
Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol | Equality and Social Justice Committee

Ymateb gan: Gwasanaeth Natur Cymru | Evidence from: Nature Service Wales

Written Evidence to the Post-Legislative Scrutiny of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act

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Introduction

Wales has been internationally recognised for its leadership in adopting the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. However, there remains a significant gap between the ambition of the legislation and its consistent implementation – particularly in relation to the protection and restoration of the natural environment. In contrast to the principles of the Act, Wales is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, and despite clear statutory commitments, Wales continues to experience critical declines in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, and is not on track to meet its nature recovery targets. This reflects an ongoing failure to address the underlying systemic drivers of environmental degradation, and a lack of coordinated, long-term ambition across sectors.

While this is considered a failure to live up to the ambitions and principles of the Act, the Act itself has provided a blueprint for designing the solutions. The development of Nature Service Wales has drawn directly on the principles of the Act to build enabling infrastructure that addresses underlying systemic issues and supports implementation – offering a practical mechanism to help realise the Act’s objectives in relation to nature, climate, skills, and equity of opportunity to engage.

Nature Service Wales

Nature Service Wales (NSW) is a national initiative established to help build the enabling infrastructure needed to deliver a whole-of-society response to the nature and climate emergencies. Through establishing a recognisable, collective identity and platform for coordination, collaboration, and the creation of more visible and accessible pathways into volunteering, education, training, and green careers, NSW seeks to make it easier for people of all backgrounds to contribute meaningfully to nature recovery and the long-term climate resilience and wellbeing of Wales.

While still in its development phase, NSW is being established to embody the ambitions and principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, which have acted as a

template and guide for its development. It is designed explicitly to address systemic barriers to collaboration, involvement, prevention, long-term thinking, and integration – each of which is essential to the delivery of Wales’s wellbeing goals.

Nature Service Wales as Case Study

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act has provided both a framework and a rationale for the development of Nature Service Wales. Its long-term, preventative, and collaborative focus has helped shape how NSW is being built – from the emphasis on shared goals across sectors, to the effort to mobilise and coordinate partners, including public bodies, around a common purpose. In this context, the Act has not only inspired the work of NSW, but also offered a practical foundation for delivering. The following points are offered as something of a case study, reflecting how the Act has shaped NSW’s development, and how NSW is actively supporting or exemplifying key aspects of the Act, including a selection of the Future Generations Report 2025 recommendations.

1. Collaboration – simplifying the partnership structures around the WFG Act

Nature Service Wales is an example of collaboration in action. It has brought together over 100 stakeholders from across Wales – environmental NGOs, public bodies, education providers, community groups, and others – to create shared vision and alignment around the role of people, skills, and opportunities in nature recovery.

NSW acts as a coordination platform rather than a delivery body, helping to amplify and connect existing initiatives, rather than adding new layers of duplication. It offers a unifying, recognisable identity that helps align the efforts of many around a common purpose. This approach is a practical response to the fragmentation that often limits both engagement and cross-sector working in Wales.

2. Involvement – ensuring the legislation levers in better involvement of the public in decision making

At the heart of NSW is the principle that everyone in Wales should be able to take part in nature recovery – whether through volunteering, education, community action, or employment. Our commissioned research has focused on understanding how young people engage with nature-based work and what barriers they face.

Key findings include:

- Young people often lack access to local opportunities and rely heavily on motivated adults or gateway organisations.
- There is a widespread lack of understanding about nature-related career pathways or how to get involved.

These insights are helping to shape a more inclusive and accessible national system, ensuring that involvement in nature recovery is not limited to the already-informed or already-involved. NSW is therefore helping to lay the groundwork for more equitable and

meaningful public participation.

3. Prevention – shifting investment towards preventative approaches

Nature Service Wales frames nature recovery and community engagement as preventative action. A more ecoliterate, connected and skilled population is better equipped to reduce pollution, mitigate biodiversity loss, adapt to climate change, and sustain healthier communities. A more informed and ecoliterate population is also more likely to support associated policies and action.

By mapping education and training provision, supporting the development of career pathways, and increasing visibility of nature-based work, NSW is helping to build the capacity needed to deliver on environmental and social outcomes before problems escalate – reducing future demand on health, economic and environmental systems.

4. Long-term – embedding a long-term lens across the public sector

NSW was established with a long-term horizon in mind. Its focus on workforce development, community involvement, and systemic infrastructure reflects the understanding that nature recovery is generational work. NSW aims to ensure that the social foundations – skills, knowledge, and public will – are in place to support Wales’s ecological recovery for decades to come.

This approach aligns fully with the WFG Act’s call for public institutions to consider long-term impact and legacy, not just short-term results.

5. Integration – embedding the Act across the corporate areas of change

Nature Service Wales supports integration by working across multiple wellbeing goals simultaneously, including:

- **A resilient Wales** (through ecosystem restoration, ecological capacity-building, building support and understanding for nature-based solutions),
- **A healthier Wales** (through nature-based engagement and wellbeing benefits),
- **A more equal Wales** (by creating more visible and accessible entry points and career pathways), and
- **A prosperous Wales** (through facilitating green job creation and skills development).

NSW helps embed the spirit of the WFG Act by providing a joined-up, cross-sectoral mechanism for aligning education, environment, skills, and community development.

On Value for Money and System Change

While still in its development phase, Nature Service Wales has already delivered strategic research, convened national conversations, and begun mapping the fragmented systems that currently limit participation and workforce development. It is positioning itself not as another delivery project, but as the infrastructure that helps existing work go further, faster, and more coherently.

In that sense, NSW is a value-for-money investment – designed to improve system efficiency, reduce duplication, and amplify the impact of others.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act provided the framework for Nature Service Wales to be developed as a cross-cutting, long-term and preventative response to the nature and climate emergencies. It offered the mandate for systems thinking, collaboration, and long-term investment in the people, skills, and opportunities needed to drive nature recovery and support the wellbeing goals. But if the ambition of the Act is to be realised in practice, these kinds of enabling approaches must be recognised, supported and integrated into policy and delivery.

To that end, the following actions are recommended:

- 1. Recognise and strengthen enabling infrastructure like Nature Service Wales**
Welsh Government should formally recognise Nature Service Wales as a national enabler supporting the delivery of the WFG Act, Environment Act, and Nature Positive targets – providing core investment to help grow sector capacity, visibility and public participation.
- 2. Embed investment in ecological literacy and skills as preventative action**
Improving public understanding of nature, ecosystems and climate resilience is a critical long-term intervention. Welsh Government should explicitly frame investment in ecoliteracy, community capacity and skills development as part of the Act's preventative duty – empowering communities to contribute meaningfully to national goals.
- 3. Support the roll-out of a Natural History GCSE as a long-term investment in ecological understanding**
Inspiring ecological awareness from a young age is key to building a society ready and able to restore nature. Continued commitment to the development and delivery of a Natural History GCSE would represent a meaningful long-term preventative intervention aligned with the WFG Act's goals.
- 4. Strengthen delivery mechanisms for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience**
Clearer accountability mechanisms are needed to ensure that public bodies deliver measurable outcomes for nature recovery. Public body duties under the WFG Act should be more explicitly aligned with biodiversity and ecosystem targets under the Environment Act.
- 5. Develop a national workforce strategy for nature recovery**
The transition to a nature-positive Wales requires a planned and supported workforce. A national nature recovery workforce strategy – developed with public sector, education and third sector partners – should be established to ensure the right skills and career pathways are in place to deliver on national priorities.

6. Improve integration and collaboration between public bodies and delivery partners

Public service boards and local authorities should be supported and incentivised to work more closely with third sector and community-based delivery partners. Mechanisms like Nature Service Wales provide an ideal platform to strengthen this collaboration in line with the Act's goals.

7. Introduce clear guidance and reporting on public body contributions to nature recovery

Revised guidance should clarify the role of all public bodies – not just environmental ones – in supporting nature recovery, including through procurement, workforce development, education, skills and public engagement. Reporting mechanisms should be introduced to track and support this contribution to nature recovery under the WFG Act.