



About the Alliance for Future Generations

We act as we do because we can get away with it: future generations do not vote; they have no political or financial power; they cannot challenge our decisions

- World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987

Society is ... a partnership not only between those now living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born

- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1790

Statement of Objective

The Alliance for Future Generations has been formed to ensure that long-termism and the needs of future generations are brought into the heart of UK democracy and policy processes, in order to safeguard the earth and secure intergenerational justice.

Why the Alliance has been formed

There is a real risk that short-termism in UK policy processes and democracy and in human behaviour threaten the needs of future generations.

Our civilisation has developed to the point where our actions impact not just other people and our local environment, but the whole planet and the conditions of life for centuries to come. We have raised global temperatures, destroyed habitats and made countless species extinct. Our accelerating consumption is leading inexorably to a series of resource peaks and further loss of natural capital that our very existence depends upon.

We stand to leave to future generations an impoverished common inheritance. This is clearly at odds with their interests and our own.

Similarly, intergenerational conflict driven by inequality could become a defining issue for our ageing society. The young will question the sacrifices they are asked to make to sustain their parents' lifestyles, just as the world's poor question their privations when they observe the lifestyles of the rich. Inequality, overconsumption, loneliness, isolation and greed threaten our current collective well-being and promise intergenerational injustice in the future.

Regard for the future, in order to safeguard the earth and secure intergenerational justice, means major changes in the way in which we carry out the business of politics and the governance of our nation.

Our democracy has not yet caught up with the opening of our eyes to our global and long-term reach – we have not yet extended the vote to future generations. It will take more than commitment. A commitment to bring long-termism and future generations into our policy processes needs institutional, political and cultural foundations. These are what we want to build.

For the UK to deliver our real potential as people and as a nation, we need our laws and

policies to support long-termism and the needs of future generations. Space for reflection and debate needs to be created from grassroots communities to our Parliament's Upper House. We need our elected representatives to make decisions with regard to the long-term, the interests of our children, and the needs of generations yet to be born – wherever in the world they might be.

We know that it will not be easy to achieve the much-needed systemic changes in the UK's policy processes. We must be humble enough to admit that we cannot foresee the future, just as the mists of history often obscure the context of previous generations' decisions. However, there is much we can do to make better decisions than we do today.

There is also a great deal of work that needs to be done to achieve wider cultural transformation – so that as citizens, we place higher value on future generations and collective well-being. We will need to work in a wide range of ways, from our streets and communities to our Parliament; in the social networks where ideas and activism are seeded and take root; in our schools, our colleges and our universities; and with deep respect for the quiet example of the many thousands of people who show in their daily lives that they refuse to accept a political culture of the individual and the short-term.

Governance

Membership of the Alliance for Future Generations is open to individuals as well as groups and organisations. Members align themselves with the Alliance's overall agreed objective, make a commitment to respect the Alliance's [Principles for Collaborative Engagement](#), and endorse this introduction to Alliance.

These basic commitments aside, the Alliance takes no assumed collective position on any issue related to its objective. All products of the Alliance's work are subject to the explicit endorsement of individual and/or organisational members, as appropriate to the particular activity.

Members are free to choose how they become involved in activities within the Alliance. Members work collaboratively by sharing information and ideas, as well as through a series of working groups coordinated by volunteers from among the members.

At the launch of the Alliance in March 2011 the active working groups were a 'Rio plus 20' working group; a 'legal and constitutional change' working group, and a 'narratives and framing' working group. Any Alliance member is free to propose activities or initiatives to other members at any time.

Overall coordination is provided by a small coordinating group, whose current members are Kirsty Schneeberger (Think 2050), Halina Ward (Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development), Anna Watson (Friends of the Earth), and Niall Watson (WWF-UK). The coordinating group also has responsibility for initiating strategy discussions, with input from all members, for providing support to working group coordinators, for coordinating recruitment of new members, and as necessary receiving representations from members relating to the application of the [Principles for Collaborative Engagement](#).

The Alliance's governance arrangements will be subject to periodic review.

Suggestions for potential new members of the Alliance for Future Generations are welcome, and should be communicated in the first instance to Halina Ward (halina.ward@fdsd.org). A list of Alliance members, which will be updated from time to time, is available on request.

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