



Generations Working Together

Wellbeing & Sustainable Development Bill: Consultation

Generations Working Together recently submitted a response to the Scottish Government's Wellbeing & Sustainable Development Bill, which closed on February 14th. GWT has only answered the Questions within the bill that it feels it has the knowledge and expertise to contribute to.

Executive Summary

Generations Working Together (GWT) largely supports the proposed Wellbeing & Sustainability Bill due to its potential to address key societal challenges and uphold the interests of present and future generations. Advocating for clear statutory definitions of 'wellbeing' and 'sustainable development,' GWT emphasises the need for comprehensive frameworks that encompass social, economic, environmental, and democratic considerations. The response proposes nuanced definitions and suggest metrics to measure success, aiming for a high standard of living and intergenerational fairness. GWT is encouraged that the bill aligns with Scotland's National Outcomes, emphasising outcomes crucial for collective wellbeing, where intergenerational approaches play a vital role. GWT underscores the importance of integrating the bill across all policy domains and extending its application to all public bodies. GWT supports calls for the establishment of an independent Commissioner for Future Generations to enhance accountability, scrutiny, and decision-making support, promoting intergenerational partnerships and ensuring policies prioritise long-term sustainability. Overall, GWT believes the bill presents an opportunity to initiate a culture of responsibility and foresight, ensuring prosperity for current and future generations in Scotland.

Q1. Is a statutory definition of 'wellbeing' required?

Yes

Q2. Do you have any views on how 'wellbeing' can be clearly defined in legislation?

We largely agree with the definition proposed by Scotland's International Development Alliance, which aligns the definition of wellbeing, with Scotland's national outcomes. We do however propose some minor amendments. It's important that any definition is accompanied by key metrics that allow governments to measure successes. It is not enough

to meet the basic survival needs of the people of Scotland. We ought to strive for a higher minimum threshold of what is 'enough', through appealing to individual autonomy; the ability to self-determine one's life in a meaningful way, and crucially, providing the means to do so. A definition of wellbeing must therefore encompass social, economic, environmental and democratic considerations, must adopt a relational approach, and must recognise a duty to future generations.

We therefore propose the following definition:

'Collective wellbeing' is the manifestation of social, economic, environmental and democratic flourishing and equality across civil society. It demands a high standard of living for everyone, beyond the satisfying of basic needs and embraces a relational approach, positing meaningful relationships as a necessary wellbeing metric. It also establishes a duty of care to the interests and needs of future generations, ensuring intergenerational fairness.

Q3. Is a statutory definition of 'sustainable development' required?

Yes

Q4. Do you agree with our proposal that any definition of sustainable development should be aligned with the common definition: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"?

Yes

Q5. Do you have other views on how 'sustainable development' can be clearly defined in legislation?

It is essential that a clear definition of sustainable development is agreed upon, in order to establish clarity and ensure accountability. We propose the following definition:

Sustainable development is a holistic commitment to policymaking that places social, environmental, economic and democratic justice and equality at the core of policy decisions, upholding the rights and needs of both existing and future generations.

Q6. What future wellbeing issues or challenges do you think legislation could help ensure we address?

The bill presents an opportunity to support and reinforce Scotland's National Outcomes on the National Performance Framework (NPF), which are of vital importance to the collective wellbeing of Scotland. Crucially, it legislates the need to protect our future generations in a way that policy making currently does not. This bill can ensure that all policy decisions that are made moving forward, across all policy domains, consider wider impacts on the wellbeing of existing and future generations. As noted previously, the key to successful implementation of this bill, are strong definitions that encompass social, environmental, economic and democratic factors. By accounting for these key considerations in

policymaking, we can ensure prosperity in Scotland, across a wide range of wellbeing measures.

In recognising the potential challenges of an ageing population and global warming, the bill presents an opportunity to rethink the value of relationships, particularly across generations. In relation to the national outcomes, Generations Working Together recognises 6 key outcomes within the National Performance Framework (NPF) that intergenerational practice is key to achieving:

Children and Young People – We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential.

Communities – We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.

Education – We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society.

Health – We are healthy and active.

Human Rights – We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.

Environment – We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment.

Fair work & business – We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone.

Culture – We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely

Intergenerational approaches contribute towards the above areas and benefit participants and the community. Used correctly, an intergenerational approach can support local authorities in meeting local outcome improvement plans which are a mechanism for Community Planning Partnerships to deliver improved outcomes for their communities. The plans are based on a clear understanding of local needs and reflect agreed local priorities, as well as the National Performance Framework developed by the Scottish Government. We believe the Wellbeing and Sustainability Bill can shed light on the value of intergenerational approaches in addressing the above outcomes, by recognising the value of relationships in supporting collective wellbeing of Scottish people.

Q8. How could a legal duty be defined to ensure that public authorities uphold sustainable development and the interests of future generations?

The Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015 places duty on public authorities to 'have regard to the national outcomes'. This is not strong enough. We are in agreement with the International Development Alliance's proposal:

"[public authorities have a duty to] promote and deliver sustainable development while protecting the wellbeing of current and future generations, ensuring that they take all reasonable steps to support the realisation of the National Outcomes, minimise trade-offs,

and resolve policy conflicts in a way that does not undermine sustainable development or the wellbeing of current and future generations.”

Establishing accountability for decisions that impact future generations is difficult however, due to the uncertainties and unknowns of the future. Generations Working Together recommend the development of a nuanced and comprehensive ‘Intergenerational Fairness’ framework, that measures how policy proposals might impact upon future generations in a range of ways. [The School of International Futures](#), with whom GWT have a working relationship, have already developed this [framework](#), which has been trialled across Europe. The framework determines how ‘intergenerationally fair’ proposed policies are on a range of criteria, and offers a final ‘fairness’ rating. We recommend that Scottish Government either adopt this framework, or use it as guidance/inspiration to develop their own, to ensure fair public policies for all generations, including future generations. The framework can offer recommended adaptations to policy proposals, to encourage sustainable decision making and to ensure greater intergenerational fairness. A framework like this would also enable necessary accountability; if policy decisions are passed despite scoring poorly on the fairness assessment, public authorities can be held accountable for failing in their duty to the wellbeing of future generations.

Q9. Are there specific areas of decision making that should be included or excluded from the Bill?

If exemptions are granted within particular areas of decision making, the purposes of the bill will be undermined. Wellbeing and Sustainable Development as terms, cannot be used ad hoc if they are to guide future policy making and the delivering of the National Outcomes. The bill must be integrated and upheld across all policymaking areas.

Q10. What issues, if any, may result from strengthening the requirement to have regard to National Outcomes?

Strengthening duties from ‘have regard’ to ‘take all reasonable steps...’ will naturally place more pressure on public bodies. Establishing a framework such as the ‘intergenerational fairness’ framework recommended above, ought to make this adjustment easier for public bodies, as they will have clear guidance by which to work to. To ‘take all reasonable steps...’ can be to ensure that new policies have passed through the framework and can be implemented fairly, with no detriment to current and future generations.

Furthermore, we strongly endorse the proposal for an independent ‘Future Generations Commissioner’, who will be able to support public bodies in adapting to this bill. We encourage that the commissioner, like the Future Generations commissioner in Wales, works closely with other commissioners; specifically, Children and Young People’s Commissioner, and the Older People’s Commissioner (if establish). A close working relationship will allow for greater intergenerational consideration across policymaking and presents an opportunity to connect people of different generations, to overcome and mitigate cross-generational

tensions. This is in the best interest of Scottish Govt, in order to uphold the aforementioned 6 outcomes that intergenerational work contributes to.

Q11. Should any duty apply to the Scottish Government?

The duty should absolutely apply to Scottish Government, as they have the most power to determine the wellbeing of future generations. It is also important that the Scottish Govt is transparent as to how intergenerationally fair a proposed policy proposal is, to demonstrate a commitment to sustainable development and the wellbeing of present and future generations.

Q12. Do you have any views on the range and type of organisations that any duty should apply to?

The duty established in the bill ought to apply to all public bodies, including governments, ministers and commissioners.

Q17. Should Scotland establish an independent Commissioner for Future Generations?

An independent Commissioner for Future Generations will significantly enhance accountability, scrutiny, and decision-making support through the integration of intergenerational practices. By focusing on the long-term impacts of policies and initiatives, the Commissioner can ensure that current decisions consider the needs and rights of future generations. Intergenerational practice encourages collaboration and dialogue among different age groups, creating a holistic understanding of issues and solutions.

The Commissioner can facilitate intergenerational partnerships, bringing together diverse perspectives to inform policy development and implementation. This inclusive approach can enhance the legitimacy of decision-making whilst strengthening their effectiveness by shedding light on their wide-reaching benefits. Moreover, the Commissioner can promote education and awareness about intergenerational justice, empowering communities to advocate for sustainable policies that prioritize the wellbeing of both present and future generations.

By championing intergenerational practice, the Commissioner can create a culture of responsibility and foresight within governmental bodies and society at large. This proactive stance towards sustainable development ensures that decisions today do not compromise the opportunities and resources available to future generations, thus establishing a more equitable and resilient society for years to come.