

#futuregen: Lessons from a Small Country

Jane Davidson

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Wales, though small, is a vanguard when it comes to integrating sustainable development via government policies and actions. The chief architect of its Well-Being of Future Generations Act, Jane Davidson, chronicles the law's enactment in the lively #futuregen, which encompasses both her personal evaluations and the sweeping policy shift's intriguing processes.

The Well-Being of Future Generations Act is the world's first legislation to "enshrine the rights of future generations alongside current ones." It requires that Welsh political leaders and organizations integrate regenerative, sustainable principles in every policy, regulation, and action. Davidson acknowledges that this kind of revolutionary paradigm shift was made possible by Wales' small size and ability to move with speed and flexibility, as well as by the historic opportunity to craft bold legislation left when the United Kingdom began to transfer self-governing powers to Wales in 1999.

Davidson's background and personal epiphanies enliven this history of the landmark law. Her childhood in Zimbabwe and years as an educator fueled her love for the natural world and her passion for social and environmental change. She underscores the "importance of personal experience as a driver of action." Her narrative is strengthened by inspirational pull quotes from Welsh voices and contains useful appendices full of policy statements, documents, and other resources.

#futuregen is an informative, animated account of a singular law, from the vital first steps in envisioning a more socially equitable and environmentally balanced country, to the nitty gritty of networking, collaborating with disparate parties, and civil service oversight. While its tone is most often positive, it notes that cultural change and long-term "cathedral thinking" are not easy; they require the work of many. Still, it declares, "[t]ackling our consumerism and the unicorn of infinite growth is absolutely key for us and future generations."

RACHEL JAGARESKI (September / October 2020)

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