

By email

4th of May 2025

Dear Jenny,

Thank you for your letter regarding the inquiry into Social Cohesion. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion, particularly as social well-being is one of the four dimensions of sustainable development, central to the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

As others have noted the Well-being of Future Generations Act provides a clear and ambitious vision for a Wales of cohesive communities—'communities that are attractive, viable, safe, and well-connected'. However, as highlighted by respondents to your consultation, achieving this vision requires a sustained commitment to long-term thinking, preventative action, and meaningful community involvement. I share the concerns raised by Carnegie UK regarding the need to empower public bodies with the skills and support necessary to embed this approach effectively.

In order to support public bodies to achieve the goal of a Wales of cohesive communities, my team and I regularly convene and advise public sector leaders and organisations on setting good well-being objectives and how to deliver on all the seven well-being goals. My team provides around 700-800 pieces of advice and assistance every year, the majority of which are to public bodies and Public Services Boards. My office also publishes detailed advice on the steps that public bodies can take. There is dedicated advice for each goal. This advice is available to see on my website.

I recently commissioned the Institute of Welsh Affairs to undertake an assessment of all public body well-being objectives and their corresponding steps in order to monitor progress. The analysis showed that of all five ways of working, 'involvement' was the least prevalent in the steps and we frequently hear from public bodies that resources (time and money) are a key barrier to meaningfully involving citizens and communities throughout policy, delivery, and evaluation. Disappointingly, the analysis has shown that just 14.7% of objectives spoke to the Cohesive Communities Goal. While we know that many public bodies value the role of their communities and the importance of involvement – action and future ambition is not necessarily aligning with these values.

There are excellent examples of projects that work with communities – as listed below - but it is not yet consistent in how public bodies are implementing the WFG Act. I have asked my team to give increased attention this year to supporting public bodies to implement the cohesive communities goal in our learning and development programme.

Another way in which I monitor progress is through the Ways of Working Journey Checker, which is a self-evaluation tool to understand how public bodies are delivering the five ways of working and provides guidance about what more they can do. The latest position shows that the majority of public bodies that have responded position themselves at level 3 of 5 in terms of implementing the involvement way of working.

My office is actively engaged in strengthening social cohesion across Wales, and this is a key area in my [Future Generations Report](#), which was published on 29th April. The report is an important part of my work to support and advise public bodies on how to implement the seven well-being goals. A central theme of my report is the power and opportunities within our communities. Whether it is through keeping people well, improving access to nature, investing in placemaking, or investing in sustainable and affordable local food systems, communities play a vital role in shaping our collective future.

While significant efforts are being made, I remain concerned that communities are not yet being meaningfully involved in decision-making processes. My report recommends that **public bodies increase public engagement** to build trust, strengthen consensus, and bridge the gap between policymaking and citizens. To further support communities, I am calling for the introduction of a **Community Right to Buy Act**, which would empower local people to take ownership of community assets and strengthen social ties. I am also advocating for all **public bodies to implement volunteering plans** that enable employees to actively contribute to their communities. This not only builds social capital but fosters a deeper sense of belonging and shared responsibility.

Whilst these recommendations provide a few illustrations of how I am taking action on social cohesion, I would strongly encourage the committee to take account of my full report.

I would also encourage the committee to draw on the Well-being of Wales Report, independently produced by the Welsh Government's Chief Statistician, which tracks

progress against each national goal and provides insight into the key milestones and indicators shaping our social fabric.

The majority of the public correspondence I receive is from people passionate about their communities and spaces, and range from concerns around community involvement in planning decisions and cuts to local transport services, to groups sharing how they're embedding the Act in local projects and asking for support in how they can go further.

These letters are particularly insightful in my monitoring and assessing of public bodies' progress and consistently show how people across Wales care about decisions being made by public bodies that impact our current and future well-being, including how they meaningfully involve people in decisions that affect them and how decisions are made with long-term impacts and trends in mind.

Additionally, my collaboration with the voluntary sector is deep and long standing as we seek to work together to build social capital. I hold regular partnership meetings with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and its members. I will be jointly hosting GOFOD3 this year, the main third sector annual conference in Wales and an important platform for sharing best practice and fostering collaboration on social cohesion across sectors.

My Future Generations Report is filled with case studies highlighting good practice in social cohesion, demonstrating how different communities and organisations are driving positive change.

- Case-study: **GwyrddNi** is a community-led movement, bringing people together from five areas in Gwynedd to take action on climate change. Delivered by [Datblygiadau Egri Gwledig](#), [Partneriaeth Ogwen](#), [Yr Orsaf](#), [Cwmni Bro](#), [Ynni Llŷn](#) and [Cyd Ynni](#), GwyrddNi has led community assemblies to co-produce local action plans; worked with more than 600 school children to bring their ideas for a greener, more sustainable future to life; and are supporting action around repair and re-use projects, active travel, community energy, retrofit, and nature restoration.
- Case study: **Well North Wales** - Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board's Well North Wales partnership is placing communities at the heart of health transformation. This multi-agency approach works to address health inequalities and the wider determinants of health, embedding prevention across

all planning and delivery. By taking a joined-up approach, Well North Wales is ensuring that services are shaped by and for the communities they serve, leading to better, more sustainable health outcomes.

- Case study: **Caerphilly's Vision 2035** - Caerphilly's [Vision 2035 Placemaking Plan](#) is placing community and culture at the heart of new developments. Key initiatives include:
 - Ffos Caerffili market, with over 20 independent traders, supporting small businesses and local food producers.
 - Affordable, energy-efficient housing and business spaces redeveloped from underused buildings.
 - Revitalisation of the Workmen's Hall, transforming it into a cultural centre for the community.
- Case study: **Beyond Recycling with Benthg Cymru** - Benthg Cymru is creating Libraries of Things across Wales, allowing people to borrow items instead of buying them, reducing both costs and environmental impact. Since 2020, Benthg Cymru has facilitated 18,000 'borrows', saving households £500,000 and reducing carbon emissions by 220,000 kg.
- Case study: **The Talking Shops** – Supported by cross-sector partners and funding, Omidaze Productions established The Talking Shops — public spaces designed for creative, cultural, and democratic discussion. Over 13,000 people, aged six months to 96 years old, have taken part, using the spaces to share experiences, learn new skills, and engage with their community and democracy. These spaces provide an accessible, inclusive setting for people from all backgrounds to connect and contribute to shaping their local communities.

These case studies will illustrate innovative approaches to placemaking, social inclusion, and community-led initiatives that align with the ambitions of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

I fully agree with the Committee that ambition must be matched with effective implementation. Government and public bodies must ensure that adequate resources and capacity are built into decisions to translate policy into practice. My office remains committed to supporting this process, advocating for stronger community involvement, and ensuring that Wales continues to lead the way in creating cohesive communities.

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry and look forward to continuing our dialogue on this crucial issue.

Yours sincerely,



Derek Walker,
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales