Shaping Wales' Future:

Using national milestones to measure our nation's progress (wave two consultation)

Summary of responses

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Wavehill: Social and Economic Research

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Executive Summary

This report provides an independent analysis of responses to the Shaping Wales' Future consultation (wave two). It sets out a summary of the views and perspectives offered by respondents with regard to the proposed national milestones.

Responses

Between June and September 2022, the consultation received eighty-nine formal responses. These included responses from a diverse range of individuals and organisations with an interest in the proposals. The fifty-six organisations that communicated their views represent a range of voluntary, private and public bodies working in Wales. These included advocacy groups, through to public bodies working across health, education and in local government.

Key Findings

Universally, each national milestone was positively received by respondents. This suggests that there is broad support for the objectives of the proposals and the priorities that they seek to advance.

Respondents offered a range of reflections and suggestions relating to specific national well-being indicators and national milestones. These included how they could be strengthened. These reflections ranged from comments on the focus of a specific national milestone to queries regarding how they are defined and measured. Furthermore, there were more general comments on the issues facing Wales as a nation that the national milestones seek to address. The specific reflections and suggestions are covered in greater detail in the relevant chapters throughout the report.

There were several overarching themes in the nature of the comments and suggestions offered by respondents. These included exploring interim targets and in some cases advocating for more ambitious deadlines. Some respondents wanted to see more specific and quantifiable targets.

Another common theme raised across responses included the importance and potential of the national milestones to advance greater equality in Wales. Some felt that the national milestones could be strengthened through the inclusion of more precise metrics highlighting the range of inequalities that people and communities may experience.

Overall, respondents supported the overarching objectives of the proposed national milestones, and comments and suggestions focused on strengthening and extending the existing proposals.

Navigating this Document

In communicating the findings of the analysis, this report follows the broad structure of the consultation document itself. Each substantive area of the proposals receives in-depth analysis of the views of respondents within individual chapters throughout the report. A broad, overarching summary is provided in Conclusions.

1 Introduction

This report provides an independent analysis of responses to the Shaping Wales' Future consultation. It sets out a summary of the views and perspectives offered by respondents with regard to the proposed national milestones.

1.1 Background

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 put into law the requirement for public bodies to pursue the long-term economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act made Wales the first country in the world to legislate for the well-being of current and future generations.

As of December 2021, there are fifty national well-being indicators which help to understand the progress that is being made towards the well-being goals within the Act.

In collaboration with a range of stakeholders, the Welsh Government set out to develop national milestones that would act as targets set against the national well-being indicators. The national milestones are a series of measures against the national well-being indicators that set out expectations regarding what the national well-being indicators should show in the future.

The first national milestones for Wales were laid out in 2021 following the first Shaping Wales' Future consultation exercise. The second wave of national milestones have been developed in 2022 in partnership with stakeholders, and this second consultation is the final stage of that work before they are laid out in the Senedd by the end of the year.

1.2 Responses

Between June and September 2022, the consultation received eighty-nine formal responses from a diverse range of individual members of the public and organisations with an interest in the proposals. Together, 37 per cent of responses were received from members of the public, 24 per cent from public sector organisations, 17 per cent from third sector organisations, and seven per cent from the private sector. A further 14 per cent of respondents did not provide profile information.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Stakeholder Group	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total Responses
Public Sector:	21	24%
Local Authorities	*6*	*7%*
Welsh Government Sponsored Public Bodies (WGSPBs)		*8%*
Health Boards	*3*	*3%*
Other Public Sector	*7*	*8%*
Third Sector	15	17%
Private Sector	6	7%
Individual Members of the Public	33	37%
Not Known	14	16%

The fifty-six organisations that communicated their views represent a diverse array of voluntary, private and public bodies. These included local government, public bodies, and advocacy groups. For a full list of organisations that contributed to the consultation, please see Appendix 2.

1.3 Analytical Approach

In September 2022, the Welsh Government commissioned Wavehill, an independent research organisation, to conduct an analysis of responses.

The questions posed to respondents regarding each of the milestones first captured a 'yes' or 'no' answer regarding whether or not they were supportive of the national milestone. Thereafter, they were asked an open-text question regarding whether they would like any changes if they answered that they did agree. In the instance in which they indicated that they did not agree with the proposal, they were instead asked to recommend a more suitable national milestone.

In addition to the questions gathering feedback on each of the proposed national milestones, the consultation paper also asked open-text questions to gather feedback on: how best to communicate with the people and communities of Wales on the national milestones, and whether respondents could identify any potential impacts and opportunities of achieving all of the national milestones, and particularly any dependencies between them.

The consultation then concluded with open-text questions regarding whether respondents felt that the proposals would have an impact on the Welsh language, and whether they thought that they could be formulated or changed so as to have positive impacts on the Welsh language or ensure that they had no adverse effects.

The specific questions posed to respondents can be found in <u>Appendix 1</u> of this report.

To analyse the perspectives expressed by respondents, the authors of this report have conducted a detailed thematic analysis. Based on this analysis, the team have highlighted particular themes and issues that were raised and have included them in this report. In addition, the team have looked for feedback provided by stakeholders whose role and area of interest tie in closely with each proposed national milestone. The reason for this is to present how those organisations have responded so that readers can be aware of how they in particular view the proposed national milestones.

1.4 Limitations

There are limitations regarding this analysis that are important to note. Due to the relatively small sample size of respondents, views and perspectives may not necessarily fully represent the wider community with an interest in the proposals.

In addition, not all respondents provided a view on all questions beyond a general sentiment.
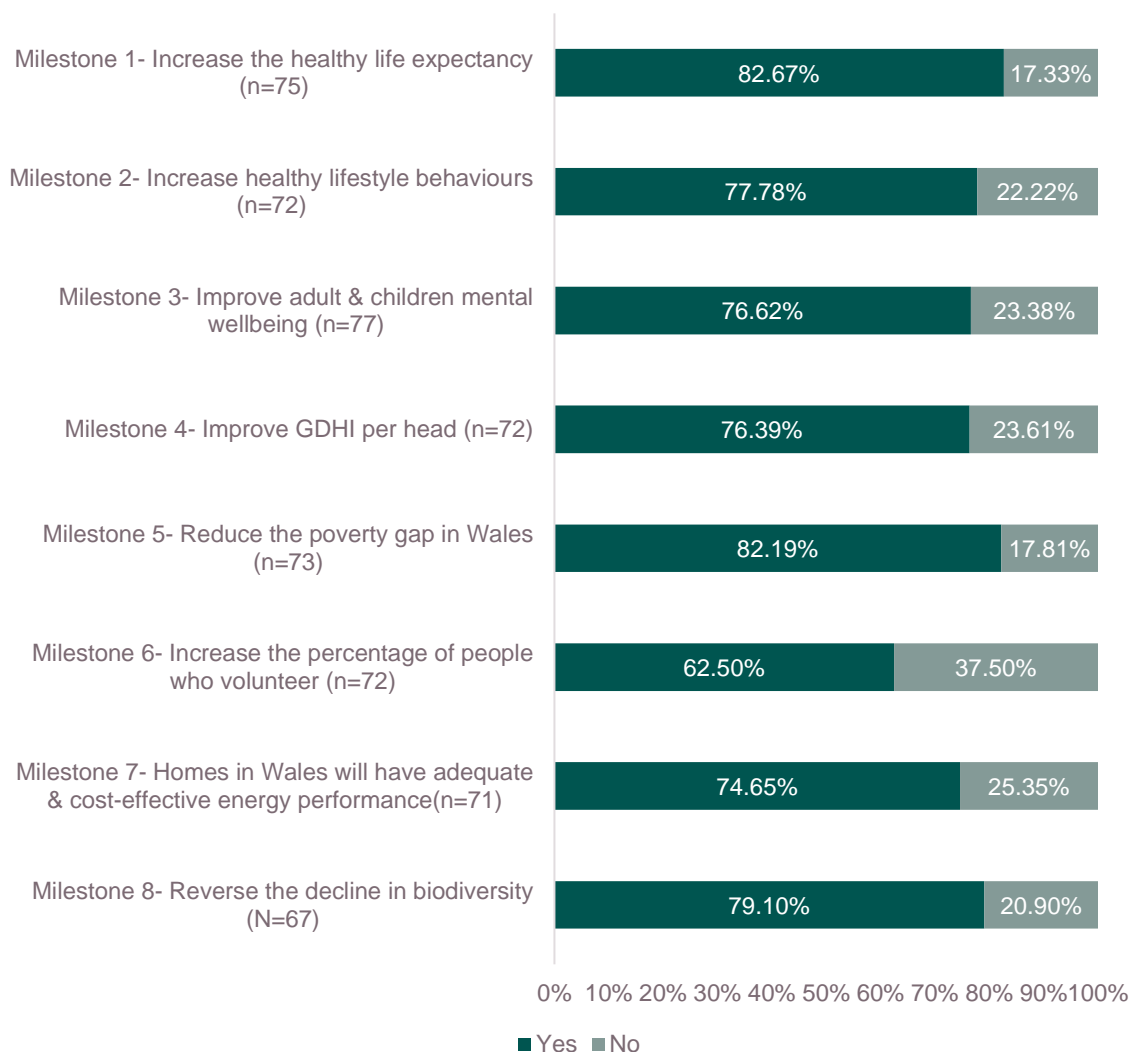
Therefore, this analysis should be considered to be providing an indication, rather than a definitive account, of the views of all people and organisations across Wales.

2 General Perceptions

Respondents were asked a series of questions relating to each individual national milestone outlined within the proposals. The analysis found that there was extensive support from respondents across all national milestones.

Respondents were asked whether they agreed with a series of specific national milestones. Across all national milestones, 76.5 per cent on average agreed with the proposals (ranging from 83 per cent agreement to 63 per cent agreement). The proposed national milestone on volunteering received the most disagreement, with 38 per cent. Overall, this suggests broad support for all of the national milestone values proposed in the consultation.

Figure 1: Agreement with milestones

Milestone	Yes	No
Milestone 1- Increase the healthy life expectancy (n=75)	82.67%	17.33%
Milestone 2- Increase healthy lifestyle behaviours (n=72)	77.78%	22.22%
Milestone 3- Improve adult & children mental wellbeing (n=77)	76.62%	23.38%
Milestone 4- Improve GDHI per head (n=72)	76.39%	23.61%
Milestone 5- Reduce the poverty gap in Wales (n=73)	82.19%	17.81%
Milestone 6- Increase the percentage of people who volunteer (n=72)	62.50%	37.50%
Milestone 7- Homes in Wales will have adequate & cost-effective energy performance(n=71)	74.65%	25.35%
Milestone 8- Reverse the decline in biodiversity (N=67)	79.10%	20.90%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90%100%

■Yes ■No

The broad support for the proposals, in addition to being indicated through responses regarding whether or not they agree with the national milestones, was also reflected in the qualitative feedback provided by respondents. This was captured through subsequent questions in which respondents were offered opportunities to expand on their views towards specific national milestones and national well-being indicators. Sentiment analysis of these open responses (qualitative information), which explores general perceptions and sentiments expressed in open text, also found extensive support for the proposals.

Overall, within open responses, an average of 33.8 per cent of respondents offered unconditional support for the proposals. A further 28.3 per cent offered conditional support, where respondents highlighted areas in which the proposals could be strengthened. Conversely, 19.1 per cent on average offered negative sentiments towards elements of the proposals. Not all respondents offered views within and across questions, with an average of 18.6 per cent across all open questions. There was slight variation in the sentiments expressed by respondents across different aspects of the proposals. This is highlighted in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Agreement with suggested milestones (including conditional agreement) (N=89)
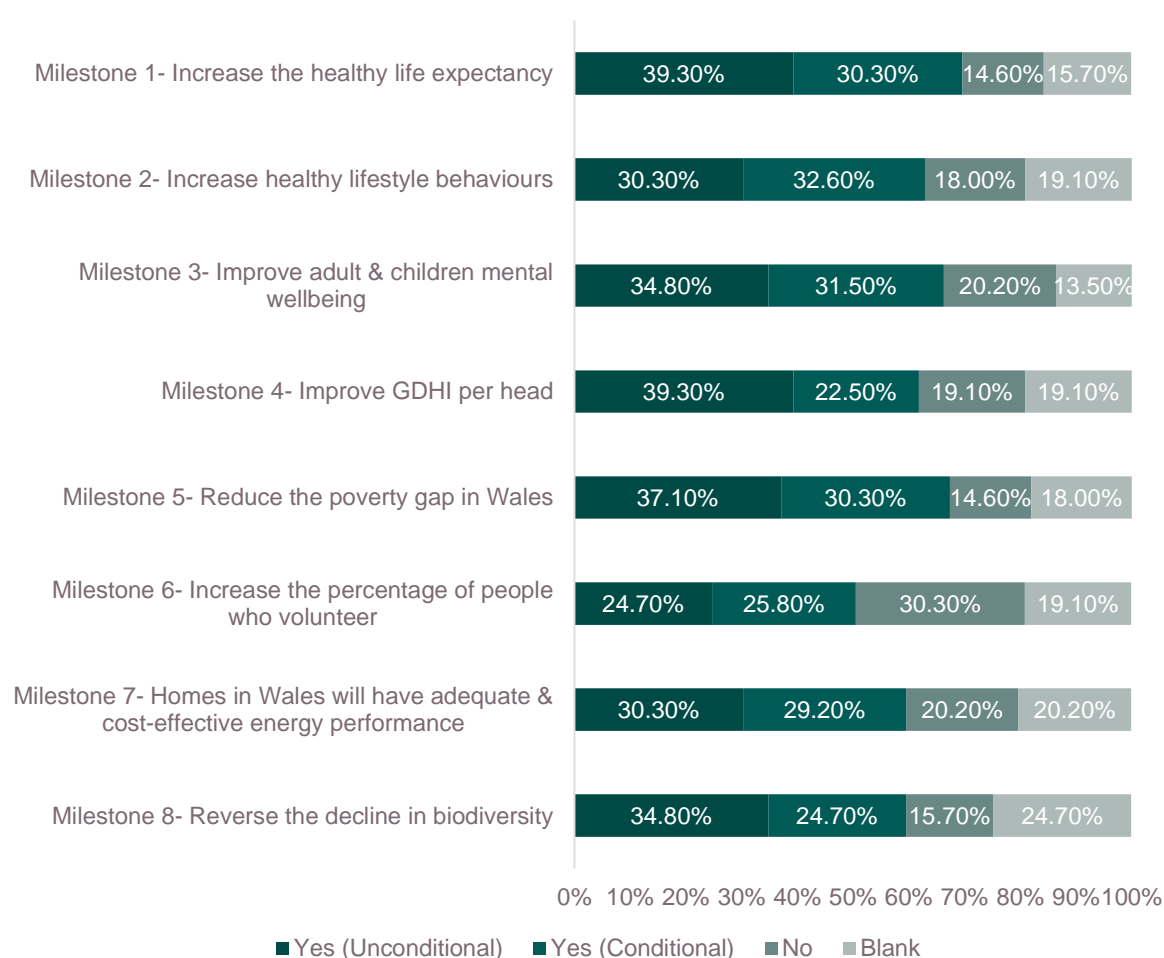
Outlined below is an analysis of responses in more detail against each national milestone. Common key themes from respondents are addressed in turn with issues of a lower prevalence at the end of each section.

3 Healthy Life Expectancy

Respondents were asked for their views on the proposed national milestone set against national well-being indicator No.2 — 'to increase the healthy life expectancy of adults and narrow the gap in healthy life expectancy between the least and the most deprived by at least 15 per cent by 2050'.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Indicator No.2 - Healthy Life Expectancy at birth including the gap between the least and most Deprived				•	•			
Milestone #1	To increase the healthy life expectancy of adults and narrow the gap in healthy life expectancy between the least and the most deprived by at least 15% by 2050							

The national milestone reflects the importance of improving the average healthy life expectancy of the whole population, as well as addressing inequalities in healthy life expectancy. Healthy life expectancy in Wales has become static with very little change in recent years. Similarly, inequalities in healthy life expectancy between the least and most deprived have not narrowed.

3.1 General Perceptions

Overall, there was strong support for the focus and intention of the national milestone surrounding healthy life expectancy, with 83 per cent of respondents indicating that they approved of the approach.

Figure 3: General perceptions of national milestone 1
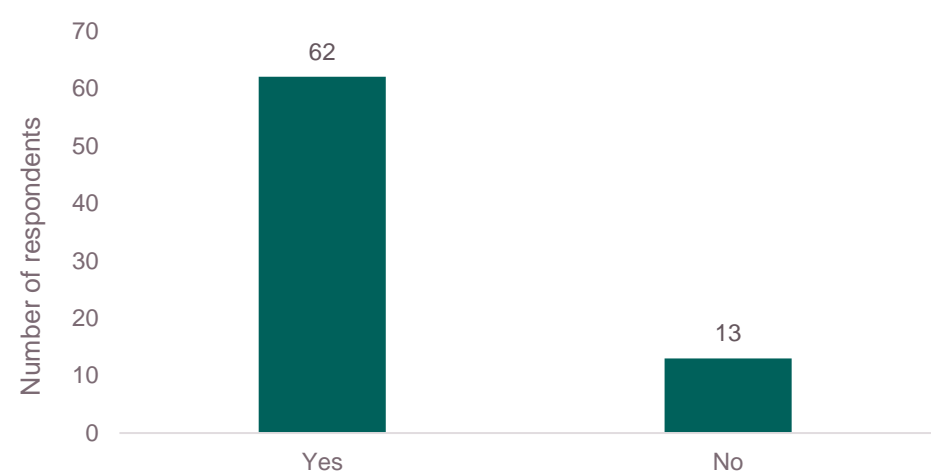
Q1: N=75, those not responding N=14.

In open responses, 38 per cent of respondents were in total agreement. A further 30 per cent offered conditional support, offering suggestions on how the national milestone could be strengthened.

3.2 Key Themes

Reducing social and economic inequalities

Recognising the complex nature of health inequalities, thirteen respondents suggested that the proposed national milestone could go further or have more urgency. These responses felt that tackling health inequalities required a broader focus, including on social and economic inequalities that can shape and determine health and well-being outcomes. It was felt that the national milestone should account for these factors in supporting action on health inequalities.

"We suggest that greater urgency is needed to close this gap than is being proposed through this consultation, given the increasing levels of child poverty witnessed across all parts of Wales, exacerbated by the cost-of-living pressures and pending economic recession."

(Children in Wales)

Precision and protected characteristics

Eight respondents suggested that a detailed understanding of the extent of health inequalities amongst different people across Wales would be valuable in guiding effective responses. This included drawing on, if possible, information that could help to illuminate the extent of health inequalities of those with protected characteristics.

"If the data could capture how healthy life expectancy varies across different demographic groups, for example, between disabled and non-disabled people and between white and ethnic minority communities. This is key to ensuring that Welsh Government takes action on all forms of inequalities that exist within Wales. It will also help ensure that resources and funding are allocated fairly and action is targeted most appropriately."

(Royal National Institute of Blind People)

Importance of raising life expectancy for all

Seven respondents highlighted the importance of the national milestone in working towards improving healthy life expectancy for all. Four felt that the focus on addressing health inequalities was valuable and necessary; however, it was important not to lose sight of actions that could improve overall healthy life expectancy. In supporting this approach, respondents advocated close monitoring and communication of the healthy life expectancy of adults alongside health inequalities.

"As with similar milestones focused on closing gaps, we would highlight that gaps such as this can be closed due to negative changes. A decline in life expectancy amongst the least deprived could suggest that the gap is closing when life expectancy of the most deprived has not changed. It is important that there is a clear narrative accompanying the publication of data."

(Chwarae Teg)

3.3 Key Stakeholder Responses

Many key stakeholders supported the national milestone, including the Future Generations Commissioner and Public Health Wales (who agreed with the approach outlined in the proposals). Both suggested that the 15 per cent target could be more ambitious in addressing inequalities in healthy life expectancy by 2050, and that intermediate targets would be valuable in driving action.

"We would support action to raise the healthy life expectancy of all with a focus on tackling inequalities. The substantial gap in healthy life expectancy between communities related to deprivation is a major public health challenge that deserves concerted, coordinated effort over the long term. However, this target deserves intermediary targets to assess progress, and is set too far in the future and requires policies and actions that would deliver this change."

(Public Health Wales)

Moreover, both agreed that consideration should be given to how the national milestone could support action on the ground. The Future Generations Commissioner, for example, highlighted that it would be valuable to provide breakdowns of healthy life expectancy by geography and by protected characteristics.

4 Healthy Lifestyle Behaviours

Respondents were asked for their views on the proposed national milestone set against national well-being indicator No.3 — 'to increase the proportion of adults with two or more healthy lifestyle behaviours to more than 97 per cent by 2050'.

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Indicator No.3 - Percentage of adults who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours					•	•	•	•	
Milestone #2	To increase the percentage of adults with two or more healthy lifestyle behaviours to more than 97% by 2050.								

This national milestone was intended to complement the wave one national milestone focusing on healthy behaviours amongst children in Wales. Together, these national milestones will serve a fundamental purpose of the Act, i.e. to safeguard the health and well-being of the people of Wales. By promoting the adoption of two or more healthy lifestyle behaviours, it is anticipated that this will ensure that everyone in Wales has longer, healthier and happier lives.

4.1 General Perceptions

Overall, there was overwhelming support for the inclusion of the milestone, with 78 per cent of respondents voicing support for it.

Figure 4: General perceptions of national milestone 2
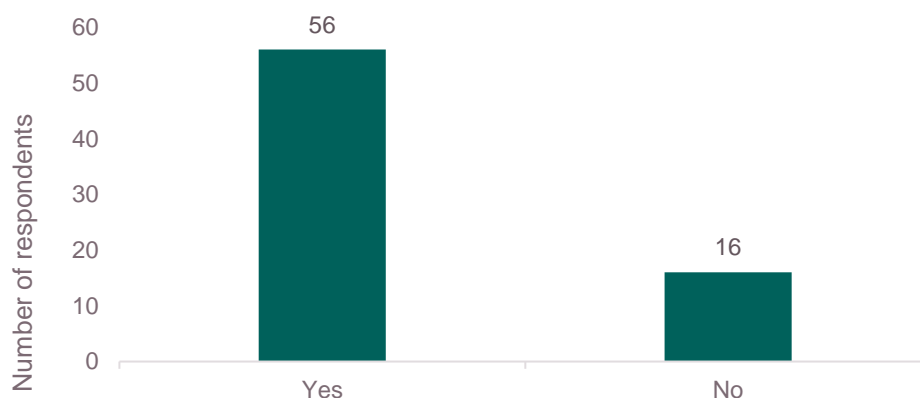
Q2: N=72, those not responding N=17.

In more open responses, 30 per cent of respondents offered unequivocal support for the proposals. A further 33 per cent of respondents agreed with the overall approach and offered suggestions on how the national milestone could be improved.

4.2 Key Themes

Greater ambition

A key theme raised by respondents included the importance of promoting healthy behaviours and addressing issues such as inactivity. Eight respondents felt that the national milestone should be more ambitious. Suggestions included increasing the number of healthy lifestyle behaviours that adults are expected to have, as well as shortening the timescale.

"We think setting a milestone for 2050 is too long a timescale for this indicator. As the latest data for Wales is 93 per cent, [...] a four per cent increase over 28 years is not sufficiently stretching. The milestone assessing healthy behaviour in children included a 2035 milestone and this would benefit from being replicated for the adults indicator. We also think two or more healthy lifestyle behaviours does not set sufficient ambition, given the importance of healthy behaviours and consideration given to the number of behaviours in the milestone being increased."

(Monmouthshire County Council)

Clarifying healthy behaviours

Some also felt that it would be valuable to include further information on how healthy behaviours could be understood and measured. Six respondents highlighted that the wording with respect to some of the stated 'healthy behaviours' could be interpreted in different ways. One respondent, for example, asked for clarification as to whether or not smoking e-cigarettes could be classed as not smoking. What is more, there was discussion surrounding the use of subjective measures of physical activity in understanding healthy behaviours. Together, these respondents felt that it would be helpful to consider and clarify exactly how healthy behaviours would be understood and measured.

"We agree with the milestone but question some of the 'healthy lifestyles' involved in calculating the results, i.e. [whether] *e-cigarette users* [should] *be included as well as smoking (not sure if this has been proven to be good or bad for the health), also* [questioning] *whether BMI is a good measure of healthy weight."*

(Member of the public)

Removing barriers to healthy behaviours

Another common theme included the importance of addressing barriers to healthy behaviours, e.g. the affordability of healthier food options, which was mentioned by five respondents.

It was also acknowledged that for some individuals, achieving particular behaviours is somewhat easier than achieving others. Someone struggling with substance abuse issues, for example, would likely find it easier to become more active but may struggle with quitting smoking or reducing their alcohol intake. Therefore, responses to the national milestone would need to consider how to track and understand meaningful change in people's behaviours.

> *"Eighty-six per cent of adults report that they do not smoke, whilst only 31 per cent of adults reported they ate five or more portions of fruit and vegetables on the previous day. Given these differences, combining these (and other) healthy behaviours into one measure could potentially hide meaningful changes, in turn limiting the value of the milestone."*

(Future Generations Commissioner's Office)

Additional suggestions

Other suggestions for this national milestone included the importance of promoting healthy behaviours at school age. This was felt to have significant benefits in supporting children in establishing healthy behaviours that remain with them into adulthood. Another consideration was given to individuals who may face additional barriers to achieving these healthy behaviours, including some individuals with disabilities, some living in poverty, and those suffering from substance misuse issues, for example. Some felt that it would be valuable to consider those with barriers and how they could be effectively supported.

4.3 Key Stakeholder Responses

Key stakeholders with regard to this milestone included Sport Wales, Public Health Wales, and the Future Generations Commissioner. There was support for more ambitious targets surrounding the promotion of healthy behaviours. Sport Wales and Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board, for example, felt that the target should be aiming for four or more of the five healthy lifestyles. Additionally, Sport Wales and Public Health Wales cited that the milestone could be strengthened with the inclusion of intermediate targets with which to support progress.

> *"The Health Board agree in principle with setting a milestone around healthy behaviours, but we were wondering whether a more ambitious milestone could be set around the achievement of four or more healthy lifestyles (rather than two)."*

(Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board)

5 Mental Well-Being

Respondents were asked for their views on the proposed national milestone set against national well-being indicator No.29 — 'to improve adult and children's mean mental well-being and eliminate the gap in adult and children's mean mental well-being between the most deprived and least deprived areas in Wales by 2050'.

|		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Indicator No.29 - Mean mental well-being score				●	●			
Milestone #3	To improve adult and children's mean mental wellbeing and eliminate the gap in adult and children's mean mental wellbeing between the most deprived and least deprived areas in Wales by 2050.							

This national milestone seeks to improve overall mental well-being whilst addressing inequalities. It is recognised that this national milestone is subject to influence from external factors that could affect well-being (e.g. the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis). Due to these factors, the proposals did not put forward a quantifiable target. Instead, the focus of the milestone was upon eliminating inequalities in mental well-being scores across communities in Wales.

5.1 General Perceptions

Once again, there was strong support for the proposed national milestone, with 77 per cent of respondents agreeing with the proposed approach.

Figure 5: General perceptions of national milestone 3
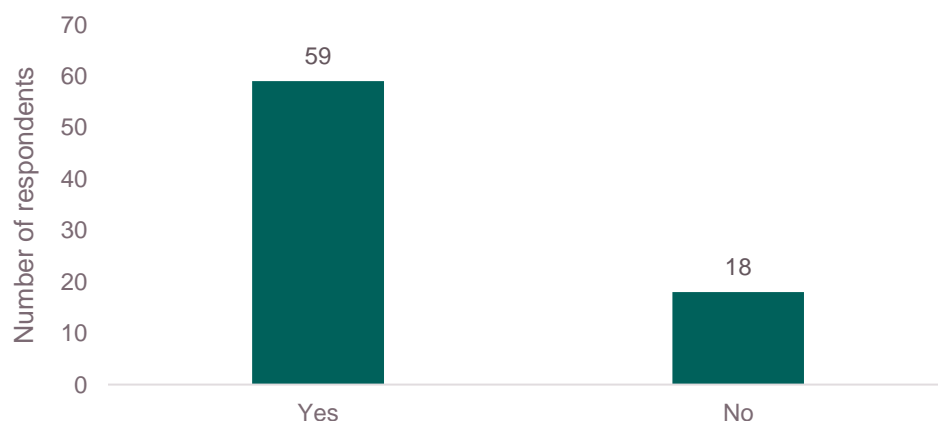
Q3: N=77, those not responding N=12.

In more open responses, 35 per cent agreed with the proposals outright. A further 31 per cent offered additional reflections.

5.2 Key Themes

Importance of mental well-being

Many responses highlighted the importance of supporting mental well-being, with eleven respondents citing a range of concerns surrounding poor mental well-being. The importance of the issue of mental well-being was felt to require significant focus and attention and, therefore, more specific and focused targets.

> *"We believe a more definitive target should be set, rather than 'eliminating' the gap in mean mental well-being scores between most deprived and least deprived areas."*

(Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board)

Appreciation of COVID-19

Some respondents highlighted that progress towards this national milestone was particularly important, given the impact on mental health caused by COVID-19. These respondents recognised that mental health and well-being scores were likely to be lower and that this needed to be considered in determining progress against the national milestone.

> *"The concerns over the impact that* [COVID-19] *had and potential longer-term impacts — particularly in the young — are echoed. To re-baseline and look for improvement appears to be an appropriate strategy."*

(Member of the public)

Targets for young people's well-being

The mental well-being of young people was a key area of concern for eleven respondents. It was noted that teaching children and young people how to approach their mental health will allow them to support future generations in doing so.

> *"There is a direct and explicit link between the mental health of parents and their children. This dependency must be accounted for when formulating the most accurate picture of the well-being of families across Wales. It is widely recognised the most crucial development stages that determine the future development and mental well-being of children happen in the first 1,000 days of a child's life. Only using the School Health Research Network will mean children* [below] *the age of year six* [pupils] *are not accounted*

for within this milestone, meaning an indication of the mental well-being of young children in Wales cannot be seen."

(Member of the public)

Additional suggestions

There was a suggestion that as part of this national milestone there should be a focus on improving the well-being of those groups who have been most adversely impacted by the pandemic, e.g. older people. Other respondents supported the national milestone but wanted more clarity surrounding how the data will be collected and benchmarked against data from previous years.

5.3 Key Stakeholder Responses

Despite most respondents agreeing with the national indicator, some key stakeholders offered suggestions or concerns. The NSPCC, for example, felt that it was important to consider the mental well-being of younger children, including those below the age of 11. The focus of the mean mental well-being score is aimed at young people aged 11–16. They believe that younger children should also be considered due to the impacts of the pandemic and the current cost-of-living crisis. The NSPCC also suggest that the national milestone could be expanded to examine lived experiences of children's well-being. Public Health Wales also raised these concerns, advocating for a separate national milestone that is specifically focused on young people. They were concerned by increases in depressive symptoms through adolescence and young adulthood.

"NSPCC Cymru/Wales is concerned that indicator No.29 is only able to measure the mean mental well-being score for children aged [11–16] *via the School Health Research Network data. This indicator should also take into account the mental health and well-being of infants and young children. We would like to suggest complementary indicators such as measuring parental attachment in pregnancy, as well as the social and emotional development of infants. While there is currently no standardised measure being used in Wales for infant well-being, there are many tools available that could be used to measure this. For example, the Mothers Object Relations Scales (MORS) are validated and easy-to-use free tools for health practitioners and researchers."*

(NSPCC Cymru)

6 Household Income

Respondents were asked for their views on the proposed national milestone set against national well-being indicator No. 10 — 'to improve gross disposable household income (GDHI) per head in Wales by 2035 and commit to setting a stretching growth target for 2050'.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Indicator No.10 - Gross Disposable Household Income per Head	•		•	•			
Milestone #4	Improve GDHI per head in Wales by 2035 and commit to setting a stretching growth target for 2050.						

This national milestone is closely linked to Wales' economic mission, which sets out a vision of what makes Wales an attractive place in which to live, study, work and invest. The Welsh Government's ability to contribute towards this national milestone is limited by its lack of control over the tax and welfare system, as well as over private sector wages.

6.1 General Perceptions

Again, there was overwhelming support for the intention and focus of the national milestone. In total, 76 per cent of respondents answering the question agreed with the overall approach.

Figure 6: General perceptions of national milestone 4

Q4: N=72, those not responding N=17.
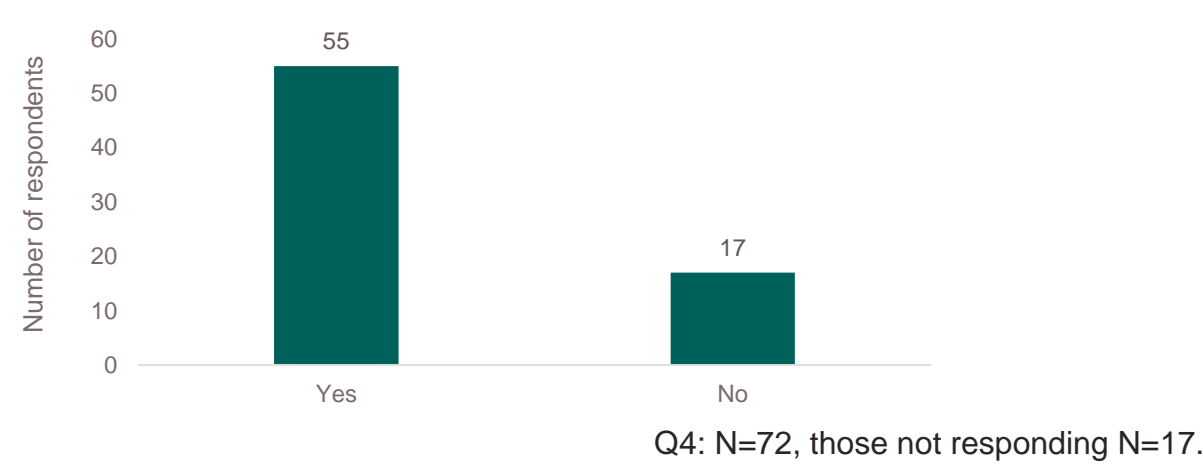
In more open responses, 39 per cent of respondents agreed unanimously with the proposals. A further 22 per cent offered further reflections or suggestions.

6.2 Key Themes

Provision of well-paid employment

Four respondents highlighted that the national milestone is largely reliant on the provision of well-paid employment opportunities. As outlined in the consultation document, respondents felt that this was largely outside of the control of the Welsh Government. Some suggested that the national milestone could consider average earnings as part of this measure.

Fairer tax and benefit system

Although not a suggestion regarding the milestone or indicator itself, five respondents mentioned that a fairer tax and benefit system would help the Welsh Government to support progress towards this national milestone. Some respondents called for more support for those currently with the lowest GDHI, who, they feel, would benefit the most from the support. Meanwhile, others called for the Welsh Government to examine how tax and benefits are currently measured, appreciating that much of the power regarding this rests with the UK Government.

> *"Poverty measured at household level (i.e. as a group, rather than as an individual) can negatively impact how child poverty is measured when you are taking account of a whole household with mixed characteristics. For example, different people within households can have different needs. There might be children, disabled people, elderly people, or multiple adults under one roof."*
>
> (Co-production Network for Wales)

Cost-of-living support

Similarly, cost-of-living support was another suggestion from three respondents. These respondents saw the current cost-of-living crisis as being one of the biggest threats to achieving the sentiment of the national milestone — reducing material deprivation.

Parity with the rest of the UK

Four respondents suggested that more of a focus should be placed upon achieving GDHI parity with the whole of the UK (as opposed to merely raising the average). These respondents felt that Wales was behind the rest of the UK with regard to this and, therefore, the Welsh Government should strive to specifically address this.

"Improvement of GDHI per head in Wales should be strived for, as the Welsh average being consistently below the UK average indicates that there is a structural problem that needs to be addressed."

(Member of the public)

Additional suggestions

Two respondents reported that setting a minimum target for GDHI would be more beneficial than examining averages of the whole of Wales, as they felt that progress towards this could be distorted by increases in GDHI of top and middle earners, meaning that increases in average GDHI figures may not necessarily represent increases for the lowest earners. Another consideration put forward was the need to examine the geographical distribution of wealth across Wales, with some mentioning that they would like to see breakdowns of progress towards this national milestone by area. Finally, similarly to other national milestones, some respondents voiced concerns regarding the timeframe for achieving this national milestone, and thought that a shorter achievement date was needed.

6.3 Key Stakeholder Perspectives

Stakeholders were largely supportive of the national milestone. There was considerable variation in perspectives on how the national milestone could be strengthened. The most common response was that stakeholders believe that there should be a fairer tax and benefit system. Some raised concerns surrounding the underlying indicator, believing that using household income as a measure can hide the true level of poverty, including child poverty.

7 Income Poverty

Respondents were asked for their views on the proposed national milestone set against national well-being indicator No. 18 — 'to reduce the poverty gap between people in Wales with certain key and protected characteristics (which means they are most likely to be in poverty) and those without characteristics by 2035. Commit to setting a stretching target for 2050.'

|		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Indicator No.18 - Income poverty relative to the UK median		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Milestone #5	Reduce the poverty gap between people in Wales with certain key and protected characteristics (which mean they are most likely to be in poverty) and those without those characteristics by 2035. Commit to setting a stretching target for 2050.							

This national milestone is seen to be a vital step in working towards a 'More Equal Wales'. It is reinforced by a range of legislation which places a statutory duty on the Welsh Government and public bodies in Wales to tackle poverty and inequalities, including the Strategic Equality Plan 2020–2024 and the commencement of the socioeconomic duty. Similarly to national milestone 4, it is noted in the consultation document that the Welsh Government's capacity to support progress towards this national milestone is impacted by its lack of control over the tax and welfare system as well as private sector wages.

7.1 General Perceptions

Once again, there was strong support for the intention and focus of the national milestone. In total, 82 per cent of respondents answering the question agreed with the overall suggested approach.

Figure 7: General perceptions of national milestone 5
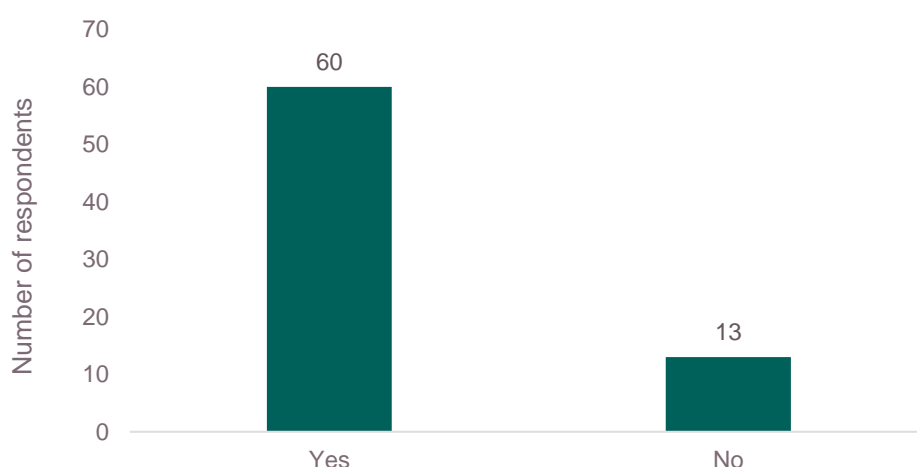
Q5: N=73, those not responding N=16.

In more open responses, 37 per cent of respondents agreed unanimously with the proposals, with 30 per cent offering further reflections or suggestions.

7.2 Key Themes

Similarly to the previous national milestone regarding household income (milestone 4), there was less consensus between respondents with respect to how the proposals could be strengthened.

Assistance for those with protected characteristics

Eight respondents reported that they appreciated the focus on certain key and protected characteristics and were interested in the types of extra support that may be available for these groups to help address income poverty. In addition, some felt that more could be done to support those with key and protected characteristics in Wales in general.

"Blind and partially sighted people are more likely to live in a low-income household, with just one in four of blind and partially sighted people of working age in employment. Likewise, life costs more if you're disabled. The pan-disability charity Scope estimates that the average extra costs of a disability amounted to £583 per month for a single disabled person, and one in five disabled people may face additional costs of up to £1,000 per month, even after factoring in disability benefits."

(Royal National Institute of Blind People)

Cost-of-living and fuel poverty crisis

As with household income, respondents also raised the cost of living (N=5) as well as fuel poverty (N=4) as being key concerns that were likely to exacerbate poverty and potentially present barriers to achieving the national milestone. Respondents were interested in what would be done to overcome these challenges so that progress could be made.

"At a time when rent and bills consume the majority, if not all, of an older person's limited budget, often sacrifices in other areas are made which negatively [affect] *their overall quality of life. With marginalised people and those with protected characteristics statistically less likely to be in permanent, stable employment in their working life, this will have a knock-on impact on their pensions and budgets for later life, with many people from marginalised communities and those with protected characteristics financially unprepared for the rising costs, through no fault of their own."*

(Care & Repair Cymru)

Broader factors influencing income poverty

Respondents highlighted the limited ability of the Welsh Government to fully address some of the underlying causes of income poverty in Wales. This included the ability of the Welsh Government to shape taxation and benefit levels, as well as the important role that the private sector has in determining wages.

"The Welsh Government does not hold the primary policy and fiscal levers that would enable the change needed to bring about a significant reduction in levels of poverty in Wales, but it does control a vast majority of public services in this country and should look to other devolved nations for inspiration."

(Co-production Network for Wales)

Additional suggestions

Some of the other issues raised included greater clarity surrounding what would be included in target characteristics. One respondent suggested that there was a need to go beyond addressing income poverty and look at addressing the wider issues, including education and training, as well as wider social factors which could potentially impact the Welsh Government's and public bodies' attempts to reach this national milestone.

7.3 Key Stakeholder Perspectives

Stakeholders were largely supportive of this national milestone. The most common response was that stakeholders believed that it was important to assist those with protected characteristics. For example, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) believed that it was crucial to identify key factors that increased someone's likelihood of living in poverty, and that blind or partially sighted people were at greater risk of living in low-income households. Other stakeholders such as the Co-production Network for Wales and Home Start also responded that it was important to assist those with protected characteristics.

Some of the other most common perspectives that arose with respect to this national milestone were the cost-of-living crisis, fuel poverty, and the need to address issues surrounding poverty. The WCVA pointed towards the current economic downturn and the impact that the cost-of-living crisis will have upon the underpinning national well-being indicator. The RNIB, the NSPCC, and Home Start all agreed that there was a need to address issues surrounding poverty, as this has adverse effects on other parts of people's and children's lives.

"We ask that the planned child poverty strategy acknowledges the link between safeguarding and abuse and neglect and highlights the fact that poverty is structural harm that inevitably impacts the whole family. It is clear [that] *if parents are struggling to pay bills and put food on the table, and/or experience mental health difficulties, they can become overwhelmed, and this may impact on their ability to meet their children's needs."*

(Home Start)

8 People Who Volunteer

Respondents were asked for their views on the proposed national milestone set against national well-being indicator No.28 — 'to increase the percentage of people who volunteer by 10 per cent by 2050, demonstrating Wales' status as a volunteering nation'.

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Indicator No.28 - Percentage of people who volunteer							•	•	•
Milestone #6	Increase the percentage of people who volunteer by 10% by 2050, demonstrating Wales's status as a volunteering nation								

This specific national milestone was selected over other considered measures such as the number of hours of volunteering because it was felt that it would be easier to compare figures of this metric over time. It was envisioned that in the future the national milestone could be updated to include hours of volunteering as well, once this can be more reliably and accurately captured.

8.1 General Perceptions

Perceptions of this national milestone were also positive, with 63 per cent of respondents agreeing with the proposal. However, of all the national milestones put forward in the proposals, this one received the lowest level of agreement.

Figure 8: General perceptions of national milestone 6
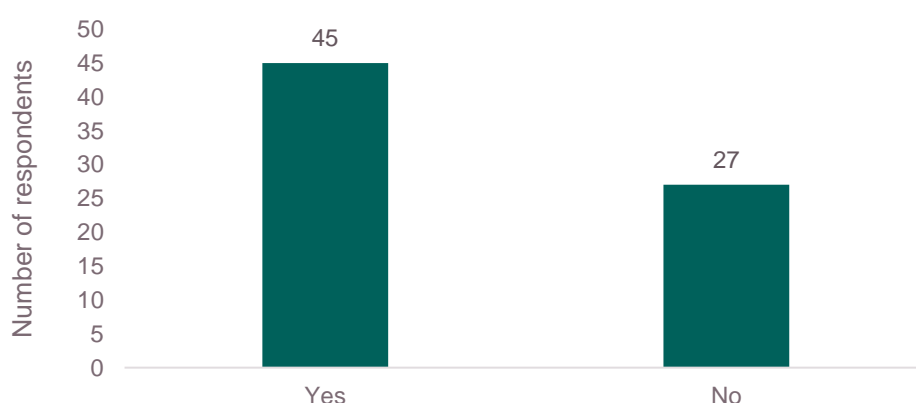
Q6: N=72, those not responding N=17.

In open responses, 25 per cent of respondents agreed unanimously with the proposals. A further 26 per cent offered additional reflections or suggestions.

8.2 Key Findings

Encourage non-traditional volunteers

Eight respondents suggested that there should be a focus within this national milestone upon engaging people from 'non-traditional' volunteer backgrounds. These included younger people as well as those with protected characteristics (such as individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds).

> *"We would like to see a definitive recognition that their target will apply to all those who can volunteer, with reporting on the increase in volunteering taken up by different ages, ethnicities, and other protected characteristics* […] *Welsh Government should be looking to increase volunteering numbers and capacity across all demographics in Wales — not taking away volunteering spaces from older people who may rely on them for several reasons but creating opportunities that appeal to all."*

(Kingspan Insulation)

Removing barriers to volunteering

Five respondents suggested that there should also be a focus on removing barriers to volunteering. Respondents put forward a diverse range of suggestions, including subsidised public transport, subsidised childcare, and accessible roles for people with disabilities. Introducing these measures would help some to overcome the barriers that they face to volunteering.

> *"Whilst we agree with the proposed milestone, we don't believe that the question being asked will capture the barriers* [that] *people and communities face when trying to access volunteering opportunities, as well as the reasons* [why] *people decide not to volunteer. Without truly understanding the barriers* [that] *people face, it will be difficult to ensure that opportunities are inclusive."*

(Royal National Institute of Blind People)

Measure by volunteering hours

It was suggested by four respondents that a more appropriate measure was that of volunteering hours and that volunteering was a personal choice that individuals should not feel compelled to make. Moreover, it was suggested that it could be more effective to convince existing volunteers to give more of their time than to get new people to volunteer in the first place. Some also felt that volunteering was already relatively high and that there was a "natural ceiling" to volunteering numbers which was shaped by external factors.

"There are going to be certain individuals who are not able to volunteer their time for various reasons, and certain cohorts who are perhaps able to volunteer a significantly greater number of hours than others. It has been recognised that there are issues in the measurement solely using the number of hours volunteered, as explained; however, perhaps it would be more beneficial to incorporate both sets of data into the measurement."

(Member of the public)

Additional suggestions

Another issue raised related to an increasing reliance on volunteers to solve issues that should rather be supported by statutory services. Furthermore, there was a request for greater clarification surrounding defining volunteering and how (if at all) differences between different levels of volunteering will be considered.

8.3 Key Stakeholder Perspectives

Key stakeholders such as the WCVA agreed with the national milestone whilst also highlighting areas in which the proposals could be strengthened. They suggested that there were challenges in capturing meaningful data with which to inform this milestone. What is more, they outlined potential barriers to achieving the ambition of the national milestone, such as the cost-of-living crisis, which could reduce the number of people who are able to participate in volunteering opportunities.

Stakeholders such as the Co-production Network for Wales also commented on how achieving this national milestone could be supported. They believed that there should be improvements to infrastructure and public transport to improve accessibility to volunteering. In addition, stakeholders such as the RNIB, Sport Wales, and the WCVA all commented on the need to remove barriers to volunteering for individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The final observation by several stakeholders was the need for a clearer definition of volunteering. Powys County Council highlighted that there are people in communities who perform informal neighbourhood volunteering. However, they may not class themselves as volunteers, as they may often think that the volunteering label is reserved for those regularly giving their time to charity or community groups. The need for a clearer definition of volunteering was backed by the WCVA, Powys County Council, Sport Wales, the Future Generations Commissioner, and the Co-production Network for Wales.

"It's important to note [that] *any data collected would only present an incomplete picture so long as 'volunteering' means different things to different people. Informal, neighbourly forms of volunteering, such as many of the activities we observed during the pandemic, often remain unreported, as individuals would often think the volunteering label is reserved for those regularly giving their time to a registered charity or community group. Even then, faith communities represent organised groups who often heavily rely on voluntary action; however, the individuals giving their time would describe their involvement as 'ministry' or 'obedience to God', rather than volunteering, and would likely not self-*[identify] *as a volunteer in a survey."*

(WCVA)

9 Home Energy Performance

Respondents were asked for their views on the proposed national milestone set against national well-being indicator No.33 — 'all homes in Wales will have adequate and cost-effective energy performance by 2050'.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Indicator No.33 - Percentage of dwellings with adequate energy performance	•	•	•				•
Milestone #7	All homes in Wales will have adequate and cost-effective energy performance by 2050						

The rationale behind this national milestone is twofold: firstly, it looks to support the people of Wales in managing the costs of heating their homes, as well as helping to deliver on the Welsh Government's legal commitment to meeting its net zero carbon targets.

9.1 General Perceptions

The majority of respondents agreed with the proposed national milestone, with 75 per cent of respondents who answered the question responding positively.

Figure 9: General perceptions of national milestone 7

Q7: N=71, those not responding N=18.
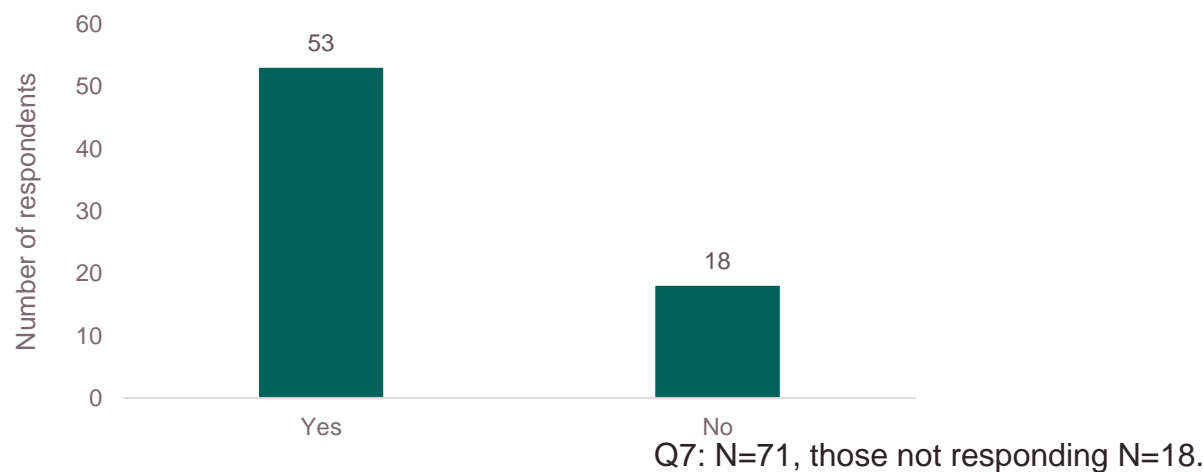
In open responses, 30 per cent of respondents agreed unanimously with the proposals, whilst 29 per cent offered further reflections or suggestions.

9.2 Key Themes

Fuel poverty

As highlighted, fuel poverty was a key concern for twelve respondents. Ensuring that all homes had adequate energy performance was, therefore, of great importance:

> *"We believe that the fuel poverty situation, in reality, is significantly more detrimental than the situation represented in the consultation document. The energy cost increase is creating a situation where people who have never been near the poverty line before will need to choose between food and fuel. For those already in poverty, the health implications are significant."*

(South Wales Fire and Rescue Service)

Shorter timescales

The importance of these issues warranted more urgent action for some. Six respondents suggested that 2050 constituted too long a timescale, with some of these also suggesting that an interim target would be important in ensuring timely progress. Moreover, it was felt to be important to mitigate the financial pressure caused by energy inefficiency upon those struggling to pay bills. Furthermore, there were environmental concerns, including the need to reduce the carbon footprint of heating homes in Wales, as well as consideration being given to ensuring the safety of more at-risk people during the winter months.

Need for clearer definitions

Seven respondents asked for clarity surrounding the definitions of 'adequate' and 'cost-effective' as well as further information on how progress towards achieving these goals will be measured.

> *"We recognise that there are clear limitations with this milestone, given that it is fairly general and open to interpretation, with neither 'adequate' nor 'cost-effective' defined. However, we acknowledge that work is underway across Welsh Government to improve the energy efficiency of homes, including those with children, and we were pleased to contribute a response to the recent consultation on the Warm Homes Programme earlier this year."*

(Children in Wales)

Clarification on retrofitting

Ten responses requested further clarification on how the national milestone would be specifically achieved for older properties which would likely require an element of retrofitting in order to improve their energy efficiency. Some felt that this could potentially be prohibitively expensive for some, and it was felt that without additional support, those living in older properties would be less likely to benefit from any improvements to overall energy efficiencies of homes across Wales.

> *"We believe it is important that Welsh Government's proposed actions to decarbonise homes must consider how fuel-poor households can be supported to mitigate any risks that decarbonisation may present to low-income and vulnerable households, e.g. whether available grants will be sufficient to cover the costs associated with the proposed switch from gas boilers to low-carbon heat pumps for homeowners in Wales. We believe that Welsh Government should undertake equality impact assessments to ensure that low-income and vulnerable households are not disproportionately affected financially by the decarbonisation of the existing housing stock, to ensure a fair transition for consumers in the move towards net zero."*
>
> (Age Cymru)

Additional suggestions

The other key issues put forward by respondents with regard to this national milestone included: considerations for businesses as part of this milestone, i.e. if support would be available; consideration given to setting target properties that are not appropriate for insulation; and the need to prioritise the use of greener energy sources for homes.

9.3 Key Stakeholder Perspectives

The most common concern was fuel poverty and the need for action to be taken to combat the fuel poverty crisis. Several stakeholders, including Liquid Gas UK and the Co-production Network for Wales, highlighted fuel poverty and that action needs to be taken.

The Future Generations Commissioner believed that retrofitting homes in order to make them more efficient was vital in the immediate term. Other stakeholders such as Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and Llangollen Town Council also agreed that action needed to be taken as soon as possible. Some stakeholders also mentioned the need for more of the energy used in these efficient properties to be greener energy, believing that houses in Wales needed to be more energy-efficient.

"The milestone is 'The energy performance of every home in Wales will be sufficient and cost-effective by 2050', but this is not setting a target to decarbonise the energy supply. A target should be added to move away from using fossil fuels to heat and supply energy to homes."

(Gwynedd Council)

10 Biological Diversity in Wales

Respondents were asked for their views on the proposed national milestone set against national well-being indicator No.44 — 'to reverse declines in biodiversity and improve the status of species and ecosystems by 2030, and supporting their clear recovery by 2050'.

Indicator No.44 – Status of biological diversity in Wales	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	•	•			•	•	•

Milestone #8	To reverse the decline in biodiversity with an improvement in the status of species and ecosystems by 2030 and their clear recovery by 2050

The national milestone relates directly to the Welsh Minister's Nature Recovery Action Plan, which sets out the Welsh Government's ambition to reverse declines in biodiversity.

10.1 General Perceptions

As was the case with the other national milestones, there was widespread support for this, with 79 per cent agreeing with the proposed target.

Figure 10: General perceptions of national milestone 8
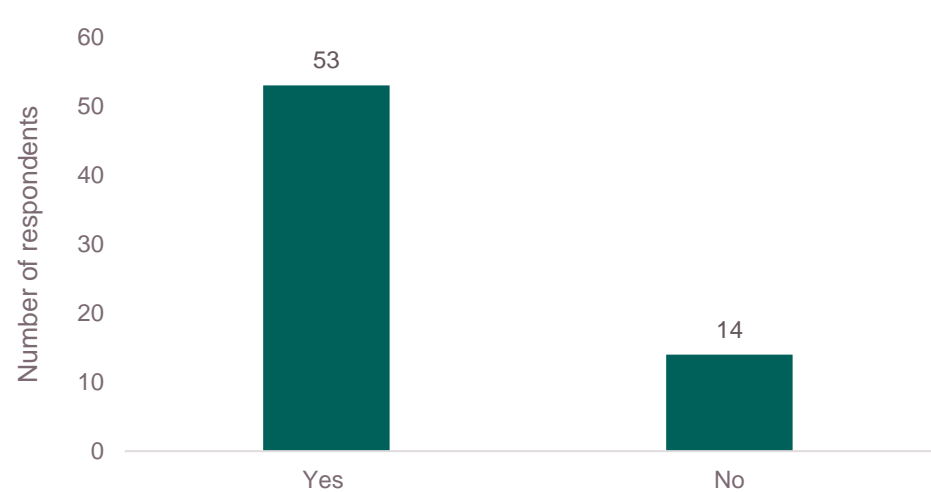
Q8: N=67, those not responding N=22.

In open responses, 35 per cent of respondents agreed unanimously with the proposals, with 25 per cent offering further reflections or suggestions.

10.2 Key Themes

Clarification on milestone

Some felt as though greater clarification on how the national milestone was constructed would be valuable, with twelve respondents being unsure as to precisely what the measure included. It was felt to be important to clarify and potentially extend the national milestone to determine whether the reverse in decline in biodiversity had been achieved, as well as how a reverse would be defined.

"As an ecologist, I would recommend adding more specific goals into this milestone. 'Reversing decline' and 'improving the status' are both great targets, but having a percentage of species/ecosystems improved or something similar would make this milestone much more meaningful. Measurable targets are always more valuable than vague ones."

(Member of the public)

Prioritisation of indigenous species

With respect to the national milestone regarding reversing the decline in biodiversity, some respondents believed that there should be prioritisation of, or at least specific consideration for, indigenous species. This was due to concerns that there are species that are unique or native to Wales that would be more at risk from biodiversity loss than would other species that can be found elsewhere.

Shorter timescales

Similar to some other national milestones, seven respondents felt that a shorter timescale could be implemented. This was due to potential issues such as preventing biodiversity loss becoming more difficult and more expensive to correct over time, as well as the potential negative impact of solutions to other issues.

Baseline establishment

Some concerns were also raised regarding establishing an accurate baseline. Respondents wanted clarification surrounding how these measurements have been taken previously.

"The milestone should make it clear what baseline is being used (1970 if using the proposed indicator) and its limitations in terms of levels of variation/bias. Where an indicator is measured from NSS datasets, an assessment will be influenced by how much and what data was recorded over the decades. Indicators used to assess the recovery of nature should include taxa across freshwater, marine and terrestrial ecosystems and measure abundance, distribution, and habitat condition."

(Member of the public)

10.3 Key Stakeholder Perspectives

The main response from stakeholders was that a more measurable national milestone was needed. Natural Resources Wales suggested that the wording of the national milestone is too broad and should be clarified, which was backed by other key stakeholders such as the RSPB and Wales Environment Link.

These three key stakeholders also believed that it was important to encourage the return of native species so as to improve the wider status of biological diversity in Wales. NRW agreed that there should be clear interim targets every ten years. The RSPB agreed that there should be shorter timescales and that we need to start to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and have full recovery by 2050 in order to meet the Nature Positive Global Goal that is to be adopted at the COP 15 summit in December 2022.

"The data to be used for the milestone reporting will be influenced by the species/species groups we have adequate monitoring data for. We do not have data for many section 7 species. In addition, an updated section 7 species list is due to be published and this is likely to change the impact of reporting should the species change, or number of species change, for which we may or may not hold data. This may provide a challenge to defining the long-term pathway to recovery. If the intention is to set a specific target, we would encourage clear interim targets for 2030, 2040, then 2050 measured against which baseline. Would 2020 be a sensible and achievable level to measure against?"

(Natural Resources Wales)

11 Communication of National Milestones

Respondents were asked to comment on how the Welsh Government should communicate with people and communities regarding the national milestones.

This question sought to ascertain what channels respondents felt would be most appropriate for communicating the national milestones. This chapter puts forward the key responses and comments received in relation to this question.

Communication media

There were mixed views towards the prioritisation of communication via social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) put forward by nineteen respondents or more traditional media (e.g. television, newspapers, radio) suggested by thirteen.

Those respondents who suggested prioritising social media reported reasons such as it being more commonly used across diverse demographics, and that with features such as comments, it was easier to receive feedback as well as signpost information and the most appropriate medium through which younger people could be engaged.

Some respondents highlighted the importance of more traditional media in reaching certain communities, as well as the potential risk that digital platforms could exclude individuals with lower digital literacy or experiencing digital poverty. What is more, it was suggested that physical dissemination methods would be more visible to the general public as they went about their lives.

> *"For older people, it is important that communication channels are not 'digital by default'. In Wales, 52 per cent of people over 75 do not have broadband access, and many older people do not use computers and smartphones, so for some, digital technology is a major barrier. Feedback from older people indicates their frustration that they are no longer able to access services, advice and support through telephone calls and paper-based information and have to call on busy loved ones to assist them to access the things they need."*

> (Age Cymru)

Accessibility concerns

Another common theme reported by 10 respondents centred on the importance of accessibility to communications. This would ensure that communications are democratic and enable full participation in debates surrounding the national milestones.

More specifically, the issue of accessibility was raised and that communications should be appropriate for those with sensory disabilities such as sight and hearing loss.

In addition, some felt as though face-to-face communication was also important. It was reported by several respondents that having individuals in communities who explain the national milestones and their purpose could help people to engage who may otherwise feel unable to comment.

"The milestones should be explained in a simple way, and the reasons behind them, to gain understanding and buy-in from people and communities. Communication methods should vary and be accessible to those with disabilities, neurodiverse conditions, hearing and sight problems, and in various formats and languages. A variety of communication tools should be used, including newsprint, digital and social media, and in several different accessible formats, e.g. posters, infographics, graphs, short films, podcasts, etc., to ensure that no one is left behind."

(Natural Resources Wales)

Raising public awareness

Another point for consideration that was raised by seven respondents was the importance of actively engaging members of the public. Some respondents raised concerns regarding the profile of the national milestones and national well-being indicators and their visibility amongst the general public. They felt that more should be done to actively promote the national milestones through news items, advertisements on social media and television, as well as scheduling visits to schools.

"The milestones and indicators need to be brought to life in an accessible and engaging way, and in a variety of formats that will appeal to a wide audience. Ideally, this would involve people and communities (including young people) in the design of the communications products. The Welsh Government could build on the above by considering how to go further than communicating with them, [...] engaging people and communities with them. It would be great to see work with people to explore what the milestones and indicators mean to them. What kind of composite indicators might they come up with that encapsulate more than one indicator, for instance?"

(Future Generations Commissioner's Office)

12 Impacts, Opportunities and Dependencies

In considering the potential impacts and opportunities of achieving the national milestones, respondents were asked for their views on any connections and interdependencies between them.

It should be noted that much of the feedback provided focused on the interdependencies between the national milestones, with less focusing on the overall impacts and opportunities of achieving them. Some responses to this question, rather than referring to the impacts and opportunities of achieving national milestones, referred to the national well-being indicators, including key debates and issues surrounding the national well-being indicators. For example, on the topic of healthy life expectancy, respondents merely referred to hospital waiting times in some instances.

Overall consensus

Most respondents felt that the national milestones should be mutually beneficial to one another. Addressing income poverty and inequalities amongst those with protected characteristics, for example, would have corresponding benefits for health and well-being. Moreover, it was felt that progress against this measure would also advance broader strategic objectives, including the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan, or the Learning Disability Strategic Action Plan.

Positive relationships

The most commonly cited positive relationships between indicators and milestones included between national milestone 4 (to improve GDHI per head in Wales) and national milestone 5 (to reduce the poverty gap between people in Wales with certain key and protected characteristics and those without those characteristics by 2035), where it was suggested that raising the income of those facing barriers would improve GDHI; and between national milestone 2 (to increase the percentage of adults with two or more healthy lifestyle behaviours) and national milestone 3 (to improve adult and children's mean mental well-being and eliminate the gap in adult and children's mean mental well-being between the most deprived and least deprived areas in Wales by 2050), where it was suggested that undertaking more healthy habits would be beneficial to individuals' health and well-being.

National milestone 2 was also suggested as having a positive relationship with national milestone 1 (to increase the healthy life expectancy of adults and narrow the gap in healthy life expectancy between the least and most deprived by at least 15 per cent by 2050), with some of the healthy behaviours being seen to be raising life expectancy.

"The aim set out in milestone 1 (to increase the healthy life expectancy of adults and narrow the gap) is, to some extent, dependent on milestone 2 (to increase the percentage of adults with two or more healthy lifestyle behaviours). These two should go hand in hand, and as one improves, so should the other. None of the milestones [are] *incompatible insofar as an improvement in one would be at the detriment of another."*

(Anon.)

Negative relationships

There have been very few negative relationships between national milestones suggested so far; however, respondents indicated where they feel that the national milestones may have negative impacts on wider issues facing Wales. The most common of these are concerns surrounding the impact of national milestone 8 (to reverse the decline in biodiversity with an improvement in the status of species and ecosystems by 2030 and their clear recovery by 2050) and the availability of affordable housing in Wales, with respondents suggesting that this could limit where houses could be built in order to meet demand.

People also felt that funding the projects and policies necessary to achieve the national milestones could lead to higher taxes with which to cover this, which would in turn have an impact on GDHI, as well as funding being diverted away from other areas and agendas that are also essential to the people of Wales.

Improving the energy efficiency of properties (national milestone 7) was also suggested as having an impact on GDHI if the public are expected to pay the cost of this, as well as potentially raising the prices of houses further than the level at which they are already situated.

13 Welsh Language Impact

The consultation also explored the potential impacts of the proposals upon the Welsh language. Respondents were asked for feedback on any changes that could positively affect the use of the Welsh language.

It is worth noting that much of the responses to this question focused on how the Welsh Government could better support the Welsh language in general, as opposed to the role of the national milestones. Therefore, some of the themes across responses were not necessarily linked with the national milestones.

Views on the impact on the Welsh language

Those who did express a view on what they believed the impact of the national milestones upon the Welsh language to be indicated that they did not see there being an impact. It was indicated that engaging with people regarding the national milestones in a bilingual manner would help to support people in using the language, whereas others indicated that there was not a specific focus on the language as part of any of the national milestones; therefore, they could not envision there being any major impact.

Consensus surrounding the importance of the Welsh language

It is also worth noting that amongst respondents, there was consensus that it was important to expand the Welsh language. To this end, suggestions were put forward with regard to how this could be done, including: the provision of free Welsh lessons for adults, ensuring that Welsh remains compulsory for all pupils in secondary education, and ensuring that spaces remain in which people can speak Welsh.

> *"We need more places, walk-in shops, and* [others] *that you can freely speak Welsh in, and more* [media] *representative in the native tongue, with more courses available. A lot of Welsh people are embarrassed that they have not learned Welsh enough to be confident to approach others to converse — it should be made more available to all."*

(Member of the public)

It is worth noting, however, that there were a proportion of responses that suggested that the Welsh language should not be prioritised over achieving the national milestones, and should also lead to preferential treatment of those who speak bilingually, especially with regard to securing jobs in the public sector.

"I agree [that] *Welsh should be kept alive but not at the expense of employment. I believe we are missing out on getting good doctors and nurses, dentists, etc. As NHS and government jobs ask for preferred Welsh speakers, seeing this would put off a lot of people from outside of Wales from applying. Jobs should be on qualifications, NOT language."*

(Member of the public)

Suggestions for improvements to milestones

When asked how they felt as though the proposals could be formulated or changed to have positive effects or increased positive effects on the Welsh language, there was little consensus between the responses provided.

The main suggestion provided was ensuring bilingual parity in terms of written communications, as well as consultations, in the implementation of national milestones. For some, both English and Welsh needed to be considered equal in stature so that people did not feel more or less Welsh, or more or less welcome as a result of the language that they speak.

"We live in Wales. Welsh is the national language and should be prioritised; however, Welsh people who don't speak the Welsh language should not feel excluded or 'less Welsh' because of this. Welsh is a language, a skillset, but not a national qualifier. I am a Welsh speaker and was brought up bilingually; however, not everybody is given the same advantage."

(Member of the public)

Other suggestions included: similar suggestions to those in the last section outlining the provision of support that could be used to expand the use of the language, calls to ensure that Welsh is more centrally embedded in every policy, and suggestions to promote the use of Welsh in volunteering.

14 Conclusions

All national milestones were positively received by most respondents. This suggests that there is broad consensus regarding the importance of the issues outlined in the proposals, as well as the priorities that they seek to advance. This is a similar finding to the national milestone values developed in wave one and published in 2021.

General agreement with the proposals was reflected in both closed-ended (quantitative) and open-ended questions (qualitative). Across all national milestones, for example, 76.5 per cent of respondents on average agreed with the proposals. Within open responses, an average of 33.8 per cent of respondents offered unconditional support for the proposals. A further 28.3 per cent offered conditional support, where respondents highlighted areas in which the proposals could be strengthened. Conversely, 19.1 per cent on average offered negative sentiments towards elements of the proposals.

In terms of how the proposals could be strengthened, a key overarching theme across several national milestones was the ambition of the proposals. Across a range of national milestones, some felt that they would benefit from more ambitious targets and shorter timescales. Furthermore, some advocated the use of further interim targets with which to support progress.

Linked to this, another overarching theme was the need to introduce quantifiable targets for those measures that do not currently have them. It was appreciated that for some national milestones this would be more straightforward than others, but respondents felt that having these targets would help the Welsh Government to measure progress and for this progress to be shared with the public.

Another overarching theme across national milestone responses was respondents wanting to see breakdowns of progress by various factors. Some suggested including further information on protected characteristics and geographical areas, for example. The reason for this is so that it can be determined whether interventions and policies surrounding these national milestones are serving Wales as a whole (rather than certain demographics or areas).

One issue that was prevalent across national milestones was recognising that progress was also driven by factors that were outside of the Welsh Government's exclusive control, such as the cost-of-living crisis, the biodiversity crisis, and the war in Ukraine. However, it was acknowledged that some of these national milestones would help to mitigate the impacts of these; therefore, to address these pressures, progress towards these milestones should begin soon.

Despite these broader reflections on the details of these national milestones, it can be clearly observed that these overarching responses further reflect the importance of the milestones to respondents and, rather than being comments on their content, are comments on ensuring that they are pursued and measured in a meaningful way to them.

Despite reflections such as these as well as those mentioned in the chapters of this report, it is clear that there is overall agreement with both the sentiments and importance of these national milestones.

Appendix 1: Consultation Questions

Question 1

a) Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.2 (i.e. healthy life expectancy at birth, including the gap between the least and most deprived)?
b) If 'yes' but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?
c) If 'no', please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Question 2

a) Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.3 (i.e. percentage of adults who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours)?
b) If 'yes' but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?
c) If 'no', please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Question 3

a) Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.29 (i.e. mean mental well-being score)?
b) If 'yes' but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?
c) If 'no', please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Question 4

a) Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.10 (i.e. gross disposable household income per head)?
b) If 'yes' but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?
c) If 'no', please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Question 5

a) Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.18 (i.e. income poverty relative to the UK median)?
b) If 'yes' but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?
c) If 'no', please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Question 6

a) Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.28 (i.e. percentage of people who volunteer)?
b) If 'yes' but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?
c) If 'no', please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Question 7

a) Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.33 (i.e. percentage of dwellings with adequate energy performance)?
b) If 'yes' but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?
c) If 'no', please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Question 8

a) Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.44 (i.e. status of biological diversity in Wales)?
b) If 'yes' but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?
c) If 'no', please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Question 9

a) How do you think we should communicate with the people and communities of Wales on the national milestones?

Question 10

a) We are keen to gather evidence on the potential impacts and opportunities of achieving all of the national milestones, and particularly any dependencies between them. For example, there could be unintended consequences of making progress towards achieving a national milestone for another national milestone, or opportunities to deliver wider benefits between national milestones. Please use this space to provide evidence of these connections and interdependencies.

Question 11

The Welsh Government would like your views on the effects that these proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- opportunities for people to use Welsh, and
- treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

a) What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased or negative effects be mitigated?

Question 12

Please also explain how you believe the proposals could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and
- no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Appendix 2: Organisational Responses

This section lists the organisations that contributed responses to the consultation.

Age Cymru
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)
British Ports Association
Care and Repair Cymru
Carmarthenshire County Council
Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
Children in Wales
Chwarae Teg
ClwydAlyn
Colegau Cymru
Co-production Network for Wales
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Home Start
Hwb Cymru
Hywel Dda University Health Board
Kingspan Insulation
Liquid Gas UK
Llanbedr Community Council
Llangollen Town Council
Llyfrgell Genedlaehol Cymru
Monmouthshire County Council
Natural Resources Wales
Newport County Council
NSPCC
Office of the Future Generations Commissioner
Platform
Portskewett Community Council
Powys County Council
Public Health Wales
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
RSPB

Rural Health and Care Wales
South Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Sport Wales
Wales Environment Link   52
WCVA
Ynys Mon County Council

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