

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – Policy research for its Impact and Effectiveness – January 2025

The Well-being of Futures Generations Act 2015 (WFGA) legally binds 48 public bodies in Wales to 7 well-being goals¹, which aims to carry out ‘sustainable development’ and “[improve] the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales”². The Act aims to promote sustainability in Welsh public bodies and focus public bodies to think about, and Act on, their ‘long-term impacts’ to prevent ‘persistent problems’ such as:

- Poverty
- Health inequality; and
- climate change³.

Overall, its goal is to create a good quality of life for both the future and current generation of Wales⁴ by setting the core purpose of the Welsh Government to be promoting the well-being of current and future generations⁵. This report will review how achievable the aims of the WFGA are; which objectives have been the most or least effective; how enforceable it’s aims are on public bodies; how effective it’s accountability measures are and overall the impact and effectiveness of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The Act imposes 48 public body with a well-being duty to be sustainable in their actions and improve Wales’ development in the:

- Economy
- Society
- Environment; and
- Culture⁶

This must be done in line with the ‘sustainable development principle’, which means a public body must act in a way which “seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”⁷. Public bodies ensure their actions are sustainable by working towards the 7 ‘well-being goals’⁸. These are:

1. A Prosperous Wales.
2. A Resilient Wales
3. A More Equal Wales
4. A Healthier Wales
5. A Wales of Cohesive Communities
6. A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language
7. A globally Responsible Wales

¹ [SPSF 1: Core guidance \(gov.wales\)](#), p.3

² [Well-being of future generations act: the essentials \(gov.wales\)](#) p.2

³ [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

⁴ [Well-being of future generations act: the essentials \(gov.wales\)](#) p.3

⁵ Jane Davidson “#futuregen: Lessons from a Small Country, p.2

⁶ [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), section 2

⁷ *Ibid*, section 5

⁸ [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

These well-being goals are overreaching aims that all affected public bodies must reflect in their actions. However, each public body has their own unique powers and responsibilities, meaning how they can reach these goals can differ. As such, the Act reflects the nuances of each public body by allowing each one to set and manage their own unique ‘well-being’ objectives⁹.

For example, the Welsh Government has set a well-being objective to ‘provide effective, high quality and sustainable health-care’¹⁰, which reflects the government’s powers and responsibility in managing NHS Wales. In contrast, Cardiff Council has set a well-being objective to make ‘Cardiff a Great Place to Grow Up in’¹¹, reflecting their powers and responsibilities in managing Cardiff’s local services.

The Act provides further guidance for how the objectives must be envisioned via the 5 ‘ways of working’ for public bodies¹²:

1. **Long term:** Policy must balance short-term needs with long term needs, and have the safeguards to do so.
2. **Integration:** Consider how the well-being objectives of a public body may impact each of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
3. **Involvement:** The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.
4. **Collaboration:** Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body meet its well-being objectives.
5. **Prevention:** How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

Overall, the Act has clear aims and guidance that public bodies must follow to be sustainable. Within the Act, there is flexibility for public bodies by allowing them to set their own well-being objectives, meaning each public body can set realistic, nuanced and achievable goals with the public body’s powers and responsibilities in mind.

To ensure the public bodies are aligning their actions to the 7 ‘well-being’ goals, the WFGA has created a ‘Future Generations Commissioner for Wales’ and empowered the already existing ‘Auditor General for Wales’ to be able to conduct reviews into public bodies. This statutory instrument means public bodies must answer questions and respond to (but not implement) any recommendations from the Commissioner’s office and Auditor General.

⁹ [Well-being of future generations act: the essentials \(gov.wales\)](#) p.4

¹⁰ [Programme for government 2021 to 2026: Well-being statement \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

¹¹ [Local Well-being Plan 2023-2028 - Cardiff Partnership : Cardiff Partnership](#)

¹² [Well-being of future generations act: the essentials \(gov.wales\)](#) p.5

The Commissioner, and by extension the Commissioner's Office, have the main duty of promoting the 'sustainable development principle', by monitoring and assessing how well public bodies are implementing the 7 'well-being' goals¹³. Their main powers to do this is through:

- Advising Public Bodies and Public Services Boards
- Reviewing how public bodies are taking account of their long-term impacts
- Making recommendations following a review¹⁴.

The Commissioner is able to conduct a review of a Public Body via section 20 of the WFGA, and suggest recommendations. For example, the 2021 review into the effectiveness of public bodies implementing sustainability in their 'procurement decisions'¹⁵ gave recommendations to both the Welsh Government and 8 other Welsh public bodies, including recommending the public bodies review their procurement approach to 'maximise opportunities' in social, economic, environmental and cultural impact¹⁶.

The Auditor General for Wales is the statutory external auditor for most of the Welsh public sector¹⁷. Since WFGA, specifically section 15 of the Act¹⁸, his team can also review how well a public body has implemented the sustainable development principle when setting their own well-being objectives and taking actions to meet those objectives. His work is similar to the Commissioner's office, but whereas the Commissioner provides recommendations and support to public bodies, the Auditor General focuses on reviewing the effectiveness of public body's policies.

¹³ [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), section 18

¹⁴ [Future Generations Commissioner for Wales – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

¹⁵ [ENG-Section-20-Procurement-Review.pdf](#)

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ [Auditor General For Wales | Audit Wales](#)

¹⁸ [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

How effective has the act been in its aims?

Overall, the WFGA is successful in implementing sustainability into the actions of Welsh public bodies. Public bodies have considerable enthusiasm to implement the WFGA aims¹⁹ and regularly utilise the Commissioner Office for advice or recommendations in doing so. In particular, public bodies are succeeding in:

- Promoting cohesive communities;
- Creating a globally responsible Wales; and
- Promoting Welsh culture and languages.

However, public bodies are struggling to create a healthier, prosperous and more equal Wales, mostly due to the cost-of-living crisis which has worsened inequality and increased poverty across the UK. Public bodies are also at risk of losing their current effectiveness in maintaining a globally responsible Wales, as across Wales public bodies are reducing their criteria for their sustainability goals or are not seeing measurable improvements to their sustainability.

In a 2022 report, it was highlighted that public bodies had been consistently failing to address 4 key areas²⁰:

1. Rising poverty rates in the face of the cost-of-living crisis
2. Declining biodiversity and climate emergency
3. Unequal life expectancy and growing inequality
4. Young people's well-being and loneliness

Rising poverty rates in the face of the cost-of-living crisis

In the 2024 'Wellbeing of Wales' report, 64% of people on permanent contracts earned a 'real living wage', 4% less than 2022 and overall a decline since 2020.²¹ This is an example of a wider issue in the Welsh economy of small economic growth, high inflation and increased cost-of-living, due to Covid-19 and the Ukraine War, which has negatively impacted living standards²².

Whilst the whole of the UK is affected, Wales has been noted to have a weaker economic performance and lower household income than the UK²³. The WFGA requires public bodies to plan for a 'prosperous Wales' and ensure both short-term cost-of-living needs are met, whilst long-term goals are planned for, to reduce poverty and improve living standards, which they are struggling to do.

To improve: Short term programmes to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis, such as free or heavily discounted public transport, to reduce travel costs for individuals and benefit those in lower-income backgrounds substantially. Welsh Public bodies must also implement long

¹⁹ [2024 11 19 DRAFT Future Generations Report Emerging Findings.pptx](#)

²⁰ [Response to Welsh Government's Well-being of Wales Report 2022 – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

²¹ [Wellbeing of Wales, 2024: a prosperous Wales \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

term strategies to prevent cost-of-living-crises occurring again. The Commissioner has recommended that public bodies in Wales consider national food strategies, housing retrofit programmes, further basic-income pilots and extension of free public transport²⁴.

Declining biodiversity and climate emergency

Wales' biodiversity has been consistently declining, with 18% of species at risk of extinction²⁵. The Welsh Government, in a 2023 report, were praised in reaching their first carbon budget. However, they have been criticised in acting slow in many policy areas to reduce their carbon footprint, such as in a lack of a decarbonisation strategy over agriculture and land use²⁶.

To improve: The Commissioner has suggested devolving further powers to local authorities, which would allow more community involvement for environmental projects²⁷. Furthermore, public bodies should implement a statutory responsibility to set biodiversity targets or establish environmental governance bodies²⁸, which would help protect the environment and measure the sustainability of a public body.

Unequal life expectancy and growing inequality

In Wales, there was a 20% increase from 2020 to 2024 in the amount of people classed as 'economically inactive' due to ill health²⁹. Life expectancy in Wales has stalled, in part due to widening inequality from³⁰:

- Low wage growth
- Fuel Poverty
- Food Insecurity; and
- Periods of Austerity

Welsh Public bodies are not planning for or creating 'a healthier Wales' and 'a more equal Wales'. There is a lack strategy by public bodies in educating the most disadvantaged in science, technology and other 'green jobs', which will result in further inequality and lack of diversity for these industries³¹.

To Improve

Sophie Howe, the previous Commissioner, has recommended the Welsh Government create a 'long-term' Food Partnership programme with Welsh councils to reduce food insecurity³²,

²⁴ [Future Generations Commissioner for Wales calls for long-term policy ideas to protect against future cost of living emergencies – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

²⁵ [TP25999-State-of-Nature-main-report_2023_FULL-DOC-v12.pdf](#), p.60

²⁶ [Progress Report: Reducing emissions in Wales](#)

²⁷ ["Urgent CCC report calls for faster and smarter work on the climate emergency," says Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

²⁸ [Tackling the nature and climate emergencies: Is more progress needed to achieve government commitments?](#)

²⁹ [Wellbeing of Wales, 2024: a prosperous Wales \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

³⁰ [Health expectancies in Wales with inequality gap - Public Health Wales](#)

³¹ [FGCW Equalities-Report_E-UPDATED.pdf](#) p.5

³² [Response to Welsh Government's Well-being of Wales Report 2022 – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

however public bodies must have long-term plans in place to reduce inequality and unequal life expectancy, such as:

- Increasing the number of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in digital and ‘green’ economy³³
- Creating plans and strategies that ensures equality and fair work in the shift of the Welsh economy to digital and green industries³⁴
- Creating platforms for people to discuss climate change³⁵
- Incentivising public bodies to improve life expectancy with increased funding for sustainable plans³⁶

Young people’s well-being and loneliness

Across Wales, 61% of people in 2023 have felt lonely³⁷. This is a decrease from 71% in 2021 and 84% in 2019, but it’s a factor that is more likely to affect young people³⁸ and is compounded by the cost-of-living crisis³⁹. Young people overall had a lower mental wellbeing⁴⁰ but are improving their health, with almost 90% of young people aged 11-16 displaying two or more ‘healthy behaviours’⁴¹. The Well-being goal of ‘a more resilient Wales’ is somewhat being met, but overall Welsh public bodies aren’t addressing young people’s well-being and loneliness specifically with policy.

To improve

The Welsh public bodies should ensure their policies protect the interest of young people, especially on climate emergency, racial inequality and the cost-of-living crisis⁴². There should be a focus on ‘green recovery’ and the creation of plans to response to future trends such as automation or climate change⁴³.

There is also some evidence that across Wales, the goals of the WFGA have been implemented by local councils but to differing degrees⁴⁴. A brief analysis by myself of the reports by the Auditor General of Wales suggests that North Wales councils are less likely to

³³ [FGCW Equalities-Report E-UPDATED.pdf](#)

³⁴ Ibid, p.13

³⁵ Ibid, p.24

³⁶ [Future Generations](#)

³⁷ [National Survey for Wales: results viewer | GOV.WALES](#)

³⁸ [‘Let’s Connect’: why our children are lonely and how we can support them](#)

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ [Wellbeing of Wales, 2024 | GOV.WALES](#), p.90

⁴¹ Ibid, p.89

⁴² [‘Don’t let young people down’, says Future Generations Commissioner as she launches Manifesto for the Future with 11-17-year-olds from Wales, and urges politicians to act now on climate and inequality – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Interview with Rebecca Leyla, 2024

review the long-term impacts of their actions versus South Wales councils. Reasons for this divide could be⁴⁵:

- Difficulty of travelling to the North from the South (and vice versa)
- Lack of resources given to the North
- Less ‘outreach’ by the Commissioner’s office to Northern councils

This overall creates a ‘barrier to North implementation’ that reduces the success of the WFGA. However, there is little evidence or research into the North-South divide in the implementation of the WFGA. Whilst this should be kept in mind, without concrete evidence to the fact, the full extent of this divide reducing the success of the WFGA cannot be determined.

Despite its faults, the WFGA has seen public bodies implement sustainability in their actions and plans successfully. In the same 2022 report from above, public bodies were found to be excelling in⁴⁶:

1. Decreasing apathy in local politics
2. Increasing engagement with Welsh culture and language
3. Increasing the amount of recycling in Wales
4. Increasing the number of educated adults in Wales

Decreasing apathy in local politics

The amount of people who feel like they can influence decisions affecting their local area has increased to a high of 30%⁴⁷. Whilst there are still considerable improvements to be made, public bodies are increasing engagement with local communities by encouraging staff to visit local projects and people⁴⁸. Overall, public bodies are improving public trust in local politics through projects that increase engagement, creating a more equal Wales and promoting cohesion in communities.

Increased engagement with Welsh culture and language

Currently, 27.8% of Welsh citizens say they can speak Welsh confidently, a 1.4% decrease from 2023 but overall an increasing trend from 2009⁴⁹. Access to Welsh language has increased across Wales, with the Welsh Language Commissioner reporting that Welsh public bodies are making good practice in complying with Welsh language standards⁵⁰ and progress being made towards the national Welsh milestone of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050⁵¹.

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ [National Survey for Wales: results viewer | GOV.WALES](#)

⁴⁷ [Wellbeing of Wales 2024 | PPT](#)

⁴⁸ [Encourage your staff to visit local projects and meet key local people driving change – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

⁴⁹ [Welsh language data from the Annual Population Survey: July 2023 to June 2024 \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

⁵⁰ [The Position of the Welsh Language 2016–20: Welsh Language Commissioner’s 5-year ReportThe Position of the Welsh Language 2016–20: Welsh Language Commissioner’s 5-year ReportThe Position of the Welsh Language 2016–20: Welsh Language Commissioner’s 5-year Report](#)

⁵¹ [2023-11-20-Strategy-English.pdf](#) p.35

Public bodies, especially local authorities, have a good understanding of what cultural well-being means and including cultural indicators and goals in their well-being objectives⁵². This overall shows that public bodies across Wales are making an active effort to increase engagement with Welsh culture and language, working towards both their own set objectives and towards the national objective of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is threatened by cuts to funding due to the cost-of-living crisis⁵³, meaning public bodies must continue to make an active effort in engaging and encouraging Welsh culture and language or risk missing their goals.

Increasing the amount of recycling in Wales

65.7% of waste in Wales from local authorities was recycled, reused or composted in 2022-23⁵⁴ and the capacity of renewable energy projects in Wales has increased by over double from 2012⁵⁵. Welsh public bodies are successfully planning for a ‘circular economy’, a net zero economy that recycles, reuses or composts any waste, by 2050⁵⁶. The implementation of public policy that encourage recycling is improving the sustainability of public bodies and private industries, with 27% reduction in greenhouse gases emissions in Wales from 2015 to 2021⁵⁷. The strength of Welsh policy in decreasing their environmental impact is evidential, and can be linked to the Welsh Government’s national indicators that plans for a net-zero and low-carbon Wales by 2050⁵⁸. Combined with the enthusiasm and long-term planning of other public bodies, the WFGA has been successful in creating a resilient and healthier Wales.

Increasing the number of educated adults in Wales

In Wales, the number of educated adults has overall increased year after year since 2015. The percentage of young people (16-24) in education and the labour market has increased to 85.8% in 2022, 2.3% higher than in 2015⁵⁹ and the percentage of adults (18-64) with a qualification of level 3 or above has increased by 11.2% from 2015 to 2023⁶⁰. Public bodies are creating a prosperous Wales through policy that encourages education and skills, and have started to plan and equip future generations with skills to take advantage of the growing ‘green economy’ and against automation⁶¹. However, as stated above, current policy is at risk of widening inequality due to the lack of education of the poorest in society on these future skills. This means that while the number of educated adults has been increasing year after year now, without proper planning we could still see widening inequality. Overall, the WFGA is successfully creating a more prosperous society in Wales.

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ [Wellbeing of Wales 2024 | PPT](#)

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ [Waste-strategy-English.pdf](#)

⁵⁷ [Wellbeing of Wales, 2024: progress towards national milestones \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

⁵⁸ [2023-11-20-Strategy-English.pdf](#) p.23

⁵⁹ [Wellbeing of Wales, 2024: a prosperous Wales \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

⁶⁰ [Wellbeing of Wales, 2024: progress towards national milestones \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

⁶¹ [FINAL-Prosperous-Wales-Topic-5-1.pdf](#)

Accountability and Enforceability of the Act

The WFGA is effective in keeping public bodies accountable. Public bodies, including the Welsh Government, have consistently applied recommendations and have considerable enthusiasm to do so. However, there are issues with the current act in enforcing recommendations. There is no statutory requirement to implement recommendations, which means public bodies can always ignore the Commissioner or General Auditor. This could undermine the act's effectiveness.

Effectiveness of Recommendations

Recommendations are not legally binding and can be ignored.

- In the 2022/23 annual report, the Welsh Government had performed specific actions for only 73% of the recommendations given in the 2021 report about their procurement procedure.⁶²
- In the 2022 review for the implementation of act into the Welsh Government's actions, it found that whilst the act has a positive impact on the ways policies are being developed, designed and implemented, this is not being consistently applied⁶³.

As the Act relies on public bodies themselves to regularly and effectively apply the well-being goals to their policies and actions, there can be inconsistencies in the applications of the 7 well-being goals. The Commissioner can review these breaches and create recommendations, but these lack any statutory power to be enforced meaning there no statutory instrument in place to enforce compliance or any instruments for redress if a public body does not follow the guidelines. The Auditor General for Wales, similar to the Commissioner, has no statutory power to have his reports enforced, which results in accountability and enforceability issues.

However, the mere existence of these reports and recommendations from the Commissioner or Auditor General have a positive influence over Welsh policy to be more sustainable via their recommendations. Recommendations are generally implemented by public bodies despite no need to, and remain a strong tool by the Commissioner and General Auditor to ensure the act is followed and public bodies' actions are sustainable.

Effectiveness of advice

The Commissioner's office has been regularly used by public bodies, including the Welsh Government, for advice in applying the 7 well-being goals to their actions, with:

- 807 requests⁶⁴ for advice in 2023/24 by public bodies; and
- The Welsh Government specifically requesting advice in its 2023 economic strategy, leading to 50 national well-being indicators to measure it's the sustainability and success⁶⁵.

⁶² [FG-AR-2023.pdf](#), p.31

⁶³ [C28299-FG-Section-20-Review-ENG.pdf](#), p.8

⁶⁴ [Untitled](#), p.24

⁶⁵ [Untitled](#), p.44

The Commissioner's office, by being regularly utilised by public bodies, have a significant influence over Welsh policy to be more sustainable. Whilst public bodies don't need to ask the Commissioner's office for advice or even follow the given advice, this power significantly boost the effectiveness of the act is promoting sustainability and means that while there is still a lack of enforceability, public bodies are being held accountable to the act and following the sustainable development principle by regularly engaging with the Commissioner's office for advice.

Other issues

Further issues of enforceability and accountability comes from the lack of statutory powers the act has in reviewing public body decisions. Specifically, the act cannot trigger a 'judicial review' of public body decisions⁶⁶, meaning the courts cannot be utilised to enforce any of the well-being goals. This means that there is no mechanism currently in place which enables the review of public body actions that are not aligned with the goals of the WFGA, resulting in a significant lack of accountability.

There is also a large majority of Welsh public bodies currently not affected by the WFGA. Specifically, there is 108 public bodies⁶⁷ in Wales, but only 48 affected by the act⁶⁸. A majority of the unaffected bodies are health boards, meaning that healthcare bodies in Wales are not creating policy to be sustainable. This reduces the effectiveness of the act and undermines its aims by allowing a large majority of public bodies to forgo any long-term planning or encourage a sustainable environment.

⁶⁶ [Law to protect future generations in Wales 'useless' - BBC News](#)

⁶⁷ [Register of devolved public bodies | GOV.WALES](#)

⁶⁸ [Public Bodies – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

How to improve the enforceability and accountability of the act?

Currently, the WFGA suffers from a lack of enforceability, stemming from its lack of statutory instruments to enforce their recommendations. However, granting the Commissioner or the Auditor General further powers to enforce their recommendations would be problematic, due to their lack of mandate from their unelected nature.

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

To improve the enforceability and accountability of the act, the Commissioner could be granted further statutory power to enforce their recommendations onto public bodies. Using the Equality Act 2006 as a model⁶⁹, the Commissioner could be granted the power to issue:

- Agreements
 - o A public body at risk of breaching the well-being goals would voluntarily enter an agreement to an action plan that would prevent a breach.
- Injunctions
 - o If a public body is likely to breach the well-being goals, or doesn't comply with an agreement, the Commissioner could apply to the county courts in Wales to restrain the public body from committing the unlawful act.
- Unlawful act notices
 - o If a breach of the well-being goals is found, the public body will be required to prepare a 'draft action plan', which sets out how it will remedy the breach and prevent future breaches. The Commissioner can approve the plan or issue a further notice if the plan is inadequate and must be revised.
- Public sector equality duty compliance notice
 - o If a public body fails to comply with a notice, falsifies anything provided in accordance with a notice or gives false oral evidence in response to a notice (without reasonable excuse for doing so), the Commissioner could apply to the High Court in Wales for an order requiring the public body to comply.

This would ensure that the aims of the WFGA are being properly met and increase the accountability of Welsh public bodies.

If additional powers are granted, then issues could arise if the non-elected Commissioner attempts to bind the democratically elected Welsh Government. A viable solution to address this could be having a Member of the Senedd lead the Future Generations Commissioner of Wales' Office. This would provide a mandate, allowing for justification in the enforcement of their recommendations on democratic institutions such as the Welsh Government.

However, having a member of the Senedd could mean the role is influenced by political pressure. The Commissioner would have reduced independence by being reliant on their election and being controlled by their party's whip. This could influence their decisions, reducing the effectiveness of the Commissioner's reports on accountability. Members of the

⁶⁹ [Our enforcement powers | EHRC](#)

Senedd are also stretched among several committees with a large workload, meaning the overall effectiveness of their work could be compromised.

By remaining unelected but be given further power to enforce recommendations, the Commissioner office would remain independent and ensures their work stays effective. However, as stated above, this would risk being seen as undemocratic.

Courts

The use of the courts in Wales to enforce compliance with the WFGA is another method to boost accountability. Allowing courts to enforce compliance notices would be especially effective, and would be much more acceptable to the general public if it binds a public body such as the Welsh Government. However, issues could arise if a public body decides to ignore a court order and could cause friction between the courts and public bodies. Overall, the enforcement of the act via the courts is a very viable method to boost accountability and enforceability, with a strong foundation for the ability to do so already laid by the Equality Act.

Finally, the act could also be enforced by the courts via 'judicial review'. Currently, the WFGA cannot trigger a judicial review into the lawfulness of a public body's actions if they violate the 'sustainable development principle' or well-being goals of the act⁷⁰. Allowing the application of WFGA principles for judicial reviews would increase scrutiny in public bodies' decisions, boosting accountability, and would increase the enforceability of the act on public bodies, meaning the act's aims of sustainability would be better achieved.

⁷⁰ [Law to protect future generations in Wales 'useless' - BBC News](#)

Overall conclusion

The WFGA has been successful in promoting sustainability in public bodies. There is considerable evidence of its success in creating a Wales of vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language; a globally responsible Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities and some evidence of a healthier, more equal and prosperous Wales.

The WFGA benefits greatly from the enthusiasm of public bodies in implementing sustainability, and is helped greatly by the advice and support provided by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. The commissioner's office is regularly utilised by public bodies, meaning public bodies are supported in implementing the goals of the WFGA.

However, the WFGA has had some difficulties in promoting a resilient, prosperous and more equal Wales. Public bodies have struggled to meet the demands of current Welsh citizens, due to the cost-of-living crisis, which has also meant there has been a significant lack of planning by public bodies in long-term, sustainable goals. This has affected the health and prosperity of Wales, and has also seen a lack of planning by the Welsh Government in a decarbonisation strategy. It is also suggested that the WFGA isn't implemented across Wales equally, due to logistical difficulties in supporting North Wales public bodies.

This shows that the WFGA is successful in implementing its goals across Welsh public bodies, but its success is reduced due to the cost-of-living crisis exasperating issues for public bodies in creating long-term sustainability goals.

As such, there are several improvements that can be made to the WFGA to improve the implementation of its goals. This includes:

- Short-term programmes to alleviate the cost-of-living
- Long-term planning to reduce food insecurity and promote underrepresented minorities in future digital and 'green' economies
- Statutory requirements for public bodies to fulfil biodiversity targets
- More initiatives to support North Wales public bodies

There are also issues with the accountability and enforceability of the WFGA. There are no statutory requirements for public bodies to implement recommendations, meaning public bodies can ignore the Commissioner or General Auditor, which could undermine the act's effectiveness. Whilst public bodies have been willing to implement recommendations and the policies of the WFGA, this could be a problem for the future. To improve, the WFGA could allow:

- The use of 'judicial reviews', if a public body violates the well-being goal of the act
- Enforcing recommendation on public bodies by the courts
- Replace the Commissioner with a Member of the Senedd
- Enforcing the WFGA on the remaining 60 public bodies currently not affected

These options would greatly increase the enforceability of the act on public bodies, whilst having a Member of the Senedd lead the Commissioner's office would provide a mandate to justify enforcing these recommendations. Although, the current benefit of the Commissioner being independent is that they are insulated from political pressure, which could be lost.

Overall, the WFGA has been successful and continues to be so. But, there are several improvements that could be implemented to increase the enforceability, accountability and effectiveness of the act and ensures it's long-term effectiveness in creating a sustainable Wales for both current and future generations.

This policy analysis report was created by Ethan Norman as part of my work with the Welsh Centre for International Affairs (WCIA). My placement with the WCIA was facilitated by Cardiff University's Law department, under my Law & Governance in Practice: Work Placement Module, during 2024/2025, the final year of my Law & Politics LLB degree. This report was created for other WCIA members to help understand what the Well-being for Future Generations Act is; it's work; where it can be improved; and where it has already succeeded. I have also included recommendations as a way to demonstrate how the Act could be improved, and to see how public law could intersect and improve the WFGA.