



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Planning Policy Prospectus

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Overview: Planning Policy Wales

Since 2002, Planning Policy Wales (PPW) has set out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. PPW, together with Technical Advice Notes (TANs), circulars and policy clarification letters comprise national planning policy.

PPW has sustainability at its heart. Planning policy is about making choices for the future on how the need for our communities to develop and flourish should be satisfied and our natural resources managed.

PPW is structured so that each chapter is dedicated to one or more theme or topic. These chapters: outline the Welsh Government's strategic objectives for these areas; set the policy context and describe key issues; identify areas which LDPs should address locally; and outline matters which should be taken into account when planning applications are decided.

The chapters are grouped as follows:

- Planning for Sustainability (including climate change, settlement strategies, managing urban form, brownfield and agricultural land, design, sustainable buildings and the Welsh language)
- Natural Heritage and Coast (including landscape and biodiversity)
- Historic Environment
- Economic Development
- Transport
- Housing
- Retailing and Town Centres
- Tourism, Sport and Recreation
- Infrastructure and Services (including water, waste, energy and telecommunications)
- Environmental Risks and Pollution (including flood risk, contaminated and unstable land, air and water quality, and noise and light pollution)

Planning for Sustainability

Chapter 4 (Planning for Sustainability) establishes links between planning and sustainable development. It describes the existing legislative background and framework as well as setting out the planning system's presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The key themes of sustainability, according to paragraph 4.1.6 of PPW, are:

- Living within environmental limits
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Achieving a sustainable economy
- Promoting good governance
- Using sound science responsibly

Every local planning authority (LPA) in Wales must prepare a Local Development Plan (LDP). Regard has to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination made under the Planning Acts. The determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In the preparation of LDPs, LPAs are required to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal. This tests the plan's policies against sustainability objectives. The purpose of the appraisal is to assess the economic, environmental and social effects of the plan and this is undertaken at several stages of its preparation. Undertaking this process ensures that decisions taken in accordance with the plan are made in the context of sustainable development.

PPW should be taken into account by LPAs, Welsh Ministers and Planning Inspectors when LDPs are prepared and planning applications are decided.

The planning system provides for a presumption in favour of sustainable development as: in preparing a development plan and taking decisions in accordance with that plan, LPAs are exercising their planning functions with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

Where a plan is not in place or is out of date, PPW contains sustainable development principles and objectives which the decision-maker should take into account when justifying their decisions on planning applications using appropriate evidence.

These sustainable development principles and objectives demonstrate how sustainable development is woven into the very core of PPW and thus national planning policy.

Sustainable Development has therefore been at the heart of the planning system, its policies and practices, for more than a decade, since the introduction of Planning Policy Wales.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill was introduced into the National Assembly for Wales on 7 July 2014. The overall purpose of the Bill is to ensure that the governance arrangements of public bodies for improving the well-being of Wales take the needs of future generations into account.

3 of the key specific purposes of the Bill are to:

- set a framework within which specified Welsh public authorities will seek to ensure the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (the sustainable development principle);
- put into place well-being goals which those authorities are to seek to achieve in order to improve well-being both now and in the future; and
- set out how those authorities are to show they are working towards the well-being goals.

The sustainable development principle seeks to ensure that all decisions by public bodies are taken in the context of "*seeking to ensure the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*".

Requiring public bodies to have regard to sustainable development in their business planning and decision making processes is effectively requiring them to carry out a process corporately which local planning authorities and other planning decision makers have been doing for over 10 years in the context of Planning Policy Wales.

The Planning (Wales) Bill

The Planning (Wales) Bill was introduced to the National Assembly for Wales on 6 October 2014. The Bill seeks to ensure Wales has a planning system which supports the delivery of homes, jobs and infrastructure for the benefit of communities across Wales.

This Bill, if enacted, will introduce a National Development Framework (NDF) and Strategic Development Plans (SDPs).

The NDF will have development plan status and will focus on land use issues of national significance including energy, transport, economic development, housing and natural resources. Through the NDF, the Welsh Government will provide a positive steer for development and investment and give direction to other parts of the planning system.

SDPs will be prepared for those parts of Wales which have planning issues that are wider than the local level and which affect more than one local planning authority area. The NDF will provide the strategic direction for SDPs and ensure Welsh Government's priorities are carried through to the regional level. Both the NDF and SDPs will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal.

Together PPW, setting out the Welsh Government's land use policies, and the NDF, setting out the spatial priorities for growth and infrastructure, will ensure that the Welsh Government provides leadership for the planning system at all levels across Wales.

Review of Planning Policy Wales

Planning Policy Wales must reflect the new legislative framework whilst continuing to provide an appropriate context within which development plans are prepared and decisions on development proposals are taken.

To take this forward we propose a progressive work programme with short, medium and longer term actions. Planning policy will need to keep up with this important change in the legislative framework and clarification and guidance are likely to be called for, particularly from local planning authorities, on how the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill goals should be taken into account in plan preparation and planning decisions. Agreeing and communicating this work programme now will ensure that our actions are well-prepared, clear and stakeholders are informed of our future intentions.

Short Term Action: By Spring 2015:

Light Touch Review of PPW to take into account provisions of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill

We will revise the opening chapters of PPW (most notably Chapter 4 which presently discusses sustainable development) to incorporate information on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill and how the goals should be taken into account by local planning authorities in plan preparation and planning decisions.

Sections 4.1 – 4.4 of PPW will be rewritten to include information on the Bill in the context of the wider sustainable development (4.1) and planning for sustainability sections (4.2). These sections will be expanded with advice and guidance on LDPs and Development Management in a similar fashion to the other topic-based chapters. The sustainable development principles and objectives (4.3 and 4.4), will also be grouped and re-ordered to align with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill goals.

These changes will be prepared and issued after the Bill receives Royal Assent and the relevant provisions of the Bill come into force, firstly in the form of a policy clarification letter and then as part of a scheduled refresh of PPW.

This initial work would provide essential information and guidance to developers and local planning authorities, whilst keeping national planning policy in Wales up-to-date in the context of the new legislative background.

Medium Term Action: By End of 2015:
Review of PPW which highlights the policy statements and relates these to the goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill.

Detailed work will begin to examine PPW in more detail to demonstrate the linkages with the goals contained within the Bill.

This will see PPW comprehensively examined to highlight and make cross-references to the goals contained in the Bill, thereby intrinsically linking the two and enabling decision makers to justify their decisions within the context of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill goals.

Longer Term Action: During 2016:
Align the structure of PPW and NDF with the goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill.

In the longer term we will refresh PPW to align the present chapters with goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill. This structuring will assign a policy topic to one or more goals.

Likewise, the NDF will be structured around the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill goals, ensuring that the principles of sustainable development continue to be at the heart of the planning system.

This work will be scheduled to co-ordinate with other ongoing work associated with PPW including the incorporation of Minerals Planning Policy Wales (MPPW) as well as the updating and formulation of revised policy which is ongoing (including retailing and built heritage etc.).

Once the system has been introduced, the Welsh Ministers will also need to demonstrate that they have taken the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill goals into account in taking decisions on Developments of National Significance (DNS).

Although the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill will be set in legislation; they can be added to, deleted, or changed by the Welsh Ministers through secondary legislation. It will therefore be necessary for PPW to be flexibly structured and published in order that it can be adapted to any changes.