



Welsh Government
Consultation – summary of response

How do we assist Welsh Ministers in measuring a nation's progress?

Proposals for developing a set of national milestones for Wales.

July 2019

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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Introduction

In 2015 the National Assembly for Wales passed the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (“the Act”). The Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act was made law in April 2015 and put in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal and globally responsible Wales, with a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

National milestones for Wales will set out expectations of progress, including the scale and pace of change required allowing us to assess whether we are on track. This is a legal requirement of the Act and makes an important contribution to supporting public bodies in Wales to achieve the well-being goals.

The milestones will relate to the National Indicators, currently a set of 46 Wales-level indicators, which reflect the combined contribution that all public bodies, individuals and organisations make towards the goals. They do not measure the contribution that individual organisations make.

Our national indicators also support us in measuring progress in Wales towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Setting milestones will also help demonstrate the progress we want to see towards those goals.

The milestones will relate to the period 2021 - 2050 and where appropriate existing targets will be used; in other areas milestones will need to be developed. All milestones will need to be supported by robust and accurate data that can support a regular reporting cycle.

Consultation period

As required by the Act the Welsh Government consulted with the specified public bodies subject to the Act, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (“the FGC”) and wider stakeholders.

Public consultation

The consultation ran from 28 January 2019 to 23 April 2019. The consultation paper was issued electronically to a wide range of stakeholders and was also made available on the Welsh Government website. A consultation letter to Public Body Chief Executives (or equivalent) was issued by Cabinet Office for the Welsh Government inviting their views on the proposed criteria, milestone set and suggest changes to indicators.

Opportunities to engage further with stakeholders were sought during the consultation period. Welsh Government officials attended a range of events and meetings to promote the consultation including:

- Gofod3 (Third sector event)
- Public Health’s Shaping our Future in Wales conference
- Session with Royal Statistical Society
- Session on a ‘Globally Responsible Wales’
- Well-being of Future Generations Act National Bodies Sharing Group

These sessions were well attended with delegates coming from a cross section of sectors, including health, education, transport, planning, environment, Sport and Local Authorities.

Welsh Government officials also engaged regularly with the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales’ office before and during the consultation period.

Detail of responses

In total 75 responses were received, this included:

- 42 submitted by e-mail;
- 33 submitted via the online form;

The Welsh Government commissioned Old Bell 3 Ltd to independently analyse the responses received which has informed this summary report.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of respondents. Respondents were assigned a category as part of the consultation analysis.

Table 1 – Profile of consultation respondents

Sector	Number of responses
Public sector	21
<i>Local Authority</i>	9
<i>Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs)</i>	5
<i>Health Boards</i>	3
<i>Other public sector</i>	3
<i>Partnership board</i>	1
Third sector	31
<i>Charity or not for profit</i>	27
<i>Membership organisation</i>	4
Other	23
<i>Individual</i>	14
<i>Public appointment</i>	3
<i>Higher Education</i>	2
<i>Trade Union</i>	1
<i>Elected officer</i>	1
<i>Political party</i>	1
<i>Not known</i>	1
Total	75

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who responded to the consultation and those who attended the consultation events for their contributions.

Next steps

Having considered the responses to the consultation the next phase of the work will be to engage with the Future Generations Commissioner, public bodies and other key stakeholders in order to now develop draft national milestones.

This process will take into account the views expressed in this consultation and will also be influenced by ongoing discussions and information sharing. Our aim throughout will continue to be to develop a shared set of national milestones that all public bodies recognise and that reflect the detail and spirit of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

This work will progress over the summer with a view to providing a further update in the autumn.

Format of the Government response

This document provides the Welsh Government response to the consultation, based on the independent analysis carried out by Old Bell 3 Ltd. The purpose of this document is not to respond to every individual suggestion made.

The document is organised into three sections:-

Section 1: Response to the criteria for selecting a small set of national indicators

Section 2: Response to the proposed small set of national indicators to which milestones will be set

Section 3: Response to the most common suggestions for changes to existing 46 national indicators arising from the consultation.

Section 1: Response to the criteria for selecting a small set of national indicators

The consultation document asked for views on:

Changes to the criteria to select national indicators against which national milestones will be developed

The Welsh Government has considered this response and is pleased to find that there is a broad agreement for the proposed set of criteria with less than a third of respondents suggesting changes.

We note that unique points were raised by individual respondents and so very few common messages emerged although Criteria 1 and 3 generated the most discussion.

Criteria 1

The majority of consultees did not suggest any improvements or change to this criteria. A small number explicitly expressed their support to the concept of introducing a manageable, small set of milestones. However a small amount of consultees were concerned that public bodies might overly focus on these, at the expense of others.

The responses have shown the key importance of considering the development of milestones in the wider context of the indicators and public bodies published well-being objectives. National milestones for Wales will set out expectations of progress, including the scale and pace of change required allowing us to assess whether we are on track in delivering the seven wellbeing goals and will not devalue or effect the effective monitoring of the national indicators. We will ensure that as this work progresses our communication approach will reflect the need to consider the wider context as well as the contribution to the national milestones.

Criteria 2

The majority of consultees did not offer any specific comment on this criteria but a small number of comments focussed on the broad scope of responsibilities and the contribution of all devolved and non-devolved partners.

Criteria 3

The majority of consultees did not offer any specific comment on this criteria.

Two consultees questioned whether the description of this criteria was in keeping with the overall aim of the WFG Act: 'what is described appears to be about integration of goals. It would be clearer to people if the language of the WFG Act was used in this criterion'

We recognise the key importance of reflecting the language and spirit of the Act in all we do and will consider how we best ensure this is reflected in the wording of this Criteria.

Criteria 4

The vast majority of consultees did not offer any specific comment on this criteria

Criteria 5

Very few comments were offered on this criteria. However, where consultees did make reference to partnership working, comments were offered in a positive light particularly given the high degree of partnership working across Public Service Boards

However we note it was highlighted that some flexibility on this criteria would be welcomed to best reflect the specific milestones and how best they could be achieved.

General Observations

The following observations were made that measures should adopt up-to-date data: some data currently being used such as gaps in healthy life expectancy were considered to be out of date and therefore of little use to public health organisations. Whilst it is not an explicit criteria, there is an underlying assumption that the data and measurement approach we take should be robust and timely. Statisticians are providing advice throughout this work. Also that, wherever possible, common measures be adopted for reporting against the objectives of the WFG Act and other Welsh Government policies so that 'a single, cohesive, management set of indicators can meet a variety of needs'.

This was thought to be a particularly pressing point for the health and social care sector in light of the fact that the sector is currently working towards a range of indicators as set out in the National Outcomes Framework, Prudent Health Care, Performance Measurement Indicators through the Regional Partnership Boards under section 145 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and A Healthier Wales and the Transformation Fund projects associated with it.

Of the 48 respondents who specifically responded to Question 6 of the consultation document, the majority (40) did not wish to see any of the existing five criterion removed whilst a minority (8) did.

A small number of respondents (no more than six in all) offered five new criterion which should be considered to select national indicators.

Section 2: Response to the proposed small set of national indicators with milestones

The consultation document asked for views on:

Changes to the small set of national indicators against which national milestones will be developed

Question 7 of the consultation document asked respondents to indicate whether they proposed any changes to the small set of national indicators against which the Welsh Government propose to set national milestones.

As set out at Table 2, half of those who responded said that they did propose a change, a quarter said that they did not whilst the remaining quarter did not specifically respond to the question.

Table 2: Respondents who wished to see changes to the small set of national indicators selected

Do you propose any changes to the small set of national indicators	Number of respondents
Yes	38
No	18
No response	19
Total	75

In all, 27 consultees noted that they wished to add national indicators to the proposed small list: of these the majority suggested the inclusion of existing national indicators whilst a minority suggested themes rather than existing indicators.

25 of the remaining 33 indicators not currently proposed to be included within the small set were identified by at least one or more consultee. Eight of the national indicators were not identified by any consultees whilst eight indicators were mentioned by three or more consultees each.

The two main themes covered by the most commonly cited indicators discussed by consultees for inclusion relate to the environment and housing:

Environment

(NI 4, NI 41, NI 42, NI 45)

Consultees thought that indicators relating to the environment and sustainable management of natural resources should be better represented within the selected short list.

Consultees argued strongly for the inclusion of NI 45 within the small set of indicators, particularly given that the 'quality and quantity of water is vital for well-being' as well as industry and the wider environment but also because Welsh Government policy has a direct influence upon water quality. It was argued that the indicator 'would meet all the milestone selection criteria listed' in the consultation document. It was noted that the indicator also has milestones in place which can be monitored via Natural Resources Wales published survey data.

The Welsh Government will continue to work closely with stakeholders to ensure the indicators giving the most detailed and meaningful picture of environmental safeguarding and enhancement are considered as part of setting milestones.

Housing

(NI 31 and NI 33):

Consultees thought that indicators relating to housing (as well as NI 34 on homelessness) were not adequately represented within the small set and that a greater focus ought to be given to the quality of housing 'as the Welsh Government invest a significant amount of money each year in housing'.

We will consider how best we can reflect these concerns and capture progress being made against housing targets and whether milestones are the most appropriate form of doing so.

Other topics raised included:

Loneliness and social isolation

It was suggested that should this be included, the indicator should be broadened to cover social isolation 'as some people do not perceive they are lonely'. Data could be provided via the National Survey for Wales, although this was noted to preclude the views of children and young people.

Active global citizenship

Three consultees made a case that none of the five milestone-related indicators currently proposed to track progress against this WFG goal would 'provide a relevant assessment of active global citizenship'. It was argued that NI 41 (greenhouse gas emissions) and NI 44 (biological diversity) should be included against this goal.

We acknowledge this discussion and debate about which of the indicators milestones can most usefully be set and this is to be encouraged given the need to develop an integrated set of milestones which show progress against our key ambitions and also understand the interrelationships between the milestones. In the next steps of this work we will look closely with stakeholders at how to provide the best overall picture of our progress.

Removal of national indicators linked to milestones

Questions 9 and 10 asked consultees to consider which of the national indicators selected for having milestones could be removed, particularly in order to keep a small set or to reduce the set further.

There was general consensus that a smaller set was appropriate with some debate on the exact number. We will discuss with stakeholders the merits of some of the changes they have suggested but will maintain a commitment to keeping the set relatively small in number.

Of those who did identify indicators which should be removed from the small set a total of nine indicators were identified, reported by between one and six respondents each.

NI 23 Percentage who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area: This was the most commonly cited indicator which consultees thought should be removed from the current short list of indicators although there was no agreement on what should replace it, with consultees offering NI 24, NI 26, NI 27 and NI 28 as options.

NI 21 Percentage of people in employment: Four consultees suggested that this indicator should be removed from the short list as it failed to measure the quality and value of work. Some believed that it could be combined with NI 11, particularly as the Annual Population Survey is the data source for both indicators. Others suggested that it could be replaced or improved with a better indicator which took into consideration job quality, security and use of zero-hours contracts.

NI 7 Percentage of pupils who have achieved the Level 2 threshold: Four consultees thought that this indicator should be removed from the short list.

Use of absolute 'point' target milestones

Over half of consultees (20 of 33) who responded to the relevant question agreed with the rationale offered for not adopting absolute 'point' target milestones for certain National Indicators. Some concerns were raised about the appropriateness of using comparisons

with England. We welcome that there is general consensus that we should consider a varied approach depending on the specific milestone, and will consider the most meaningful approach for each as we progress the work.

Section 3: Response to the most common suggestions for changes to existing 46 indicators arising from the consultation.

The consultation document asked for views on:

Changes to the existing 46 national indicators

In all, just under half (36 of 75) of consultees proposed changes to at least one of the 46 existing national indicators. Of these 19 consultees proposed new indicators and 22 consultees proposed removal or a change to an existing indicator¹.

The report sets out the detailed changes identified by consultees for 21 existing indicators. The most commonly cited changes related to the following indicators:

NI 13: Concentration of carbon and organic matter in soil be broadened to ‘the state of soils in Wales’

NI 21: Percentage of people in employment should be changed to ‘percentage of people in employment earning the living wage’

NI 23: Percentage who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area should be changed to ‘percentage of people who had the opportunity to contribute towards decisions affecting their local area’

NI 30: Percentage of people who are lonely should be changed to ‘percentage of people who are lonely or socially isolated’

NI 37: Percentage of people who can speak Welsh should be broadened to include ‘the number of percentage who speak Welsh daily’

NI 46: The social return on investment of Welsh partnerships within Wales and outside of the UK that are working towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals should be defined by ‘the percentage of people who answer yes to three of a set of specific questions in the National Survey for Wales’.

Consultees identified eight indicators for removal from the current list of national indicators. Most of these indicators were also identified as ones which could be improved or changed:

NI 3: Percentage of adults who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours

NI 5: Percentage of children who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours

NI 7: Percentage of pupils who have achieved the Level 2 threshold

NI 21: Percentage of people in employment

NI 20: Percentage of people moderately or very satisfied with their jobs

NI 23: Percentage who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area

NI 29: Mean mental well-being score for people

NI 38: Percentage of people participating in sporting activities three or more times a week.

Consultees identified some 16 new indicators (or themes for new indicators) which they considered should be included within the WFG full list. The most commonly cited covered the themes of:

Food poverty

Fuel poverty

Violence or abuse

¹ Six proposed both

Quality of landscape
Long term illness or good health.

The Government's Chief Statistician is leading on the consideration of these results in order to best reflect these views in any potential amendments to the full set of 46 indicators. We have always been clear that the national indicator consultation exercise in 2016 set out indicators for the long-term, and it is important to retain consistency in definitions and approach to provide us with an understanding of progress we have made. However where the feedback we have received suggests a clear need for change we will consider how best to reflect this in the indicator set.