

Sophie Howe  
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

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10 October 2019

Dear Sophie

### **Future Generations Report**

Thank you for your letter of 9 August 2019 inviting the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee ('the Committee') to make suggestions as to reports, documents and recommendations that you may wish to consider when drafting your first Future Generations report.

I have outlined below work the Committee has completed, or is currently undertaking, which relates directly to your priority areas. I have also provided a flavour of the Committee's Brexit related work, which may be of interest to you.

### **Climate change and decarbonisation**

Climate change is one of the greatest global challenges we face. With this in mind, at the start of the Fifth Assembly, the Committee agreed that climate change would be one of its priority areas for scrutiny.

In May 2018, the Committee published its [first annual report on the Welsh Government's progress on climate change mitigation](#). The report was informed by the Committee's Expert Reference Group on Climate Change. The Committee



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru**  
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1NA

✉ [SeneddNHAMG@cynulliad.cymru](mailto:SeneddNHAMG@cynulliad.cymru)

☎ 0300 200 6565

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1NA

✉ [SeneddCCERA@assembly.wales](mailto:SeneddCCERA@assembly.wales)

☎ 0300 200 6565

concluded that the Welsh Government would not meet its targets for emissions reduction by 2020 (as set out in its Climate Change Strategy), and included recommendations across key policy areas, including housing and transport. It also set out the Committee's expectations about the process for developing carbon budgets under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

In November 2018, the Committee published its *Report on The Climate Change (Wales) Regulations 2018*. In that report, we commended the Welsh Government for the comprehensive evidence included in the Regulatory Impact Assessment, which demonstrated how the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the 2015 Act) informed its approach. The Committee recommended, among other things, that the Welsh Government review its 2050 target and report back to the Assembly before setting its third carbon budget.

The Committee also undertook a short piece of work to inform the development of the Welsh Government's first Low Carbon Delivery Plan and *wrote to the Welsh Government outlining its findings*. We will be incorporating scrutiny of the Welsh Government's progress against delivery of its Plan and 2020 target in our on-going work on climate change and decarbonisation.

Our second annual report on the Welsh Government's progress on climate change mitigation will be published later this term.

## Housing

Improving energy efficiency is a key part of achieving the well-being goals set out in the 2015 Act. Several of the well-being goals refer specifically to climate change mitigation. One of the national indicators relates to energy efficiency and measures the percentage of dwellings with adequate energy performance.

In August 2018, the Committee published its report, *Low Carbon Housing: the Challenge*. Our report includes a series of recommendations aimed at bringing existing homes up to zero carbon standards and building zero carbon homes for the next generation. It sets out how planning, building regulations, and an



effective inspection system can be used to deliver low carbon homes at scale. In our report, we called on the Welsh Government, among other things:

- to prepare and publish a ten-year low carbon housing strategy, which should include milestones and targets;
- to revise Part L of the building regulations to increase the required energy efficiency of new homes;
- to continue to invest in and expand its current retrofitting schemes.

We intend to follow up some of these issues as part of our inquiry into fuel poverty in Wales (see below).

The Committee is currently undertaking inquiries within two of your seven priority areas:

### **Planning – Inquiry into the Welsh Government’s draft National Development Framework**

The Welsh Government published its draft National Development Framework (NDF) in August 2019. As you are aware, the National Development Framework (NDF) will set out a 20-year land-use framework for Wales. It is a key policy document, which will set national spatial policy, direct Strategic Development Plans and Local Development Plans, and inform Welsh Government decision-making on major planning applications.

The Committee is undertaking its inquiry ahead of the statutory Assembly consideration period (currently timetabled from April to June 2020) to influence the content of, and inform any future debate on, the draft NDF. The outcome of our work will be published in early 2020.

### **Housing – Fuel poverty in Wales**

The Committee is in the process of gathering evidence to inform its [inquiry into fuel poverty in Wales](#). As part of the inquiry, we will consider why the Welsh Government failed to meet its statutory obligation to eradicate fuel poverty by



2018. However, we will also be looking forward at preventative measures to mitigate the risk of fuel poverty for future generations, in particular improving energy efficiency in current and new housing stock.

An invitation to submit written evidence to inform our inquiry was sent to your office at the end of the summer term 2019. The closing date for responses is Friday 1 November. We hope that you can engage in this work.

On a wider note, much of the Committee's work over the last 18 months has focussed on the challenges and opportunities arising from the UK's exit from the EU. For over 40 years, the EU has set the direction for policy and legislation within key areas of devolved responsibility that fall within the Committee's remit: agriculture, fisheries, and the environment. Brexit provides an opportunity for the Welsh Government and its partners to rethink its approach to these, and to develop future policies and legislation within these areas that support the well-being goals and deliver better outcomes for future generations.

The Committee has undertaken detailed work on post-Brexit land-use and fisheries management, as well as a new system for environmental governance in Wales. We intend to pursue these matters further with the Welsh Government over the coming months, and when the outcome of Brexit becomes clearer. Given the significance of these issues within the wider context of sustainable development, we hope that you will be keen to engage with our future work in these areas.

I trust that this information will be useful as you prepare your report.

Yours sincerely



**Mike Hedges AM**

**Chair of Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee**

