

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd / Priorities for the Sixth Senedd
PR116
Ymateb gan Anabledd Cymru / Evidence from Disability Wales

Disability Wales Response to Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee Priorities

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Who are Disability Wales?

Disability Wales/Anabledd Cymru is the national association of disabled peoples organisations in Wales striving to achieve the rights and equality of all disabled people.

Disability Wales promotes the adoption and implementation of the Social Model of Disability, which identifies that it is environmental, organisational, and attitudinal barriers that disable people and prevent their full participation in society not their medical conditions or impairments.

Introduction

This response is informed by our manifesto “Bring Us Our Rights: Disabled People’s Manifesto”. This manifesto was informed by around 230 contributions from disabled people across Wales, gathered via 9 focus groups, a survey and multiple semi-structured interviews.

This response is also informed by previous responses to the Active Travel Plan and Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy 2021.

We thank the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure committee for the opportunity to comment on their future priorities. We look forward to working together to create a more sustainable and more accessible Wales for the future generations.

Key Recommendations:

- Working co-productively with disabled people and disabled people’s organisations to improve transport across Wales

- Working co-productively with disabled people and their organisations to ensure that Welsh streets are accessible to all, such as wide enough for wheelchair users to navigate.
- Reversing privatisation of public transport services and transition to services based on need not profit.
- Centring disabled people and other marginalised groups in conversations and policy surrounding climate change
- Using the UNCRDP to scrutinise all policy and work to ensure that there will be no further ableist policy regarding the climate.

Priority One: Sustainable transport and access to community

Over 25 years since Castle Street was put to a standstill by disabled activists demanding accessible transport networks and the creation of the Disability Discrimination Act, the transport system in Wales is still nowhere near good enough.

Access to transport is wider than bus timetables. Access to transport means access to your local services, your support network, social events, the pub down the road, the national park on your doorstep, your ability to quickly nip to the local shop because you ran out of milk. In short, it is about your ability to access your community.

We have been told that there is a major problem with transport in Wales. This is especially a problem in rural and North Wales, but that does not mean that more urban areas and the south of Wales is exempt from this. We have been told that this results in disabled people becoming increasingly isolated and lonely. People are left unable to access support services in their area.

Disability Wales recommends:

- Working co-productively with disabled people and disabled people's organisations to improve transport across Wales
- Working co-productively with disabled people and their organisations to ensure that Welsh streets are accessible to all, such as wide enough for wheelchair users to navigate.
- Reversing privatisation of public transport services and transition to services based on need not profit.
- Scrutinising the Llwybr Newydd for its impact on disabled people. Working directly with disabled people and disabled people's organisations.

Priority Two: Creating Climate Justice

Climate justice is an idea which began by climate activists in 2002 and focuses on centring groups that are most affected by climate change in work to fight against it. Disabled people, especially disabled people who are also lower income, are an ethnic minority or live-in areas prone to flooding, are a key group of people who need centring in this work.

It is well acknowledged that disabled people are impacted more by climate change than non-disabled people. It has also been disabled people who have campaigned for more access to public transport and improving public transport for decades. Unfortunately, some policies aimed at combatting climate change, do not take into consideration the support needs of disabled people e.g. a ban on plastic straws. Creating climate justice in Wales, also means looking directly at how climate change affects disabled people and ensuring that disabled people are not left behind in discussions about climate change.

It is not possible to create a sustainable future that is not also an accessible future, for future policy in this area to have the long-term impact that it needs, a fifth of the Welsh population cannot be forgotten along the way.

Key priorities:

- Centring disabled people and other marginalised groups in conversations and policy surrounding climate change
- Using the UNCRDP to scrutinise all policy and work to ensure that there will be no further ableist policy regarding the climate.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is vital that disabled people and other marginalised groups are not just included but centred in conversation and policymaking around the climate. Although progress has been made and promises have been given, we in Wales are still a long way from the accessible country that disabled activists have campaigned for.

These policy priorities are the first steps that need to be taken and a lens through which this committee must operate through in order to be able to deliver a better, more sustainable, more accessible future for everyone in Wales.