

UK Open Government National Action Plan 2019-21: Welsh Government Commitments

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Introduction

This latest set of Welsh Government Open Government commitments forms part of the overall UK Open Government National Action Plan 2019-21, along with commitments from the other devolved administrations.

The commitments outline our ambitions over the next two years to be more open and responsive to citizens, more accountable and to take a more collaborative approach to the way we work.

In developing this set of commitments, we have engaged with civil society and active citizens via the Open Government Network Wales, seeking to address some of the areas for more open working that they identified. We aim to continue and build upon this collaborative approach during the implementation of this current set of commitments and in developing future commitments.

Commitment 1: Engagement

We will investigate different ways of engaging with people and organisations in order to support greater collaboration and openness, including how to provide a more coherent, whole of Government holistic approach.

Objective

To involve and increase engagement and collaboration with a wider range of stakeholders.

Status quo

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on public bodies (including the Welsh Government) to take account of the importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the seven well-being goals set out in the Act and to ensure those people reflect the diversity of the population that they operate within.

The Welsh Government has a long-standing commitment to engagement, for example through the National Principles for Engagement, which it has endorsed. The Well-being of Future Generations Act has given renewed impetus to assess how the Welsh Government engages with and involves people in policy and decision - making.

We are engaging widely on our priorities and we continue to seek new and different ways of involving people and organisations. We have already made improvements to the way that we consult by developing an improved consultation service via gov.wales and we want to build upon this work.

Ambition

To identify and develop different ways of engaging with people and organisations in order to gain a better understanding of the issues faced by citizens in Wales. The intended outcome is to ensure that citizens are involved in helping to develop policies that affect them and in the delivery of the services they may use.

Leading implementing organisation

Welsh Government

Timeline

March 2019 – March 2021

OGP values

Civic Participation

New or ongoing commitment

New

Other actors involved

The Open Government Network and Civil Society

Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfil the commitment	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
1: Continue to work and engage with civil society within Wales.	New	March 2019	March 2021
2: Use different methods to engage and collaborate with communities to improve prosperity in the South Wales valleys.	New	September 2018	March 2021
3: Pilot new approaches to stakeholder management, utilising digital engagement and collaboration tools to support the work of the taskforce	New	November 2019	March 2021
4: Identify and increase take up of digital tools and platforms to enable improved engagement	New	March 2019	March 2021
5: Develop a toolkit for officials to help them engage and involve the public and organisations in policy making and delivery.	New	March 2019	March 2021
6: Develop a package of development opportunities for officials to improve their engagement and involvement skills	New	March 2019	March 2021
7: Continue to develop Cadw's engagement activities that connect communities with their local monuments and buildings	New	March 2019	March 2021

Commitment 2: Access to Information

We will make information about how Welsh Government works easier to find and to access by making improvements to our website.

Objective

To help users find the information about Welsh Government and how it operates.

Status quo

The Welsh Government website contains a substantial amount of information concerning the business of Government, how Government works and the relationship with the UK Government, Local Government and the National Assembly for Wales. Government business is wide ranging and the associated business processes can be complex.

Although information about Government business is hosted on the Welsh Government website(s), it is often dispersed, which can make it difficult for users to access the information that they require.

Ambition

Improving accessibility to information that is held on gov.wales will enable people to gain a better understanding of the role of Welsh Government and how it works in relation to the UK and local government. This will also help people to identify where in Welsh Government responsibilities lie so that they can engage with the relevant department or an appropriate external body on issues of interest to them.

Leading implementing organisation

Welsh Government

Timeline

March 2019 – March 2021

OGP values

Access to information

New or ongoing commitment

New

Other actors involved

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Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfil the commitment	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
1: Continue to populate Open Government pages on the Welsh Government website	New	March 2019	March 2021
2: Produce and publish details of areas covered by senior civil servants and the Ministerial portfolios that they support	New	March 2019	March 2021
3: Make information about how and why we use personal data available by ensuring Welsh Government Privacy Notices are published openly and are easily accessible	New	March 2019	December 2019
4. Openly publish a list of data sharing agreements relating to statistics and research.	New	March 2019	December 2019
5: Develop pages explaining how government works in Wales and its relationships with UK government and local government	New	March 2019	March 2021
6: Develop pages to help users understand how we procure goods and services and help them find the relevant information	New	January 2019	September 2019
7: Investigate how we can help users find and access the open data they need	New	March 2019	March 2021

Commitment 3: Guidance on Open Data Publication for Public Bodies

We will work collaboratively to develop guidance that encourages greater publication and use of open data across the Welsh public sector.

Objective

To increase the amount of open data that is published by the Welsh public sector. The publication programme should have an emphasis on addressing the requirements of users, with an aim to encourage the greater use of open data.

Status quo

Whilst there is interest in publishing open data in Wales, publication can be inhibited due to a lack of understanding of how to make data open and what data should be prioritised. This can result in information not being available or only being partially available, which can negate or limit its potential use by consumers.

By working collaboratively to develop guidance for the whole of the Welsh public sector, we envisage that more open data will be released, that there will be a consistent of approach to the releasing of open data and that the requirements of users will be addressed.

Ambition

Through the increased use of published open data, a number of potential benefits could be realised, these include improvements in service delivery, increasing public engagement, greater accountability and the encouragement of economic activity.

Leading implementing organisation

Welsh Government

Timeline

June 2019 – March 2021

OGP values

Access to information, Open Data

New or ongoing commitment

New

Other actors involved

The Open Government Network, ODI-Cardiff, Data Cymru and Public Sector bodies

Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfil the commitment	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
1: Identify public sector publishers and potential users of open data in Wales	New	March 2019	June 2019
2: Engage with potential publishers and users of open data to agree content and coverage of the guidance	New	May 2019	October 2019
3: Develop draft guidance	New	October 2019	March 2020
4: Pilot the use of draft guidance	New	March 2020	March 2021

Commitment 4: Grants

We are committed to making information about the grants and the grant application processes more openly available.

Objective

To provide greater clarity about the application and provision of Welsh Government grants.

Status quo

Each year Welsh Government spends in the region of £13bn on grants across all Ministerial portfolio areas. Welsh Government routinely releases details of all payments made that are over £25,000 in value. An annual report on grants management is published, which presents a number of high - level grants statistics, however, there is no routine/regular publication of grant scheme or grant offer data.

By making grants data openly available, it is anticipated that the public will gain a better understanding about how Welsh Government spends money in Wales.

Ambition

Making information available about how grants are issued will provide citizens with a better understanding of how public money in Wales is used and the activities that it funds. This will provide greater accountability. Providing clarity on what grants are available and how citizens can access them will ensure that everyone will have an opportunity to apply for the grants that they require.

Leading implementing organisation

Welsh Government

Timeline

March 2019 – March 2021

OGP values

Access to information, Public accountability

New or ongoing commitment

New

Other actors involved

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Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfil the commitment	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
1: Begin a process to compile, publish and maintain a central list of existing Welsh Government grants	New	June 2019	March 2021
2: Look to openly publish up to date information on Welsh Government grants	New	June 2019	March 2021
3: Coordinate guidance on Welsh Government grant schemes	New	June 2019	March 2021

Commitment 5: Legislation

We will help citizens understand the law applicable in Wales, by making information easier to find and by providing bilingual searching services and content.

Objective

To make Welsh law accessible, clear and straightforward to use.

Status quo

For many years, concerns have been raised about the complexity of the law in the UK. This issue is particularly acute in Wales due to the devolution settlement, the single legal jurisdiction, difficulty in ascertaining where Acts of Parliament apply differently in Wales and the continued expansion of a bilingual body of distinct Welsh law. The Law Commission's 2016 report, "Form and Accessibility of the Law Applicable in Wales" considered the causes and impacts of inaccessible laws.

Ambition

The long-term aim is to create a well-organised Welsh statute book that will categorise the law by Codes on specific subjects. We are also working towards improving how existing legislation (and its supporting documentation) is published and organised. This will include providing information about and demonstrating how the law in Wales is made.

Leading implementing organisation

Welsh Government

Timeline

December 2018 – March 2021

OGP values

Access to information; Technology and innovation for openness and accountability

New or ongoing commitment

New

Other actors involved

The National Archives; the Law Commission of England and Wales, Westlaw UK

Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfil the commitment	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
1: Place a new legal duty on the Counsel General to keep accessibility of Welsh Law under review and create new duties on the Welsh Ministers and the Counsel General to develop and implement an ongoing programme of improving accessibility of Welsh Law.	New	December 2018	March 2021
2: Redevelop the Cyfraith Cymru / Law Wales website (which provides information about the constitutional settlement of Wales, and the law applicable in Wales).	New	July 2019	March 2021
3: Expand the information that is available on Cyfraith Cymru / Law Wales about the law made in Wales, including bilingual text and explanatory material	New	July 2019	March 2021
4: Improve the accessibility to Wales law available via legislation.gov.uk by publishing and updating legislation bilingually and by developing new bilingual search tools to make Wales law easier to find.	New	March 2019	March 2021
5: Improve information on the making of law, including publication of guidance on both the gov.wales website and on Cyfraith Cymru / Law Wales about how legislation is prepared and made.	New	March 2019	March 2021

Commitment 6: Financial Engagement

We will explore different ways of engaging with people and organisations to support a greater understanding, awareness and openness in relation to how the Welsh Government gets its funding, how money is raised through taxes devolved to Wales and how that funding is spent across devolved public services.

Objective

To raise awareness of Welsh Government finances, specifically about where the money comes from and how it is spent. Welsh Government is keen to engage with citizens to provide greater clarity and understanding about Welsh public finances.

Status quo

Civil society wish to understand how Welsh Government determines budgets and how taxes are spent in Wales. They would like:

- to understand how Welsh Government decides where tax money is spent
- information about where tax money is spent
- assurances that Welsh Government is financially competent and spends money wisely.

Ambition

To identify and develop different ways of engaging with citizens and organisations to increase understanding and participation in the journey between taxation and public spending in Wales.

To gain an understanding of citizen's priorities for Welsh Government spending and to help support decision-making about how those resources are used.

To develop more open processes and transparency around the budget process and Welsh Government spending.

To enable better access to the data that underpins the Welsh Government decisions to allocate resources in the most effective way.

Leading implementing organisation

Welsh Government

Timeline

March 2019 – March 2021

OGP values

Civic Participation, Access to Information

New or ongoing commitment

New

Other actors involved

The Welsh Revenue Authority, the Open Government Network, HMRC, National Assembly for Wales and Civil Society

Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfil the commitment	New or ongoing	Start date	End date
1: Identify ways to increase the understanding of Welsh Government budgets and the resources available to fund devolved public services.	New	March 2019	March 2021
2: Publish more budgetary and financial information, including contact details, in open format, via the Welsh Government website.	New	March 2019	March 2021
3: Look to build upon and improve our engagement activities around the development of Welsh taxes and taxation policy.	New	March 2019	March 2021
4: The Welsh Revenue Authority to regularly publish information openly about taxes devolved to Wales.	New	March 2019	March 2021
5: To periodically publish information concerning infrastructure projects funded via the Mutual Investment Model (a process to enable Welsh Government and the private sector to jointly fund projects).	New	March 2019	March 2021