

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Priorities for the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
EIS 26 Carnegie Trust UK	EIS 26 Carnegie Trust UK

Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Andrew Carnegie House
Pittencrieff Street
Dunfermline
Fife, Scotland, KY12 8AW
Tel: +44 (0)1383 721445
Fax: +44 (0)1383 749799

www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk

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Dear Sir/Madam

Forward Work Programme of the National Assembly for Wales' Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

The Carnegie United Kingdom (UK) Trust welcomes the opportunity to inform the Forward Work Programme of the National Assembly for Wales' Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee. The Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. Further information on our work is available on our website www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk. The Trust's Strategic Plan identifies three thematic priorities – Fulfilling Work, Digital Futures and Flourishing Towns, each of which has direct applicability to the work of the Committee.

Fulfilling Work

To inform our emerging programme on [Fulfilling Work](#), we recently commissioned a data review to understand how fulfilling work might be measured and how many people across the UK have access to it. This work shows that access to fulfilling, paid work has long been a significant determinant of people's wellbeing. Economically, fulfilling work provides a secure income, while in social terms fulfilling work can offer a sense of purpose, social connections and personal agency.

Our data review indicates a number of concerning shifts that contribute to in-work poverty in the UK. These shifts include heightened levels of job insecurity, low skilled and low paid work, underemployment and unpredictable hours, and a rise in self-employment (with many self-employed people experiencing significant levels of underemployment). Wales has been particularly affected by the increase in unemployment, involuntary underemployment, and job insecurity. July 2015 ONS labour market data suggest that self-employment, part-time and temporary jobs in Wales have increased by 10% since the onset of the financial recession. The Committee may wish to explore what levers the government has to reduce in-work poverty and improve business resilience in Wales.

Digital Futures

Through our understanding [digital exclusion](#) project, we have analysed the reasons why people are excluded from technology and what policy makers can do to reduce the barriers to participation.

The social and economic benefit to be gained from providing high quality internet access is substantial. We understand the value of prioritising broadband rollout in Wales' Enterprise Zones, as the Welsh economy could gain from the enhanced connectivity, innovation and competitiveness which superfast broadband facilitates. We suggest that a potential role for the Committee could be to continue to monitor the progress of the essential Superfast Cymru rollout.

Super-fast broadband rollout also offers an unprecedented opportunity to eradicate some of the traditional challenges facing Wales' rural communities. In Scotland, we have worked with the Community Broadband Scotland initiative (<http://www.hie.co.uk/community-support/community-broadband-scotland/>) which successfully supports remote communities to develop local solutions to access to broadband. The Committee could consider what further action could be taken to encourage and facilitate community-led broadband schemes in rural areas.

Our research has shown that social inequalities cannot be bridged through the provision of infrastructure alone. Digital inclusion requires people to have the skills to navigate the online world in order to derive the most economic and social benefit from being connected. The need to embed digital skills across the life course is critical: OECD research indicates that workers who use ICT in the workplace frequently have substantially higher wages than those who do not, and the Tinder Foundation estimates 90 % of all jobs in the near future will require basic digital skills. We suggest that the Committee considers what further activities or initiatives are required to develop citizens' digital skills to enable them to take advantage of the Superfast Cymru roll out.

Flourishing Towns

Our (forthcoming) international research into town development suggests that the economic purpose of a town – and its flexibility to refocus or diversify its economic base – is a key determinant in its ability to 'turn around' periods of bad fortune or dilapidation. For all communities in Wales to see the positive impact from economic growth, our research suggests that local actors need a robust understanding of their local economic ecosystem, and must be proactive about change. We recommend that the Committee considers how to develop this approach among Welsh local authorities, which are well placed to understand and plan for the dynamics of their local economy in a way which improves the life chances of the population.

We hope that you find these comments helpful. If you would like to discuss our response, or would like to find out more about our work, please contact Gail Irvine, Policy Officer (gail@carnegieuk.org).

Yours faithfully,

Douglas White
Head of Advocacy