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**Well-being and  
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## Well-being and Sustainable Development

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### **Abstract**

*This paper offers an appraisal of what is understood by well-being in relation to sustainable development, and an exploration of the relationship between these two concepts. Through a review of the literature, the use of gross domestic product (GDP) as an adequate indicator of societal performance is challenged and alternative measures examined.*

*The new power to advance well-being in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 is considered by looking at both its potential and current use to date. The findings of a pilot survey that sought to identify whether factors such as age, health, money or where a person lives affects well-being are also discussed.*

*The findings of a pilot survey that sought to identify if levels of well-being differed in urban versus rural areas found that overall, people living in rural areas enjoyed slightly higher levels of well-being. However, it is identified that further research is needed in order to understand why this is so.*

*The paper observes how the advancement of well-being can contribute to the culture that is needed to drive sustainable development in Scotland. More specifically, it recommends that indicators of well-being as measures of societal performance need to be based on the experiences and beliefs of people and therefore lends itself to an evidence base drawn from the perspective of individuals.*

*The conclusions of this paper have implications for policy development and allocation of resources by national and local government, government agencies and funding bodies. The outcomes challenge the traditional view of societal progress and government priorities, and provide recommendations for the production of well-being indicators.*

## Well-being and Sustainable Development

### **Understanding the jargon**

The terms sustainable development and well-being are widely used terms whose broad ranging definitions have considerable overlap. The United Nations<sup>1</sup> defines sustainable development as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.' The UK government and devolved administrations concur with this definition holding that the objective of sustainable development is enabling all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations.

Sustainable development can be interpreted as being concerned with improving the well-being of people and the communities in which they live, for the long-term. This can be achieved by integrating economic, environmental and social impacts. It is clear that through the pursuit of sustainable development it is expected that society will maintain or improve its levels of well-being. Indeed the UK sustainable development strategy 'Securing the future'<sup>2</sup> has indicators for physical health as part of the measures of progress. However, whilst the process of sustainable development can achieve higher levels of well-being little progress has been made in identifying the advancement of well-being as a goal in itself.

It could be argued that any measures designed to increase well-being will also contribute positively to sustainable development as a lack of well-being can have such severe consequences on two of the three elements of sustainable development, namely economic and social. For example, the cost of mental health problems in Scotland has been estimated at £8.6 billion each year. Of this, £2.4 billion represents losses to the Scottish economy and £4.7 billion the social losses, as people's quality of life is adversely affected<sup>3</sup>.

A recent Sustainable Development Research Network Discussion paper described well-being as a "*more than the absence of an illness or pathology; having subjective and objective dimensions; being measurable at the level of individuals or society; accounting for elements of life satisfaction that cannot be defined explained or primarily be influenced by economic growth*"<sup>4</sup>. A similar definition of well-being has been adopted by the UK government<sup>5</sup>.

The Scottish Executive<sup>6</sup> in the Local Government Act 2003, views well-being as being dependent on many factors, some of which may be controlled nationally or globally. It identifies four factors which contribute to the promotion or improvement of well-being: social, economic, environmental and health related. The fact that three of these four factors are also considered the main dimensions of sustainable development reaffirms the connection between the two concepts.

More specifically, the following factors have been identified as affecting well-being:

Positive factors affecting well-being	Negative factors affecting well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships (family, friends and work)</li> <li>• Social activities (hobbies, sport)</li> <li>• Access to support and services</li> <li>• Money</li> <li>• Feeling that you matter, have a role, are useful and can make a contribution</li> <li>• Feeling involved in decisions</li> <li>• Having your views heard and respected</li> <li>• Having hope</li> <li>• Confidence and self-worth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear (of crime, rejection etc)</li> <li>• Guilt</li> <li>• Boredom &amp; a sense of pointlessness</li> <li>• Lack of control and choice</li> <li>• Limited horizons</li> <li>• Issues of access to services and supports</li> <li>• Isolation and loneliness</li> <li>• Rejection and exclusion</li> <li>• Poor housing</li> <li>• Poor employment opportunities</li> </ul>

Table 1: A list of factors affecting well-being as identified by the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health<sup>7</sup>.

In order to understand how well-being is being pursued on the political agenda consideration will now be given to the local government power to advance well-being and the use of well-being as an indicator of sustainable development.

### **We have the ‘Power’ ...to advance well-being**

The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 was introduced to provide a framework for improving public services. The act has three elements imposing a duty on local authorities to secure best value; providing a statutory basis for community planning and giving local authorities a specific power to advance well-being. The concept of Best Value was first introduced in 1997 following the suspension of the Compulsory Competitive Tendering process<sup>8</sup>. However, whilst Best Value has been widely adopted by local authorities it is as yet unclear how this links with either sustainable development or well-being. The Power to Advance Well-being was introduced to encourage innovation and closer partnership working between local authorities in better responding to the needs of communities.

The Scottish Executive’s guidance on the Power to Advance Well-being<sup>6</sup> recognises that it may be used to close gaps in opportunity or outcomes for disadvantaged groups of people or geographic areas. It suggests that local authorities could use the power to promote sustainable development, improve health, reduce poverty, tackle inequalities and enhance the local environment.

Forward Scotland contacted all 32 councils in Scotland and asked them to describe their experience of using the act. Of those who responded, only two could provide examples of this piece of legislation being used. So far the legislation appears to be limited to environmental improvements such as removing trees from gutters and enacting a graffiti policy. However, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) have advised that well-being could also be advanced through regulatory services and thus encompassing all three elements of sustainable development. Furthermore, several councils felt that they had not needed to use the power as well-being was already addressed by other existing legislation. However, a spokesperson from Edinburgh City Council indicated that advancing well-being ‘is the raison d’etre for local government’ and therefore encompasses everything that they do.

One experienced local council development officer suggested that councils are still trying to cope with Best Value and Community Planning and have given little time to the Power to Advance Well-being. Historically, local authorities have found it easier to use new legislation when it is accompanied by additional funds (such as with the National Waste Plan) or if it is audited (as is the case for both Best Value and Community Planning). No such assistance has been given to the Power to Advance Well-being.

In England the Local Government Act 2000 has been used to improve well-being in a variety of settings. Examples include: the creation of a temporary employment agency in Greenwich, the provision of suntan lotion in Hastings and the right for Wakefield District Council to be able to acquire houses on a declining estate<sup>1</sup>. In addition, most local authorities in England have produced a set of quality of life indicators in response to the Act. The findings have been used to inform policy, measure success and support the targeting of funds at particular areas or issues<sup>9</sup>. The UK Government has also identified examples from across the world that it regarded as applicable. These include a 'go slow' movement in Japan, a community garden in Sydney to improve children's nutrition and the development of a sustainable community in Germany<sup>10</sup>. Whilst these all appear to be worthwhile projects in their own right, the sheer variety might suggest that even if local councils started to use the power to advance well-being it is more likely to be used in an ad hoc manner than as a coordinated approach to further sustainable development and well-being. Indeed, it has been suggested that local authorities are unsure of how to use the legislation and are waiting for further guidance.

The power of local authorities to advance well-being is, however, a largely untapped opportunity for communities to access resources and support from local authorities to meet their needs. The legislation has potential for use as a means for communities in Scotland to pressurise local authorities to make improvements in their environments, ultimately leading to improvements in their well-being. It also gives communities the opportunity to question the way local authorities spend resources in the pursuit of their well-being.

### Is health the same as well-being?

Another public sector body working to improve well-being is NHS Scotland. They are currently running a national programme to improve mental health and well-being as well as devising a set of mental health and well-being indicators. Whilst these indicators have not yet been finalised it has been reported that they will be based on 19 central constructs (see table 2)<sup>11</sup>.

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Structural / Policy</b>
Emotional intelligence Spirituality Learning & development Healthy living Physical health	Participation Social networks Social support Trust Safety	Violence Physical environment Working life Stigma / discrimination Debt / financial security Social inclusion Equality

Table 2: The central constructs for NHS Scotland's mental health and well-being indicators

These constructs appear to be very similar to the UK sustainable development indicators for well-being (see table 3)<sup>5</sup>.

<b>SD indicators relating to well-being</b>	<b>Well-being indicators</b>
Fear of crime	Overall life satisfaction
Perceptions of anti-social behaviour	Satisfaction with aspects of life
Workless households	Frequency of positive and negative feelings
Poverty	Frequency of positive and negative feelings
Education	Level of participation in sport
Life expectancy/general health	Access to green space
Social justice	Level of participation in other activities
Environmental quality	Positive mental health
Housing conditions	
Satisfaction with local area	

Table 3: A selection of UK sustainable development indicators relating to well-being

Instructing NHS Scotland to work independently on well-being indicators could be seen as a duplication of work. Furthermore, it could be seen as a failure to mainstream sustainable development. By adopting the UK indicators, NHS Scotland might have had a larger budget to spend on measures to directly improve mental health and well-being.

The link between health and sustainable development has now been recognised by public health groups. In their recent symposium on health and sustainable development, the UK Public Health Association (UKPHA) expressed concerns about the health impacts of climate change and environmental degradation<sup>12</sup>. The UKPHA has identified the Scottish government as its lead partner in developing work in this area<sup>12</sup>.

### **A happy ‘sustainable’ society**

The use of well-being as a measure of sustainable development has recently been recognised. Indeed, the UK government is currently devising a set of well-being indicators as part of its sustainable development indicator set<sup>13</sup>. However, the development of such an indicator is plagued with the difficulties associated with trying to measure something that is subjective and variable amongst people and across time.

It appears that well-being as an indicator of progress towards sustainable development sits uncomfortably with some of the other indicators, in particular that of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) where there is often a poor correlation with other indicators such as health.

In his book ‘Happiness’<sup>14</sup>, economist Richard Layard demonstrates that increasing wealth as measured by GDP does not correlate with measures of well-being such as happiness or life satisfaction. He suggests that, once an individual or society achieves a certain level of wealth that allows for basic living standards to be met, further increases in wealth do not bring similar increases in happiness.

Measures such as GDP per capita continue to be used around the world to measure and compare how societies are performing. Whilst this is a comparable measure of a nation's economic base, it is doubtful that a measure related to production – a process impacting heavily on communities and the environment - is best able to measure how a society performs in a global context. People in countries where GDP per capita is high are often informed that they are 'doing well' rather than necessarily appreciating it for themselves. Indeed Layard suggests that increasing GDP beyond a level that takes people out of poverty brings an increase in happiness but as GDP further stretches beyond this there is no direct, indisputable correlation with happiness.

The Economist<sup>15</sup> has similarly sought to establish a worldwide index of quality of life using a definition that in many respects is close to that of well-being and happiness. What is interesting about the results is that it also demonstrates that there is no clear relationship between GDP per capita and quality of life. For example, nations with the highest levels of GDP per capita, while clustered in the upper reaches of the quality of life index, are not simply ordered in terms of GDP per capita. The United States has the world's second highest GDP per capita, yet ranks 13th in terms of quality of life. The UK is ranked 29th in terms of quality of life, 16 points below its ranking at 13th in terms of GDP per capita. At the same time, countries like Sweden, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Mexico and Thailand score significantly well in terms of quality of life, in comparison to their relatively low GDP per capita. The Economist's researchers suggest that this positive difference is due to favourable social conditions including social and community activity, family relations, security, gender equality, job security and political freedom.

An alternative and widely referenced approach to measuring well-being, incorporating environmental considerations, exists in Bhutan in the eastern Himalayas where Gross National Happiness has been adopted as an alternative measure to GDP<sup>16</sup>. This approach is based on philosophical principles and places the happiness of the population as the country's main development objective. The four constructs of Gross National Happiness are the promotion of equitable and sustainable socio-economic development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment, and the establishment of good governance. Bhutan is perhaps the only nation in the world to so overtly seek the promotion of happiness but it is an idea gaining ground in other nations.

Devised by Daly and Cobb in the early 1990s, the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) is another indicator that has demonstrated the growing disparity between GDP and well-being in the developed world<sup>17</sup>. The ISEW uses monetarised measures of welfare and the environment to measure well-being. Following a study commissioned by the Welsh Assembly it has been recommended for use as an indicator of sustainable development for Wales principally because it incorporates social and welfare well-being. However, the ISEW has not been accepted as a mainstream indicator of well-being due to concerns about its robustness as an indicator<sup>18</sup>.

The New Economics Foundation<sup>19</sup> (NEF) has also found that social progress in Britain has become increasingly decoupled from economic growth which has stalled completely in the last three decades. NEF attempted to measure domestic progress – the level of social progress in relation to economic growth which attempts to quantify satisfaction with life. NEF argues that this lack of progress is due to the social costs of crime and family breakdown, huge increases in environmental costs of production and the failure of government interventions.



One of the most recent attempts to measure well-being is the NEF's Happy Planet Index<sup>20</sup>. This measure is built by combining life expectancy, ecological footprinting and a subjective measure of well-being. The inclusion of a subjective measure of well-being is to be commended, however the index still has limitations. For example, countries with the lowest life expectancy by default also have low ecological footprints, artificially raising their position in the Happy Planet Index ranking. This would suggest that the measure is only sensitive for the most developed countries. In addition, Graham et al argues that determining a welfare function will vary between countries due to the impact of cultural values<sup>21</sup>.

Well-being as an area of interest appears to lend itself more to the Bhutan approach rather than the empirical approach of traditional indicators. Well-being is clearly more a state of consciousness, driven by individual and collective perception rather than communication about how 'wealthy' we are, how 'healthy' we are and how 'good' the quality of the environment is measured to be.

The provisional UK sustainable development framework indicators for well-being do follow a Bhutan-style approach in that they are subjective. However, well-being is only one of 68 sustainable development indicators and as yet, no information has been published as to how these indicators may be weighted. This could lead to a situation where well-being is given equal importance with other indicators such as fish stocks and how children get to school<sup>5</sup>. If this happens the importance that well-being plays in measuring progress towards sustainable development would be undermined.

As well as providing a measure of sustainable development, well-being indicators can be used to aid policy making. NEF worked with Nottingham City Council to measure the well-being of young people in the city<sup>22</sup>. The outcomes of the study revealed areas where policies could be improved to have the most impact on well-being and this was used to inform the councils investment programme.

However, whilst there is a need to further develop well-being indicators there is a risk that time and money is being diverted from projects that would actually improve well-being. The duplication of work caused by different government departments developing their own well-being indicators is unnecessary and is yet more evidence of the failure to effectively mainstream sustainable development.

### **Well-being: the pursuit of wealth, health and happiness?**

Well-being should be more than just absolute wealth, more than physical and mental health and perhaps even more than happiness. It should be concerned with the relative value of earnings, a measure of how satisfied people are within the limits of their health and beyond the 'happiness' described by Layard which makes no explicit reference to the quality of physical surroundings and increasing concerns expressed locally and globally about the environment. The quality of surroundings or global environment do not feature in his "Big Seven" factors which cover, family relationships, financial situation, work, community and friends, health, personal freedom and personal values<sup>14</sup>.



Surely society cannot be ‘very happy’ when there is a high level of concern about the environment and an increasing number of environmental disasters. This is likely to be experienced when there is an increased likelihood of events that can have a devastating effect on a large number of individuals, such as the damage hurricane Katrina inflicted upon the citizens of New Orleans in the USA. Individuals and societies as a whole are finally making the connections between environmental damage and humanity’s survival as a species. There is perhaps a reducing confidence in the ‘not in my lifetime’ attitude to concern that environmental damage is affecting quite evidently this generation.

The Scottish Council Foundation in its well-being project<sup>23</sup> does include the physical environment as a key determinant of well-being alongside those determinants discussed by Layard. In its discussion of the term it concluded that well-being was fundamentally about perceptions, the components of which were ‘internal’ and that it was very much about happiness and contentedness.

The connection between the environment and ill-health has been known for many years. Indeed, the loss of 12,000 lives in the great smog of London in 1952 has been attributed to severe air pollution<sup>24</sup>. However, the role that the environment has on our well-being is now also being realised. Guite et al<sup>25</sup> surveyed over 1000 residents of Greenwich to ascertain which environmental factors were perceived to negatively affect well-being. They found that neighbour noise, fear of crime, a sense of over-crowding in the home and a lack of escape facilities such as green spaces and community facilities all significantly influenced people’s well-being. At the same time, a high quality environment has also been demonstrated to increase well-being by improving mood, reducing stress and hastening recovery from illness<sup>26</sup>. Such is the recognition of these benefits that the UK government made available £89 million for new and improved urban parks and green spaces in 2004<sup>27</sup>.

### And the survey says...

As part of our environment, where we live has also been found to affect our well-being<sup>7</sup>. Despite this knowledge, little research has focused on understanding if living in an urban versus a rural environment affects well-being.

In order to try to address this, Forward Scotland piloted a street survey to ascertain how people living in different locations across Scotland perceived their level of well-being. Surveys were conducted in both urban and rural locations, with 154 surveys collected in total. Samples were representative in terms of the spread of age and gender based on the 2001 census data<sup>28</sup>. The rural sample was doubled to reduce error in what would otherwise have been a small sample. In addition to asking people about their overall happiness, questions aimed at trying to identify other factors (such as health and money) that might affected a person’s sense of well-being were included.

Locality	No. of surveys
Urban	103
Rural	51

Age	No. of surveys
18-29	41
30-44	36
45-59	41
60+	36

Gender	No. of surveys
Male	84
Female	70

### Survey Results by Locality

Rating scale: 1 (low/negative) – 10 (high/positive)

	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
Overall, how happy are you?	7.50	8.09
How would you rate the quality of your local environment?	<b>6.15</b>	<b>7.88</b>
How would you rate your ability to change your local environment?	<b>4.14</b>	<b>5.01</b>
How concerned are you about the global environment?	6.76	7.29
How would you rate your ability to change the global environment?	4.83	4.68
How would you rate your overall health?	<b>6.82</b>	<b>7.7</b>
Do you have sufficient money to lead a comfortable life?	<b>More than enough 8%</b> <b>Sufficient 41%</b> <b>Not enough 41%</b>	<b>More than enough 2%</b> <b>Sufficient 73%</b> <b>Not enough 25%</b>
How satisfied are you with your social network?	8.22	8.72
Do you think Scots are happier now than 10 years ago?	Yes 58% No 42%	Yes 55% No 45%

### Survey Results – All results collated

Rating scale: 1 (low/negative) – 10 (high/positive)

Overall, how happy are you?	7.69
How would you rate the quality of your local environment?	6.72
How would you rate your ability to change your local environment?	4.43
How concerned are you about the global environment?	6.93
How would you rate your ability to change the global environment?	4.78
How would you rate your overall health?	7.11
Do you have sufficient money to lead a comfortable life?	More than enough 5% Sufficient 59% Not enough 36%
How satisfied are you with your social network?	8.38
Do you think Scots are happier now than 10 years ago?	Yes 57% No 43%

The survey revealed that the quality of a person's local environment and their ability to change that environment was perceived as higher in rural areas than urban areas. This may not appear surprising. Indeed in their yearly audit of cleanliness Keep Scotland Beautiful found that rural areas had comparably less litter, vandalism, dog fouling and graffiti than urban areas<sup>29</sup>. However, Marans found that, whilst urban environments were in absolute terms worse than their rural equivalents, people's perceptions exaggerated these conditions further<sup>30</sup>.

People living in rural areas rated their overall health higher than their urban counterparts. This could be supported by the fact that air quality has been shown to be worse in urban areas and in deprived communities<sup>31,32</sup>. However, there is virtually no difference between the death rate and the incidence of cancer in rural and urban areas<sup>33,34</sup>. This would suggest that people living in rural areas have a more positive perception of their health. This may be due partly due to the quality of their local environment. Indeed the positive impact that the environment can have on a person's health has been well documented<sup>26</sup>.

Our survey revealed that 75% of people living in rural areas felt that they had enough or more than enough money to lead a comfortable life. This compared with only 49% of urban dwellers. Research shows that there is a higher rate of home ownership in rural areas<sup>35</sup>, yet people living in urban areas have been found to have higher levels of disposable income compared to their rural counterparts<sup>36</sup>. This would again suggest that rural inhabitants have a more positive outlook, in turn suggesting an increased level of well-being.

Although the primary purpose of the survey was to look at the differences between rural and urban areas, analysis has also demonstrated some interesting findings according to age.

The survey asked people to rate between one and ten their level of concern for the global environment and how they rated their ability to change the global environment (10 being highest). The overall average concern for the global environment came out at 6.93. This would concur with the recently published Defra survey of 'public attitudes and behaviours towards the environment' who found that only 28% of people felt that the environment was a low priority for them<sup>37</sup>. Disappointingly, despite this high level of concern the Defra survey also found that the environment still ranked behind crime, health and education in terms of which issue people thought that governments should be most concerned with. Whilst this in itself might be unsurprising, this picture has remained unchanged since 1993 despite the heightened awareness and concern for environmental issues such as climate change.

Despite a low average score of 4.78, a surprising number of people felt that they had a high ability to influence change on the global environment. However many people offered explanations attributing this to participation in a kerb-side recycling scheme. The Defra survey also found that people tended to have a very positive attitude towards recycling. However, it also found that far fewer people were prepared to make other changes such as flying and driving less and reducing energy consumption despite believing that they were key to protecting the environment<sup>37</sup>.

Overall, people living in rural areas were happier. This may be in part attributable to their local environment. However further research is needed in order to understand why this is so.

### **Implications for policy**

One of the most commonly expressed opinions in the literature reviewed was the need to make the economy more focused on well-being. NEF<sup>20</sup> suggests that this could be achieved by promoting a healthy work-life balance, and recognising the value of social, cultural and civic life. Changes in government policy would be crucial in achieving such an outcome.

Levett-Therivel<sup>10</sup> suggests that policy makers should be open to solutions that do not come from obvious sources. For example, it has been demonstrated that it is cost effective to treat respiratory conditions by investing in housing improvements rather than putting the money directly into the health service<sup>38</sup>. Such a paradigm shift from the treatment of illness to preventing it by tackling the root-cause would require an increased coordination across government and between agencies. Forward Scotland's discussion paper 'Sustainable Development and Health' looks at these issues in more detail<sup>39</sup>.

Finally, our survey findings suggest that it would be beneficial to investigate why people feel less able to change their local environment if they live in urban rather than rural areas. It is only by gaining such an understanding that policy makers will be able to make the most area-appropriate decisions that will contribute to increasing and enhancing community well-being.

### **What don't we know?**

In order to maximise the potential of the local government power to advance well-being it may be possible to develop indices and benchmarking for well-being at a local authority level. This would enable local authorities to more readily measure successes and identify areas for improvement. In order to achieve sustainable development, such a measure should be given as much recognition as GDP or ecological footprinting.

Dolan et al<sup>40</sup> believes that further research needs to be conducted on how the environment affects well-being as there is currently a lack of work in this area. Our research would support this belief. A multidisciplinary approach might be best suited to such work as the research currently available has largely focused on health or psychological factors that influence well-being.

Our survey findings support the recommendations of Dolan et al<sup>40</sup> who believed that further work is needed to understand the differences in the factors that affect well-being across different population sub-groups. In particular we believe that work should explore differences in areas such as health, money, age and locality. Expanding the work of the Scottish Household Survey would help in obtaining such information but there is a clear need for more in-depth, qualitative work in this area.

To date there appears to have been little research that considers the differences in the approaches needed to facilitate sustainable development and increased well-being in urban and rural areas. Friends of the Earth Scotland and the Scottish Executive both identified unemployment and isolation as problems in both rural and urban areas but suggested that the causes, and therefore solutions, differed. Both recommended regeneration as an urban solution to unemployment and sustainable tourism and organic farming as a rural solution<sup>2,41</sup>. Further research in this area will facilitate future planning decisions.

### **Well-being: a key determinant for sustainable development**

Well-being is clearly influenced by an array of environmental, social and economic factors, so a change in focus is required in order that resources are channelled into addressing the causes of societal concern. A flexible approach is required, one that is removed from the distinct budgets that has traditionally dominated public sector investment.

Uppermost in these considerations should be investment in issues or activities which have been clearly demonstrated to improve well-being. These areas could include increasing funding for green spaces, improving local environments and widening access to healthy diets and sports facilities. In addition, our survey findings suggest that investments should be tailored to suit the individual needs of communities, with rural and urban areas having particularly distinctive needs.

Scotland's local authorities have been given specific powers to advance well-being in their regions but there is little evidence to suggest that their power is widely exercised or has been effective. Steps must be taken to capitalise on the potential of this piece of legislation to deliver for Scotland's people. Options that could be pursued include the introduction of a forum for best practice, further legislative guidance or the introduction of well-being as a statutory performance measure.

An indicator of well-being may yet prove to be a meaningful and credible measure of progress in an area of sustainable development. However, in order that the indicator is meaningful, steps must be put in place to ensure that it is truly representative of the people of Scotland. Ultimately the Scottish Government must provide leadership that is focused on the well-being of Scotland's people and report clearly on progress towards this goal.

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Forward Scotland is a dynamic organisation at the leading edge of progress in sustainable development in Scotland. Since its inception in 1996 the organisation has supported action for sustainable development through practical projects, research and the distribution of grant funding.

Forward Scotland aims to change the way people think and act through the lessons learned from practical projects, inspiring a culture where the benefits of sustainable development are understood, valued and achieved.

We promote sustainable development in ways that challenge people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviour to achieve economic growth, regeneration and social justice

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