



RTPI Cymru

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e-mail response sent to: SeneddPAC@senedd.wales

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to: Barriers to the successful Implementation of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe, representing some 25,000 spatial planners. RTPI Cymru represents the RTPI in Wales, with 1,300 members. The Institute seeks to advance the science and art of planning, working for the long-term common good and well-being of current and future generations. The RTPI develops and shapes policy affecting the built environment, works to raise professional standards and supports members through continuous education, training and development.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. Our response to the consultation questions is set out below and focuses on planning issues.

1.Awareness and understanding of the Act and its implications.

The planning system has an important role in shaping social, economic, environmental and cultural factors which promote and impact on well-being, which is the essence of the Act.

Welsh Government's Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 10) clearly links the seven goals and five ways of working of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015), fully integrating the Act into national planning policy. It does this through putting the concept of placemaking at the heart of national planning policy to ensure that planning decisions consider all aspects of well-being and deliver new development which is sustainable and provides for the needs of all people. The new format of PPW is a step change in how planning policy is presented and it will take time for users to shift to new ways of using policy, however we support this alignment as it will keep planning policy current and at the forefront of delivering quality places.

The draft National Plan: Future Wales 2040 (National Development Framework (NDF) equally makes reference to the Act, stating that "the Act influences the way we plan for new

development; it demands that development and use of land contribute to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.”

Within the planning profession in Wales there is a broad understanding of the Act. Further clarification and understanding of the relationship between the different approaches by different bodies and how they relate to each other would be useful. For example, the relationship between Well-being Plans and Local Development Plans (LDPs) and their relationship with planning strategies and policies.

We would support more joined up working with Public Service Boards. In particular we believe there is an opportunity for stronger links between health and the land use planning system, in order to better meet the goals of the Act. LDPs could be seen as the spatial interpretation of Well-being Plans, if they were better integrated. The emerging NDF, Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) and LDPs would be an effective way of setting development proposals in an integrated context. The statutory status of LDPs and SDPs would also bring significant benefits in terms of the delivery of individual projects within an agreed development framework.

In terms of understanding and the implications of the Act, we are not aware of any formal training given to planning professionals, in the public or private sectors, regarding the Act. It is important to ensure that the details and requirements of the Act filter to all actors in the planning system.

2.The resources available to public bodies to implement the Act and how effectively they have been deployed.

We are unaware of any resources, training etc. provided to Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to help them implement the requirements of the Act. Work has been absorbed into planning practice at a time when LPAs in Wales are under increasing pressure to deliver more services with fewer resources, having seen their budgets cut by more than 50% in the last five years.

We note that the Commissioner has highlighted this in the five year report published in May 2020, as an area for their further attention.

It is important to recognise the spatial distinctiveness of places in developing policy and decision making. At the national level, it will be the NDF and at a regional level it will be the emerging SDPs which can facilitate an integrated approach. Strategic plan-making requires technical skills and a deep understanding of community needs and priorities.

A well resourced, plan-led, positive planning service can deliver corporate objectives, which, if properly encouraged and effectively organised can bring together objectives across services and help achieve local and national sustainable development and climate action goals. Corporate management teams provide leadership, vision and priority setting for areas, by shaping the strategic operational direction and investment decisions of local authorities. The implications of these corporate decisions on new investment, infrastructure, development activity, local services and policy delivery are significant, particularly at this time. The RTPi believes that investing in the planning service would positively influence the outcomes of planning and support good growth and a balanced recovery.

The RTPi believes that making the role of the Chief Planning Officer a more prominent and strategic position within local authorities would positively influence the outcomes of planning and support good growth and a balanced recovery.

3.Support provided to public bodies by the Future Generations Commissioner.

We appreciate this is a difficult time to plan for future resources. Yet at this critical stage support and guidance on the ways of working and collaboration would improve the implementation of the Act along with funding to support it.

The framework of local government and public bodies in Wales allows engagement, dialogue, sharing of information and good practice which can be a useful support in implementing the Act.

4.The leadership role of the Welsh Government.

See our response to 1 above regarding Welsh Government's incorporation of the Act into planning policy.

Linked to recommendations in the Future Generations Report 2020. RTPI Cymru have recently published research on measuring planning outcomes, [Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes Research](#) which was supported with funding from Welsh Government, along with the Scottish and Irish Government, Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government and the Office of the Planning Regulator in Ireland. The research explores how local authorities can go beyond simple metrics like speed of processing applications and number of housing units delivered and focus on the impact of planning policy and decisions on the ground.

RTPI Cymru welcomed Welsh Government's [Building Better Places Guide](#) which links with the Act and puts planning and planners at the centre of responding to the recovery of the pandemic, understanding and valuing what planning and planners can deliver.

5.Any other barriers to successful implementation of the Act (e.g. Brexit, COVID, etc.).

Planners have an important proactive role as a driver of change, but collaborative working is needed across sectors, business and communities, with funding in place to support this. The importance of integration within our communities has been demonstrated during the pandemic, not least because of the inequalities that have been highlighted as a result of Covid19. A partnership approach, along with integrated plans and strategies will help strengthen and build resilience for the future.

RTPI Cymru called for the NDF to come forward as a priority, to provide the framework to strategically guide development in Wales and assist with aligning investment decision making with the Act. It will have an important role to play in identifying infrastructure projects and other development at a time where there is uncertainty around the future of planned projects, infrastructure finance and as the UK leaves the European Union. We are pleased it is progressing but would encourage its adoption.

It is important that the requirements of the Act do not become a tick box exercise and that the decision making process and implementation of planning consents on the ground reflect the aims of the Act. This could be an area where further resources would assist implementation and links to the measuring of outcomes (see our response to 4 above).

Better integrating the five ways of working into working practices, for example the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Process, would help planners/developers embrace being more collaborative and involve the community in shaping plans and schemes. The current emphasis on placemaking may assist this approach where there is focus on enabling collaboration between organisations and involvement of people in planning.

It is important that all legislation/regulations link together and so it is imperative that Welsh Government are able to review all legislation and Regulations within its remit.

6.How to ensure that the Act is implemented successfully in the future.

See suggestions set out above.

If you require further assistance, please contact RTPI Cymru on 020 7929 8197 or e-mail Roisin Willmott at walespolicy@rtpi.org.uk

Yours sincerely,



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Director
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