Witness Seminar: How has the Environmental Movement Developed in Wales?

Convened for the Oral History of the Environmental Movement Project

This account of the meeting is based on a transcript that has been judiciously corrected, edited and some minor additions to make to make it more concise, and easy to read for general circulation. We have endeavoured to check name spellings, but it has not always been possible to contact every participant to confirm, so please be cautious in this regard, and note that the spoken word is not always grammatical.

The meeting was held on the 20th March, 2025 at the Bute Building, Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University. We are extremely grateful to the We are extremely grateful to Professor Juliet Davies and the Welsh School of Architecture, for generously providing our venue for the recording, and all those involved in organising and contributing to the meeting. The participants were asked for permission to make this document public.

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[inaud] - inaudible word or phrase [incomp] - incomprehensible word or phrase	[sp?] – spelling unclear/unknown [?] – substantial section where audio is inaudible

Participants (in alphabetical order):

Alyson Austin, opencast campaigner
Andy Rowland, Ecodyfi
Anne Meikle, Ex WWF Cymru
Gary Mitchell, Social Farms and Gardens Cymru
Haf Elgar, Friends of the Earth Cymru
Karen Whitfield, Wales Environment Link (WEL)
Margaret Minhinnick, Sustainable Wales
Rachel Sharp, Wildlife Trusts Wales
Rory Francis, Snowdonia Society

OHEM project team members in attendance from Royal Holloway, University of London

Dr Barbara Brayshay, Post-doctoral Researcher
Chris Church, Project Officer
Jeremy Iles, External Liaison Officer
Dr Toby Butler, Reader in Geography

Audience members

Chris Fray
Phil Williams
Tanya Nash
Robert Minhinnick

1) How has the unique context in Wales shaped the environmental movement and what have been the key moments in the development of environmental work?

[00:06:22]

Barbara Brayshay: *So for this first session, the headline question that we're going to be talking about is 'How has the unique context in Wales shaped the environmental movement and what have been the key moments in the development of environmental work?' So to speak to this we've got four people on the panel. We've got Haf Elgar, Andy Rowland, Margaret Minhinnick, and Alyson Austin. So just to start off I'd like people to go round the, we will extend actually, we will extend the conversation out to other members of the panel after this first part of the session. So I'd like to, we'll start perhaps with Alyson. And what I would like people to do, just to start off is to just say something about yourself, just your role in the work that you're doing. And actually also maybe say something about this unique context of Wales, because I think it would be quite nice to have that on record for this recording. Really your thoughts about the uniqueness of Wales. So Alyson, hand over to you.*

Alyson Austin: I'm Alyson Austin. I'm a long term fairly experienced campaigner. I started campaigning with Ffos-y-fran open cast coal mine starting in 2004. The reason why I started with that was because it directly impacted me. And then it just grew. We got involved with groups. We got involved with FoE, Coal Action Network. We went on then to, we closed down Aberthaw power station. We stopped the extension of the coal mine over at Nant Llesg. We stopped an incinerator coming to Merthyr. Over the twenty-one years it's been extremely busy. I think for me the uniqueness of Wales has got to be the fact that a lot of things in Wales have been devolved. So we have our Welsh Government now. And it's far easier to get the ear of a Senedd member. And to be honest they are extremely warm and extremely welcoming. We can go in there and we have got their ear.

[00:09:04]

Barbara Brayshay: *Oh thank you Alyson. So Haf would you like to speak now?*

Haf Elgar: Yes sure. So my name is Haf Elgar. I'm the director of Friends of the Earth, Cymru. I've been working for Friends of the Earth for is it eighteen years, seventeen, eighteen years now. So I'm a newcomer and don't think I'm qualified to speak on a history project but there we've go, I've been persuaded to be on the panel and glad that those such

as Margaret that have been around from the start are here as well so that it's not just relying on me. So yes, so I was initially a campaigner for Friends of the Earth Cymru. So working specifically in the devolved context as I started in 2008. So that was already, already there, working on a number of issues from, you know, fuel poverty and energy efficiency to incineration to open cast coal to legislation in the Senedd, like the Environment Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act which we'll get into later. To things like transport campaigns against the M4 relief road and then looking more at sort of transport strategy and how we can stop that from happening again. To issues like clean air as well as obviously, yes, climate change and a bit of everything that's involved in that. So in terms of context of Wales, I mean I think there's so much that could be said and I'm aware there's others on the panel as well so I'll try and keep it brief. But I do think there really is a unique context that goes back centuries really also about Wales being a unique nation. You know the language and the culture makes us unique. But also the whole and very relevant to the environment and our current situation is industrialisation and the way that Wales was developed 200 odd years ago based on sort of commercial or imperialist needs rather than local. So you know as well as sort of exploitation of communities and that that created then and has continued I'd argue up until now, all the environmental injustices that we see throughout Wales. That's also our transport infrastructure is based on getting resources out rather than connecting communities internally throughout Wales. And the whole sort of set-up of Wales, you know, moved from- Or have a combination of a lot of land that's still rural and smaller market towns and beautiful countryside that has been kept. But also a lot of coast, I think that's really significant how much coast we've got around Wales and those coastal communities and small market towns. But then since industrialisation, the Valley communities and the cities as well, so that whole set up of how Wales was industrialised and has developed is really crucial to the issues we're seeing and working on now in the communities we work with. And you know the economic and social challenges and poverty that, whether it's rural or post-industrial, that stem from that. And also in terms of activism, I'm not sure specifically the environmental movement, but Wales is a small country, we are quite connected as different organisations and groups despite the challenges of geography. And there is a strong history of internationalism and peace movements and the women's movement. So sort of strong activism that has come from Wales and you know Greenham Common starting from Wales. And all of that history to me has fed through to environmentalism. But I'm not sure quite of the path so I will leave that to others, but I just wanted to mention it.

[00:12:58]

Barbara Brayshay: *Oh thank you Haf. So Andy.*

Andy Rowland: I'm Andy Rowland. I'm retired and I retired from a social enterprise in the Dyfi Valley called Ecodyfi which combines economy and ecology primarily. And I was the director of that since 1998 and for fourteen years prior to that I was at the Centre for Alternative Technology. So I've paid those dues as well. I'd like to build on a few things that Haf has mentioned there. The first one with some trepidation as a second language Welsh speaker, but just to amplify a bit more the Welsh language context of environmental action. And I'm hoping that others will be able to improve on what I say later. It's sometimes said, going back to my kind of early if it can be called a career, sometimes it was tempting to think, well compared to some parts of England, if you look around who's doing the environmental action, it seems a bit lopsided. Or rather too similar. Yes a lot of middle-class people, white people, English speakers were more apparent it seemed in the environmental action than the Welsh speakers. And I mused on that for a while at the time and wondered whether a lot of the energy of the Welsh speaking communities and peoples had taken up in Welsh language culture issues and defending the Welsh language and the nation, which required a lot of energy and still does. So that's a thesis that is unproven. But the links between them are very interesting, partly because the Welsh language movement obviously has a strong tradition of non-violent direct action and the radicalism that derives from some of the things Haf mentioned. And so the, if there were two sides in those days they had a lot to learn from each other in terms of techniques as well as understanding the culture. And I feel that work has been slow to gestate and maybe more could be done yet. And going to values, yes, the values of not just pacifism but what I would characterise perhaps as stewardship of what we now call our natural resources. Stewardship of the environment, habitat, land. So I'm from Mid-Wales now. And I was struck when I got stuck into it and under the surface a little about the attitudes I was finding, particularly in the farming community, very strong, the business of handing it on to our future generations. Which is in great accord with the large numbers of people who came to the Dyfi Valley from elsewhere, again environmentally driven from some way. So a lot of common ground there. Not, maybe that's not unique to the UK, but certainly it being the Welsh country, the Welsh culture is the unique dimension. And maybe we'll have time to talk about Madryn in a bit as a specific occasion. But just to go on the economic front

slightly following from Haf, yes it's been an extractive economy hasn't it, by and large, with coal in particular. And it's just worth nothing I think that to a certain extent that continues. And I'm thinking of onshore wind and I've been much involved with onshore wind from a community perspective, trying to increase community control and ownership as opposed to the extractive model of capital being provided from elsewhere and therefore the economic benefit goes elsewhere.

[00:16:28]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you. So Margaret would you like to introduce yourself please?*

Margaret Minhinnick: I'm Margaret Minhinnick co-founder of Friends of the Earth Cymru with Robert who is over there about forty, just over forty years ago. But I was an environmentalist before that obviously because I wouldn't have done it from nothing. And I think that, like we've all been saying, there's this uniqueness about Wales, obviously the language, the culture, the location here at the west side of the UK, sort of seen as a county of England by many people in the UK. And it's not. When you live here you know it's a country and you know it's got its own culture and its own history as you've been saying and uniqueness. And I think that was why we needed to form Friends of the Earth Cymru. It wasn't, it was just because of that, because you knew at the time that the campaigning that was being done in London sometimes was appropriate for Wales, we could reflect some of the issues, you know, acid rain and that. But then when you got into the information realised that my God, an example would be acid rain, that the issue was really obviously significant here and therefore the campaigning had to reflect what was going on. Another would be open cast mining which wasn't reflected in the UK. There were lots of campaign groups around in the north of England and so on that were campaigning in isolation. But you had to start getting the information level adequate, confidence building information that was about your locality because we had a different media. And they had Welsh institutions, they had the Welsh Office then. And the civil service that you had to try and influence. We didn't have the politics. We didn't the same type of politics as we've got now. But we had a fantastic media, in fact we had a better media then than we have now. Loads better. And you got to know the good journalists, the ones that were taking it seriously what you were doing and wanting to help in a sense lobby with you. We were able to get on TV easily, well relatively easily, you know, doing the stunts and stuff like

that. But making the story relevant to the location. You know it's really important that the ammunition that you're using has got meaning to the place you're in and to the people you're trying to convey that communication message to. So that's how we kind of started off getting going and developing local groups that way. And the local group network is still there and it's fantastic. Actually didn't say anything about Sustainable Wales did I? But I actually, shall I say it?

Alyson Austin: Yes. [laughing]

[00:19:50]

Margaret Minhinnick: [laughing] But twenty-five/six years ago I, with the help of Robert again, decided to set up Sustainable Wales, which I am a director of. And we kind of aim to sort of create some solutions for the councillors. Because it felt years ago that councillors just were mindful all the time just to accept jobs at any price. They had to get jobs for their community but they did not really know how serious some of these jobs would be environmentally and how long, they wouldn't be long term, things like that. And so it felt like we had to create some actions which showed, create some solutions for the councillors to kind of learn more about. It kind of felt like that. And like first campaign was the real nappy campaign that, you know, there you are sustainability, economic benefit, mums would save loads of money. You would create a local business, nappy laundry service. You'd be protecting the environment, reducing landfill. And you'd create a network of people, create a social response to a campaign. So it was, that's how we got, we pushed that agenda twenty-six years ago. Very much into consumerism now and trying to challenge consumer behaviour to be more people and planet friendly, shop local, all that green stuff. And we've got a cooperative as well which creates a practical project to allow people to achieve it.

Barbara Brayshay: *Lovely, thank you Margaret. So I think we probably, we'll have to move on to the second part of the question here, and ask each of you in turn to talk about what you think have been the key moments in the development of environmental work. And, you know, you feel make it relevant to the work that you've done yourself, or the field of work that you're in, that's fine.*

Alyson Austin: Right, I'm Alyson Austin and I think the realisation for me was, I was at a Rossport solidarity camp campaigning against a high pressure gas line going through the

village. And was sitting in the field and I was listening to their story and up until that point I always thought with Ffos-y-Fran that we only had to get the story up there at a high enough level within Government for somebody to realise how absurd and how ridiculous the scheme was, how unfair it was and somebody there would do something. Well I'm sitting in this field and all of a sudden I realised, this is exactly the same story, they've changed the name of the developer, they've changed the name of the place, but other than that it's exactly the same. And it was at that point then that I realised what level of campaigning and what level of work we had to do to win. So we applied that then to the Covanta incinerator project, and it was a fantastic campaign. We managed then to win that campaign, it wasn't just us as a group. It was like a national thing in Wales and different groups all over the place, different groups within our area and we managed to stop it. Well at that point then, Wales's waste sort of strategy changed. And now Wales is the second best recycling, not just UK, not just Europe but the world, so I think Merthyr can be very proud of itself and everybody who campaigned for Covanta and the incinerator. The second one then obviously is the closure of Aberthaw power station. We were very instrumental in that along with FoE, Coal Action Network, we managed to get that closed down. And then with that then we cut off the feed for open cast coal mining. So there was no power station in Wales taking coal therefore no need for coal. So at that point it was very much the turning point of open cast coal mining. From that we had the win with the Ffos-y-Fran extension. We had the, the policies in Wales against coal. We had the presumption against coal. And I think it's changed things dramatically. That's me.

[00:24:40]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you Alyson. And Haf would you like to tell us what you think the key moments were?*

Haf Elgar: Yes sure. And because I know what's coming up in terms of the other panellists I'm going to try not to stray too much into the impact of the Future Generations Act so we can keep that for later, although that's a long list in itself. And maybe looking internally in terms of the movement as well as our outcomes as well, I've got to say establishing FoE Cymru in 1984, thank you Margaret and Robert who are here. But I do think you know establishing professional structures, organisations that are looking wholly within the Wales context has been really key for the environmental movement. Also the

coalition of Stop Climate Chaos Cymru, I think I'm, was it 2006 was- Were you around? I'm not able to remember who was around, when Stop Climate Chaos Cymru established as a sort of wide coalition of organisations. So it was just before my time and yes Morgan Parry, former head of WWF Cymru was involved. So was Gordon James who was director of Friends of the Earth Cymru. And Julian Rosser and others at the time. But those sort of structures that we worked together as an environmental movement. In terms of sort of more externally then, and if Gordon was here today, he's unfortunately ill, but I'm sure he would be raising this as well, the Sea Empress oil spill in 1995, that was such a big issues, you know, pre-devolution days but that was such an obvious environmental disaster hitting the shores of Wales, our local group in Pembrokeshire was really active on a practical level trying to rescue the sea birds. But then how, how that showed gaps in environmental protection and it took a couple of years work to make sure that there was prosecution eventually in 1999 as a result of that. But that feels like a really significant turning point pre-devolution. And then an early with, once we had devolution was the GM Free Wales campaign, the statement, you know, unanimous vote by Assembly members back in 2000 that Wales would be GM free. And that, you know, the FUW and WI was involved as well as environmental organisations. So a really early example of how things can be different in Wales because of devolution, really testing that system.

[00:27:14]

Barbara Brayshay: *And was that also bringing that kind of coalition together.*

Haf Elgar: Yes, yes, a different coalition not just environmental groups as well. And that goes back a bit to the uniqueness of Wales. You know the Size of Wales is a brilliant rainforest charity but also commonly used as a sort of unit of measurement. But it is important in terms of the necessity of working together as well as sort of the naturalness as organisations despite, you know, geographical barriers and things like that. I think, yes, devolution has allowed us to do that. As well, you know, the fact they wanted to do different things, because I agree with everything that Alyson said as well, the recycling targets. And at the same time as that in 2010 I think was the plastic bag charge, which was a sort of, a real policy that people could see, you know. It was Wales being the first country in the UK to introduce a plastic bag charge. And that came from local groups running campaigns in towns across Wales of plastic bag free towns and sort of bubbled up from

there to be a national policy. Which sort of showed Wales willing to be a bit brave and a bit different and maybe something that, one of the early things that just influenced every person in Wales from day to day that they could see that, that at work. Yes and as you say, yes, Covanta and the open cast victories that we've had. Although we're still battling away at that. And then of course, yes, the sustainable development coalition that Anne Meikle who's on the panel today Chaired and then we got together and got the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, was definitely a big turning point both in terms of how we, again working together as an environmental organisation but also bringing lots of different actors across society in, and winning that Act. I've got a long list after that but I might keep- I might stop there so that we can focus on the wins since that, or that that has influenced at a later session.

[00:29:16]

Barbara Brayshay: *Okay. Okay, that sounds good. And so Andy would you like to speak to that?*

Andy Rowland: Yes. Well it's for others to judge perhaps how key the moments are. But I think it's probably appropriate I focus back in on the energy field, not so much the fossils but the nuclear and the renewables. And I mentioned Madryn earlier and the poor transcriber will be wondering what on earth a madryn is, well it's a fox, a particularly cunning fox. But it was also the campaign that in the end was victorious if there is such a thing, you can never be secure. But anyway, for the time being stopped the threat of nuclear waste being buried in Mid and North Wales. And so we're going back to about 1983 I think, from memory. I had been living in Aberystwyth, I was only on the edge of Madryn itself but I was heavily involved in the Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance which is against civil nuclear as opposed to military nuclear, although both in practice. And the Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance is still going, rather surprisingly perhaps. And did result in the majority of Welsh councils signing up for nuclear free Wales. So it was done through the local authority structure as is quite a lot of campaigning. We've seen climate emergency since of course. But the, North Wales was identified as a possible geologically appropriate place to dump nuclear waste, to bury it one should say. And so geologists, poor souls, came from the geological survey and were either followed, which I had a small part in, or even perhaps harried one might say, as they went about their business trying to find appropriate spots. And I mention it not just because it was a resistance of what was seen as a culturally

imperialistic movement as well as the environmental impact itself, but because it did exemplify how the Welsh speaking communities and the non-Welsh speaking communities can really come together in action. And that was certainly done under the leadership I think of the Archdruid Geraint Bowen, which is perhaps again a particularly Welsh thing. Why would a leading poet be leading a, quite a radical environmental action? But he brought it together and Dafydd Elis-Thomas who has recently died of course was very prominent as a politician. But as seen from the Centre for Alternative Technology, who had been seen as a rather sort of, well definitely an incoming thing in Mid Wales with some resistance from longstanding residents, this common cause made a shift, a step up in the understanding and collaboration and is notable from that point of view I think. Around the same time, the idea of community ownership of renewable energy assets was still very young. The first commercial windfarm was in the Dyfi Valley, at Cemmaes, around that same time. And we had Dan McCallum with Amel Awen Tawe labouring at what turned out to be the very foothills of a generation-long struggle to get a significant sized community windfarm built in South Wales, which he did. And on the back of that and several others, we now have Community Energy Wales. So there is now a very active and effective Welsh movement for community ownership of renewables.

[00:33:08]

Barbara Brayshay: *So Margaret tell us what you think, tell us what your thoughts are on the key moments?*

Margaret Minhinnick: Yes, well looking back again, like Haf was mentioning, I think with Friends of the Earth, when we managed to get a regional structure, and we were no longer tied in with Wales and West Midlands, and we were able to form our own kind of annual general meeting and full regional meetings with training and that, bringing the expert knowledge back into Wales and applying it to Wales, made a massive difference. And then the other thing that struck me when I was trying to think about this stuff was, what happened then, for the environmental movements, we came together a bit via an organisation called UK 2000. And that morphed into Environment Wales. UK 2000 was established with some Richard Branson money. And just before that it was Prince of Wales committee. So there were some influential people setting an agenda here that we could get involved in and get some money out of. It meant that at that time we were able to employ

a staff member who couldn't campaign but they had an office, they had facilities. And we had more staff to be able to get on with it. Because remember it was cyclostyling. We didn't have photocopiers. We didn't have stuff to- And we used to stick, you know, manually post, take these copies, put them in envelopes, stick your stamp on and get to the post. You had to do all that manual stuff to get messages out. And that meant we had more equipment. We were able to kind of get an office and get more people come in to help slowly. And the community groups that we were interacting with, because we were with Wildlife Trusts and archaeological groups and it was a lot of them anyway, I can't quite remember them all. But we were kind of sharing experiences and knowledge and confidences again. And establishing that kind of move forward for the environmental movement. So I think that was important. And then they were able to help the community sector who wanted to do some practical project, whether it were a beach clean or a gardening thing or whatever it was, do it, you know, because they needed a bit of money to do it. So I think you know things like- And then of course the PR that went along with it helped, if you like, market the fact that the change is occurring and people can get involved in the environment. And then another one I wrote down was the Rio Earth Summit in 19, was it '87?

Barbara Brayshay: *'92.*

Margaret Minhinnick: Oh I had- 1992.

Audience member: 1990.

Chris Church: *'92.*

[laughing]

Margaret Minhinnick: Well whenever, you know. And the concept of sustainability came in then. And you know we were, I suppose at the verge of understanding what that was, but not everybody was, I don't think they can't get. But you know the connection between the economy and environment, social issues, culture and so on. So I think that made a difference. And then there was Local Agenda 21 where local authorities, from that, had a Local Agenda 21 officer. And they used to kind of pull stuff together or go out, outreach a bit more. And then that went on for a few years and then that folded. So that was good

then, at the time, really good. And I kind of thought, we're getting there. But I wouldn't say that now. I wouldn't say that now. And then in the Referendum and devolution that you've started to mention already anyway, that made a difference again, that we, we then get the development of a Parliament for Wales where you've got politicians to go and lobby. You didn't have to just do Westminster stuff. You could get at them and try and influence and they had a civil service too of course, and you could get a bit more closely linked with everyone. They did used to have regional meetings years ago. And you could, you know, go if there was an issue in that area, or the community groups could, and lobby that way, more face to face. I can remember we did 'finding our voices' because a big part of sustainability is participation, community participation, decision-making together, with this long term thinking. And judging the past, present and the future all together. And the 'finding our voices' thing, two conferences we did. But one was just before the election of the first set of politicians for the Welsh Government. And they all came and we had big round tables and everybody was discussing whatever it was all the time, you know, you can imagine. And yes I think, you know, that kind of gelled us more then. We were able to network more than we are now, get around and do stuff together and to learn from each other and ring each other up more. [laughing] So I don't know if, that's all, that'll do for now. [laughing]

[00:39:08]

Barbara Brayshay: *Okay, that's great thanks. [laughing] And so I'd like to throw this topic out to other people, the other people in the panel. Would anyone like to share their thoughts? Anne first of all then.*

Anne Meikle: Yes, I just, I wanted to come in now because what I wanted to say is very much what Margaret was saying about the whole sustainable development stuff. And for me that's the point where we in Wales started to think about our global impact. Not just what went on in Wales and how did it affect us locally but actually what were we doing that was affecting other areas? And I worked for a national park in Wales at the time of the Rio Summit. And the whole Agenda 21 and Local Agenda 21 changed the way we operated because I was already there to do community engagement, and this was a gift as to how do you engage that local community in how to manage those areas in a way that was sustainable for everybody. And I think it started a process for me that has happened

in different organisations since, because it started with that and then, as you say, it changed a bit, but it started getting communities engaged. And it started public bodies having to think about it and having to engage with our sector as well as their local community, which made a bit of a change in the whole way things happened. And then for me, when I came to work then for WWF, WWF were already in a project with Welsh Government among others to develop ecological footprint as a measure of our global impact. Imperfect as it is, it's still to this day a sustainable development indicator. And it was, what I liked it most for was its ability to paint a picture for politicians, for ordinary people about how much stuff are we using and how much more are we using than our fair share. So I think a lot of things for me then came from that. Certainly within WWF we went on to develop, well what do you about that? We wrote *One Planet Wales* which is how do you get from here to one planet's worth? What do you have to do? And then, fortunately for us, Jane Davidson when she was then Environment Minister picked that up and actually developed a plan for Wales by 2020, how much they were going to reduce their footprint. And unfortunately they had an election and did anybody ever do anything about that plan? No they didn't. So, and that's a continuing frustration I think of anybody who works in this sector, it's short termism. But for me that's what then, by the time we came to going, okay so we need systemic change, we need something like a Future Generations Act, as it then became, having an alliance of people who cared about sustainability in a very broad sense was how you came to that alliance. It had unions in it, we'd been involved in other things like CND. I mean it had other bodies and people who had networked for years through Sustainable Wales through Cynnal Cymru, through whatever, they were people who were already connected and they weren't just environmental in their focus. And so, you know, that alliance included people like the Welsh Language Society. You know, from us in the environment, we had a particular agenda for that, which we can talk about later. But other people had agendas too, and the Act tried to bring them all together. So for me the thread in some ways has been from that sustainability conference to how have we taken that and how have we used it to make things different in Wales?

[00:57:22]

Barbara Brayshay: *That's great, thank you. Did you Gordon? Sorry, Gary.*

Gary Mitchell: Gary.

Barbara Brayshay: *Gary, sorry Gary.*

Gary Mitchell: No that's all right. I just wanted to perhaps pick up on part of Andy's point, and Alyson's really, on that, potentially that extractivist nature of Wales and our natural resources that we have got, and looking back even further in history to the mineral extraction that we have way before coal really, so lead mining particularly, I'm in Mid Wales with Andy as well. And pollution from lead mines is a really significant factor not only in my communities but how far that's travelling down the water courses and the flood plains. And the maps of where the levels of contamination aren't safe are just staggering. Fifty percent of our water bodies failing on the health directives, if you like, in terms of water quality, fish stocks decimated in most of our rivers now. And a lot of that stems back. I've got one mine in my patch, seven tonnes of cadmium a year still coming out of it, and that's 200 years after it stopped mining. And that's been happening for 200 years and that's after all the lead's already washed out and sunk out and things like that. So looking back a long way as a nation of Wales, we've been extracting a lot of our resources, water is a topical one locally for me, I've got Thames Water looking at a reservoir in my neighbourhood, saying, 'Oh we could put that up twenty metres higher and we can get it down the Severn and extract out through canals back into London,' because London's running out of water and Wales is still pretty wet. And we don't really capitalise on that but the environmental impact is sometimes significant. If we look at Trawsfynydd for instance, many people would argue, gosh we're ten years decommissioning and it's a billion pounds a year cost, but no we're looking at it again for nuclear generation, and Wylfa again. But who is thinking about the long term impacts of that process? Energy is an awkward one for me in terms of local energy production and wind particularly. One of the communities that I support is facing the largest clusters of large scale energy parks anywhere in the whole of the UK and probably arguably in Europe. Ten large energy parks all owned by multi-corporate national, international bodies, other government bodies, very little Welsh ownership or local ownership within that at all. But the communities are faced with that as a dilemma. They know they want cleaner energy but they're the ones greatest impacted and arguably not seeing much of a benefit from it and then what happens later on after they've extracted energy, what do the communities get? So just reflecting a little bit, looking further back on how as a nation of Wales we've been creating some of our wealth through extraction, but how it hasn't really delivered environmental gains certainly to date and I think we've got to get better at that and flip it around somehow.

[00:46:42]

Barbara Brayshay: *That's great, thank you. How about Rory or Karen, would you like to speak?*

Rory Francis: Could I pick out two, what for me are key moments. And the first one was long before I had anything to do with environmental campaigning myself when I was a little boy, the dreadful tragedy of Aberfan. And I do remember it happening, you know, adults talking about it. And that must have been so traumatic, particularly for people in the South Wales valleys. And I think that that, as Haf was saying, that must have driven home to everyone to what extent South Wales had been exploited both economically and environmentally. And I think there is a strong feeling, isn't there, in the South Wales valleys that that is not the way it's going to be in the future. And I'm sure that that underlines an awful lot of the strength of the green movement in Wales and why the Welsh Government and the Senedd has been willing to pass the legislation that it's passed. I mean I remember a few years ago we had people staying with us from Patagonia, and I was driving to this exhibition about Aberfan, and I was telling them on the way this dreadful disaster, you know, all these kids, fifty kids were killed. And they said, 'Well yes you're saying that was 150 years ago?' And I said, 'No, it was fifty years ago.' And they couldn't believe it. I think that was really important. And the second thing, which is a much less important thing in one way, but very shortly after devolution, in probably about 2003, 2004, Wales Environment Link that Karen works for that she'll tell us about, decided to change its name from Wales Wildlife and Countryside Link. You know it had been set up in the mould of Wildlife and Countryside Link in London. And we realised that actually we had our own Senedd, we had our own Government, and we should be pushing not just a wildlife agenda and just not a countryside agenda but an environmental agenda. And we decided to change the name to Wales Environment Link. And it wasn't an easy discussion either, you know. I mean actually the RSPB weren't at all happy, they thought we'd lose focus on what was happening to curlews or whatever. But the, on the casting vote actually of Mervyn Williams who was the Chair at the time, we decided to do that. And that was so important because, you know, we are part of an international movement, aren't we, which is about finding a way of living in harmony with the world environment, and that was really important, in my view.

[00:49:29]

Barbara Brayshay: *Thank you. Karen would you like to-*

Karen Whitfield: I'm very grateful that I don't have to keep describing us as WWCL instead of WEL. [laughing] It's very hard to say. So I'm Karen Whitfield, director of Wales Environment Link. I actually only came to Wales in 2009, so even less qualified to speak on a history seminar. [laughing] I think for me two key moments, and I won't go into too much because it will kind of, it'll kind of cut into the kind of last ten years and stuff. But when I first came to Wales I was so impressed with the One Wales One Planet policy that I saw. Because coming from outside, and also I hadn't worked in the environment sector before. I actually for my sins worked for the Royal Bank of Scotland as a market researcher. And you know in my world you just didn't hear about that. And it was, it was you know it was so well explained, it really brought it home to me what sustainability meant. So that was a really important moment for me when I first joined the sector as Wales Environment Link's first policy coordinator. I think the other thing that I would pick out for me is when we got full primary law-making powers and we started to work on the Act. And, because I spend a lot of my time working on policy and legislation, understanding and kind of upskilling the whole sector on how to read legislation and how to lobby for good legislation. I think we learnt, we probably made some mistakes when we were, when we were looking at those kind of, at the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, because we weren't used to kind of looking at things like commencement dates and how to really kind of tie down the key things that we needed to make sure that we had something that was really effective and that could be enforced. And I think we've learnt a lot from that, you know, that whole journey with legislation. And we've had a lot more in Wales since but I'll talk about that more later on.

[00:51:33]

Barbara Brayshay: *Okay, thank you. I'm opening it to the floor. So is there anyone in our audience, is there anything that you'd like to add please?*

Toby Butler: *Please say your name.*

Chris Fray: Chris Fray.

Barbara Brayshay: *Chris. I'm sorry I was trying to read your badge from here.*

Chris Fray: I enrolled in this building on a town planning course in 1967. And Cardiff Council, as it was, had just accepted what was known as the Buchanan Report, which was going to drive a major highway into the city centre, right through Roath. And the city council had compulsory purchased that road between 1500 and 2000 houses which were going to be demolished for this road. And there was a strong student community body that was totally opposed to this. And the fight went on for a couple of years and eventually the city council gave way. And the hook road was scrapped and those houses were put back on the market so that people could live in them. Can you imagine today someone suggesting they knock down 2000 houses in a city centre, on the edge of a city centre? I mean, I think the student body at the time in the late sixties was heavily involved that type of politics. They weren't interested in demonstrating about the university and the sort of things going on, they were more interested in getting out there and demonstrating in the community. And one of the first demos I went on in Cardiff in 1968 was about the Corona factory. And they stopped the deposit on bottles, so we collected a huge amount of bottles and had sort of photographs outside the Corona depot and of course we sent them all off to the press and it got absolutely nothing, no publicity at all. So there was this urge to do things, you know, which would benefit the environment. And I think it was a sort of build up of, you had the Welsh School of Architecture here, which was world class, you just had the start of the town planning course here. Both, you know, strong Welsh leadership in both of those. And I think because Wales has both a beautiful landscape and an industrial legacy, and a lot of the people I was on the course with have gone on to develop things like the Glamorgan Heritage Coast, which is a pilot scheme run by, which was the money came from the Countryside Commission then. And it was one of the pilot projects to sort of establish the preservation, the conservation of the undeveloped coast in the seventies. And that pilot scheme was rolled out across England and Wales. And associated with that you also had things like the establishment of Planning Aid Wales. And Planning Aid Wales, I was a member of Planning Aid Wales, you gave up your time in your local community to help organisations who were combatting what the local authority or other bodies were doing locally. And for instance I got involved in an allotment group in Maesteg and the local authority wanted to build houses on the allotment. And I basically told the allotmenteers how they would go about combatting this, and luckily the local authority at the time decided that they wouldn't put the houses on this particular- the allotmenteers won, you know, the allotments are still there today. So I think out of the sort of, you know this build up in Cardiff especially of people who wanted to do things to do with conserving

the environment and not add to the pollution. And I think that it was because of this, the coming together of people who were actually interested in the environment both architecturally, from the planning point of view, and for other environmental reasons as well. So it goes back beyond 1970, it goes back into the sixties.

[00:56:29]

Barbara Brayshay: *I think that's one of the things actually that I'm conscious of because people I know, was that there was quite a strong sort of alternative community, people moving into Wales and setting up. And I think some of them are still, some of those communities are still here. But back in the seventies, eighties, something I'm really aware of, that people, alternative living and moving to Wales to do that was quite a part of the cultural landscape at the time. And we're just on time at four o'clock for a break now. So thank you very much everyone.*

[Audio ends: 00:57:22]

2) What has been the impact of devolution on the environmental movement?

[NOTE: the audio recording began shortly after the session start]

Rory Francis: -…a whole range of issues. And I was also kind of fortunate because I happened to speak Welsh. And you know Friends of the Earth Cymru was active on transport issues, waste issues, open cast issues. So it was brilliant for getting messages across.

Audience member: Yes you were rent-a-quote for a while, weren't you. [laughing]

Rory Francis: Well you've made me a rent-a-quote rather. But also part of my job was to work with the local groups, you know there were twenty-five local groups around Wales and I had made a point of going round to see them all and say, 'Look how can we work together?' And you know I think we really did put into effect didn't we the idea, think globally, act locally. And you know managed to build up Friends of the Earth Cymru as an organisation from the grassroots. And I think that we always anticipated devolution because as Margaret was saying, we always insisted on taking on the agenda that was important in Wales, not what they told us to do from the London office, but to pick up issues. And we got pressure, we got kickback from that didn't we as well, but we insisted and said, 'Look this is what we're supposed to be doing.' So I think, you know, that that was really important. And when we got devolution it then allowed huge changes to happen. Obviously you saw the big organisations like the RSPB and, well the RSPB in particular, and WWF of course, recognising the opportunity that the Senedd offered and be setting up offices, you know. I remember at that time meeting Morgan Parry, you know, going up to Mon and Arfon Friends of the Earth, and Morgan was very much the brains behind that organisation, insisting that we should not just work on a Welsh agenda but we should use both languages and we should build up a- We should get our message across in both languages. Which, you know, not everyone took for granted in those days. And that has allowed us, I think, that has allowed the Senedd to make huge changes. When I started there was a recycling officer, you know, working for Friends of the Earth Cymru. I think it was two percent of the waste stream in Wales was recycled. It's now I think sixty-six, second highest in the world. We've got the requirement for net zero written into law. We have got more of our energy generated from renewable energy than from fossil fuels. We have, we saw, you know, a few years ago pretty well all of the road schemes in Wales

cancelled for environmental reasons. You know it's made a huge difference, and it's shown that local communities can stand up. And we know that bad things are happening in politics in the world. You know we've got Trump and we've got Putin. We've got populists taking over. One guy who, I regard him as a friend of mine but I've never actually met him face to face, a guy called Donnachadh McCarthy who used to be active in the Lib Dems but he's now kind of a freelance environmentalist. What he does is to go onto GB News, that horrible television station, full of Farage-like propaganda and he argues the environmental case. And he argues it in populist terms and he gets Nigel Farage to agree that actually it's important that we have a planet that's liveable in the future. Because we know that maybe Nigel Farage doesn't care about the future of the planet or net zero but actually the people who vote for him do. And you know we need to make those points. We need to remind people why it's so important to change. But we should remember that, although we haven't done enough, we haven't done it fast enough, we've made huge differences, we've had a huge impact, and devolution has been a really big part of it. I'll shut up now.

[00:04:32]

Haf Elgar: *No that's great. Toby I was just going to check whether the tape was running from the start.*

Toby Butler: *I'm afraid it wasn't from the start.*

Haf Elgar: *Okay no problem.*

Toby Butler: *So would it be possible just if you just introduce yourself and it was just the first kind of thirty seconds.*

Haf Elgar: *Okay. Shall I just say what the session is as well?*

Toby Butler: *Please. Thank you.*

Haf Elgar: *So my name's Haf Elgar. I'm facilitating the second session which is: 'What has been the impact of devolution on the environmental movement.' And we were just hearing from Rory Francis. I think the tape clicked in quite soon when you started but if you can just introduce yourself.*

Rory Francis: Yes I mean I started off by saying that I landed my dream job in 1990 when I started working for Friends of the Earth Cymru with Robert and Margaret. And that it was a great opportunity to meet with local groups. And that at the time the environment was very much the issue of the day in terms of the local media, you know, the local, the- I mean, I've actually got a book here which rather immodestly claims to be *Cynefin y Cymro: Y llyfr gwyrdd cyntaf yn Gymraeg,* 'the habitat of the Welsh', which claims immodestly to be the first green book ever published in Welsh, which of course it wasn't, absolutely not. But it was published in 1989. And they were, you know, the authors were jumping on the bandwagon but they sing the praises quite rightly of the Nature Conservancy Council and the RSPB, the National Trust. And make the point about the importance of getting local communities and farmers and communicating in social references, you know, with Welsh language culture and history.

Toby Butler: *That's lovely thank you. And also just to add if anyone's going to speak who wasn't part of that first forum, the first round, if you could just introduce yourselves and say a little bit about yourself before you discuss.*

Haf Elgar: *Yes. So Rachel Sharp of Wildlife Trusts Wales. And yes Rachel if you could introduce yourself and then give us your thoughts on this topic.*

Rachel Sharp: Certainly. So my name is Rachel Sharp. I'm the director of Wildlife Trust Wales. And the Wildlife Trusts are a bit of a unique organisation, as in we consider ourselves a bottom-up organisation. There are forty-six Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK from the Isles of Alderney up to Scotland. But in the Welsh context there's five Welsh trusts. And we're a federated structure that come under the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts. We're an organisation that believes that you can only really advocate for nature's recovery at that local level. And we've got over 330 nature reserves across Wales. You can only manage that sort of estate at the local level. And it gives us this unique opportunity to really get to know local communities. We have over 2,000 volunteers in Wales. So to manage that estate, to really embed ourselves in those communities and then enable that support, that has to come at the local level. And I think that really suits Wales. I've always said one thing fundamental about Wales is Wales is large enough to be a devolved nation but small enough to get everybody who matters round a table. And that gives us very unique opportunities in Wales. So we, you know, at the moment we employ about 180

people across Wales. And we also have about 180 nature conservation projects. So as well as the estate, I think we're now the seventh largest landowner in the UK, as well as that estate we also have these nature conservation projects. They run from species re-establishment to species re-introduction and habitats. And we do the land and the marine. The unique thing about Wales is we have more sea than land. We are a coastal nation. And often there's a misconception about who, you know, what really matters. We are a coastal nation. We look to the sea. But sometimes I don't think that's really reflected in the environmental movement in Wales. But I think that is now starting to change, there's starting to be a shift to understanding, not just because of the importance of nature but also it's a natural resource that governments particularly around renewable energy are waking up to. So that's fundamentally who we are as an organisation. The five trusts as I say are very embedded at a local level. But one of the things I've witnessed, not just in Wales but in the environmental movement, is we've had decades and decades of broken promises around nature. And part of that has been, when we talk about the environment we often talk about energy, waste, transport and now climate. But very rarely does that mean nature. And one of the challenges I think has been, even around devolution, it's really trying to embed concepts around nature and why nature is important. I'll progress onto that because obviously now the Welsh Government has declared a nature crisis. I started my career in England. And so I want to start off by having a reflection of what my perception of Wales was before I crossed the border, even though I was living in Wales at the time. And it was very much a, not much to be honest. That not much is known about the environmental movement in Wales, I'm being very honest. And kind of preconceived concepts about Wales and the Welsh. And I think some of this story, the narrative, what is the environmental movement in Wales, is a narrative about those perceptions of us in the UK context and the story of devolution in a more general sense. But what has been quite clear in the ten years from 1990 to the early 2000s, that really radically changed. A lot of organisations like mine at the UK level suddenly realised that we have a very different political set up in Wales. And that actually you could play that off against what was by that stage a predominantly Conservative UK Government, to a Labour Government in Cardiff. And actually you could start looking at what are the differences? What's the differences in approaches? And start trying to use that to your advantage to highlight some of the issues. That really took off obviously when we had the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Because that was groundbreaking. And that was a good four years of my life I think, endless meetings to that. You have to remember though when we started off on that journey, there

wasn't a resilient Wales goal. And there wasn't a global goal. It was just a battle just to get the, you know, some of the key things around culture even into the Act. So it wasn't a given that Wales was looking to the environment, wasn't looking to its global place. And still it irks me that that goal is called a resilient Wales goal. Because what the heck does that mean? And only until you actually the goal itself do you start to understand. It's been fundamental as in we now have to have local authorities looking at their biodiversity duty. But we've just heard through the Wales audit office that only forty-eight percent of local authorities have actually taken up that duty. So I'm still not convinced that that is getting fully embedded into decision making in Wales. However, it's been quoted internationally, not just across the UK, you know, 'What Wales does today the world will do tomorrow' is the quote that often gets referred to. There's no doubt about it but I think in that Act, the real key to it is actually the five ways of working, and we are nowhere near really understanding and implementing that. We still in this sector are in a position of short term funding, short term decision making. And we really need to get away from that if we are really to have the impact. All we're concerned about at the moment, the Wildlife Trusts, is nature's recovery at scale and at pace. And it's frustrating that we still don't see that focus on nature. We're slightly behind I think, the climate agenda is much further forward in Wales, and we need to bring that nature agenda along a bit quicker. And then that Act then invoked things like the Environmental Wales Act. And obviously now we have the Agricultural Wales Act as well. And that's really important for us as an organisation to have those unique pieces of legislation specific to Wales to actually, to then actually keep, trying to keep Welsh Government accountable. My next kind of reflection though is what kind of difference does that really make on the ground? Because the other big difference between the Welsh Government and the UK Government is budget, and our ability to raise funds because obviously Treasury is not devolved. And that has constantly been an issue trying to get work at scale and at pace undertaken. But actually I see now a completely- and maybe we'll do this in the discussion, about what's next for Wales. Because actually Wales is very rich in what often is referred to as natural capital, it has huge opportunities to get investment in, and so we're quite uniquely placed to overcome some of these issues. But we're still not there in terms of politically and culturally and willingness to accept that. If we don't get there politically or culturally I feel like we will never see nature's recovery in Wales because there simply will not be enough funds, because there's definitely not enough public funds, to undertake the work. We are also going to see huge change in our politics going forward with the new super-constituencies going from sixty to ninety-six

Members of the Senedd, the MSs, and that that will all be proportional representation. So Rory you talked about the Green Party, I think there's a real opportunity going forward that we might actually see our first Green MSs in Wales. And given that the last Welsh Government budget was reliant on one single Liberal Democrat, we could actually, they could become quite powerful because you've always had a situation of coalition. So in terms of what does it mean to be an environmental organisation in Wales, as I said the key thing is you've got that access, you've got the access to the Members of the Senedd, the Cabinet, the First Minister. It's very easy for me to impress some of my UK colleagues when I talk about being with the Deputy First Minister about two or three times a week; I've known Huw Irranca-Davies for over fifteen years, we employ his son, it's a very tight-knit community. And that allows for faster dialogue. It doesn't necessarily mean that you get the decisions you need. But you're more likely to understand why you don't get the decisions you need. But we still haven't got the gravitas around the nature agenda for me. So that's the biggest difference for me is around that lack of ability to raise funds, to attract funds. So we find ourselves in a sector that's what I call a Catch 22. It's often running to stand still. We've got some amazing local community initiatives, amazing people wanting to get involved, but we're stuck in this stop-start, three year project cycles, that's not complying to the five ways of working and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. And I think that's where we now need to focus going forward.

[00:17:04]

Haf Elgar: *Great. Thank you very much Rachel. And anyone else who would like to come in to raise their hands now. Just a reminder, the question is, 'What has been the impact of devolution on the environmental movement?' So that can be in terms of how we work internally as a movement, or in terms of outcomes and policies etc. Or in terms of structures. So Karen Whitfield you have your hand up first.*

Karen Whitfield: Thank you. Karen Whitfield. It was actually to pick up on a point that Rory made about following devolution, environmental, UK-wide environmental organisations seeing the potential in Wales and setting up offices in Wales that were, I suppose, some were more independent from England than others. And I wonder what your thoughts are Rory on whether that might be starting to go into reverse a little bit with all the kind of cuts and austerity. Because my experience through working through Wales Environment Link in recent years is that particularly with some of the smaller organisations

that may have had offices it not an office covering Wales, that is starting to go into reverse because organisations don't have the funds that they used to have ten years ago, fifteen years ago, and so Wales is the first office to be cut.

Haf Elgar: *That's interesting Karen. Would you be happy to answer that Rory?*

Rory Francis: I mean I have to say, I'm sure Karen has her finger more on the pulse than I do on that, dealing with all the different organisations. But I would say that the big UK organisations would be mad if they turned their back on trying to influence the Welsh Government because we have a legislature. What happens in Wales in the environment is down to the Senedd. And okay, yes there are incredibly important levers like tax policy and energy policy that we can't control, but there are huge areas that we can. And I mean I'm sure that environmental bodies are having to cut across the board, but I think they would be absolutely mad to close down offices in Wales.

[00:19:18]

Rachel Sharp: Can I just have a reflection as well, just on that. One of the things I have been quite, you know, I champion Wales within a UK environmental organisation. And we actually restructured, probably about ten years ago, around devolution. So we are absolutely committed to that, and so we have Wildlife Trusts Wales that actually deals across Wales, all the advocacy of our Welsh partners. And it's quite important to remember that. Some of our major funders like the Heritage Fund do have a Welsh office. They have a Welsh CEO and Chair and board. So also our funders are expecting us to work within the devolution frame and to have that relevance to Wales, as well as our major partners as well. So there are those external drivers to this. I think the point that Karen was getting to, I think every organisation wants to have Welsh offices and Welsh officers but they simply can't afford it anymore. In my early career that was really key because not only would I be joined by members from WWF or RSPB or the Woodlands Trust, I'd also be joined by members of Butterfly Conservation and Bat Conservation Trust. They no longer are there. So there are fewer voices around that table I talked about. And that does have an impact.

Haf Elgar: *Thanks Rachel. Alyson did you want to come in on this and then we'll go to Anne.*

Alyson Austin: Yes. Alyson Austin. As a campaigner in Wales I find that my voice is much stronger with Wales having devolution. I find that I may not be able to approach my immediate Senedd Member but I can approach my regional Senedd Members. And they are very willing to come in, to listen, find out what's going on. We've had a lot of success by using the Senedd. We've had the All Wales Against Open Cast which was generated by a Senedd Member. She's and ex-Senedd Member now, Bethan Jenkins. She put that group together and we had people from all around Wales who were involved in open cast and we were all sitting together talking about what our problems were and what we wanted from the Welsh Government, what we wanted them to do about it. Out of that we had the 500 metre buffer zone. And yes, we've had a lot of success. They can do a lot more. They can be a lot stronger. Sometimes they're sitting in their ivory towers and we feel that, you know, they're not really aware of what the real impacts are. Especially with nasty campaigns that are going on that nobody ever wants to sort of get involved in. As long as they feel that things are in place and protocols and processes are in place to protect, then everything's going to be fine. It really isn't. The Government needs to be stronger on that and it needs to have more accountability. But my voice is much stronger and I am able to raise these issues whereas I wouldn't be able to do that with Westminster.

[00:22:37]

Haf Elgar: *Great. Thanks Alyson. Yes that's interesting in terms of the system, the element of proportionality in the system when you've got regional members as well as local members. And that gives you sort of multi-party options as well, isn't it, and of course the Senedd building itself was designed as transparent and meaning, you know, literally glass fronted. But that wonderful wooden canopy that goes over is also wonderful for rallies. It does feel like it was designed for a good-*

Alyson Austin: It was. It was. Yes.

Haf Elgar: *-good rally on the Senedd steps there even if it is windy down the bay. So that's another plus. Over to Anne Meikle.*

Anne Meikle: So Anne Meikle. And I mean I'll just add one tiny bit to what Rory has said I think about setting up offices and changing governance. I worked for two different UK charities over that time period. In both I had to do presentations to the board on the Welsh Language Act to get them to understand why they had to do things differently in Wales. I

think I did the last of those in about 2009. I've never had to do one since because gradually there has been an improvement in the understanding from certainly the large UK charities about what's different in Wales, what's the opportunity from that, going to Rachel's point, and what do we have to be careful of, like the Welsh Language Act or whatever. So I think that's been good. I was going to go back to when there was a new Welsh Assembly and Welsh Government. It was set up with a requirement around promoting sustainable development, which came about from all those years before then and the momentum from Rio and onwards, and it did make a difference. It was a collaborative body. It wasn't as it is now, a Government as an opposition. It was collaborative. And there were opportunities that there just weren't in Westminster, particularly in the early days, because they were all new, they didn't have resources and expertise in Government or indeed in the Senedd, they'd never done this. And actually there was a huge opportunity for us to teach them about the environment, and we all took it with great alacrity. But they also, I think it was the only time as WWF we ever had any money from Welsh Government. And it was for a marine officer, going back to your point, because everybody recognised there was no capacity on marine at all in Wales, including in Government. Nobody knew what to do with this, all of this sea that we had. So there was quite a different feel I would say in the first let's say ten years of that Assembly before they changed the way it operated. And a lot of opportunities that were the envy of our UK based colleagues because of that access and that willingness to collaborate I think. We'll just give them their due on that.

[00:26:01]

Haf Elgar: *Yes. Yes I think it's also worth remembering that we first got devolution in Wales from a very, very narrow referendum in 1997. And that everyone was very aware of that in setting up these institutions that they needed civil society, they needed, you know, to sort of develop devolution. It felt like very shaky starts and that getting everyone together around the table and everyone working together was sort of built into that culture from the start because of that element. And also as you said Anne, you know, Welsh Government is very small isn't it, the civil service, you know, Members of the Senedd have small offices, there's a small research service, so they do rely on expertise of the third sector and of organisations like this. And I'm sure Karen will be able to come on this as well, that you know, and maybe that was more true at the start than it is now, but certainly it felt like, and still feels like, you know, Members of the Senedd really appreciate information that we can give them and the expertise that we have as a sector. So that's sort of, yes, built into the model of devolution. Did you want to come in Karen?*

Karen Whitfield: Absolutely. Absolutely. It just reminded me of a recent meeting we had with the Minister for Climate Change and Deputy First Minister describing his time when he was an Environment Minister in Westminster and the civil service team that he had supporting him of eighty or 100 people or something like that, and he now has a team of about four people and the disparity is just enormous. So yes, absolutely, I think that does give environmental organisations a real opportunity then to feed in their evidence and you know data that they have and their recommendations, and Welsh Government is quite receptive to that.

Haf Elgar: *Anne do you want to come back in?*

Anne Meikle: Yes it just reminded me of one other thing that was different. I used to try and do this when I was arguing with the UK to give me more resources. Trying to get them to understand that it wasn't just Welsh Government, we had a relatively small team of people who had to be fantastic across a whole range of topics. And trying to get them to understand that it wasn't as siloed in Wales as it was elsewhere, and I would be expected to be able to talk to a politician and not just on one topic but on quite a few others that range around it, and they would want that input. And you know it's the same with the communications stuff: they have to do both languages, they have to do media, they have to do social media, they have to do marketing; they have to do all of those things that are separate functions at a UK level. So there's a lot more, I was going to say cohesiveness and understanding across the piece, I think, within this sector in Wales than necessarily in our UK counterparts, who can afford to be a bit more specialised I think.

[00:29:20]

Haf Elgar: *Certainly. Would anyone like to come who hasn't yet? Margaret?*

Margaret Minhinnick: Can I have an ask really. From what you're saying, yes, the experience that we are getting at grassroots and every level is a strengthening of this movement here isn't it. The fact that we do it at every level, that's an advantage, a massive advantage. But I was just wondering, because you know, I don't work at this level anymore, whether because you have close relationships with the politicians, whether it's weakened the campaigning edge.

Haf Elgar: *Good question.*

Rachel Sharp: I'm quite happy to answer that.

Haf Elgar: *Yes Rachel.*

Rachel Sharp: In a blunt term, over my dead body. [laughing] So hopefully that sets the tone for the answer. I think that if you're going to campaign on something, you have to have a reason, evidence, and a fundamental way to deliver that. And I think that's when politicians will listen. And I think at times if you go without that intent to enable the change, then it becomes problematic. But I think what's been really good about the environmental movement is it's also, Anne you talked about that, that kind of they were all new, we've all grown together. And it's kind of- one of the things I have often had from environmental ministers that I've predominantly worked with, is just 'Tell me what you want. Tell me what you need. And then I can tell you if I can give it to you or not.' You know, and as I said, the answer isn't always 'yes we can do that', but at least they're willing to listen. And often people will say, you know, there's an accusation across sector around where do you get your money from and does that alter what you do? In my experience anyway of the Wildlife Trusts, never would we compromise- I always say charities, we run on reputation first and money second. All it takes is one incident of, you know, perception about us taking money or being directed in a wrong direction and we would lose huge amounts of membership and confidence of funders. And now our relationships have grown. Our relationships are with the philanthropic community, with wider donors, with corporates, major international investment now. It's becoming even- the world is becoming really complex for us, but we're very clear, you know, we have received as an organisation £38 million from a company called Aviva. It took us two years to do our due diligence on that company, for us to be absolutely convinced there wasn't even an hint of greenwashing in our relationship with them, because of that reputational risk. I think the problem is, is lots of kind of other players in the commercial world that actually are quite willing to have a greenwash type relationship, and we get tainted by that. Because all the public see is there's an environmental activity, say planting trees for example, and that's not being done with Welsh communities, very specific to Welsh culture. And one of the last things- I think one of the things that isn't recognised and this is across the board, is how actually having charities and environmental organisations involved in projects, you

start to embed some of those principles around community engagement, doing things with and for communities rather than to. And that we will safeguard that greenwash reputation. So I would say definitely not, and we need to be very clear about our voice in campaigning, but to make sure that it's being, you know, it has to be critical when it needs to be, but we also need to give pathways into resolving whatever it is we're campaigning for.

[00:33:27]

Haf Elgar: *Thank you. If I could come in, it's Haf here, with the microphone, and that having said that I have been in meetings in coalition spaces in the past where some organisations have said, look we agree with this ask, with this open letter, but we don't feel we can sign because our funding is based on some specific project funding from Welsh Government or from another public source. So we'll work behind the scenes but we don't want to be seen publicly, you know, that the money that we're given isn't meant for campaign means. So I think there is, there can be an element for that maybe with smaller organisations. But that doesn't mean that if you get public money you don't campaign. There's plenty of organisations across Wales that will, you know, know how to do the working on projects for the public good or with public money, but then will protest, will raise their voice when they need to, will work with politicians when they need to.*

Margaret Minhinnick: Can I ask another? Do you find that advice comes from, you know, the experts, the scientists or whoever, this is what used to happen to us, something like Professor Steve Ormerod, Professor Ron Williams, no, Countryside Council of Wales, whatever it was then.

Phil Williams: Ron Edwards.

Margaret Minhinnick: Ron Edwards and various, one or two, some others used to say, 'No don't say that, say this, but don't put my name to it.' Do you get that going on? And that is really important that sort of thing. And one or two journalists who are good enough to kind of, I don't know how it works with journalists now because it's so difficult. But you know those, there are these other people need finding who help you become accurate and solid. And you know that the politicians have to look at it.

Haf Elgar: *Yes, yes. Absolutely. The movement isn't just NGOs or NGOs and activists. There's the whole academic community and experts out there as well. Anne you had your hand up first and then I'll come back. So Anne Meikle.*

Anne Meikle: Yes. I think there's two things. It's not always been rosy in Wales. I have been through a lot of fights with Welsh Government and other public bodies about them trying to put constraints on- that go with their funding that are absolutely not acceptable to our sector. And that fight has been won in my memory at least three times and it keeps coming back. And partly some of that's been driven, there was a whole period when the Conservative Governments in the UK who really had a go at charities. And it carried over somewhat into Wales as well. But there was a fantastic Charter back in the early 2000s that Wales Council for Voluntary Action negotiated with Government about the proper way of partnership with the people they funded. And that wasn't just our sector. And it was great. And then again like many of these things, it disappears in some change of Government and you have to start all over again with another bunch of people saying no, no, no, that's not how these things work, you cannot do that. And I think there's a lot of that. But then one of the things that surprised me, so I Chaired the Sustainable Development Alliance around that Future Generations Act, and afterwards we commissioned an independent review of how did that go as a campaign and what did we learn from it? And one of the things that genuinely surprised me that came back from their interviews was the number of smaller organisations who said, one of the reasons they valued being part of that alliance was they did not feel able, like you say, to put their name publicly to something because they felt it would jeopardise their relationships with Government or their funding. And I think that's pretty appalling and it probably merited quite a bit more investigation than it got. I was genuinely surprised that that was one of the reasons they valued being part of an alliance.

[00:38:21]

Haf Elgar: *Yes. Thanks. Did you want to come in Karen?*

Karen Whitfield: Yes that would be great. Anne has said so many things there that I want to respond to.

Haf Elgar: *I know, respond.*

Karen Whitfield: But I'm not sure if I can remember them all. [laughing] I think I was going to say that I think it's, the environment movement as a whole, and here I kind of include what Margaret was saying about, you know, academics and maybe public bodies providing evidence as well, the way it works together is really important. And not every part of it will be a campaigning organisation. That might not be their purpose. It might not be their speciality. You know, they may not be very good at it in some cases. But working together to kind of bring that evidence and then get those with a kind of real kind of campaigning expertise behind that. When it all works together like with the SD Alliance, I think some of the campaigns we've done through Wales Environment Link on different Bills and so on, that, you know, that's really powerful when we get all those kind of parts working together. We need the right legislation and policy in place to have an impact. But by itself it won't work. We need pressure on the ground. We need local examples of how these things are working in practice. And politicians need to see that people care about this and they're will to campaign. And it has to work all together I think. You know you can't say one part is better than the other part. That's my main view. I would like to just mention the chilling impact of the Lobbying Act that came in though.

Haf Elgar: *Yes, the UK Lobbying Act, yes.*

Karen Whitfield: That has made it really difficult especially for small organisations to campaign around elections. We are constantly not sure what we can do. Working together in a coalition or a network is even more difficult because you have some parts of the network that might want to do their own campaign but then if you do something collectively they have to think about how that impacts on what they can spend. And it's an absolute minefield. So I think that's had a really chilling impact in the last few years.

[00:40:27]

Haf Elgar: *Yes, thank you Karen. It'll be kicking in again next January. Yes. Toby.*

Toby Butler: *Just a question, and it's a sort of devolution question, but what about Europe? In Northern Ireland this was a massive kind of area and the interviews we did in Northern Ireland revealed that an absence of Government, Northern Ireland Government through this period, meant that leaping up to Europe in the courts and legislation stuff was very useful. I'm just wondering how has that played out in Wales.*

Haf Elgar: *We have two minutes left and I could speak for an hour on that as I used to work in the European Parliament before coming to the Friends of the Earth. So I'm not sure that's fair. I was going to ask Andy or Gary if they wanted to come in on the original question just to give you opportunities on this issue. But totally optional, but just-*

Gary Mitchell: I think, so yes Gary Mitchell, the only thing I would perhaps reflect around devolution, so we're definitely closer to our politicians, we're about to expand the Senedd, that means we can theoretically get quite closer. But the constituencies now are ginormous and that becomes really complicated if you look across the border into Westminster, the MPs constituencies are just crazy, I don't know how any single person can work across those constituencies. And then for my sins I'm a county councillor for Powys. So it's the largest authority in Wales, it's a quarter of the size of Wales, and I hold the ward that is famously the second largest ward in the whole of the UK outside the Highlands and Islands. And geography in Wales is a challenge sometimes with politics, even with six Senedd Members for a constituency, those constituencies are vast. And every community will have a different issue, concern, point of interest etc. etc. And they will get lobbied around everything. And I was just reflecting really then in my notes was actually the pressure in terms of politics often just comes down to money and budgets and where the priorities are, where are the statutory duties in the legislation and what you should be focusing on. But actually wanting to support your communities with whatever their needs are, and you have to look at poverty that we've got across Wales, all of those real impactful issues for constituents is what the politicians have to really try and work through. So although we have that benefit to talk to our politicians, I can see how constrained they are in terms of resources behind them, finances to do what they might want to do, and also all those competing other pressures that they've got, just makes it hard. And I will say I think more recently politics is becoming more toxic generally. Even in Wales we see it, which we wouldn't have done five, six, seven years ago. And it scares good politicians off. And there's some pretty good ones probably not going to stand for the next elections. And that just becomes hard doesn't it. So I think, yes, devolution is good in absolutely most of the ways but it comes with its pressures as well.

[00:43:32]

Haf Elgar: *Thanks. Andy.*

Andy Rowland: Well I haven't got time to do my bit now.

Haf Elgar: *No.*

Andy Rowland: I just wanted to offer a small case study based around the UNESCO Dyfi Biosphere. There's only one UNESCO Biosphere in Wales, it's in our patch. But just the bit that I will just point to is that devolution was very helpful because people like me have been banging on for several years back in 2002, 3, 4, about this opportunity that we've received to take advantage of this international status. And we weren't really getting traction with the statutory bodies, especially with Defra, and it's a Defra thing at the UK level. But with devolution came the opportunity and the personal connections are definitely part of the story. So Pete Frost from the Countryside Council for Wales turned into an enthusiast for these biospheres, he really saw the potential. And eventually Diana Reynolds got a new job in Welsh Government, and on her first day there, at the end all this amazing loads paperwork that she had been dealt with, because she's a process person, she said, 'Right I've got to actually do something on my first day. Oh look there's this sustainable development issue opportunity for this partnership-working to be innovated with Wales. Countryside Council for Wales wants to give them 100 percent funding for this community engagement process to discover whether this is a good idea or not, we can't do it because of the Treasury rules, without Welsh Government signing off.' And she had the power and she used it on the first day. She said, 'Well I'm going to allow it.'

Haf Elgar: *Good example. Thank you. We are at time. Toby has raised a totally different question-*

Toby Butler: *Sorry, yes.*

Haf Elgar: *-about, about Europe. I'm not sure who I'm looking to in terms of timings. Do you want us to answer that now or could we come back to it after the third panel where we've got time for other lessons from history from our current situation. Shall we pack it into that maybe rather than start another discussion because we might have a lot to say.*

Toby Butler: *I think that's probably a good idea, yes.*

Haf Elgar: *Okay, thank you very much. Yes, we've now got a just under twenty minute break and then the third panel.*

Toby Butler: *Wonderful thank you.*

[Audio ends: 00:45:35]

3) What impact has the Future Generations Act had over the last ten years? Are there lessons from our history for our current situation?

Chris Church: *-wrestle with, discuss. 'First is what impact has the Future Generations Act had.' And we've already had quite a bit about this but I welcome more inputs. We're then as we move on from that, we're going to look at history. This is after all being done by a history project, and we can have history just as something interesting to look at but possibly history there is something to learn. So the second part of the discussion as you will see on the screen is 'Are there lessons from history for our current situation?' And our current situation is perhaps quite different to what we imagined it might be. So we can use that as an opportunity to look at maybe where we're going as well, in terms of what we can learn from history. So first point, I was fortunate along with Toby this morning to attend the celebration event for the tenth anniversary of the Future Generations Act. And as I live in Oxford and we have a couple of county councillors who have been looking at this enviously for some time saying, could we be the first county to have a Future Generations focus, Act, whatever. We wouldn't have an Act but we might have a staff person or something. So it's been interesting. And it was interesting to hear the people who were sure it had done brilliant stuff. But equally there were a few people who felt it had fallen short of its aspirations which perhaps would not be surprising. Anyway, as initial discussants I have Anne who was heavily involved, Karen who wasn't so heavily involved but has been here in-depth ever since. And Gary from Social Farms and Gardens Cymru who as you have heard is also actually a councillor. So I'll start with Anne. Impacts, what do you think it's actually done?*

Anne Meikle: So I'd like to start back a slight bit about, as an environmental movement, what were the aims that we had for this Act? Why did we want it? We wanted it to give proper priority to the environment, particularly in Government decisions but in general in the decisions of public bodies because we knew full well that, as Rachel said earlier, it doesn't get enough priority. It doesn't get taken into account. So we felt it needed systemic change to put environment and climate at the heart of decision making in all policy areas. Because otherwise we were never going to stop the loss of biodiversity and tackle climate change. So this broad coalition came together, because environment would never succeed on its own. And I think to answer that point about has it done what we wanted it to do, there's three questions. Has it changed Government decisions that impact the environment and the long term? Action on the environment and climate, is it at the scale and pace that is required, because that's one of the things we wanted to change? And has it changed how money is spent, so it does less damage to the environment and it does more good? So my

answers are has it changed Government decisions, sometimes. They do do integrated assessments and they do take long-term into account some of the time. But they also game the system. They still do tick box. I haven't been there for two and a half years but I guarantee it'll be the same as it was when I last looked. And they use their framework to pull it into the mainstream and to enable them to justify whatever decision it was the Minister wanted to make in the first place. And I'm pretty sure they'll still do that, instead of as you wanted it to do, that framework to inform the options and make the decisions different. So I think Ministers and departments are probably still the problem and I don't know how you fix that. That's another question. Has it changed action on the environment to the scale and pace required? Biodiversity, no, absolutely definitely not. It is not on track to even get back to stopping the loss in the timeframe that anybody thinks is reasonable. Climate change? Probably not. I suspect most of the reductions in emissions, and I'm hoping somebody else who knows this better than me will tell us, might have been because of things UK Government has done. And there's a big hard job coming up for Welsh Government that they've not really made much progress on yet, like how do you heat houses, as an example. So and then, has it changed how they spend money? Well sometimes. So Rory said earlier, yes it has on transport, yes they've changed what they spend on roads and how they do it. Agriculture? Maybe. But definitely not enough. It's definitely not changed enough from the last time I saw it and somebody can argue differently, thank you Rachel. And climate, no not really. There are still probably if you did a proper carbon analysis of their budget, I suspect there's still rather too much of it increasing emissions rather than decreasing them. But I don't know that so somebody can come up with the goods on that. So my summary is it's a partial success. It has enabled change. But it hasn't put climate and environment as the key drivers of policy regulation and spend. That's my-

Chris Church: *Thank you for a very concise assessment on the three key issues. I'll come to Gary next. Gary you're working with Social Farms and Gardens, people very much on the grassroots. Have they noticed it?*

Gary Mitchell: Yes, thank you. I'll perhaps just give you a tiny potted history of me and perhaps Social Farms and Gardens as well. UK-wide charity, forty years plus in existence, joined like colleagues here today. Obviously our remit is to support community organisations to produce food but also to produce social outputs. And primarily most of

ours would be around health and wellbeing in some shape or form, or environment and climate. So very much at the forefront of what Social Farms and Gardens is about. I've been with the organisation thirteen years. It's a challenging space working across those devolved nations across the UK and in Northern Ireland where they, well they've got a Government at last finally, but they are a long way behind in many things. But actually maybe that's freed them up a little bit to just get on and do stuff as well as a bit of a reflection. I sit on a number of taskforce and sometimes they're positive and sometimes you feel what am I doing here? I've been here a long time and you're still banging that same drum. Seven years in a sustainable farming scheme, since conception to where we are now, and we still haven't got it. We're going to get it fairly soon. But gosh that's a long time not to create the policy that's needed, particularly in terms of the environmental gains around food and farming. I will say I love the Act. The team behind it now as well, and Sophie previously, Derek and his team, fantastic, approachable, you can work really closely with them and they get the issues. But what I worry about is how much teeth they have. There isn't really enforcement legislation behind the Act. There never was designed to be. And that's arguably okay and that's an approach Welsh Government will say they'll always take: we set the policy and the framework, you deliver and if it doesn't work we're not quite sure what happens because that's the state we're in really, nobody comes in and enforces it. We use the Future Generations Act a lot in our work. And actually we help the groups really understand it because that does unlock barriers and opportunities. You can say, well hang on, local authority or Government or public health, we can deliver your aims under this because that's what our communities do, you don't have to worry about it quite as much, we'll just do it as long as you support us and stuff. So a big part of our job is transcribing that Act into everyday life, if you like, how they do it, and presenting it back to them to say, we're doing this quite well for you. So looking at that community impact for me is important. I think Anne's very right, in terms of influence on public bodies it's a real challenge. They understand it, they know it's there, they're told what they have to do under it. It's a bit like you must produce wellbeing assessments. Okay, our local authority, and I don't want to belittle them too much, but our wellbeing assessments were based on 232 responses from our entire community. That's not very representative. And therefore that all gets transcribed up into this massive plan for five years' worth of development but I'd argue it's a bit meaningless. So there's that, there is that issue that that the Act itself is fantastic, very laudable, doing the right thing. I'm pleased to say actually Westminster have had a consultation about a Future Generations Act for England. And it's moved into the

second tier stages and stuff. And other countries have looked at it. We know that. But I hope they learn from a little bit of the lessons of the things that haven't quite worked as much as we would hope it does, draw on them, focus on them, work out how you overcome those in terms of creating that legislative framework. And I will just finish off by saying, you can still have all of the best policies in the world, all of the best Acts, the Environment Act, sustainable farming scheme and all of that sort of stuff, but Wales is in a poor state, state of nature report again absolutely damning. Rachel mentioned the audit office report, you just read the first summary of that and you don't want to read the rest because it's horrific. One of the most nature depleted countries in the whole of the world now, Wales. And that saddens me, we're green, we're mostly rural, we're highly agricultural, and yet our nature isn't recovering at all, not at any pace. It's getting worse. The farming sector, and I'm not anti-farming at all, my ward is deeply rural, but it's the only sector that is increasing its carbon emissions. And it's responsible for over a third of our emissions. So we've got to work out how we get better at that and how we curb it and how we support our farmers to transition and change. And our food supply in Wales is a bit like many of our natural assets, and an awful lot of what we produce is exported and we effectively, we create the environmental impact of that and the benefit sometimes goes elsewhere – and you can argue Northern Ireland the same – massive food producing nation but they've got some deep rooted environmental concerns across that agricultural sector that I don't know the Act is struggling to work out if it can overcome that. It talks about protecting our future generations at its core but it's not quite doing it yet for me. But seven years, ten years, arguably is not that long in turning that big ship around, is it. And there's a hope isn't there for the next ten years, let's improve on that. Thank you.

[00:12:23]

Chris Church: *Phew, I'm glad you finished with some hope after a slightly-*

Gary Mitchell: Sorry I don't want to be too negative.

Chris Church: *And that point I think about how we use it and understand it will be an important one. But as you said it was developed by a broad coalition. And while- sorry, Wales Environment, nearly said the wrong word, Wales Environment Link has been involved with that coalition or those groups who made that coalition. So, how do you see it?*

Karen Whitfield: Absolutely. So, I remember working with Anne when she was Chairing the Sustainable Development Alliance as we worked on that Act, in my role as policy coordinator in those days. And I do remember all of the work that went in to trying to make that Act as strong as possible. It was probably the first time we'd worked on primary legislation together. I think we learnt a lot of lessons from that. I'm not going to focus on all the things that it hasn't done because that's been covered. I did initially, when I was asked to come to this, look at, okay well a lot of the reports, the scientific reports, the data that I see shows that things are still going in the wrong direction. I looked at the national indicators that go with the Act and the milestones, and that's a mixed picture. I focused on the environment ones, that's a mixed picture but in general progress has been slow or not great. But there have been some good decisions I think that have been supported by the framework of the Act, particularly around transport. Now you could say how far is that the impact of the Act or the impact of a Minister or Ministers that really got the spirit of the Act and kind of took that on board to make the right decisions? One of the criticisms I have heard a lot of the Act is, how is it different from a policy? How is it more impactful than the One Planet One Wales policy that came before? And I think the difference in having the Act has meant that all public bodies, and some private businesses as well as a result of operating in Wales, have had to learn about the Act, have learnt more about sustainable development as a result. I do think that. And I think that's been a positive thing. And I think the conversations that we were having with officials, with people from public bodies and the wider citizens before the Act came in, it felt like more of a niche subject to me. And it does feel like more people understand this subject now, and that has been a positive. I think the introduction of the Future Generations Commissioners office has been a positive. When we were campaigning for the Act we wanted that commissioner to have stronger powers than it was given. But at least we did win the, having a commissioner that went for terms that went beyond the electoral cycle. I think that was really important. It's great to have a voice for future generations. I think the office is respected and that governments, the Welsh Government and governments around the world do listen to them. So I think that's a very good thing. But we have to remember that since the Act came in, it hasn't been a usual ten years. We've had the Covid pandemic, we've had the impact of Brexit, we've had the cost of living crisis. And the organisations that are supposed to implement this Act have just had cut after cut after cut. So it's difficult to say whether it's a failure of the Act or of the kind of opposing forces to the Act that are coming in from outside, I feel. I think also in Wales we've seen a huge amount of new

legislation on the environment since the WFG Act we had the 2016 Environment Act which we also worked on through WEL. We tried to get nature targets in that Act. We didn't get that but we are finally going to get targets to restore nature this summer, hopefully. We're still fighting to make sure they're good achievable effective targets. But it is coming. We've had the Single Use Plastic Act, Air Quality Act, Coal Tips Act, Sustainable Agriculture Act, all in the last five years. It's been too much for us all to keep up with really. But I still worry that, you know, even if these pieces of legislation are more tightly drawn, more enforceable, if there aren't the resources behind this for public bodies to enforce it, for people to implement the requirements of these Acts, we're still not going to see the scale and pace of change that we need.

[00:17:34]

Chris Church: *Right. So from tick box Act to enabler of other legislation, to a way of getting things moving, I have seen a few people nodding and scratching, and looking like they want to come in. Haf, I think you had your hand up first.*

Haf Elgar: Yes, oh there we go, quick on the draw. Yes, I feel quite a lot of ownership over this Act as Anne I think, did Rachel say earlier, you know, a good couple of years went into sort of campaigning for this. I think Karen as well, you know, we really put our minds and our hearts and everything into the campaign to get this Act. And had to save the Bill a couple of times. I think it's fair to say that without a lot of work behind the scenes that we might not have an Act. So I'm always sort of grateful for it and remembering what went into it and what Anne laid out was sort of the intentions at the start. So, yes, want to be positive about it because of that. So I'm going to start with positives, that I do think it's had an impact, maybe beyond the wording of the Act but impacts that we've seen in campaigns and policies. The first one I remember being with Alyson at Caerphilly Council, the Nant Llesg decision which was just a couple of months after the Act had passed. So it hadn't even sort of come into force with local authorities yet. But there was a big decision on an open cast coal mine there. And I remember in that meeting councillor after councillor quoting the Act and saying, 'Look this is coming, we can't possibly start a new coal mine now with this coming in.' And I just remember feeling so proud that actually we'd created something, got it through, that it was on the statute book and was having that sort of impact. And in planning decision making since then I've often heard it quoted as

well and used positively by councillors. And linked to that there have been significant policy areas which, that's the thing with the Act, it doesn't do anything on day one but over time as policies get revised, that it has been taken into account. So for example with coal policy and the energy hierarchy in Wales to turn that on its head and say renewables should be coming first, or energy efficiency of course should be coming first. We need to use less energy and then use renewables and that coal should be right at the bottom and shouldn't really be used. And fossil fuels should be phased out. And with planning policy real changes as well. And then the area of transport that's been mentioned as well. To start with the big decision of the M4 relief road, which we haven't really mentioned, where the then Future Generations Commissioner Sophie Howe stepped in and said this is against the Act. And a lot of our campaigning in coalition with other organisations and community groups against that road did rely on the Act, and it was eventually rejected. So I would say that's partially down to the Act but it's certainly a significant factor. And after that a few of us did more work in the whole area of transport. How can we make sure that transport strategy and policy is changed so that we're not just fighting site battles like this time after time. And that has now happened with the transport hierarchy, putting active travel first and roads right at the bottom, and the road review that came after that. So I think, yes, lots of positives, and we use it continually in our campaigning and sort of use it as a tool. Having said that it's possible that none of those would have happened without campaigning and without political will. So it's not sort of a guarantee in itself. So it's sort of a tool that you have to use, and working with the Future Generation Commissioners office as well and sort of using it. So it's only as good as how it's used and the political will. And I am fearful that we don't know what's happening in the future; it's good that it's in legislation rather than a policy, that it does tie future Welsh Governments. But we'll see how strong it is. So yes concerns around the enforcement of it and possibly that we need to strengthen the Commissioners' powers as well, I think that would be welcome.

[00:22:08]

Chris Church: *So it's a tool to use but it needs to be used better and resourced better. But Alyson, looked like you want to come in.*

Alyson Austin: Yes, I'm absolutely with Haf on this. I've feel really proud that we've got this legislation in place. We used it heavily with the Nant Llesg campaign. And I'd like to

feel that it was instrumental in winning our campaign for us. It's a good, solid piece of legislation to have in place, needs work I think because it's open to manipulation. Our horrible mining company are now using the Future Generations Act and Wellbeing Act to say that if they don't do restoration it's better for our health because they're not going to be so noisy and creating so much dust. [group laughing] So I think yes it's a fabulous piece of legislation but it needs a little bit tightening and a little bit of tweaking now to get it really effective.

[00:23:10]

Phil Williams: Alyson did you find that Merthyr council has understood the Act?

Alyson Austin: Oh it wasn't Merthyr it was Caerphilly.

Phil Williams: Oh Caerphilly then.

Alyson Austin: It was Caerphilly with Nant Llesg. We didn't have it for Merthyr with Ffos-y-Fran.

Phil Williams: Well did those councillors understand the Act?

Alyson Austin: I think they might have actually because they were all using it.

Chris Church: *Okay. Actually, oh I see Rory you look like you want to-*

Rory Francis: Well I would just like to be- I have to agree with Haf as well actually. I mean I do remember when the Act was going through the processes, it being discussed on the council of Wales Environment Link. And there was a gentleman from the Cambrian Mountains saying, 'Well yes how do you write the concept of sustainability into legislation in a form which is completely binding?' And it would have been incredibly difficult for us to get something which was completely legally binding in the future. But to me it's clear that it's a huge advantage that we have that on the statute book, and we've seen the impacts in terms of transport policy and many other sorts of policy as well. But what I would say is when they passed the Act they did so because there was pressure from their electors, from the public, and from organisations. And they also thought it was a good idea, it

aligned with their ideas. And it's our job as the environmental movement to get them to use it properly. And I would like to, this is a history seminar and I've recently read the book *Tir*, which is a history of the Welsh landscape by a brilliant guy called Carwyn Graves. And he talks about this poem, 'Coed Marchan', which was written by a travelling poet in the sixteenth century. And it's all about a group of squirrels, they would have been red squirrels in those days, who go to London to file an affidavit to protest against the destruction of their wood. But they don't say it's ancient woodland, it's protected, they said, 'Look we've got nowhere to hide from the dogs that chase us.' And they say, 'The owls have got no holes in the trees so they can't lay their eggs and they're screeching all night and they keep the children awake at night. And the piglets and the pigs and the people who look after the pigs don't have anywhere to take them to eat the acorns.' They were making the point of the importance of that woodland, and it was probably ancient woodland, to the wider community that depended on it. And I think that's exactly what we have to do as the green movement today.

[00:25:54]

Chris Church: *Well thank you. And perhaps you can give us, we could have that as an appendix or a pulldown in our blog on this.*

Rory Francis: I'm happy to give Carwyn a plug.

Chris Church: *Thank you. Before I come to Rachel, we have someone here, Tanya, who actually worked on the Future Generations Act. Would you like to come in for just a couple of minutes. Can you speak up so the mic's-*

Tanya Nash: Yes. So probably some context, I have worked for local government. I then worked for the Future Generations Commissioner and Welsh Government on various points, helping develop the Act, starting to implement the Act, and looking at where we're going. So I've got this overarching history, and with many of these people I've sat around tables. Anne, I've just got so many memories of you [laughing] arguing, us debating what should be in the Act. But I think, and very much so, that what we were arguing for was a paradigm shift. What we were asking for was a shift in purpose. And what hasn't been mentioned here is what the Act set out to do, the policy intent was to put sustainable development as the central organising principle for the public sector in Wales, the devolved

public sector in Wales. That was a purpose change. It was a paradigm change, okay. What we got is a rule book. What we got was a set of procedures of things that you need to do, this is what you need to do. And we weren't able to- what we haven't seen yet is that sort of whole paradigm shift, for a number of different reasons, Karen discussed, other people have said. And that's in part because Government is made up of people with their own agendas, their own paradigms, their own what they think is right. You know we can all argue the case about whether it's right or wrong. And that's what we're not doing, is the Act hasn't shifted the people part of this process. Part of this, and there's been a lot of criticism about the vagueness of the term sustainable development and what that means, and actually where does that come from, and as such people have openly tried to manipulate the process. The Act was really clear about the outcomes, it has a set of goals, it has a set way of working, but that sense of when you speak to some of the research that's been done, 'oh we're not clear on what it's asking for, we're not clear'. And I think some of that is genuine we're not sure but also it comes down to ignorance, but I think some of that is people just saying, 'We can't be bothered to find out, we can't be bothered to spend the time to really understand and explore that'. So I think what we've failed to do with the Act and we've failed to present, and I think as a body and a movement need to, we haven't yet got a clear articulation about what the alternative is. Wales lives in a global system, in a global site, you know, layers of other governments that are coming down. What we need is a succinct articulation of what, as an alternative, what the sort of current neoliberal capitalist stuff that we're getting from other places, particularly from North America at the moment. And I think in Wales we've got those stories we just haven't pulled them together in something that we could say. We talked earlier about the extractive economy and how much that has taken out, and how much our communities are suffering as a result of that extraction. But we've got really good examples in Wales of small scale projects that could be scaled up, that build, I don't want to say wealth but build wellbeing, that are really good qualified examples, something that wind power, wind turbines being perhaps one of them. You know we've got some really good community energy projects. That sense of sort of social change that we might be able to have. The other thing the Act has enabled us to do I think is to get actually onto a global platform. Part of that articulating an alternative is not to be seen- and actually I'm getting really tired of the 'still the only place in the world that's got a Future Generations Act'. Well actually for me now, I think eight, seven or six years ago, that was really good. Now all the countries are lining up behind us, they're doing some of their alternatives. But what we are having is conversations now with other

countries that are similarly aligned – so Canada, New Zealand, I can't remember what some of the others are out there, Finland, Iceland – around perhaps coming up with that alternative, that alternative challenge to what is a global paradigm, capitalist-based paradigm, we want to see the alternative that we can't necessarily I think do that as Wales on our own. But with others we might be able to do that. And I think that's what the Act has given us a chance to do.

[00:31:16]

Chris Church: *Thank you. There's some quite broad issues there. Before we go any further down that line I would like to give Rachel, you were looking like you wanted to come in and obviously you've got the Trusts to consider in terms of the Act.*

Rachel Sharp: I think it goes beyond the Trusts. For those who know me in the room, I mean like several other people, as reflecting with Anne, although Anne hasn't been around for two years you are very much missed because it's the collective memory, it's the collective understanding that we have when we're sat round those tables, so we can quote back to politicians at the time round the intent, around what the purpose was. And that we do have all those case studies, and that we are embedded in local communities, so we can quote where things have worked really productively. I think we're actually moving further away from the Future Generations Act at the moment. And the reason predominantly why I say that is because there was a reflection earlier in the conversation that actually Wales was trying to be progressive. When the Assembly was first set up, that was the intent. I now see, maybe it's because we have an election in May 2026, I am seeing short term politics. And I'm seeing that short termism. The beauty of the Act was it was that long term, the Future Generations. And I always remember that fundamentally when I'm trying to have a discussion with somebody about why they should care about nature and nature's recovery, if I talk to them about themselves, it's one conversation, if I talk to them about their children and the future generations, it's a much more productive conversation, the mindset shifts. So when you go into that long term. Because there has been, I mean Haf you mentioned the M4, we worked very closely with you as an organisation to try and stop that. It was completely inappropriate. It should never, ever, ever have been proposed. A motorway through a wetland, an ancient wetland system. But that was going to be given permission by the then First Minister Carwyn Jones. The only reason we took out a judicial

review was to delay the decision until Mark Drakeford became, we didn't 100 percent know but we had an idea he'd become- Because we were more minded that he would make the right decision. I think the Act gave a framework in which politically, for that behaviour to come to bear. But the decision wasn't based on the Act, if you actually look at his wording on the decision, it wasn't based on the Act. I think the other issue for Wales is we are, you know, Gary you talked about farming at the moment, you could talk about where the debate is about the sustainable farming scheme, it is anything but sustainable, in terms of budget, in terms of outcomes, we are going to repeat the mistakes of where farming is in England, where most of the scheme at the moment is just again a requirement to have plans. And that's the other issue with the Act, the requirement is for the local authority have to have a wellbeing plan; not to implement the plan, but to have the plan. And that's the issue, is there's not the political will to really say no, for that sustainable future to happen, that paradigm shift to happen, we actually know things need to change quite radically. So for example in terms of farming, we will never get to net zero without reduction in livestock numbers. We will never see clean rivers in Wales without livestock reduction. We do not eat the meat we produce in Wales in that livestock production, it all gets exported. So the new Future Generations Commissioner wants to major on food. There is a false narrative around food in Wales. Welsh farming has nothing to do with our food security, we don't feed ourselves, we don't have healthy diets. I understand where there's an impetus to start engaging with that. But because politically they won't make that paradigm shift because there is a cultural and real perception that you cannot upset farmers. Although there are 16,000 of them in Wales managing ninety percent of the land. If we don't see a change in farming, you do not get nature's recovery on land. It doesn't happen, full stop. So that paradigm shift is around bold decision making. We did see that around the M4 and the road review but we haven't yet seen it in terms of climate or nature.

[00:36:26]

Chris Church: *So let's follow this up. Can I come to you in a minute Phil?*

Phil Williams: Okay.

Chris Church: *But this seems to be a tool to use, it's a groundbreaking thing, it's possibly a sign of paradigm shift. But it's not getting to where it should be. We're not getting the reversal of biodiversity loss. The indicators are not going in the right way. But it's there. And speaking as an outsider, most of us are*

very envious of it. And you seem very proud of it. So just maybe we could go round, what are the ways in which it could actually be made to be more effective? Anyone like to come in? Margaret.

Margaret Minhinnick: Yes, I mean, who knows. But I was going to say, you know that the staff in the PSBs have this responsibility to deliver through the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. And they come together, because I can only look at what's going on in our borough, Bridgend which is merging with Rhondda Cynon Taf, and we are getting into a relationship now with those staff, we're only just starting, the fire, the agents, utilities, all of them that have to come together, police, everybody. We're getting into relationships, really, really early days but they're wanting to know what we can think, what we could do, how we can help. And it's very much focused on climate that I can see so far. And the other thing is, what was the other thing I was going to say about it? [laughing] Yes, I'll just say this instead, that I feel we have to lobby those PSB people. We have to say, 'You are not,'- we've got to be on top- All the different voluntary sector organisations they will work with the different agencies don't they, the health set, we need to start building bridges with the others again and to find out how they are feeling and how they think, so they can take the right message and we can take their message, you know, back and fore like that. And just one other thing to ask you others, do you think the Social and Public Procurement Act is going to add any benefit? Because that's just come in February. Yes?

[00:38:58]

Chris Church: *Okay. I mean your point there was about using it at a local level.*

Margaret Minhinnick: Yes using it.

Chris Church: *Which is very much what Gary was saying about using and understanding it in everyday life.*

Haf Elgar: Can I just clarify for the tape, PSB, Public Service Boards.

Chris Church: *Yes, sorry, thank you for that. Yes.*

Gary Mitchell: I was just going to reflect on two things we've said there. One thing reflecting, obviously this is an environmental movement and history oral project, but one

of the problems we are facing in Wales is the obesity crisis and actually child poverty. We've got the highest instances of child poverty now in the whole of the UK. And that's horrific. And this Act is all about protecting our wellbeing and actually that obesity crisis is the single biggest drain on our NHS budgets. And without the money to create the shift, we're going to be fighting that battle for a very long time. One of my neighbouring health boards this year alone is £300 million in year debt. That's not recoverable, that's not sustainable. You can't get out of that by just cutting a few staff and stuff. They haven't even got the resources to cut. So I was just reflecting on, obviously our conversation is around the environment, absolutely get it, but in terms of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act, it's not protecting our children and it's not protecting our society very well yet. And that's not necessarily its job but then you come down to whose responsibility was it to try and administer the duty behind it, and you look at a PSB, and I for my sins I sit on a PSB scrutiny group and that's a really challenging space. The PSB is an odd bunch of people if you're honest. Police, fire, local authorities, NRW, they all have to come together, they all have to do something, and they are not resourced by a single penny from Government. So they do what they have to do because they get told off if they don't. But beyond that it's a real challenge. And I would then reflect differently in terms of health. I look at the regional partnership board, and RPB, they'd have hundreds of thousands of pounds each to spend very wisely in their communities, to do the things that have an impact. Yet we haven't resourced PSBs with a single penny and that becomes challenging because yes we could go and lobby PSBs but they're going to say, 'I've got no resources. I'm told to be here, I come here once a quarter and we chat and then we go away and every three years we write a paper' and that doesn't create change in my opinion, so there's just something we've got to shift somehow there.

[00:41:23]

Chris Church: *So that's one thing that we could actually take forward briefly.*

Tanya Nash: But I know, there's a challenge to that, that the PSBs know, they haven't been resourced in the same ways as RPBs and it's an issue. But the organisations that sit around the table do have money, they do have resources. The PSBs were set up in order to enable those relationships between those organisations to work in a different way. And that's where the failure in many ways has come, is because in many ways they just said, we

can't share budgets, we can't put, take stuff out of health to put it into local social care in order to look at preventative stuff. There were lots of excuses being used because nobody wanted to sort of tackle some of the irritating minutiae. So yes I agree, I think there should be, and there is some budget, grants that were put in, miniscule, not a huge amount, that were in to set them up. But I do think that it's not so there is no budget, the organisations have budgets, it's actually how do they get them to work together more effectively and use those budgets in a more coordinated, integrated fashion.

Chris Church: *That doesn't sound like an easy ask for NGOs that want to make the Future Generations Act better. We want clearer spending, yes, across- But Anne you were-*

Anne Meikle: Well it's kind of one of my reflections on lessons. And it's not just about the FG Act. I think every piece of legislation I have worked on, including the Environment Act and subsequent ones like the Agriculture Act, has not been sufficiently resourced to deliver what it wanted to deliver. And the regulatory assessments beforehand are an absolute joke. Somebody should be fired because they always say, 'This won't cost any more money.' It's nonsense. It's always nonsense. And we said the same thing about this. If you want to do this you're going to have to put some money in. And one of the ways that, going back to systemic change, we wanted to free up the space to do that, is by saying you actually need to review all the other pieces of law and policies and your mechanisms of Government to bring them in line to Act. Otherwise it's just another piece of legislation that people have to deal with. And you know, given the constraints they're all under, they will go for the easiest road, I'm going to call it, which is to write the plan. It doesn't cost anything to write the plan apart from time and effort. But actually delivering the damn plan, that would take a lot, and they don't have any more resource. And there has never been a review that says, okay so we need to, not stop doing that, but do that in a different way so that it contributes to this, a bit like your bit of budget sharing, instead of just allowing people to do the least they need to. I think there's just a basic problem and I don't think I've ever seen Welsh Government resource a piece of law that they have made properly. I don't think they've even worked out how much it's going to cost. And they've certainly never put it in place. And I feel sorry for the people who end up having to try and deliver all this. You are just adding to, we know very well about Natural Resources Wales, you just keep adding things for them to do. If you don't them any more money, in fact you've given them less. Well how's that going to work?

Phil Williams: They're losing huge numbers of staff.

Anne Meikle: Yes absolutely.

Haf Elgar: Exactly.

Anne Meikle: Of course. And I mean I would, can I just put a little positive in. I was roundly told off by a Minister that lots of people will no doubt know at one point for being slightly, what's the word, unrealistic in my ambitions for pieces of legislation to be paradigm shifting etc. And they said – and I think this is actually quite true but it's why you get patchy implementation – that the purpose of a lot of law that goes through Assembly is to give the tools to enable the people who are committed to do the right things. What it doesn't ever do is make the people who are not committed move from business as usual. So it does enable those who want to to get on with it and there are lots of good examples of where that's happened. But what it's not dealing with is the laggards.

[00:46:15]

Chris Church: *So it's the carrots and sticks to some extent.*

Anne Meikle: Yes.

Chris Church: *Haf, I think you want to come in.*

Haf Elgar: Yes. I've got one general point about the Act and sort of future points and then about funding as well. So I can't remember who said it, was it Rachel, that I agree with, that it feels like we've been going backwards the last year or so. And I'm really concerned. And I'm concerned that we have very few people left in Government who really understand the Act or who are committed to it. And I think that after the next election it will even worse, a lot of people are stepping down, retiring, whatever may be the case, we'll have very few champions. So I think one future role for us as NGOs going to the next election, is to be campaigning on that. I know we're already talking about it and you know there's this big growth agenda coming from the UK Government and 'build baby build' and that's impacting, that's trickling down to Wales as well with two Governments of the same colour. So I think we've got to be ready to defend the Act and

to go to explaining what it's about and not presuming that the people in political parties now actually get it, let alone are committed to it. So that's my sort of future point. On funding because it's come up quite a bit, and really it is ridiculous to expect that the Welsh Government or public bodies in Wales can deliver on long term preventative challenges with one year budgets, a block grant from Westminster that they can't influence, and no ways of raising any money or investing in anything. So there's a real contradiction between Wales's fiscal situation and how we've got to do our budgets. You know it's just moving things around in little pots based on an amount of money based upon a formula that comes down from Westminster. So I think those two things really work against each other and to explain, you know, I'm not justifying every budgetary decision the Welsh Government take but that lack of resourcing in some areas they would want to do it. You know, Tanya was saying about great pilot projects and schemes, we never scale them up because there's only funding for five pilot projects and then that ends after two years. So we're in a sort of frustrating cycle where even where we've got aspirational aims or want to achieve something in line with the ways of working and the Act, we're blocked from doing so because of where we're stuck with our budgeting processing. And yes you know a bit of Crown Estate money and HS2 money would help if that was added into the budget but there's still no way of investing in the Wales that we want, to coin a slogan.

[00:49:01]

Chris Church: *Yes, so we've got to write up a blog, it would be useful for us, we would be very happy to put it any recommendations. And we've got about half an hour. And as you say you've got a year to an election, it's ten years since the Act, so there must be ten years learning about what works and what hasn't worked. But I'm just going to go, Phil has been waiting very quietly and I know would like to be in on this.*

Phil Williams: I'm going to try and do this really quickly, okay. I run a one man organisation, or whatever, called Plan-It Eco. And I, for the last twenty six years have toured Wales, the UK and Europe doing programmes on sustainable development, encouraging people to get involved. So informing them and then encouraging them to join groups and organisations like yourselves. And I go from year four primary, all the way through to corporate level. I have worked with- I'm currently sustainability consultant Neath Port Talbot College and so on. But my background is very different. I used to be, I

can talk to you about the media because I used to be a presenter for BBC educational programmes. And then spent eighteen years living around the planet making wildlife programmes, including going into the Amazon rainforest. My concern is how do we get the public, whether you are year four or whether you're a corporate CEO, to understand these issues and to then embrace it and become actively involved rather than just tick a box or whatever. I, a couple of weeks ago, was at a breakfast club for fourteen businesses and not one of them knew about the Future Generations Act. And so I'm saying are we actually getting the- Because I think on paper it's a really great thing. But are we actually getting it out there? And then going back to the media, I was doing a talk in Central Wales a while ago and part of the talk was to encourage people to buy local produce, support local farmers, cut down on their carbon footprint, great. And then on Monday I get a phone call from somebody who had taken my card, 'Why should we do it?' I said, 'Beg your pardon?' 'Why should we do it?' Because last week they saw on TV that the next COP30, which is in Brazil, they're building a 120 mile road right through the Amazon rainforest and they're dredging the Amazon river because they're bringing in cruise liners because there's not enough rooms in the city for the people. So I contacted my contacts, because I take people out to the Amazon rainforest and bring Amazonian Indians who speak English over here, and I contacted my friends in Brazil, not one of them can find that there was any conversation with the farmers, the indigenous people, about this road. And once you've got that road, I know we're talking about Wales here, but once you've got that road, what are you going to do after COP30 is you open it up to the illegal loggers. The thing is, the media will jump on that, not everywhere but we do have a negative media. I'm sorry because I've been part of it. But they will jump on that. So now here's all my work trying to encourage people to buy local food has gone out the window because- And that happens at a political level as well.

[00:52:15]

Chris Church: *Okay. I will just say, I have heard that that road was actually planned way before the COP. But it's just being used as a way of rubbishing the COP. So I mean I think you have to be careful about this kind of, how that spreads. But then we come back- Yes.*

Phil Williams: The Governments that did it, sorry, the Government did it.

Chris Church: *Yes, no absolutely, the Government said you're doing the road.*

Haf Elgar: It was a Government intervention.

Chris Church: *But the question I would put to you is, you know, what have the NGOs learnt, and how can that learning be put into actually a) reminding people this thing is quite important. Gary has talked about making links with health and farming. Clearly future wellbeing, health and food are going to be quite important. What would people here like to see happen so that everyone in Wales, or far more people, and all your businesses, think the Future Generations Act is a really important thing and we should be paying more attention to it?*

Phil Williams: Personally I think we just have to find a way to actually promote it across all levels of society better.

Chris Church: *But Rory, you were-*

Rory Francis: I mean I'm reminded of something that Morgan Parry, who we've mentioned, was saying at a fringe meeting at one of the party conferences we were at. And he made the point, and it's a very, very simple point, that the politicians and the media and the commentators have got into the habit of measuring their success in an incredibly stupid narrow way. You know they think you can measure everything by how many pounds we have in our pay cheque. And actually bleedingly obvious that what we all want as people is we want to have a good life, we don't want to be under too much pressure, we want to have somewhere to live, we want our kids to be happy, we want to be able to enjoy the outdoors, a healthy environment, we want to be able to get into green spaces. And that's what clearly the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act is about. It's about what everyone wants, if you sit back and ask the question. And I think that it should be our role at these elections to go out with that proactive message and remind people of that. Remind the political parties about what is actually important. Because as soon as they start measuring their effectiveness in the wrong criteria, they'll get the wrong answer.

Margaret Minhinnick: Chris, the manifestoes are being written, they're starting to write them for the candidates now. So it's urgent that we get shaped up and get something in there. And because so many of them are leaving, the Labour Party people, there is like somebody was saying a chance the Green Party, but there's also Reform to get out. You know there's all that. We've got to kind of review how we can move forward this way now.

And that's the first thing I would think, manifestoes and the lobbying that would go with it. And using it in our communities, isn't it.

Audience member: It's estimated that there will be between twelve and eighteen Reform Senedd members.

Haf Elgar: At least.

Audience member: They're going to raise the M4 relief road.

[00:55:49]

Chris Church: *Okay. But Rachel.*

Rachel Sharp: I'm going to say a couple of controversial things here. Yes there will be Reform MSs, because they are reflective of opinions in Wales, and so there should be. We are living in a democracy. That is a reality of where we're at. And the thing is you have to also remember though who is going to go in coalition with Reform? The Conservatives. So the only threat is if there's enough Conservatives and Reform MSs to form a Government. If there isn't then that, you know, we have to understand the political situation. So you talk about the role of the environmental NGOs, we have our charitable purposes. That's what we have. That is our role. The role of an individual organisation isn't to set the- We are a public body, we're not party to the Act. And I think we need to set up- where we need to focus is where it's going to make the biggest difference. And actually the biggest difference might not be with the public sector. And it might not be with Government. Where it might be is somewhere completely different. And it might be with corporates, because my kind of ideal is corporates, to be blunt, have the money; all Governments can do is legislate, cajole and incentivise. That's it. That's all they can do. Then we need academia because everything we should do is on a science base. So here's the other controversial thing to say. You talked, Gary you talked about your wellbeing plan for Powys, it was based on 230-odd respondents. Let's face it, it's going to be people similar to me that have a view, have an opinion and will air that. The wellbeing plan shouldn't be based on that. The wellbeing plan should be based on science and evidence around where do we need to have all that preventative- you know, the five ways of working and that long term thinking, preventative, collaborative. It shouldn't be the loudest voices in the room.

So democracy can also undercut some of this process. So what is the role of the environmental NGOs going forward? Well the bottom line for us is, the one phrase that's come up time and time again is scale and pace. The only way you get scale and pace if it's properly resourced. And the bottom line is we need to get more financing in to get nature's recovery off the ground. And I'm not in the mood to hear arguments around, if you should or should not engage with that, as long as it's a genuine investment, you fully engage with it because it's the only way you get nature's recovery. And there are always a million and one reasons why not to do things. And a million and one arguments that will be presented about if something is right, something is wrong. I'm not interested anymore. Not interested. Unless you are going to invoke action at scale and at pace, I will listen to you. If you want to have a debate about the rights and wrongs of an organisation or if a process is or is not working, we haven't got time. Five years, after five years then we get critical population issues with species and we might not be able to recover. And we'll have one in six species already at threat of extinction. That figure will keep going up. I've been too long in the tooth now, next five years.

[00:59:24]

Chris Church: *Gary.*

Gary Mitchell: I was just going come in on the things that I've been reflecting about how do you sort of create bits of finance or the incentive and stuff, and reflecting on things that worked. We've talked about recycling targets in Wales. We're not far off seventy percent in Wales and that's pretty outstanding. The only reason we're nearly at seventy percent is because Government have told us, 'If you don't reach seventy percent you're going to get some serious fines'. And they are serious fines, they are- you cannot not do this because you can't afford not to do it. And if you get fined as a local authority for not meeting those targets, you'll effectively become insolvent. So that's that top down, 'We know this is the right thing to do, and you should do it, but actually we're going to penalise you if you don't'. Now I know Welsh Government, that's not their usual stance. But it's worked. And it's worked in a relatively short space of time. There is a national standard for recycling in Wales and collections and almost every local authority adheres to it and that's why we're nearly at seventy percent. And we will get to seventy percent in a couple of years if not sooner. I look at England and what they're doing and their new legislation kicks in now,

come April. Some local authorities have already applied to delay their implementation till 2036 because they're not going to be fined if they don't do it. And you're like, well what's the point in that legislation then? It's pretty meaningless. But there's incentives. I see biodiversity net gain in England rocketing. Now many people would argue it's greenwashing and all of that sort of stuff. But because it's legislative you can't develop without creating biodiversity net gain, whereas in Wales we just have to do a few trees and a bit of grass, and actually you don't always have to do it because you can say, 'I don't really think it's going to have an impact'. But in England there's five agencies already established to take that money and say, 'We'll deliver that for you.' So money can flow with it and it can create change quickly, maybe it's not being very well regulated yet and that worries me. But there are opportunities to create shift relatively rapidly I think. There's all sorts of other issues in the way as well and that sort of slows down. But yes, I was just reflecting on where the possibles and the levers are.

[01:01:34]

Chris Church: *So it's how to make the biggest difference and we know this is the right thing to do, so let's actually enforce it. Alyson.*

Alyson Austin: Yes. I think Welsh Government they've been talking the good game for such a long time that they need to put their mouths now where their- They need to start doing what they're talking about. They need to stop being chocolate teapots, they need to start acting on climate change, because it's happening, there's no denying it. And there are people all over Wales feeling these impacts with flooding, because if they don't do that, there will be no future generations to enable the Act anyway. So, that's what I think.

Chris Church: *So let me just take that back to you and others. How, I mean at the moment the environmental movement, MPs are saying they are bewildered about how little, and I use that phrase direct quote, how little pushback on the national rollback of climate targets they are getting. People don't seem to be alarmed. What would you do, if you're saying we should be making this a big issue.*

Alyson Austin: We absolutely should. I mean what used to be once in a hundred years, happening with flooding, it's happening twice a year now. I mean you've only got to look at Pontypridd, how many times has Pontypridd been flooded in the last two years? And that would have been once in ten, twenty years. It's happening, it's accelerating, we really

need to wake up, we need to force Welsh Government to act. And it has to come from us. It has to come from grassroots. And we have to, yes, really sort them out.

Chris Church: Karen.

Karen Whitfield: Saying that, I'm not sure I believe that there's no pushback. [laughing]

Chris Church: Okay. Good. Well there may be in one- yes.

Karen Whitfield: For the first thing, but also you know it might be worth considering how many vocal protestors have been jailed with long sentences in the last few years. So that's definitely going to have an impact on how much pushback that you get.

Chris Church: Well that doesn't stop people writing to their MPs.

Karen Whitfield: I think people still are writing to their MPs. [laughing]

Chris Church: Well I hope so.

Rachel Sharp: Can I just have a quick reflection. There's a reflection on, you talked about MPs, we're talking about MSs here-

Chris Church: Apologies.

Rachel Sharp: -that everything we care about, the environment, health, education, etc. etc. is here in Wales and we need to remember that. I get really surprised when my friends, I live in Cardiff, when my friends when it comes round to the Welsh Government election they ask me questions like, 'Well should I bother? It's almost like your local councillor or your police constable, you know, those ones.' And I go, 'Well if you care about health, education and the environment then do. And if you don't care about any of those things, then, you know, go to the pub.' You know, knock your socks off. And they kind of get it. And I think the problem with devolution has been, is there's not that fundamental understanding of where the power sits. And I am really worried that the proportional representation, the point that's being made here, there is an opportunity, you know. I will talk, this is me personally talking, you know, I have always voted Labour because in my

constituency it was a vote to keep the Tories out. For the first time ever in 2026 I can vote the way I want to vote. And unsurprisingly I want to vote Green. For the very first time I'm enabled as a citizen to do that because that vote- You know if you've got enough people voting for the Monster Raving Lunatic Party in Wales, you would have to have that proportional representation. And so, what I really want to- The other point I wanted to make is we don't seize the opportunities in Wales. So single use bag levy is now a marketing budget for supermarkets because it doesn't go to the environment, it goes to whatever the shoppers vote for in their shop. The new tourism levy is not going to go to- the main reason why people come to Wales is because of the landscape, because of the environment. A single penny of it's not going to go to that because it will go to the local authority. We see opportunities time and time again where that investment into the environment could make a huge difference. Imagine if all of the single use bag levy went to Keep Wales Tidy, for example, there would be cracking organisations to give that money to, that would be transformational. Imagine if the tourism levy was given to the, I don't know, the Rambler's Society. Transformational. Instead it's just going to get diluted to potholes or something, I don't know, whatever the local authority end up spending it on. It's that lack of accountability and understanding of where money is going to, is a real issue. So I think there's that disconnect with politics which is plaguing the world at the moment because there is a definitive narrative to do that, to disengage people with politics. And that I worry about more than anything else.

[01:06:38]

Chris Church: *Okay. That democratic disconnect is essential, is absolutely real. But we are here slightly talking about the Future Generations Act but that as something that, if people understand it, has a positive benefit for their grandchildren and their children. Is that something that could actually play a useful role in creating that bigger focus on engaging with national Welsh democracy? Anne you've been-*

Anne Meikle: Well I am not sure I'm entirely on that point.

Chris Church: *Okay.*

Anne Meikle: I do think Rachel's right that better proportional representation gives us an opportunity, because you have no idea what kind of coalition you're going to end up with, and that's always an opportunity. Just cross your fingers there is one. And I think some of

what needs to change, and I'm trying to think how would you put this in an election sort of stuff, but is about Welsh Government's aversion to real legislation. And to any remedy whatsoever for non-compliance. And I genuinely, I'm sorry to say, I don't think anything will change until- I'm absolutely with you the most effective piece of legislation we've ever had is the one on waste and it's because it had massive fines attached to it. And believe you me, we argued long and hard about the Future Generations Act and the Environment Act that it should have similar teeth. And there is no way in God's Earth we could get that through. And it is a major weakness and it's got worse since Brexit because we now don't have anyone external to take a complaint to who will hold the Government to account. And we still haven't got anybody who will do that job and enforce it because there is still no plan for that to be enforceable against Government. So there's a whole legal structure and my only hope for it would be that there is some way that we could use, I don't know, Green Party people, or whoever, to actually enforce some of this and put some teeth around it. And I don't know what it is with Welsh Government. A very eminent lawyer once described to me that Welsh Government, he's never seen a single piece of legislation that wasn't just policy. That's dire. That's absolutely dire and I think he's right.

[01:09:26]

Chris Church: *Okay, Gary.*

Gary Mitchell: Yes I was just going to reflect on the politics bit a bit longer perhaps. And where I'm already seeing it from talking to constituencies, people are really confused about what's ahead of them in terms of how they're going to vote. So we've got proportional representation, yes, but actually we have also got a class list system, a party list system, so technically you won't have a clue who you're voting for except for the party. And that might be an interesting shift, mightn't it, I don't know. But historically a lot of people vote for a person because they understand that person, they know their values, they know that they will get stuff done, or they've got similar alignments to them. And we're not going to see that in the Senedd elections. And I think what I'm seeing is constituents turned off just because it's really complicated. It's actually really complicated. When they get to that booth I'm not sure they're going to understand even what they quite need to do. I don't understand it and I've had quite a few briefings on it. And we've got some local authorities going under STV, Single Transferrable Vote, and that's another whole area of complexity.

But the idea is it all works better for you as a person with your vote and who you want to see. So I'm just thinking that, gosh, influencing parties, absolutely yes, manifesto pledges are going to be really important. In terms of the Future Generations Act, actually it's there isn't it, we can't really change much of it. We've got Cymru Can, so we've got the focus for the next term of office for the Future Generations Commissioner. We can pick on that and say, okay, we've said here's our ten priorities, or our twenty point list. We can lobby against those and create focus. But who's going to deliver it? And that then comes down to those PSBs, if that's where they're still targeted to do it, and how we do that. And I'm not sure in my mind our MSs are too far above that. Yes, I think we'll have an interesting election, we'll have a different Government, perhaps a different shape of Government at least, it might be slightly more diverse and there will probably be, have to be some form of coalition again, and we'll have to work with that I think in terms of where we find influence.

[01:11:31]

Chris Church: *It does seem like you want to ensure that the Future Generations Act is still taken very seriously by whatever Government. And you've talked about it, a tool to be used. So part of this is how is it going to be used? You also talked about the need to make sure people are aware of it. So it's about getting it used and shining a light on it and really highlighting its importance. And I'm saying this because I've got eighteen minutes and I've got nine people sitting round a table which works at about two minutes each. We started the discussion with what impact has the Future Generations had over the last ten years. I invite you to kind of think about, this could be not necessarily your last, but last but one statement before we finish, on how those impacts can continue to develop and be strengthened over the next ten years. Anyone want to come in on kind of, we've talked quite a lot of things about what should happen. Leave aside the election, something about really how does this go forward in the future and what can be done?*

Haf Elgar: Sorry to interrupt, were we going to come back on the EU as well because, sorry.

Chris Church: *Oh blimey, okay.*

Haf Elgar: We sort of, I didn't- before Toby- but- sorry.

Chris Church: *Have you got something specific you want to bring in on that? Because now, let's do it now.*

Haf Elgar: Potentially a couple of people have but I'm happy to- I'm happy to do quickly sort of thing.

Chris Church: *Yes okay.*

Haf Elgar: But for others, yes.

Chris Church: *Well does it, is it related to this section?.*

Haf Elgar: No. No, it's just because Toby asked us earlier and there wasn't time in my section, so I thought we should.

Toby Butler: *It would be nice just for a minute because you've talked a lot about the Welsh Government but clearly there's- you've also talked about the powerlessness in terms of money still sits in Westminster to some extent. And also yes you've got the whole European question. I just think historically over the last fifty years, I'd be interested to know about, given that Wales got so much money from Europe and so many NGOs worked with European funding, I'm just interested in any reflections really, perhaps how that might play out in the next ten years if you like.*

Haf Elgar: Okay, I'll come in quickly on that. So Wales used to have that direct relationship with an international body, we could bypass UK Government quite a lot. And the funding did, so that was a big factor that the Objective One, convergent funding and other funding was available directly for projects in Wales and sort of controlled or decided what they should be on a Wales level. So that's no longer the case. It's something is meant to come from the UK Government but it's less money and it doesn't go through Welsh democratic channels. But there's also things like the European Commission used to have an office in Cardiff. You used to have a complaints system which we certainly used as Friends of the Earth. There were about MEPs, European Parliament systems and petitions and things like that. So more processes and places where Wales could go for advice or for complaints, not just the UK court system as well. And of course the vast majority of environmental legislation comes from the EU. So post-Brexit we're in a more complicated position. We, as Anne mentioned, still don't have the post-Brexit environmental

governance in place in Wales, we're expecting a Bill this summer but there's definitely a massive gap whilst we see things get worse in every area. So I think we've really suffered from that. And just also the overwhelming burden which I know, Rachel you were very involved in those early, after the Brexit vote years, in sort of what on earth do we do when we've got a Welsh Government that isn't bigger but all of a sudden having to deal with all of this legislation in Wales as well. So that overwhelming burden, it sort of stopped Senedd business for a couple of years, it felt like, that there wasn't an opportunity to introduce new legislation or anything that wasn't related to Brexit. They just, everyone had to deal with that. So I'm not sure we're out of that yet. So yes, over to others in terms of what happens next.

[01:16:01]

Chris Church: *Okay. Anyone want to come in briefly on that? Alyson.*

Alyson Austin: Yes. We've used the European Commission and we've made a complaint to the European Commission because we couldn't get the local authority, the Welsh Government, to act on impacts of the open cast on us generally. We made a complaint that we couldn't get funding, and we were denied access to justice, and the European Commission came back and said, under Aarhus, the UK is breaching European conditions. Also Aberthaw power station were breaching their emissions. And I came across some obscure piece of writing on a coffee break one day, and I thought, hang on, nobody's acting on this. And it was because of that then that we were enabled, we set out a campaign, The Coal Action Network with Friends of the Earth to get Aberthaw shut down. Because they were just carrying on breaching and nobody was doing anything about it.

Chris Church: *Okay. Any other thoughts on the EU? Karen, Rachel, you sound like you've been heavily involved in post-Brexit.*

Rachel Sharp: I think I agree with Haf that nobody was expecting the vote and I remember the day after the then First Minister Carwyn Jones had twenty of us around a table, and the interesting reflection was just the sheer amount of assistance they needed. We've already mentioned the lack of civil service in Wales. And there was huge concern coming from our sector because we are, and continue to be, very dependent on the structures around environmental protection, not just in terms of designation, but if any

threats to that designation, so if you want to have any development on SACs or SPAs, and then the Natura 2000 network. But what was also interesting was the EU also exerted fines. I remember when I lived in Ireland, Ireland at one stage was getting fined £30,000 a day because of infringement on a SPA, which is a special protection area, predominantly usually for bird species. And so it had to do something about it. You talked about Aarhus, and that is still in place.

Alyson Austin: Is it?

Rachel Sharp: And also, we are also going through as well reminding Welsh Government nothing's happened to international agreements, you know. So like OSPAR, for example, and the marine environment. And actually the other issue around Brexit was around all the institutions that we relied on, around science and gaining that knowledge and insights. So one of the effects of climate change is going to be more pest and diseases for example coming over affecting us. So our resilience is really impinged now around how we can respond to that changing climate. And the other element is of course the lack of funding that we've got through, and training opportunities. But I also would have a wider reflection. A lot of- the EU you have to remember was set up post-war and it was all about getting to know your neighbours, having that community in Europe. And we see the lack of that now, you know. One of the great- I look on now and at the moment as soon as you become sixteen in Europe you can get a free interrail ticket because they want you to travel around Europe to get to know your neighbours, so you are less likely, we hope, to go to war again. And we miss out on that. So it's also the research, you know, we're sat in this district, Cardiff is very much a university town. All those research grants etc., so that science, that evidence we rely on really heavily, is escaping us. So I think we've only just started to see the impacts and that will continue. We felt it gave us an opportunity. So for example getting away from the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries policy. But that hasn't materialised. If anything that domestic agenda is now writ large over our future farm subsidy scheme. And I don't think we're actually going to see the outcomes that we need.

[01:20:31]

Chris Church: *Okay. I'm really going to have to start wrapping up here. Well I think we're opening up a whole new kind of area of work here. But the bottom line is, where do we get support for environmental improvement, restoration, resilience, protection, tackling climate? And one of the key elements has been*

locked away by Brexit. So we have only got ten minutes. One of the things you have got that we haven't got in England is, coming back to it, a Future Generations Act. So one or two minutes on what you think, is there value there in really pushing this? And how might you do it? I'm just going to go round the table, not necessarily in order.

Rory Francis: I want to agree with Haf. I think that we should remember that as environmental campaigners by far the strongest thing we have is our democracy, the fact that we can vote our politicians out, the fact that politicians need to listen to us, the fact that we can get our members, the wider public to lobby politicians to get involved, to ask questions, to stand up and make demands. That is so important. One of my weird hobbies is learning foreign languages, and over the past few years I have learnt Russian. And I read the Russian media regularly. And I used to love reading the website of Greenpeace Russia and WWF Russia; they did great work protecting wonderful resources like Lake Baikal, and the wonderful alpine, wonderful mountainous, wonderful nature reserves. In the past three years those, both two organisations have been criminalised. Anyone who stands up to Putin and his mates, his cronies who want to make millions or Rubles by destroying Lake Baikal by selling the water gets shut down, we need to use our democracy and get people to rejoice in it and make demands I think.

[01:22:36]

Chris Church: *Okay. Let's get back to you Andy, you haven't said much in this session.*

Andy Rowland: Well I've been thinking about money and the significance about, particularly we're all feeling very strapped and the public purse is even tighter than it has been. And that makes it just more difficult for us and indeed for everybody else. But I've been reflecting a bit about Gary's, I feel your sort of direction from the top example with waste is, I agree, has been very effective. But there seems to be a bit of a contradiction with the Act almost because that is so top down and the ways of working in the long term are the only way to make the Act effective. It comes down to people making decisions isn't it. Understanding the ways of working and enacting them. So all power to Diana Reynolds' elbow, she needs a whole team with her, but that ain't really happening. But I'm also reflecting that really it's GDP is the problem surely. We're slaves to GDP. And yet we've gone backwards. The ISEW and all the other measures that academics are working on, where are they? It seems to be that's what we need. And if we aren't going to get that, then

maybe it's the language of multiple benefits, that okay, they're going to spend money, and we have to explain to everybody, you're not just getting these beans, you're getting those vegetables and whatever metaphor you want to use, multiple benefits.

[01:23:43]

Chris Church: *The co-benefits of strong environment, okay. Now I'm going to go back and forth. Haf.*

Haf Elgar: Oh gosh. What was the question again, sorry? [laughing] I've been listening.

Chris Church: *Basically you've got the Future Generations Act, is it useful? What can be done? In a minute.*

Haf Elgar: Okay. Yes it is. Okay, so I liked what Rory said earlier about inspiring people and showing what a positive future can be like and what people actually want. So thriving communities, not just GDP, what's that actually mean to people? So going back to what we value and using that to what we measure, I think is what we need to bring back out of the Act, and yes, not just about economic growth. But we need to make good not just motherhood and apple pie, which was what the Act was often accused of being, wasn't it, in the early days especially. So we need to keep in mind we're in a cost of living crisis, people are thinking about just what's going on today, tomorrow. So there's no point just sort of saying, 'Look at this glorious, over the rainbow future.' But still doing so and talking about it in a positive way, about the changes it can make for you and your community and nature and the future of our world. So I think we're in such a polarised, culture wars, social media, etc., we've got all of that context at the moment as well that we need to, not fight back but come together in the spirit that we did when we were campaigning for the Act originally. And get back a bit to that. But with a cost of living filter on it maybe.

[01:25:35]

Chris Church: *Strong collaboration and really keeping the focus.*

Haf Elgar: Yes but thinking with people's current situation in mind and what they're seeing on social media. So a sort of reality check on it.

Chris Church: *Rachel.*

Rachel Sharp: Right, okay. I think the beauty of the Act is in the name, Future Generations. If you keep that long termism, then you get the right answers. If you resort to short termism, invariably it's economics that drive that, but we need long term economics. And I think the problem with the sector is we don't talk and think economics enough because unfortunately it is what the world turns round. Because one the things- I was in a session recently talking about the farming scheme and basically they're trying to keep the status quo. And I said, 'It doesn't matter what you want today. Climate change is going nowhere. The world outside is going nowhere. And the nature crisis is going nowhere.' So I think my fear is that we have to come back to the Act but it might be too late. My hope is that we understand that Mother Nature is much more powerful than us humans. And she's going nowhere and she's getting really angry with us at the moment. You see it in the climate. We have been an adaptive species, but we are also a dominant species, so how do we overcome that? And I think in terms of species we are just a single mammal species that wants to dominate. But we are self-destructive. So let's start to really understand what the future holds for Wales. And where we're sat at the moment, if we don't do anything about it we'll be under water.

[01:27:28]

Chris Church: *Yes. As somebody the future is not written in stone, the future is what we make it.*

Rachel Sharp: It is but we are a dominant species that doesn't always apply logic.

Chris Church: *Okay. Coming back, Margaret, one minute or two.*

Margaret Minhinnick: Yes, a final sort of thing, I think because of the next election and because of the urgency of maintaining at least, if not developing, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, we need to get on with the lobbying with the manifestoes, get at the people, do public question times, get the MSs to come, and the candidates to come, and make sure that it's not open to- it's got a sustainable development theme and that we get the right people with the whole audience who can clarify the situation for us - it won't be me, I'll be able to Chair it or something, but I haven't got the knowledge now. So you know get the others to come who can really explain the situation. And we've got a year

now haven't we, we can be working on that and working together, who can help, and can we go to yours, can you do mine? You know, that sort of thing.

[01:28:46]

Chris Church: *Okay, gotcha. Okay. So really planning for the election.*

Margaret Minhinnick: Yes.

Chris Church: *And really trying to get the local debates resurrected and active. Alyson.*

Phil Williams: Yes Margaret but if we do that you know we've got to give a chair to Reform. And I know what we said about democracy-

Margaret Minhinnick: Yes course you do.

Phil Williams: They have to be around-

Margaret Minhinnick: Rachel did.

Phil Williams: And they will bring their people.

Margaret Minhinnick: Oh yes.

Rachel Sharp: Yes they will do, that's democracy. I don't like it, but that's democracy.

Chris Church: *I'm running out of time. I really am.*

Alyson Austin: And I will speak.

Chris Church: *Okay, go on.*

Alyson Austin: I think we have to go back to the spirit of the legislation. We have to go right back to the beginning. Why was it put in place? Why did we want it in place? And we have to change our mindset. We have to put this mindset now in everything we do. We

have to look after the future generations. We have to look after the wellbeing. And that has to be in everything we do.

Chris Church: *Okay. Yes. Gary.*

Gary Mitchell: Yes, I'm struggling with this one if I'm honest. I think I always look at, personally my biggest concern is nature loss and biodiversity loss and the depletion of our species around us. And then I try and look back at the Future Generations Act and the team behind it and think what can they do? And I'm really struggling. There's so much to do isn't there and all the other pressures they've got. I honestly can't see where I would put my focus.

[01:30:20]

Chris Church: *Okay. There's a lot to be done. Karen.*

Karen Whitfield: I think if I had one practical suggestion it would be around training, better training on the five ways of working, facilitation and co-design for people creating those policies. We keep saying we see legislation, regulations going through that aren't really enforceable or if they are enforceable, there's not political will. It's partly about money but there's also in some cases no political will. We see that with the control of pollution regulations in farms which have been pushed back and pushed back. But a lot of that is fear around what the stakeholders that are being regulated will think. And I don't feel like- there's not enough communication and facilitation about co-designing solutions. We're still getting too much consultation where most of the ideas have already been agreed internally and they don't get that buy in from the public, they don't get the buy in from local communities. But it's a skill. You can't just send out civil servants or people from public bodies to do that without training or without maybe specialist facilitators that can come in and help with that I think.

Chris Church: *I think almost last word then Anne.*

Anne Meikle: Well I'm going to be much more nitty gritty. It's ten years, I would say to the Future Generations Commissioner, you need to come out really hard here. You need to really do a job on what has happened in ten years and what has not and come up with

some very good proposals which very much bring more- they've done quite a good job at various times of bringing that voice of future generations in, but it needs to be more real almost. It's like that is everybody's grandchildren, or whatever. And somehow that's not sufficiently in the political thinking about, yes everybody wants to put food on the table now but they also want their grandchildren to be educated and to be healthy. So a bit like you Rachel, where has that gone? And to go with that, I'm sorry that's why I say the FGC is not just about that big picture nice stuff, but actually, I'm sorry, you haven't changed the way Government make decisions. In particular you have not reviewed the way that they- I've forgotten what the systems are called now, but the way that they justify allocating money or investment. The Treasury Green Book remains as it was for the last fifty years or more. It has nothing in it, it discounts future benefits in a way that is totally unhelpful. And all of the internal mechanisms for deciding about money have not changed. They've got a little tick box down the side but they have not changed the fundamentals. And unless you do that to Welsh Government, there will be no change in the way that all of that filters down. So what little money there is will not go most effectively towards delivering the Act.

Chris Church: *Phew. We are at the end. Thank you for staying with us.*

[Audio ends: 01:34:05]

4) Closing remarks

Chris Church: *And what have been the key moments? And almost, early on someone said the Future Generations Act. We talked about the impact of devolution. And again, it came up again. And people talked about feeling proud of it. It's there, the five ways of working I would suggest are a remarkable set of things that almost no other Government has really dealt with. We also came up with this huge thing about GDP and economy, which anywhere you go in the environmental movement I think these days people are saying it. My worry is that people have been saying that for twenty years in many cases, and we're still not a lot closer to understanding, not so much how to overthrow capitalism, but to at least bring neoliberal capitalism under control. Anyway, I think what we have got here is hopefully some useful observations on how the Act might be- we might improve it, protect it, as you say, encourage the Commissioner and whatever staff there is to really come out swinging over the next year. So we will be recording this. We will be writing it up as a blog.*

[Audio ends: 00:01:16]