



Standards of Conduct Committee
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Dear Committee Members,

The Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Code of Conduct for Assembly Members

The Well-being of Future Generations Act is intended to make a fundamental change to how Wales works. By implementing the Sustainable Development Principle the Act empowers our public bodies to make a change from 'business as usual' and to make decisions designed to improve national well-being and ensure that the needs of future generations are met. Given the scale of this change it is appropriate for Assembly Members to consider what this Act means to them as individuals at the forefront of public life, and whether Members wish to take steps to embrace the Act when fulfilling your duties.

The current Code of Conduct for Assembly Members does not make specific reference to the Act as the National Assembly for Wales is not one of the public bodies it covers. Yet the Code is underpinned by the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life. These principles are agreed at a UK level and adopted in Wales as written. However, the potential exists for the Committee to look afresh at these principles as part of its wider consideration of the Code and explore whether more can be done to reflect Wales' specific needs. Scotland has already undertaken this process via the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 which led to the introduction of two further principles on 'Public Service' and 'Respect' in addition to the seven identified under Nolan.

WWF Cymru would encourage Members to explore the inclusion of a new principle for Future Generations to be added to the seven already established. We believe this is the best way to reflect the step change intended by the Act and would be most effective in allowing Assembly Members to lead in demonstrating how the Act can make a material difference to how Wales works and impacts their decision making.

In coming to this conclusion we considered whether the intent of the Act was already reflected in the existing principles. While the wording of the current principles may be considered suitably flexible to accommodate this position, we suggest taking this interpretation would imply the Act is not delivering real change from 'business as usual'.

A challenge of developing a new principle will be to find a wording which is sufficiently strong to meet the ambitions of Assembly Members whilst also being acceptable to the Standards Commissioner given that the Act does not expressly apply to Assembly Members. Given that the Code currently states that Members "should" rather than "must" observe the principles, we suggest that it would be within the authority of Assembly Members to decide to take on this additional expectation of yourselves without causing a further burden to the Commissioner. Below, dependant on whether a choice a made to directly reference the Act, we have included options for wording a new principle for future generations which are consistent with the wording of the existing principles:

- **Future Generations** – Holders of public office should exhibit their commitment to future generations by demonstrating how their decisions will maximise the seven Well-being Goals and how they have applying the Sustainable Development Principle identified by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- **Future Generations** – Holders of public office must act and take decisions for the betterment of future generations.

We would welcome your views on this proposal and would be delighted to engage with you further to ensure that the Well-being of Future Generations Act fulfils its potential.

Kind regards,



Anne Meikle

Head of WWF Cymru