms such as ARIs at the start of the Seventh Senedd when considering its priorities and developing its work programme.

### **Cross-Senedd working**

**164.** Throughout this Senedd term, we have sought opportunities for collaborative and joint working with other Senedd committees, particularly on cross-cutting issues where this would enhance the effectiveness of scrutiny. However, competing workload pressures, together with scheduling and Member-capacity constraints, have limited the extent to which joint working has been possible.

**165.** Looking ahead to the Seventh Senedd, a more flexible approach to the scheduling of committee meetings, coupled with increased Member capacity (for example, through Members serving on fewer committees), could provide greater scope for joint working. We would encourage our successor committee to make the most of any further opportunities for joint working, particularly on climate change issues.

**166.** We recognise the importance of the Petitions Committee and believe that stronger coordination between it and policy committees could help inform forward work programmes and support the early identification of emerging issues.

### **Support for sustainable land management**

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**167.** In determining its priorities for the Sixth Senedd, we agreed to explore opportunities to consider the provisions in the [Agriculture \(Wales\) Bill](#) that were relevant to its remit, recognising the key role of sustainable land management in delivering climate change and biodiversity commitments.

**168.** The Bill was referred to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs (ETRA) Committee for scrutiny. Following an agreement between Committee Chairs, Members of this Committee participated in ETRA Committee's evidence sessions to inform Stage 1 scrutiny.

**169.** Subsequently, this Committee and ETRA Committee concurrently scrutinised the Welsh Government's proposals for a Sustainable Farming Scheme. We invited ETRA Committee to our stakeholder event, which was attended by representatives from the agriculture, food, and environmental sectors.

**170.** In October 2024, a joint debate was held on our committees' reports.

### **UK-EU implementation review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement**

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**171.** We were one of four committees<sup>10</sup> to undertake a [joint inquiry](#) to consider the effectiveness of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement in the Welsh context ahead of the planned implementation review.

**172.** The inquiry covered a wide range of policy areas, but common themes that emerged included how the devolved nations' voices are represented and understood in UK-EU relations and the importance of effective inter-government working.

**173.** The [joint report](#) (September 2025) was the first of its kind for the Senedd.

### **Relationships with other parliamentary committees**

**174.** We recognise the value of strong working relationships with counterparts in other parliaments. We would encourage our successor committee to further develop and strengthen existing links and seek opportunities for cooperative and collaborative working on areas of common interest.

### **Welsh Affairs Committee**

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**175.** Early in the Sixth Senedd, the Committee Chair met informally with Members of the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee (WAC) to discuss future work programmes and areas of mutual interest.

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<sup>10</sup> Other committees involved in this work were: Culture, Communications, Welsh Language and Sport Committee; Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee; and Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee.

**176.** We shared our report on [Renewable energy in Wales](#) (May 2022) with WAC to help inform its inquiry on grid capacity in Wales.

**177.** In July 2023, the Committee Chair guested at WAC's one-off session with Transport for Wales on the south Wales Metro and Wales' wider rail network, as well as the Welsh Government's proposal for bus franchising.

### **Cross-committee visit to the Oireachtas**

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**178.** In September 2024, Committee Members took part in a cross-committee visit to Dublin to meet with counterparts at the Oireachtas. The purpose of the visit was to share good practice and discuss areas of common interest.

**179.** A notable matter arising from discussion was the Oireachtas' cross-committee approach to scrutinising the Government of Ireland's Climate Action Plan. We consider there would be merit in exploring whether a similar approach could strengthen oversight of the Welsh Government's carbon emissions reduction plan. We would encourage our successor committee to reflect on this.

### **Family-friendly and inclusive parliament**

**180.** On 3 March 2026, the Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament Review Board published its report, [A Senedd for all](#). We note that the report has been submitted to the Senedd Commission for consideration and future action. We would encourage our successor committee to reflect on the report and relevant recommendations in agreeing its ways of working.

### **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 15.** Our successor committee should seek opportunities to:

- undertake engagement activity to ensure that a broad and diverse range of perspectives inform its work, and
- strengthen its external perspective through visits, within available capacity and resources.

**Recommendation 16.** Our successor committee may wish to consider using mechanisms such as ARIs to access academic expertise, including at the start of the Seventh Senedd when considering its priorities and developing its work programme.

**Recommendation 17.** Our successor committee should continue to seek opportunities for collaborative and joint working with other Senedd committees, particularly on cross-cutting issues where this would enhance the effectiveness of scrutiny, for example climate change.

**Recommendation 18.** Our successor committee should further develop and strengthen existing links with equivalent parliamentary committees across the UK and seek opportunities for cooperative and collaborative working on areas of common interest.

**Recommendation 19.** Our successor committee should reflect on the report and relevant recommendations of the Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament Review Board in agreeing its ways of working.

## Annex 1: 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
<b>14 January 2026</b>	<b>Nilesh Sachdev</b> Natural Resources Wales <b>Ceri Davies</b> Natural Resources Wales <b>Rachael Cunningham</b> Natural Resources Wales
<b>21 January 2026</b>	<b>Dr David Clubb</b> National Infrastructure Commission for Wales <b>Dr Jenifer Baxter</b> National Infrastructure Commission for Wales <b>Helen Armstrong</b> National Infrastructure Commission for Wales
<b>29 January 2026</b>	<b>Vernon Everitt</b> Transport for Wales <b>James Price</b> Transport for Wales <b>Heather Clash</b> Transport for Wales
<b>11 February 2026</b>	<b>Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs,</b> Welsh Government <b>Claire Bennett</b> Welsh Government
<b>25 February 2026</b>	<b>Ken Skates MS, Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales</b> Welsh Government <b>Peter McDonald</b> Welsh Government

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Date	Name and Organisation
	<b>Alex Walters</b> Welsh Government <b>Alison Thomas</b> Welsh Government
<b>5 March 2026</b>	<b>Rececca Evans MS, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning</b> Welsh Government <b>Neil Hemington</b> Welsh Government <b>Ed Sheriff</b> Welsh Government

## Annex 2: Policy inquiries

The table below lists the policy inquiries/one-off sessions we undertook during the Sixth Senedd.

<b>Inquiry</b>	<b>Completion date</b>
Priorities for the Sixth Senedd	January 2022
Marine environment management	May 2022
Water quality and sewage discharges	June 2022
Renewable energy in Wales	October 2022
Digital connectivity - broadband	November 2022
Bus and rail transport in Wales	January 2023
Decarbonising the private housing sector	May 2023
Decarbonisation of the steel industry	May 2023
Electric vehicle charging	June 2023
Performance of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	March 2024
Proposals for a Sustainable Farming Scheme	July 2024
Restoration of opencast mining sites	August 2024
Inquiry into waste	September 2024
Halting and reversing the loss of nature	January 2025
Storm response	September 2025
UK-EU implementation review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement	September 2025

## Annex 3: Scrutiny of Bills

The table below lists Bills we scrutinised during the Sixth Senedd.

<b>Bill</b>	<b>Completion date</b>
Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Bill	June 2023
Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Bill	December 2023
Infrastructure (Wales) Bill	December 2023
Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Bill	April 2025
Bus Services (Wales) Bill	September 2025
Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill	October 2025

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## Annex 4: Scrutiny of Legislative Consent Memoranda

Below is a list of the Legislative Consent Memoranda we scrutinised during the Sixth Senedd.

### **Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) and Supplementary Legislative Consent Memorandum (SLCM)**

- Environment Bill LCM
- UK Infrastructure Bank Bill LCM
- UK Infrastructure Bank Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.2)
- UK Infrastructure Bank Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.3)
- Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill LCM
- Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.2)
- Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.3)
- Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.4)
- Automated Vehicles Bill LCM
- Automated Vehicles Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.2)
- Great British Energy Bill LCM
- Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill LCM
- Water (Special Measures) Bill LCM
- Water (Special Measures) Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.2)
- Water (Special Measures) Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.3)
- Water (Special Measures) Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.4)
- Great British Energy Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.2)

- Data (Use and Access) Bill LCM
- Bus Services (No. 2) Bill LCM
- Planning and Infrastructure Bill LCM
- Planning and Infrastructure Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.2)
- Planning and Infrastructure Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.3)
- Planning and Infrastructure Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.4)
- Sustainable Aviation Fuel Bill LCM
- Sustainable Aviation Fuel Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.2)
- Sustainable Aviation Fuel Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.3)
- Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill LCM
- Railways Bill LCM
- Railways Bill SLCM (Memorandum No.2)

## Annex 5: Engagement activity

The table below lists engagement activity we undertook during the Sixth Senedd.

<b>Inquiry</b>	<b>Engagement type</b>	<b>Detail of activity</b>
<a href="#"><u>Welsh Government's proposals for a Sustainable Farming Scheme</u></a>	Stakeholder event	On 13 March 2024, the Committee held a stakeholder event attended by representatives from the agriculture, food, and environmental sectors. Luke Fletcher MS and Sam Kurtz MS participated in the event as members of the Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs (ETRA) Committee.
<a href="#"><u>Bus and rail transport in Wales</u></a>	Stakeholder event	The Committee held a stakeholder event in March 2022. The session aimed to understand stakeholders' views on the effectiveness of bus and rail services, their future purpose, barriers to the public in using them, and perspectives on the effectiveness of Welsh and UK Government policy. 20 stakeholders covering several areas of interest, including passenger representative groups from across Wales, attended the event.
<a href="#"><u>Bus and rail transport in Wales</u></a>	Focus groups and interviews	The Committee commissioned the Senedd's Citizen Engagement Team to undertake a series of focus groups and interviews with passengers. Participants were sourced through Committee Members, community groups, and organisations representing passenger interests. A series of five focus groups and six one-to-one interviews took place between March and April 2021
<a href="#"><u>Decarbonising the private housing sector</u></a>	Interviews	The Committee commissioned Senedd Cymru's Citizen Engagement Team to conduct interviews with private landlords and homeowners.
<a href="#"><u>Storm response</u></a>	Interviews	In March 2025, the Senedd's Citizen Engagement Team undertook an engagement programme to hear the experiences of

Inquiry	Engagement type	Detail of activity
		individuals from communities most affected by storms Bert and Darragh.
<u>The Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Bill</u>	Online survey	The Committee held an online public survey, which focused on provisions in relation to trunk road charging but invited comments on all aspects of the Bill.  The survey received 2239 responses.
<u>Restoration of opencast mining sites</u>	Committee visit	The Committee visited the Ffos-y-Fran opencast coal mine on 7 November 2024 to gain a fuller understanding of the issues explored during the inquiry, including the history of the site, the work undertaken by Merthyr (South Wales) Limited and its predecessor companies, and the development of proposals for a revised restoration plan.
Ongoing scrutiny of transport policy	Committee visit	In November 2024, the Committee visited Transport for Wales' Metro Depot and Infrastructure Control Centre in Taff's Well. These discussions contributed to the Committee's scrutiny of the Welsh Government's work on transport in Wales.
Ongoing scrutiny of transport policy and scrutiny of the Bus Services (Wales) Bill	Committee visit	In April 2025, the Committee visited Transport for Greater Manchester to gain insight into the challenges associated with bus franchising and delivering an integrated transport system in Greater Manchester.
Ongoing scrutiny of climate action	Committee visit	In 2024, the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee carried out an inquiry examining the relationship between Wales and Ireland. As part of this work, in September 2024, a cross-committee delegation visited Dublin.  The purpose of the visit was to explore key areas of collaboration set out in the Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan 2021-25, including culture, language and heritage, climate and sustainability, and trade.

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## Annex 6: Areas of Research Interest (ARIs)

The impetus for the ARI programme stemmed from [Professor Diana Stirbu's 2021 review of the effectiveness of Senedd committees](#), which concluded that getting more diverse evidence from a wider range of people was a key priority for Members and committees. She recommended that committees should be evidence led, as well as being ambitious and creative in reaching out to new audiences.

The Committee's ARI work built on the experience of UK Parliament committees. They aimed to identify medium to longer term areas of interest to the committee that may not be on the immediate agenda, fill gaps in evidence and knowledge, and open the door for new and diverse sources of evidence and expertise to feed into the scrutiny process, for both policy and legislative work.

Between 2022 and the end of the Senedd, the Committee ran a total of four ARIs:

- Sustainable communities;
- Modal shift and active travel;
- Behaviour change in response to the climate emergency; and
- Environmental governance, principles and biodiversity targets.

The first three ARIs (run jointly) received a total of 134 responses from academics across the UK and beyond. The fourth received 14 responses. Notably around 65% of respondents to the ARIs had never previously engaged with the Senedd.

The ARIs were used to support the Committee's work in different ways.

The ARI on environmental governance, principles and biodiversity targets was the first example of the Senedd using an ARI to cast a wider net seeking expertise to support its work on legislation, specifically the Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill. Submissions to the ARI were received from academics across the UK, all of whom were invited to provide written evidence to the Committee's consultation to inform Stage 1 scrutiny of the Bill. One respondent was subsequently invited to give oral evidence.

The other three ARIs had a broader purpose: to inform the Committee about up-to-date academic research in the three policy areas to help shape future work. In November 2023, the Committee invited 14 academics from across Wales and the

UK to the Senedd for a one day mini-conference as an opportunity to share and discuss their research. Other attendees included Members' staff and cross party group members.