



# How do Governments and Organisations Define Wellbeing?

Biodiversity Net Gain and People's Wellbeing / October 2021

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# 1. Summary

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) could transform how we finance, design, build and operate development, with the UK's Good Practice Principles providing an approach that supports developers to generate long-term, measurable, and meaningful net benefits for biodiversity<sup>1</sup>. But while we are making progress towards this goal, focussed on the conservation of biodiversity for its own sake, it is important to remain mindful of the connection between biodiversity and people's wellbeing.

The UK's BNG Good Practice Principles involve sharing the benefits fairly among stakeholders and achieving an overall gain in the services that ecosystems provide<sup>2</sup>. However, the principles do not explicitly state that BNG should avoid detrimental impacts on people, in other words they lack the "do no harm" principle adopted internationally for sustainable development<sup>3</sup>. Neither do they explicitly link BNG to wellbeing or consider the social impacts of BNG in a holistic way that fully understands and addresses how people's wellbeing is affected by BNG within the wider context of sustainable development.

With funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, CIEEM, in collaboration with Balfour Beatty, the University of Oxford, and Wild Business Ltd, undertook a scoping study on whether, and, if so, how, wellbeing should be incorporated more directly into the UK's BNG Good Practice Principles. The aim of incorporating wellbeing into BNG good practice is for development projects to achieve BNG in ways that "do no harm" to people's wellbeing and, where possible, enhance wellbeing.

Much has been written about wellbeing and what it means for individuals. However, definitions of wellbeing can differ between governments and organisations. This can create confusion about what wellbeing is and be a barrier to considerations about applying wellbeing to a development context.

This report contains definitions of wellbeing by key international organisations including the World Health Organisation, by UK governments and by key UK organisations including the UK Office for National Statistics who undertake yearly surveys of wellbeing<sup>4</sup>. The report was undertaken as a desk-based review, and highlights similarities and differences between wellbeing definitions. It also draws out the most common themes used by these organisations to describe wellbeing. These themes were:

- **Good health and sanitation**
- **Social connections**
- **Basic materials**
- **Life satisfaction**
- **Hedonic and eudemonic factors**
- **Governance and political voice**
- **Education**
- **Freedom and choice**
- **Security**

# 2. Introduction

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) could transform how we finance, design, build and operate development, with the UK's Good Practice Principles providing an approach that supports developers to generate long-term, measurable, and meaningful net benefits for biodiversity<sup>5</sup>. But while we are making progress towards this goal, focussed on the conservation of biodiversity for its own sake, it is important to remain mindful of the connection between biodiversity and people's wellbeing.

BNG can benefit people directly, for example when communities enjoy high quality natural surroundings either by BNG being achieved within the development footprint or when a biodiversity offset increases people's access to, or views of, nature. Indirectly, BNG has a wider societal benefit of enhancing the natural environment for everyone, and people can benefit from simply knowing there has been a net gain of biodiversity from a development. But poorly designed BNG

<sup>1</sup> CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA (2016) Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Principles for Development. UK

<sup>2</sup> [Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development | CIEEM](#)

<sup>3</sup> The "do no harm" principle of sustainable development is to avoid or mitigate impacts that create or exacerbate poverty, or that undermine the resilience of people or communities. In recent years, international sustainable development has adopted a "do good" agenda of actively working to improve human livelihoods and wellbeing.

<sup>4</sup> [Well-being - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA (2016) Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Principles for Development. UK

can be detrimental to people's wellbeing, for example by restricting access to nature within a development site, without adequate alternative provision.

In 2018, international principles were published to give guidance on how to assess the social impacts of No Net Loss (NNL) and BNG in depth and ensure that people are not left worse off by BNG interventions (Bull et al, 2018<sup>6</sup>). These 'People Principles' set an outcome for NNL/BNG projects to achieve, as follows:

*"People perceive the components of their wellbeing affected by biodiversity losses and gains to be at least as good as a result of the development project and associated biodiversity NNL/BNG activities, than if the development had not been implemented."*

Wellbeing is defined as a positive physical, social, and mental state, and these international 'People Principles' for BNG focus on wellbeing related to biodiversity. Their application involves measuring change to people's wellbeing that is caused by losses and gains in biodiversity from a development and its BNG activities, and then making sure that this change is positive through an inclusive approach to planning BNG activities to support the wellbeing of affected people.

The UK's BNG Good Practice Principles involve sharing the benefits fairly among stakeholders and achieving an overall gain in the services that ecosystems provide<sup>7</sup>. However, the principles do not explicitly state that BNG should avoid detrimental impacts on people, in other words they lack the "do no harm" principle adopted internationally. Neither do they explicitly link BNG to wellbeing or consider the social impacts of BNG in a holistic way that fully understands and addresses how people's wellbeing is affected by BNG within the wider context of sustainable development.

## 1.1. Scoping Study

With funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, CIEEM, in collaboration with Balfour Beatty, the University of Oxford, and Wild Business Ltd, undertook a scoping study to determine whether, and, if so, how, wellbeing should be incorporated more directly into UK industry's BNG Good Practice Principles.

The scoping study involved desk-based reviews and consultations that included webinars, an on-line questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussions. The study commenced during Autumn 2020 and was completed in Spring 2021. The project team was supported by a Technical Advisory Panel, with expertise from industry, academia, and government, who provided advice and feedback throughout. The team and Technical Advisory Panel members are listed in Appendix A.

The study findings are documented in the following reports:

<b>Defining and assessing human wellbeing: what the science says</b>	A literature review of how wellbeing is defined assessed within the academic literature
<b>How do governments define wellbeing?</b>	A literature review of how wellbeing is defined by international and UK governments and key organisations
<b>Accounting for wellbeing within planning applications</b>	A desk-based review of whether planning authorities in England require consideration of a development's impacts on people's wellbeing as part of a planning application
<b>Biodiversity Net Gain and Wellbeing: consultation responses</b>	A report on responses to this study's consultations on whether, and, if so, how, wellbeing should be incorporated more directly into UK industry's BNG Good Practice Principles
<b>Biodiversity Net Gain and Wellbeing: core messages and recommendations</b>	A summary of the core messages from all of the evidence gathered by this scoping study, together with the recommendations.

<sup>6</sup> [ensuring\\_no\\_net\\_loss\\_-\\_bull\\_et\\_al\\_2018.pdf \(iucn.org\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development | CIEEM](#)



## 1.2. This Report

This report documents definitions of wellbeing by key international organisations, the UK devolved governments and key UK organisations. It describes similarities and differences between these definitions and highlights common themes. The aim is to highlight variations in how wellbeing is defined especially across the UK, in order to support the practical applications of considering wellbeing as part of the development process.

This report is written from desk-based research of freely available information. The three main sections of this report are:

- 1) **How do international organisations define wellbeing?**
- 2) **How do UK governments define wellbeing?**
- 3) **How do UK organisations define wellbeing?**

## 3. How Do International Organisations Define Wellbeing?

### WHO

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines wellbeing as:

*“Wellbeing exists in two dimensions, subjective and objective. It comprises an individual's experience of their life as well as a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values.”*

This definition of objective wellbeing comprises of health, education, work, social relationships, built and natural environments, security, civic engagement and governance, housing and work-life balance. Whereas the definition of subjective wellbeing refers to one's personal evaluation and feelings about their quality of life, feeling worthwhile and feeling emotionally positive overall.

Wellbeing is also a critical component in the World Health Organisation's definition of health: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

The WHO also defines mental wellbeing: “Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

Wellbeing is used in many definitions by the WHO, displaying a variety of dimensions in which the word ‘wellbeing’ can have. The main definition of ‘objective wellbeing’ contains such a large variety of aspects which all contribute to a person's wellbeing (*WHO, 2012*).

### OECD

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defined wellbeing in their 2001 report ‘How's Life?’. They defined wellbeing using a combination of objective and subjective aspects. Objective components of wellbeing are essential to assess people's living conditions and quality of life, however information on people's evaluations and feelings about their own lives is also important for capturing the psychological aspects of people's beings and doings, and understanding the relationship between objective and subjective components of wellbeing. The OECD defined wellbeing as “people's living conditions and quality of life” and as “people's evaluations and feelings about their own lives”.

The OECD have a framework for measuring sustainability which is split into three fundamental pillars. The three pillars are material living condition (income and wealth, jobs and earning, housing), quality of life (health, education, social

connection, subjective income, environmental quality, civic engagement and governance, personal security) and sustainability (ensuring objective and subjective wellbeing of future generations by maintaining various forms of capital – natural, human, economic, social).

Although the OECD have a brief definition and explanation of wellbeing, they stated that it is difficult to define wellbeing because “because it requires looking at many aspects of people’s lives, as well as understanding their relative importance”. The OECD allude to the fact that there is no single definition of wellbeing, they recognise that people around the world would agree that wellbeing requires meeting human needs for example being in good health, as well as the ability to pursue one’s goals, to thrive and feel satisfied with their life (*OECD, 2011*).

## UNEP

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) define wellbeing in their ‘Ecosystems and Human Well-being – a framework for assessment, 2005’. They defined wellbeing as “A context and situation dependant state, compromising basic material for a good life, freedom and choice, health, good social relations and security” (*UNEP, 2005*).

## IPCC

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) refer to many different types of wellbeing in their Sustainable Development and Equity report. They define subjective wellbeing, which includes both cognitive wellbeing and emotional wellbeing.

“Happiness is an ambiguous concept that is often used as a catchword for subjective wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing is multidimensional and includes both cognitive and affective components. Cognitive wellbeing refers to the evaluative judgments individuals makes when they think about their life...Whereas emotional wellbeing refers to the emotional quality of an individual’s everyday experience as captured by surveys about the intensity and prevalence of feelings along the day”. Emotional wellbeing has also been described as “The frequency and intensity of experiences of joy, fascination, anxiety, sadness, anger and affection that makes one’s life pleasant or unpleasant”

The relationship between subjective wellbeing and quality of life was examined. It was found that both contains a substantial element of life satisfaction, and that health and income are key determinants of subjective wellbeing or quality of life (*IPCC, 2011*).

## EU Directive on Environmental Impact Assessments

This definition is from the Institute of Environment Management and Assessment (IEMA) *Primer on Proportionate Approach to Health in Environmental Impact Assessment*.

Population and human health are the two factors which the amended directive requires to be identified, described and assessed in an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The directive does not define population and human health, however an understanding of the scope of these terms is important in outlining the types of issues that must be covered to ensure that health is properly considered. The EIA Directive leaves the scope of issues covered by population and human health factors open to interpretation (*IEMA, 2017*).

# 4. Similarities and Differences

## 4.1 Similarities

The WHO and the OECD both define wellbeing using a combination of subjective and objective wellbeing. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change also define subjective wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing refers to people’s feelings about their own lives. The main factors which the WHO, OECD, IPCC and UNEP pointed out which contribute to wellbeing are good health, good social connections and basic material for a good life. These factors are what they believe all contribute to a person’s quality of life and are the key determinants of wellbeing.

## 4.2 Differences

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) point out a factor that others do not, which they believe contributes to a person's wellbeing which is freedom, choice and security. The EU directive on EIAs displays population and human health as the two factors that could affect wellbeing. However, dissimilar to the other organisations, the EU directive does not define these two factors, and they leave the scope of issues which are covered by population and human health open to interpretation.

# 5. How Do UK Governments Define Wellbeing?

## 5.1 Wales

References to wellbeing can be found in two key pieces of Welsh legislation – **the 2015 Wellbeing and Future Generations Act**, and the **2014 Social Services and Wellbeing act**. Welsh Government's (WG) Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (Welsh Government 2015) is a unique legislation that demonstrates its commitment to sustainable development. It is the only global legislation that enshrines the UNs Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within it. It emphasises WGs commitment to a 'Health in All Policies' approach to policymaking by emphasising the sustainable development principle is integrated to address seven Wellbeing Goals.

The 2015 Wellbeing and Future Generations act states that a definition of national wellbeing is made explicitly through its seven wellbeing goals. These goals are:

- 1) **A prosperous Wales**
- 2) **A resilient Wales**
- 3) **A healthier Wales**
- 4) **A more equal Wales**
- 5) **A Wales of cohesive communities**
- 6) **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language**
- 7) **A globally responsible Wales**

The act notes that all seven goals contribute to improving individual wellbeing, which it broadly defines as 'quality of life'. They believe this can result in an overall improvement of the national wellbeing of Wales.

The Wellbeing and Future Generations act notes that sustainable development is the process of improving wellbeing. They believe if Wales does not work to develop sustainably, then they limit the potential to improve the wellbeing of Wales and therefore the wellbeing of individuals. Sustainable development is about acknowledging that there are many things that determine a person's quality of life (their wellbeing), and that these can all be broadly categorised as environmental, economic, social and cultural factors. These are captured in wellbeing goals. This means that improving the quality of environment, economy and society culture can improve the wellbeing of individuals and that of Wales as whole. In this way the Act provides a clear definition of sustainable development and what wellbeing means for Wales.

**The 2014 Social Services and Wellbeing act** defines individual wellbeing, referring specifically in this case to the wellbeing of those in care or carers themselves. It specifies that wellbeing means any of the following:

- 1) **Physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**
- 2) **Protection from abuse and neglect**
- 3) **Education, training and recreation**
- 4) **Domestic, family and personal relationships**
- 5) **Contribution made to society**
- 6) **Securing rights and entitlements**
- 7) **Social and economic wellbeing**
- 8) **Suitability of living accommodation**

In relation to a child, wellbeing also includes physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development. In

relation to an adult, wellbeing also includes control over day to day life and participation in work.

Both Wellbeing Acts were translated into relevant strategic priorities by Public Health Wales (PHW), one of which is specifically 'improving mental wellbeing and building resilience'. PHW defines mental wellbeing as "a state where people are able to cope with the normal stresses of life whilst being productive and being able to contribute to their communities." PHW monitors mental wellbeing using the ONS4 survey data for Wales, as well as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale in the National Survey for Wales. In turn the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale defines wellbeing as "feeling good and functioning well." It measures similar components of wellbeing as the ONS4 questions including psychological functioning and subjective wellbeing.

## Public Health Wales

Public Health Wales have strategic goals that are a direct translation of the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act- reflecting a wellbeing goal, which is: improving mental wellbeing and building resilience. Public Health Wales want to help everybody realise their full potential and be better able to cope with the challenges that life can bring. They say that good mental wellbeing impacts physical as well as mental health and has the potential to influence inequalities in health (*Public Health Wales, 2014*).

## The National Survey for Wales – Wellbeing in Wales (2012/2013)

The National Survey for Wales regard personal or subjective wellbeing as considering of at least two factors. Generally, these are 'hedonic' wellbeing (happiness, pleasure, enjoyment) and 'eudemonic' wellbeing (purpose, functioning, fulfilment). There are two approaches that the National Survey for Wales have pointed out regarding asking about personal wellbeing. There are 'experience' questions, which ask how people felt at a specific and recent point in time, while the 'evaluative' questions ask people to make a more general judgement about their level of satisfaction overall or with an aspect of their life.

The inclusion of measures of personal wellbeing on the National Survey for Wales has enabled better understanding (*The National Survey for Wales 2012/13*).

## 5.2 England

### UK Department for Health & Social care – The Relationship Between Health and Wellbeing

This document recognises that there is a two-way relationship between wellbeing and health. It displays how health influences wellbeing and wellbeing itself influences health. They believe that health is one of the top things people say matters for wellbeing and that both physical and mental health influence wellbeing, however mental health and wellbeing are independent dimensions, mental health is not simply the opposite of mental illness.

This document makes a clear distinction between mental illness and mental wellbeing, for example you can have a mental disorder however still have high levels of wellbeing. Equally, you can have no mental disorder and have low levels of wellbeing. The UK Department for Health & Social care define wellbeing as: "feeling good and functioning well and comprises an individual's experience of their life; and a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values. Wellbeing exists in two dimensions: Subjective wellbeing (or personal wellbeing) asks people directly how they think and feel about their own wellbeing and includes aspects such as life satisfaction (evaluation), positive emotions (hedonic), and whether their life is meaningful (eudemonic). Objective wellbeing is based on assumptions about basic human needs and rights, including aspects such as adequate food, physical health, education, safety etc. Objective wellbeing can be measured through self-report (e.g., asking people whether they have a specific health condition), or through more objective measures (e.g., mortality rates and life expectancy)." The UK Department for Health and Social care say that wellbeing comprises an individual's experience of their life and a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values.



As well as defining subjective wellbeing and objective wellbeing, the department also defines mental wellbeing and mental illness / mental disorder. They indicate that mental wellbeing is part of overall wellbeing and that it is a positive state of mind and body underpinned by social and psychological wellbeing. They describe how mental wellbeing enables and supports good relationships, improved resilience, improved health, meaning, purpose and control. It is linked with physical health and living with or recovering from both physical and mental illnesses. The department defines mental illnesses as a range of mental health problems that can cause emotional or cognitive distress and interfere with daily functioning (*Department of Health 2014*).

## 5.3 Scotland

### Scottish Planning Policy

The Scottish Planning Policy sets out how wellbeing should be delivered. It locates development in the right place and planning can provide opportunities for people to make sustainable choices and improve their quality of life. Well planned places promote wellbeing, a sense of identity and pride, and greater opportunities for social interaction. Planning therefore has an important role in promoting strong, resilient and inclusive communities. Delivering high quality buildings, infrastructure and spaces in the right locations helps provide choice over where to live and style of home, choice as to how to access services and amenities and choice to live more active, engaged, independent and have a more healthy lifestyle.

### Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF)

The purpose of the NPF is to “focus on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing and sustainable and inclusive economic growth.”

The NPF is Scotland's wellbeing framework. It combines measurement of how well Scotland is doing in economic terms with a broader range of wellbeing measures. These indicators incorporate a wide range of different types of data – from social attitudes and perceptions to economic and environmental statistics. In 2018, the framework was updated to include indicators such as gender balance in organisations, child wellbeing and happiness, and the importance of secure work (*Scotland's NPF, 2016*).

### Public Health Scotland

Mental wellbeing is one of Scotland's strategic priorities for public health, which contribute to the National Performance Framework described above. Public Health Scotland define mental wellbeing as “...a combination of feeling good and functioning well psychologically. It's an important indicator in Scotland's national performance framework and a public health priority. Public Health Scotland has identified it as a priority because it has a considerable impact on Scotland's health and wellbeing. Others are keen to work closely with us to address it.” On their strategic plan website, they state that community health and wellbeing is complex, and its foundations include:

- 1) **An inclusive economy with good work**
- 2) **Quality housing and education**
- 3) **Accessible and effective health and social care services**
- 4) **Clean open spaces**
- 5) **Water and sanitation (Public Health Scotland, 2020)**

### Scottish Health Survey (2018)

The Scottish health survey is part of the National Performance Framework, of which improving mental wellbeing is an important part of improving overall wellbeing in Scotland. Mental wellbeing is a major determinant of overall health which has increasing international recognition. Positive mental wellbeing encourages better quality of life overall, healthier lifestyles, better physical health and improved recovery from illness, better social relationships and higher educational attainment. All public services have a role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Scotland's population from Local Government services to primary care and education providers as well as specialist mental health services.

Mental health is reported as part of Scotland's NPF, and the data for mental health that is used comes from the Scottish health survey. This is based on an indicator that uses the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), a common measure of mental wellbeing.

The WEMWBS represents mental wellbeing as both feeling good and functioning well. The wellbeing scale covers:

- 1) Eudemonic and hedonic wellbeing
- 2) Psychological functioning and subjective wellbeing
- 3) One end of a continuum of mental health with the opposite end being mental illness, mental health problems or psychiatric disorders. The concept of mental wellbeing defined by WEMWBS is therefore much more than the absence of mental illness. People who have been given a diagnosis of mental illness can and do experience wellbeing when their illness is not making them feel bad or function poorly.
- 4) Holistically linked to other aspects of wellbeing: physical, social and, where appropriate, spiritual. (Scottish Health Survey 2018)

## 5.4 Northern Ireland

### Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

"Personal (or subjective) wellbeing concerns peoples' self-reported assessment of their own wellbeing, for example by asking about their life satisfaction, happiness and psychological wellbeing."

The personal wellbeing domain also includes population mental wellbeing. The population mental wellbeing score is based on the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. Each question is given a score between 1 and 5, and the result is measure out of 35, a higher score indicating more positive mental wellbeing. Mental wellbeing in Northern Ireland is also measured through the Health Survey for Northern Ireland. The survey uses a 14-item version of the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and is based on approximately 4000 respondents (*Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency 2020*).

### The Public Health Agency (PHA)

The PHA was established in April 2009 as part of the reforms to Health and Social care in Northern Ireland. They are the major regional organisation for health protection and social wellbeing improvement. Their role commits them to addressing the causes and associated inequalities of preventable ill-health and lack of wellbeing (*Public Health Agency Northern Ireland, 2011*).

## 6. Similarities and Differences

### 6.1 Similarities

The Welsh government, English government, Scottish government and Northern Ireland government all refer to hedonic and eudemonic wellbeing in their definitions of wellbeing. Eudemonic refers to purpose, functioning and fulfilment, and hedonic refers to happiness, pleasure and enjoyment. This is how they define subjective and objective wellbeing. The Welsh and Scottish government both use sustainability as a factor which forms their definitions of wellbeing. The Welsh government say that sustainable development is process that leads to an improvement in the overall wellbeing of Wales. The Scottish government refer to sustainable choices being made which can result in an improved quality of life. The Scottish and Welsh government also make reference to social interaction and social connections, both governments believe this can also lead to an improvement in wellbeing. In addition, the Welsh government believes wellbeing can be affected by environmental factors, similarly, the Scottish government mention how clean open spaces can improve wellbeing. The English and Welsh government also denote mental wellbeing, and how mental wellbeing can impact your overall health and overall wellbeing, as well as affecting your physical health.

## 6.2 Differences

The Welsh government is the only government to mention factors such as protection from neglect and abuse and securing your rights as factors which can affect wellbeing. Similarly, the Scottish government is the only government to mention health and sanitation in their definition of wellbeing. The Scottish government have a large section of their definition in their planning policy based on how well-planned places can affect wellbeing. They indicate how high quality buildings, infrastructure and spaces in the right locations can provide a larger choice for people to choose where to live, and can give people a larger variety over their style of home, which the Scottish government believe has an impact on the wellbeing of Scotland overall. This is the only wellbeing definition mentioned in this report that factors in the type of buildings people live in, and the type of infrastructure that surrounds them as affecting their wellbeing.

## 7. How Do Key UK Organisations Define Wellbeing?

### The UK Office for Science

The UK Office for Science defines mental wellbeing as “... a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community.” It defines wellbeing in the context of achieving prosperity and wellbeing as a country through enhancing individual potential – which requires both “mental and material resources” (or “mental capital”).

### Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment Toolkit (MWIA)

Within the United Kingdom, the policy context for measuring wellbeing has increased significantly over recent years and momentum continues to grow around the importance of measuring wellbeing outcomes. This MWIA toolkit for wellbeing provides an evidence-based framework for improving wellbeing through commissioning processes, project and service design and delivery, community engagement and impact assessment.

The MWIA states that “good mental health and wellbeing is fundamental to all our lives and to the communities where we live. It underpins everything we do, how we think, feel, act and behave. It is an essential and precious individual, family, community and business resource that needs to be protected and enhanced. There is increasing evidence and understanding of the importance of good mental health and wellbeing and more is now known about what can be done to sustain mental health and wellbeing for organisations, communities, families and individuals of all ages.” (*MWIA, 2011*)

### UK Office for National Statistics – Measuring National Wellbeing Programme

The UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) have two different wellbeing reports displayed on their website: Personal well-being, and personal and economic wellbeing. They state what areas they are looking into which may contribute to a persons and societal wellbeing: “Societal and personal wellbeing in the UK looking beyond what we produce, to areas such as health, relationships, education and skills, what we do, where we live, our finances and the environment. This data comes from a variety of sources and much of the analysis is new.” (*ONS, 2019*)

The ONS measures and makes a distinction between personal and economic wellbeing. Personal wellbeing is taken as a subjective measure. They measure subjective wellbeing using four questions. These questions cover evaluative, eudemonic and hedonic wellbeing.

Their measures of personal wellbeing focus on overall satisfaction with life, the extent to which we feel things that we are doing are worthwhile, and our daily emotions such as happiness and anxiety. They say that these measures are strongly related to other important aspects of quality of life such as health. The ONS survey questions for personal well-being:

- 1) overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- 2) overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
- 3) overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

#### 4) overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

The ONS use personal wellbeing as an indicator to measure national wellbeing. They define national wellbeing as: ““how we are doing” as individuals, as communities and as a nation, and how sustainable this is for the future. The full set of headline measures of national wellbeing are organised into 10 areas, such as health, where we live, what we do and our relationships. The measures include both objective data and subjective data.” National wellbeing is measured based on indicators in 10 domains:

- 1) **Personal wellbeing**
- 2) **Our relationships**
- 3) **Health**
- 4) **What we do**
- 5) **Where we live**
- 6) **Personal finance**
- 7) **Economy**
- 8) **Education and skills**
- 9) **Governance**
- 10) **Environment**

### Social Impacts Taskforce – A framework for understanding the social impacts of policy and their effects on wellbeing

This document is proposed for use across UK government, for understanding the relationships between the social impacts of policies, their effects on the UK’s underlying stocks of capital, and implications this has for wellbeing. The Social Impacts Taskforce has several factors which affect wellbeing, which are accounted in economic and environmental valuation. They also state that there are several non-material factors which may affect wellbeing including personal relationships, social and community relationships, employment and political regimes. Their wellbeing framework acknowledges that wellbeing is multi-dimensional and may reflect contributions of:

- 1) **Material living standards**
- 2) **Health**
- 3) **Education**
- 4) **Political voice**
- 5) **Personal activities**
- 6) **Social connections**
- 7) **The environment**
- 8) **A sense of security**
- 9) **A sense of freedom**
- 10) **The opportunity (Social Impacts Taskforce, 2011)**

### 25Year Environment Plan - Chapter 3: Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing.

This environment plan alludes to how spending time in the natural environment can improve our mental health and feelings of wellbeing. The plan explains how spending time in the environment can help reduce stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression. The plan also describes that it can help boost immune systems, encourage physical activity and may reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as asthma, as well as combatting loneliness and binding communities together.

### Natural England MENE Surveys

This survey shows an analysis of the investigation of relationships between these key variables:

- Three types of nature contact
- Connectedness to nature
- Self-reported general health

- Two types of subjective wellbeing
- Two groups of pro environmental behaviours (**Natural England, 2020**)

## Environment Agency – The state of the environment: health, people and the environment (2020)

Health is often understood in different ways by different people. In 1948, the WHO defined health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’. The Environment Agency stated that wellbeing includes people’s satisfaction with life, and their feelings that the things they do in their life are worthwhile. This view allows people to experience good health at all life stages and even during some physical illness. The EA believe human health is affected by the surrounding environment in many complex ways (**Environment Agency 2020**).

## 8. Similarities and Differences

### 8.1 Similarities

The UK Office for Science, the Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment Toolkit (MWIA), the UK Office for National Statistics and the Social Impacts Taskforce all reference mental health and general health as major factors affecting wellbeing. The 25-Year Environment Plan and the Environment Agency display how mental health is affected by how much time we spend in the natural environment. The EA believe that human health is affected by the surrounding environment in many ways. Therefore, spending more time in nature can improve mental health, and have a positive impact on wellbeing. Education is also a key factor mentioned by the UK Office for National Statistics and the Social Impacts Taskforce which can impact levels of wellbeing. Levels of finance and a strong economy is mentioned by the UK Office for Science, the MWIA, the UK Office for National Statistics and the Social Impacts Taskforce as a vital factor which could also influence wellbeing.

### 8.2 Differences

The UK Office for National Statistics is the only UK organisation to mention how the governance of a country may impact wellbeing. This is an important factor to mention as there is a vast array of political decisions which can directly influence the things that determine wellbeing, for example taxation, education policy. Even though no other UK organisations specifically mentioned governance and government policies, it is linked to factors mentioned by the other organisations such as education and economic stability. The Social Impacts Taskforce also mention political voice as a factor which can impact wellbeing. This is referring to our ability to vote and have an impact on the governance of your country, which therefore links to the ONS factor of governance. The Social Impacts Taskforce are also the only UK organisation to mention security and freedom as an aspect which may influence levels of wellbeing.

## 9. Summary

This report brings together a variety of different wellbeing definitions, which have been defined by UK Governments, UK organisations and international organisations. All the wellbeing definitions consist of different factors in which these organisations and governments believe contribute to a person’s wellbeing. With such a large variety of wellbeing definitions, it is important to find a common ground of what an acceptable definition of wellbeing is to apply wellbeing with a development context.

International organisations define wellbeing in many ways. The international organisations researched for this report are the World Health Organisation, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), The UN Environment Programme, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (and the EU directive as an example of a Directive). The WHO definition of wellbeing references factors such as education, social connections, work and health in which they believe contributes to wellbeing. Similarly, the OECD define wellbeing using a combination of objective and subjective factors. Objective refers to peoples living conditions and quality of life, whereas subjective refers to people’s feelings about their own lives. The OECD refer to 3 pillars to describe what contributes the most to wellbeing, the 3 pillars are: material living condition, quality of life and sustainability. The IPCC describe wellbeing in a similar way, using subjective factors in which they say that this is how individuals make evaluative judgments about



life. The IPCC believe that health and income are key determinants of quality of life and thus wellbeing. The UNEP have a much shorter definition, in which they refer to very minimalistic factors which include basic material for a good life, freedom and choice, health and social relations. The EU Directive takes a very different approach to defining wellbeing in comparison to the other international organisations. They do not give a definition for wellbeing; however, they state that population and human health are the two main factors which contribute to a person's wellbeing.

This report also investigates how UK Governments define wellbeing. The Welsh government specifies that the following is required to contribute to wellbeing: Physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing, protection from abuse and neglect, education, training and recreation, domestic, family and personal relationships, contribution made to society, securing rights and entitlements, social and economic wellbeing and suitability of living accommodation. The national survey for Wales gives two factors which contribute to subjective wellbeing: 'hedonic' wellbeing (happiness, pleasure, enjoyment) and 'eudemonic' wellbeing (purpose, functioning, fulfilment). The Welsh government also indicate that factors such as economic, social, environmental, educational factors contribute to improved levels of wellbeing. Wales also state that good mental wellbeing can impact your mental health. Similarly, the English government recognise that there is a two-way relationship between health and wellbeing, however mental health wellbeing are different dimensions. Correspondingly to the Welsh definition, the UK Department for health and social care define subjective and objective wellbeing and define wellbeing as being eudemonic and hedonic. Scotland base their wellbeing definition around sustainable choices, which they believe can improve quality of life. It is stated that sustainable economic growth and an inclusive economy are essential factors which contribute to wellbeing, as well as clean open spaces, the same way that Wales factor in the environment to their definition of contributions to good wellbeing. Scotland also define eudemonic and hedonic wellbeing their definition, the same way which Wales and England define this. Northern Ireland also define subjective wellbeing, which they define as people's life satisfaction, and how people assess their own levels of wellbeing. The UK governments definitions of wellbeing use very similar words and factors of which they believe contributes to a person's wellbeing levels.

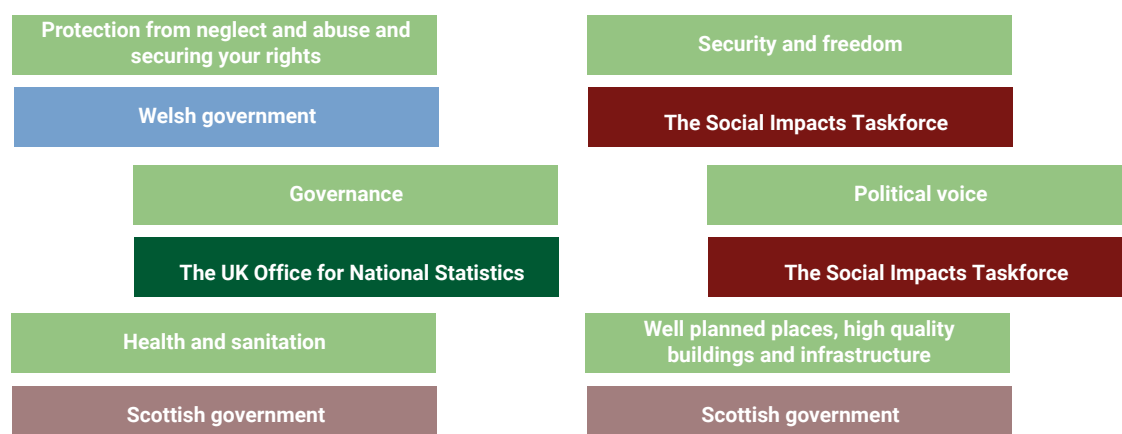
There are also many definitions of wellbeing from a variety of UK Organisations. The UK Office for Science use mental capital as a large factor which they believe contributes to wellbeing. Mental capital consists of mental and material resources. They also believe that people should develop their potential, work productively, build strong relationships and contribute to their community to have a strong sense of wellbeing. Similarly, the MWIA believe that good mental health is fundamental to wellbeing, and that wellbeing underpins everything we do. This means it is essential to have good mental health, as wellbeing effects everything that we do. The UK Office for National Statistics take a different approach to defining wellbeing, and they use a larger variety of factors which they believe contribute to wellbeing. These consist of good health, relationships, educational skills, finances and environment. They also measure personal wellbeing as a subjective measure. The ONS survey questions included feelings such as satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and anxiousness. The ONS believe all these feelings affect a person's level of wellbeing. The Social Impacts Taskforce also list aspects which they believe contributes to wellbeing, these consist of: material living standards, health, education, social connections and environment. However dissimilarly to the others, the Social Impacts Taskforce also reference political voice and personal activities as factors which contribute to wellbeing. The 25-Year Environment Plan, the Natural England MENE surveys and the Environment Agency all take very similar views on what can affect a person's wellbeing. They all believe that spending time in the natural environment can help improve people's mental health, their satisfaction with life and general health. Their definitions are founded on environmental factors.

In summary, all the definitions of wellbeing given by UK Governments, UK Organisations and international organisations are similar, however they are expressed in different ways. In order to have a universal understanding of what wellbeing means, it is essential to gather a variety of different definitions as has been done in this report and create one definition using the many different classifications of wellbeing already created.

# UK Governments and Organisations Similarities



# UK Governments and Organisations Differences



# International Organisations

## Similarities

Good Health, social connections,  
basic material

The World Health Organisation (WHO)

The Organisation for Economic  
Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate  
Change (IPCC)

Life satisfaction

The World Health Organisation (WHO)

The Organisation for Economic  
Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate  
Change (IPCC)

Subjective and objective wellbeing

The World Health Organisation (WHO)

The Organisation for Economic  
Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate  
Change (IPCC)

Basic Material

The World Health Organisation (WHO)

The Organisation for Economic  
Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

# International Organisations

## Differences

Education, built and natural environ-  
ments, housing and work life balance

The World Health Organisation (WHO)

Living conditions and sustainability

The Organisation for Economic Co-  
operation and Development (OECD)

Freedom, choice and security

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

Factors of health and population left open  
to interpretation

EU Directive on Environmental Impact  
Assessment

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## 10. Appendix A: Project Team

### Project Lead

Julia Baker, Balfour Beatty

### Technical Advisory Panel

TAP Member	Organisation
Sally Hayns	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)
Kerry ten Kate	Independent Consultant
E.J. Milner-Gulland	University of Oxford
Joseph W. Bull	Wild Business Ltd; Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE)
Sarah Scott	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

### Research Team

TAP Member	Organisation	Leading on:
Hannah Williams	WSP	Requirements to consider development impacts on people's wellbeing within regional and local planning policies in England
Shuo Gao	University of Oxford	What the science says: defining and assessing wellbeing
Isobel Taylor	Wild Business Ltd	Consultation responses on whether and how BNG good practice should more directly incorporate wellbeing

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