

Finance Committee Summary Engagement Report

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25

July 2023



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Welsh Government Draft
Budget 2024-25

July 2023



About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddFinance

Current Committee membership:



Committee Chair:
Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Plaid Cymru



Peter Fox MS
Welsh Conservatives



Mike Hedges MS
Welsh Labour



Rhianon Passmore MS
Welsh Labour

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Chair's Foreword

Later this year, the Welsh Government will publish its Draft Budget of approximately £22 billion for the next financial year, from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025; the third Draft Budget brought forward by the Welsh Government during the Sixth Senedd.

These budgetary proposals are essential to the delivery of public services in Wales. However, the financial landscape continues to be highly uncertain and years of austerity, stubbornly high rates of inflation and a drop in living standards are all having a significant impact on what the public purse can afford and deliver.

The world economic outlook is bleak with a fall in growth and the cost of living remains one of the most significant issues for people in Wales. The Welsh Government will have significant pressures in responding to the economic difficulties; with unprecedented pressures on key public services.

Each year, the Finance Committee undertakes several engagement activities to gather views on where the Welsh Government should prioritise spending in its forthcoming budget. During these difficult times it is more important than ever that we hear directly from stakeholders and the general public across Wales about where the Welsh Government should be prioritising its spending.

This year we visited north Wales to hold our annual stakeholder event at Wrexham Glyndŵr University. Wrexham is a centre for manufacturing, retail, education and a cultural and sporting focal point for the area. It is important to us as a Committee that we listen to the views of people and organisations across Wales, and we are grateful to all the stakeholders that attended and took part in the discussions.

For the second year running, we also held a workshop with Members of the Welsh Youth Parliament and I would like to thank these young Members who gave up their own time to speak honestly and openly about the issues concerning them.

The final strand to our engagement strategy was the numerous focus groups that were held with organisations and individuals across Wales. Again this is central to our work and we are grateful for their continued engagement in our work.

The views and concerns expressed in this report will form a cornerstone of our Plenary debate on the Welsh Government's Spending Priorities for 2024-25 that will take place on Wednesday, 12 July 2023.

We hope that the Welsh Government will listen to the concerns raised and will focus its resources appropriately in its forthcoming Draft Budget so that we have services that are sustainable and address the concerns and priorities of the Welsh public.

There will be further opportunities for organisations and individuals to engage with us on the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25. We intend to issue a written consultation, followed by oral evidence sessions with key stakeholders and the Minister in the autumn, once the Draft Budget is available.

We always like to hear from you so if you are interested please contact SeneddFinance@Senedd.Wales for further information.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peredur Owen Griffiths', with a stylized, flowing script.

Peredur Owen Griffiths, Chair of the Finance Committee

1. Introduction

- 1.** The Finance Committee (the Committee) is responsible for scrutinising the Welsh Government Draft Budget (the Draft Budget). The Draft Budget is normally published in the autumn. The Draft Budget for the next financial year 2024-2025 is expected to be around £22 billion. This is made up of funding from the UK Government through the Welsh block grant and money raised through Welsh taxes.¹
- 2.** Prior to the publication of the Draft Budget, the Committee undertakes public engagement with interested stakeholders and individuals to comment on expected draft budget proposals, as well as the Welsh Government's strategic approach to setting the budget and prioritising resources.
- 3.** The information gathered during its public engagement forms the basis for a Plenary debate, led by the Committee on the Welsh Government's Spending Priorities. This type of debate was introduced by the Committee (with the agreement of the Business Committee) to ensure the Senedd had a formal opportunity to debate and influence the Welsh Government's spending priorities prior to formulation of the Draft Budget.
- 4.** Our engagement work will also inform the Senedd's scrutiny of the Draft Budget in the autumn, enabling the Committee to hold the Welsh Government's spending decisions to account in line with the views and priorities of the Welsh public.
- 5.** The Plenary debate on the Welsh Government's Spending Priorities will take place on 12 July 2023. The Minister for Finance and Local Government (the Minister), Rebecca Evans MS, will respond to the debate.
- 6.** This year the Committee's public engagement strategy consisted of the following:
 - an external stakeholder event at Wrexham Glyndŵr University;
 - an online workshop with members of the Welsh Youth Parliament; and
 - focus groups with organisations and individuals facilitated by the Senedd's Citizens Engagement team.

¹ Welsh Taxes include: Welsh Rates of Income Tax, non-domestic rates, Land Transaction Tax, Land Disposal Tax

7. The Committee would like to thank everyone that has contributed to its work.

2. Stakeholder Event

Background

8. The Committee's Stakeholder Event took place on 15 June 2023 at Wrexham Glyndŵr University.²

9. A targeted invitation was issued to previous stakeholder attendees and respondents to the Committee's latest Draft Budget consultation. 17 organisations participated in the event from a wide range of sectors. A list of organisations that participated is at Annexe A



² Rhianon Passmore MS, was unable to attend and sent her apologies.

Summary of the discussions

10. There was a general view amongst participants that budgets were being squeezed due to the main cost pressures of high inflation and high energy prices.

11. Stakeholders raised the following general concerns regarding the current fiscal context:

- A lack of capital investment, exacerbated by high inflation, has impacted planned infrastructure projects and improvements, throughout the public sector.
- There was concern on how public sector pay awards, some of which have not yet been finalised, will be funded and the impact that this will have on strategic planning.
- The Welsh Government needs to adopt a more strategic approach when administering grants, as too many smaller size grants received later in the year caused difficulties for strategic and financial planning.

12. Other issues raised by participants at the event have been summarised under seven sub-headings which were identified as main priorities:

Support for those studying and working in the education sector

13. The comments of stakeholders focused on providing support to those working and studying in the education sector and the need to increase capacity to maximise opportunities:

- The mental well-being of students was a major concern, with academic institutions seeing an increase in student requests for support. The impact of COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis were cited as the main reasons for the increase in requests, with students struggling financially, academically and socially.
- It was noted that continued under-funding for adult education was a real concern, especially as Wales once had an ambition of being “a nation of life-long learning”. An increase in funding was needed to expand the opportunities available for adult learning, as it was an important means of escaping poverty.
- There needs to be a greater focus on developing and promoting apprenticeship programmes as a means of creating more well paid jobs in Wales. An increase in the availability of Higher Education (HE)

apprenticeships would be desirable as the current offering was viewed as extremely limited. Accountancy and cyber-security were highlighted as two professions with current talent gaps in Wales, that would benefit from high-level apprenticeships.

- More capacity in the education curriculum for workforce training, collaboration and professional development was identified as important, especially as academics were being asked to take on more responsibilities.
- The development and funding of a recovery plan for students who have missed out on schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic was identified as important.

Services need to collaborate to meet the challenges facing the NHS and social care sector

14. Participants noted that targeted funding in key areas and an emphasis on working collaboratively and to improve frontline services:

- Workforce planning in the healthcare sector was raised as an important issue, with significant talent gaps evident within certain professions. It was noted that staff shortages has led to an increase in international recruitment and an overreliance on agency staff, resulting in increased costs. Collaboration between the healthcare and education sectors in identifying the future skills mix would help mitigate this problem.
- Funding support for medical students and trainees was identified as important, with the NHS Wales Bursary Scheme seen as a vital source of income in providing help for fees and living costs. Although it was acknowledged that the bursary covered several healthcare professions, participants questioned whether it could be extended further.
- One stakeholder suggested that medical research had been chronically under-funded. It was stated that regardless of whether investment in medical research led to products being developed in Wales, there were still financial benefits in relation to prevention and job creation within the community.
- In relation to the future of healthcare services it was noted that a one-stop shop model, with patients accessing services closer to their community, would be highly beneficial. This model would see a greater

focus on prevention and promotion of healthy lifestyles. There needs to be a shift from quantity to quality of patient outcomes.

- Concern was expressed regarding the future funding for important healthcare initiatives such as the mapping and maintenance of the defibrillator network. Public awareness campaigns promoting online healthcare platforms such as Dewis Cymru and Llais were also identified as important.
- A concern was raised that continued health board overspends could lead to a corresponding reduction in funding for local government and, as a consequence, impact the provision of social care services.
- It was suggested that enhanced social care roles would see a greater focus on prevention and the reintegration of patients back into the community, with these added responsibilities and skills leading to higher rates of pay and recognition. This elevated status would also help with the current challenges faced by the social care sector regarding staff retention.

Local government needs sufficient resources to deal with mounting demands

15. A number of participants from the local government sector said that they had insufficient resources in the face of mounting policy and funding pressures and increases on the demands placed on its services:

- There needs to be greater recognition by the Welsh Government of the cost implications for local government in implementing policies, such as the introduction of default 20mph speed limits in built-up areas.
- There were calls for a review of the current funding formula for local government, which is based on population distribution and population trends. It was noted that raising council tax to make up any shortfall in funding was not an appropriate long-term solution.
- Some concerns were raised over the sustainability of the Fire Services Levy, with expected increases in the range of 10-15 per cent.
- It was noted that local government has insufficient resources available to address the increasing rates of homelessness.

- Similarly, there were concerns regarding insufficient resources available to meet the demand for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and it was noted that this scheme is oversubscribed for all local authorities.
- With local government statutory services such as adult social care and education a priority, concerns were raised regarding a lack of resources for discretionary services such as leisure, which have associated preventative spend benefits.
- There were discussions around the provision of free school meals, with participants noting that an increase in funding will be needed to meet the expectation of providing children with a nutritious and healthy meal. Questions were raised as to how the free school meal policy will be tracked and monitored to determine its effectiveness and value for money.
- Cost pressures were identified in relation to the provision of transport services, especially school transport.
- Comments were made for greater Welsh Government understanding of the different economic and social circumstances faced by north Wales local authorities compared with local authorities in south Wales.

The impact of the cost of living continues to be felt

16. One participant noted that the cost of living crisis is not going away any time soon, and stakeholders discussed the wider impact it was having across society:

- Women are disproportionately affected by the cost of living crisis, which is also exacerbating social problems, particularly abuse against women and girls, and those with no recourse to public funds.
- Support systems and services for domestic abuse sufferers should be simplified and more funding provided for organisations and businesses to train staff to identify signs and provide help.
- Solutions to social issues needs to be comprehensive and holistic, involving a number of health and social services, and including the third sector and private business to raise awareness and provide support.
- Initiatives introduced by the Lloyds Banking Group to provide support for victims and survivors of financial abuse was identified as good practice in the private sector.

- Voluntary groups need to write safeguarding training into different bids for funding.
- Links between women's charities and other organisations should be strengthened so that appropriate training and guidance can be issued across services.

A focus on community-led solutions and prevention is needed to tackle the root causes of poverty and inequality

17. Participants noted that innovative and radical solutions were required to address widening inequality and increasing rates of poverty but that there is a long way to go:

- There is an opportunity to simplify the support processes for those needing assistance to alleviate poverty and those suffering domestic abuse so that they can be accessed more easily. More needs to be done to reach a 'no wrong door' approach for people seeking support.
- Integrated services should be encouraged as they provide value for money and reduce inefficiencies, and also avoid situations where organisations are doubling up efforts.
- It was noted that austerity policies have been in place since 2010, followed by COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and high inflation. These factors have led to increased pressures on local services and hollowed out the funding available to small, community led organisations.
- It feels like community-led organisations are losing funding and there is no replacement for the Communities First programme, at a time when it is needed the most.
- A number of attendees felt that there was a need for the Welsh Government to adopt an invest-to-save approach, including spending money on prevention initiatives to reduce social and health difficulties arising in the medium to long-term.
- The importance of universal initiatives, as opposed to targeted initiatives for those receiving welfare support, was noted. These included warm hubs, and play initiatives.

- Food policy was essential in achieving play-friendly initiatives, and the Free School Meals policy was seen as vital in providing a long-term commitment to levelling the playing field and reducing inequality.
- Play initiatives, such as the Welsh Government's summer of fun and winter of well-being initiative were seen as absolute lifelines. The importance of them being universally available was noted. Wales is leading the way with its play policies and a continuation of funding is needed to ensure that its unique position in relation to this policy is retained.
- Innovative approaches, such as a move to a four-day week and the 15-minute cities concept, should be explored by the Welsh Government.

There needs to be a move away from ad-hoc funding for the voluntary sector

18. Participants noted that the voluntary sector was providing essential services during the cost of living crisis but were facing a number of challenges:

- We heard that the challenge for most third sector/voluntary organisations is that they are passionate about improving people's lives and achieving real change, but that they don't have the right levels of resources to provide the necessary levels of support.
- Voluntary sector is hugely dependent on underspends from Welsh Government to survive.
- Short-term nature of funding from the Welsh Government is a huge challenge and longer-term funding, rather than ad-hoc funding which is dependent on departmental underspends, would allow greater focus on longer-term projects.
- Lack of funding across the board is making the bidding process for funding far more competitive.
- It was noted that funding shortfalls in the third sector was having a disproportionate impact on women, as more women were employed in that sector than men.

Turning Wales's potential for green energy into reality

19. Participants noted that there is a need to move to renewable energy, and that Wales has huge potential, but more is needed to make it ready for the switch:

- Greener, cheaper energy will help to deal with the cost of living crisis.
- A healthy natural environment must underpin a happy, healthy and productive society and workforce. It is essential to addressing the cost of living crisis and in helping us to address systemic problems such as poverty and inequality.
- Decarbonisation and low carbon initiatives were also noted as good examples of green initiatives with positive social outcomes. However, it was noted that these were expensive, for example, it would cost £4 billion to decarbonise the housing market.
- The importance of marine planning in supporting the growth of sustainable offshore renewables in Welsh seas was also noted as potential priorities.
- Energy inefficiency across the public sectors estate, especially in the NHS, was identified as detrimental in meeting climate change targets.

3. Workshop with Welsh Youth Parliament Members

Background

20. In October 2016, the Senedd voted to set up a dedicated Welsh Youth Parliament. The Youth Parliament is made up of 60 members, aged between 11 – 18 years old and their term is for two years.

21. The current Welsh Youth Parliament (the WYP) is for 2021-23. The Members have chosen their three key topics which are:

- climate and the environment;
- education and the school curriculum; and
- our mental health and wellbeing.

22. Members of the WYP were invited to participate in a workshop to discuss where the Welsh Government should be prioritising spending in the next financial year (2024-2025).

23. Five Members³ of the WYP attended the workshop on Thursday, 29 June 2023, to discuss their views and concerns with Members of the Finance Committee:

- Fatmanur Aksoy, Newport East
- Ruben Kelman, Cardiff North
- Ella Kenny, Swansea East
- Tegan Skyman, Learning Disability Wales
- Ffion Williams, Cardiff West

Summary of the discussions

24. WYP Members were asked to choose up to three areas where they think the Welsh Government should prioritise funding in the next year and if the Welsh

³ Rosemary Squires, Swansea West, was unable to attend and sent her apologies.

Government was going to increase spending in these areas, where should spending be cut.

25. There were mixed views from WYP Members on areas that should have increased spending and where spending should be cut. WYP Members recognised that, whilst it is very difficult to retract funding from areas, such decisions are required to be made by the Welsh Government in order to prioritise areas of real need.

Areas that WYP Members agreed spending should be prioritise

Health and Social Care

26. There was a general consensus that Health and Social Care should be a key priority for the Welsh Government. There is still a huge pressure on the NHS to address the record number of people in Wales waiting for operations or treatment in the aftermath of the pandemic. It was noted that a “healthier workforce leads to a healthier economy”.

Education

27. WYP Members felt that Education was also a key priority. It was noted that school buildings are in a state of disrepair, with a need for more capital investment. There needs to be better pay for teachers given the additional expectations placed upon them. The affect the recent teachers’ strikes has had on students’ learning was highlighted as well as the importance of increasing support for students, in both an academic and pastoral sense, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Local Government

28. The huge strain on local government was noted, particularly given the range of “everyday services” it provides and the increase in demands placed upon it given the current economic climate.

Housing / homelessness

29. Housing was raised as an area of concern, with young people struggling to get on the property ladder due to rising house prices. Some WYP members felt that more investment should be made in building “starter homes” in the “right places”. This was also linked with transport and ensuring there is suitable infrastructure for communities.

30. It was also noted that rent is increasing and the need for legislation to regulate housing such as “rent control”, particularly to protect vulnerable people. It was noted that there is a link between high rates of homelessness and individuals with protected characteristics.

Transport

31. There was agreement that more needs to be done to improve transport and infrastructure, with train services described as particularly poor and unreliable, especially given the recent strikes and delays. It was noted that young people, especially those with a disability, rely heavily on public transport and it needs to be sustainable.

Cost of living crisis

32. All members were extremely concerned about the continued cost of living, which participants noted as getting worse, and the impact it was having on communities. It was noted that wages need to rise, otherwise the “crisis will deepen”. There was acknowledgement of the benefits of the Free School Meals scheme and for the roll-out to continue in primary schools and to be extended to secondary education. The link between the cost of living crisis and increases in mental health issues was also noted.

Areas that WYP Members had mixed views on spending priorities

Climate Change

33. There were mixed views on the importance of prioritising climate change. Some WYP Members felt climate change is a major priority and described recent data on global warming as “terrifying”. Participants felt that the Welsh Government should be pioneering green policies and that, even though Wales is a small country, it should be leading the way and setting an example.

34. However, other members felt that significant funding is already directed at climate change, and cited the cost of introducing the default 20mph speed limit, whilst there are still significant issues to deal with “in the present” such as the NHS and school buildings.

Economy

35. Another area where there was mixed views was on the economy. Some members felt more support was needed, particularly in terms of encouraging well-paid jobs, whilst others noted that some industries are heavily subsidised and

that the Welsh Government should be diverting such funds to green initiatives instead.

Rural Affairs

36. Again there were mixed views on whether rural affairs should be prioritised. A member suggested that subsidies should only be allocated to farms that demonstrate sustainable practices. Others noted that some farming subsidies have not been replaced since Brexit and suggested the importance of this to Wales having a sustainable food system. It was also suggested that the farming industry needs to adopt more eco-friendly practices.

Areas that WYP Members agreed spending should be cut

Welsh Language / Culture / International relations

37. There was general consensus that dedicated spending on the Welsh language, culture and international relations should not be a priority. There was a feeling that a large amount of money is already being spent on the Welsh language, through other areas such as education. There were no specific reasons provided for why spending on culture and international relations should not be a priority.

Welsh Taxes

38. The Welsh Government's budget is made up of approximately 80 per cent from UK Government funding and 20 per cent for Welsh taxes.

39. Whilst all members were aware that the Welsh Government has tax raising powers, they were not aware of the specific taxes.

40. It was noted that the mindset in Wales was that low taxes was a good thing but that in other countries, namely across Scandinavia, higher taxes were considered to be instrumental in the delivery of high quality public services. There was a strong feeling that, if the Welsh Government used its powers to increase tax, it would need to clearly show where the money will be spent so that the public could get something back and see the benefits of such an approach.

41. There was also a strong view that tax raising should be progressive and aimed at big businesses, with increases in corporation tax suggested for large companies who often receive tax breaks in the UK.

42. Members acknowledge that raising taxes in the current financial climate is difficult and would exacerbate the cost of living crisis and therefore increases should be targeted at the higher earners.

4. Focus groups with organisations and individuals

43. The Senedd's Engagement Team conducted focus groups with interested organisations and individuals to consider where the Welsh Government should prioritise spending in 2024-25.

44. 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.

45. Nine focus groups were held and two interviews were conducted with 43 participants covering 15 local authorities across Wales. Some participants were identified through gatekeeper organisations. This was to ensure the sample was representative as well as diverse.

46. This approach has been commissioned annually by the Finance Committee since the beginning of this Senedd, and it complements cross-committee engagement. Through these focus groups, the team heard first-hand from the citizens of Wales. This longitudinal approach enables the Committee to continue to monitor perspectives and attitudes over time and the trends that have developed over the last three years are summarised in the focus group report that can be found at Annexe B.

Annexe A: List of stakeholder event participants

47. The following organisations participated in the stakeholder event at Wrexham Glyndŵr University on 15 June 2023.

	Organisation
1	Association of Chartered Certified Accounts (ACCA) Cymru
2	Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS)
3	British Heart Foundation Cymru
4	Colegau Cymru / Coleg Cambria
5	Community Housing Cymru
6	Community Transport Association
7	Flintshire County Council
8	Marine Conservation Society
9	Office of the Future Generations Commissioner
10	University and College Union
11	The Venture
12	Universities Wales
13	Welsh NHS Confederation
14	Welsh Women's Aid
15	Wrexham County Borough Council
16	Wrexham Glyndŵr University
17	Ynys Môn County Council

Welsh Government draft budget 2024-25

Engagement findings

June 2023

As part of the Finance Committee's annual scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget, the Citizen Engagement Team proposed a series of focus groups to gather the views of the people of Wales on where Welsh Government should prioritise spending for the next financial year.

This approach has been commissioned annually by the Finance Committee since its first scrutiny inquiry of the 2022-23 Welsh Government Draft Budget (hereafter referred to as *Year One*). The method was developed and delivered for the scrutiny of the 2023-24 Welsh Government Draft Budget (hereafter referred to as *Year Two*). Findings within the main part of this summary note refer mainly to this year's findings (hereafter referred to as *Year Three*). Trends that have developed since year one can be found on page 3.

1. Summary of findings

The headline points within this report are as follows:

1. 9 focus groups were held and 2 interviews were conducted with 43 participants covering 15 local authorities across Wales.
2. **Health and Social Care** was prioritised most frequently by participants, closely followed by **Education** and then **Economy**.



3. **Children and Young People, Transport and Housing and Homelessness** were also identified by most of the groups as priorities for funding.
 4. When discussing areas that could receive a cut in funding, participants prioritised **international relations** and the **Welsh language** in the majority of cases.
 5. Others preferred to see more efficiency in the way funding was spent, rather than identify any areas in particular to receive a reduction.
 6. Participants were mainly in favour of **increasing spending**, although a number of groups argued for **maintaining spending**. No participants felt it would be viable to **decrease spending**.
 7. Views on using **taxation or borrowing** differed, with arguments made for and against both. However, the majority of participants only wanted to see **increased income tax** for those who can afford it or **borrowing** where it was for a large projects that would see a return on the investment.
 8. In monitoring any attitude changes since last year's study, participants were more focused on increasing spending for **Health and Social Care**. Second to that, **Education** was still a very important area, and **Economy** was mentioned more frequently this year. This differed to year one and two where **Education, Health and Social care** and **Climate change** were identified in that order as priorities both years.
 9. Similarly, **International relations** and **Welsh language** were also identified last year as areas to receive less funding.
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10. In comparing attitudes towards spending, participants in year one and two all shared the opinion that funding should be maintained or increased but they didn't always agree with borrowing or taxing to achieve this.
11. **Improving homes** and **connecting people** were felt to be the most important of the Future Generations schemes, followed by **investing in Welsh energy and food production capacity**.
12. Innovative funding to deal with future challenges included ideas on **free transport offer for under 25 year olds** and the creation of **more pet friendly "training flats"** for young people to understand how to be independent.
13. In most of the engagement sessions, participants identified **older and younger people** as a group that may require more focused funding. Participants also highlighted a range of other groups such as rural community members, people with hidden disabilities, people who want to switch careers and prison leavers as needing more help and support. Similarly to year one and two, this year, the majority felt that funding should be driven by **need**, rather than categorising people.
14. Sector specific challenges were discussed and covered a range of issues from staff retention and recruitment in the **health and social care** sectors to consistency of funding for the **third sector**.

In monitoring attitude changes since last year's study:

15. Participants appear to have shifted their focus from Education being their top priority to **Health and Social care**, then **Education** and then **Economy**. Climate change was not as heavily discussed in year three as it was in year one and two. In year one, in the majority of the sessions economy didn't even make it into any participants prioritisation selection.
 16. During sessions held across all three years, **International relations** and **Welsh language** were identified as areas to deprioritise. This was mainly for the same reasons. In addition
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participants preferred to see more efficiency in the way funding was spent, rather than deprioritising certain areas.

17. In regards to increasing or decreasing taxation or borrowing, participants seem to all agree that there was a need to **increase or maintain** the net budget allowance. No participants wanted to see a reduction, as a pose to in year one and two where a small number felt this could be affective.
 18. Again, there were mixed view in year three about how to increase funds. Similarly to year two, there was a sense that **taxation of the general public wouldn't be popular**, where as in year one some participants were happy to be taxed more if the extra funds generated would be spent in Wales.
 19. **Improving homes** and **connecting people** were felt to be the most important of the Future Generations schemes, followed by **investing in Welsh energy and food production capacity**. This is the same as in year two.
 20. As with year one and two, participants suggested; **Welsh Government grant funding is reformed** with a preference for long term funding schemes and; **increased education for the general public about budgeting**, debt, cost of living, council tax.
 21. In all three years the majority felt that funding for certain groups should be driven by **need**.
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2. Engagement

Methodology

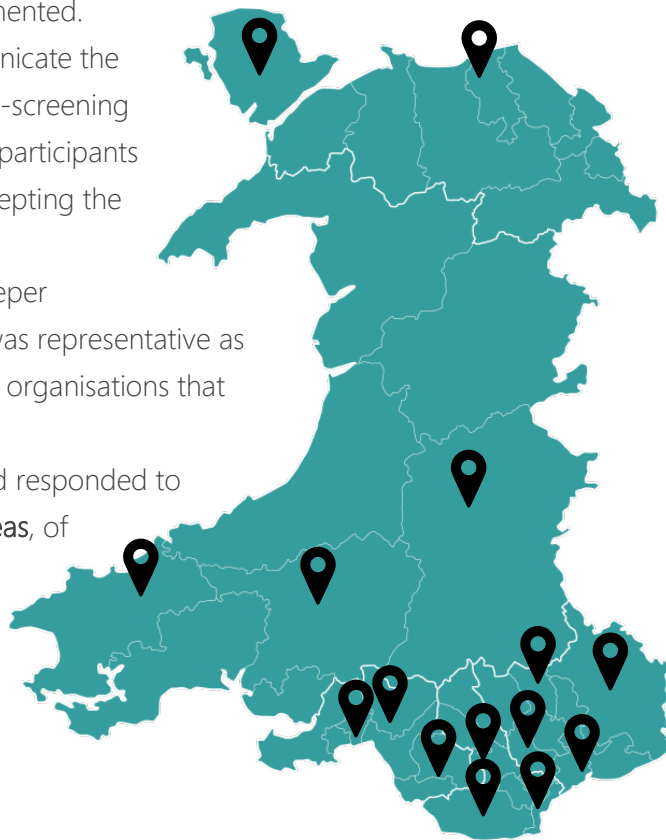
22. The Citizen Engagement Team held 9 focus groups and 2 interviews during June 2023 with 43 participants. The aim of the engagement was to gain qualitative information about the experiences of participants and deepen the Committee's understanding of the issues affecting the people of Wales.
23. The aim is to continue undertaking focus groups throughout the course of this Senedd to form a longitudinal study to allow the Committee to monitor perspectives and attitudes over time.
24. Participants were asked similar questions to those posed during year one and year two, with a few additions to reflect current challenges. 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 detailed questions participants were asked.
25. 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.
26. 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.
27. This approach is intended to complement cross-committee engagement and enable Members to hear first-hand from the citizens of Wales.

Participants

28. Participants were sourced through similar partner organisations to last year to cover the same demographics, and focus groups were organised to focus on particular policy areas.
 29. The Citizen Engagement Team would like to thank all those who contributed to the programme of engagement.
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Data collection

30. In order to ensure the demographic was as representative as possible of the Welsh population, a pre-screening survey was implemented. Working with external organisations to communicate the opportunity, 52 participants completed the pre-screening survey from across **19** local authority areas. **40** participants were then invited to a focus group, with **16** accepting the invitation.
31. **28** 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.
32. Participants who were selected to take part and responded to the invitation represented **15 local authority areas**, of which markers of their rough locations can be seen on the map. Just over half were from urban areas and the rest were made up almost equally from both suburban and rural areas.
33. Participants came from all Senedd regions.
34. The format of engagement was largely comparable across the focus groups, but varied slightly to respond to the views, experiences and ideas shared by contributors.



3. Engagement findings: In which areas should Welsh Government **prioritise or deprioritise** funding in the next financial year?

35. Participants were asked to identify up to three areas they would like to see Welsh Government prioritise or deprioritise funding in the next financial year. The areas are listed below in the general order of highest to lowest priority.

Health and social care

36. **Health and social care** was prioritised by the majority of the engagement sessions, with a focus on reviewing the way both sectors are operated and suggestions to consider merging the two. One participant also suggested reviewing local government involvement in social care.

"It's not just responding to the crisis we face today. It's also about restructuring health and social care so that we avoid crises in the future." Healthcare professional

37. One group felt they were having trouble with getting to the top of waiting lists and accessing their GP and they wanted more funding to increase services and professional's time.
38. However participants generally felt that the current challenges in health and social care could not just be addressed with additional funds, but more thought on how the health boards were operating. An "integrated approach" was described as being successful, but this hasn't been implemented in all of the health boards.

"There is so much inconsistency with approaches between different health boards. And best practices are not being shared due to the silo'd approaches and divided nature of them as evidenced by today's conversations." Healthcare professional

39. In a number of the groups, the issue of recruitment and retention of staff was raised as an urgent problem. Current structures of agency staffing are causing safeguarding issues and a drop in moral for permanent members of staff. There is more detail on this in on page 20.
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"Student nurses are exhausted working over their placement times of 37.5 hours per week and then working nights and days off to support their nurse training" Healthcare professional

40. One participant expressed that it has become more cost effective for nurses to go on benefits than to work on the current nursing wage.

"They've dropped their hours so they can claim benefits because they can't afford to stay nursing because the wages aren't high enough." Healthcare professional

41. A professional working in long term care found that people have been staying longer in hospitals because there is *"a significant lack of community support available."* They described how *"people are having to live or stay for prolonged periods within the acute setting where they may acquire infections."*

"There needed to be more resources within the community setting to allow people to either remain in their homes, or to be discharged with care/into a care setting. There simply aren't enough services to avoid hospital admission or allow discharge in a timely manner." Healthcare professional

We just simply can't get them discharged to their preferred setting and they end up passing away in hospital, which is absolutely tragic." Healthcare professional

Education and Children and young people

42. Another main area prioritised by participants was **Education**. Participants felt an investment in education was important to secure the future of young people.

"Bringing them (children) through and investing in them and allowing them to achieve their potential, empowering them for the future is the way to be successful." Member of the finance sector

43. Education was considered as *"vital"* in some groups. One participant highlight how Wales has *"probably the worst attendance rates ever,"* they felt it was important to focus on this to avoid problem in the future.

"Where young people are on free school meals, their average attendance in school is about 80%, so you've got a whole generation of young people who are not engaging with and attending school and college, which is ultimately going to have a long term impact on the economy etcetera. That's a huge problem storing itself up if we don't address this now." Member of the education sector

"We need to get the new generation ready for the careers that will help us in the future." Health professional

Economy

44. Investment in the economy was perceived by many participants as *"the answer"* to preventative health issues, business recovery and a solution to decreasing social issues.

"I think one of the challenges for Wales is that it doesn't appear to have a significant economic engine that can act to fund all of our aspirations." Older person

"I have chosen my areas because they are all underpinned by the issue of economic development." Member of the Finance Sector

Children and Young People (including childcare, play, youth services)

45. Further to **education**, many participants felt support for children and young people was essential for the future success of Wales. Participants wanted to see more funding for youth services to help young people build respect for their community.

"I don't think we invest enough in the youth service and childcare now. There's not enough for them to do. If they have problems in school they are just being labelled as lazy." Participant accessing health services

"A lot of the youth services I grew up with have now gone or been taken away. It's important for young people to be able to engage and speak to people." Young person

46. Several participants felt Welsh Government needs to encourage aspiration wider than locally and to nurture an environment that allows for easier travel to expand young people's opportunities.

"From the business perspective we must think about aspiration. I work, a lot as a volunteer with Young Enterprise and have for decades. And I think it's incredibly sad to go into schools to talk about their aspirations, which are so often limited to what they see within five mile radius of where they live." Member of the finance sector

47. A number of participants raised the issue of childcare and the challenges many parents and carers faced to find affordable childcare to sustain their careers.
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"Childcare is really expensive. It's difficult to find a job that is flexible around childcare arrangements.[...] I want to work full time, but at the moment I just can't do it." Person with experience of homelessness

Transport

48. Several groups identified issues with current transport offers.

"Young people might decide that they're going to stay in school purely because they can't afford the bus fare to travel to their local college [...] There are so many job vacancies at the moment in so many different positions and part of the reason for that is the young people in Aberdare cannot get home after 6 o'clock in the evening on public transport. So their ability to go and get a job is based on the transport infrastructure and probably cost." Member of the education sector

"Transport, that's a huge problem still." Older person

"You need transport for people to get out. People can't get from Pontypridd to Cardiff to see a show or anything because they can't get transport home." Older person

49. Further to increasing the availability of public transport, young people wanted to see improvements in active travel and physical accessibility (including funding to ensure there's audio announcements for the visually impaired).

"Cycling needs to be made more accessible for people." Young person

Housing / Homelessness

50. Participants linked good quality and financially viable housing to good mental and physical health.

"It makes such a difference if someone has a home to live in." Young person

51. While recognising devolution and its limits, one participant felt strategies such as **improving homes across Wales** within the Future Generations Act, were being jeopardised by financial policies that the Welsh Government could lobby against.

"VAT legislation on installing solar panels, external wall insulation is drafted at a national level and it doesn't allow zero rating which means if you want to spend £1 million on improving housing stock you'd have to spend £1.2 million because you'd have to pay the VAT, but if it can be 0 rated, you're only

spending a million [...] Wales could be more actively putting forward a voice on in terms of how things work at a taxation level, which could have an influence to have benefit across the wider community."

Member of the finance sector

Climate Change

52. Compared to previous years, participants didn't highlight Climate Change as highly as they did in year one and two. Generally, climate change was considered as a broad area cutting across several of the key areas of the budget. However participants felt it should be a long term goal which required a long term approach.

"We are not going to solve climate change, but responding to it strongly will make communities healthier and improve people's wellbeing." *Health practitioner*

53. Several participant thought that there was potential to create more energy within Wales to support sustainability and possibly even create an income for the nation.

"I think we've got fantastic opportunities here in Wales for energy production and we're just not using them." *Young person*

Agriculture / Rural Affairs

54. When prioritising agriculture, many participants talked about food production and becoming more self-sufficient in order to be more mindful of climate change.

"Wales produces food of the highest quality and has a reputation for that. Investment is needed in this. Therefore, we need to reduce food imports – that was the intention of Brexit – but we also need to export our best produce" *Member of the agriculture sector*

Culture (including arts, sports and heritage)

55. Several participants suggested this area should be deprioritised.

"As much as I love my sports, heritage and arts, if anything is going to take a hit and in these difficult times we're in a very serious position after austerity and the pandemic and you've got to make some difficult budget decisions [...] Wales already has a very established sporting culture." *Member of the finance sector*

"I think culture and the Welsh language probably could be supported by people who are very keen individuals." *Business owner*

Local Government

56. Decision making at local government level was described as “key” for communities, and for town centre regeneration by one participant from a business background. However many participants were calling for local authority reform.

*“There are 22 authorities across Wales for a population of our size in terms of what we manage compared with Birmingham that has three.” **Member of the finance sector***

57. One participant felt “reform of the business rates system is absolutely critical.” Retailers were hopeful that the Welsh Government will freeze the business rates multiplier again this year, like they did last year.

*“Whilst they bring in £1.1 billion, they are also massive deterrent to future investment [...] they can take small retailers to a cliff edge position when they grow in size and then have to face a huge business rates.” **Business owner***

Welsh language

58. Welsh language was another area chosen by the majority of participants to deprioritise with many feeling that, although it is an important part of Welsh identity and culture, much has already been achieved to promote the language and savings could now be made. Some participants suggested this could be a short-term solution to address challenges they felt were more urgent in the current climate.

*“I know that the Welsh language is something people are very proud of, but sometimes you just got to prioritise and I think homelessness is more important than our pride.” **Person with experience of homelessness***

*“I think we have to recognize where the most effective investment on priority comes. I'd love to be able to speak the language, [...] but I'm not sensing the value added and I think that's supported by the numbers that fall away in language post education.” **Member of the finance sector***

59. However some participants prioritised Welsh Language. For one participant explained that funding has supported them to become a Welsh speaker and they'd like more opportunities to continue to learn.

*“Where I live, not many people speak Welsh, and I want to speak Welsh all the time, but I don't get the chance.” **Healthcare professional***

"I've lost my Welsh because when I went into care, I was placed in a foster placement, who didn't understand or speak Welsh." Young Person

International relations

60. International relations was identified by the majority of the groups with a feeling that as this isn't devolved, responsibility should be left to the UK government.

"International relations is largely a UK responsibility." Older person

Efficiency of spending

61. When asked to deprioritise areas, many participants voiced concerns over cutting certain areas of funding over others and wanted to see more scrutiny of the allocation of funding, better governance and an improvement in efficiency of spending.

"I have great concerns about the monitoring and oversight because very often it feels like we are throwing money in a black hole and nothing improves." Older person

62. Local government was used as an example by a number of groups where they would like to see more transparency and more effective spending. One participant from the education sector felt post-EU funding hasn't *"filtered back through the Welsh budget."*

63. Some participants felt that policy making was out of touch.

"there is this disconnect between the public sector understanding and the reality of life on the ground [...] I think that's partly a need for Welsh Government to educate themselves about the reality." Member of the finance sector

4. Engagement findings: If you were thinking specifically about how Welsh Government could have the greatest impact on improving population health and wellbeing, and creating the social, environmental, and economic conditions for all people to thrive, how would you prioritise the budget?

64. For the first time this year, participants were invited to reassess their priorities while focusing on the above question. The majority of participants didn't change their original answers but did comment on the importance of good mental health and wellbeing.

*"I don't feel like there's enough being spent on mental health, not just for men and women and grown-ups, but for children as well [...] Me and my family going through our own personal thing at the moment. It's been really hard to get play therapy for my little brother. My mum passed away in September and it's taken about seven months for him to see anybody and a lot of damage can happen in seven months. We appreciate the help obviously, but we feel like it's just been a bit too long. The reason they gave us was lack of funding." **Person with experience of homelessness***

65. One participant wanted services to be offered that were suitable for people who needed them and not to apply a '*one size fits all*' approach. They felt poor mental health wasn't taken as seriously as poor physical health. They gave the example of a homeless person who was happier living on the street because after suffering from PTSD, they were unable to live in a block of flats and this was all that was offered to them as support, "*sometimes you just have to think outside the box.*"
66. Many participants wanted to see mental health and wellbeing as an active part of policy making.
-

*"We could build ten hospitals tomorrow and we would be able to fill them. Therefore, we have to think of ways of providing services and the prevention of diseases in different ways." **Healthcare professional***

67. Participants wanted to see access to healthy food and increased encouragement of healthy eating.

*"Healthy food production is really important for wellbeing. If Wales can produce healthy food, that would help the population." **Business owner***

68. Participants felt there needs to be a culture change in terms of attitude to food, not just educating people about healthy eating, but supermarkets need to play their part too.

*"Supermarket foods are full of sugar, but because they are in every supermarket people think that this is what real food is" **Healthcare professional***

5. Engagement findings: Should Welsh Government use its taxation and/or borrowing powers to increase, decrease or maintain overall funding?

69. Firstly, participants were asked if they were aware of how the Welsh Government budget was funded, and were provided with a breakdown of the amounts raised by certain taxes. Many participants were unaware of how the budget was funded. The majority of participants had some awareness of how the budget was funded in terms of devolution, but not of the specific amounts and the specific taxes involved. A small number of participants who worked in sectors that pay business rates or worked in the finance sector were fully aware of the way the budget was funded.

70. Participants were then asked to comment on whether an increase, decrease or maintenance of spending was preferable, and whether amounts of taxation or borrowing should be changed in order to achieve this. Groups generally agreed that an increase or maintained level was required. No participants felt it would be viable to decrease the budget.

"I think we live in a society now where we can't avoid the conversation of increasing tax." Young person

Taxation and borrowing

71. Views on taxation also differed, although all were against increasing income tax for those who were struggling financially already and felt that any increase in taxes should be directed at those with higher incomes or large businesses. Some participants expressed concern about getting the balance right in terms of raising tax as they felt tax increases for low earners would cause hardship but could drive high earners over the boarder, or put off businesses wanting to work in Wales if neighbouring countries aren't taxing as much.

"I don't think people are going to be happy with increased taxes and increased borrowing, its just a recipe for disaster." Young person

"There's an easy fix, by adding a percentage to an income tax rate in order to deliver revenue, but people are suffering and struggling, and I think there's a danger of creating diversity, particularly at borders between England and Wales." ***Member of the finance sector***

72. In terms of borrowing, some participants were concerned about interest rates rising and burdening future generations. However, some participants felt if the projects were going to provide a return on the investment, they were more comfortable with the idea of borrowing more.

6. Engagement findings: Should the aims outlined by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales be priorities?

73. Participants were asked about a number of schemes outlined as a focus by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and whether they felt these were important to focus on at the moment. Many participants felt that the schemes were interconnected.

"They all interlink, if you're putting the right amount of government spending into it, they will all grow."
Person with experience of homelessness

74. Overall **Improving homes and connecting people** were felt to be the most important of the Future Generations schemes, followed by **investing in Welsh energy and food production capacity**.

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

75. Participants in the majority of the groups said this scheme was very important with the need to create energy efficient homes in light of the current cost of living crisis. A number of participants also talked about how Wales may struggle to support this scheme due to a lack of a skilled workforce. One participant felt Wales should examine a model incorporated in The Republic of Ireland where ringfenced funds are used to create education centres across the region to train up the working population in retrofitting skills.

"Unless you've got an absolute clear strategy and policy on education, you won't have the skills to be able to train up people in the skills that are required to complete the scheme. Retrofitting is a good example of that." *Member of the education sector*

Connecting and moving people - including improving digital connectivity, active travel (non-motorised ways of traveling for example on a bicycle) and public transport

76. This scheme was felt to be very important by the majority of participants with particular comments around improving digital connectivity, and improving transport infrastructure.
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"I would argue there's an infrastructure problem. Broadband is still so pathetic in rural areas. We don't have the infrastructure for on wastewater in West Wales. You can't generate more energy in some parts of Wales because the power lines coming out of that area wouldn't cope." Member of the farming community

77. A lack of suitable, efficient and cost effective transport was considered an issue by participants who were from both urban and rural areas.

Investing in Welsh food production capacity to reduce reliance on imports

78. This scheme was noted by the majority of participants as very important, especially in light of Brexit, the cost of living crisis and to meet climate targets.

"We have such [an opportunity] to produce food here in Wales and we send it abroad. It's difficult to buy local lamb here." Member of the agriculture sector

79. Many participants felt that becoming more self-sufficient as a nation should be a priority for Wales. One participant also suggested a focus on STEM subjects would strengthen opportunities for the citizens of Wales.

"We've lost the home grown element we're having to bring so much in from abroad now we're adding to the carbon footprint by doing that, we are not supporting our local businesses." Healthcare professional

Investing in Welsh energy production capacity to reduce reliance on imports.

80. Participants felt that so much more could be done using our natural resources in Wales.

"I think we've got fantastic opportunities here in Wales for energy production and we're just not using them." Young person

"Wales has got a huge scope to be a green energy hub...We're windy and wet and that should work to our advantage!" Healthcare professional

7. Engagement findings: Innovation in funding to deal with future challenges

81. Participants were asked for ideas of how Welsh Government could be innovative in the way it funds all sectors in order to deal with future challenges, such as the cost of living crisis, supporting business recovery, transitioning to a lower carbon economy; and responding to changes post-Brexit. Many participants made suggestions. Some of the suggestions were also made in year one and two.

Suggestions made included:

82. Reforming the way grant funding is allocated to avoid the short-term funding cycles and time spent on grant applications (this was mentioned in year one and two)
83. Educating people at an early age around budgeting, debt, cost of living, council tax (this was mentioned in year one and two)
84. Put pressure on Westminster to allow organisations working towards climate change targets to be VAT exempt
85. Reforming the local authorities structure and the council tax system
86. Creating pet friendly "training flats" for young people to understand how to be independent
87. Offering free or subsidised transport for under 25 year olds. Or creating 24 hour public transport options for the cities of Wales.
88. Grants for businesses starting up to be able to access paid for advice
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89. The use of sports and culture to combat issues around poor mental health and wellbeing

90. Offering regular health checks at milestone ages, to help prevent health issues manifesting

8. Engagement findings: Should certain groups of society receive more or less funding to support a more equal society?

91. Participants were asked if Welsh Government should prioritise funding for certain groups of people in society and what the impact of that funding would be for those groups.

92. In most of the sessions, participants identified **older and younger people** as a group that may require more focused funding.

"Older people deserve more respect than they get currently." Member of the agriculture sector

"The start you get in life impacts you the rest of your life [...] If we've got that right, we'll have a whole new group of young people who can support the economy." Member of the finance sector

93. Participants also highlighted a range of other groups such as rural community members, people with hidden disabilities, people who want to switch career paths and prison leavers as needing more help and support.

94. Prison leavers were considered vulnerable or *"without hope"* with the current system of cutting funded accommodation as soon as employment has been gained.

"Having those two massive life experiences collide (gaining employment and having to move house) can really affective a person as an individual but also affect the sustainability of their employment which then of course affects the public purse [...] what is the incentive to be in employment?" Person with experience of homelessness

95. Similarly to year one and two, this year, the majority felt that funding should be driven by need, rather than categorising people.

"I would like the funding to actually be used correctly and put into places that really need it." Young person

9. Engagement findings: Key challenges by sector

96. Participants were asked to comment on the key challenges they faced in their sector and how Welsh Government could support them.

Health practitioners

97. The key pressures raised were staff retention and recruitment. This issue was being compounded by the regular use of agency staff. Staff were described as dropping fulltime roles for part time roles so that they can work part time in a permanent role and part time with an agency to “top-up” their income. One participant described how nurses could make “more in a week on the agency that they were making on their NHS monthly.” And there was no lack of agency roles to fill.

“I’m a third year student nurse [...] I’ve just recently come off an oncology and haematology placement in Swansea and nearly half of the qualified staff were planning to actually leave to go to agency.” Health practitioner

98. Some participant felt a nurse should be positioned within every care home to ensure patients could access care at the level they need.

“The impact upon district nursing services from care homes is substantial [...] Something does need to be done in how we bridge that gap with care homes so that people in care homes are cared for safely and effectively and with the right amount of staff.” Health practitioner

Third sector

99. Consistency of funding was the biggest pressure noted by a number of participants. It was felt that the short-term cycle of funding was restricting what the sector could achieve as much of their time was spent on grant applications and having to recruit staff into fixed-term roles. One participant even felt the Post-EU funding hadn’t been distributed correctly which they felt might be a problem building up for the future if not addressed.

“The impacts on groups if funding is taken away are often quite sharp and the ending of funding for certain projects and charities can have very fundamental effects” Older person

100. One organisation felt Welsh Government funding was not cost effective where they offer their staff a Living Wage rate. This has meant they have a shortfall that they have had to fill otherwise they risk damaging a positive and valued culture within their workforce.

"This could make our services unsustainable and can affect the people that we support." Staff at a third sector organisation

Farming

101. Participant with and without an agricultural background felt rural communities were "struggling" and not given the recognition they deserve given the extent to which agriculture can support a number of the other key areas.

"There are so many farms and smallholdings struggling." Participant accessing health services

"Without our farmers, the Welsh language would weaken. So we need to look after the rural sector." Member of the agriculture sector

102. The farming community also identified several skill shortages for key roles within the agriculture sector.

Education

103. Many participants suggested increasing apprenticeship opportunities, particularly to support the Future Generations Act where participants felt schemes were being hindered by a lack of skilled workforce.

"We've got an education system and to a certain extent an economy that's been designed pre-pandemic and we're trying to use it for a post pandemic solution and those, the two things don't match up [...] We're seeing a drop in people going to university and university applications. More people are looking for apprenticeships, but some of the policy decisions that we've made for apprenticeships are madness." Member of the education sector

104. One participant explained that one policy decision has meant the removal of Level 2 Construction apprenticeships and they now start at Level 3 inhibiting potential students.

"We've got hundreds of young people now who would have normally gone into the construction industry and they are not able to access the apprenticeships because they're not at a Level 3 and that's a policy

*decision, which seems ridiculous when we haven't got enough people in that industry." **Member of the education sector***

Business owners

105. Incoming legislation was considered a challenge in terms of maintaining a sustainable business model for the retail sector. One participant wanted to see better policy and regulation for supporting businesses that are leading the low carbon revolution.

*"We've got deposit return schemes. We've got single use plastic packaging. We've got business recycling regulations. Those are just three that are coming in the next 12 months for retailers [...] there is a huge swathe of regulation incoming for businesses, which is making things very difficult and it's creating huge cost burdens, which effectively will get passed on to the consumer." **Business owner***

106. One participant explained that retailers pay into the apprenticeship levy but *"as retailers, we don't really see the end return from that."*

*"Businesses need to be alongside HE&FE, they need to be much more engaged in early development of where that budget goes and the priorities because at the moment our Members are not getting any return on the investment, effectively, there's either a skills gap then between Wales and England, or they're having to double fund for apprenticeships within the workforce." **Business owner***

107. One participant wanted to see improved procurement processes and another participant wanted further improved communication with businesses to offer useful support.

*"There's a failure to recognize the value of SME businesses and there's a danger that the priorities that the Welsh Government put in terms of allocating funding actually misses the point about improving the way in which they operate [...] Particularly in the way in which they stick rigidly to procurement budgets and procurement processes, which largely alienate a majority of SMEs." **Member of the finance sector***

*"It doesn't necessarily need a big pot of money. We just need to be working collaboratively to identify where good practice is happening to support business recovery." **Business owner***

Patients

108. Patients with long term conditions felt there was a gap in funding for 25-50 years old people in terms of assisted living. Both participants would like to have safer independent housing, their current options are, living with family or in a care home. There is nothing for their age group.

109. One participant expressed frustration with the systems in place for missed health appointments. They felt that money was wasted by people missing appointment and prescriptions. The other participant thought patients should pay for an appointment if they missed it without a valid reason.

Appendix 1

The Citizen Engagement Team would like to thank the following organisations for their support with this inquiry:

CBI	Older People’s Advisory Group
Colegau Cymru	Royal College of GPs
Cymru Older People's Alliance	Royal College of Nursing
Epilepsy Action	Sport Wales
Farmers Union Wales	Tir Dewi
Federation of Small Businesses	Voices from Care Cymru
Food Centre Wales	Versus Arthritis
Legacy Leisure	The Wallich
Money Helper	Wales Federation of Young Farmers Clubs
National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)	Welsh NHS Confederation

Appendix 2

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. If you were thinking specifically about how Welsh Government could have the greatest impact on improving population health and wellbeing, and creating the social, environmental, and economic conditions for all people to thrive, how would you prioritise the budget?
6. Are you aware that the Welsh Government draft budget 2023-24 is funded by the following:
 - estimated £3 billion from Welsh Rates of Income Tax
 - £1.1 billion non-domestic rates
 - £283 million from Land Transaction Tax
 - £39 million from Landfill tax
 - and £150 million planned borrowing

which constitutes just under a fifth of total Welsh Government Funding?

- Yes
- *Yes, I am aware of tax devolution but not the amounts and/or the specific taxes devolved*
- No

7. 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

8. 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 increase borrowing, and increase taxes*

9. 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*

10. How important do you think it is 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.
-

- Investing in the creation of new greener jobs.
- Investing 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..
- Investing in Welsh energy production capacity to reduce reliance on imports.
- Investing in Welsh food production capacity to reduce reliance on imports

Scale of importance: Very important / Fairly important / Not very important / Not at all important / Not sure

11. How can the Welsh Government be innovative in the way it funds all sectors in order to deal with future challenges, such as:

- *the cost of living crisis,*
- *supporting business recovery,*
- *transitioning to a lower carbon economy; and*
- *responding to changes post-Brexit*

12. 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?

13. Why are these groups a priority?

14. 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?

15. Policy based questions (Optional):

- What are the key long term pressures on your 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 can the Welsh Government be innovative in the way it funds your sector in order to deal with future challenges?
-