

Senedd Cymru
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Masnach a Materion Gwledig
Economi Gwyrdd
GE01
Ymateb gan: Anabledd Dysgu Cymru

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Welsh Parliament
Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee
Green Economy
GE01
Evidence from: Learning Disability Wales



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Evidence to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee for its inquiry into the green economy, submitted on behalf of Learning Disability Wales

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About Learning Disability Wales

Learning Disability Wales is a national charity representing the learning disability sector in Wales. We want Wales to be the best country in the world for people with a learning disability to live, learn, love and work.

We work with people with a learning disability and their families, Welsh Government, local authorities, disabled people's organisations and the voluntary sector so we can create a better Wales for all people with a learning disability.

Our response to the consultation

Wales's transition to a green economy presents opportunities to remodel structures and establish a system that is fair and prosperous for all. But there are also many challenges in ensuring that the transition is genuinely just and inclusive. Learning Disability Wales is optimistic that change can be made for the better, but there are many obstacles before that can happen.

While the climate crisis affects all of us, it does not affect everyone equally. Where extreme weather events like storms, floods and heatwaves happen because of climate change, survival chances are much worse for disabled people.

Common issues we talk about in relation to the social model of disability, such as unequal access to environments and information, are expected to make the effects of climate change worse for disabled people than others. In response to this, the United Nations Human Rights Council announced a resolution addressing for the first time the rights of disabled people in connection with climate change¹.

In researching this area of policy, we have observed a lack of consideration for people with a learning disability², with information often being inaccessible and a significant lack of Easy Read material available. From the outset, if the green transition is to be genuinely just then it must take with it people with a learning disability, making information accessible and understandable through Easy Read and other accessible formats. The estimated average reading age in Wales is just 9 years old so any information aimed at the public should always be written with this in mind.

¹ [Final Report of The Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

² [Why climate change is a disability issue - Learning Disability Wales \(ldw.org.uk\)](#)

There is a danger that people with a learning disability are excluded from the transition to a green economy while they are among the most at risk from the worst extremes of global temperature change and the nature emergency. Learning Disability Wales wants Wales to be the best country in the world for people with a learning disability to live, learn, love and work. To that end, it is vital that whatever action is being taken by the Welsh Government in this area is inclusive and equitable.

The scope of economic change is enormous. The opportunities provided by that change must be exploited in a fair way. That means people with a learning disability are given the chance to be a part of that transition, so they can access the jobs and skills that will make the transition work for all.

The Welsh Government's language of openness and inclusivity around its green economic policy is welcome. However, in practice we need to see action taken that meets the government's inclusivity goals. Policy must therefore be designed inclusively, to use the rich seam of talent available means adopting policy that accommodates the diverse qualities of everyone.

Shifting to renewable energy and establishing a more circular system of consumption will open unforeseen opportunities for people with learning disabilities. Learning Disability Wales has some core recommendations to ensure that people with a learning disability are not left behind through this process:

- i) Training needs for people with a learning disability must be adjusted to ensure they are included in the economy of the future.
- ii) Intersectionality of outcomes meaning people with a learning disability and other marginalised groups are more likely to feel the worst effects of climate change should make their needs central to prevention policy.
- iii) Cross-sectoral inclusivity must be encouraged, with awareness of the needs of, as well as the qualities offered by, people with learning disabilities by stakeholders engaged in the transition to the green economy.
- iv) A continuing conversation between policy-makers and people with a learning disability is necessary to ensure decisions are co-produced and co-designed, with marginalised groups a part of the solutions developed.
- v) Creating a nation with truly accessible public transport, as well as universal access to the basic public services, must be fundamental in the transition to a carbon neutral economy in Wales. Unless systems are genuinely inclusive then the transition cannot be defined as just and equitable.

Governments are playing the most important role in the global drive to reduce emissions and create a changed economy in the future. Here in Wales, the Welsh Government can make that change happen fairly, ensuring

marginalised people are not just considered and consulted with, but co-opted in decisions, making policy meaningfully co-produced.

While the repercussions from climate change are a worry for everyone, the opportunities presented by a pivot to the green economy are exciting. But they should be exciting for everyone, meaning a policy-driven approach to change in the economy, with consequences for education, health and transport, must be led by the Welsh Government doing that in an open and inclusive way. Learning Disability Wales would emphasise the needs and talents of people with learning disabilities are very much a part of the continuing conversations in this area of policy.