

**Wildlife & Countryside Link written evidence to Environmental Audit Committee
Sustainable Development Goals in the UK inquiry.**

September 2018

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is the largest environment and wildlife coalition in England, bringing together 48 organisations to use their strong joint voice for the protection of nature. Our members campaign to conserve, enhance and access our landscapes, animals, plants, habitats, rivers and seas. Together we have the support of over eight million people in the UK and directly protect over 750,000 hectares of land and 800 miles of coastline.

This response is supported by the following organisations:

A Rocha
Angling Trust
Amphibian and Reptile Conservation
Bat Conservation Trust
Born Free Foundation
Buglife
Butterfly Conservation
Campaign to Protect Rural England
Freshwater Habitats Trust
Institute of Fisheries Management
Marine Conservation Society
People's Trust for Endangered Species
Plantlife
RSPB
Salmon and Trout Conservation
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
Woodland Trust
WWF-UK

1. Link members have an interest in the achievement of all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We understand the connections between the social, economic and environmental dimensions of the goals, and that a healthy natural environment underpins delivery of all the goals. Our members are focused not only on those goals which directly concern the natural environment (SDG 13 Climate action, SDG 14 Life below water, SDG 15 Life on land), but also on those with significant implications for the natural environment. That includes SDG 2 Zero hunger, SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation, SDG 7 Affordable and clean energy and SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 12 Sustainable Production and Consumption. The SDGs are closely inter-related and progress against individual goals must not be at the expense of progress against others.

Overview

2. We recognise that this is a UK- wide inquiry, and that whilst the Westminster government has policy leadership for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and is responsible for co-

ordinating domestic implementation, devolved administrations have their own responsibilities to implement and report on them for all devolved issues. This response focuses on England and Westminster where not stated otherwise, and has a section which specifically addresses the devolved nations.

3. Link is disappointed in Government's approach to ensuring it delivers the Sustainable Development Goals. Government does not seem to be seriously considering how to deliver the goals within the UK.
4. We note in this light that the [UKSSD report](#) of July 2018 says in summary:

"How is the UK measuring up?"

*[...] while there is much to celebrate, **the most vulnerable people and places in our society are increasingly being left behind.***

The UK is performing well on 24% (green) of 143 relevant targets, with 57% where there were gaps in policy coverage or performance is not adequate (amber) and 15% where there is little to no policy in place that adequately addresses the target or the performance is poor (red).

*The worst performance is in **Goal 15, Life on land**, where four targets are ranked poor.*

*Goals 2, 5, 9 and 13 on Zero Hunger, Gender Equality, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, and **Climate Action** have no targets with a 'good' performance rating.*

5. We note also that the report reflects a disparity in performance across the different nations of the UK. The report states:

"While this report covers the UK's performance as a whole, it is worth noting that there has been more progress on the SDGs in Scotland and Wales where efforts have been made to consider the implications of, and incorporate, the SDGs into policy and practice, particularly through cross-sector dialogue and new legislation."

What steps the Government has taken to achieve the Goals?

6. The UK is currently failing to meet the SDGs in the UK, as demonstrated by UKSSD's report, and the Government does not appear to have a coherent plan to address the gaps in SDG delivery.
7. Government currently puts emphasis on the role it plays in supporting the global delivery of the SDGs, with DFID being the lead department for the goals. For example, under SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation, Government implementation focuses on ensuring clean water abroad. It appears to fail to consider the issues we have in the UK such as:
 - up to 25% of our water bodies and aquifers are over abstracted
 - we had 1,827 pollution incidents in 2017 (categories 1-3),
 - we have over 20,000 combined sewer overflows a year releasing untreated wastewater into our rivers and coasts

- freshwater species have declined by around 50% both long term and short term
 - less than 25% of our water bodies are achieving Good Ecological Status
8. Although the role Government plays in the global aspect of the SDGs is important, the SDGs are a universal agenda applying to all countries and they must therefore also be delivered in the UK.
 9. The Cabinet Office's report 'Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals' (December 2017, updated May 2018) does not cover the complete framework of the SDGs.
 10. The Government's general approach is to look at how the SDGs fit into current plans and policy rather than to consider how the SDGs and their specific targets could be used to drive further action where needed. Current mechanisms in place will not deliver the goals. Further commitment and investment is needed to ensure the targets are met.
 11. Government also needs a more coherent and robust data-driven approach, as well as more clarity on its strategy to address the convergence between the Goals through integrated cross-departmental initiatives. An overarching strategy to deliver the SDGs would enable better policy coherence and highlight any gaps between the different sectoral plans. The Single Departmental Plans and a future SDG Action Plan should address all of the 169 targets and not 'pick and choose' from them.
 12. In Defra's single departmental plan (SDP), tackling illegal wildlife trade is linked to SDG 17, despite an obvious related target under SDG 15 (15.7). Similarly, in DFID's SDP, actions to prevent catastrophic environmental degradation and tackling degradation of habitat and loss of species are only said to drive the delivery of SDG 14, despite the clear links with other Goals' targets, including SDG 15.
 13. We recognise Government's ambition to take a leading role in the fight against illegal wildlife trade, and welcome its initiatives (e.g. London IWT conference) and recent announcements (in July) of new plans and funding for tackling the issue across the world. Those should contribute directly to the delivery of targets 15.7/15.c. However, there seems to be a significant lack of well-defined targets and an apparent lack of statistical capacity, which urgently needs to be addressed.
 14. Despite SDG 6 targets to halve the proportion of untreated wastewater and to protect and restore freshwater ecosystems, we see little action at a UK level aimed at meeting these targets or any reference to them in Government reports on SDGs. In fact a recent [letter from Defra Secretary of State to Mary Creagh](#) MP, suggested extending the deadline for water framework delivery past 2027 and potentially "revising water quality objectives." Such an approach fundamentally fails to acknowledge the role the Water Framework Directive plays in meeting SDG 6 and the target deadline of 2030.
 15. The [Government's Agenda 2030 report](#) into delivering the SDGs under SDG 6 focuses purely on "clean water" and fails to identify the environmental aspects of this goal, such as sustainable abstraction and to protect and restore water-related ecosystems. The report seems to suggest that there is nothing extra for the Government to do to meet this goal, whereas -as indicated above - this is clearly not the case. This situation also highlights that goals such as SDG 6 are not integrated

within Defra's work. This 'pick and choose' approach to the goals and targets is symptomatic of how the Government is responding to the goals.

16. The Government's 'Agenda 2030' report¹ into delivering the SDGs under Goal 15 fails to acknowledge that biodiversity loss is at critical levels in Great Britain, with the UK ranked amongst the most nature-depleted countries².
17. More specifically, the report disregards the alarming declining trends and extinction risk in priority species' populations across all four UK countries. By 2013, the combined measure of abundance and distribution of protected species in the UK had shown a consistent downward trajectory, with a statistically significant decrease of 56% since 1970. In the short-term (2002-2013), 53% of species decreased. Using modern Red List criteria, which identify species of the highest conservation concern, 15% of British species are extinct or threatened with extinction.³ In this context, agriculture accounts for approximately 70-75% of land use and its impacts on the country's biodiversity are highly significant. Please see points 45- 50 below for more on this issue.
18. Another challenge is the fact that biodiversity planning and development processes are all devolved to the different administrations of the UK, and it is unclear how public authorities exercise associated duties and powers. Clear and consistent planning, delivery and reporting of biodiversity-related targets at UK level, using relevant indicators, are key to achieving Goal 15. In addition, because a number of global biodiversity-related targets are due to expire in 2020 under the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#), Government will need to develop an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which should include improved and better-resourced species recovery schemes.
19. We welcome the publication of [the NPCC's Wildlife Crime Policing Strategy 2018-2021](#) (July 2018) which may contribute to the realization of Goals 14 and 15 as long as its associated delivery plans align with the relevant SDG targets.
20. It is difficult to understand why the Government has not taken some obvious opportunities to highlight the SDGs in key policy documents. For example, Link and other organisations called on the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to refer to the SDGs in the [National Planning Policy Framework's](#) (NPPF) chapter on 'Achieving sustainable development'. However, the revised version published in July 2018 fails to do so. This is a key document that should guide sustainable development in England, and yet no reference to its importance in delivering targets under Goal 11 is made. In taking a step back from international initiatives in the revised NPPF, and by focusing the NPPF on building homes, the revised NPPF does not appropriately mainstream the wide-ranging scope of Sustainable Development.
21. In addition, we are concerned that the revised NPPF:

¹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/603500/Agenda-2030-Report4.pdf

² RSPB. (2016). State of nature 2016.

³ RSPB. (2016). State of nature 2016.

- a. Creates an unequal balance between social, economic and environmental objectives of sustainable development with an overall focus on enabling housing development;
 - b. Continues to contribute to high levels of complexity in the planning system, which could lead to a void in local policies essential for protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
22. We welcome commitments in the 25-year environment plan and the revised National Planning Policy Framework to achieving “Net Environmental Gain”. However, without further details on how this approach will work in practice, there remains a huge risk that inappropriate developments will be approved in the wrong places, based on an ill-defined net gain.
23. Among the most important actions that the Government can take to achieve the SDGs that focus on the natural environment are to deliver the ambitions of the 25 Year Environment Plan through:
- i. Legally binding targets to restore our environment, defending and extending environment laws
 - ii. Investment to enrich our environment and landscape, with public payments directed towards delivering public benefits, complemented by private investment
 - iii. Accountability for the state of nature—across Government, on land and at sea, at home and abroad

Further details on these points were set out in our [response](#) to the Committee’s inquiry on the 25 Year Environment Plan in March 2018.

What steps the Government has taken since the Committee’s report to better mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals into its programme? How this is reflected in Single Department Plans and departmental reporting?

24. Link works closely with Defra, which has updated its departmental plan to reflect where its actions relate to goals. However, the goals do not seem to have influenced the content of the plan or Defra’s work.
25. For instance, there is one reference in the plan regarding contributing to SDG 6 which puts the emphasis on meeting this goal on water companies. It does not say how they are going to ensure delivery and given current approaches, we do not believe Defra will achieve the targets under SDG 6. In the Defra annual report (2017-18) the SDGs are mentioned only once, with no detail provided at all. *“Worked closely with a wide range of government departments to drive forward the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, continuing to help other departments to take natural capital into account when developing carbon reduction measures for the Clean Growth Plan.”*
26. The Environment Agency, however, has suggested in their 2017-18 report that they consider that the aims and performance objectives of the Environment Agency closely align with the SDGs.
27. The UN SDGs are mentioned in the [25 Year Environment Plan](#). However, they are not mainstreamed throughout the Plan, and are only referenced under Chapter 6 on protecting our

Global Environment. Again, this approach de-prioritises those targets and goals where national action is needed.

28. The 25 Year Environment Plan says that Government have set up a cross-Whitehall Sustainable Development Forum to co-ordinate and facilitate implementation of SDGs in the UK. We note a [letter](#) sent by the Committee chair to the Cabinet Office requested the names of those sitting on the forum and that the response indicated it was a Defra led forum but provided no further information. There is no mention of the forum in the Defra annual report. This highlights a lack of transparency in Government's approach to delivering the SDGs.
29. We ask the Committee to recommend that details of the members, terms of reference and outputs from the Sustainable Development Forum be published.
30. As mentioned in our response to the first question of this inquiry, MHCLG has not included the UN SDGs in the revised NPPF.
31. Whilst MHCLG publishes a wide range of statistics relating to its Single Departmental Programme, it fails to make the link to the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, the Land Use Change Statistics can provide an indicator of sustainable urbanisation. The range of statistics published could be increased, for example to report similar data on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other designated land, as is currently the case for the Green Belt.
32. In addition, we support the recommendations of the UKSSD in its submission to the Committee:
 - i. There needs to be an alignment of the SDPs to specific targets as well as the top line goals, without which it is difficult to identify gaps in SDG implementation.
 - ii. The SDPs are not sufficient for an 'action plan' on the SDGs and the Government needs to develop a comprehensive implementation and coordination plan at the same time as developing its Voluntary National Review.
 - iii. An analysis of policy coherence should be undertaken. This will help show where policies contribute to and potentially conflict with SDG delivery at home and abroad.
 - iv. Build on the SDGs assessment in *Measuring up* to monitor and report on whether delivery against SDG targets is on track.
 - v. For all departments to look at the Leave No One Behind aspect of the SDGs and identify how they are contributing to this area of the 2030 Agenda.

Whether the Government has done more since the Committee's report to raise awareness of the SDGs especially amongst children and young people

33. We have seen no evidence that the government has acted on the EAC recommendation to raise awareness of the SDGs among children and young people or indeed other groups. Though the Government responded to EAC's previous report with examples of how some of the topics addressed in the SDGs are covered in the curriculum, it has not committed itself to teaching young people about the SDGs themselves, which is disappointing.

34. The SDGs provide an ideal framework for teaching children and young people about global issues and the connections between the UK and the wider world. We recommend the SDGs become a key part of citizenship education.
35. Increasing public awareness and understanding of the goals is important for public accountability. The public cannot hold governments, businesses or civil society organizations to account for delivering on the SDGs if they do not know about them. We therefore recommend that the Government do more to make raise public awareness of the SDGs.
36. The UK's Voluntary National Review (VNR) is an excellent opportunity to raise public awareness of the goals, and build momentum for their implementation, including across the public, private and non-profit sectors. However, so far we have not seen any indication that the UK Government will use the opportunity of the VNR to engage the public and increase communication on the goals.

What preparations are underway for the Voluntary National Review process, and how will the outcomes and impacts be measured?

37. In November 2017 Government committed to a voluntary national review in 2019. [A PQ in May 2018](#) asking the government "what steps it is taking to secure the active involvement of local authorities and civil society organisations" elicited the following response:

"The Government will ensure that a wide range of partners and stakeholders, including civil society organisations and local authorities, have an opportunity to contribute to the review."

We welcome this commitment. Although we understand that DFID met with stakeholders at the end of July 2018 to discuss on its approach to the Voluntary National Review, most of our members have not been engaged so far. It is important that consultation should take place with as broad a range of stakeholders as possible. However, the Government should not underestimate the challenge of engaging with environmental (or indeed other) stakeholders at a time when many organisations, including Link members, are devoting significant time and resources to dealing with the implications of Brexit.

38. To engage stakeholders in a meaningful way requires time and resources, given the deadline for submitting the VNR we are concerned that it is very late in the day to be reaching out to stakeholders. A timeline and process for engaging stakeholders needs to be communicated widely as soon as possible.
39. We recommend that the EAC request a completely transparent and well-publicized process to the Voluntary National Review, stakeholder engagement and publication. Any review should ensure gaps are highlighted and report at the target level rather than goal level so that no aspects of the goals are omitted.

Whether the Government can be said to have an action plan on the SDGs

40. There is a [webpage](#) on Gov.uk on implementing the sustainable development goals and the Agenda 2030 report, but we do not consider this an action plan, nor is the integration of SDGs into SDPs sufficient to be considered an action plan.

41. An action plan should consider the current situation under each of the goals, and the actions to be taken to meet specific targets. Actions need to be specific, measurable and bear in mind the linkages between goals. The Government's current approach does not sufficiently show the interlinkages between goals and targets in terms of benefits or trade-offs, undermining its ability to deliver the SDGs.
42. In addition, the ONS only has data relating to 41% of the SDG indicators, so it is unclear how Government can have a clear assessment of its progress towards meeting the goals.
43. We recommend modifying the current ONS dashboard on indicators to not only give the status of the indicator, and, where the data is available, how well we are meeting the indicator, but to include the actions Government will take to improve the results and relevant milestones. This would then, essentially, hold all the necessary information in one place.
44. Where the ONS report that they are "exploring data sources", we propose further information is given as to when the indicator is likely to be assessed and any current Government commitments to gather data and meet the associated target. For example, under indicator 6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time, all it says is that suitable data sources have not been explored. There is no indication of when data sources might be considered or any information about what Government is doing to meet the associated target, either under the indicator or within any Defra or Government publication.

How does the Government take its commitment under the SDGs to address food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms into account when developing policy on food; is there the data to effectively measure progress against these commitments?

45. The publication of "Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit" in February 2018 set out the Government's aspirations for a new direction for agriculture in a post Common Agricultural Policy world. While the word sustainable is used several times, the word is not defined or linked to the SDGs, and can be perceived to have different meanings according to the context of the sentence.
46. We welcome the Government's commitment to putting the provision of public goods at the heart of a future farming and land management policy. Underpinned by a strong regulatory baseline, a new policy should optimise the use of public money in delivering environment and animal welfare outcomes that are not rewarded by the market.
47. We believe the Government is right in seeking to put the protection and enhancement of the environment at the centre of a future policy, given the significant body of evidence that more sustainable land management delivers a range of benefits in terms of rural economic growth, ecosystem services and rural tourism.
48. The [2016 State of Nature report](#) highlighted that nature remains under pressure across England. Work to inform the report also identified that agriculture has been, and remains, the biggest driver of biodiversity decline across the UK. Declines in pollinators in recent decades have also been dramatic, and are already known to be affecting the provision of ecosystem services. The repercussions of continued declines in key groups of pollinators for agriculture and the health of our environment would be profound.

49. Beyond biodiversity, soil degradation in England and Wales costs £1.2 billion per year, and agricultural management is both the single biggest cause of pollution incidents in England, and the sector responsible for the greatest number of water bodies failing to meet Good Ecological Status. Agriculture is the source of 85% of ammonia emissions and accounts for a tenth of all UK greenhouse gas emissions. According to the Committee on Climate Change, the “...voluntary nature of the industry-led GHG Action Plan to reduce emissions in this sector and the lack of effective monitoring do not provide confidence of future abatement.”
50. There is a legitimate role for public policy in creating the conditions in which productivity improves. However, higher productivity in itself is not a public good as the primary beneficiary is the producer, and as such should not be supported with public money. We would, however, recommend that Government also recognise public health as a public good eligible for support in a future policy; this would support a UK based response to the needs of SDG2.

The devolved nations

51. Along with our sister Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Environment Links, this section summarises our concerns.
52. The four nations of the UK are taking different approaches to delivering the UN SDGs. There is currently a lack of visibility and awareness around what progress is being made by governments across the UK. We recommend public disclosure and a coordinated inter-parliamentary approach to the SDGs.

Northern Ireland

53. Given the lack of a functioning Executive and NI Assembly, Northern Ireland is *being left behind* in the terms of delivering the UK policy commitment to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Currently citizens have no way of holding the NI government to account for the lack of progress.
54. Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity. The Agenda sets out an ambitious set of 17 inter-related Goals and targets which are intended to guide global development efforts until 2030.
55. The UK government has signed up to delivering the SDGs and is required to produce Implementation Plans. While the Irish government has forged ahead by producing an SDG Implementation Plan, similar progress has not been made in the UK. In Northern Ireland the SDGs are being completely overlooked in government policy and regional priority setting.
56. There is currently a lack of understanding and awareness amongst government, civil society and politicians in Northern Ireland around the importance and relevance of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and there is currently no strategic, comprehensive approach to implementation of the Goals in Northern Ireland.
57. In Northern Ireland, responsibility for Sustainable development policy previously fell within the remit of the Executive Office. Responsibility for progressing the UN Sustainable Development

Goals in Northern Ireland has since been moved to an under-resourced unit of the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

58. The current position of government is that the NI Programme for Government is the main vehicle for delivering sustainable development in the region, given that the draft Programme for Government (PfG) framework has been constructed around economic, social and environmental outcomes. However, the Programme for Government does not specifically address the SDGs and the PFG should not be used as ‘cover’ for effectively ignoring and failing to progress anything meaningful in terms of SDG policy. High level backing from senior civil servants is required to address the current inaction, establish cross-Departmental structures and bring much needed focus to this flagging policy agenda. Action at the devolved level is crucial if the UK is to take seriously its role in implementing the UN SDGs.

Scotland

59. In 2016, the Scottish Government committed to reviewing its National Performance Framework to reflect the UN SDGs.

60. Introduced in 2007, the National Performance Framework (NPF) sets out a vision for through which to measure Scotland’s national wellbeing beyond GDP and action to improve the quality of life for the people of Scotland. The NPF supports an outcome-based approach whereby focus is placed on the difference that can be made to achieve real and lasting benefits for the people of Scotland. The NPF operates via an overarching purpose, a set of National Outcomes that specify the kind of country we want Scotland to be while progress is tracked via a number of top-line indicators.

61. The commitment to review the NPF was welcomed by Scottish Environment LINK (SEL) members.

62. The Scottish Government consulted widely with citizens, stakeholders and the NPF Roundtable where LINK is represented and produced enhanced proposals for a review of the NPF which would:

- Amend the NPF’s overarching purpose, to ensure that means beyond economic growth were acknowledged as contributing to the success of Scotland as a nation
- Improve the national outcomes, while retaining the ambition to “protect and enhance our environment”.
- Introduce 81 metrics to track Scotland’s performance including new targets for biodiversity and the marine environment in addition to existing ones on greenhouse gases, greenspace and the status of protected nature sites.

63. The revised NPF was scrutinised by the Scottish Parliament and SEL provided written views. It was published on 11 June 2018; its provisions will form the basis of future government policies, including an Environment Strategy for Scotland expected by end of 2018.

64. While it is disappointing that the revised NPF fails to make reference to ‘sustainable development’ in the overarching purpose, the amended national outcomes and increased number of indicators represent a step in the right direction. SEL members welcome the opportunity to work further with the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament to realise the vision of the NPF.

Wales

65. Wales passed its own sustainable development legislation in 2015. As the UK SSD report says: “The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Wales to carry out sustainable development and help achieve the seven well-being goals, including “A healthier Wales” and “A more equal Wales”. Welsh Ministers are required to set national indicators and milestones and must publish an annual report on progress.”
66. The seven wellbeing goals are: A prosperous Wales, A resilient Wales, A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of Cohesive Communities, A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language & A globally responsible Wales.
67. More information is available [here](#); progress against the wellbeing goals is measured by the 46 National Indicators.
68. The Five Ways of working under Wales’ Sustainable Development Principle are also integral. These are essential to ‘working sustainably’ as the way a government or public body works is at the heart of delivering sustainable development. If a government is not using the five ways of working – long-term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement – then it is difficult to say that they’re making good progress on the UN SDGs.
69. The Future Generations Office has established a Future Generations Commissioner, who is currently Sophie Howe. The Office’s job – in tandem with the Wales Audit Office – is to hold the Welsh Government and all Welsh public bodies to account on sustainable development. Their Strategic Plan for 2017-2023 sets out their approach. In 2017-18, the Commissioner gave feedback to 19 Public Service Boards (aligned with Welsh Local Authorities).
70. In terms of Wales’ alignment with the SDGs, the Wellbeing of Future Generations (WFG) Act has a legal relationship with them by including a duty on Welsh Ministers to prepare a Future Trends report. This must “*must take account of the United Nations’ sustainable development goals and the impact of climate change on Wales*” and needs to be published within 12 months after an Assembly election.
71. The WFG Act’s relationship to the SDGs therefore relates to Wales taking account of the SDGs in its implementation of the Act, not how it reports on our progress into the UN framework. We would welcome clarity from the Welsh or UK Government on Wales’ role in inputting into the UN reporting process.

72. However, recently, the Welsh Government did hold some [joint workshops with WWF Cymru](#) on effective implementation of the WFG Act. We are expecting a report on this later in the year. The workshops were productive and addressed many of the institutional challenges to achieving sustainable development. There were a lot of ideas for partnership working going forward and we look forward to the report.
73. The Welsh Government has also recently announced that they will consult on setting the National Milestones in the autumn. This consultation will look at “both the criteria for selecting milestones and on proposals for the small set of *National Indicators that should have milestones related to them.*” The final National Indicators will be published in 2019. The Welsh Government also said: “*It is likely that the work on the National Milestones may identify some potential improvements to the set of 46 National Indicators. Ideally we would want to maintain consistency in what is after all a set of indicators intended to assess long term progress, and there was significant consultation activity on the indicators in 2015.*”

Devolved nations’ engagement in international forums

74. Engaging with the SDGs and its associated processes offers an opportunity for all the devolved nations to be part of an international community and engage with world leaders. Taking a full and active part in Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) – whether as four nations or the UK as a whole – would enhance this understanding and improve capability of Wales to respond to its own legislation. Furthermore, active engagement with the SDGs may result in new partnerships and funding collaborations.
75. We would welcome a statement from the UK Government and devolved nations as to how they will collaborate on the SDG reporting process and where they can be joint working between the four countries’ relevant Ministers to achieve the SDGs.
76. Whilst DFID has been meeting with civil society organisations and other stakeholders to discuss their approach to the VNR in 2019, there has been no equivalent engagement like this in Wales between civil society and the Welsh Government. The Future Generations Commissioner could have a role in this work, but there has been no clarity from them on Wales’ participation either.

END

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