

HEFCW's Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Report 2019

Environment (Wales) Act 2016
Part 1 Section 6 (S6)



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Government

1. Introduction and context

About HEFCW

- 1.1 The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is a 'Welsh Government Sponsored Body' operating between Welsh Government and higher education providers. We regulate full time undergraduate and PGCE fee levels at higher education providers, ensure a framework is in place for assessing the quality of higher education and scrutinise the performance of universities and other designated providers. We provide funding for higher education teaching and research and apply our influence and expertise to help deliver Welsh Government priorities for higher education that have wider societal, environmental, cultural and economic benefits.
- 1.2 In pursuit of our vision of 'sustainable, accessible, internationally excellent higher education in Wales', we:
- fund higher education;
 - regulate higher education providers;
 - influence higher education with evidence-based advice and strong partnership working;
 - work in partnership with students; and
 - operate effectively as an organisation.
- 1.3 Our strategic themes are set out in the [HEFCW Corporate Strategy 2017 to 2020](#).
- 1.4 HEFCW is a small organisation and employer (of 45 staff). We are situated on a single floor of a leased building in Bedwas, Caerphilly. As tenants, we have very little influence over the building maintenance and no influence over the supply and provision of water and energy nor over catering nor recycling services. The Welsh Government is our landlord.

2. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 2.1 The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act \(2015\)](#) aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. HEFCW is committed to working in accordance with the Act's sustainable development principle in a manner that seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. HEFCW is subject to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. While regulated universities and colleges are not subject to the Act, they support its principle, goals and the five ways of working and their commitments contribute to our support of the Act.

2.2 To comply with the Act, HEFCW has published its [Well-being Statement](#) and well-being objectives, which we review annually.

3. Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

3.1 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016, section 6 (S6) duty requires listed public authorities, such as HEFCW, to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of our functions and, in so doing, promote the resilience of ecosystems.

3.2 To comply with the S6 duty, we have chosen to embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into our business planning and day-to-day activities by aligning to them to our duties under the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act.

3.3 Our reporting duty has been developed to be proportionate to our size and function, having due regard to the actions for biodiversity we are able to take. We have chosen to produce a standalone S6 report for 2019, as it is our first report. In future years, the S6 report will be included within the sustainability section of [HEFCW's Annual Report and Accounts](#).

3.4 We consider ourselves to be a 'Group One' organisation, as set out in the S6 reporting guidance document, based on the following:

- we rent not own an office building; and
- our functions are not directly connected to biodiversity and/or land management.

3.5 In developing this environment annual report we have aligned our response to the [Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales](#) (NRAP) objectives 1, 4 and 6, as required for a 'Group One' organisation.

3.6 The S6 guidance also applies to Welsh universities which are classed as 'Group Two' organisations and, as such, they will be reporting progress individually.

Action Report

4. NRAP Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels.

Embed biodiversity action across your organisation's functions.

4.1 In our Corporate Strategy (2017 -2020), we make an organisational commitment to work in a sustainable manner.¹ Through funding, regulation, influence and working in partnership with students, we contribute to creating the environment within

¹ Corporate Strategy p. 6.

which higher education providers deliver sustainable, accessible and internationally excellent higher education in Wales.

- 4.2 All HEFCW policies are impact assessed for equality, sustainability and Welsh language considerations. The integrated impact assessment focuses on the Well-being of Generations Act 'A Resilient Wales', assessing the policy and funding implications on biodiversity, the natural environment that support social, economic and ecological resilience.
- 4.3 HEFCW officers meet with Estates Directors, or their equivalents, during triennial Institutional Assurance Review (IAR) visits. An all-Wales Estates meeting has also been established, with the first meeting due in Spring 2020. This will give Estates Directors the opportunity to share best practice with each other in meeting HEFCW's regulatory requirements in their area, as set out by the Financial Management Code (FMC).

Example

Research Funding

- 4.4 Research funding is provided to higher education institutions (HEIs) to underpin research activity and enable universities to engage in activity that will contribute to improving Wales and the world. Our funding enables sustainability in the research base, resilience in our systems and, ultimately, the new knowledge and innovation impacts positively on Wales and wider society.
- 4.5 HEFCW's [Research and Innovation: The Vision for Wales](#) confirms our expectation that universities should ensure that their plans, supported by HEFCW research and innovation funding (2019/20: £76m recurrent funding), take account of 'place'. We expect our universities to consider their investments in the context of local, regional- and Wales-wide partnership and collaborative working, as well as for wider societal improvement.
- 4.6 When submitting plans to HEFCW for [Higher Education Research Capital funding](#), we stipulate that universities must give consideration to how funding is used to support the ambitions and goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- 4.7 In terms of new research funding for HEIs from academic year 2020/21, HEFCW's [Consultation on the Research Wales Innovation Fund](#) specifically asks universities to consider the impact of the new funding on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's goals.

Example

Procurement

HEFCW's procurement policy statement and processes

- 4.8 HEFCW is a small organisation and in the previous financial year 2018-19, its procurement-based expenditure for goods and services amounted to less than £400,000.
- 4.9 [Wales Procurement Policy Statement](#) states 'Welsh public bodies must apply the Sustainability Risk Assessment to all procurements above £25,000'.
- 4.10 HEFCW uses the [Welsh Government's Sustainable Risk Assessment templates](#) (SRA's) on procurements above £25k, inclusive of Valued Added Tax (VAT), to embed sustainable criteria into tender specifications. HEFCW seeks to ensure that sustainability factors are built into the procurement process and, where applicable, suppliers are aware of this requirement.
- 4.11 HEFCW ensures that any collaborative agreements we use include a sustainability check as part of the procurement process and we take account of the twelve principles contained in the [Welsh Government's Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains](#) as part of our procurement and contracting process.
- 4.12 The majority of our procurement-based expenditure for goods and services is via collaborative agreements, where sustainability and environmental policies are built into the strategy and the contract. We use [National Procurement Services Wales](#) collaborative agreements where sustainability and environmental policies, including Future Generations Act considerations, are in-built. Examples of HEFCW's current practice include:
- the use e-procurement for any tendering processes avoiding the use of paper;
 - sustainability built into our procurement of information technology goods to ensure longevity and, at the end of any asset's life, we dispose of it using a recycling company which either reuses it in community/social inclusion projects, or recycles it;
 - used toner cartridges being sent for recycling/reuse;
 - recycled paper purchased for use across HEFCW; and
 - the procurement of a meeting management software application which has substantially reduced the amount of paper copies of meeting documents, printing/photocopier costs, and postage (envelopes/stamps).
- 4.13 We review our approach to sustainable procurement at our Health, Safety & Environmental Group meetings. This is an internal HEFCW group that meets three times a year.

Example

HEFCW's collaborative procurement work with higher education institutions

- 4.14 We work collaboratively with the higher education sector, Welsh Government, taking a consortia approach to avoid duplication, improve performance and follow procurement best practice.
- 4.15 We publish annually a [Higher Education Procurement Report](#) that details the sector's procurement progress, efficiency and best practice, including information and case studies about community benefits achieved from their procurement activity and their implementation of the Welsh Government's Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chain.

Example

HEFCW's support of higher education institutions' estates

- 4.16 We have provided capital funding (2018 – 19 £10m) to higher education institutions to enhance their estates. The criteria for the award of funding includes:
- (i) that the capital investment plans should include details of how expenditure would improve the learning and teaching space, benefit the student experience and reduce institutional risks associated with estate utilisation and levels of future expenditure on university operations; and
 - (ii) that suitable projects could include those that seek to increase the efficiency or to improve the condition or function of buildings.

5. NRAP Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

Use biodiverse- and native nature-based solutions wherever possible by providing local green spaces for communities and visitors to improve health and well-being outcomes

Example

Welsh Government remit letter to HEFCW (2019-20): Climate Change and De-carbonisation

- 5.1 In 2017, the [Welsh Government published a commitment for a carbon neutral public sector by 2030](#).
- 5.2 In our [2018-19 remit letter](#) the Welsh Government drew attention to the [Green Growth Wales](#) initiative. To date one university has accessed the funding to develop a large-scale recycling project.

- 5.3 In our [2019 -20 remit letter](#) the Welsh Government encouraged universities to join voluntarily other Public Bodies in efforts to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and stimulate significant economic, social and environmental benefit. The remit letter states “Higher education institutions have a key leadership role through the impact their activities have on their staff, students, local communities and the influence their purchasing practices have on Welsh supply chains. There is considerable potential for the sector to make a significant contribution in this area through research, business and industry collaborations”.
- 5.4 The environmental risks to Wales are outlined in Welsh Government’s draft [Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Wales](#) and detailed within are the thirty-two adaptation actions public bodies can take to respond to them.
- 5.5 Welsh Government’s evidence points to a number of key areas for action needed to achieve carbon neutrality, which are:
- how we build;
 - how we manage and use or buildings;
 - our transport and mobility strategies;
 - how we manage our land; and
 - how we procure goods and services.
- 5.6 Institutions are already taking action to reduce their impact across some of these areas and three universities have formally declared a climate emergency. This report details examples of the actions HEFCW and the sector have taken in order to meet the S6 duty.

Example

HEFCW’s Well-being and Health in Higher Education Policy Statement

- 5.7 In November 2019, [HEFCW published its Well-being and Health in Higher Education Policy Statement](#). Within the document HEFCW has committed to work with Public Health Wales NHS Trust to support higher education and further education to implement the [Healthy and Sustainable Higher Education/Further Education Framework](#) which incorporates health and well- being.
- 5.8 The framework recognises the following six health topics:
- mental and emotional health and wellbeing;
 - physical activity;
 - healthy and sustainable food;
 - substance use and misuse;
 - personal and sexual health and relationships; and
 - sustainable environment.
- 5.9 The aspects of college and university life covered are:
- governance, leadership and management;
 - facilities, environment and service provision;

- community and communication; and
- academic, personal, social and professional development.

6. NRAP Objective 6: Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery

- ***Ensuring someone is responsible for ensuring biodiversity action is taken – ultimately this should be the board or chief executive of the organisation***
- ***Ensuring the S6 duty is monitored and reviewed***

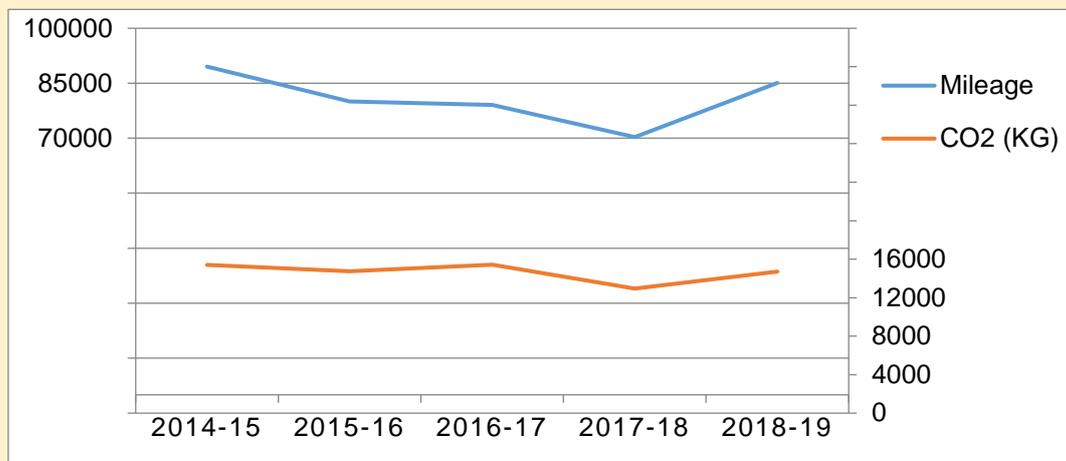
Example

6.1 HEFCW's Chief Executive is responsible for the delivery of the Corporate Strategy, including making progress towards our vision statement and reporting to our Council. Environmental sustainability forms part of our governance reporting system via our annual report and accounts. The information below is taken from our 2018 -19 annual report and accounts and provides a summary of HEFCW business travel and associated carbon emissions.

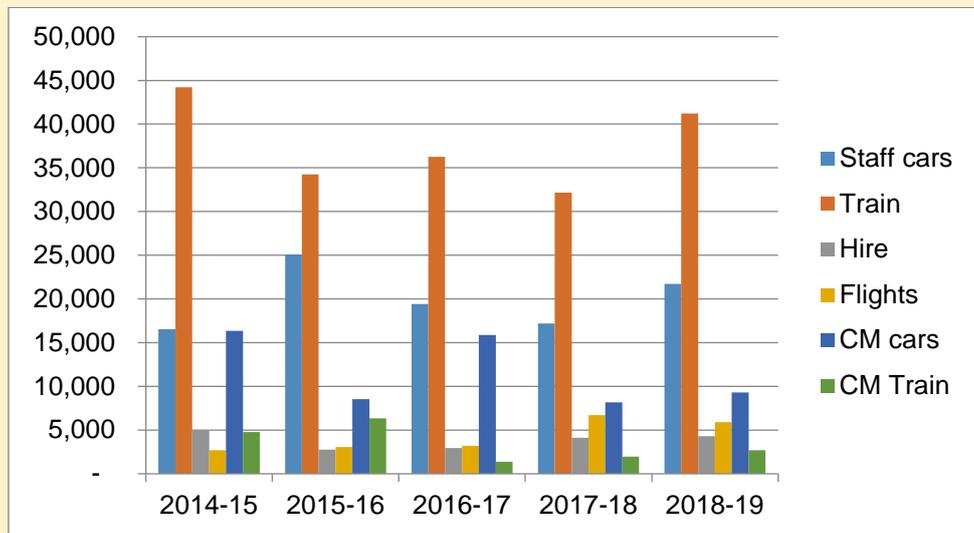
Business travel

6.2 Carbon emissions associated with HEFCW business travel vary from year to year, in part due to new and changing policy commitments and changes in both the personnel and associated travelling patterns of Council members. As illustrated in the graph below (**chart 1**), from 2014-15, business mileage reduced and had been broadly flat until 2018-19 when it began to increase again. This increase in emissions is despite an increased use of video conferencing, tele-conferencing and train travel.

Chart 1



6.3 Annual mileage and methods of transport vary depending on the impact of changes to Council members' business travel and the general business need. Train travel remains the most frequent method of travel. **(see Chart 2)**



Business travel summary

6.4 Throughout 2018 -19 HEFCW has seen a 13% increase in carbon emissions arising from business travel (14,722KG), mirroring the overall increase of business travel (14,762 miles). As noted above, annual mileage varies depending on the impact of changes to Council members' business travel and the general business need. We continue to encourage staff to avoid business travel where possible and to use trains where possible, particularly for longer journeys.

Waste an energy minimisation

6.5 Having moved to the Welsh Government building at Bedwas in 2016, we are no longer able to capture detailed data relating to our own consumption of waste or energy.

7. Review of S6 duty

7.1 HEFCW will conduct a detailed review of its priorities and functions to make more progress towards meeting the requirements of the S6 duty in 2020. This will be reflected in the newly developed 2020-2023 Corporate Strategy to be published in March 2020, which will set vision our ambitions and priorities over the next three years.