

Welsh Government

Consultation – summary of responses

Proposals concerning the publication of Sustainable Development Indicators statistical outputs

August 2014

Summary of responses document

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this Summary of Responses document is to summarise the responses received and present our findings following the consultation on proposed changes to the statistical output method for Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales. The review of the indicators is outside the scope of this consultation.

1.1. Sustainable Development

The Sustainable Development Scheme 'One Wales: One Planet' confirms that sustainable development means enhancing the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people and communities, achieving a better quality of life for our own and future generations. Sustainable development is the process by which we reach the goal of sustainability.

Currently, the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales are used to measure sustainable development in Wales in support of the delivery of the Welsh Government's statutory Sustainable Development Scheme 'One Wales: One Planet' (2009).

The latest information on Sustainable Development Indicators was published in 2013, and is available from the Welsh Government Website:
<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/sustainable-development-indicators/?lang=en>

1.2. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill

On 7th July 2014 the Welsh Government introduced the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill into the National Assembly for Wales. The Bill establishes a set of six statutory well-being goals which Welsh Ministers and specified public authorities in Wales will be expected to contribute to.

The Bill provides for a set of long-term well-being goals for Wales. These are for a prosperous; resilient; healthier; more equal Wales; with cohesive communities; and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Placing them in legislation will provide a clear definition of the Wales we want – a sustainable Wales, and help deliver the long term consistency and certainty that is needed to tackle the generational challenges we face, for example climate change, tackling poverty, and health inequalities.

The Bill will require Welsh Ministers to establish national indicators to measure progress towards the achievement of the well-being goals and report on them annually. These will build upon and replace the current set of Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales. The Bill confirms the aim of public bodies to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Wales in accordance with the sustainable development principle.

Further information on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill can be found at: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/future-generations-bill/?lang=en>

2. Summary

In accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the Welsh Government conducted a 12 week consultation on proposed changes to the statistical output method for Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales. The nature, type and selection of indicators were outside the scope of this consultation.

The consultation commenced on 14th April 2014 and concluded on 4th July 2014. A copy of the consultation document can be found on the Welsh Government website alongside this summary of responses.

We consulted at this stage to allow time for consultation responses to be acted upon, where possible, prior to finalising the details for this year's Statistical Release publication on the 21st August 2014.

The main aim of the consultation was to seek users' views on the following two proposals:

- Proposal 1: to include within the existing Sustainable Development Indicators Statistical First Release, analyses of the five headline indicators, accompanied by up-to-date Statswales tables.
- Proposal 2: to cease the publication of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales 'In Your Pocket' booklet.

This document provides a summary of the responses to the consultation as well as confirming plans for the 2014 publication of Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales.

2.1 Consultation respondents

In total 13 responses to the user consultation were received, of these:

- 11 were from users in the Public Sector or professional organisations; and
- 2 were from Local Authorities;

We value the opinion of our users and want to thank those who have taken the time to read and respond to the consultation. All feedback received has been considered in informing the next steps.

The report below includes a summary of responses as well as some direct quotes where relevant.

A full list of respondents can be found in [Annex 1](#).

Not all respondents answered all questions.

3. Method

Respondents were asked if they agreed to the proposed changes to Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales statistical outputs. All responses received are available in full in the accompanying [Individual Responses](#) document.

The background document explaining the consultation and the response form are accessible via the Welsh Government consultations website. There were thirteen responses in total, eight respondents completing the response form available online and five submitting written responses in pdf or email format. All recipients were given the opportunity to submit their views anonymously, but none opted to do so.

4. Results

A summary of the key themes emerging from the responses received is given for the two proposals.

4.1 Proposal 1

To include within the existing Sustainable Development Indicators Statistical First Release, analyses of the five headline indicators, accompanied by up-to-date Statswales tables.

The majority of respondents were supportive of our proposed direction of travel. Some respondents raised concerns that not all the statistics will continue to be analysed and indicated that the booklet was useful in the current form, especially to non-expert users of statistics.

Analyses will be provided for the headline indicators, with data available for the other indicators on StatsWales. Within the presentation of the data on StatsWales, users will be able to access the range of sustainable development indicators that are relevant to consider together. Appropriate communication about the uses of the data can be found in the Annex of the Statistical Release. Furthermore, users can contact us should they require advice on any of the indicators at: stats.inclusion@wales.gsi.gov.uk

4.2 Proposal 2

To cease the publication of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales 'In Your Pocket' booklet.

All respondents agreed to the proposal to cease publication of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales 'In Your Pocket' booklet, with the consensus that this proposal would have little negative effect on users, providing that all the equivalent data is made available on StatsWales.

Only four respondents that received hard copies of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales 'In Your Pocket' booklet responded to the consultation via the online response form. None of the four respondents rated the hard copy as being 'Very Useful.'

There were two other responses that didn't receive hard copies but rated the booklet as being of more use. The majority of respondents felt that ceasing the publication of the booklet would not any impact on their work, especially if the equivalent information was made available on Statswales.

A few respondents emphasised the importance that indicators are clearly signposted on StatsWales and that updates should be highlighted and communicated widely to both current and potential users.

We will include links to each Sustainable Development indicators on StatsWales in this year's Statistical First Release publication.

4.3 Other comments

Many respondents recognised that, in the light of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, work around measuring progress towards to the goals will result in the need for new indicators. A number of respondents indicated a wish that there should not be a gap in updating the indicators during this period.

A number of respondents also provided comments on other areas concerning Welsh Government official statistics not specifically covered in this consultation.

These included references to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, Sustainable Development Planning Indicators and the need for more economic data on Wales. These comments have been passed on to the appropriate departments for consideration.

5. Next Steps

Given the responses we have received suggest our users broadly agree with our proposals, we will action the proposed changes straight away.

In our next annual Statistical Release, due to be published on the 21st August 2014 we will include analysis of the five headline indicators and links to the corresponding Statswales tables for each of the Sustainable Development Indicators. We will be ceasing publication of the 'In Your Pocket' booklet.

We will, of course, continue to regularly review our activity and seek our users' feedback to enable us to most efficiently meet as wide a range of user requirements as possible and ensure we continue to be reactive to emerging priorities.

6. Summary of Responses

Five respondents provided textual responses in letters or emails that may not have directly answered any following questions and are therefore not included in the analysis below, however general comments and recommendations are included as appropriate.

7.1 Question 1

1.1 “Do you agree with the proposal to cease publication of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales ‘In Your Pocket’ booklet?”

This question required a Yes or No answer. Respondents were reminded that the analysis of the 5 headline indicators will still be included in the annual Statistical First Release and all the other indicators will be updated where possible, and available on Statswales.

There were eight responses to this question. All respondents agreed to the proposal to cease the publication of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales ‘In Your Pocket’ booklet.

1.2 “What impact would ceasing the publication of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales ‘In Your Pocket’ booklet have on your work?”

There were eight responses received to this question, for all responses please see the [Individual Responses](#) document. The majority of respondents (six responses) indicated that ceasing publication of the booklet would have little to no impact on their work, especially if the indicator data were made available via Stats Wales. The answers provided included the following:

- *The ‘In Your Pocket’ booklet is an accessible tool which can be used to immediately communicate the concept of sustainable development in practical terms. The scope and range of the ‘in your pocket’ indicators immediately illustrates how sustainable development is fundamental to social economic and environmental wellbeing across Wales and about more than ‘green issues’. The indicators are a helpful means of demonstrating that sustainability is the responsibility of all services rather than a small group of champions or environmental departments.*
- *The culture particularly within the public sector is currently very much performance orientated so it can be helpful to frame sustainable development within these terms. As long as the indicators are still presented as a basket under sustainable development online the shift from a specific booklet is not problematic and is a step toward integration. There is no issue with the decision not to publish in hard copy as data is routinely sourced online including the ‘in your pocket data’.*

Whilst there were no objections to ceasing publication of hard copies of the booklet, respondents emphasised the need for the all indicators to be clearly signposted on Statswales. We will include in the Statistical First Release an additional column in the indicator table, which will provide a direct link for each indicator to the corresponding table on Statswales. In addition, we will display all the sustainable indicators in one location on Statswales and ensure that all current and potential users are informed of this change.

7.2 Question 2

2.1 “Do you receive a hard copy of the SD indicator ‘In Your Pocket’ booklet?”

All eight respondents answered this question. Half of those who responded using the online response form selected ‘Yes’ indicating that they currently /or have previously received a hard copy of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales ‘In Your Pocket’ booklet.

2.2 “If yes, how useful are hard copies to you?”

There were six responses to this question. Respondents were asked to rate usefulness on a scale of 1 (not very useful) to 5 (very useful). Although four answered ‘Yes’ to question 2.1 two of those who responded ‘No’ to this question still chose to answer question 2.2.

This question received mixed responses, of those who responded; two rated the hard copies as ‘Not Very useful’. Three respondents selected ratings between 3 and 4, with only one respondent giving the rating of 5, ‘Very Useful’. As the majority of respondents provided a rating of 3 or under, this further supports our proposal to cease the publication of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales ‘In Your Pocket’ booklet.

7.3 Question 3

3.1 “Please indicate which of the following themes you have used, selecting multiple items if appropriate”

All eight respondents chose to answer this question. The majority selected multiple themes, and provided various examples of how indicators are used in their work. We can therefore be confident that the respondents have an interest in this output; even if they did not currently receive a hard copy of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales ‘In your pocket’ booklet.

Indicator	Number
Headline Indicators	5
Sustainable Resource Use	7
Sustaining the Environment	5
A Sustainable Economy	4
A Sustainable Society	6
The Wellbeing of Wales	5

As the table above shows a range of indicators and themes are used. The most commonly identified theme was Sustainable Resource Use.

3.2 For each theme selected, respondents were then asked to give further details on the specific indicators used and their application in their work. Respondents gave a wide variety of examples illustrating how they make use of the Sustainable

Development Indicators for Wales. Most users gave examples of where our outputs have been used in monitoring, evaluation, policy development or benchmarking.

A couple of responses to the headline indicators has been selected and are presented below. For all responses please see [Individual Responses](#) document.

Headline indicators

- *All these indicators have been used at different points in space and time directly and indirectly by employees of the City and County of Swansea in evidencing and informing the planning, development and delivery of services. The indicators have also been used to inform and frame work on sustainable development reporting and wider work undertaken by the sustainable development team. The document provides a good overview as to the current 'state' of Wales providing a fundamental platform from which we can identify the Wales we want in the longer term and how the local authority forms part of that vision.*
- *The UK Environmental Law Association aims to make the law work for a better environment and to improve understanding and awareness of environmental law. UKELA's members are involved in the practice, study or formulation of Environmental Law in the UK and the European Union. The organisation attracts both lawyers and non-lawyers and has a broad membership from the private and public sectors. UKELA prepares advice to UK Governments with the help of its specialist working parties, covering a range of environmental law topics. Its interest in the details of Sustainable Development indicators is primarily in ensuring that the legislative framework reflects global best practice; the indicators are compatible with the current and forthcoming legislation; and that they are meaningful in illustrating Wales' progress to sustainable development. The indicators are used generally to demonstrate the work that Wales is doing in this field. They are included in academic research papers; presentations and papers to conferences; and general articles delivered to a wide range of audiences.*

7.4 Question 4

4.1 “We publish the data for each indicator on Statswales. Were you aware of this?”

4.2 “Have you used data from Statswales before?”

All eight respondents answered ‘Yes’ to both question 4.1 and 4.2. This highlights that Statswales is an important resource to existing users. We will continue to ensure that data is available in this accessible format, and that the location of the relevant tables for each indicator is clearly signposted in the Statistical First Release.

7.5 Question 5

“If you have any general comments you wish to make with regards to Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales ‘In Your Pocket’ booklet please include these in the space below.”

Responses to this question included the following:

- *The publication of the booklet was an opportunity to draw attention to the progress, or lack of, on the SD Indicators. WCVA would hope that the publication on StatsWales of this information would also be accompanied by similar promotion and publicity to draw attention to the information and encourage discussion and debate.*

- *In the interests of efficiency and in the light of increasing use of the internet to access detailed information, it is understood why it is proposed to stop publishing the “In Your Pocket” book. Whilst UKELA has not held a copy of the publication, it is of the view that it could be useful in a number of scenarios. The focus during the next couple of years will be on developing indicators under the Future Generations Bill and, as part of that, it will be important to consider the wider communication of indicators and their progress to a wide audience, in particular younger generations. That process will need to consider carefully the most effective way of communicating with various sections of society.*

We will take all comments into consideration, and evaluate how best the indicators can be publicised and signposted on our Statswales website, in order to ensure that perspective and support is provided to current and future users.

7.6 Question 6

“If you have any related issues that we have not considered, please use the space below to let us know.”

For all responses to this questions please see the [Individual Responses](#) document:

- *WCVA welcomes the consideration that will be given to future monitoring of progress on sustainable development following introduction of the Future Generations Bill and hopes that, along with headline indicators, there will be others that third sector organisations of all sizes can contribute to – including very small community groups. Environment Wales found the current SD indicators too specific (e.g. levels of soil acidity) for the majority of its grant recipients to contribute to. At the same time there is no doubt that these groups, and many other like them across the third sector, are making a huge contribution to sustainable development at a local and sometimes regional level and it is important that this contribution can be recognised and captured. WCVA also believes there is a strong case for using common indicators across Welsh Government funding and support schemes so that schemes can be properly benchmarked against each other in terms of effectiveness and delivery. These indicators should be based on, or in line with, those emerging from the Future Generations Bill and the shared outcomes of NRW.*
- *It is importance that a void is not created as the reporting duty of the Future Generations Bill is worked through and the advisory body and its role established. The Headline indicators and availability of supporting indicators online need to be given a profile during the interim period to help organisation continue to adopt sustainable development reporting during the shift to potentially more integrated reporting requirements.*

Many respondents recognised that, in the light of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, work around measuring progress towards to the goals will result in the need for new indicators. A number of respondents indicated a wish that there should not be a gap in updating the indicators during this period.

A number of respondents also provided comments on other areas concerning Welsh Government official statistics not specifically covered in this consultation. These included references to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, Sustainable Development Planning Indicators and the need for more economic data on Wales. These comments have been passed on to the appropriate departments for consideration.

Annex 1: List of Respondents

1. Janet Jones, Federation of Small Businesses Wales
2. Meri Huws- Welsh Language Commissioner
3. Clare Parsons, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
3. Clare Sain-ley-Berry, WCVA
4. Iwan Wyn Jones, Cyngor Gwynedd
5. Sustrans Cymru, Sustrans Research and Monitoring Unit
6. Suzy Richards, City and County of Swansea
7. Dr Roisin Willmott, Royal Town Planning Institute
8. Vicki Hirst, Planning Officers Society Wales
9. David Clubb, Renewable UK Cymru
10. Dr Norma Barry, UK Environmental Law Association
11. Alan Hare, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
12. Julie Boswell, Natural Resources Wales