

Dear Finance Committee,

I am writing in response to your consultation on scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft 2021-22 budget. I do not have the necessary knowledge to comment on the issues raised by the first five consultation questions. My entire response therefore deals with three of the matters raised in question 6. I am responding to this consultation as an individual.

To begin with the topic "Sustainability of public services", the Digital Engagement Summary Note that accompanied this consultation contained a worrying finding. According to that document, participants who supported cutting the budget for 'Councils and Housing' outnumbered those who supported increasing this funding. It is my understanding that councils are responsible for delivery of a range of vital public services such as buses and public toilets. The latter is a service that I strongly believe should be free at the point of use and the increasing deployment of 'paywalls' is of grave concern. I hope that funding for the day-to-day provision of public services can be protected.

Returning to the consultation letter, question 6 also asked "to what extent alleviating climate change should be prioritised in supporting economic recovery" and how to "better deliver against the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations Act" as part of 'building back better'. These two points are interrelated; climate change is a crucial issue for future generations and is relevant to at least three of the well-being goals.

It is my opinion that all aspects of Welsh Government policy, including the budget, must fully **integrate** the **prevention** of climate change and other **long term** adverse outcomes. **Integration, prevention and long term** planning are of course three of the Future Generations Act's 'five ways of working'.

As a result of the pandemic's impact on the economy, there will be a strong temptation to 'invest' in projects (for example road-building) that are believed to provide an economic boost but have undesirable consequences in the long term. This temptation must be robustly resisted. In [Chapter 5 of the Future Generations Report 2020](#), which deals with transport, the Future Generations Commissioner recommends that the Welsh Government should **stop** prioritising investment in building new roads. Even if new roads provide an economic boost in the short-term (which is unproven) they are permanent infrastructure and will forever work against the government's objective of encouraging motorists to switch to public transport. Greenhouse gases released in the construction and maintenance of the road will remain in the atmosphere for many years.

The Welsh Government's Draft transport strategy suggests that there is currently a road maintenance backlog and that they will *"look at a target to reduce the maintenance backlog to sustainable levels by 2030"* ([Llwybr Newydd - A New Wales Transport Strategy](#), page 80). Spending on new roads both reduces the funds available to maintain the existing network and increases the area of tarmac/concrete that will need to be maintained in the future. [Chapter 5 of the Future Generations Report 2020](#) also recommends prioritising investment in walking and cycling infrastructure and that at least 50% of capital spending on transport is allocated to improving bus and train services. The Senedd's scrutiny of the Welsh Government's budget should ensure that these recommendations are heeded.