

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Committee's priorities over the next 12-18 months, bearing in mind the priorities laid out by the Ministers in their letter of 30<sup>th</sup> July.

We are aware that many peers in the third and environmental sectors are submitting responses which lay out the immediate priorities from our point of view – we heartily endorse these, particularly submissions from our host DTA Wales, Wales Environment Link, the Food Policy Alliance Cymru and other members of the Climate Cymru movement, and will not reiterate points already very well made by them.

Our particular niche is supporting grassroots action at the local level, driven by communities themselves and catalysing further action across place-based networks and networks of like-minded groups. From this perspective the critical issues that we would ask the Committee to bear in mind whilst exercising its duties are:

- Responding to the climate and nature emergencies will only succeed if it is absolutely integral to every area of decision-making, investment and action. We very much welcome the creation of new Ministerial portfolios which seek to embrace a wide range of issues under the Climate Change umbrella but would urge the Committee not to lose sight of critical developments and opportunities in other portfolios – e.g. rural affairs, economy, education, health, social justice – which both drive and impact on the nature and climate emergencies – and to set a new bar for delivering against the principles of integration, prevention and long-term perspectives under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act;
- Major barriers to action at the grassroots are lack of meaningful involvement in decision-making and direction-setting with regards to delivering a sustainable future locally, and the persistence of unhelpful norms in how public bodies act at the local level – e.g. around planning decisions, asset transfer and management arrangements, and place-based investments more generally. Since 2012 the experience of the Renew Wales programme is that ordinary citizens and community groups have both the will and capacity to deliver transformational progress on climate, nature and sustainable futures more broadly, but they are still hampered by a system that devalues their contribution and puts blockages in their way rather than supporting them to

do the right thing. We are too deep into these crises now to continue leaving it to small numbers of heroic activist groups to overcome these hurdles, and would urge the Committee to exercise its role with an eye on how to shift norms in favour of enabling, encouraging and escalating citizen-led action instead of hampering it.

- (We would be happy to set up opportunities for the Committee and/or individual members to meet community groups across Wales who are at this frontline, and have the direct conversation about what currently helps and hinders them. Members can see who we are currently supporting on our website, [HYPERLINK "http://www.renewwales.org.uk" www.renewwales.org.uk](http://www.renewwales.org.uk), and are welcome to get in touch directly with me or via the team at [info@renewwales.org.uk](mailto:info@renewwales.org.uk)).
- Our network of stakeholders welcomes the Ministers' repeated reference to engagement around key issues, but recent experience – for instance around the second Low Carbon Delivery Plan – suggests that Welsh Government is still an extremely long way from being able to engage with a wide range of communities in an appropriate, accessible and deep enough way. Again we are glad to offer any capacity or insight from our members which might help shift the dial on involvement, and would ask the Committee to scrutinise plans for such engagement with real attention to the quality and far-sightedness of the approaches proposed, and push for higher standards of involvement across the board.

We would be happy to follow up on any of these points through further discussion, and look forward to the positive impacts emerging from the Committee's work going forward.

**Dr Kate Hamilton**

***Cyfarwyddwr Rhaglen - Programme Director***

***Adfywio Cymru - Renew Wales***