



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

# Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

Cabinet Paper CAB(20-21)61

First published: 30 March 2021

Last updated: 30 March 2021

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## Decision required

Cabinet is invited to agree the publication of Future Wales: the National Plan 2040 on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

## Summary

1. This Cabinet paper -

- Asks Ministers to agree to the publication of Future Wales.
- Explains how Future Wales provides the Welsh Government with a national

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spatial strategy.

- Explains how Future Wales will support the delivery of Minister's work.

## Context

2. The preparation of Future Wales commenced in 2016. Following a detailed programme of engagement, consultation, assessment and scrutiny, we have reached the final stage and are now ready to publish the Welsh Government's first 20 year national development plan.

3. On publication, Future Wales will become the first national development plan published in the UK. It represents a major achievement and demonstrates the Welsh Government's commitment to the long term reconstructive actions required to create a greener, more productive and fairer Wales in line with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and the Covid-19 Reconstruction: challenges and priorities.

4. The Senedd scrutinised Future Wales across September and November 2020. I have considered the recommendations and resolutions of the Senedd and will lay a statement of response in the Senedd on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The scrutiny process has helped improve the final version. The Senedd is supportive of Future Wales and I have made final changes to the plan in light of its comments. I have agreed with the majority of the recommendations made to me by the committees and have made changes to strengthen Future Wales in a range of areas including digital connectivity, Covid-19 response, Regional Economic Frameworks, town centres, green infrastructure, national parks and energy.

## The role of Future Wales

5. The role of Future Wales is to provide a framework for the actions we need to take now and over the next 20 years. It does not predict the future or attempt to decide what we will do in all circumstances. Rather it sets out how we will take the decisions we face, the outcomes we want to achieve, our key spatial policy

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objectives and gives a framework against which to support existing and future Welsh Government policies.

6. Future Wales sets out a spatial strategy that identifies at a high level how Wales should grow and change over the next 20 years. It provides a framework for delivering the infrastructure to support this growth and for ensuring that as our places change, we sustainably manage our most important natural resources.

7. Future Wales will play an important role in helping to determine Developments of National Significance (planning applications submitted to and determined by Welsh Ministers) and will support the use of the new consenting powers to be established by The Infrastructure Planning Bill provisionally identified for the next Senedd.

8. Future Wales has a role in providing a framework for action by others, including local government. It is complementary to the provisions of the Local Government and Elections Act particularly in relation to the operation of Corporate Joint Committees and greater regional working.

## **Future Wales provides common outcomes and a national spatial strategy**

9. Future Wales' overarching outcomes and spatial strategy have been directly shaped by a broad range of Welsh Government policies. Our economic, transport, decarbonisation, housing, health, energy, marine, digital, regeneration and environmental policies have all contributed to the development of 11 outcomes and a single spatial strategy to help deliver them. Our growing regional work, the steps needed to support the Covid-19 recovery, managing the ongoing impact of Brexit; and the actions to support our rural areas have also all influenced Future Wales' spatial approach.

10. Having outcomes and a national spatial strategy that express collectively a broad range of government policy, provides a context for current and future work. It helps explain how different aspects of government policy are aligned and co-ordinated. For example Future Wales supports our future generations'

goals by providing a mechanism for integrating our regional economic policies with the housing, energy, digital and transport infrastructure required to support it; and we have considered at a high level how this growth will be planned to protect and enhance the natural environment, and deliver decarbonisation. All these aforementioned policy areas can use Future Wales to explain their relationship with each other and demonstrate how policy in one area is co-ordinated with another. In doing so they can rely on the extensive evidence, engagement, consultation, assessment and scrutiny that has supported Future Wales' preparation. This includes Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Regulations Assessment, all required Welsh Government assessments and a preparation process shaped by the goals and ways of working of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

11. Much of our work as Ministers in delivering on the ground, starts with a process of defining and describing what it is we are seeking to achieve and how it relates to other parts of government policy. By drawing on Future Wales in their work, Ministers can move more quickly, where appropriate, to policy delivery initiatives. Future Wales' development plan status means that development proposals at all scales which are in accordance with Future Wales, will be supported through the planning system. By aligning proposals with Future Wales, new development driven by Welsh Government and our partners which requires planning permission, will be supported in principle.

## The relationship between Future Wales and policy areas

12. Following is a summary of some of the key policy aspects Ministers will be able to draw on from Future Wales to support their work.

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| Policy Area | Support from Future Wales |
|-------------|---------------------------|
|-------------|---------------------------|

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|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Renewable Energy</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of 10 areas for wind energy development</li> <li>• Policy for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Housing</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of need for 110,000 houses over next 20 years (16,200 North, 1,800 Mid, 25,600 South West, 66,400 South East) with a clear emphasis on the provision of social and affordable housing</li> </ul>                               |
| <b>Growth Areas</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of national and regional growth areas dispersed throughout Wales to promote greater prosperity and reduce inequality</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Town Centres</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear policy to promote a town centre first approach, which allows for change in town centres and will help direct new uses into centres</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Regions</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framework to drive regional planning and preparation of Strategic Development Plans and allowing for co-ordination of regional land use, transport and economic development plans</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Ecosystems &amp; Biodiversity</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy to drive strategic action to safeguard ecological networks and secure biodiversity enhancements</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Flooding</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood risk management framework to enable sustainable strategic growth and regeneration in National and Regional Growth Areas</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Transport</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies to support national, regional and local transport priorities</li> <li>• Policy to focus growth and development around metro schemes</li> <li>• Strong focus on reducing the need to travel, public transport &amp; active</li> </ul> |

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travel

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**Decarbonisation** • Future Wales as a whole developed to drive decarbonisation in order to meet our international and national obligations

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**Rural** • Flexible rural policy framework to support traditional and new rural sectors and empower rural areas to use the planning system to address their key issues

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13. I have circulated to you a short briefing note setting out the relationship between Future Wales and individual portfolios in more detail. I have also asked my officials to arrange a Future Wales launch event for your officials after publication, to ensure there is an early opportunity to discuss further how Future Wales can be used to support government work.

## Supporting Our Spending Plans

14. In the Draft Budget proposals published in December 2020, the Welsh Government sets out how in building a greener future, we are focusing on our priorities of housing, combating climate change, and reinvesting in town centres to maximise the impact of our infrastructure investment. This includes an additional £36.8m for social housing and £5m more to develop our National Forest and invest in wider biodiversity. We are investing an extra £40m in education infrastructure and will continue decarbonising transport, boosting the funding for active travel by £20m, and providing a total investment of £274.7m in rail and metro. Future Wales will provide a framework to directly support these priorities, ensuring that decisions taken by the planning system at all levels are aligned to support delivery and maximise the opportunities this investment provides.

15. In line with our commitment to maximise the impact of our infrastructure investment for a greener Wales, the Welsh Government also set out in

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December the principles for the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan (WIIP) successor. The emerging framework of the WIIP successor will be built around a set of outcomes, focusing investment decisions will be on what infrastructure in Wales can do and what it can enable, as opposed to what it should be.

16. The successor to the WIIP will set out the strategic outcomes that our infrastructure investments need to deliver, as well as our overarching approach to financing delivery of that infrastructure in Wales. As the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd set out in her Written Statement in December, the successor to the WIIP will be underpinned by a series of infrastructure finance plans setting out the key infrastructure programmes necessary to deliver the outcomes set out by the strategy. The place based principles of Future Wales will play a key role in shaping those infrastructure programmes, and therefore in turn the delivery of Welsh Government infrastructure investment.

## Delivering Future Wales

17. It is important that the publication of Future Wales is not seen as the end of a process but rather the beginning. It provides a framework to help co-ordinate our actions, focus our investments and give a context to emerging strategies. It provides certainty on national and regional growth areas and the outcomes we require new development to deliver. It will empower local authorities and Corporate Joint Committees to drive forward strengthened regional land use, transport and economic planning and provide clear direction for activities undertaken by Welsh Government and our partners in these areas

18. Following publication my officials will continue to work with and support officials across Welsh Government in using Future Wales to support both existing and future work. Formal governance arrangements will be established early in the new Senedd term. I hope that the common outcomes and spatial strategy Future Wales sets out can provide a basis to support a wide range of policies and initiatives and can support an earlier focus on delivery on the ground.



## Communications and publication

19. Future Wales will be the subject of extensive communication and publication. I will lay a statement in the Senedd on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021 setting out my response to the Senedd's scrutiny of Future Wales.

20. A number of versions of Future Wales will be produced, including a full version and young person's version. A programme of support to Local Authorities will be provided post-publication. This paper can be published six weeks after this meeting.

## Recommendation

Agree the publication of Future Wales: the National Plan 2040 on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Julie James, MS  
Minister for Housing and Local Government

February 2021

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