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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

**Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol | Equality and Social Justice Committee**

Ymateb gan: Rewilding Britain | Evidence from: Rewilding Britain

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**Welsh Government Evidence Submission - Equality and Social justice Committee**

**Post-Legislative Scrutiny of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

**Submitted by: Rewilding Britain**

**June 2025**

### **About Rewilding Britain**

Rewilding Britain is a registered Charity, working across the 3 nation's, to help create a wilder Britain for nature, climate and people. We're inspiring a movement of rewilders across Britain's land and seas - a groundswell of hope, so that together we can ensure a wilder, nature-rich future that benefits us all. Rewilding in Wales will be shaped by the country's unique legislative, cultural and ecological context.

Our response focuses on the effectiveness of the Act in delivering environmental sustainability and ecosystem resilience (Goals 2 and 7), and how it can better support nature restoration, including rewilding, which is the restoration of natural-process to ensure ecosystems function and flourish at scale, as a key part of future well-being in Wales.

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## **1. To what extent is the Act delivering its intended outcomes?**

We welcome and fully support the ambition and intent of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, and acknowledge that it has helped raise the profile of sustainability within public sector decision-making. However, its delivery on environmental outcomes—particularly the goal of a *Resilient Wales*—has been limited.

Wales remains one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and recent analysis on the amount of land currently in good condition for nature, by Wales Environment Link members, suggests that there is less than 3% of land and the sea that could count towards the Global Biodiversity Framework Target of 30% of land managed for nature by 2030. Despite a declared nature emergency, one in six species is at risk of extinction. While there have been some positive local initiatives, including rewilding projects, overall biodiversity trends continue to decline.

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Key issues include:

- **Lack of statutory targets for nature recovery** – in contrast to climate targets, this leads to nature being deprioritised by public bodies. Nature must be given equal status to climate. They are equal and opposite and inextricably interlinked.
- **Limited impact of the Act on nature-based investment** – only 7.4% of the Welsh Government budget positively affects nature, while 50.4% is assessed as having a negative impact (Future Generations Report 2025).
- **Under-resourcing of ecological expertise** – cuts in local authority budgets have led to the loss of key staff needed to deliver on nature recovery ambitions, particularly ecologists. Uncertain and variable, short-term, funding for the delivery of Local Nature Recovery Action Plans make staff retention difficult, stifling effective delivery.

## 2. What changes are needed to strengthen the Act's delivery for nature?

We recommend the following reforms and actions to enable the Act to more effectively deliver nature recovery and support rewilding as part of a joined-up approach to well-being:

### a. Introduce targets for nature recovery and ecosystem health

To match the urgency of the climate crisis, we need statutory nature targets that enable public bodies to prioritise ecosystem restoration alongside decarbonisation. This can be delivered through a strong Environmental Governance, Principles and Biodiversity Targets Bill. However, the Commissioner needs to be able to be empowered to request reporting and compliance on these targets to assist the Welsh Government in delivery. Targets should include metrics for ecological condition, connectivity, and natural regeneration, aligning with Wales's international biodiversity commitments.

### b. Ringfence budgets for preventative environmental action, including rewilding

Rewilding, along with other nature recovery measures, is a proven preventative approach—reducing flood risk, enhancing carbon storage, and supporting mental and physical health. Dedicated, multi-year funding for nature-based solutions must be embedded in Welsh Government budgets to meet the intent of the Act. The current lack of investment (budgetary analysis suggests just 2% of the flooding and coastal erosion protection budget is spent on nature-based solutions) undermines progress on multiple well-being goals.

### c. Strengthen the enforcement powers of the Future Generations Commissioner

The Commissioner plays a vital role in shaping sustainable policy, but currently lacks statutory enforcement powers. Given that only 68% of Public Services Boards have well-being actions/steps relating to nature (Future Generations Commissioners 10 year

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Report), stronger powers are needed to hold public bodies accountable for action on biodiversity and ecosystem restoration.

#### **d. Resource and reform public partnerships to enable nature recovery at scale**

Public Services Boards and place-based partnerships have a critical role in driving integrated, landscape-scale recovery. But without consistent, reliable and dedicated funding or staff capacity, delivery is limited. Natural Resources Wales, for example, cannot support all PSBs meaningfully with their current level of resources. A systems approach must be properly funded and resourced to deliver effective change and measurable actions on the ground. Without resources for delivery this is a paper only process.

#### **e. Strengthen guidance and training on the Five Ways of Working for ecosystem restoration**

The Five Ways of Working are essential but unevenly applied—particularly in relation to nature. Nature recovery projects often demonstrate how long-term, participatory approaches can transform degraded landscapes. And the IUCN Rewilding Principles embed community participation into rewilding approaches. These principles could be used to help guide landscape scale recovery. Public bodies need specific, practical guidance and training on embedding nature recovery into their well-being objectives and delivery plans, including high quality community involvement and co-design. Resourcing needs to meet the time and input requirements that these approaches require.

### **3. Is current guidance under the Act sufficient?**

Current Welsh Government guidance focuses largely on compliance rather than delivery. More detailed advice is urgently needed on:

- Balancing short-term service pressures with long-term environmental goals;
- Managing trade-offs between well-being objectives;
- Embedding natural capital and ecosystem health into all major investment and infrastructure decisions.

The Future Generations Commissioner offers valuable support, but the scale of the challenge demands stronger, more strategic guidance from the Welsh Government across departments. Unless the Commission is granted stronger powers and the legislation is strengthened so it is more legally binding.

### **4. Is the Act enforceable and good value for money?**

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While the Act has helped embed sustainability language and culture, it remains limited in legal enforceability. Environmental progress still relies on other legislation (e.g. Environment (Wales) Act 2016). To deliver true value, the Act must evolve to drive tangible environmental outcomes—not only procedural compliance.

The Office of the Future Generations Commissioner provides strong value for money and is one of the few bodies consistently advocating for environmental action. We support further investment in the Commissioner's role, alongside legal and budgetary mechanisms to enforce compliance.

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## 5. Conclusion

The Well-being of Future Generations Act remains a bold and necessary piece of legislation. However, to meet the scale of the nature and climate emergencies, it must now evolve. Rewilding—restoring ecosystems through natural processes—offers a practical and visionary approach to delivering resilience in our landscapes, communities and rural economy alongside community well-being.

We urge Welsh Government to:

- Embed rewilding approaches, guided by the IUCN rewilding principles, and large-scale nature recovery in future well-being strategies;
- Provide public bodies with the resources, targets, and guidance needed to act;
- Ensure accountability for delivery on environmental and nature focussed outcomes across all Goals.

With these improvements, the Act can help deliver the thriving, resilient future it promises—not only for future generations, but for the natural systems on which all life depends.