

## Submission by Prospect on the consultation of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act – developing statutory guidance for public bodies

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[www.prospect.org.uk](http://www.prospect.org.uk)

## **Introduction**

Prospect welcomes this ground breaking Act. We believe that long-term sustainability of communities, workplaces, future jobs and indeed the wellbeing of society needs a holistic approach that enables collective action and wide spread participation.

We share the understanding that corporately and individually we are stewards of our planet's natural resources – elements that are vital to life and economic activity and that contribute to business operations, staff wellbeing, local communities, national ambitions and overall global sustainability.

We commend the new Act as a platform to mobilise society participation and for public bodies leading by example and being accountable for their impact on and use of planetary resources. We also support the seven foundation pillars for the Well-Being of Future Generations.

Equally applauded is the acknowledgment in the Act of trade unions with representation on the newly established annual Future Generations report and the new advisory body with consultation of trade union representation in local Well Being plans.

## **This submission**

This submission does not aim to answer all the discussion points laid out in the consultation document. It aims to provide evidence related to Prospect's work on sustainable development undertaken by Prospect workplace environment and development advocates.

Building on Prospect's long term commitment to advocating for responsible economic, social and environment sustainability of planetary and human resources and activity, we advocate for guidance to include:

- Recognition of workplace trade union representatives as stakeholders in the process of data gathering, monitoring and evaluation in public bodies, and
- Guidance on working with elected trade union representatives on:
  - just transition principles, and
  - decent work principles and indicators

## **Background**

Prospect is an independent and forward-looking trade union with over 114,600 professional members in the public and private sector. With approximately 30,000 specialist and professionals in the Public Service - spread across a large number of government departments, executive agencies, trading funds and non-departmental public bodies in the UK government and the devolved governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Prospect has more than 5,000 members living and working in Wales for a variety of employers many of which are identified in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act. We are affiliated to, and actively involved in, the Wales Trades Union Congress, and play an active role in its executive committee and general council.

## Trade union sustainable development activity

Prospect has a long and proud history of leading the Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee with an internal governance committee of elected members called the Science, Engineering and Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (SESAC).

SESAC has overseen ground-breaking work developing representatives and workplace activists dedicated to sustainable development principles. These members have piloted and implemented work on pro-poor procurement, human rights in supply chains, environmental sustainability, corporate social responsibility agreements and greening the workplace projects.

### Contributing to the discussion

#### Q1 what works?

The key feature of the guidance listed below is that they are workplace specific (designed for a specific target audience), broken into bite size information, offer solutions to specific challenges and provide templates and examples of best practice.

It should however be noted that these trade union guides are supported by education, networking opportunities, seminars and ongoing briefings and articles.

#### Examples of guidance

Prospect in conjunction with the TUC has developed guidance for trade unionists on workplace environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in relation to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Greening the workplace and targeting climate change guidance outlines the international and national policy framework; gives an overview of why this is a trade union matter and provides specific detail on workplace related matters of water, waste, transport, energy, investments etc.

Trade union members are introduced to the benefits and challenges on each subject with clear instructions on how to deal with each specific workplace topic. Examples are given on how to establish workplace networks, committees and audit trails.

On corporate social responsibility the guidance explains the link between operations and processes such as procurement to contributing to pro-poor activities based on the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Prospect environment representative guide <a href="#">Greening the Workplace</a>	TUC handbook: <a href="#">Go green at work</a>
Prospect member guide on <a href="#">CSR &amp; international development</a>	TUC workbook: <a href="#">Targeting climate change</a>
<a href="#">Prospect member guide on the MDGs</a>	Examples of briefings to Environment Reps on Environmental <a href="#">auditing</a> and <a href="#">Biodiversity</a>

## Evidence on why these resources have worked

The evidence on workplace representation in CSR and procurement has been assessed and documented in a publication called "[A world of Difference – a contribution to the Millennium Development Goals](#)". Case studies, to name but a few, include:

- Public sector:
  - Veterinary Laboratories: Changing to an ethical financial service provider and verification of ISO2600 compliance
  - Marine Management Organisation: Sourcing and purchasing of work clothing that included labour and human rights and environment criteria
- Academic institution (Scottish Agricultural College) now SRUC:
  - Contribution to design and implementation of an ethical IT procurement policy
  - Leading arguments against cutting funding on research
- Private global energy company:
  - Strengthened corporate accountability through a global agreement
  - Participated in the auditing and verification of CSR & Sustainability reports
  - Negotiated CSR inclusion in the sale of part of the business.

## Workplace environmental sustainability

The successful outcomes of both the Trades Union Congress and Prospect's work on initiating environment related projects is well documented in various reports including:

Labour Research Department: [Green Unions at Work 2012](#): The outcome of a survey of 1,200 environment reps which gives detail data on energy, resource efficiency, travel policies and improving operational procedures.

[Greening the workplace project report](#): Case studies include BT Adastral Park, Ipswich; Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, London; Leicester City Council; National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; National Museums Liverpool; National Union of Teachers and United Utilities.

[Report: Union effect on greening the workplace](#): Labour Research Department's study of the "union effect" on greening the workplace - union shop stewards and activists working on creating sustainable workplaces.

## Global principles mentioned in the Act

1. **Decent Work:** The International Labour Organisation has developed guidance and a toolkit on [mainstreaming employment and decent work](#). The Toolkit, developed with support from the European Commission within the Decent Work Campaign, is a framework to achieve policy coherence and cooperation by assisting UN agencies, as well as governments and social partners, to integrate and improve decent work outcomes in their own policies and programmes.
2. **Just transition:** The European Trades Union Congress has recently launched the Change Partnership website with guidance on [integrating the Just Transition](#) in EU industrial, climate and energy policy. The Just Transition principles covered in the guidance include:

- Consultation: between representatives from trade unions, business, government, regional bodies and voluntary organisations, on the shift to a green, low carbon economy, from the workplace to national government.
- Green and Decent Jobs: Investing in technologies and infrastructure to meet the sustainability challenges for a low carbon, resource-efficient future while creating quality jobs.
- Green skills: Government-led investments in education/training and skills programmes to equip students and the workforce with the skills for a low carbon, resource-efficient economy. Promoting individual worker rights to training to ensure access for all workers.
- Respect for labour and human rights: Democratic decision-making and respect for human and labour rights are essential in order to ensure the fair representation of workers' and communities' interests. Strengthening worker information, consultation and participation rights to matters concerning sustainable development.
- Social protection: Strong and efficient social protection systems in the transition to a low carbon economy

[SustainLabour](#) – the international Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development is dedicated to belief that workers play a fundamental role en route to a sustainable world.

Their work covers climate change, green jobs, biodiversity and advocacy – they have however recently published a report on [Unions4Climate. Reducing emissions from the workplace and creating jobs](#). The case studies also show that trade unions' commitment to climate action is reinforced when proposals address job creation and focus on workplaces by giving specific responsibilities and functions to elected representatives.

Like SustainLabour we believe that trade unions are in a unique position to stimulate the social aspects of sustainable development and can contribute to the economic and environmental dimensions.

## **Q2 The format of the guidance**

We believe that the format and type of guidance outlined in the discussion document is both useful and flexible.

However we believe that based on the evidence, a shared agenda and the Act's reference to trade union consultation it would help to have guidance on working with trade union representation in the public bodies listed in the Act. This could include the role and responsibilities of environment or sustainability workplace representative.

### Q3 Understanding the goals

As indicated in Q2 the references to trade union consultation would lend itself to guidance on Just Transition (climate change and environment) and Decent Work (labour standards and principles). This should help promote understanding of the concepts and indicators associated with the principles.

In addition – work that Prospect has undertaken on public procurement and supply chains has indicated a lack of general knowledge on core international labour conventions – for example conventions on child labour, workplace discrimination, freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. These are useful tools for sourcing of goods and/or services from low income countries.

### Q5 Setting well-being objectives

With the focus on workplace sustainability and the involvement of workplace representatives we believe guidance on behavioural change and workplace issues is vital.

The evidence provided in Q1 refers with specific reference to steps of:

- Guidance on establishing workplace consultation forums
- Staff engagement in gathering data, contributing to plans, monitoring and evaluating outcomes of goals/indicators.
- Consultation on changing work patterns or processes directly linked to climate change - for example energy efficiency initiatives.

### Q6 Shared delivery

The project partnerships between management and trade unions has delivered tangible results on environmental performance, ethical sourcing, changing behaviours and overall awareness. The evidence for these initiatives are referenced in Q1.

### Q7 Sustainability challenges

We agree that sustainable development is often wrongly perceived “to be about balancing conflicts between benefits for our society, our economy and our environment” we do believe that the workplace offers a unique platform (or environment) to promote, educate, participate and share the values of sustainability as set out in the Act. Two sustainability challenges we have addressed through workplace activity are:

**Behavioural change:** through education and participatory consultation with staff, positive attitudes have delivered change and tangible results. In some instances we have worked in a tripartite partnership – for example, working at the Natural History Museum with management, Prospect members and the National Union of Students on a “Green Impact” 3 year project that is aimed specifically at changing behaviours to support environment objectives.

**Awareness raising:** The evidence provided in Q1 is also indicative of well informed networks at global, national, regional, sector and workplace level. There are also elected representative bodies with established structures and communication channels. This is the framework used to actively promote and support sustainable development objectives in view of a shared agenda. Raising awareness can be targeted; for example:

General messaging to all Prospect members in all sectors was a Christmas briefing on a “[sustainable Christmas](#)” whereas specific workplace awareness has ranged from energy efficiency, ethical procurement to a workplace [travel policy](#).

Equally, we support members who arrange workplace events in support of sustainable development objectives. These have included workplace thermal imaging demonstrations, environment days and Fairtrade fortnight.

Where appropriate we give advice on the plethora of social and environmental labels and certification schemes used in workplaces – these include:

- principles (eg UN Guiding principles on Business and Human Rights)
- standards (eg ISO 14001, ISO 26000)
- codes (eg UN Global Compact, Fairtrade, ETI base code) and
- reporting frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).

## **Q8 Sustainable governance**

Trade unions have a long and successful history of being integral to the governance structures for workplace health and safety. We would welcome a transference of this knowledge and experience to support the sustainable development goals.

## **Conclusion**

We agree with a statement in the PwC 17th Annual Global CEO sustainability survey report that says: “Sustainability is no longer a philanthropic afterthought or about installing low energy light-bulbs, but an approach to embed more forward thinking and responsible business practice into how a business produces and delivers its goods and services. It’s about being ‘able to sustain’ your business responsibly, with one eye on ‘new’ external risks and the other on future consequences of your decisions.”

It goes on to say that, “Understanding these impacts can drive improvements in corporate strategy, day to day operations and ultimately in financial performance. They’re moving away from sustainability as an afterthought or something that helps them put right a problem they’ve caused, to a way of doing business.”

From our experience, we believe that trade union workplace representation on sustainability in the public bodies of Wales will contribute to the wider good of society but also to good business.