



Comisiynydd  
**Cenedlaethau'r  
Dyfodol**  
Cymru

**Future  
Generations**  
Commissioner  
for Wales

# Strategic Plan

2017 - 2023

*“What Wales is doing today, we hope the world will do tomorrow – action more than words is the hope for our future generations” United Nations*

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# Acting today for a better tomorrow

## Future Generations Commissioner – Strategic Plan 2017-2023

### Welcome and Introduction

I am pleased to present the first edition of my strategic plan, setting out my long-term vision for future generations and plans for my seven-year term.

The role of Future Generations Commissioner for Wales was established by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. I am honoured to be appointed as the first Commissioner and I took up my post early in 2016.

My first priority has been to meet with all 44 of the public bodies in Wales to better understand the opportunities and challenges as they see them. I have also held meetings with hundreds of organisations, staged public events across Wales and used digital platforms to reach out to people. It is the learning from this, and the views of my Advisory Panel that have helped to shape our vision. Together with my team, we have set out our purpose as an organisation and it's this purpose that provides the foundation for this strategy.

We are on an exciting expedition to deliver the Wales we want - a journey we cannot undertake without the involvement of the third sector, private sector and everyone who believes in a brighter future.

Our vision is clear and I am determined that the sustainable development principle (including the five ways of working) will be at the heart of everything we do. I will be challenging my team and those who develop policy and deliver services, to be bold in their approach and to share the learning along the way. Future Generations are depending on it.



**Sophie Howe**  
**Future Generations Commissioner**

## Acting today for a better tomorrow

**“What Wales is doing today, we hope the world will do tomorrow - action more than words is the hope for our future generations” United Nations.**

Business as usual is not an option for our public services in Wales.

But if everyone in the world consumes as we do in Wales, we would need more than two planets to shoulder the environmental burden. The World Health Organisation describes climate change as “among the greatest health risks of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. It threatens our environment, our health and our economy. For example, flooding alone is expected to cost us around £200 million a year with so many homes and properties in Wales close to water.

All of this is happening at a time when people report feeling disengaged from the decisions that most affect them. A number of influential reports show that many young people feel they are uniquely isolated or even excluded. One UK survey reports that just 15% of 18-24 year olds trust the Government to put the needs of the UK first. It is clear to me that there is a need to build a better understanding of our communities and the way people live, to give them a stronger voice.

A quarter of our citizens are struggling to make ends meet. Future economic trends, such as the development of automation, could make the situation worse if we don't rise to meet the challenges – for example, this could result in job losses, or, with the right approach could enrich people's work.

Major changes are needed or our public services will simply not be able to cope.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act gives us the encouragement, the permission and the statutory obligation to make these changes. It is a unique, pioneering piece of legislation attracting worldwide attention. It offers huge opportunities for us as a small nation, here at home and globally, but I do not underestimate the scale of the challenge ahead if we are to make the most of this.

## The legislation defines my role as to:

Promote the sustainable development principle, in particular to act as a guardian of the ability of future generations to meet their needs and encourage public bodies to take greater account of the long-term impact of the things that they do and for that purpose to monitor and assess the extent to which well-being objectives set by public bodies are being met.

Sustainable development has been talked about for decades. But lasting change has yet to be delivered. There is still a need to develop an understanding that sustainable development is not a vague concept that should be dealt with by a particular department or set of interest groups but instead is an approach that we all need to take to ensure our planet, our services and our communities are fit for future generations.

In Wales, the Welsh Government has taken the bold step of defining sustainable development as:

“The process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals.”

Legislating for future generations and setting out clearly what sustainable development means is a significant milestone in the journey towards a Wales which is fit for the future but is not an end in itself. The Act requires words to be turned into action. We need to build a better shared understanding of what we mean if we are to turn the talk into action and deliver the cultural changes required.

The Act sets out five ways of working which, if properly embraced by public bodies, will help deliver the fundamental changes required to achieve the Wales we want. These will promote the type of constructive disruption to traditional approaches needed and will create opportunities for innovative thinking, rooted in the reality of our communities, the way people live their lives and their expectations of the public services they fund. These five ways of working are:

**Taking a long-term view:** We need to build real insight as to what the future might look like if we achieve the goals, or fail to tackle the biggest threats, to help public bodies to plan for the future.

**Taking an integrated approach:** When one organisation or department takes a decision, there is a knock-on impact for another. Public bodies must work together to understand their collective contribution to all seven of the well-being goals, avoiding the temptation to simply focus on one or two.

**Involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals:** I firmly believe real and meaningful dialogue between communities, individuals and their public services is crucial if we are to meet the needs of the current generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

**Collaboration:** We need to create a better understanding of what true partnership looks and feels like, along with breaking down barriers and building understanding of the benefits.

**Preventing problems from occurring or getting worse:** Again, Wales has been discussing the concepts of prevention and early intervention for a long time. We have made progress in some areas but we need to step up the action if we are to improve the lives of citizens and if public services are to manage the challenges now and in the future.

I am determined that these 'ways of working' will be at the heart of my work and that of my team.

Our approach will be one of constructive challenge underpinned by support. I am resolute in the need for a move away from the "tick-box" approach to meeting duties and responsibilities and towards a long-term approach to delivering services in a joined-up way that supports people now and in the future.

**With this in mind, I have worked with my team and others to define our organisational purpose as to:**

- Highlight the big issues, challenges and opportunities facing future generations
- Support and challenge public bodies to think about the long-term impact of the things they do
- Work with others to drive the changes needed
- Walk the talk – be the change we want to see in others

The strategic plan below sets out how I will use these purposes to make the most of my contribution, and that of my team, to promote sustainable development in Wales and safeguard the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

## The Plan

### Purpose 1:

Highlight the big issues, challenges and opportunities facing future generations

#### I will:

Be a guardian for future generations – demonstrating the risks they face and challenging short-term policy making. This will include producing the first Future Generations Report by 2020 as required by the Act, setting out how public bodies can think and plan for the future.

Challenge public bodies to take action on the biggest threats facing Wales, offering support by building insight into the best ways of tackling the challenges we face and highlighting the opportunities to act. I have worked with others to identify the following priority areas for action through which I will focus my support for public bodies and target my limited resources effectively:

#### **Creating the right infrastructure for future generations, with a focus on:**

- Housing stock
- Energy generation and efficiency
- Transport planning

#### **Equipping people for the future:**

- Skills for the future
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Alternative models for improving health and well-being

Share learning with other nations - promote the Welsh approach whilst learning from others – supporting and challenging progress on sustainable development.

#### How we will do it:

- Set (and at intervals review) priority areas for action to address the biggest challenges and issues facing future generations in Wales and focus our support and challenge on public bodies. To do this, we will engage with experts, organisations, public bodies and citizens to define these challenges and issues, identifying key opportunities to tackle them.
- Establish networks of experts and academics (nationally and internationally) to build insight into future trends and scenarios and “what works”.
- Monitor well-being objectives, policy development and decision-making by public bodies, within our priority areas, to identify key opportunities to promote sustainable development and the significant or systemic issues that require our intervention to ensure the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act are applied.

- Work with others, build knowledge around the seven well-being goals and priority areas and develop targeted resources setting out the challenges and opportunities facing Wales and demonstrating the positive difference implementation of the Act can make.

## Purpose 2:

Support and challenge public bodies to think about the long-term impact of the things they do

### I will:

Challenge 'business as usual' within the public sector, supporting improvements in assessing and planning for well-being, monitoring and assessing the extent to which public bodies are meeting their objectives and maximising their contribution to the goals.

Support and challenge those who set performance frameworks and those who independently review them to develop an integrated, long-term approach to effectively assess and challenge public bodies on their contribution to the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

### How we will do it:

- Establish a partnership with an academic institution and others to review well-being assessments, provide analysis, share learning and inform our response to well-being plans.
- Use learning from the well-being assessments to inform advice and support for public bodies and public services boards and areas where we should focus our action.
- Work with public bodies to develop support to encourage their work to be fit for future generations, taking better account of the long-term impact of their decisions and supporting them to meet their statutory duties to maximise their contribution to each of the well-being goals. I will do this through three key pieces of work.
- **The Art of the Possible** – a collaborative piece of work that draws on the collective intelligence of people and organisations to explain and explore the practical implications of using the five ways of working and to lay the foundations for interpretation and action on the well-being goals.
- **Live Labs** - develop and test methods to equip public bodies to “walk through” an area or issue to build a vision for the future and apply the five ways of working. These will primarily focus on our priority areas for action identified.
- **Cloud of Innovators** - connecting public bodies to each other and to experts and academic institutions who champion the Act, are innovators in their field and equipped to advise and assist public bodies in using the Ways of Working to transform the way they work and deliver the Wales we want.

- Facilitate a Public Sector Exchange Network – an information exchange group established to share learning and provide feedback to my policy and assessments teams.
- Challenge and support the Auditor General for Wales, inspectorates and those who set accountability frameworks to develop their approaches in a way which encourages the innovation and transformation required by the Act.
- Work with the Auditor General for Wales and others to develop an approach to monitoring and assessing the extent to which public bodies are meeting their well-being objectives, ensuring our respective powers under the Act have most impact in driving change.
- Work with partners to develop and strengthen the understanding of the long-term impact of decisions and to improve scrutiny on behalf of future generations, for example by working with elected representatives such as Assembly Members and councillors.

### **Purpose 3:**

Work with others to drive the changes needed

#### **I will:**

Build strong effective partnerships and develop a movement for change within the public sector, where people champion the Wales approach to sustainable development.

Champion effective public involvement and engagement, challenging ourselves and others to better understand the needs of our communities, our people and their influence on the decisions that affect them.

#### **How we will do it:**

- Use our work on the well-being goals (the Art of the Possible) and priority areas for action to work with others to produce a strong narrative and compelling case studies to build an understanding of how the Act can be used as a framework for transformational change.
- Develop our communications infrastructure, integrating with that of our partners, to support effective promotion of sustainable development and understanding of the Commissioner's powers and duties.
- Connect public bodies with those who know what needs to change and have the skills and expertise to make it happen.
- Build understanding of levels of citizen involvement and engagement in Wales and challenge and support public bodies to improve their approach to this.
- Use, promote and encourage innovative ways to engage meaningfully with citizens.

- Work with the other Commissioners and partners, through the statutory Advisory Panel, to identify areas of mutual interest, ways to jointly support public bodies and how our different powers can be used most effectively to drive change.

## Purpose 4:

Walk the talk – challenging our team to be the change we want to see in others

### I will:

Set up my office with the sustainable development principle and the five ways of working at the heart of all we do. This means working collaboratively and taking a partnership approach to support services and delivering our work wherever possible. I will seek learning from others and share our own organisational learning with public bodies as part of our statutory duty to promote sustainable development.

### How we will do it:

- Develop my own team's understanding of what it means to live the five ways of working, creating a culture and working practices which contribute to achievement of the well-being goals.
- Build an infrastructure to deliver our work based on partnerships with others, avoiding duplication and maximising opportunities for joint working.
- Establish a governance framework, including risk management arrangements, which embeds the principles of the Act.
- Publish my annual report and accounts by 31 July each year, containing a statement showing how my office is living the sustainable development principle and the five ways of working.