

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.

on behalf of an organisation

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".)

No Response

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

Third sector (charitable, campaigning, social enterprise, voluntary, non-profit)

Optional: You may wish to explain briefly what the organisation does, its experience and expertise in the subject-matter of the consultation, and how the view expressed in the response was arrived at (e.g. whether it is the view of particular office-holders or has been approved by the membership as a whole).

I am responding to this consultation as the Convener of the Church In Society Committee of The Scottish Episcopal Church on behalf of members of the committee.

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).

Church in Society Committee of The Scottish Episcopal Church

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.

This organisation is fully supportive of the proposed bill because:

1. we support the idea of placing standardised definitions of both "Sustainable Development" and "Wellbeing" into legislation.
 2. we support the establishment of a Commissioner for Wellbeing and Sustainable Development
 3. we support the proposal that new duties are conferred on public bodies to ensure consideration of both sustainable development and wellbeing are embedded in public sector policy, decision making and implementation.
- Our interest is in the promotion of Justice for Community and Creation.

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.

Yes, legislation is required to ensure policymakers and developers minds are focused on the facts and reality of people's wellbeing - now and in the future – and whether goals of sustainable development are really being met.

The proposed Bill aims for standardised definitions of terms which are currently being used in a loose and varied way.

There are currently no other ways to achieve the proposed Bills aims because the existing short-term approach of decision making on government policies and local authority actions endangers the wellbeing of both current and future generations.

It is our view the proposed bill is required because of many reasons:

1. A review of existing legislation shows that there is a current lack of a standardised definition for the term "sustainable development" and there appears to be no concept of "wellbeing" being considered. Tightening up and

standardising the definitions will allow for government departments, public bodies and proposed developments to all aim for the same outcomes.

2. Far too often, there currently exists a short-term view when deciding on policies, actions and developments – often due to perceived financial costs and benefits. Such pervading "short-termism" does not consider the impacts these decisions can and will have on future generations. It is time that governments and society start to act to ensure a positive legacy is left for those who come after us. Future generations must not be forced to pay the economic and climate chaos price for our economic progress, Nor should they be denied access to the nature and biodiversity that current and past generations enjoyed. The joy that can be experienced watching bumblebees emerge from winter hibernation, knowing that Spring is around the corner with the colours of God's Creation to look forward to is a boost to the mental health of many.

3. A Bill that promotes the current and future wellbeing of people and communities is of utmost importance in these uncertain times.

There is growing medical evidence that rising levels of mental health illness can be linked with worries associated with the impacts of climate change and a separation from the beneficial effects of nature. By acting now to help combat the decline in biodiversity and mitigating the degree of anthropogenic induced climate change, society can help ensure the mental and physical health of future generations is not adversely affected. Rising levels of mental health illnesses, and the extra burden this places on local health services, can in part be mitigated by ensuring that policies and developments take into account the mental and physical health needs of society.

4. A specially designated role, to oversee Societal Wellbeing and Future Sustainability - the suggested Commissioner for Wellbeing and Sustainable Development – is core to future policymaking and all proposed developments. In our view it would be a positive step towards ensuring justice and fairness for

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all members of society, now and in the future. This role would be an important mechanism for oversight of, as well as support to, the existing regulatory framework of Audit Scotland.

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.

As an organisation we have actively promoted the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through our congregations and outreach.

For a suggested definition for Sustainable Development, using the United Nations approach would be the easiest way forward:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

With a fuller description also following that of the UNs approach:

To live within our environmental limits while also ensuring a strong, healthy and just society.

"This means meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity."

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.

While there are mentions of wellbeing in other aspects of legislation. There is nothing that gathers all these ideas and concepts of wellbeing into one unifying practice.

Although it must be stressed that "Wellbeing" is not a single thing that can be measured by a tick box. It encompasses an individual's

- physical and mental health
- access to nutritional food, healthcare and education

- ability to connect with peers, family and culture
- access to nature and open spaces

There is also no current policy of ensuring the wellbeing of future generations.

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.

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

A Commissioner as proposed would be ideally placed to be able to:

- be involved in policy development where it relates to sustainable development and the current and future wellbeing of society
- ensure a longterm view is taken when policies with potential impact for the wellbeing of future generations are made
- be involved with the reform of existing legislation to ensure a standardised approach is taken towards sustainable development
- to ensure that the wellbeing of current generations is not compromised because of short term fiscal thinking
- to hold accountable both politicians and public bodies to ensure their actions adhere and abide to the principles of sustainable development
- to ensure research and academic learning is taken into account before decisions are made
- promote best practice for wellbeing and sustainable development in both and public sectors
- be involved in promoting cultural change so that wellbeing and sustainable development are keystones of society

- to enable joined up thinking and policy coherence between government departments and public bodies
- produce an annual report on their activities pertaining to the above and detailing how Scotland is meeting the goals for sustainable development and wellbeing.

Any Commissioner must be appointed and funded by the Scottish Parliament and be answerable to the people of Scotland. The work of the Commissioner should be reviewed by the Scottish Parliament Public Audit Committee to maintain openness, transparency and accountability.

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

Please explain the reasons for your response.

Commissioner for Wellbeing and Sustainable Development

Any title needs to be a clear reflection of the role of the responsibilities

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.

There is an obvious need for the duty of public bodies to include not just consideration of, but practical implementation of all aspects of sustainable development and wellbeing.

Too often, cost/benefit analyses are viewed from a purely financial aspect. This can lead to overlooking:

- the hidden value and benefits of the natural world and what costs would be inflicted upon it
- the current impact on sectors of society
- the legacy left to future generations

The current "Business As Usual" (BAU) approach has been proven to be detrimental

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?

to the environment and the long term climate stability our country and society require to prosper. Things need to change.

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 increase 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.

There will undoubtedly be claims that such a new law will increase the regulatory, administrative and legislative burden on just about all levels of government, business and the public/private sector.

However, as previously mentioned, the current BAU model is not sustainable if we wish to avoid the worse of climate change and the weather chaos that will bring. Along with increased food insecurity, and the risks to public health and mental wellbeing that will follow, leading to a future health crisis we are ill-equipped to face,

The real question is: Is this the legacy we want to leave to the Scotland of the Future?

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.

No Response

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?

The obvious answer here is we definitely hope so, and in an extremely beneficial way. There needs to be a way to take account of the impacts that policies and developments will have on society both now and in the future. This Proposed Bill and new Commissioner for Wellbeing and Sustainable Development would be a very positive step in the right direction. As guardians of God's Creation, we have a moral imperative to protect and look after the natural world.

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)?

No Response