

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2022-2023

Engagement Report

December 2021

In September 2021 the Finance Committee of the Welsh Parliament (Senedd) set out to undertake detailed engagement work on what the public wanted the Welsh Government to focus spending on as part of the Draft Budget 2022-23 inquiry.

This engagement report contains participants' views from a programme of focus groups held between October – November 2021.

Findings in this report are based upon the responses of **67 participants** from across Wales who shared their views during **14 focus groups**. The aim of the engagement was to gain qualitative information about the experiences of participants and deepen the Committee's understanding of the issues affecting the people of Wales.

The method included policy committees in the consideration of relevant audiences to engage with. This ensured a broad sample of voices were able to engage and share their lived experiences within particular fields - putting the voices of the citizens of Wales at the forefront of scrutiny.



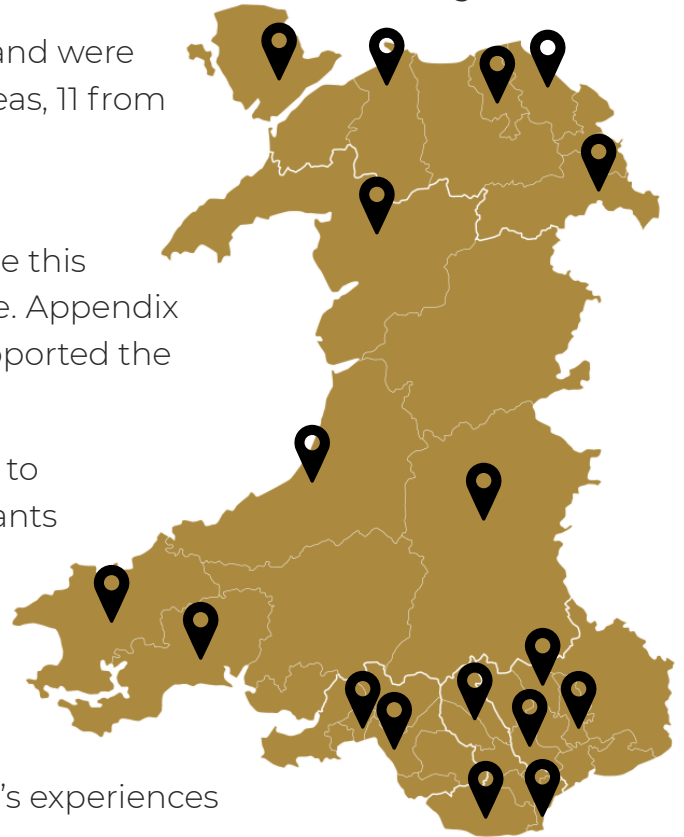
1. Data collection

In order to ensure the demographic was as representative as possible of the Welsh population a pre-screening survey was implemented. This identified participants from 18 county council areas of which markers of their rough locations can be seen on the map. Participants came from all Senedd regions.

Of participants who completed the survey and were selected to take part, 11 were from urban areas, 11 from suburban areas and 17 from rural areas.

Some participants were identified through gatekeeper organisations. This was to ensure this sample was representative as well as diverse. Appendix 1 includes a full list of organisations that supported the engagement approach.

Working closely with external organisations to communicate the opportunity, 103 participants completed the pre-screening survey. 53 participants were then invited to a focus group as well as 14 participants directly identified through gatekeeper organisations. One Member of the Senedd joined a focus group to hear the participant's experiences first-hand.



The questions posed at each focus group were based on the overarching question: *What do you want the Welsh Government to focus spending on?* Appendix 2 outlines the overarching strategic financial questions that participants were asked.

This engagement report outlines the key findings which arose during the focus groups that may be of relevance to the Committee's work. Themes are highlighted throughout while structured around the key areas of questioning.

Quotes and themes within this note have been selected on the basis that they were recurring or prominent in discussions thus enabling an insight into the participant's lived experiences. Where it's possible and appropriate, anonymised quotes have been selected to add context. The quotes are displayed in grey boxes. To illustrate some of the key themes identified, several case studies have been included.

2. Summary of Findings

The headline points within this report are as follows:

- **Education and Health and Social Care** were the two areas that were most heavily selected to receive more funding. Followed by **Climate Change** which in the majority of the focus groups was chosen over **Economy**. In many cases **Economy** didn't even make it into any participants prioritisation selection.
- Participants thought **Education and Health and Social Care** were **struggling before the pandemic** and the pandemic had exacerbated issues. They also highlighted that **Climate Change should be integrated into many other funding areas**, perhaps this would be better than having a separate funding area.
- Participants were concerned about **low staff morale** across several sectors, including **Education, Health, Homeless/ Housing and Agriculture and Rural Affairs**. They mainly sighted **exhaustion and lack of fair pay** as cause for this.
- The three areas that tended to be selected by participants for de-prioritisation of funding were **Welsh Language, International Relations** and narrowly **Agriculture and Rural Affairs**. However participants from a range of sectors did feel **Agriculture and Rural Affairs could be considered as cross cutting** in that it supports communities and other areas such as Welsh Language, Culture and Climate Change and therefore it was important to maintain their funding.
- Many participants expressed how Welsh Language had received a lot of funding in recent years in their opinion. Although most participants were aware that **this area doesn't receive a huge proportion of the overall budget**: Participants who felt spending should continue said it should be more focus within education and Welsh Language by **increasing the number of Welsh medium nurseries and schools**. This would require new buildings but also the resources in teaching staff to teach through the medium of Welsh, **otherwise they felt that the Government will not reach its target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050**.
- Many participants expressed satisfaction with the UK government leading **Brexit negotiations** if it meant the Welsh Government could save money from the International Relations area.
- Many participants said they'd de-prioritise Agriculture and Rural Affairs but **didn't give much reasoning for this choice**. Perhaps because they were

distanced from the sector and weren't clear of how funding works in this area.

- When asked about increasing the overall spending of the budget all groups shared the opinion that **funding should be maintained or increased** but they didn't always agree with **borrowing or taxing to achieve this**.
- Overall participants felt that **all the points were still important** and agreed that improving **connectivity (physically and digitally)** was the most **important** after what they'd experienced over the lock down.
- Many sectors were feeling the pinch from **"the combined impacts of the climate crisis, Brexit, Covid and ten years of austerity all crashing together in the most horrific way."** However there was **appetite to innovate** and work through these challenges should Welsh Government provide funding and support to do so. One main suggestion was **longer term certainty when it came to allocating funding**.
- Participants felt that all groups of people in society should get treated equally while the Welsh Government should identify where one group may have a particular disadvantage in society and then investment should be made.
- Many participants in different focus groups suggested **there was a need for a stronger and genuine channel of communication** between grassroots people and the Welsh Government. **Allowing for co-production** and for the citizens of Wales to be able to express what types of projects and programmes would support them.
- There was an **added focus on** a group identified as **"people in poverty"** where participants felt **if funding was directed there it would help elevate funding required to a range of overarching areas** e.g. Health and Social Care and Education because they felt **these members of society are the biggest users of governmental support currently**

3. Key Areas of Questioning

***Overall Priority Areas:** Including Education, Health and Social Care and Climate Change*

Participants were asked to select up to three areas that they felt funding should be prioritised and three areas that they felt funding could be deprioritised. The areas participants could choose from were:

- Agriculture / Rural Affairs
- Children and young people (including childcare, play, youth services)
- Climate Change
- Culture (including arts, sports and heritage)
- Economy
- Education
- Health and Social Care
- Housing/homelessness
- International Relations
- Local Government
- Transport
- Welsh Language

Participants answers were not clear cut with almost every area being selected for both prioritisation and de-prioritisation. However below are the thoughts from the majority of participants.

Education and **Health and Social Care** were the two that were most heavily selected to receive more funding. Followed by **Climate Change** which in the majority of the focus groups was chosen over **Economy**.

In many cases **Economy** didn't even make it into any participants prioritisation selection.

Below are some of the reasons why these three areas were selected as priority areas for funding:

Education:

Participants from within and outside of the education sector were aware of the **pressures on this sector** including the **incoming new curriculum**:

The government needs to reflect on the commitment to a raft of changes in primary schools. The ALN Reform Bill the new curriculum for Wales, and if they don't spend money or raise school budgets somehow to deliver these, I don't know how I'm going to deliver those things. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

But **participants understood the need to change the curriculum** due to things such as a lack of life skills education to date and its impact on society:

I definitely think schools need to teach more life skills...I don't have the first clue how to pay taxes or bills or anything like that. I was never taught this,

instead I spent my time doing trigonometry, which to this day I've never applied to life. I definitely think education needs to be more focused on preparing people for life not further education. - Lifelong learner

Cutting across the areas, the outlook for the **culture and arts sector appeared bleak** to some participants **however the new curriculum was gaining momentum** in that teachers were wanting to involve more creative processes in their teaching plans:

The new curriculum is coming in and a couple of teachers that I work with tend to be the performing arts teachers in the school but all of a sudden the rest of the school is really listening to them and wanting to know how to evolve their teaching to be more creative.. – Arts and Culture Professional

Mae'r cwricwlwm newydd mor gyffrous. Ond, rwy'n credu bod angen inni edrych tua'r tymor hir wrth gynllunio; hynny yw, nid dim ond y ddwy neu dair blynedd nesaf, ond dros bum mlynedd a thu hwnt i'r ddegawd nesaf. Rwy'n credu mai'r trosolwg hirdymor hwnnw yw'r unig ffordd y gallwn wneud y gwaith cynllunio. / The new curriculum is so exciting. But I do think that we need to look on a long term basis when planning. Not just the next two or three years but five years and beyond to over the next decade. I think that that long term view is the only way that we could do that planning. – Arts and Culture Professional

After the first lockdown, schools focused on making sure that children were alright. **Children have had different experiences, because they come from different backgrounds, so schools have adapted to respond to children's needs and learning requirements.** There has been a lot of pressure on staff and participants expressed how they could see a problem with staff leaving teaching due to this pressure. **Investment is needed to support the wellbeing of pupils and school staff.**

Un peth mae Covid wedi'i wneud yw gwneud i bobl ail ystyried ble mae nhw. Gyda'r pwysau ychwanegol, does dim digon o fuddsoddiad i gefnogi myfyrwyr, a chymorth i aros yn y swydd, ac rydyn ni ar fin colli llawer o athrawon. / Covid has definitely made people think about where they are. With the additional pressure, there's insufficient investment to support students and to support staff to stay in their jobs, I fear that we're about to lose many teachers. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

There appeared to be an abundance of grants for schools, but these have to be used for specific purposes. **Schools are restricted as to how they spend the grants which is limiting considering that all schools are different**, but all grants have the same restrictions.

Mae gormod o reolau ynghlwm â sut, ble a phryd mae arian grantiau yn cael ei wario / There are too many rules attached to how, where and when the grant funding is spent. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

The funding that we do get always come in too late for us to be able to plan anything, and so we're constantly on the back foot. There's a disconnect between what schools are expected to do and what government are giving us at the other end. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

Education for adults was also highlighted as a priority for ensuring more people within society are able to access good jobs and not become “a drain” on society:

People need educational skills. I remember when I was an asylum seekers and courses used to be free. Now I have my papers and I was able to get into employment immediately because I did the courses. But this has changed for new asylum seekers. They can't access the courses as easily. I waited for 13 years to get my papers, people have nothing to focus on while they wait. – Participant with migration experience

I want to support young people that have been in care or are currently going through care as a support worker. But to do that I have to go back to college and university. But I don't want to do university because it costs so much money and for a care leaver, someone that doesn't have anyone to support me, to be left with that much debt on my head is very scary and daunting. This holds you back from opportunities that you want to do in life. – Young person and care leaver

I applied for what's called the Financial contingency fund within the college. They paid the £30 lab fees where we get a lab coat and goggles. But when I applied for free meals, I didn't get that. I don't know why. I get the impression this fund was ... a follow on of free school meals. I don't think this fund is really geared towards adult learners – Lifelong Learner with dependents.

Also see **Case Study 2** from a lifelong learner with dependents and focuses on the support available to them.

Support was also called for **disabled people** to access **better education**:

Disabled people need to have funding for medical things, but they also need funding to help them become part of the society. I have a disabled daughter and we still can't find proper training that she can have at college. It's not acceptable because she is intelligent...They have put her on an apprenticeship so she can learn how to write a CV to go to work, but she doesn't want to go to work yet, she wants to carry on in education. She wants to be a lawyer. – Participant with migration experience

Funding has recently been cut from the only special educational needs school in Wrexham. This is worrying because my son is autistic and nonverbal and he needs access to a good education. I don't want him to be a drain on society if he can't get a job. There is an option for him to go to a private school but this will cost the government 3 times as much money so the investment should be in the public school. Disabled children should not be put aside, they should be encouraged. – Participant with migration experience

Health and Social Care:

It was clear to almost all participants that **the health service is struggling** on a number of levels and that more funding could help but it came with the caveat that **extra funding might not necessarily be the only answer to the issues**:

It seems to be more difficult for many people who don't speak English or Welsh. They have to have doctor appointments without interpretation. – Participant with migration experience

Health and social care services were already going downhill and the last two years has been disastrous. – Older person

I think there needs to be more joint working between health boards and local government. I don't believe the Community Care Act is working. One issue is that people haven't got the social care to leave hospital and this is impacting on health and of course it's impacting on families as well. – Older person

The lack of hospital and GP appointments has meant people's health has deteriorated. My friends mum had a large heart attack last week. The ambulance took four hours to arrive and she died – I don't think this wouldn't happen in normal times. – Participant with migration experience

Health and social care is a major contributing factor to the issues we try to address. The pandemic has exposed existing cracks especially on mental health care and provision. The pandemic has caused isolation and general stress levels have been exacerbated for people who had underlying health conditions both physically and mentally. – Homeless Charity Staff

There were particular **concerns for Mental Health services**:

If you've got a mental health problem in the countryside in Wales, you can't go anywhere in the NHS. You have to go to a charity. It's an absurdity that government through taxpayers investment cannot provide an equivalent to a medical interventions for mental health – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

I think we're about to see a tsunami of mental health problems. You're seeing the start of it already. Therefore I think we should increase the amount of funding available. - Homeless Charity Staff

Also see **Case Study 1** from a registered mental health nurse working in mental health of the older person.

Personal stories were shared about **long waiting times** and how they were causing levels of stress for participants who understood why this was happening but **felt helpless** about the situation:

Waiting times have had a real big impact on me because the pandemic has pushed back my waiting times with the Welsh Gender Service to start going on testosterone. I'm almost halfway through a two or three year wait. I'm looking at possibly next summer, but possibly not. Also the cost of operations like this are so expensive. And if it turns out the NHS won't cover it for me then I don't know what I'm going to do. That'll completely stop me in my tracks of becoming who I want to be. It'll really affect my mental health. If the pandemic wasn't here I'd have probably started this transition already. - Lifelong learner

Career progression was described as "limited" by health care professionals and more so this was causing a detrimental effect on the overall system. Poor pay was also a problem and this was causing **staff to feel undervalued**:

I run a team of 16 people. I should have approximately 11 people in my team every single day. There was an incident last week where we couldn't draw staff

in from anywhere because I've lost five members of staff. They've gone to other teams and areas because they couldn't get progression within this area. It's not because they want to leave this team, not because they want to stop doing the job that they've grown to love but there's no career progression for them. And that means that their wages will not rise, so therefore they have no choice. Last week, I ran this team on just two registered nurses. We can't continue like this because we're burning out our existing nurses. – Health Care professional

There is little incentive within the sector. Lidl are now offering £10.10 an hour shelf stacking. Sometimes you've got senior care staff working on less than that within a care home. We need the system to be made fairer. – Health Care professional

Carers don't feel as valued even in these situations – even when everyone needs carers but they only pay the lowest wage. I'm really confused why this is. – Participant with migration experience and health care professional

I have two daughters and my wife. My wife is a band three support worker with the psychiatric liaison service. That is a very complex role. Our 20 year old daughter recently started working in a sushi stand in our local supermarket. Within two years our 20 year old will earn more than my wife will filleting salmon instead of looking after people – Health Care professional

There is no actual opportunity for movement for staff through the promotion levels and to get experience and progression. This doesn't exist. We know it can exist. There's no actual formalized national structure to say this is how you get from being a carer to being a home manager. Without that career progression and the hope of at least earning more money, carers aren't going to want to stay within the sector. Especially when they see other sectors that have less responsibilities. – Health Care professional

Staff abuse was a regular occurrence and again caused professionals to feel devalued and depleted:

I have suffered more abuse over this last year than I've had in the last 20 years from people that I would never have expected to have had it from. But one problem is the expectation of the service and people want everything immediately...Stop saying that the NHS is free at the point of need because in actual fact we have all paid for it, so it's not free. – Health Care professional

It was identified that **potential new staff may fear of Covid** which could have a detrimental impact on recruitment long term:

The number of people that train as nurses is great. But the number of people that leave after 2 years of training is escalating. Perhaps Covid has exacerbated that. It's an environment that if you screw up, you're going to carry something home that's going to wipe your family out. – Health Care professional

Climate Change:

While being noted as a priority that the Welsh Government should focus upon, participants also highlighted that **Climate Change should be integrated into many other funding areas**, perhaps this would be better than having a separate funding area.

Climate change really should be the umbrella that touches all of these funding areas and we should consider climate change in the way that we invest in all of them. – Arts and Culture Professional

Climate change should be integrated into every single area of spending not as a silo. – Business owner

Participants expressed **urgency for the Welsh Government to address Climate Change** head on:

I think ultimately, if we don't do something to fix climate change nothing else is going matter for that much longer. - Lifelong learner

There is no future without solving this. – Older person

Participants suggested **legislation would help** tackle Climate Change:

Welsh Government could subsidized businesses that are plastic free shops giving them a much reduced council tax or business rate. This would incentivize other businesses to do the same. Or you could flip it around, I guess and charge higher taxes on businesses that produce a lot of plastic waste. – Young person

Climate change often came under the guise of Agriculture and Rural affairs.

Many arguments from Agricultural Sector workers were made for the need for **cattle farming** as this would support biodiversity:

I hate the way some people seem to think that you can't do both environment and farming. To me, farming and environment are inextricably linked. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

Mixed grazing is really good for the environment. It's really good for the grass. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

I might have a problem, especially after they've announced 30% targeted reductions in methane. But on the other hand, one of the reason I've got cattle is because of the way they graze, it's akin to supporting biodiversity. This is absolutely crucial to the land. I think there's a total imbalance in targeting cattle at the moment. Because cattle are a massive contributor to biodiversity. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

Other Policy Areas; including: Agriculture / Rural Affairs; Children and young people (including childcare, play, youth services); Culture (including arts, sports and heritage); Economy; Housing/homelessness; International Relations; Local Government; Transport and; Welsh Language

Participants expressed split opinion when it came to many of the other policy areas.

The three areas that tended to be selected by participants for de-prioritisation of funding were **Welsh Language, International Relations** and narrowly **Agriculture and Rural Affairs**. However participants from a range of sectors did feel **Agriculture and Rural Affairs could be considered as cross cutting** in that it supports communities and other areas such as Welsh Language, Culture and Climate Change and therefore it was important to maintain their funding.

Many participants shared the view that **deprioritising areas wasn't practical** but **'smarter spending'** was essential for future sustainability:

I think there needs to be smarter moves that are put in place for some centralised opportunities. – Arts and Culture professional

Points were made around the fact that if money was **better spent in priority areas** naturally less money would be required in certain areas and so they would **become less of a priority**:

If homelessness has been addressed better and health and social care has been addressed there will be less drain in other areas and so there's be more money to spend elsewhere. – Homeless Charity Staff

Some participants thought certain areas could receive **less funding for one year**. Although they admitted this would affect progress but felt in the long term the impact wouldn't be too great.

Below a is a summary of each policy area in alphabetical order:

Agriculture and Rural affairs:

Participants from this sector saw **the sector as cross cutting** and involving more than just agriculture and rural affairs, it extended to culture, Welsh languages and climate change:

By supporting agriculture in my head, you are also already supporting the Welsh language and therefore culture, and so it becomes even more important to support agriculture. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

There was an occasional **lack of faith in the Welsh Government** from participants in this sector which seemed to be caused by **multiple layers of bureaucracy** and **staff within these layers not being experienced** or aware of the sector at a business level:

Whatever they do needs to be much more simple because I think there's loads of us living in fear of ticking that wrong box. I think they just they need to stop trying to catch us out. I realise that there is a small minority, and I believe it really is a minority, who need keeping an eye on, but the authorities are so busy trying to catch out that minority and the rest of us have an absolutely nightmare with it. We are often made to feel like criminals. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

Sometimes it feels like the Welsh Government has a siege mentality because they have so many pressures on them. But I'd like them to know that they can

trust us to help them with these problems. We can contribute a lot and willingly if they will just trust us. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

Participants from outside the sector also valued this area and felt there was a strong need to support it due to the way it interlinked with communities, climate change and had a role to play with feeding the nation locally grown and high quality food:

It does seem that growing food locally should be prioritised post Brexit, especially given that trade with our nearest allies has been damaged. That seems an equally valid environmental strategy, to support farmers, especially organic ones. – Arts and Culture professional

Post Brexit, I think the Welsh Government need to help the farmers because it does impact us just think about where our milk comes from. We don't want chlorinated chicken coming from the United States. We want to know that we're having good food on our tables. – Older person

I think having substandard food can negatively affect the whole community. So far with the help of the EU, our food standards have been controlled, but without the EU we really don't know where we stand. – Participant with migration experience

Agriculture and rural affairs is important because I live and work in a rural area. Agriculture is of major employer here. If it's not employing people, there's no jobs for people and this will cause problems. – Homeless Charity staff

The future of farming didn't appear overly positive to participants working in the sector. Routes into farming are limited by lack of promotion to young people, lack of accessibility financially to get started and the growing trend of larger more intensive farms or mass tree planting sites.

Problems were highlighted around investments in large intensive farming business which participants felt was a growing trend supported by the Welsh Government:

I think the definitive description of farming is one where a farmer can go around and see all their animals. At the moment in farming I think there's very little 'entrance' opportunities for farmers because you have to start with such a lot of investment. I work as a builder as well as farming, so that that helps. But it's not an immediately profitable industry. You need other skills. Kids are walking away, they take the opportunity of going to university. I've got two

boys and a girl. We've been in the valley since 1520. I very probably will be the last generation here. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

Children and young people (including childcare, play, youth services):

This was mentioned on a number of occasions in reference to a **lack of social spaces for young people** which participants felt was causing antisocial behaviour. They sympathised with young people due to the lack of funds in this area to **offer more spaces that they could interact safely**.

Culture (including arts, sports and heritage):

The arts and culture sector was described as going through **troubling times with a double hit of pressures from Brexit and the pandemic** on the already fragile nature of freelance working:

There are lots of concerns about the freelance nature of the workforce and how precarious that has been and continues to be. This has been completely exacerbated by the longer term impacts of Covid, so things like a much slower reopening for our sector than almost any other sector, which I think is continuing to impact how much people can actually work and how much work there is out there. I think in combination with Brexit it's absolutely causing difficulties in terms of personnel and how to sustain this. – Arts and Culture sector professional

Funding streams were integral to holding the sector up during the pandemic but it **wasn't always described as accessible** or taking into account the individual and therefore it **alienated and excluded certain individuals** which has had an **impact on their confidence** in these systems.

The Freelancer Fund and the Cultural Recovery funding has been significant in terms of keeping the sector going. – Arts and Culture sector professional

I don't think funders took into consideration the concept of being a freelancer and the understanding that freelancers sometimes have mixed incomes, so those that were on a mixture of PAYE and self-assessment had a real issue when it came to finding support...I'm reluctant now as a freelancer to mix my incomes. I could have gained a mixture with my current roles but I have decided to just stick with one because it felt like the policymakers and decision makers at that time were completely unaware of how this would work. – Arts and Culture sector professional

They [Arts Council Wales] needed to be speaking to young parents, recent graduates, people with mental health needs, people with disabilities – they need to bring in more diversity of thought within their advisory groups – especially with there being quick turn arounds. – Arts and Culture sector professional

Also see **Case study 4** which highlights one artists journey through Covid and applying for funding with a disability.

Views from across the other focus groups were that **culture needs to be more diverse**:

I would change the title of this area to “multi-culture” not just “culture.” We need more opportunities to celebrate other cultures, not just from a Welsh perspective or in English. Things need to be multicultural. Because we are a multicultural country now, so we should include all of it. – Participant with migration experience

Other focus group **participant could see huge benefits** in ensuring this sector is strong enough to sustain itself through the pandemic and Brexit challenges because **they recognised the community wide benefits** it offers:

The Welsh Government needs to continue to invest in new and refurbished community sports facilities and parks ... The health benefits of physical activity support local communities recovering from Covid and in doing so, reduce the pressures on the NHS. – Charity worker

I work with children and young people. I took a few families recently to The National Museum Cardiff and some of those children had never been there. It's free and it's local and it was mind-blowing for those kids. When they see things about history they are over the moon, even the parents too. We need to embed culture and history into those young girls and boys. – Participant with migration experience

Economy:

Some participants identified that **without a good and strong economy all other areas of society may suffer**:

We need to bolster the economy, without that we aren't going to be able to support any other areas, because without the money we're not going to be able to do anything. Don't ask me how! – Older person

The economy needs to recover and the more robust the economy is the more it can feed into almost every other area of funding. – Business owner

However many participants appeared to be opposed to funding this area, perhaps because of **the perception that the economy has enough money already**:

It might sound a bit counterintuitive, but the economy could survive for a year with less because there's no point people being really rich if the planets going to die. – Young person

Also see **Case studies 3A-C** from a number of business which focus on “**being listened to**” by the Welsh Government, Green Economy Support and Funding for Sports Clubs

Housing/homelessness:

Many participants across several groups felt that **housing and homelessness was “solved” if only temporarily, early in the pandemic**, therefore the public were beginning to see this as something that is solvable in the future:

Homelessness changed during the pandemic. In Wrexham there was nobody on the streets, the Council managed to find temporary accommodation for everyone. If it can be done then why can't it be maintained into the future. – Participant with migration experience

However major concerns were raised about how **housing market trends have affected the services** working with homeless people:

In our areas, a substantial amount of cash was given to alleviate the problem – homelessness has been “resolved”, but it's very temporary and it's not a long term fix for people. Here, there are a lot of holiday properties, and where landlords previously may have rented to our client group now they've gone out as temporary accommodation. For example, where they may have held a £350 a month shorthold tenancy they have now opted to use it with the local authority to provide emergency temporary accommodation which may see them gaining £40 a night. We've struggled to get those longer term tenancies

back. Add on to that the fact that lots of landlords who previously rented out properties are now using them as holiday rentals because UK holidaying has become a better option. We don't just need money we need more properties. It's an uphill battle. – Homeless Charity Staff

Workforce issues were a common theme in the focus group with homeless charity staff. Concerns were raised around finding the right kind of people for the jobs that are on offer as well as a high demand for longer term planning to secure roles and projects for longer periods of time.

Over the past year since the pandemic we've had some real challenges in our sector in terms of recruitment. We're just not getting the kind of quantity and talent level. We would hope within our sector that there could be wider recognition of our roles as key roles. – Homeless Charity Staff

Although participants recognised that these may not be related to the pandemic, sector changes and shifts were identified, there were concerns about the longevity of effective approaches, and fatigue within the sector due to being over stretched. Staff described their role as feeling like they were constantly battling through.

It always feel like a battle, whether that be that you are battling the restrictions of the prison services, the complexities of mental and physical health services, or advocacy for our service users. Until we reach a point where we look very seriously on a governmental level at the powers of co-commissioning, how can we change the habits of a lifetime? We spend so much time advocating for the individuals that we work with, it's exhausting. And we are a workforce, like many, who have already been through a lot over the past couple of years. – Homeless Charity Staff

They called for fairer pay which would ultimately come from the Welsh Government who offer competitive funding opportunities to the charity sector. Fundraisers expressed difficulty in offering a Living Wage given the pressure to secure the funding in the first place:

Support worker salaries across Wales can offer anything from about £15,000 a year to about £20,000...at the lower end of that salary bands you could be working at Tesco's and not earning any less. – Homeless Charity Staff

Questions that have been raised through the pandemic are “who are our core people”, “who do we need to make our society run” and “are those people

getting paid fairly for the commitment that they make to our society?" I don't think that support work should be forgotten in this conversation. All of us worked front facing throughout the pandemic. Nobody just shut up and went home. We all continue to deliver exactly as we had done. – Homeless Charity Staff

Participants from outside of the sector identified what they saw as a housing issue with regards a **lack of affordable housing**.

Housing is a national issue – whether that is because people are on the street or because there is insufficient housing, or only substandard housing available. As a non-native Welsh person, I have made my home here and I dislike the 2nd home owners culture. These should be discouraged as much as possible. Community is crucial and if an area has a high number of 2nd homes, this does not help the community. Holiday lets are acceptable because this encourages tourism, but this should be managed so that communities are still able to thrive. – Business Owner

International Relations:

Many participants expressed satisfaction with the UK government leading Brexit negotiations if it meant the Welsh Government could save money in this area:

I think International Relations should be spearheaded by the UK rather than the Welsh government. Whilst we might not like what the UK government has to say, the reality is most overseas governments do not understand the difference between Westminster and the devolved governments. Americans think everyone in the UK is English!! I have never known a US president visit Wales or the 1st minister. – Business Owner

Others felt there was a need for funding here but as everything is so stretched they felt **this area might be the only area that they could justify cutting down on:**

Peoples health and their well-being is more important right now – international relations comes further down on my priority. – Lifelong learner with dependents

We need to look closer to home and get ourselves in a much more sustainable position and recover before we worry too much about what's going on. We

can't recover if we're investing too much everywhere else. Just let's get recovered and then bring that back into the mix at a later date. – Lifelong learner with dependents

Local Government:

Perhaps through lack of understanding of the extent of funding that is allocated to Local Government **this area was not mentioned very often** and **when it was it tended to be negative**. But it was rarely on peoples list to de-prioritise.

Most local governments if they were a business, they'd be bust within a week. I don't know how anybody can get it so wrong so consistently. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

Transport:

The majority of participants raised the point **that public transport is unaffordable or expensive** for what it is. Participants felt that **transparency was an issue** when costs were justified blaming 'austerity' but with no further explanation:

I'd say more funding for transport is 100% needed. At the moment travel is such a big struggle especially when you're working. Once I have paid for my studies and my travel I'm left with very little at the end of the day. – Participant with migration experience

Local transport in this area is diabolical. We've got no life after 4:30pm in my area. You don't get any transport after that time. We can't go out, we can't do anything. – Older Person

I've got plenty of friends who live rurally and there's lots of times where the buses haven't even turned up. People I know have been threatened with the sack because they aren't getting to work on time. And there's no explanation as to why this keeps happening. – Lifelong learner

Primarily for **climate reasons** participants felt the need to invest better in transport:

Transport links are so vital for us to achieve some of the other ambitions we've got in terms of climate change, decarbonization etc. But also to make our

economy work, and to open up Wales to be the target destination for people in England and beyond, they've got to be able to get here and get around. Trying to travel through Wales is horrible. – Business owner

We live in a world where we're trying to get people off the roads but without a public transport infrastructure that is affordable it's impossible. The UK Government has talked about fuel cars not being produced by 2030. But we need buses and trains to replace them. – Health Care Professional

The rapid shift away from petrol and diesel cars will require car-dependent households to purchase electric cars over the next 8 years. Whilst there may be a decrease in running costs, the capital cost to purchase an electric car will be unaffordable to many that are reliant on cars for their connection to jobs, education, health and food. For many of our communities, particularly the remoter communities, transport poverty will increase, reducing the access to income, education and services. – Charity Worker

I would love to get the train to work. I drive for three hours, three days a week to get to Carmarthen from Cardiff. I hate the contribution that makes to climate change - I would love to be able to do my marking on the train - but it would take me about that same amount of time just to get into work each day if I were to use the trains because the trains are so slow and so rare. – Arts and Culture sector professional

Welsh Language:

There was a very clear divide on this area of spending.

Many participants felt spending should be more focus within education and Welsh Language but **increasing the number of Welsh medium nurseries and schools**. This would require new buildings but also the resources in teaching staff to teach through the medium of Welsh, **otherwise they felt that the Government will not reach its target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050**.

Participants thought that childcare staff should be paid the same as schoolteachers. **The pay scale hasn't changed since 2017**, and there is no clear indication that it will rise in the future. The funding rate is currently £4.50 an hour for each child within a nursery setting and given employers are keen and encouraged to pay a living wage as well as consider all the other costs associated with childcare placements **the sector is severely underfunded**.

Os yw'r Llywodraeth o ddifri am weld mwy o siaradwyr Cymraeg, mae'n rhaid dechrau o'r dechrau. Nid yw'n gallu denu plant i ysgolion Cymraeg os nad yw'n dechrau gyda'r meithrin, ysgolion a chymunedau. Felly bydd buddsoddiad mewn gofal plant yn fuddsoddiad ym mhob maes. / If the Government really wants to see more Welsh speakers, it must start from the beginning. It cannot attract children to Welsh-medium schools unless it starts with nursery, schools and communities. Therefore, investment in childcare will be an investment in all areas. – Welsh language organisation

Welsh language is one of our key characteristic's. It's a civil right, and I think it's what many parents desire for their children. I do agree, however, that sometimes that needs to be much more effective because simply printing far too much and nodding and ticking isn't what's needed. Its investment in areas like primary school teachers. – Participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

There were also some concerns about **how accessible the schools were to parents without a basis of the Welsh language:**

I have a child and when she was younger I had a dream that she would be the first female black Welsh speaking news presenter. I wanted to put her in Welsh school but I couldn't. The school asked if I spoke Welsh and I didn't and they questioned if I would be able to help her with her homework. They gave me negative feedback and in the end my dream died. She went to a English medium school. – Participant with migration experience

Some **participants were despondent about the way Welsh Government has approached the Welsh language in recent years.** They expressed concern about how difficult children are finding learning it but how it is still being encouraged and even “**forced**” in a school setting:

Gan ystyried y targed o filiwn o siaradwyr Cymraeg, does dim digon o bolisiau i weithio tuag at y targed. Mae yna dueddiad i feddwl y gwnaiff addysg greu'r siaradwyr Cymraeg. / Considering the target of one million Welsh speakers, there are not enough policies to work towards achieving this target. There is a tendency to think that education will create the Welsh speakers – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

It's hard because the kids have to learn it in school but not everyone wants to and there is no choice. Even though they learn Welsh at school it doesn't

matter, they can only come home and say a few phrases – Participant with migration experience

Many participants expressed how this area had received a lot of funding in recent years in their opinion during the Covid recovery and post-Brexit impact it may need to be cut back. Although most participants were aware that **this area doesn't receive a huge proportion of the overall budget**:

I'm proud of being Welsh and I agree with Welsh being introduced and I recognize the importance but I don't think we need to be pushing that in the next 12 months, with everything else going on. – Lifelong learner with dependents

As much as I like trying to learn Welsh, I don't think a year will make much difference to how much we can learn whereas I think there are other things at the moment that we need to prioritize. – Older person

Some participants were frustrated by receiving everything bilingually. They suggested practices need to improve so that people can choose to access Welsh, English or bilingual correspondence and this preference saved so that in future time, money and resource could be saved by public service organisations.

Overall Budget Spending

Participants were asked: Thinking about the Welsh Government's spending in the next financial year, do you think it should use its taxation and/or borrowing powers to increase or decrease overall funding available to spend, or maintain its current level of spending?

Across all groups there was a feeling that either **funding should be maintained or increased** but they didn't always agree with borrowing or taxing to achieve this.

I think in the next year or so, while we're still getting over the whole impact of the pandemic, an increase in spending would be a good thing to do. Not indefinitely, but I think we are coming out of quite dark place and a little bit of a spending increase could make a difference. – Lifelong learner

Most participants **didn't feel comfortable suggesting taxes for lower paid people**. Mainly because they felt **household budgets are already stretched** but also because they believe **UK Government have increased taxes "so much"** that it would be too much for The Welsh Government to do the same:

I don't agree with increasing tax because we're getting so taxed from the UK Government at the moment, higher taxes will just tip people over the edge. It's just getting ridiculous. – Business owner

Welsh Government shouldn't go anywhere near tax, the UK government is doing enough in that area. I don't think an increase in tax will go down well within the Welsh public because we paying so much to the UK already. – Older person

Equally they weren't sure if **borrowing** would be a good idea because "you're always going to have to pay it back":

Borrowing obviously has the disadvantage that you store up problems for the future. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

Many groups also highlighted a need to maintain spending but **spend smarter** and have better checks on accountability to stop funds being "wasted." They also asked for much more **transparency of funding** (One participant even suggested designing a tax that is specifically ringfenced for the NHS because that would assure people about where those extra funds were going):

Dydy'r cyhoedd ddim yn gwybod sut mae'r arian yn cael ei wario a ble mae'r arian yn mynd. Mae angen mwy o dryloywder i sicrhau dealltwriaeth pobl Cymru. / The public does not know how their money is spent and where the money goes. Greater transparency is needed to ensure that we gain the understanding of the people of Wales. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

I live in this room, Council tax is £150 a month I went to see another house. It's a two bedroom house and the tax there is £800 per year – it doesn't make sense. I really don't understand how they calculate council tax. There is a lack of transparency in this system. Even my landlord doesn't know why it's this rate. – Participant with migration experience

Dylen ni edrych ar sut mae pob adran polisi yn gwario arian i sicrhau arbedion yn hytrach na thynnu arian i ffwrdd / We should look at how each policy department is spending money in order to make savings, rather than withdrawing money. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

The risk is that the Welsh language and climate change can get lost if they are seen as a way of ticking boxes within other departments. So, targets are needed to ensure accountability in relation to the targets set. The Government should publish plans and set clear targets, monitor progress consistently and report back transparently. Setting clear accountability for the targets will avoid a situation where no-one is responsible for the aspects that 'fall between two departments', as it were. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

Not everyone was against the idea of **borrowing**:

The risk of increased taxation is you actually end up with people spending less because they have less. I think to get out of the situation we are in we need to borrow and not tax. – Business Owner

Some suggested having a **balance between borrowing and increasing taxes**:

I think there should be a mix of both increased tax and borrowing, because obviously a lot of us can't afford big high tax increases. But it can't all be based on borrowing. – Lifelong learner with dependents

Borrowing is appropriate for some expenditure for example, housing where we discussed how this is inadequate. At least it's creating an asset with a future value. It would also hit some of the other areas, such as climate change. It's a chance to improve present housing in terms of insulation. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

Participants thought **big companies aren't being taxed enough** and solving this would mean that **the Welsh Government would have more money** in the budget and **wouldn't need to borrow at all**. They wanted a **fairer tax system** with a particular focus on **taxing bigger companies or richer members of society**:

If the big companies are genuinely tax, I don't think the country would need to borrow. – Participant with migration experience

Mae angen cynyddu buddsoddi a gwariant. Mae'n gwneud synnwyr defnyddio pwerau benthyca fel rhan allweddol o'r cynllun, ond hefyd mae angen trethu'n deg i warchod y rhai sydd angen eu gwarchod yn ein cymdeithas / There needs to be an increase in investment and spending. It makes sense to use borrowing powers as a key part of the plan, but also fair taxation is needed to protect those that need protection in our society. –Welsh Language Organisation

Mae angen trethu, ond nid oes angen codi trethi pobl ar y stryd; mae angen codi trethi'r bobl sy'n gwneud arian mawr neu hefyd trethu ail gartrefi yng Nghymru. / Taxation is required, but taxes should not be raised from people on the street; taxes should be raised from those who make plenty of money or also tax second homes in Wales. –Welsh Language Organisation

I believe spending should be increased. I believe taxation is too low for the richer members of society. The very wealthy should be contributing more through taxation, however, I think the government should borrow more too – Business owner

I fod yn onest, nid oeddwn yn talu llawer o dreth yn ystod blynyddoedd cyntaf fy ngyrfa oherwydd doeddwn i ddim yn ennill digon i dalu'r trethi hynny. Gallai hyn fod yn naïf, ond mae'n ffrainc cael bod mewn sefyllfa i dalu trethi, a cyhyd â bod y cynnydd yn deg i bawb a'i fod yn flaengar does dim gwrthwynebiad gen i. Mae angen i ni rannu'r baich o ran trethiant yn deg yn ôl pwy all fforddio talu. / I'll be honest in the first years of my career I wasn't paying much tax because I wasn't earning enough to pay those taxes and this might be naive, but it's a privilege to be in a position to pay tax, and as long as the increase is fair for everyone and it's progressive I don't mind. We need to share that burden of taxation fairly according to who could afford to pay. – Arts and Culture sector professional

A number of participants felt too **uninformed to make this decision** and wanted The Welsh Government **“to work it out on their own”**:

I think this is where the members of the Senedd need to earn their considerable salaries. The devil is in the detail. I as an individual do not know if borrowing or taxation is the best means. They have got to look at society in Wales and decide what matters ... I have a PhD but I do not know whether taxation or borrowing is the right approach. I'd like the members of the Senedd to work it out for themselves. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

I don't know whether taxation is the right thing to do or to borrow money is the right thing to do. I'm not really particularly skilled enough to understand that. But what I do know is on the ground in communities that are poor and deprived, things are getting extremely tough for families and children. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

Concerns were raised about areas where funding was seen to be “leaving Wales” which angered and frustrated some participants:

The Galstir Woodland Creation scheme, which will be a large part of future RDP schemes. Where currently, 96 hectares have gone to businesses with addresses outside of Wales and only 17 hectares to addresses within Wales. So that is Welsh funding going straight out of Wales to plant trees that will be a massive threat to our future because one thing that's going to do is drive the cost of land. We're already seeing all sorts of organisations, including sports clubs purchase acres of land in Wales. These investors buy farms to plant trees and they're not even based in Wales. I completely disagree with the whole idea of “carbon offset”. You shouldn't be allowed to offset your business by buying a block of agriculture and use that offset to your own business. Fundamentally, RDP must stay in Wales. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

Pan fydd buddsoddiadau'n cael eu gwneud, dylen nhw gael eu gwneud ar lefel lleol, nad yw'r arian yn mynd i gorfforaethau mawr, ac nad yw'r arian yn gadael Cymru / When investments are made, they should be made at a local level, with money not going to large corporations, and the money not leaving Wales – Welsh Language Organisation

The Well-being of Future Generations Act

Participants were asked to indicate how important the following areas of well-being were to the overall spending in the next financial year:

1. Improving homes across Wales - including decarbonisation of homes, building new low carbon affordable housing and a national programme to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes.
2. Connecting and moving people - including improving digital connectivity, active travel (non-motorised ways of traveling for example on a bicycle) and public transport.
3. Investment in training to create new greener jobs.
4. Investment in nature - including prioritising funding and support for large-scale habitat and wildlife restoration; supporting natural flood defences; implementing the new national forest; and improving local food chains and distribution.

5. Supporting businesses that will help Wales to lead the low carbon revolution

Overall participants felt that **all the points were still important** and agreed that improving **connectivity (physically and digitally) was the most important** after what they'd experienced over the lock down:

*Connecting and moving people has to be a priority for Wales. Public transport is rubbish so we need to really improve this so it is actually a viable alternative.
– Business Owner*

Mae buddsoddiad mewn cysylltedd digidol yn hynod o bwysig. Roedd gyda ni un teulu a oedd yn byw ar fferm. Roedd y plant yn gorfod mynd at waelod y cae i gael signal i lawrlwytho 'r gwaith, a mynd adre wedyn i wneud y gwaith, ac wedyn mynd nôl i waelod y cae i uwch-lwytho'r gwaith. / Investment in digital connectivity is extremely important. For example, we had one family who lived on a farm. The children had to go to the bottom of a field to get a signal to download the work, then go home to do the work, and then go back to the bottom of the field to upload the work. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

A few participants were concerned that the **objectives were all too climate focused** and not all participants felt that this was required at this current time:

I struggle with 'investing in nature' because my heart says yes, it's the right thing to do, but is now the right time. I think it's important, but not as important as it is getting Wales back onto the right track. – Business Owner

But this was mostly **overridden by the need to be active and innovative about climate issues**:

Why is there no strategy for getting lorries off the roads and freight onto trains. We have heard in recent weeks about a shortage of Lorry drivers – probably a direct result of Brexit and all the UK government can think to do is train lorry drivers more quickly. There should be strategy to get freight back onto the railways. This will; Reduce congestion on the roads; Reduce CO2 emissions; Which in turn helps work toward net zero carbon; Reduce the need for Long distance Lorry drivers; This will allow lorry drivers to spend more time at home with families thus improving their quality of life and reduce their stress. – Business Owner

A handful of participants said they think some communities might not think these are priorities because they are **struggling to survive themselves**:

Most people's priorities that we engage with are around the questions like; How do I keep putting food on my table, when my benefits have been cut or my wages haven't increased? How do I keep my home warm this winter when my energy bills are so high? For some it's a choice between, do I bath my kids tonight, or put my heating on for an hour. As much as the natural world and environment are massively important. I think where a lot of families and individuals are at the moment they probably feel there are sharks closer to the boat. – Homeless Charity Staff

Innovation: With a focus on post Brexit and Covid Recovery challenges

Many sectors were feeling the pinch from “the combined impacts of the climate crisis, Brexit, Covid and ten years of austerity all crashing together in the most horrific way”:

Mae'r diwydiant Ilaeth wedi'i ddifrodi gan Brexit oherwydd bod llawer o'r gweithwyr a ddaeth o Ddwyrain Ewrop – mae pob un o'r rheini wedi diflannu. Maen nhw wedi mynd adref. Mae wedi achosi problemau mawr i rai o'r ffermwyr hyn, ac rwy'n credu ar hyn o bryd mai'r pryder mawr sydd gan lawer mewn amaethyddiaeth yw'r cytundebau masnach rhwng y Deyrnas Unedig ac Awstralia a Seland Newydd. Mae'r cyfeiriad polisi presennol o dyfu coed dros ardal enfawr o dir Cymru yn gwneud synnwyr perffaith wrth greu cytundebau masnach â gwledydd eraill. Rydyn ni wedi allforio diwydiant trwm ac rydyn ni'n awr yn condemnio India a China am eu hallyriadau. Rydyn ni'n barod i wneud yr un peth o ran cynhyrchu bwyd hefyd, mae'n debyg. Mae gan y sector amaethyddol bryderon mawr ynglŷn â'r cytundebau masnach hyn. / The dairy industry has been damaged by Brexit because the number of workers who came from Eastern Europe, all of those have disappeared. They've gone home. It's been very problematic for some of these farmers, and I think that at the moment the major concern there's many have in agriculture is the trade deals between the UK and Australia and New Zealand. The present policy direction of growing trees over an enormous area of Welsh ground makes perfect sense to forge trade deals with other countries. We've exported heavy industry and now condemn India and China for their emissions. We are prepared to do the same with food production

apparently. The agricultural sector has a great deal of concern about these prospective trade deals. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

If we pull down an organic farm and grow a load of trees there and then we have to import food from New Zealand or China. Then everybody loses, don't they? – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

Despite the fact that agricultural is devolved, we still remember all those promises that we would not receive less support once we left the European Union. And we need to feel that Welsh Government is doing what it can for us. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

However there was **appetite to innovate** and work through these challenges should Welsh Government provide funding and support to do so. One main suggestion was **longer term certainty when it came to allocating funding**:

Our projects are commissioned on a year by year basis and everybody around this table is expected to create spaces of safety and stability for some of the most vulnerable people in society when we generally don't know whether our projects are going to run past the 31st of March every single year. – Homeless Charity Staff

The Welsh Government needs to look at how they can work with the third sector more closely and how they can make things easier for the third sector to get funding. I'm involved with a charity who have funding for advice services and the process can be quite frustrating. It can take a while to have decisions and a lot of charities have got to issue redundancy notices because they haven't been told the funding is definitely coming through in time. Then when it arrives they retract the redundancy notice but by this time it's damaged staff morale. – Older person

We're grateful that we do have now some clarity for the next two years at least. But we don't know where we are heading. We have no idea what the budget is going to be and no other business would run itself in that way. We need more clarity and information because one of the expectations of us if we go to the bank is we have to have a five year business plan. How can we plan for five years at the moment? I don't think government ever thinks about five years because they're not guaranteed to be in office any longer. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

I think longer term funding is a major issue. With longer term funding you can actually plan as governors. We have to plan three years ahead financially but

we only receive funding on a one year basis. This makes planning very difficult and does inhibit long term planning. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

More long term and more reliable financial support would be very useful. I think schools needs a bit more confidence that things are going to be longer term so we can actually plan better. – participant from the Headteacher and School Governor focus group

Particularly in the agricultural sector:

What is wrong with thinking positively instead of negatively about this? We've heard, for example, about the problems in the Wye catchment area where egg producing businesses are being blamed for pollution in the river. I believe 77% of those businesses were supported by Welsh Government to establish in the first place. Why don't Welsh Government go to those people and say we've got a nitrate problem in the Wye, maybe a little bit of phosphate in the water. These chemicals are fertilizers which cost about £600 - 800 pound a ton. Why don't we get together some of this European money and put up a big shed and make Welsh fertilizer? To sell to the rest of Wales where they need it and it could be cheaper and home produced. Solving many problems. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

Equality

Participants were asked **should the Welsh Government prioritise funding for certain groups of people in society.**

Participants felt that all groups of people in society should get treated equally while the Welsh Government should identify where one group may have a particular disadvantage in society and then investment should be made:

I feel that younger people and in some ways, older people were disproportionately affected by Covid. And within those groups, yes, ethnic minorities, disabled people. LGBTQ plus were affected more so. But I don't think that we should just target people because of their label. What we should do is make sure that everybody has equal access. And some people will need a step up and help with that. – Older Person

Everyone is equal and they should all have equal care and respect. – Older Person

Many participants in different focus groups suggested **there was a need for a stronger and genuine channel of communication** between grassroots people and the Welsh Government. **Allowing for co-production** and for the citizens of Wales to be able to express what types of projects and programmes would support them:

Welsh Government should take a bit more lead from teachers and schools, maybe inviting schools to come up with innovative ideas. Coproduction perhaps. I know there's a lot of talk about Co-production with the rolling out the new curriculum in our area, but I think perhaps there could be a lot more of that in future. – Arts and Culture Professional

I think that the whole population, needs to be supported, but I think with some of these groups there needs to be more of a platform for those people to come forward with ideas and suggest the funding that would support them. – Young Person

I think for Wales to succeed and the farming industry to continue, the Welsh Government has to sit down and listen to the views of people that are actually on the land. They know their land. These schemes seem to be one size fits all. There never seem to be any boxes where the farmer can give an opinion of what they think would work well on their farm. For example, last year I tried a scheme requesting a wildlife corridor. They told me what trees I had to plant. Which I did, but I told them at the time that some of them wouldn't grow. It was the wrong tree for the wrong place. And they haven't grown. To me that was a waste of money. The wildlife corridor was a good idea and it was a bit of a shelterbelt for me, but for the effort I put in and the scheme only just about covered costs. It didn't cover labour and it's been a failure really. – Participant from the Agricultural Sector

I understand they can't deal with all the little forums throughout Wales, but there should be some kind of overarching way in which small organisations could be dealt with. – Older Person

Small funding pots should be more available to these groups. Community leaders know their needs, and they know what will make the difference. One of the problems sometimes with Government down things is that you are superimposing things that you think might work. The people that really know are the community leaders. – Older Person

Because the Welsh Government looks at things on a much bigger picture and a more strategic level. They sometimes don't see what's happening down on the ground, but sometimes they come up with really good ideas, like when they funded the BSL interpreter apprenticeship scheme. This scheme increased the number of BSL interpreters in Wales. And it was a really successful scheme. But the idea came from the deaf community who campaigned for more equal access to services. In this case the Welsh Government had to listen to the smaller groups. Maybe there needs to be better and easier access to the government to share solutions. – Older Person

Specific support was also outlined for certain groups. Participant felt each group was equally important to focus funding on and stressed the **impact on decreasing** funding as “disastrous” and “catastrophic”:

I think that for LGBTQ+ and trans people an increasing in funding would reduce the waiting lists for surgery and hormone therapy which can both save lives and help peoples mental health. And a decrease in funding could just be really catastrophic. – Young Person

Ethnic minorities:

Participants expressed how **there is a still an issue of ensuring inclusion:**

The Black Lives Matter protests are still happening and I think this does highlight that there's still a problem – Young Person and care leaver

From a BAME perspective we know that we contribute so much to the economy but every time we try to access funding, if it's to promote our language or our culture or to celebrate an event it's so difficult and complicated to access funding. We don't feel included in the economy. – Participant with migration experience

We need to focus on hate crimes more, not just focus on reporting but action is what we need to see. We need more legal support for LGBTQ+ and ethnic minorities. – Participant with migration experience

Disabled people:

Disabled groups were identified as an important group to focus on for support with housing in particular. Some participants shared stories of where housing didn't suit people with a disability (physical and mental) and that this needs to be addressed:

Those on the neurodiversity spectrum it's incredibly difficult for them to share HMO's (House in Multiple Occupation) and for a lot of people, that's a contributing factor to them being homeless. They also require quite intensive support in a way that differs from other types of support. There seems to be a huge waiting list for adult assessments of autism. (38 months was suggested) – Homeless Charity Staff

We've currently got someone in a HMO because there would have been homeless otherwise. They are the third floor and yet they are in a wheelchair. It's not sustainable, but it was either that or watch someone wheel themselves up and down the promenade in Aberystwyth in the rain. – Homeless Charity Staff

We need more bespoke facilities and more that are suited for people who are homeless because of their underlying conditions. Whether it's PTSD, whether it's a severe and lasting condition like schizophrenia or bipolar, who can't be around other people. – Homeless Charity Staff

During the cultural freelancers focus group points were made around **a lack of diversity and thinking creatively around funding** within the sector:

I feel at the Arts Council have not got enough diversity of operation. There are 67 Arts Portfolio Wales (APW) organisations in RCT. Three of those APW's gained 91% of the Arts Council of Wales budget for this area. Within those organisations the majority of staff do not work in RCT. Within one of these organisations their recruitment policy documents state that disabled people aren't allowed to be employed, and they use these words "people with certain competencies are not allowed to work within certain job roles" which is describing disabled people. So they have outdated policies which are not inclusive for allowing people to work. – Arts and Culture Professional

Some participants shared stories of **feeling overwhelmed when filling in forms** and that this was possibly a very dated way to collect information which lacked accessibility:

I had to fill out the EMA form for my son. That was a massive form! He was really daunted, he's dyslexic. He's not very academic on paper, and I ended up filling out most of his form because he just couldn't do it. And I did think maybe there could be a better way, maybe digitising parts of it. And you have to send original documents and that's always a hassle as well. The Covid pass checks for identity were so much more straightforward and were proven ways

of establishing my identity. It made me think that there must be better ways to collect this data. – Lifelong learner with dependents

Older people:

Most participants described this group as “vulnerable” and felt they do need added support from the Welsh Government.

I would say that funding is needed for the elderly because some of them can't pay for care homes. Care homes aren't equal in their support, the more you pay the better the service. But not everyone can afford it. – Young Person

Loneliness and mental health issues in older people definitely needs to be addressed. Like loneliness in care homes or people on their own who might be older people with no families need support. – Young Person

Younger people:

There was a particular focus upon **young care leavers** within one focus group that highlighted where they **felt they were at a huge disadvantage** when they immediately left “the education system” and were embarking on “the working world”:

When I was in a hostel I was on £50 a week and I had to pay £22 a fortnight to live there. With what was left I had to buy my food and I'm sorry but how can you make a 20 year old do that? I think that it is wrong that the government is making young people live their early life like this. I've carried this experience through until now and I am scared to be homeless again. I'm scared to get a job and things not work out and then because I've left the benefit system I won't be able to get straight back in and I'd be homeless again. Because being homeless has no stability. You've got to start the whole 8-12 week process again going through all the assessments and the whole time you'd be living on nothing. – Young Person and care leaver

We are encouraged to stay in school until 18 but the education still sends us off into a world that we don't know how to navigate. That's how it was for me, I got thrown in the deep end and then I was made homeless. You're not meant to go from education to being homeless. How can we achieve if there are no stepping stones or no funding. They [Welsh Government] have to help us. – Young Person and care leaver

The jobs market is tough at the moment. Because of Covid work places are only taking on for like 3-6 months at a time. This is too temporary for me to leave a safe place. Also a lot of places want you to be able to drive. I wouldn't be able to afford to learn. We get penalized because we can't drive, but there's no funding out there to help us do that. I know people from school whose parents pay for that and buy them a car and pay for the insurance. These costs are sky high. It's like £5,000-7,000 just to be in that situation. There's just no chance for me! There are a lot of barriers that stop us. – Young Person and care leaver

Many participants wanted to express the need to **level things out for young people** from all background particularly when it came to wages:

Why do young people have a lower minimum wages, are we worth less? That's what it feels like. – Young Person and care leaver

I've never understood why if you're over 25 you get extra money. I have lived in my own flat since I was 19. Then I'd see people who are like 27 still living with their mum and dad and they are entitled to £100 pound more than me for what? I live on my own. I've got to pay bills. I have a phone bill. And they're entitled to £100-200 more than me. And they have nothing to pay for really. I'm not saying they should lose their £100. I'm pretty much saying people under 25 should get the exact same because it's nothing to do with the fact that we're younger or we're older. It makes absolutely no sense. – Young Person and care leaver

You can do the exact same job as someone, but because you are two years under the minimum wage limit of 25 years old you get paid like 50p - £1 less an hour. It makes me feel undervalued. I don't think it should be based on circumstance or your age. I think everyone should be entitled to the same thing. – Young Person and care leaver

People in Poverty:

There was an **added focus on a group identified as “people in poverty”** where participants felt **if funding was directed there it would help elevate funding required to a range of overarching areas** e.g. Health and Social Care and Education because they felt **these members of society are the biggest users of governmental support currently:**

I think some of these things can be solved with more legislation than more funding. I want to see people in poverty get that funding because people in

poverty, and we have some of the highest areas of poverty in Wales across the UK, they also tend to be the significant users of health service, government services, social services. If we gave them that the hand up that they need to get jobs and become meaningfully engaged in society again. Then we reduce the need on the government to fulfil that role. – Business Owner

There's so much need for social housing because people generally can't afford private rent. I use to private rent and I use to pay £250 towards it from my benefits. I got £400 a month on benefits. That's over 50% of my incoming funds on rent. I had £150 left to live for the month. I did that for a year and a half before the Council decided to put me into the property that I am in now. But young people don't know how to budget straight away and that was a very difficult learning curve. – Young Person and care leaver

When I was on universal credit it was before they offered the temporary uplift and I was going to the food bank and really wondering how people were managing on this little per week. Then when they upped it I suddenly felt like oh yes this is now very much manageable. I'm just about buying the food, covering the bills, we haven't got money for luxuries or anything but I thought I'm keeping my head above the water...It [taking the uplift away] feels wrong. For people, it means the difference between having the heating on or not. It's not a lot really to help quite a lot of people to get just out of poverty. They still won't be living the high life! – Lifelong learner with dependent

Participants discussed their thoughts on the proposed **Universal Basic Income (UBI) pilot**:

I've got mixed feelings about it[UBI] because for some people they could see it as just easy money and not work, not make any effort to better themselves, or try to get a job – Lifelong learner with dependents

I do wonder where the money would come from to pay for it [UBI pilot] because it does sound like it would be expensive. – Lifelong learner with dependents

Obviously there are some people that it [UBI] would really benefit, but ultimately I think it would be cheaper and probably easier if they just made Universal Credit an amount that you could actually live on. – Lifelong learner with dependents

I'd be concerned about the cost implications and it[UBI] being abused. It would have to be a monitored. I think Universal Credit have got the right idea

where they make contact with you every couple of weeks to ask you how you are, what you're doing, and if you don't participate in that positively, they can reduce your payments or stop your payments. I do get the concept of it [UBI] if people are constantly trying to get out of a ditch. – Lifelong learner with dependents

It's [UBI] quite a bold idea. I don't know whether it will work, but I think the Welsh Government should be bold enough to give it a shot.- Business Owner

We should be lifting people out of poverty. It's shameful really that in this day and age that people are suffering, children are malnourished in this country. If it[UBI] can do that then I'm for it. But I'd want to know how it's going to be funded – Business Owner

I think there is power in that freely giving of a basic living wage. I have seen from the pandemic what that can do for people in our sector. I saw artists making work. People supporting each and their communities as a result of being given an artist basic income. – Arts and Culture Professional

It really would be valuable to have a [UBI] pilot that includes a really diverse range of people that because then I think it would be more likely to prove results. – Arts and Culture Professional

4. Case Studies

Case Study 1 - Health and Social Care (Registered Mental Health nurse – Focus on patient flow)

This case study by a registered mental health nurse working in mental health of the older person focuses on **patient discharge issues** and the fact that more beds wouldn't necessarily be the answer:

If you took my ward is a microcosm. We have 14 beds. We admit people. We treat them, then we're unable to discharge them because the resources in the community are not there. We need more funding towards home care and care support.

We need more support services for people who are being discharged into the community on their own, such as in to day centres and backups, these

resources have crumbled in the last year. Or have closed in relation to Covid or now they are only working behind fences.

We can do the work that we can, but then we cannot generate a safe discharge for the patient into the community. So the patient then stays with us, and if the patient stays with us, we can't admit another patient. And that generates a backup and then that has a knock on affect across the system because we organize and manage peoples care if we cannot achieve that care of that care becomes stagnant. That disincentivizes the staff that we have working with us and certainly it disincentivizes our students. The nurses of the future enter into a circumstance where they see nursing staff on a daily basis "banging their heads" against the wall. Trying to generate a safe discharge to manage things for patients, set up goals, get people back out into the community, and optimize their lives for them. Then to hit this cliff edge before the patients discharge date. It just all stops.

*There was a psychologist in the 1960s called Erving Goffman and Goffman came up with the term "institutionalization". All it takes is six weeks of inpatient care. If you don't get it right, that person starts to almost lose the will. They become more reliant on the environment. They start to give up their independence. They start to give up their goal setting and they become reliant on other people decision making for them. In my field, if you keep someone in a room for six weeks, you manage their care, but you're telling them what to do. Every single step of the way. They only have so much autonomy in their life. Not a nice world. However, **the longer that person stays in that bed. The less chance that person has survived in the world on discharge.***

The community resources that we have are essential to us and we have nowhere near enough of them at this time. It would be disingenuous to turn around and say that just the care in the community is the solution because I went through the care in the community revolution of the 90s and I saw how many inpatient beds we lost in mental health, for example, in North Wales we had hundreds of hospital beds. Nowadays in North Wales we have about 50.

But the numbers of mental health patients are only growing. Covid has amplified that for us. Support is vital within hospitals and for that ongoing journey. More beds would be good but more beds would require more staff and other resources it's not as simple as just increasing the number of beds.

Case Study 2 – Education (Lifelong Learner with dependents – Focus on funding)

This case study from a lifelong learner with dependents who discussed their journey throughout Covid and how funding was “amazing and some of it a little bit confusing” at times:

I lost my job in the in the public sector a year ago and it was down to digitalization. They reorganised the department because the company digitalized a lot quicker than what they'd planned because Covid force them. So the reorganization of the department happened very quickly. I had a pay-out but not a massive one. I completely lost my confidence. Even with 30 years of experience, lots of qualifications and I just didn't know what to do. I wasn't right mentally and I just didn't know what the future looked like with Covid. We didn't know what was happening.

Then my daughter was incredibly ill and we didn't know what was wrong with her, so I stepped out of the working world for a bit to look after her and she was diagnosed with Crohn's disease in March 2021. After being in and out of hospital for quite some time, so I couldn't really throw myself back into a job. So I had to claim Universal Credit for the very first time in my life. I've always worked up until then but I felt I had to wait until she got better. And during that time I didn't know what I was going to do because of being in the civil service for so long doing quite a specialized job, I was quite worried. But what I did have was 30 years of experience of managing people and quite a few qualifications that I've gained along the way during work. So I decided to go back and learn how to be a teacher so I could support people in those kind of roles.

Financially the bit of Universal Credit that I've had has been a lifesaver. It's kept my head above water. I have a mortgage so I don't get the of full scope of Universal Credit, and that's been quite tough because there's not much support for mortgaged people at all. But I'm not going to moan. I had lots of support from Welsh Government with things like dinner money and pupil development grants. I received things like reduced Council tax and reduced water bills which have all been a huge help for me.

I applied for student finance and it's a part time course that I'm doing, so I was accepted for the maximum amount at part time, which I was absolutely thrilled. I've got the loan to pay off when I become a certain level, but I got a grant as well. The only downside really was that I was a little bit surprised when I got my grant because it affected my Universal Credit, so it was

pointless me getting it anyway because they cancelled each other out but nevertheless, I'm just grateful to be here and changing my career.

When my daughter was very, very ill and when I lost my job she was starting to really show signs of not being a well girl. The waiting times for hospitals and going back and forth into hospital while in the pandemic was a nightmare. It was a really difficult time but I just tried to grab any financial support I could. There was support out there for me but it was difficult to find and to understand. Universal Credit were great in telling me that you need to start thinking about claiming PIP too. So I went through a huge process of trying to claim PIP for her because she was over 16. It took months and months and by the time we actually got a decision on her PIP she was starting to get better. But his was eight months later. So the PIP team decided because she was on the mend, we weren't entitled to anything. Those eight months of waiting were difficult. At first we didn't know what was happening and it was that worry as no money was coming in and I had a poorly daughter.

*I was lost in the world. But I navigated my way through everything. **Some of it [funding] has been amazing and some of it a little bit confusing.** Now, I just see it as this is how it is. I'm here. We're alive. My daughter is getting better. I'm studying. I've already been offered a part time job by the college too.*

*I was made aware of a mortgage loan for people that had been on Universal Credit for nine months and I was very interested. So I thought I'd take a look and work it out. And the small print said if you've got an income then you aren't eligible. And I've just gotten a small part time job that might open more doors to me. It's like Universal Credit think about these things, but you've got to be in a very, very dire situation before it's available. There needs to be barriers and restrictions to funding and support from the government because of obvious reasons. But sometimes **when you're genuine like me have just gone through huge trauma and found yourself unemployed it's so tough.** I had to choose a part time course because I've got 2 girls and I've got lifts and cook. I can't be throwing myself into something full time at the moment, especially with my daughters illness because she can become ill very quickly.*

So yeah, it's like the support is there, it's just it is difficult to navigate and understand what you're eligible for, what you're not.

Case Studies 3A-C – Economy and Sport (Focus on “being listened to” by the Welsh Government, Green Economy Support and Funding for Sports Clubs)

Case studies 3A, 3B and 3C are from Welsh based business people and a private sports club

Case study 3A:

One participant said they had felt **listened to by the Welsh Government** but still have fears that another lockdown would be hugely detrimental:

I think in my industry, the tourism leisure industry, we probably got hit the hardest by Covid. We are quite a resilient industry and we bounced back really well this year. But my huge fear is going back into another lockdown. We will do anything we can to avoid going back, having masks or Covid passports. We will do that.

I was fortunate to be on two Covid task force meetings. One organised by Welsh Government and one by UK Government. And they were two massively different meetings where I felt in the Welsh meeting you were far more closer to decision making.

Since, we have had further conversations with Welsh Government and the Ministers are listening to us and think we are a mature and sensible part of the economy who want the best for our customers. I do honestly think that Ministers listen to our views and it was refreshing to see that.

Case study 3B:

Participants called for **more advice and support from the Welsh Government to guide them in the best approaches to being more green**. At the moment there is a lot of information out there and there's appetite from the sector to make changes but it's not abundantly clear which routes are more effective, efficient and profitable. **Businesses want to invest but in the best possible way from the very start**.

We're not proud of running off generators and we want to explore changing this but we don't feel there is enough support out there to help businesses to be greener. It's a minefield trying to find out whether solar, wind, hydro, is best and when you go to the companies they of course all say that they are the best. It's not just a financial support we need. We need proper advice.

As a small business I need to start researching solar power. I believe we need to do these things and the appetite is there but we need support. If we can generate our own energy we know we will save so much money, but this requires changing the whole infrastructure. And this costs thousands.

Case study 3C:

From a sports perspective, a private sports club argued the need for more support as the **costs over the pandemic didn't stop building up despite the lack of members** being able to access the site:

We could have done with more loans and opportunities to support our infrastructure during that period of time.

We did have some Sport Wales grants which were very useful, but we don't have those on a regular basis. There were also some low interest loans which were great to kick things off. But we had no revenue coming in to cover the building costs and the building is still running. Then our problem was that we had to try to convince people back. We depended on people coming back to play sport and pay their memberships and get back in but even today they're very wary.

We had two grants. Both only covered some of the costs for some building work. One job was to improve the lighting system making it more accessible for members but also more environmentally friendly and cost effective. The other was to renew the tennis court surfaces. Both of these things have helped to encourage members back. It was a good time to do the maintenance work too. But we still need more support. The building is old and needs a lot doing over the next 10 years. We have lost a year of income and so these improvements will take us at least 10 years to save and have the funds to do the other improvements. Then we'd be waiting even longer to see that return on investment.

Case Studies 4 – Culture (including arts, sports and heritage) – Focus on applying for funding with a disability)

A participant who has disabilities shared their **personal experience of accessing funds**:

*I received the Freelancers funding and I've got dyspraxia, ADHD and dyslexia. So for me **even trying to do those forms was an absolute panic and there was zero support.** We basically got left on our own as people with disabilities and they said "fight amongst other people". Now that's for me, that's not a fair shake of the stick, but even when I asked for disability support, nothing was offered and some organisations say that they gave adequate disability support which for me is a complete slap in the face of people with disabilities like myself.*

The funding should have been made open and fair for everybody, and that includes support for people with disabilities, learning or otherwise. As a group, Covid has dramatically affected us, I think it was up to six in 10 people who were infected with Covid had a disability and died. People with a learning disability, you weren't going to be resuscitated. The pandemic has been hugely damaging to disabled people and people with disabilities.

*It needs to be discussed because at the moment **we need to get disabled artists to feel safe enough to come back to the sector.** And we need to change parts of the sector to make people with disabilities more welcome. Because it feels like we are always the last one on the list. This needs to be stepped up and become more important.*

I think one of the long term impacts of Covid on the sector could be a massive loss of diversity because we were all so precarious to begin. Financially and in terms of energy levels because we were working very hard compared to what we were earning. Since the pandemic I've seen people drop out and go into other jobs because they can't hack it anymore. People who either had a disability or had existing traumas due to being from a minority group seemed much more likely to suffer in that way.

*I recently graduated from professional training and my accounts weren't up to date. So when it came to the last round of **the Freelancer fund**, I wasn't entitled to it. Because they said there was a cut-off point and my profits weren't there. Basically, that affected all of the self-assessment from the government. So I **got about £1000 to live on for 12 months.** This was the case for artists if you were recently graduated or just moved. It didn't help my growth as an artist either. Before Covid these would have been my years of growth. **That life support that was there for that little bit was then taken away and I was left with nothing.***

5. Appendix

Appendix 1

The following organisations supported the process of evidence gathering from the focus groups:	
Children in Wales Young Wales Project Board	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Coleg y Cymoedd	Royal College of Nurses
Colegau Cymru	Squash Wales
Farmers' Union of Wales	The Beavan Foundation
Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Wales	The Wallich
Food Centre Wales, Ceredigion	Tir Dewi
Governors Wales/Cymru	Together Connecting Communities
Money Helper	Welsh Food Producers
Mudiad Meithrin	Welsh NHS Confederation / Confederasiwn GIG Cymru
National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)	Welsh Sports Association
National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)	What Next Cymru
Rhondda Cynon Taf Older People's Advisory Group	Zip World Wales

Appendix 2 – Main questions asked during the session

1. If you could choose up to three areas you think the Welsh Government should prioritise funding in the next financial year what areas would you choose:

Agriculture / Rural Affairs
Children and young people (including childcare, play, youth services)
Climate Change
Culture (including arts, sports and heritage)
Economy
Education
Health and Social Care
Housing/homelessness
International Relations
Local Government
Transport
Welsh Language

2. Why do you think the Welsh Government should increase spending in these areas?
3. If the Welsh Government is going to increase spending in some areas, it may need to cut spending in other areas. If you had to choose, which of the following areas do you think the Welsh Government should cut spending in the next financial year? Choose up to three areas: (refer to list above)
4. Why do you think the Welsh Government should reduce spending in these areas?
5. Thinking about the Welsh Government's spending in the next financial year, do you think it should use its taxation and/or borrowing powers to increase or decrease overall funding available to spend, or maintain its current level of spending?

Increase spending

Decrease spending

Maintain current level of spending

6. Ask to participants who answered "increase spending" above):

You said that the Welsh Government should increase its spending in the next financial year. Which of the following best describes how you think it should fund this increase in spending?

Welsh Government should increase borrowing

Welsh Government should increase taxes

Welsh Government should both borrow, and increase taxes

7. Ask to participants who answered "decrease spending" above):

You said that the Welsh Government should decrease its spending in the next financial year. Which of the following best describes how you think it should do this?

Welsh Government should reduce borrowing

Welsh Government should decrease taxes

Welsh Government should both cut back on spending and borrowing

8. During the economic recovery from Covid, how important do you think it is, if at all, that the Welsh Government focuses spending on the following schemes:

- Improving homes across Wales - including decarbonisation of homes, building new low carbon affordable housing and a national programme to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes.
- Connecting and moving people - including improving digital connectivity, active travel (non-motorised ways of traveling for example on a bicycle) and public transport.
- Investment in training to create new greener jobs.
- Investment in nature - including prioritising funding and support for large-scale habitat and wildlife restoration; supporting natural flood defences; implementing the new national forest; and improving local food chains and distribution.
- Supporting businesses that will help Wales to lead the low carbon revolution.

9. How can the Welsh Government be innovative in the way it funds all sectors in order to deal with future challenges, such as recovery from Covid and changes to funding post-Brexit?

10. Thinking about the next financial year, should the Welsh Government prioritise funding for certain groups of people in society? If so which groups should be prioritised?

11. Why are these groups a priority?

12. Considering the impact of funding for these groups ...

What would be the impact of funding or additional funding for these groups?

What would be the impact of no further funding or a decrease in funding for these groups?

13. Policy based questions (Optional):

What will the likely long-term impacts of Covid be on the sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?

How effectively does the support provided by the Welsh Government address the sector's needs?

How might the sector evolve (not just after Covid but year on year) and what financial support will it need as a result?

How can the Welsh Government be innovative in the way it funds your sector in order to deal with future challenges?