



# Barriers to successful implementation of the Future Generations act

## A RESPONSE FROM WCVA

1. Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) is the national membership organisation for the voluntary sector in Wales. Our purpose is to enable voluntary organisations to make a bigger difference together.
2. We have consulted widely across the voluntary sector in drafting this response and are pleased to have the opportunity to feed a wide range of sectoral voices into planning for the draft Budget 2021-22. We thank the organisations who gave their input, including Association of Voluntary Organisations Wrexham (AVOW), Building Communities Trust, Glamorgan Voluntary Services, Cardiff Third Sector Council, The Wales Civil Society Forum on Brexit, Business In The Community, Interlink and the Co-Production Network for Wales.

## AWARENESS OF THE ACT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

3. While awareness of the Act is reasonably high across the voluntary sector, our engagement suggests this is not the case at community level, with our members suggesting that few local-level organisations show much awareness of the Act and the Five Ways of Working.
4. The Act appears remote and 'far from the realities of people's everyday lives', as GVS put it, which means that even when action is taken as a direct result of the Act, people don't realise it's the Act which made these actions happen. Welsh Government and Local Authorities must communicate what actions have specifically been taken in the name of the Act and highlight the impact they have. The voluntary sector can play a role in cascading this information which appears particularly needed at grassroots level.

5. There is a question over the efficacy of using Public Service Boards as a driver for the Act. Sector partners who work at PSB level tell us that the Act is not being used as a means of measuring what a PSB or its partners have achieved. The sector could act as a better amplifier for the Act with PSB partners, were it better resourced to fully play its role at PSB level. However, as we have reported before, many sector organisations struggle with the time and experience necessary to properly and confidently play a part. In addition, too often sector organisations are seen as a ‘junior’ partner by the other organisations around the table.

## **THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO PUBLIC BODIES TO IMPLEMENT THE ACT AND HOW EFFECTIVELY THEY HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED**

6. Perhaps because the Act is something that everyone is supposed to be working towards achieving, across and between the Well-being Goals, there has been no specific funding stream with the concrete aim of implementing it. As AVOW and Interlink both point out, this is very different to, for example, the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.
7. The development of a funding stream dedicated to the Act, or perhaps a specific Wellbeing Goal or two (selected with the help of consultation and engagement) to provide particular definition, would give a focal point for organisations to work towards but also act as a catalyst for developing more formal partnerships across certain sectors to realise those Goals.
8. Public bodies often develop policies and programmes in silos, leading to little joined-up working across organisations. Welsh Government must encourage change in this area for the Act to succeed. It’s important, as the Act articulates, to involve people. However, as is often the case, citizens are rarely involved from the outset in developing policies and services to meets their needs.
9. We ask Welsh Government to communicate to Local Authorities the importance of community involvement in the Act, stressing the importance of genuine coproduction. We draw comparison with the valuable involvement of communities working with Local Authorities during the Covid-19 response and note that all partners have confirmed interest in building on these links and connections.

## **SUPPORT PROVIDED TO PUBLIC BODIES BY THE FUTURE GENERATIONS COMMISSIONER**

10. Some of our members have criticised what they perceive as ‘silence’ from the Future Generations Commissioner during the Covid-19 crisis, commenting that the Commissioner should be visibly challenging politicians to ensure alignment with the Act and across the

Well-being Goals, especially around the health of the population and the impact of Covid-19

11. The Commissioner's own guidance to public bodies encourages stakeholders to take asset-based approach to community involvement. Local Authorities should be reminded of this and work with County Voluntary Councils to build a sustainable approach using the established infrastructure support of the third sector.
12. The Co-Production Network for Wales have reported that organisations are being asked to implement the Five Ways of Working without being told or shown how to do so. Upskilling is necessary so everyone understands what the Ways of Working are and what they could look like, with citizen involvement. Organisations then need encouragement and support as they try to put these methods into practice and document their learning, with time built in to share good practice. Improving understanding is essential to making a success of citizen involvement. The sector appreciates there are many points of contact managed by the Commissioners' office and the development of a regular discussion forum between the sector and the Commissioner is welcomed.

## **THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF WELSH GOVERNMENT**

13. Welsh Government should place the Act up front and central as it 'builds back better' from the pandemic. The rebuilding presents an opportunity to draw people's attention back to the Act as vital to the long-term recovery. Not doing so will make it even harder long-term to demonstrate to people the benefits of the Act. Welsh Government and partners need to establish what a firm foundation for re-building looks like - without that, re-building may not be sufficiently stable to weather future crises.
14. Welsh Government should ensure that funding streams, whether directly related to the Act or not, are well-managed, issued in a timely manner, are developed for the long-term, come with clear guidance, allow for funding to be rolled-over to the next financial year, and do not set organisations a very limited window to spend the money.
15. A particular over-arching strategy for community development, framed by the Act, would ensure consistency in practice within Welsh Government and prevent siloed working. We suggest looking at our report on [Empowering Communities](#).

## **ANY OTHER BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACT? (E.G. BREXIT, COVID-19...)**

16. With the transitional period for Brexit ending in weeks, it is important that analysis is undertaken to see where and how funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund could help delivery of the Act.
17. The Internal Markets Bill represents a fundamental threat to successful delivery of the Act. At an overarching level this legislation would make it more difficult for Wales to introduce policies that are tailored to local requirements. This is particularly the case in areas like environmental policy, but the concern is potentially much wider and could cover a variety of social policy objectives, with concerns having been expressed for example in the social housing sector and around labour standards, human rights and public health.
18. The UK Internal Market Bill's own regulatory impact assessment acknowledges that societal benefits that might have been achieved through local policies may not be achievable under this legislation, but views this as an acceptable cost if it results in greater UK wide economic efficiency.
19. The non-discrimination principle in particular could challenge some of the work around reinforcing the Foundational Economy in Wales, and on procurement policy, which needs reforming.
20. The Senedd's research services have also highlighted in their [Research and Legal Briefing](#) on the Bill, that the legislation could potentially prevent Welsh language requirements being introduced in some instances.
21. Short-term funding cycles, as described above, drive short-term thinking, and fail to look towards the long-term implementation of the Act.
22. Covid-19 has seen the income of many organisations fall sharply, leading to a decrease in service provision and cuts in staff numbers. This, in turn, means that services that would otherwise help apply the requirements of the Act are either not taking place at all, or are taking place less regularly or less efficiently.
23. The pandemic has also led, naturally, to much short-term planning as a firefighting measure. This makes planning longer-term very challenging for Local Authorities and Health Boards.
24. The sector, and citizens, are under-resourced and under-supported to ensure a strong community voice when decisions are being taken at RPB and PSB level. This must change if better decisions are to be made and the engagement principle of the Act is to become embedded not only in policy, but also in practice.

## **HOW TO MAKE SURE THE ACT IS SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE**

25. Our engagement suggests that long-term plans, including a framework and/or milestones, should be put in place to ensure the Act is being monitored effectively, with services designed to have a clear link to the Act. AVOW commented that without this, there is a risk that complying with the Act will simply become a 'box ticking' exercise rather than a chance to reshape communities for the future. A new strategy for communities, as discussed above, could provide this.
26. Public bodies can have a top-down culture, and this can be a barrier. Bodies must be supported to work co-productively with citizens, communities, and the sector to achieve the aims of the Act.
27. Funding from a Community Wealth Fund, financed by the proposed Dormant Assets Scheme, should be used to provide additional finance for community projects supporting the Act.
28. Business in the Community have highlighted their [Responsible Business Map](#) and [Tracker](#) as tools for businesses to show their commitment to the Act.
29. Place-based working can help local solutions be put into place quickly, building on what already exists in a specific area.
30. Require PSBs to work with and map community-run infrastructure as part of wellbeing assessments, as suggested by Building Communities Trust.
31. Welsh Government must continue to pressure UK Government for further clarity on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This in turn could be a valuable source of community support, further building towards the aim of the Act.

## DISCUSSION

32. WCVA will be pleased to discuss these or any other points relating to this consultation response with officials, committees or Ministers if requested.

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*November 2020*