

CONSULTATION FORM

Sustainable Development Bill White Paper

We want your views on our proposals for a Sustainable Development Bill.

Please submit your comments by 4 March 2012.

If you have any queries on this consultation, please email:
SDBill@wales.gsi.gov.uk or telephone: (02920 82) 1728 or 6541

Data Protection

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tick the box below. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

CONSULTATION FORM

Sustainable Development Bill White Paper		
3 December 2012 – 4 March 2013		
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Type <i>(please select one from the following)</i>	Businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Local Authorities/Community & Town Councils	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Government Agency/Other Public Sector	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Professional Bodies and Associations	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Third sector (community groups, volunteers, self help groups, co-operatives, enterprises, religious, not for profit organisations)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Academic bodies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Member of the public	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (other groups not listed above)	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Q1	What are your views on the proposals for a new duty to embed sustainable development as the central organising principle of selected organisations in Wales? [Chapter 2]
<p>Please provide your views below:</p> <p>Higher Education Wales (HEW) welcomes the consultation on proposals for a Sustainable Development Bill. The consultation is important to Wales both intellectually and developmentally. Whilst HEW welcomes the proposals, the question as to whether universities are providing "public services" needs further consideration. The White Paper's implicit assumptions regarding organisations which provide "public services" requires scrutiny. As highlighted by the Higher Education and Further Education Bill (Wales) 2012 the development of statutory provisions directly regulating Welsh FE and HE institutions could lead to serious consequences which both the Welsh Government and the sector would wish to avoid. This includes placing the status of universities as autonomous institutions and their Office of National Statistics classification for purposes of public accounts at risk, causing potential conflict with existing legal obligations (e.g. contractual agreements with partners, collective agreements incorporated into contracts of employment, or general statutory duties relating to higher education). However, HEW is supportive of the principle of the SD Bill. To truly embed SD in Welsh life, education must play a central role, including embedding SD into the curriculum at all education levels. As the legislation is taken forward, the Welsh Government must provide clarity as to how it will support societal behavioural change to achieve the aim of embedding SD.</p>	

Q2

What are your views on the proposals for an independent sustainable development body? [Chapter 3]

Please provide your views below:

HEW welcomes the proposals for a SD body. In order for the body to effectively support organisations to embed SD, they must have a thorough understanding of the sectors in question. It is vital that each of the sectors listed have input into the initial establishment and the ongoing activity of the body, to ensure it is effective and relevant. Whilst it is positive to see the body will have a primarily supportive role, the question of an ombudsman role remains. Further consideration should be given to scrutiny, and how organisations might be held to account. At all stages of development of the body, the organisations to be subject to the duty, should be consulted. The body must also recognise the important contribution the HE and wider education sector can offer to the development of policy and practice in SD in Wales.

Q3

What are your views on the proposed phasing and implementation of the duty, including the timing of the establishment of the independent sustainable development body? [Chapter 4]

Please provide your views below:

If the SD body's principal role is primarily one of support, it is essential it is ready and functioning as soon as the Bill comes into force. For the body to develop the capacity to support the sector it must be functional as soon as is practicable, whilst taking advice from the sectors in question. The White Paper notes that the Bill alone cannot drive the change that is necessary, and HE can certainly offer leadership in building capacity, improving capabilities, and sharing practice. As the SD Bill develops, HE can offer thought leadership, research capacity, and an opportunity to share policy and practice. Education is key to phasing in and implementing the Bill, and the HE sector has a crucial role to play. HE is in a unique position where it can engage and enable people and communities, and work to find solutions to best meet specific circumstances within the SD framework. The HE sector can also offer expertise in the development of SD indicators, having already begun progressing work in this area.

Q4

What are your views on the proposals to improve the accountability framework for sustainable development in Wales? [Chapter 5]

Please provide your views below:

HEW welcomes the proposal to embed the SD scrutiny arrangements into existing frameworks. Many organisations are already undertaking a significant level of reporting, and it is vital that any reporting on SD activities is not burdensome or bureaucratic.

Q5

We have asked five specific questions. Do you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, for example with regards the implementation of the proposals? Please use the consultation response form to express your views.

Please provide your views below:

Education is largely absent from the White Paper, and HEW believes education at all levels is absolutely fundamental to embedding sustainability and the behaviour change required.

Higher education institutions (HEI) and students' unions (SU) are already undertaking a significant amount of work in the sustainable development (SD) area and are key to embedding SD in public life in Wales. Engagement by students with the SD agenda demonstrates the commitment to address SD challenges - not just through 'greening the campus' but through behavioural change. This includes five students' unions in Wales participating in the National Union of Students (NUS) Green Impact project (<http://www.green-impact.org.uk/>) and two engaging with the Student Switch Off campaign (<http://www.studentswitchoff.org/>). Research conducted by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and NUS suggest that students believe SD skills are highly valued by employers, and want to see SD embedded into their HE curriculum (http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/esd/Student_attitudes_towards_and_skills_for_sustainable_development.pdf). HE is key to offering the thought leadership and research evidence required to drive forward the SD agenda in Wales.

Confidentiality

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential please indicate here:

How to respond

Please submit your comments by 4 March 2013, in any of the following ways:

Email	Post
<p>Please complete the consultation form and send it to: SDBill@wales.gsi.gov.uk Please include 'WG17030' in the subject line.</p>	<p>Please complete the consultation form and send it to: Sustainable Development Bill Team Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ</p>

Additional information
<p>If you have any queries on this consultation, please contact us by email or telephone: Email: SDBill@wales.gsi.gov.uk Telephone: (02920 82) 1728 or 6541</p>