

**Senedd Cymru**

**Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol**

**Ymchwiliad:** Deddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol (Cymru) 2015

**Ymateb gan:** Comisiwn Seilwaith Cenedlaethol Cymru

**Welsh Parliament**

**Equality and Social Justice Committee**

**Inquiry:** Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

**Evidence from:** National Infrastructure Commission Wales



# Reframing the Future: Embedding Long-Term Infrastructure Strategy into the Well-being of Future Generations Act

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 was a globally significant step forward, legislating a commitment to intergenerational justice by requiring public bodies to work towards seven national well-being goals, grounded in the principle of sustainable development. Nearly a decade on, the Act retains strong political and institutional support. It has contributed to a culture shift within Welsh Government and across public services, creating new teams, accountability structures, and decision-making processes that give greater prominence to long-term thinking and community outcomes.

Achievements such as the rollout of [universal primary school meals](#) and the [launch of a new curriculum](#) giving a new focus on ethical citizenship and sustainability have emerged under the influence of the Act. Wales has also pioneered new ways of measuring national success, replacing narrow GDP metrics with [well-being indicators](#), and supported alternative models of prosperity, such as cooperatives and social enterprises. On environmental progress, Wales has cut national carbon emissions by 27% and become the world's second-highest recycler.

Yet these early signals of success mask a deeper challenge: [the Act has not yet catalysed the structural, system-wide change it was designed to deliver](#). This is particularly evident in the realm of infrastructure, an area that shapes the daily experience of communities, locks in environmental and economic outcomes for decades, and determines the resilience of future generations.

Despite its forward-thinking ethos, much of Wales's current infrastructure, spanning water, energy, transport, digital networks, circular economy and related social infrastructure, remains based on traditional delivery models and short-term investment cycles. Infrastructure continues to be designed, funded, and delivered in ways that are often disconnected from the Act's well-being goals, and rarely evaluated over a true generational horizon.

Issues such as climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, housing inequality, and economic disconnection are not abstract future threats. They are here now, and are intensified by infrastructure systems that are misaligned with the long-term public interest. Without an urgent upgrade in how Wales integrates the Act into infrastructure governance and delivery, we risk entrenching the very injustices the legislation was designed to prevent.

To make the Well-being of Future Generations Act a truly operational framework, one that actively shapes long-term infrastructure outcomes, a comprehensive upgrade is needed. Below are a series of recommendations for government, public bodies, and civil society to ensure that infrastructure planning, investment, and oversight are aligned with future well-being.

## Resourcing for Long-Term Infrastructure Transformation

- Substantially increase resourcing for long-term, cross-sector infrastructure initiatives. Establish a central Well-being Infrastructure Fund to support strategic projects that integrate transport, housing, energy, and environmental goals over a 30–50 year horizon. This fund should support regional delivery via Public Services Boards and City/Growth Deals.
- Mandate that all Welsh Government capital spending proposals include long-term well-being cost-benefit modelling. This must include trade-off assessments (e.g. between car-centric and active travel systems, grey vs. green flood defence infrastructure) and reflect not just economic ROI but ecological and community outcomes. A Well-being Infrastructure Lead within the Finance Department should have authority to reshape capital allocations accordingly, mirroring the Treasury function in [New Zealand's Well-being Budget](#).
- Ringfence a minimum of 5% of annual public body budgets for infrastructure investments that specifically reduce intergenerational injustice. These funds should prioritise preventative, resilient, and low-carbon infrastructure, such as social housing retrofits, sustainable drainage, or digital access networks in underserved areas.
- Ensure all Ministers' remit letters and budget statements explicitly reference the long-term infrastructure implications of their portfolios under the Act. This step has often been neglected but is critical for creating cross-departmental accountability and visibility.
- Require public bodies to map infrastructure-related corporate plans and budgets to the seven national well-being goals, demonstrating how investments in roads, buildings, schools, and technology infrastructure directly support outcomes like resilience, equality, and ecological health.
- Public Services Boards (PSBs) should be fully resourced and authorised to act as infrastructure delivery hubs, pooling local knowledge and investment capacity. PSBs must have direct input into regional infrastructure strategies and be able to commission long-term capital projects aligned to their well-being plans.

## Embedding the Act into Infrastructure Governance

- Require public body boards to publish annual statements on how their capital strategies and infrastructure decisions reflect the Act's priorities, and how future needs have been weighted in procurement, design, and maintenance choices.
- Introduce mandatory training on the Act for all infrastructure-facing staff across the public sector, including planners, engineers, procurement leads, and asset managers. The training should be contextualised with case studies in housing, digital,

transport, and energy.

- Each public body should designate a senior-level Future Generations Infrastructure Champion, responsible for integrating the Act into capital programmes and representing long-term perspectives at Board level. This role would be similar in principle to the [Nature Guardian currently being assessed by NICW](#), but focused on future inhabitants of Wales.
- Tie senior managers' performance reviews to measurable progress on Future Generations well-being outcomes, such as reductions in fuel poverty, improved flood resilience, or enhanced access to sustainable transport.
- Support a cross-sectoral "Community of Practice" to build capability and share learning on well-being-based delivery across Wales, drawing on examples from other countries such as Finland and Scotland.

## Monitoring, Transparency, and Systems Alignment

- Produce an online open source platform to enable all organisations in Wales to review and report on progress in a systematic way that helps monitoring and evaluation, and supports good practice.
  - Use standardised metrics aligned to national indicators and new well-being index.
  - Enable public feedback, peer benchmarking, and real-time visualisation of systemic impact.
  - An open source approach would enable it to be modified, improved and adopted elsewhere at no cost
- Create a Wales-specific Well-being Index, modelled in part on [Bhutan's GNH system](#), incorporating environmental footprint, accessibility, quality of life improvements, and future resilience indicators.
- Develop a national online platform for tracking infrastructure progress against well-being outcomes. All capital projects above a defined threshold should report into this system, using standardised metrics aligned with national indicators and a new Well-being Infrastructure Index. The platform should:
  - Enable cross-comparison across local authorities and sectors.
  - Include public feedback mechanisms and citizen audit functions.
  - Visualise progress toward long-term goals (e.g. % of new developments within 500m of public transport).

## Public Engagement and Legislative Renewal

- Establish permanent Citizens' Infrastructure Panels to inform major decisions on long-term planning, infrastructure procurement, and budgeting. These panels should review and comment on Future Trends Reports and national infrastructure strategies.
- Form a dedicated Senedd Committee on Future Infrastructure and Generations, with power to review, amend, or block legislation and investment plans that fail to meet future well-being tests (inspired by [Finland's Committee for the Future](#)).
- Create a Charter for Intergenerational Infrastructure Justice, outlining the responsibilities of current decision-makers to avoid harm and maximise benefit for future generations. The Charter should be used to frame all major infrastructure strategies and reviews.
- Introduce measurable, time-bound targets for infrastructure transformation, such as:
  - 100% of new public buildings being net zero carbon by 2026.
  - Active travel comprising 40% of all journeys in cities by 2035.

## Conclusion

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 positioned Wales as a global leader in legislating for the long-term. But to fully realise this vision, the Act must evolve into a practical, enforceable framework for long-term infrastructure transformation. Infrastructure is not grey infrastructure like concrete and cables, it is also the natural world around us and arises as the physical expression of our values and foresight. It shapes where people live, how they move, how resilient they are to crisis, and what kind of world they inherit.

A Wales that builds in alignment with the Act will not only improve lives today, it will leave a legacy of foresight, care, and justice for generations to come. In principle the Act should mean that every bridge, broadband mast, home, and hospital contributes to a Wales that thrives, socially, economically, and ecologically, for decades to come.