

Insights from a National Strategy for Next Generations programme on Improving Government Strategic Thinking

In today's complex world, a nation's strategy must be adaptable and sensitive to the needs of current and future generations. As a Next Generation Champion of the National Strategy for the Next Generations (NSxNG) programme run by the School of International Futures (SOIF), I participated in an experiment to explore the hypothesis that a whole-of-society approach is needed for effective policy and strategy development. As such, the recommendations for a global perspective highlight the critical need for an evidence-based, future-focused decision-making approach to national strategy. Our findings, spurred by events like COVID-19 and the Ukraine-Russia War, emphasise the intergenerational demand from citizens for foresighted leadership.

Amidst challenges, glimpses of governance innovations emerge through initiatives like the 2015 Welsh Future Generations Act, the 2023 Second World Summit of the Parliamentary Committees of the Future and the 2024 Summit of the Future at the UN, which aims to accelerate efforts to take concrete steps to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities many of which require action now for returns in the future. Addressing these issues — from emerging technology and climate change, preventing pandemics to mitigating growing inequality — demands a collaborative "whole-of-society" approach.

We think Andrew Mitchell, MP and Minister of State for Development and Africa, said it best: "If we are serious about building a safer and more prosperous world for future generations, then it falls upon all of us to try and model in our actions, the kind of world they deserve to inherit." Indeed, our championed call for evidence-based policymaking hinges on intergenerational citizen dialogues, highlighting the need for inclusive infrastructure connecting governance, parliament, and society. This is the focal point of our efforts with this inquiry.

Key Messages:

1. Addressing the Global Climate/Prosperity Nexus:

Message: It is of critical importance to address the global climate/prosperity nexus for the next generations.

Evidence: Insights from the NSxNG programme reveal that young leaders are passionate about decisive actions for ambitious reforms, particularly climate change and the development of technological innovations. By championing sustainable development, the UK can position itself as a positive global force, fostering international cooperation and inspiring positive change.

2. Whole of Society Involvement, Especially Young People:

Message: The input of the whole society, connecting infrastructure connecting governance, parliament, and society, is critical for effective strategy-making by the government to ensure long-term resilience. In particular, intergenerational voices, including young people leading intergenerational dialogues, helps provide insights, perspectives, and contributions to add at a critical time.

Evidence: NSxNG has empowered young leaders to engage actively in dialogues about the UK's future. We have discovered a "whole-of-society" and "nothing about us without us" approach is imperative for effective policy and strategy. Through national dialogues, our

findings show the importance of creating an informed public capable of understanding the intricacies of long-term challenges.

3. Infrastructure to Connect Deliberations into Government and Parliament's Role:

Message: There is a need for infrastructure to connect deliberations into government, and Parliament plays a critical role as the bipartisan holder of the long term.

Evidence: Evidence from public engagement programmes demonstrates the value of citizen input, showcasing how evidence-based decision-making bridges the gap between the government and the public on complex issues. By addressing enduring structural changes by building internal capability and fostering external support across the Civil Service, Parliament and Civil Society can come together on meaningful issues.

Based on insights gathered from engaging with individuals in 46 dialogues, here are our recommendations:

I. Comprehensive Foresight and Legal Safeguards for safeguarding the rights and well-being of current and future generations:

- ❖ Enhance foresight capabilities across government through Whole of Society discussions. Create institutions and legislation safeguarding the rights and well-being of current and future generations, ensuring a necessary legal framework.

II. Structural Changes and Strategic Culture:

- ❖ Address enduring structural changes by building internal capability and fostering external support across Civil Service, Parliament and Civil Society. Propose a cross-HMG strategy culture supported by common language and training.

III. Parliamentary Involvement and Long-term Planning:

- ❖ Establish a Parliamentary Committee of the Future for long-term planning, utilising insights from NAO, POST, and GoS. Develop a 25-year national strategy incorporating future scenarios and whole-of-society input, with an associated National Strategy Unit for effective implementation.

IV. Intergenerational Collaboration and Policymaking:

- ❖ Conduct a National Dialogue about the Future of the UK for collective shaping by citizens, experts, and policymakers. Bring intergenerational perspectives explicitly into select committee inquiry, futurecheck (like APPG) scenarios, and build relations. Create a specific commitment to intergenerational fairness in policymaking, such as legislative commitments, an Independent Commission for long-term scrutiny, and fostering intergenerational solidarity.

Introduction

1. I'm Elle, 26, and a Next Generation Champion (NGC) with the School of International Futures (SOIF), a leadership group of young leaders aged 16–30. Together, we are actively shaping a series of continuous dialogues focused on defining the future role of the UK in the world.

2. SOIF's mission is to empower policymakers with applied foresight, a vision reflected in the NSxNG launch in 2019. As an NGC, my involvement in NSxNG provided insights into our citizens' views, shaping the UK's future through intergenerational dialogues. My background in AI and emerging tech meant that I could facilitate conversations focusing on cutting-edge concerns such as privacy and the development of AI and how tech may influence other areas such as democracy (political interference and deepfakes), economics (feared job loss due to automation) and climate change (green energy and transitioning innovations). The views throughout reflect the great diversity of conversations conducted by all of the NGC's experiences over the last four years.
3. Launched during the UK's 2020 Integrated Review planning, NSxNG empowers young leaders, emphasising long-term thinking and citizen participation—a pioneering approach to policymaking. Our dialogues led to an overall question: *How can a national strategy uniquely position the UK as an innovation leader through coordinating inclusive international relationships and consolidating the benefits of existing innovation?*

The Climate/Development Nexus: A Critical Must-Have

4. Since 2019, the NSxNG pilot has involved 70+ Next Generation Champions across the UK in impactful international dialogues addressing the country's role in global challenges. Joining this effort in 2023, I and 25 others have engaged in dialogues this year, reaching over 46 communities across the UK.
5. Participants passionately emphasised the need for decisive actions and bold, ambitious reforms to address the profound challenges ahead, especially climate change. This resonated strongly with the younger generation, particularly Gen Z (born 1996-2012). Edelman's UK Broadcaster Climate Special Report highlights Generation Z's optimism and engagement in climate action. For instance, 88% of 16-24-year-olds believe climate solutions like solar energy have tangible impacts, compared to just 66% of 35-44-year-olds. Similarly, 86% of 18-24 year olds and 73% of 25-34 year olds think climate action will benefit the economy.

"Follow through and make those targets; don't delay them any further." - Dialogue participant.

A Source of Optimism and Confidence for the UK

6. Through our dialogues, young people overwhelmingly envisioned the UK as a catalyst and accelerator, leading by example to facilitate international cooperation, build new alliances, and inspire positive change. One of my dialogues, held virtually across the Southeast and Northwest, had participants emphasise the need to move beyond "not-in-my-backyard-ism" and urged prompt action to meet climate targets, including promoting and encouraging alternative energies.

"Strive to become a pioneer and leader for change, a nation that others can look at and follow." - Dialogue participant.

- Our findings revealed that participants want a proactive stance, with the establishment of broad implementation benchmarks rather than incremental progress. In many of Champion's dialogues, participants emphasised the need to finance research and

development (R&D) partnerships in the private sector, especially for low-carbon transitional technologies.

- They also stressed the importance of open intellectual property legislation and export regulations to facilitate widespread impact.
- Young people are urging for a "just transition" to a cleaner energy approach. However, as we embark on this transition, it is crucial to stress-test borrowing debts incurred by future generations, incorporating intergenerational fairness as a key principle, as Generation Z will inherit this debt.

"Britain should act as a conduit and network facilitator amongst various states." - Dialogue participant.

7. The consensus across our intergenerational dialogues is clear: **bold, innovative, and swift** action is essential in navigating the complex challenges of today's world. These views of UK citizens underline that if the climate/development nexus is addressed correctly, there is the potential to frame the UK as a global leader in tackling this issue.

Purpose of the Programme: Past, Present, and Future

8. The NSxNG programme tested the hypothesis that a whole-of-society approach is imperative for effective policy and strategy development. It serves as a platform for valuable insights, emphasising the importance of reflecting on our journey, drawing lessons, and offering recommendations for future generations in national strategy.
9. Our NGC network has expanded to over 70 members, trained in foresight and leadership to facilitate intergenerational dialogues. For example, Lauren, 21, explored healthcare security futures with the Girl Guides Youth Leadership group.

Connecting Civil Society, Civil Service and Parliament

10. Connecting Civil Society, Civil Service, and Parliament, our collaborative efforts span international networks and parliamentary involvement, encouraging insight and knowledge learning from others externally and internally. Here are some examples:
 - **Commonwealth Dialogue:** We have collaborated with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and engaged parliamentarians across the Commonwealth to address intergenerational citizen challenges. Fellow NGC Baaz Chandwan and I had the opportunity to present findings and discuss issues with parliamentarians. International Parliaments, such as Kenya and the Caribbean, participated and are exploring what it means to build intergenerational policy fit for the long term. The Welsh Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 has a lot of visibility and international interest as the best example of comprehensive governance innovation.
 - **Parliamentary Involvement:** I had the opportunity to contribute through work experience with CPA UK's London office, utilising my AI expertise to present briefings and develop training ideas to educate parliamentarians on emerging technologies and their risks.

- **Innovative Tool - Future Check:** Implementing Future Check, which is a citizen-led service using SOIF's Intergenerational Fairness Assessment tool to assess live legislation, fostering discussions on long-term consequences.
- **Engagement with UK Civil Service:** Presenting insights to the UK Civil Service Heads of Horizon Scanning, contributing to discussions on foresight within the civil service.
- **Protecting Women:** Amaleehah Aslam-Forrester ran dialogues, went on to continue her impact by studying Development Studies (Gender) at SOAS and won the Next Generation Foresight Practitioners award, where she's working on an 'Honour The Girl' Project enabling young people to design a world where honour-based violence no longer exists.
- **Devolved authorities Wales Network:** Nirushan Sudarsan's community insights from citizen discussions led to him creating the Next Generation Futures Network for Wales, bridging local perspectives with global foresight. Sudarsan has also been organising the Senedd Launch of the Welsh Youth Futures Hub.

Long-term planning

11. For long-term planning, Parliament is crucial in connecting with society, embracing change, and involving citizens in decisions on significant issues like AI, climate, and emerging technologies. Evidence from public engagement programmes, such as ScienceWise, highlights the value of citizen input, showcasing how evidence-based decision-making bridges the gap between the government and the public on complex issues.
 - Simultaneously, key infrastructure connecting citizen input to government, Civil Service, Parliament, and Civil Society is essential. Informed citizen discussions in early policy stages enhance implementation impact, ensuring cost-effective policies that reduce the likelihood of future conflicts due to consensus and practical considerations.

"We can only mitigate damage to the environment collectively - everyone must feel they politically and socially are part of the movement for change." - Dialogue participant.

Blueprint for a Resilient and Inclusive Future: NSxNG Recommendations and Urgent Calls to Action

12. Our recommendations reveal the importance of involving the general public in decision-making processes. The suggestions from the NSxNG programme's findings serve as a comprehensive roadmap to an inclusive future. These findings illustrate the need for human-centred design and active listening, and we urge the government to embrace our outlined objectives for National Strategy development. It is essential to recognise that the time for action is now.
13. The importance of a "whole-of-society" and "nothing about us without us" approach is imperative for effective policy and strategy. We particularly stress the significance of civic education and raising awareness about long-term issues. Through national dialogues, our findings show the importance of creating an informed public capable of understanding the intricacies of long-term challenges.

14. The collaborative commitment to intergenerational fairness, the establishment of future-proofing mechanisms, and the engagement of citizens in a National Dialogue about the Future of the UK are the pillars upon which a resilient and adaptive governance approach can be built. This is crucial for developing a stable, long-term strategy that aligns the interests of diverse parties and ensures the sustainability of our national vision.

Conclusion

15. In conclusion, our national dialogues across the UK have not only successfully answered our guiding question – "How can a national strategy uniquely position the UK as an innovation leader through coordinating inclusive international relationships and consolidating the benefits of existing innovation?" – but also provided crucial insights that offer a blueprint to enrich the country's national strategy by integrating diverse citizen voices. This inclusive approach strengthens the strategy's resilience and aligns it with our society's varied needs and aspirations.

Beyond our borders, we have gained interest in our programme from Commonwealth partners, including Kenya, which hints at the potential for our model to inspire global strategies. The challenges we addressed, spanning climate change to technological innovation, resonate universally, emphasising the relevance of our findings on an international scale. Success lies in the recommendations and fostering collaboration among citizens, policymakers, and stakeholders. This collaborative spirit underscores the importance of dialogue in shaping our collective future.

We encourage the UK government to act on these insights, creating a national strategy reflecting the diverse perspectives of current and future generations.

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