

Planning for future generations

Setting well-being objectives at Transport for Wales

March 2025

We have prepared and published this under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

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Audit snapshot

What we looked at

- 1 Under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act), Transport for Wales (TfW) and certain other public bodies must set 'well-being objectives' to create a better Wales, both now and in the future. Having set these objectives, public bodies must also take all reasonable steps to meet them.
- 2 In setting objectives, public bodies must consider their impact on the national 'well-being goals' set out in the Act. They must also involve the public and other stakeholders in the process and consider how they might work with partners to deliver. Ultimately, public bodies must take a longer-term view, so they can meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This is known as the 'sustainable development principle'.
- 3 We looked at how TfW applied the sustainable development principle as it set its well-being objectives and began planning to deliver them. TfW started developing the objectives in spring 2024, then published them in April 2025.

Why this is important

- 4 Well-being objectives should set the strategic direction for public bodies. They should help public bodies plan the short and medium-term actions they need to take to improve the well-being of the people and places they serve. If the Act is to have the desired impact, it will be important for public bodies to set their objectives effectively and to communicate how they have done that clearly.

What we have found

- 5 Overall, we found that TfW applied the sustainable development principle when setting its first well-being objectives. However, it could go a lot further when it next does this, including by involving more stakeholders.
- 6 TfW set its first well-being objectives separate from its main Corporate Strategy 2021-2026, though recognises the importance of bringing plans and objectives together in the future. Doing so would present opportunities to apply the sustainable development principle to a greater extent and help put the well-being objectives at the heart of the organisation.

What we recommend

- 7 We have made four recommendations. They focus on integrating the well-being objectives with TfW's corporate strategy and annual business plan, and developing monitoring arrangements. They also cover strengthening involvement and developing the well-being statement when TfW next sets well-being objectives.
- 8 We recognise that, since setting its well-being objectives, TfW has continued to develop its thinking on how it takes them forward and embeds the sustainable development principle across its work.

Key facts and figures

Well-being in Wales

- 7** National **well-being goals** for Wales
- More equal
 - Resilient
 - Globally responsible
 - Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
 - Healthier
 - Prosperous
 - Cohesive communities

- 5** **Ways of working** that bodies must take into account when applying the sustainable development principle:
- Long term
 - Integration
 - Involvement
 - Collaboration
 - Prevention

TfW's well-being objectives

- 4** **Well-being objectives** set by Transport for Wales in April 2025:
- Enabling people and communities
 - Benefitting the environment
 - Supporting local areas and the economy
 - Elevating the Welsh language and culture

Our findings

Planning

TfW has designed its well-being objectives to improve the well-being of Wales, but involvement with staff and external stakeholders was limited

Overall approach

- 9 TfW became a named body under the Act on 30 June 2024. It published its first well-being objectives in its well-being statement on 29 April 2025. This was slightly later than the statutory deadline of 31 March 2025, though it discussed this with Welsh Government officials and the Future Generations Commissioner in advance.
- 10 TfW is required to produce such a statement, and it should include certain information. However, TfW's well-being statement does not cover all necessary information (see also **paragraph 34**).
- 11 Public bodies have freedom to decide how they set their well-being objectives. However, it is best practice for them to make the well-being objectives and corporate priorities one and the same. TfW has not done this; its well-being objectives are separate from its main corporate strategy.
- 12 This approach is partly due to the fact TfW's existing corporate strategy runs from 2021 to 2026. Therefore, the new requirement to set well-being objectives did not align with its existing corporate planning cycle and TfW chose not to do an early refresh of the strategy.

- 13 TfW sees the refresh of the corporate strategy as an opportunity to bring its plans and well-being objectives together, though it had not decided precisely how it would do this at the time of our review. In determining this, it will be important for TfW to consider how it can put the objectives at the heart of the organisation and avoid unnecessary complexity across its plans and objectives (see **paragraphs 29 and 37**).
- 14 TfW considers that it had already been working in the spirit of the Act for a number of years. It has worked to build on this since June 2024. It sought advice from the Future Generations Commissioner (the Commissioner) on the setting of well-being objectives and the broader implementation of the Act. It has used the Commissioner's self-assessment tools and has identified areas for improvement and related actions (see **paragraph 24**).

Understanding the short and longer term

- 15 TfW used its existing strategic priorities as a starting point for shaping its first well-being objectives. Specifically, it drew on the national transport strategy, Llwybr Newydd, and the national transport delivery plan. These documents were informed by relevant research and consultation evidence. Therefore, TfW's well-being objectives are, indirectly, informed by that evidence.
- 16 TfW also reviewed some other key evidence sources to assure itself that it had covered the right themes in its draft objectives. They included the Welsh Government's Well-being of Wales reports and Future Trends report and the Commissioner's Future Generations Reports. These evidence sources provide insight into short and long-term strategic challenges.
- 17 TfW did not directly draw on its own performance information to inform its well-being objectives. This includes key performance data, which principally relates to rail, that it routinely reports on, publishes on its website, and uses to develop its business plan (see **paragraphs 36 to 39**). However, TfW's executive leadership team provided views and shared their knowledge of the business and performance.

- 18 More broadly, TfW recognises the importance of strengthening its horizon scanning capacity and capability, which could also help inform its next well-being objectives. TfW is a member of [Hwb Dyfodol](#), Wales' futures thinking hub, which it sees as a way of embedding futures thinking into its operations.

Involving others

- 19 TfW's Executive Leadership Team was involved in key stages of their development. They discussed the draft objectives together and each member also met with the team tasked with developing them. TfW also sought the views of internal Sustainable Development Leads, who lead on different areas of sustainability-related work, in developing the draft objectives.
- 20 The draft objectives were shared for comment with a wider group of staff at an 'All Grades Company Council' in early 2025. The Council is attended by union representatives and members.
- 21 TfW considers that the engagement with the Council helped discharge its duty to 'seek consensus or compromise' with social partners when setting well-being objectives, as required by the [Social Partnership and Public Procurement \(Wales\) Act 2023](#). However, that legislation requires consultation at a formative stage and otherwise throughout the process. TfW's objectives were largely determined by the time it shared them with the Council. TfW recognises it could improve this when setting future well-being objectives.
- 22 TfW carried out very limited public involvement when setting its well-being objectives. It spoke to a small number of people at the National Eisteddfod in summer 2024, asking what they saw as priorities for TfW. While staff told us this provided useful insights, they acknowledge it did not capture a diversity of views. TfW recognises it will need to go further when it next sets objectives.

- 23 TfW has well-established links with a range of stakeholders, including local authorities, transport providers and accessibility panels. However, these groups were not directly involved in the development of the well-being objectives. It will be important for TfW to consider how it can seek the views of these stakeholders when it next sets well-being objectives (see **paragraphs 30 to 31**).
- 24 While not specifically related to the well-being objectives, TfW has sought the views of staff to help it understand how effectively it is implementing the Act overall. It used self-assessment tools provided by the Commissioner and, as part of that, invited staff to drop-in sessions and launched a survey. However, engagement was low with only a small proportion of staff – fewer than 50 – providing their views overall.
- 25 TfW recognises the need to expand staff involvement as it seeks to deliver on its well-being objectives. It has identified that this will be a challenge, given its size and the number of front-line, operational staff. TfW has launched an internal communications campaign to raise staff awareness of the objectives. It also plans to take forward mandatory training covering the Act and its objectives.

Integrated thinking

- 26 TfW has considered the contribution it can make to each of the national well-being goals. It has framed its objectives around social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being. TfW's well-being statement describes a range of intended benefits, including for communities, health, the environment, and the Welsh language.
- 27 TfW recognises the important role it plays in delivering national priorities. Its well-being objectives broadly align with the Welsh Government's vision for transport and wider priorities.

- 28 The Welsh Government's remit letter priorities are implicitly covered by the well-being objectives and supporting narrative in the well-being statement.¹ The remit letter's emphasis on 'developing greater commercial opportunities and behaviours to maximise revenue and minimise costs' is not as clearly set out in the well-being statement as other priorities. However, the statement does include some related references, such as using technology to increase efficiency and the 'user experience'.
- 29 TfW's role has grown since it published its corporate strategy in 2021. When TfW updates its strategy in 2026 there is an opportunity for it to consider how it can best bring together its well-being objectives with its corporate strategy and, in doing so, reflect the full breadth of its responsibilities (see also **paragraphs 11 to 13**).
- 30 TfW reviewed some partner organisations' well-being objectives when setting its own objectives. Positively, it also approached certain Public Services Boards (PSBs) that have transport objectives and now participates in some PSB meetings to contribute to that work.² TfW also considers this important in identifying opportunities for partnership working to support delivery of its own objectives.

¹ TfW's Welsh Government [Remit Letter 2022-2027](#) includes five strategic policy objectives. These are to: maximise modal shift; deliver a fully integrated transport system; nurture a multi-modal culture in Wales; encourage and support people to adapt and consider sustainable transport modes; and enhance and develop greater commercial opportunities and behaviours to maximise revenue, minimise costs, mitigate risks, and exploit opportunities.

² PSBs were established through the Act to bring together local public service leaders to assess and address the well-being needs of their areas.

- 31 TfW already works with a range of public bodies but recognises there are opportunities to expand partnership working to deliver on cross-cutting objectives. TfW intends to re-launch its Sustainable Development Advisory Panel, which is made up of external experts. It plans to expand it by inviting PSB representatives, which would further enable them to discuss opportunities to work together. TfW also recognises it needs to develop other relationships to deliver its ambitions; for example, continuing to build on its links with Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) as their role in regional transport planning and delivery grows.³

Resourcing and delivery

TfW has not yet established a clear link between its well-being objectives and its business and financial planning, but intends to begin addressing this

- 32 TfW must set out the steps it intends to take to meet its well-being objectives in its well-being statement. This is a requirement of the Act, but it also important because TfW's well-being objectives are broad and high-level.
- 33 Positively, TfW's well-being statement describes steps it intends to take for the short and longer term. Some steps are clear and SMART.⁴ However, there is also further narrative description of what TfW hopes to do in a separate section of the statement. TfW's well-being statement could more clearly describe the various steps it intends to take to meet its well-being objectives.

³ CJCs are regional corporate bodies that came into effect in April 2021. There are four CJCs across Wales. They are responsible for strategic development planning, regional transport planning, and promoting the economic well-being of their area.

⁴ 'SMART' stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

- 34 Under the Act, well-being statements must also set out certain other information. For example, they must set out how bodies propose to ensure that resources are allocated annually for the purpose of taking steps to meet their well-being objectives. TfW's well-being statement does not cover this. Neither does it set out the necessary description of how its governance will support its well-being objectives.
- 35 While we have not reviewed them in detail, we note that TfW has plans and processes in place to support the delivery of its Corporate Strategy 2021-2026. The strategy sets out the direction for the organisation, with annual business plans that set out how TfW will work towards it. TfW's business plan for 2025-26 references the many ways transport can contribute to the well-being of Wales.
- 36 TfW also prepares a five-year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). It models assumptions to provide the Welsh Government with an indication of required funding for future years. TfW refreshes the MTFP each year.⁵
- 37 As noted in **paragraph 11**, the well-being objectives had not been incorporated into existing strategic planning when we were gathering our evidence. While there is some read across between the well-being statement and business plan, there is no explicit link. Establishing such a link could help connect the objectives to a broader range of TfW's activities. It could also ensure the well-being objectives are delivered and routinely monitored (see **paragraphs 45 to 46**).
- 38 TfW intends to address this by developing a matrix to show how the well-being statement and business plans connect during 2025-26. It then intends to make overt links in its 2026-27 business plan.

⁵ TfW receives annual funding from the Welsh Government. It has noted this poses a particular challenge given the long-term nature of its investments in transport infrastructure. This reflects a broader theme described in our April 2025 [No time to lose](#) report on public bodies' implementation of the Act.

- 39 However, TfW is taking wider action to facilitate delivery of its well-being objectives. It has set this out in a dedicated work programme. The work programme includes further developing TfW's governance to ensure the Act is considered as part of decision making and to provide effective oversight of the objectives (see **paragraphs 45 to 46**). It is considering developing a Future Generations Sub-committee (as a sub-group of the executive team) and a Future Generations Working Group.

Monitoring

TfW has identified indicators to help understand the impact it is having through its objectives, but recognises it needs to refine them and ensure effective oversight

- 40 TfW's well-being statement includes information on how it intends to monitor its well-being objectives. It has developed a 'social effectiveness framework' covering each of the four well-being objectives.
- 41 The framework covers national measures, specifically the Act's national indicators and the Llwybr Newydd monitoring measures. It also includes TfW's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) around safety, customer experience, people, finance, and sustainability. These KPIs help TfW measure progress against its corporate strategy and remit letter commitments and TfW reports them publicly on its website.
- 42 It is positive that TfW has considered how it will measure both outputs and outcomes as part of this framework, and that it has considered the impact it will have on national indicators. However, it has identified that there is work to do to refine some of its indicators.
- 43 Also, as stated in **paragraph 33**, TfW could present the steps it will take to meet its well-being objectives more clearly. This would help ensure there is a connection between the actions TfW plans to take and the indicators in its social effectiveness framework.

- 44 Some of the established Llwybr Newydd measures are informed by out of date and/or proxy data which limits their effectiveness. Transport for Wales has been working with the Welsh Government to develop a new National Travel Survey which is expected to provide better data for some of the measures.⁶ However, the data will not be available until 2026. Although this National Travel Survey data may provide better data, some measures are likely to be new, and it will take time to develop longitudinal analysis.
- 45 At the time of our fieldwork, TfW was still working through how it would report progress against the framework. It will need to consider how it brings together clear information across the many indicators, which helps to tell the story of progress and impact against its well-being objectives. As described in **paragraph 39**, TfW is considering how it can further develop its governance structures to ensure effective oversight of the well-being objectives.
- 46 TfW has established arrangements for reporting on performance and progress against its business plan actions. It reports to Executive Leadership Team and Board through quarterly business milestone reports. It also reports to the Welsh Government via quarterly Performance Board meetings.
- 47 As described in **paragraph 35**, TfW intends to develop clearer links between its business plan and well-being statement. This presents an opportunity to monitor progress towards the well-being objectives as part of routine performance reporting. More generally, TfW will have an opportunity to consider how it brings together its reporting against its various plans and objectives when it refreshes its corporate strategy.
- 48 TfW is also developing a scorecard to help monitor the long-term impacts of decisions and evaluate how projects contribute to the well-being objectives. The scorecard will form part of a wider benefits realisation framework, to complement TfW's existing KPIs. This could also help inform decisions and the prioritisation of spending, in the context of the well-being objectives.

⁶ We touched on plans for the National Travel Survey in our September 2024 [report on Active Travel in Wales](#).

Recommendations

- 49 Our recommendations seek to ensure that TfW can deliver its current well-being objectives effectively and apply the sustainable development principle to a greater extent when next setting them.

R1 TfW should put its well-being objectives at the heart of the organisation, including by:

- 1.1** identifying how it can best integrate the well-being objectives when it refreshes its corporate strategy (see **paragraphs 13 and 29**).
- 1.2** establishing clear links between the well-being objectives and annual business plan, ensuring the steps it will take to deliver the objectives are clearly defined (see **paragraphs 33 and 35 to 37**).
- 1.3** establishing monitoring and reporting arrangements for the well-being objectives, appropriately linked to its corporate strategy and business plan (see **paragraphs 45 to 47**).

R2 When TfW next sets well-being objectives, it should ensure they, and the associated steps, reflect the full range of its functions, including more explicit links to its commercial activity.

This recommendation should be considered in relation to 1.1, and the opportunity to integrate the well-being objectives as part of the refresh of the corporate strategy in 2026.

- R3** When it next develops a well-being statement, TfW should ensure it covers all the information required under the Act; including, how it proposes to govern itself to meet its objectives and how it proposes to ensure that resources are allocated annually for the purpose of taking such steps (see **paragraphs 10 and 34**).
- R4** TfW should expand and strengthen how it involves stakeholders when it next sets its well-being objectives, including by:
- 4.1** Seeking the views of the diversity of the population (see **paragraph 22**).
 - 4.2** Seeking the views of key stakeholder organisations (see **paragraph 23**).
 - 4.3** Doing more to involve staff and trade unions. In involving trade unions, TfW should ensure it reflects the requirements of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, working with them at a formative stage and throughout the process (see **paragraphs 20 to 21**).

Appendices

1 About our work

Scope of the audit

Under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, TfW must set and publish well-being objectives that are designed to maximise its contribution to achieving each of the national well-being goals.

The Auditor General must examine the extent to which TfW has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives. The Act requires an examination of this nature at least once in a specified reporting period. The current reporting period ends in May 2029.

We examined how TfW went about setting its first well-being objectives, which it did between Spring 2024 and April 2025. We gathered our evidence between May 2025 and August 2025.

This was a relatively high-level review. Our main focus was on the process leading up to the publication of the objectives. We have considered corporate and financial planning in so far as they relate to how TfW developed its well-being objectives and began planning for their delivery. We have not assessed the overall effectiveness of TfW's corporate and financial planning.

Audit questions and criteria

Questions

In carrying out this work, we explored the following:

- Was the process TfW put in place to set its well-being objectives underpinned by the sustainable development principle?
- Has TfW considered how it will make sure it can deliver its well-being objectives in line with the sustainable development principle?

- Has TfW put in place arrangements to monitor progress, learn, and continue improving how it applies the sustainable development principle when setting its well-being objectives?

Criteria

We used audit criteria to inform our assessment. The audit criteria describe what good looks like and cover each of the sustainable development principle's five ways of working. They are based on the positive indicators we have previously used in our sustainable development principle examinations. We developed these indicators through engagement with public bodies and informed by advice and guidance from the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

Methods

We reviewed a range of documents, including TfW's well-being statement, evidence that has informed its thinking on the well-being objectives, its Corporate Strategy 2021-2026, and its Business Plan 2025-26.

We also interviewed staff who had led the process of developing the well-being objectives and a sample of senior staff.

2 Key terms in this report

Term	Description
The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015	The Act places a duty on public bodies to carry out sustainable development, which is defined as ‘the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals’.
Sustainable development principle	<p>The Act defines the sustainable development principle as acting in a manner ‘which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.</p> <p>The sustainable development principle is made up of five ways of working:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Integration • Involvement • Collaboration • Prevention.
Long term	The importance of balancing short-term needs with the needs to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
Integration	Considering how the public body’s well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.

Term	Description
Involvement	The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.
Collaboration	Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.
Prevention	How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
National well-being goals	<p>The Act sets out seven well-being goals.</p> <p>The Act makes it clear public bodies must work to achieve all of the goals, not just one or two.</p>
National indicators	A <u>set of indicators</u> to measure the progress towards achieving the well-being goals at a national level, rather than the performance of individual public bodies.
Well-being objectives – and steps to meet them	<p>Public bodies must set and publish well-being objectives that are designed to maximise their contribution to achieving each of the well-being goals.</p> <p>They must also take all reasonable steps (in exercising their functions) to meet those objectives.</p>

Term	Description
Well-being statements	<p>When publishing well-being objectives, public bodies must also publish a well-being statement. Well-being statements must include certain information. Among other things, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• why a body considers that meeting the objectives will contribute to the achievement of the well-being goals; and• the steps a body proposes to take to meet those objectives.
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales	<p>The general duty of the Commissioner is to promote the sustainable development principle. In particular, to act as a guardian of the ability of future generations to meet their needs, and encourage public bodies to take greater account of the long-term impact of the things that they do. The Commissioner's website provides more information about their work.</p>

About us

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