



Measuring National Well-being in the UK: Four years of progress

Glenn Everett*

Office for National Statistics, Newport, UK – glenn.everett@ons.gov.uk

Abigail Self

Office for National Statistics, Newport, UK – abigail.self@ons.gov.uk

Abstract

There is widespread agreement that a broad set of economic, environmental and social measures are needed alongside GDP to provide a complete picture of ‘how society is doing’. In November 2010, supported by UK Prime Minister David Cameron, the Office for National Statistics launched the ‘Measuring National Well-being Programme’ with the aim of establishing “an accepted and trusted set of National Statistics which help people to understand and monitor national well-being”. Taking its lead from the Stiglitz Commission, the Programme has focused on providing: a fuller understanding of the economy – and has developed a set of measures of economic well-being to better reflect income, wealth and the household perspective; a better understanding of society – by conducting a 6 month national debate asking the nation ‘what matters’, defining a reporting framework of domains and measures of national well-being and adding questions about personal well-being to ONS largest household survey; and promoting sustainable development and monitoring the environment for the well-being of future generations – through developing a set of environmental accounts as well as measures of social, human and natural capital. Measuring national well-being in the UK is a long term development programme but much progress has already been made in raising the importance of well-being measurement in UK Policy, internationally and outside Government. Critical to this success has been regular stakeholder and citizen engagement from the outset.

Keywords: capitals; sustainable development; UK policy, stakeholder engagement