

Dear Chair,

Re: Future Generations Commissioner for Wales - Response to Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee Scrutiny of Accounts: The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales 2022-23 Report, March 2024

Please find below our responses to the recommendations contained in your report dated March 2024.

Recommendation 1. We recommend that the Commissioner considers publishing information about the meetings of his Advisory Panel.

We are happy to consider some publication and we will discuss this with our Advisory Panel at the next meeting in May 2024.

Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Future Generations Commissioner provides the Committee with an update on the development of his office's KPIs, including numeric and financial targets, once these have been set.

Central to the success of [Cymru Can](#), will be measuring our impact. We will do this by embedding a culture of ongoing evaluation and review, monitoring our impact, and changing course or adapting our approach as needed, based on what feedback tells us.

We will measure our impact using a 4-tiered approach:

1. **[National well-being indicators](#)**. Our approach starts here with tracking progress against the national well-being indicators. These are the ultimate measure of progress against our well-being goals and are reported on annually by Welsh Government in [Well-being Wales](#). We will do more to spotlight this report and what it tells us, and to embed greater awareness of the indicators in our advice and advocacy, emphasising to public bodies the importance of decisions that work towards not against them.
2. **Outcome indicators (Table 1)**. These are the indicators that relate to the changes that we're looking to see in public bodies i.e. the impact and outcomes that we included in Cymru Can.

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We will use baseline data from our own data sources, as well as that by others to monitor progress.

3. **Activity KPIs (Table 2).** This includes quantitative and qualitative data that relates to what we've delivered in the Future Generations Commissioners team, and how well that has been received. Our approach integrates qualitative and quantitative data for a more nuanced understanding of social impact. While quantitative measures lend empirical support, qualitative insights delve into the human dimensions of change. This synthesis bridges the gap between hard facts and personal stories, enhancing the authenticity and depth of the assessment.
4. **Mission specific performance indicators** for internal project management.

Table 1 – Outcome indicators

Mission	Outcome indicators
Impact and Implementation	1. Improved understanding and evidence of action amongst leaders in public bodies in delivering the Act and long-term approaches.
Climate and Nature	2. Welsh local authorities have an improved rating on the UK Climate Emergency ScoreCard 3. Increased integration of activities that support nature recovery into Wales' public services.
Health and Well-being	4. Improved understanding and evidence of action amongst senior leaders in public bodies about their collective role in keeping people healthy and reducing demand on the NHS. 5. Improved understanding and evidence of action amongst key budget decision makers of the agreed definition of preventative spend in budget setting.
Culture and the Welsh language	6. Improved understanding and evidence of action amongst leaders in public bodies of what cultural well-being encompasses and the positive impact of culture and the Welsh language on the implementation of the Act.
Well-being economy	7. Increased number of public bodies framing plans around well-being economy (covering one or more of foundational economy, circular economy, doughnut economics etc.)

Table 2 Activity Indicators and targets

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Activity	Quantitative data	Targets 2024/25	Qualitative data
Monitoring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Number of public bodies completing the ways of working journey checker Number of well-being objectives assessed (this would only apply to some years) 	<p>80% completion rate (or 45 PBs)</p> <p>300</p>	Qualitative assessment of public bodies well-being objectives and progress measures relating to missions (SMART).
Advocating	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Number of pieces of written evidence, position statements, letters, research, oral evidence. Number of events / speaking engagements 	<p>50</p> <p>100</p>	Evidence of change. Impact on Ministerial commitments, policy, process, behaviours. Testimonials, feedback, and desk top analysis.
Convening	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Number of FGC events, workshops and training sessions delivered. Number of people reached (by sector, subject, region and protected characteristics). Satisfaction score from training and advice sessions (between 0-7) % of FGLA participants that report an improved confidence in explaining the purpose and workings of the Well-being of Future Generations Act to their colleagues or community. 	<p>12 events/ workshops.</p> <p>A minimum of 50% of attendees are from public bodies.</p> <p>5 out of 7 average score</p> <p>65%</p>	<p>Participant feedback.</p> <p>Testimonials from alumni and partners.</p>

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Advising	<p>9. Number of pieces of advice and assistance provided (proactive AND reactive advice)</p> <p>10. Number of examples and case-studies of good practice proactively shared with PBs and others</p>	<p>100</p> <p>25 detailed case-studies shared to support implementation</p>	Anecdotal stories and testimonials that evidence improved understanding and confidence in delivering long-term approaches and the implementing the Act, and the role of FGC.
Walking the Talk	<p>11. Number of FGC carbon emissions and % reduction (based on 2022/23 figures)</p> <p>12. % of clean audits</p> <p>13. % staff said FGC a great place to work.</p>	<p>10,000T by 2030 down from 2022/23 baseline.</p> <p>100% clean audits</p> <p>75% employee rating</p>	Statements from auditors Quotes, highlight stories.

Recommendation 3. We recommend the Welsh Government push the UK Government for a clearer timetable for providing information each year to inform the budget preparation process. We ask that the Welsh Government provide us with details of how it is liaising with the UK Government to get greater clarity and certainty on funding.

Welsh Government to respond.

Recommendation 4. We recommend that the Future Generations Commissioner provide us with further information regarding the reorganisation of his staffing structure, the related costs, an overview of the processes to agree these changes and assurances he has sufficient staff going forward.

On 26th October 2023, we commenced a formal consultation for 30 days on proposed changes to our organisational structure. The main drivers for change were to re-align our people resources to deliver on the five key missions in our new Cymru Can strategy and to respond to existing budgetary pressures (which later became worse as a result of a 5% budget cut to our budget in December).

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The budget situation meant we needed to reduce our headcount by five posts. We also used the restructure process to consider team feedback about changes to job titles and about the need for greater clarity over areas of responsibility.

We offered the opportunity for team members to reduce their hours in the first instance and then invited expressions of interest for voluntary redundancy as a means of avoiding compulsory redundancies.

A detailed Organisational Change process was developed, underpinned by our organisational values. We ensured the process was communicated well and understood by everyone. We sought to ensure inclusivity and fairness, and to create a supportive environment where kindness and compassion were at the centre of how all our people experienced change. We worked closely with our Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee during the process.

We fully adhered to civil service compensation guidelines and embraced a rigorous internal involvement programme which was central to its success. The Commissioner led and owned the entire process and was supported by our fully HR qualified People Director and our Deputy Commissioner. Individual 121s were offered to all team members and meaningful consultation on proposed changes took place throughout the month of November 2023.

By the closure of the consultation period on 27th November 2023, 6 team members had expressed an interest in voluntary redundancy. Four applications were subsequently accepted, and in addition it was decided to not extend one fixed-term post. Two team members agreed to reduce their hours. The resultant cost saving was £279k annually and our new structure was fully operational on 1st April 2024.

In line with Cymru Can, each mission is now overseen by a Mission Director, and we have a strengthened approach to corporate operations and governance, focussing on corporate areas of change as set out in the Well-being of the Future Generations Act 2015. Responsibility areas are now more fully allocated and understood by team members, and this is further enhanced by the introduction of clear line management oversight.

Welsh Government agreed to cover up to £75k additional funding to support the restructure costs. Restructure costs (up to end of March) total £72k, and this has been reclaimed from Welsh Government.

Recommendation 5. We recommend that the Future Generations Commissioner provides us with details of any changes made to the roles and responsibilities of the newly appointed Head of Finance and the decision to change the job title from Director of Finance. We ask the

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Commissioner to provide assurance the new role complies with the requirements set out in Managing Welsh Public Money.

When our Director for Finance and Governance left the organisation in 2021, our Director for Policy, Legislation and Innovation was offered a new post created at the time of Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Commissioner in the same Band 6 salary as former directors operated. The COO post was the only one left at Band 6 and was in line with the practice in other Commissioner's offices. We decided then to create a new Head of Finance post to give us the finance expertise we needed and matching the Head of HR post we already have and both Heads would report into our new COO.

The Head of Finance role was filled in September 2022. The staff member recruited is a professionally qualified accountant – she is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW - membership number available confidentially on request) and has been for 10 years (FCA application in progress). She has 17 years professional accounting experience within practice, private and public sector. She is a member of the senior leadership team providing challenge when needed, attends meetings of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee and reports to both the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. She leads and oversees the Office finance function and ensures a professional, transparent, and risk-averse attitude is taken to this work (in line with our strategic risk register), ensuring adherence to the requirements laid out in Managing Welsh Public Money, as well as the rules and requirements of the IFRS's (International Financial Reporting Standards), ISA's (International Standards on Auditing) the FrEM framework (The government financial reporting manual) and HMRC/HMT rules and requirements et al.

During the 2023 organisational restructure, the role was re-shaped to become a new post at the same grade: Director – Finance & IT. This job title has been in use since January 2024.

Recommendation 6. We recommend the Future Generations Commissioner advises whether he will be able to continue to provide us with reassurances regarding the support provided by the public bodies team to the public bodies that fall under the Act, for which his office used its reserves to fund in 2022-23.

In line with the new strategy [Cymru Can](#) and as a result of the budget pressures, we have implemented a new model for providing advice and support to public bodies that fall under the Act. This will mean we will have more focus on providing one to many sessions and will offer fewer bespoke sessions for individual public bodies. Each public body will still have a named contact, but our reduced team size means there will be less capacity for one-to-one support. The Commissioner has written to public bodies to explain the change.

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We are confident we will still be able to provide a high level of support and advice to public bodies. In line with the Act, we involve public bodies closely in what service we provide them so to ensure it is high quality and relevant. Our experience so far tells us that the new model is working, however it is early days.

Recommendation 7. We recommend that the Commissioner provide the Committee with a written update in six months' time on the work being undertaken by his office to develop a model for charging for services to generate additional resources.

We will provide the information as requested in September 2024.

Recommendation 8. We recommend that the Commissioner updates the Committee in a years' time on the delivery of his office's Leadership Academy and Welsh Government International Programme.

We will provide the information as requested in March 2025.

Recommendation 9. We recommend that the Commissioner share with the Committee the outcomes of the review being undertaken of the shorter working week initiative being implemented within his office. The Committee would also like to see clearer evidence of how this initiative is leading to increased productivity and staff well-being.

We first introduced a pilot 30-hour week during COVID-19 to assist with homeschooling and mental well-being. It was based on a 6-hour day model over 5 days per week and was implemented rapidly in response to the increasing crises. Following COVID, we formulated a partnership with Autonomy to help us understand the global work happening in this area and commissioned a [report](#) which was later published. As part of this research, in October 2021 Autonomy also conducted a review of our own voluntary and optional Shorter Working Week with our team. There was broad support of the 6-hour day but it was clear some colleagues were unable to achieve it. There were two recommendations made in relation to the treatment of part-time colleagues, firstly that the hours of part-time colleagues were reduced such that they had the same relative reduction in hours as full-time equivalent colleagues or, secondly, that levels of pay be raised to align with the new full-time working week.

Following appointment of the new Commissioner in March 2023, our Head of People & Culture was asked to review our Shorter Working Week and carried out a series of 121s across the team to

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understand the benefits and barriers during the Autumn of 2023. It was clear that around 25% of our team were managing to implement the Shorter Working Week successfully and consistently, but 75% were not. A discussion paper was taken to SLT on 28th November and as a result, the Commissioner requested that a sub-group be formed to further deep dive into the Shorter Working Week, focussing upon the evidence around success measures, productivity outcomes from ongoing trials and to develop some clearer parameters around its feasibility going forward.

The sub-group met twice on 9th January and 28th February 2024. Following its first meeting, a series of actions were agreed:

- Create a Teams Channel to share prominent 4-Day Week evidence reports.
- Design a petite pulse to roll out to the whole team garnering views.
- Invest time in researching evidence specifically around measures of success and KPI's related to the 4 -day week.
- Arrange to hear first-hand from WEALL their own personal experiences of implementing 4-day week as a champion of good practise.
- Continue to conduct a review of our meeting cadences and diagnose workplace inefficiencies.

Following its second meeting, the following happened as a result:

- Reviewed the findings of the Workforce Partnership Council 4-day Week Group
- Rolled out team Petite Pulse
- Learnt the key benefits and pitfalls from Michael Weatherhead, Development Lead & Co-Founder at WEALL from their own 4-day Week Journey. The Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) is the leading collaboration of organisations, alliances, movements and individuals working towards a Wellbeing Economy, delivering human and ecological wellbeing.

We found that one blueprint does not exist, and productivity measures varied based on the business activities of each organisation. Some common measures included things like reduction in short term sickness absence, increase in staff happiness/well-being indicator, no increase in budget for resourcing, no drop in customer service levels, increased levels of job satisfaction. Ultimately the main measure of success was that all other business KPIs were achieved.

Qualitative measures showed condensed weeks encouraged team members to optimise their hours and better organise their tasks. Psychological research suggests that most of us are "medium maximizers" — we tend to focus on objective, easily quantifiable success metrics such as hours worked, rather than more qualitative metrics such as productivity or well-being. As a result, many companies use immediate responsiveness and time at the office as proxies for employees' commitment levels, even when those measures seldom correspond to actual value added to the

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organization. For a four-day workweek to be successful, leaders must shift their mindsets to value actual productivity, not just hours worked.

Many examples of the measurements used by private sector organisations to evaluate the success of shorter working week policies focus on increased profitability alongside employee well-being. There is a lack of examples of how these financial measures are adopted by public sector organisations.

Going forward, we are currently considering a change to 10% reduction in working hours on an 'opt in' basis from 37 hours to 33 per week. This will mean a 10% reduction in annual leave to accompany and follow the model some organisations are moving to. As part of this shift, a number of internal measures will be implemented and monitored for the next 12 months:

Measurement category	Type of measure	Current data collected	New data to collect
People measures	Staff stress levels	Cheerleader structure, SWS, reasons for short and/or long-term leave	Understanding of workload
	A happiness indicator	Staff turnover	Are you proud to work here? Would you recommend the OFGC as a great place to work?
	Sickness / absence levels	Sickness days or percentage	Are the people who are most frequently on sick leave / absent managing to achieve the SWW?
	Staff turnover	Reason for leaving	Has there been a change in staff turnover since implementing the shorter working week? Ask staff if they

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			are less likely to look for other employment because of the shorter working week policy?
Business measures	Targets in relation to organisational KPIs		Our draft organisational KPIs. Tier 3, activity KPIs e.g. number of events convened, pieces of advice provided, case studies
	Progression on delivering mission activities		Productivity mission measures monitored by Line Managers
	Completing activities outlined Cymru Can within our budget	Budget / spend data	
	Cost recovery		Costs we are recovering through charging for services
	Carbon emissions		Has there been a change in carbon emissions and cost as a result of implementing a shorter working week? E.g. Office space costs, Travel costs and Food/drinks (for the FGC and for individual staff)

Recommendation 10. We recommend that the Commissioner provides the Committee with an update, in a year's time, on the work and progress being made to attract and recruit disabled people in the workforce at the Commissioner's Office.

We will provide the information as requested in March 2025.

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Recommendation 11. We recommend that the Future Generations Commissioner provide us with an update, at the end of the 2023-24 financial year, about the work of Internal Audit, including the number of reports issued.

Our internal auditors were engaged on an initial three-year agreement in 2021-22. Over the three years they have undertaken six, four and five internal audits in years 2021-22, 2022-2023 and 2023-24 respectively. These numbers include a follow up audit each year. The numbers provided at PAPAC appear to include the follow up audit for 2021-22 but not for the 2022-23 year, which made the reduction in internal audits appear larger than it is.

Three of the four audits undertaken in 2023-24 achieved a status of “substantial reassurance” (the highest assurance rating), with the fourth achieving “reasonable assurance” (the second highest assurance rating). The three audits that achieved the highest assurance rating were: Key Financial Controls, Corporate Governance, and Risk Management. Our Project Management internal audit received reasonable assurance.

Recommendation 12. We recommend the Commissioner includes information about the risks faced by his office in his Annual Report, as required by the Financial Reporting Manual.

Agreed. This will be included in our next annual report 2023-24.

Recommendation 13. The Committee recommends that the Commissioner provides an update about whether he has, as he suggested he may wish to do, reviewed the resources requested for 2024-25 following the publication of his new strategy and the long-term vision for his office, ‘Cymru Can’. This should include an assessment of the consequences of the funding allocated by the Welsh Government in its Draft Budget for 2024-25 falling short of the resources requested by the Commissioner in his Statutory Estimate.

There is global understanding of the need to change our behaviours to ensure future generations can meet their needs. This is currently highlighted by the work of the United Nations who are preparing a summit and a declaration on future generations and Wales has been an inspiration on this journey.

We are living through climate and nature emergencies. The recent crises of Covid and cost of living show why we need to adopt preventative approaches to prevent such crises or at a minimum to minimise their impact on our population, society and economy. These reasons and others show why

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it is more important than ever to invest in the implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Any investment in this work is an investment in our collective future.

Therefore, it is disappointing that the budget of the OFGC has been decreasing for the last two years. The situation is increasingly challenging. On 31st March 2024, I lost 5 members of staff out of 28, the equivalent of around 20% of my workforce.

The table below shows the evolution of my budget in the last 3 years:

	£000		
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Baseline	1,592	1,680	1,610
Pay Parity ¹	32	16	
Underspend C/F ²	300	74	0

Total Core Funding of the Office	1,924	1,770	1,610
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Reduction (£000)	154	160
Reduction (%)	8%	9%

¹Pay parity support was agreed by Welsh Government at the end of 2022-23 at £16k a year for 4 years, back-dated for one year – hence 2 x £16k received in 22-23. It was received in addition to baseline in 2023-24 as budget was agreed ahead of final agreement on Pay Parity. But for the final year, has now been included within the baseline resource.

²Prior to the “alignment project” the Office enjoyed reserves which could be carried over to support future work and years. 2022-23 was the last year this was allowed. The office was awarded a one-off discretion and a round sum of £300k was carried over for the last time. 2023-24 was the first year that no “reserves” were allowed, however there was a small underspend of £74k in the 2022-23 period, which was requested to be carried over and was granted. The latest forecasts for 2023-24 indicate a nominal underspend (less than £10k). Whilst any underspend that materialises in 2023-24 will be requested to carry over, the amount is nominal and there is no guarantee that the request will be granted and so for planning purposes is currently ignored.

The pressure on the office is also increasing as the number of requests for our advice and assistance continues to grow and will grow further as a result of an additional eight public bodies coming under the remit of the Act this summer (with no additional funding).

As outlined earlier in this response, the funding situation has resulted in changes in the way the office provides support to public bodies.

The eight additional bodies require different support as they start their formal journey of implementation of the Act. The OFGC has already provided support to them as they consider their new well-being objectives and plans. It is not expected that the level of demand on my office from public bodies (original ones and the new ones) will decrease over time as our experience shows that the number of requests tends to increase as the level of understanding and of maturity of public bodies increase. Staff turnover in public bodies also means that introductory work and training is continually required.

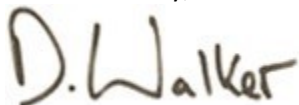
We continue to be open to, and actively explore, avenues and opportunities to increase our impact and capacity through various routes including secondments and partnership working.

We are also looking at opportunities to charge for services when appropriate. We can only charge to recover costs and cannot make a profit. The very difficult financial situation faced by many organisations across all sectors in Wales, means the amount of funding that can be raised in this manner is likely to be limited.

Having said that, in the past few years, we have been successful in securing funding that is additional to our core funding. In the year 2023-24 we raised £172k for the Future Generations Leadership Academy, we were granted £200k from Welsh Government to support delivery of its international Strategy, and other small projects and collaborations raised £8k.

We will send the answers to the other questions in the timescales the Committee have indicated.

Yours sincerely,



Derek Walker
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales