

Newid Hinsawdd, Ynni a Chynllunio
Climate Change, Energy and Planning



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Nick Ramsay MS
Chair
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
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Dear Nick

Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales

Thank you for your letter of 7 October seeking further information on how the Welsh Government intends to take forward recommendations 5, 6 and 7 of your report into the Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales. As agreed with the clerk, I am responding on Andrew Slade's behalf and I must apologise for the delay in doing so.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to clarify our approach to place planning as referred to in Recommendation 5. We believe that a distinction needs to be made between the policy objective – Placemaking and one of the tools available to implement the policy namely Place Plans. There are currently no plans to bring forward legislation to make Place Plans a statutory requirement but we do want to see Placemaking embedded within the planning system as the Committee suggests.

Planning Policy Wales was comprehensively revised in 2018 and includes a focus on using the planning system to deliver Placemaking through the preparation of Local Development Plans and individual planning decisions. Placemaking in this context needs to be a holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes. It should draw upon an area's potential to create high quality development and public spaces that promote people's prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being in the widest sense. We were encouraged that the Future Generations Commissioner has commended the approach which PPW has adopted commenting that it is one of the best examples to date of the use of the Act to design national policy in Wales and of engagement with her office.

We therefore agree that Placemaking needs to become ever more central to how we use our towns and cities, particularly in light of the repercussions of Covid-19 and the climate emergency for communities. We are fortunate that the revised PPW and Future Wales puts us in a strong position. The Committee may also wish to note that the Minister of Housing and Local Government has issued guidance on how the planning system should contribute to the recovery from the pandemic. Building Better Places: The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures sets out 8 themes where action is necessary.



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- Staying local: creating neighbourhoods
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- Revitalising our town centres
- Digital places – the lockdown lifeline
- Changing working practices: our future need for employment land
- Reawakening Wales' tourism and cultural sectors
- Green infrastructure, health and well-being and ecological resilience
- Improving air quality and soundscapes for better health and well-being

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/building-better-places-the-planning-system-delivering-resilient-and-brighter-futures.pdf>

Building Better Places signposts where further guidance is available and the resources which local planning may draw on for assistance. The clear national expectation is that LDPs and planning decisions will implement the policy locally. Where this does not happen the Minister may comment on LDPs or call-in planning applications.

Place Plans are a tool which can help to implement the placemaking policy. The Chief Planner, through his regular dialogue with the Planning Officers Society Wales (POSW), will continue to encourage local planning authorities to support the preparation of Place Plans. We will also be highlighting the valuable contribution Place Plans can make to the LDP review process and how guidance and training on the preparation of Place Plans, produced by the Design Commission for Wales and Planning Aid Wales using grant assistance from Welsh Government, can support the process.

With regard to recommendations 6 and 7 we are hopeful that regional co-operation on S106 and other technical planning matters can be progressed more rapidly than the Committee suggests. It has been our long-standing policy that local planning authorities should pool their specialist and technical planning functions to increase resilience. The pooling of resources between authorities in this way should not depend upon completion of Strategic Development Plans. We strongly agree with the Committee that Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy remain important tools to mitigate the impact of development on communities. This is however an area where substantial policy redesign will be necessary if we are to accurately reflect the nature of development in Wales and associated land values. As your report indicates accurate data covering this area is scarce. We are seeking to address this issue in order to inform further policy development to address the Committee's concerns. Our current intention is that we will have commissioned further research in this area by the end of this year. In the meantime this is an aspect of the planning system that we will continue to keep under review.



JOHN HOWELLS

Director of Climate Change, Energy and Planning