

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
WFG 65
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill
Response from Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment

Consultation by the Environment and Sustainability Committee on its Consultation on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill

*Response from the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)
September 2014*

Background to IEMA

The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) www.iema.net is the UK's leading Environment and sustainability professional membership body, with a growing membership of over 15,000 professionals. In April this year IEMA also acquired the Global Association of Corporate Sustainability Officers – www.gacso.org

IEMA is dedicated to creating a sustainable future through skills, knowledge and thought leadership and working to deliver sustainability and environmental skills into the economy. IEMA's professional qualifications are well regarded by employers across all sectors, regularly cited as a requirement for people being employed in environmental management, environmental assessment and in sustainability roles. Our members are active in professional work and advice into all sectors of the economy.

CONSULTATION RESPONSE -- The [Environment and Sustainability Committee](#) is undertaking an inquiry into the general principles of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Bill](#). IEMA's response to this consultation has been compiled through engagement and consultation with members in Wales (led by our IEMA Wales group). The following considerations are outlined in the consultation and IEMA Wales responses are provided against each-

1. How the Welsh Government should legislate to put sustainability and sustainable development at the heart of government and the wider public sector;

IEMA Wales considers the general approach around principles of engagement with public bodies to be the right approach. The approach is one that is becoming mainstream for UK private sector businesses, particularly larger ones. However, IEMA Wales would like to express concern over the renaming of the Bill to the "Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill" as the group does not believe it conveys the same message as the original white paper, namely the continuity of intergenerational equity. IEMA Wales would like to make note that the Welsh Government has a responsibility to promote sustainable development. At a time when UK, European and Global terminology is converging around 'Sustainability' and 'Sustainable Development' (such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals) the mismatch of terminology is unhelpful. It is suggested that the Bill terminology should be renamed to better represent 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development', as it did in the White Paper. Indeed it was this wording that received the support of many organisations. IEMA Wales suggests its proposed renaming be included in the follow through within the legislation too. For example, to include the setting of 'sustainability goals' and 'sustainability objectives'. The private sector, third sector and academia are increasingly using the sustainability language, hence it is IEMA Wales' concern that the current title may set the Welsh public sector on a

different course, causing potential confusion. Working with professionals in leading Corporates, IEMA is undertaking an engagement process specifically to strengthen the lexicon around sustainability and sustainable development. Details can be found here:

<http://www.gacso.org/resources/Pictures/White%20Paper%20080714.pdf>

2. The general principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill and the need for legislation in the following areas–

- The “common aim” and “sustainable development principle” established in the Bill and the “public bodies” specified;

- The approach to improving well-being, including setting of well-being goals, establishment of objectives by public bodies and the duties imposed on public bodies;

- The approach to measuring progress towards achieving well-being goals and reporting on progress;

- The establishment of a Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, the Commissioner’s role, powers, responsibility, governance and accountability; and

- The establishment of statutory Public Services Boards, assessments of local Well-being and development / implementation of local well-being plans.

- I. IEMA Wales supports the framework of legislation for public bodies’ duties. Public bodies should be required to set and publish their sustainability goals, measure progress of their objectives and associated performance indicators and report the results publicly. There is considerable evidence that this is driving positive progress in private sector organisations, such as those FTSE companies which report publicly.
- II. Wales’s natural resources are one of its greatest assets. It needs to manage these in a way to pass these on to future generations, without increasing the burden on other parts of the planet. The Environment-Related Goal(s) as proposed in the Bill have been weakened considerably in the progress of the Bill from the White Paper version to the version laid before the Assembly in July. IEMA Wales believes that the two Goals which are ostensibly ‘environment-related’ are not sufficiently acknowledged as such in the titles given: ‘A prosperous Wales’ and ‘A resilient Wales’. IEMA understands the reasoning behind the ‘inclusive’ nature of the Goals, and the need to read them all together. However, in a space where terminology and equal weighting of importance matter, we believe the pendulum has swung too far in the other direction. The importance of the environment in sustainable development (and its subsequent social and economic impacts) has been downplayed too far, hence we recommend that the environment is acknowledged through a Goal title: “A Wales with a sustainably managed environment”, or “A Healthier Environment Wales”. As it stands the bill risks encouraging a short-sighted approach which may meet the well-being goals at the expense of natural capital, in particular the natural environment.

III. IEMA Wales supports the establishment of a Future Generations, or Sustainable Development Commissioner for Wales, providing he/she is gifted the appropriate powers. The Commissioner and his/her office should have a limited role in supporting public bodies, such as providing guidance or template reports for them to use. The Commission should not act as a guidance body. There are already enough networks and supporting organisations providing guidance, e.g. Cynnal Cymru, Carbon Trust, IEMA, etc. The Commissioner should focus their effort on the specific requirements of the public bodies and reporting progress of Public Bodies. The Bill should ensure that the commissioner focuses on holding public bodies to account for the process and quality of their approach and implementation of the objectives, e.g. the success in embedding sustainability across the public bodies' functions. The Commissioner should focus on ensuring public bodies are appropriately ambitious enough and broad enough in their approaches. As with private sector organisations, most are tackling sustainability issues, but some more appropriately and with more urgency than others. The Commissioner's role should be focused on reporting and addressing this issue of *quality of approach*. The validation of performance data and the auditing of the detail of its performance (outcomes) should remain with the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office. IEMA Wales proposes clear differentiation of duties; the Commission should support the Wales Audit Office but refrain from auditing itself.

3. *How effectively the Bill addresses Welsh international obligations in relation to sustainable development;*

- I. As noted above the UN is in the process of developing the global Sustainable Development Goals (for the post-2015 agenda). Wales and the Goals eventually chosen should make reference to these. The Bill and the legislation needn't.
 - II. The Bill however should make clear that the Goals and indicators should also take into account Wales' international sustainability impacts; otherwise it risks failing to appropriately deliver sustainability (e.g. due to carbon or environmental leakage).
-

4. *Any potential barriers to the implementation of these provisions and whether the Bill takes account of them;*

IEMA Wales considers knowledge and understanding of sustainability within public sector organisations to pose the greatest barrier. The Bill and legislation can't really address this in the short term. This needs to come from a good set of ambitious procedural requirements in the Bill and an acknowledgement that early actions for public bodies include public sector employee up-skilling in the field of sustainability. IEMA Wales would be keen to support this, and indeed has developed a Skills Map for Sustainability Professionals and has linked up with City & Guilds to develop 'All Jobs Greener'. This programme recognises that for the UK to move to a more sustainability-based economy it needs all employees, whatever their role in an organisation, to understand the need for

sustainability, the importance of the agenda at the devolved government level, and their role in facilitating it. <http://www.iema.net/training>

5. *Whether there are any unintended consequences arising from the Bill;*

Although IEMA with other organisations broadly supports the Bill, and commends what the Bill is trying to achieve, IEMA Wales does wish to raise concern that the Bill does not currently set out the key deliverables/indicators or the detail of how these will be measured. Without targets, the level of ambition and speed of progress expected is unclear. Poor indicators developed at the eleventh hour, without consultation, could sink the ambition of the Bill.

6. *The financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum and Regulatory Impact Assessment; which estimates the costs and benefits of implementation of the Bill); and*

IEMA Wales would raise concern that the skills gap in the field of sustainability in the Public bodies which may be affected by this Bill may have been underestimated. It is set out that public bodies already cover issues such as reporting of indicators, however data is only useful if it is of the correct quality and interpreted by appropriately skilled staff. Whilst the collection of high quality data may incur additional cost, they can no doubt be offset by the inevitable money saved e.g. through waste reduction and energy efficiency. As an example of savings available over a medium term, IEMA engaged directly with Defra in 2011, working to evidence the environmental and cost benefits that organisations can secure from skilled environment and sustainability professionals working within robust reporting frameworks - see Regulatory Impact Assessment for mandatory carbon reporting

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/82354/20120620-ghg-consult-final-ia.pdf

7. *the appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the Explanatory Memorandum, which contains a table summarising the powers for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation).*

No comments made

