

# Proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill

## Introduction

A proposal for a Member's Bill to ensure policy development and implementation by public bodies is in line with principles of sustainable development and wellbeing by introducing a duty for public bodies to promote these principles and establishing a Commissioner for sustainable development and wellbeing.

The consultation runs from 14 December 2022 to 24 March 2023

All those wishing to respond to the consultation are strongly encouraged to enter their responses electronically through this survey. This makes collation of responses much simpler and quicker. However, the option also exists of sending in a separate response (in hard copy or by other electronic means such as e-mail), and details of how to do so are included in the member's consultation document.

Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) require an answer.

All responses must include a name and contact details. Names will only be published if you give us permission, and contact details are never published – but we may use them to contact you if there is a query about your response. If you do not include a name and/or contact details, we may have to disregard your response.

Please note that you must complete the survey in order for your response to be accepted. If you don't wish to complete the survey in a single session, you can choose "Save and Continue later" at any point. Whilst you have the option to skip particular questions, you must continue to the end of the survey and press "Submit" to have your response fully recorded.

Please ensure you have read the consultation document before responding to any of the questions that follow. In particular, you should read the information contained in the document about how your response will be handled. The consultation document is available here:

[Consultation Document](#)

[Privacy Notice](#)

I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice which explains how my personal data will be used.

On the previous page we asked you if you are UNDER 12 YEARS old, and you responded Yes to this question.

If this is the case, we will have to contact your parent or guardian for consent.

If you are under 12 years of age, please put your contact details into the textbox. This can be your email address or phone number. We will then contact you and your parents to receive consent.

Otherwise please confirm that you are or are not under 12 years old.

*No Response*

## About you

Please choose whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.  
Note: If you choose "individual" and consent to have the response published, it will appear under your own name. If you choose "on behalf of an organisation" and consent to have the response published, it will be published under the organisation's name.

an individual

Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose "Member of the public".)

Member of the public

**Optional: You may wish to explain briefly what expertise or experience you have that is relevant to the subject-matter of the consultation.**

Former board chair and current Director of Iron & Earth, a not-for-profit organization engaged in supporting the transition of oil & gas workers and their communities into roles in renewable energies and the 'next economy'. The organization is a strong advocate for a Just Transition in Canada (and beyond) with the view that transition must be achieved within the context of broad wellbeing for all, in which new metrics are adopted to assess the 'health' and 'success' of a society. Commenter is Scots but resident in Canada.

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

*No Response*

Please choose one of the following:

I am content for this response to be published and attributed to me or my organisation

Please provide your Full Name or the name of your organisation. (Only give the name of your organisation if you are submitting a response on its behalf).

(Note: the name will not be published if you have asked for the response to be anonymous or "not for publication". Otherwise this is the name that will be published with your response).

Bruce Wilson

Please provide details of a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response. Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number.

We will not publish these details.

[REDACTED]

**Aim and approach - Note: All answers to the questions in this section may be published (unless your response is "not for publication").**

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill? (Please note, that this question is compulsory.)

Fully supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

Sustainability and the wellbeing of a society are inseparably linked and one could argue that it is not possible to have a 'sustainable' society that does not serve the common good and wellbeing of all citizens. It is also essential that we de-couple sustainability from the notions of process, industry or commerce. Sustainability is first and foremost intended to serve the people, and specifically those future generations who cannot speak for themselves on such issues. The wellbeing of our present society is the primary marker of our collective ability to serve those generations and our consciousness on that collective responsibility needs to be embodied in the fabric of our laws.

Q2. Do you think legislation is required, or are there other ways in which the proposed Bill's aims could be achieved more effectively? Please explain the reasons for your response.

Legislation is quite certainly required given the need for accountability and the ability to empower, educate and enforce through the vehicle of statutes. There should be no latitude for 'optionality' since this will favour those who currently hold power and who have little interest in equity over profitability. The other reason is that 'Wellbeing' is seen as encompassing softer and ill-defined concepts that can be easily brushed aside. Legislation gives definitions of societal wellbeing a much needed edge with which to cut through denials of their importance.

Q3. Which of the following best expresses your view on whether 'sustainable development' should be defined in legislation?

Fully supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response, including any views on what the definition should include.**

Quite simply 'Sustainable Development' speaks to humanity's ability to continue developing and providing for future generations. There is no alternative to sustainability that is ultimately...sustainable - every other approach is doomed to eventual failure. We need legislation against which to test the methods and motives of our social, environmental and economic pathways. If we fail to develop legislative guidance that expresses the will, and embodies the hopes of the Scottish people, we risk becoming locked into cycles of confusion and inaction at a time when all our actions must be characterized by clarity and urgency.

Q4. Which of the following best expresses your view on whether 'wellbeing' should be defined in legislation?

Fully supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response, including any views on what the definition should include.**

Answered to some degree in previous responses where I suggested that Sustainability and Wellbeing are inextricably linked since the initial condition for creating a society that is sustainable is establishing within all our population, the conditions of sufficiency and comfort that are precursors to their thinking about others in the current and future society. Before one's own direct needs are met, it is far less likely that we will throw our energies into the mechanics by which the needs of future generations will be met. There are a range of wellbeing metrics from poverty levels to mental health to personal safety. For the purposes of legislation, many definitions are possible but, as I noted, perhaps there is a threshold sense of 'wellbeing' at which the average person might become better prepared and more open to participate in laying the pathway for the generations to come. This not only calls on society to address the needs of the current

Q4. Which of the following best expresses your view on whether 'wellbeing' should be defined in legislation?

generations but to educate and inform people about their duty to those who come after them. This requires us to inspire people to a higher calling than the 'self', suggesting that community participation, sharing, participatory democracy and other elements of 'agency' are all key to making Sustainability and Wellbeing a success.

Q5. Which of the following best expresses your view on whether there should be a Commissioner for sustainable development and wellbeing?

Fully supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response, including any views on what the key functions of the proposed Commissioner should be (see pages 19 to 20 of the consultation document), what model of governance could be adopted (see page 22 to 23), and whether the Commissioner could play a role in strengthening existing duties or legislation.**

A Commissioner is key to the success of the initiative because to some degree this is a journey of exploration where we don't have all the right answers from the outset. The Commissioner must constantly track and consult, shaping the remit and helping refine legislation. In terms of governance, more than any other role, the Commissioner's duty should lean on a distributed network of individuals to inform citizens, regional governments, municipalities, NGO's and to gather feedback and knowledge in return. The Commissioners position should be accountable to Parliament but perhaps also to a citizens committee that provides a conduit for knowledge on the ground of what measures work and what do not. Time is not on our side to get this done - much of the decisions being made, either consciously or by default, will lock in the inertia to change. As the transition to the 'next economy' progresses, the failure to bring Wellbeing into the frame might ultimately preclude it from being woven into the fabric of the society that will emerge in the next ten to twenty years.

Q6. What, in your view, should the title of the proposed Commissioner be?

Please explain the reasons for your response.

Commissioner for Sustainability and Societal Wellbeing

Q7. Which of the following best expresses your view on whether there is a need for duties for public bodies to promote sustainable development and wellbeing in policy development and implementation?

Fully supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response including views on any barriers to implementation of these duties and on how the effectiveness of implementation could be measured.**

Let's try a thought experiment into what will happen in the near term if we fail to promote policies that safeguard people and our future legacies of land, air, water and an inclusive, equitable and well-ordered society. We will judge the success or failure of our time on this planet by the way we hold out our hand to others and by the manner in which we respect the natural assets and framework of society that we leave to those who follow us. We must insist on the need for public bodies at all levels to embrace this and to demonstrate clearly what steps they have taken to implement this common vision. Metrics are complicated and we should lean on learnings from other jurisdictions on how best to do this. There has to be incentive - and there have to be sanctions against those in office who fail to reflect these ambitions in their governance mechanisms.

## Financial Implications

Q8. Any new law can have a financial impact which would affect individuals, businesses, the public sector, or others. What financial impact do you think this proposal could have if it became law?

some reduction in costs

**Please explain the reasons for your response, including who you would expect to feel the financial impact of the proposal, and if there are any ways you think the proposal could be delivered more cost-effectively.**

Although there might be an almost instinctive reaction that laws requiring complex approaches, that mandate equity and care - or people and environment - come at a cost, but such reactions fail to evaluate the ultimate cost of inaction and the slow decay of indifference that will erode society from all angles. Much as it has been assessed that action to address the climate crisis might actually generate jobs and boost economies, there is every reason to believe that actions to create a healthier more balanced and happier society will pay dividends. Societies that are more fulfilled, may become more 'generative', reinforcing positive, supportive and sustainable behaviours and reducing the burdens caused by 'damaged' societies that lack equity, empathy and a vision of what might be better. There is no reason at all to be fearful that embarking on a pathway toward a more caring society in which people are empowered to contribute to simple, daily acts of kindness and stewardship, and to feel unity with future unborn generations will lead to burdensome costs that should be avoided.

## Equalities

Q9. Any new law can have an impact on different individuals in society, for example as a result of their age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

What impact could this proposal have on particular people if it became law? If you do not have a view skip to next question.

Please explain the reasons for your response and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts on particular people.

This bill, this legislation will only lead to greater equity, improved understanding of what benefits the wellbeing of each individual and thereby the health of society. The bill can avoid the perception of negative impact only through greater clarity such that the obfuscation of those who have an interest in resisting change is not successful. Sustainability is seen as complex in real terms, Wellbeing even more so. I have see the way that the Just Transition can be willfully misinterpreted to represent something destructive and insidious. By taking this to the people at the citizens assembly level and patiently working through the concepts it is possible to push back against the characterizations of this bill as being 'divisive' 'wasteful' or misdirected.

## Sustainability

Q10. Any new law can impact on work to protect and enhance the environment, achieve a sustainable economy, and create a strong, healthy, and just society for future generations.

Do you think the proposal could impact in any of these areas? (If you do not have a view then skip to next question)

Please explain the reasons for your response, including what you think the impact of the proposal could be, and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts?

Yes, positively only. Greater wellbeing in society and a more widespread understanding of how each citizen has their part to play in the future wellbeing of others and of our environment can only be a positive. This legislation could become the guiding framework by which all other intersecting legislation is influenced for the better. Where other legislation pays lip-service to issues of wellbeing and sustainability, this legislation could become the engine of change to give shape and substance to all other mandates.

## General

Q11. Do you have any other additional comments or suggestions on the proposed Bill (which have not already been covered in any of your responses to earlier questions)?

Patient explanation and illustration are the key to adoption. As intuitive as it might sound, 'Wellbeing' is only slightly better understood than the Just Transition, and fewer still might be able to grasp how the individual factors that make for 'wellness' in a society could ever replace metrics like 'gross national product' and other numbers that purport to describe how well our nations function but miss entirely the idea of for whom our societies exist.