



FOR A HAPPIER,
HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

Consultation Response

Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill

13/2/24

If you have any questions about this response, please contact our policy team:
policy@pathsforall.org.uk

Who We Are

Paths for All is Scotland's walking charity. Established in 1996, we work in partnership with 30 national organisations with a shared vision of a healthier, happier, greener Scotland, where everyone can be active every day. Walking is the easiest and most accessible way to be active, and our work to change the way people move, travel, and enjoy life in Scotland is focused on the following three themes:

- Walking is for everyone.
- Walking is for everywhere.
- Walking is for every day.

Our [strategy](#) sets out our vision for tackling physical inactivity, poor mental health, increased health and transport inequalities and the climate emergency.

Our Response

Defining wellbeing

1 Is a statutory definition of 'wellbeing' required?

Yes

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

We broadly support the aims to:

- place new definitions of sustainable development and wellbeing into legislation
- introduce new public duties in relation to sustainable development and wellbeing based on these new definitions.

Our support would depend on the detail of the definitions and how the proposals are implemented.

We agree with the case for a separate piece of legislation setting out definitions and public duties in relation to sustainable development and wellbeing would strengthen that focus and build on existing legislation.

As we understand it wellbeing does not appear in any legislation in Scotland yet.

It would be helpful to clarify what it means as it is being increasingly adopted as a concept. A common understanding would be useful.

A wellbeing economy would prioritise what really matters to us – rather than following an outdated economic approach such as GDP.

This is the approach taken in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the National Performance Framework and we would support it being anchored in legislation.

Wellbeing would encompass our priorities as an organisation. Our strategy sets out our vision for tackling physical inactivity, poor mental health, increased health and transport inequalities and the climate emergency. Our work closely aligns with the NPF and National Outcomes.

- We want everyone in Scotland, no matter who they are or where they live, to benefit from walking.
- We want our places and spaces to be safe and attractive for everyone to walk in, everywhere.
- We want everyone in Scotland to feel motivated to walk every day.

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/strategy>

Defining sustainable development

3 Is a statutory definition of 'sustainable development' required?

Yes

4 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

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

Clarifying the definition of sustainable development would be useful as this has become muddled - e.g. references to "sustainable economic development" - which is not, in our opinion, the same thing.

This would be an opportunity to define it in the current context - it is some time since the concept was adopted and people's understanding of it can vary.

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

The proposal would, in our view, have a positive impact on work to protect and enhance the environment, achieve a sustainable economy, and create a strong, healthy, and just society for future generations.

7 We are aware that the term 'sustainable development' has been set out in various legislation of the Scottish Parliament since devolution in 1999, and that careful consideration will need to be given to how any new definition will impact on these. What impact, if any, would the proposed definition have on other areas of legislation?

This would be an opportunity to define it in the current context - it is some time since the concept was adopted and people's understanding of it can vary.

Strengthening duties for the National Outcomes and sustainable development.

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

We believe such duties would help promote sustainable development and wellbeing.

The impact would depend on how strongly worded these duties are.

We would recommend wording along the lines of a "duty to further" sustainable development and the interests of future generations.

The relationship between Community planning, Health and Social care planning and the third sector at a local level is so often where there are challenges.

Anything that gives a common language and sets out clear duties can only help.

A local focus is essential to wellbeing and sustainability - for health, food, transport, economy and reducing inequality. Good health is made and sustained in local communities. The third sector have a huge and important role to play in this, supporting priorities identified by local people in their place. All PFA programmes support this local place approach.

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

Not that we are aware of.

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

We would see this as a positive development.

Clarifying to whom the duties apply

11 Should any duty apply to the Scottish Government?

Yes

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

Public bodies and agencies

Determining an approach to future generations

17 Should Scotland establish an independent Commissioner for Future Generations?

Yes

18 In what ways could an independent Commissioner for Future Generations increase the accountability, scrutiny and support for decision making?

We broadly agree with the case for a Commissioner to embed the principles of sustainable development and wellbeing across the public sector. We can see how high-profile interventions by a Commissioner in areas including transport, planning and housing would ensure that Government decision making takes into account sustainability principles and wellbeing.

Our support would depend on the detail of how this is implemented.



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