

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
WFG 33
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill
Response from Torfaen CBC and Torfaen Local Service Board

Environmental & Sustainable Development Committee

Well-being of Future Generation Bill - call for evidence

Torfaen County Borough Council & Torfaen Local Service Board

Joint Response

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

We welcome the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Bill. It will enhance the distinctive policy ambitions of Wales within the UK, and promote developing approaches to service delivery that account for critical “futures” issues such as climate change.

As with the Equalities agenda – a legislative requirement will help to accelerate and widen progress.

Without statutory guidance it’s hard to know how it will operate in practice. Having the guidance (currently being developed) focus on sustainable development as a central organising principle would help ensure that the new legislation gets embedded across the whole organisation.

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 common aim and the sustainable development principle will help to ensure a consistent approach to sustainability across the public sector.

- 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;

It is important that the environmental aspect of wellbeing isn’t overlooked.

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

This seems reasonable.

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

We support the establishment of a Future Generations Commissioner and the role of advocating for future generations.

The Commissioner's office will need to focus its activity to maximise its influence across the public sector and to take into account the variance in sustainability performance across the public sector.

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

We welcome the addition of Natural Resources Wales to the Public Service Board, this will help to ensure that environmental wellbeing is fully taken into account in the wellbeing plans.

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

As Wales have produced its goals before the UN goals thought will have to be given to how the international dimension is linked in.

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

Current budget pressures mean that public sector organisations will need to become leaner. Whilst the governance approaches set out in the bill will promote collaborative working and taking a preventative action, the possible risks associated with exploring new approaches such as alternative service delivery models may prove to be a barrier.

There will be new professional development requirements across the public sector.

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

That the emphasis is placed on the social aspects of well-being rather than there being equal consideration of social, environmental and economic well-being.

Innovative service delivery models may need to be delivered in order to achieve sustainable development.

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);

There are clear benefits from taking early action and the legislation will help ensure that these risks are considered in our service planning process and that cost effective actions can be identified that can build capacity.

Taking action now will avoid greater cost in the long-term.

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).

We would support this.

September 2014.