

National milestones for Wales

Response from the Landscape Institute

For: Wales Government

Date: 19 April 2019

1 Summary

This is the Landscape Institute's response to the Welsh Government's consultation on setting a small set of national milestones, to measure progress in Wales. The full consultation can be seen here:

<https://gov.wales/measuring-our-nations-progress>

Our response to the consultation questions (below) support the intention to create a small set of national milestones, but recommended a small number of changes. In summary, these are:

- Using a different indicator to measure "local place quality", which is more directly related to public satisfaction, and includes green space provision
- Using a different indicator to measure natural capital, focussing on habitats rather than species
- Introducing a new indicator to measure "healthy cities", as this is not captured by any of the existing measures

2 Response to consultation questions

2.1 Do you propose any changes to the criteria?

No

2.7 Do you propose any changes to the small set of national indicators against which we propose to set national milestones?

Yes

2.8 Do you propose to remove or add national indicators from the small set against which we propose to set national milestones? (Please tick one box)

Add

2.9 If you are proposing an additional national indicator against which a milestone should be set, which national indicator do you propose adding?

We support the intent to create a smaller, balanced set of national indicators. In order to achieve this, we propose the following changes:

- **Replacing indicator 23 with indicator(s) 26:** Percentage of people satisfied with local area as a place to live and/or **indicator 24:** Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/ access the facilities and services they need.
- **Replacing indicator 40 with indicator 43:** Area of healthy ecosystems in Wales

The effect of these changes is described in more detail below (Q11).

2.10 If you have answered the question above, please now consider which national indicators can be removed from having milestones, to keep a small set or to reduce the set further

As above

2.11 Please provide an explanation for your proposed changes and the contribution they make to a small, balanced set of milestones.

Proposal 1: Replacing Indicator 23: Percentage who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area, with Indicator(s) 26: Percentage of people satisfied with local area as a place to live, and/or indicator 24: Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/ access the facilities and services they need.

As acknowledged in the consultation document, Indicator 23 (*Percentage who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area*) is conceptually difficult to benchmark, given the paucity of good data and lack of obvious policy levers to affect it.

It is right that decision-making in Wales is democratic and that people feel empowered to affect their local area – however in reality this is difficult to quantify and can be problematic in practice.

The planning system provides a simple example: the planning applications which attract the most public comments are usually the most controversial, not the highest quality. Furthermore, not all issues are equally valued by the public at a local level. Addressing national issues like biodiversity loss or climate change might require local trade-offs, which would reduce people’s self-reported “influence” levels, but which are nevertheless worth doing.

It would be preferable to measure the desired outcomes themselves, rather than the degree to which people can influence them. In this instance (quality of local place), this is better addressed by measuring indicator 26: Percentage of people satisfied with local area as a place to live, and/or indicator 24: Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/ access the facilities and services they need.

Other contextual data could usefully include wider measures of environmental factors, such as National Resource Wales’s [Tree Canopy Assessment](#), and accessibility factors such as [Welsh Outdoors Recreation Survey \(WORS\)](#). Some useful methodologies for measuring people’s health and wellbeing derived from places in Wales can be found [here](#).

Proposal 2: Replacing Indicator 44: Status of biological diversity in Wales, with Indicator 43: Area of healthy ecosystems in Wales

Addressing biodiversity loss in Wales is a vital outcome, and it is right that this is one of the national indicators. However, from a measurement perspective it is an especially difficult outcome to quantify, and there are a number of methodological challenges with making it a national milestone – including a lack of local-level data. This is noted in the consultation document.

It would be both easier and potentially more effective to use habitats as a proxy for biodiversity in setting national milestones. A healthy habitat (e.g. native woodland) is likely to be higher in biodiversity, whilst also providing other ecosystem services, such as carbon retention, flood mitigation, etc.

The existing indicator on healthy ecosystems (No. 43) may provide this. We note that this is in-itself an imperfect indicator with its own methodological challenges, and we support the intent to “collaborate with scientific and policy experts” to ensure it is fit-for-purpose. The landscape sector can support this.

2.13 Do you propose any changes to the existing 46 national indicators?

Yes

2.14 What type of change are you proposing to the existing 46 national indicators? (Please tick one box)

New

2.15 If you are proposing a change to an existing indicator/s or proposing a new indicator, please provide the version you propose.

% of population living within a healthy urban environment

2.18 Please tell us why your proposed change to the existing 46 national indicators will support us in measuring progress towards achieving the well-being goals.

Currently, the 46 national indicators do not include a dedicated measure of the degree to which urban environments promote better health and wellbeing outcomes, for instance through urban greening. The existing indicators do not cover this outcome:

- The existing indicators for the environment (43, 44, etc.) only cover natural (or semi-natural) habitats, and so do not include the urban area.
- Existing indicators covering local place satisfaction (24, 26, etc.) only include general self-reported satisfaction, not specific place-based outcomes (as currently exists for heritage, culture, water quality, etc.).
- The existing health and wellbeing indicators (2, 3, 29, 30, etc.) only consider health outcomes in the present population, not the degree to which we are designing healthy places for future generations.

Efforts to increase the quality and quantity of green infrastructure provision are therefore not captured, for instance. A single measure of healthy urban environments would provide a means of assessing the effectiveness of decisions across planning, place-making (including heritage and

aesthetic-cultural considerations, like soundscapes), urban resilience to natural events (incl. climate change), etc.

The new Planning Policy Wales edition 10 supports a holistic interdisciplinary approach to planning. A new indicator on healthy places would align well with this approach.

3 About the Landscape Institute

The Landscape Institute (LI) is the royal chartered body for the landscape profession. We represent over 5000 landscape architects, planners, designers, managers and scientists.

As a professional organisation and educational charity, we provide training, accreditation, technical advice, and standards to maintain the high quality of the landscape profession in the UK. We protect and enhance the built and natural environment for the public benefit.

For more information, please contact policy@landscapeinstitute.org.

