

By email

21st February 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter and for sharing Petition P-06-131.

For your information, Derek Walker will begin his term as Future Generations Commissioner for Wales on the 1st of March 2023. Once in post, we will ensure the new Commissioner is made aware of your letter and this petition, as requested by the petitioner.

We have received other correspondence and letters on this topic and water quality has proven to be a concern for people across Wales. This is timely as the new Commissioner will enter into a listening exercise during the first months of his tenure, in order to set out the new priorities for his Office. We will ensure that the topics raised in this petition are included in the exercise.

Looking at the specificity of this case, unfortunately, unlike other Commissioners, we do not have a case-work function to provide support to individual cases. The Commissioner's office is not established in law as an extra layer of appeal on specific issues or decisions like these ones.

The new Commissioner will select new areas of focus when in post but to date, we have not carried out any specific research relating to pollution or water quality and are unable to provide detailed advice on this matter.

The Act contains a national well-being goal of A Resilient Wales for its ecosystems and Wales has declared a nature emergency. We are concerned that [nearly one in five rivers](#) in Wales are polluted with sewage and are negatively affecting wildlife and people's health.

A biodiverse natural environment is not only good for wildlife, it also provides our most basic needs, including clean air and water, food, energy and security. Managed effectively, it can also help us adapt to change and reduce the impact of incidents such as flooding. Our natural environment is vital for our well-being and its health is intrinsically linked to our own. Future generations depend on it.

Our rivers, lakes, ponds and floodplains harbour rich biodiversity including some of the most threatened wildlife in Wales. As the Act requires, we need to improve the resilience of our ecosystems; enhancing the benefits they provide and reversing the loss of biodiversity. When natural resources flourish, society and the economy thrive as well. The nature emergency should heighten the urgency of tackling these issues.

In our Future Generations Report 2020 we recommended that *“Welsh Government and public bodies should maintain and enhance the natural environment through managing land and sea appropriately to create healthy functioning ecosystems”*. This includes our rivers.

In Wales, we have the legislation and policies in place to protect and restore nature and take a more integrated approach. However, we must understand that reversing biodiversity loss and protecting our natural environment is not a ‘nice to have’. It is essential if we are to survive as a species ourselves. It is not too late to make a difference, but only if we start taking action now, at every level.

You can find more detailed information and our full recommendations around ‘A Resilient Wales’ in the [Resilient section of our Future Generations Report 2020](#).

While we have not carried out work into pollution or water quality, like any other area, we would expect to see the Act being fully applied by public bodies (and other organisations) to help inform decision making and improve well-being in Wales.

A number of public bodies and Public Services Boards (PSB) who have duties under the Act to carry out sustainable development and improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales should be considering this petition including:

- Natural Resources Wales
- Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
- Carmarthenshire County Council
- Carmarthenshire PSB
- Gwent PSB
- Monmouthshire County Council
- Natural Resources Wales
- Newport City Council
- Powys County Council
- Powys PSB

While the Act does not place any statutory duties on Welsh Water, we understand they consider the framework it provides when developing their own business plans.

Finally, we are keen for people to engage with the Act directly and we have produced a number of tools to help with this. For example, our [Future Generations Framework for projects](#) and [Future Generations Framework for scrutiny](#) can be used to ask how the long-term impacts of decisions are being considered and how decisions are considering the well-being goals, including ‘A Resilient Wales’. Questions and challenges to the decision makers can include for example:

- *What consideration have you given to the long-term trends that could affect your proposal or how could your proposal impact these trends?*



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- *Is this proposal trying to prevent problems from occurring - if so, what are they and how will you know you're preventing them through this proposal?*
- *Who have you collaborated with in finding out more about this problem and potential solutions?*
- *How does this proposal contribute to a more resilient Wales – now; and what more can you do as the proposal is delivered to maximise your contribution to this goal? How can it help contribute even further for the future?*
- *How will you develop innovative solutions for building works which prioritises environmental resilience and green infrastructure?*
- *How can you enhance biodiversity (a duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016) with this proposal?*

There is a plethora of other questions and prompts in relation to all elements of the Act (goals, objectives and ways of working) included in the frameworks.

While I am not able to intervene in this case, I would be grateful for the Committee to consider the needs of future generations in the response and report and the need for us as a nation to achieve the goals set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations Act and in particular in this case, A Resilient Wales.

Thank you again for sharing this petition and we hope you will find this response useful.

Yours sincerely,

Marie Brousseau-Navarro
Interim Future Generations Commissioner for Wales



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