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The voice of RTPI Cymru

CYNLLUNIO

Summer 2011 Edition

Wales Planning Conference:
New Beginnings?

INSIDE **this edition of Cynllunio:**

CIL & S106 • Localism Bill in Wales • President's Visit to Wales
Policy & Research News • Events • Urban Design
Culture Change and Development Plans • University News
Consulting or Engaging? • and much more

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Front Cover: Wales Planning Conference 2011

Printed by Icomworks on recycled silk paper

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Welcome to the summer edition

I am pleased to report to Cynllunio readers that this year's Wales Planning Conference was a huge success. This is its 4th year and, despite the economy we are operating in, saw its highest number of attendees to date. We can now confidently say the Wales Planning Conference is truly established and is the leading conference to discuss planning in Wales. But we musn't rest on our laurels ... planning for next year's Conference is already underway. We need your support also. To retain this valuable opportunity to come together to discuss issues for planning in Wales we need attendees, so please put the date in your diary - 6th and 7th June - and we'll let you know early in 2012 the details of the programme.

Of course 2011 hasn't just been about the Wales Planning Conference; we also held a successful Spring Conference in Llandudno in March, which used economic renewal as its focus.

Presentations from both the Spring Conference and the Wales Planning Conference are available from the RTPI Cymru webpages.

Linked to the Spring Conference, was the RTPI President's visit (see page 3) to Wales. Richard Summers spent three productive days with us in north Wales and had the opportunity to meet many planners.

I must take this opportunity to mention the elections in May. RTPI Cymru, for the first time, published its own Manifesto - our ask of Government for the next session. Developing our Manifesto was a useful excercise and gave us an opportunity to really think about what the RTPI wants to see from the planing system in Wales. This also helped raise the profile of the RTPI and planners alike, and we will develop the Manifesto further ready for the local elections next year.

As a result of the elections, we have a Labour Welsh Government and, as previously, we will work positively with the Government and the Minister, John Griffiths AM, to work for a planning system in the public interest, as per our duty. With the new portfolios, we will also seek close working with other relevant Ministers (see pg 5).

This edition is full of news items, including from the Planning Inspectorate, updates on the Localism Bill and the newly published study on planning for economic renewal. There are also articles on urban design and designing for business, community engagement, Cardiff University, and Young Planners Cymru, as well as an article informing you what we in the Institute are doing to make your subscription fees go further! There are details of lots of events coming up, including the Planning Summer School, which will be in Swansea this year. Remember to keep up to date on events by registering for the bi-monthly e-bulletin and also keep an eye on the RTPI Cymru webpages.

Cynllunio, Spring 2011

Roisin Willmott
Editor

Contributing to Cynllunio

Contributions are welcome from RTPI members and others on a wide range of topics and in a variety of different forms:

- Conference announcements
- Reports on conferences
- Critical thought pieces
- Updates on policy in Wales
- Recent project successes
- Humorous items
- Images, photographs

Croesawn erthyglau yn y Gymraeg.

The copy deadlines for the next 3 quarterly issues of Cynllunio are:

- Thursday 18th August 2011
- Thursday 27th October 2011
- Thursday 26th January 2012

If you want to make contributions to the newsletter then get in touch on 029 2047 3923 or email: roisin.willmott@rtpi.org.uk.

Advertising

Cynllunio is distributed to all RTPI members in Wales and also to Chairs of Planning Committees, Assembly Government Ministers with a relevant portfolio and other key organisations, and therefore provides an excellent way of reaching the wider planning community across Wales. Circulation is currently approximately 1,150 each quarter, plus editions are available more widely on our website.

Current advertising rates are (excl. VAT):
Back page: Full - £300; half - £250
Internal: Full - £250; half - £200; 1/4 - £125
Discounts are available for multiple editions.

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RTPI, a charity registered in England 262865 and Scotland SC 037841

President's Visit to Wales

Richard Summers, RTPI President, reports back on his visit to Wales in March

My visit to Wales in March was based in Llandudno and Dolgellau in the spectacular scenery of the Snowdonia National Park. It was great to be back in North Wales, to meet planners who are dedicated to renewable energy and environmental conservation and to find myself in the midst of a lilting Celtic language again. Planning in Wales is certainly not the same as Scotland or England!

I took the cross country train from Edinburgh to Llandudno on the coast of North Wales and then hired a car to take me to a much-needed weekend break between my visits to RTPI Scotland and RTPI Wales at Beaumaris on the southeast coast of Anglesey, the magical Isle of Mon. The British Society of Dowsers (BSD) put me in touch with some local dowsers who took me to dowse at several ancient sites for the spirit of place. We were all in awe of the magnificent views of the snow-capped and cloud-touched mountain peaks of Snowdonia on the other side of the Menai Straits.

The first day of my formal President visit to North Wales began with a fascinating visit to the BREEAM Excellent office building of West Coast Energy at Mold in Flintshire with Roisin Willmott, National Director of RTPI Cymru, where I heard about the company's work in renewable energy and low carbon construction. We then had a thought provoking colloquium with planners and councillors at Flintshire County Council about local community planning, to bring back some ideas to help with the new localism in England.

Above: West Coast Energy's BREEAM Excellent HQ in Mold

I chaired the RTPI Cymru Spring Conference on Planning for Economic Renewal in Llandudno on the second day of my visit to North Wales, where we were joined by Anna Prescott, Chair of RTPI Cymru. There were presentations and discussions on economic prospects, planning policy and practice and planning for economic renewal. The conference was well attended and the discussions ranged widely over community and environment issues, as well as economic development. This was followed in the evening by an informal dinner with members of the RTPI Cymru Management Board.

The last day of my visit to North Wales took me to the Dolgellau Townscape Heritage Initiative in the Snowdonia National Park. Anna, Roisin and I were shown around the town centre by an enthusiastic group of planners who pointed out their many successes including the restoration of Listed Buildings and the plans for a flood control scheme that would enable the development of new community facilities, in line with the Townscape Heritage Initiative. We were joined by some more planners for a stimulating colloquium about local community planning in Wales. It was a joy to be back in my favourite North Wales town!

That afternoon Roisin drove Anna and me back through the breath-taking mountain and valley landscapes of mid-Wales from Dolgellau to Cardiff where I was to take the train back home. They told me how various wind farm projects had taken a long time to get planning permission

because of highways and police concerns about bringing the huge components of wind turbines through narrow lanes and bridges. I was reminded of comments in Llandudno that they ran boat trips out to the wind turbines in the bay and were planning illuminations on the towers to rival Blackpool!

My visit to RTPI Cymru in North Wales equalled my visit to RTPI Scotland but in several different ways. The national planning systems in both countries are relatively stable compared with those in England and Northern Ireland, and there is great interest and some sympathy for the public criticism of planners and the localism proposals in England. Roisin and Anna were also perfect hosts but set a more measured pace than their Scottish colleagues! My visit reached a more local scale of planning and regeneration than the big schemes I saw in Edinburgh and Glasgow but many of the issues and objectives were the same. There was a more neighbourly approach to planning in rural North Wales. Cymru am byth!

Above: Tour of Dolgellau with officers from Snowdonia National Park Authority

Infrastructure Planning and CIL

LDP Wales states that, in areas where significant development is proposed, Local Development Plans (LDPs) should identify any new infrastructure required to bring it forward. Local planning authorities (LPAs) must be able to show that they can deliver the development planned in their LDPs. LDPs should, therefore, be supported by evidence of good infrastructure planning. Done properly, and provided there is no significant delay, that infrastructure planning could also be able to be used to support a CIL charging schedule.

Infrastructure planning should consider the infrastructure required to support development, costs, sources of funding, timescales for delivery and gaps in funding. It should also cover who will provide the infrastructure and be informed by and inform any strategies and investment plans of the authority and other organisations. The infrastructure planning process should identify, as far as possible:

- infrastructure needs and costs;
- phasing of development;
- funding sources;
- responsibilities for and time of delivery

It is acknowledged that some infrastructure providers can be reluctant to engage and that their spending programmes are relatively short lived compared to the life of a LDP. However, it is critical that LPAs are proactive in involving infrastructure providers, particularly where the provision of infrastructure has a bearing on delivery. It may help to point out that being involved at an early stage in the LDP process is likely to help the providers' own infrastructure planning.

It is not likely that all the infrastructure required to deliver a LDP's objectives will need to be in place the day a plan is adopted but it should be in place by the time a development is envisaged to come forward. LDPs can include policies to phase development, for example done properly a housing trajectory will link infrastructure with delivery. It will also aid in monitoring the progress towards meeting the aims and objectives of the LDP.

Good infrastructure planning will be informed by effective engagement in regional working groups addressing matters such as highways, transportation and waste. LPAs should also be working with their neighbours to deliver necessary infrastructure to the benefit of everyone. Monies raised though CIL can be spent outside borough boundaries. Links should be forged and mature political relationships developed and nurtured to ensure cross boundary issues can be tackled effectively and problems resolved expeditiously.

Done properly and provided there is not a significant gap between the production of a LDP and a CIL charging schedule, the evidence produced to inform and support a LDP could form a key part of the evidence base supporting a charging schedule. As this is likely to lead to time, cost and efficiency savings, in producing evidence to support a LDP (such as background/topic papers, land availability or viability studies) LPAs should consider what (if any) additional information might render a document also fit to inform a charging schedule.

In producing a charging schedule the charging authority should follow these six steps:

1. Identify scale and location of development
2. Assess infrastructure implications
3. Decide which are critical to delivery
4. Identify costs (actual or expected) and sources of funding for the critical infrastructure
5. Assess whether there is there a gap
6. Set the CIL rate(s) in the context of the balance between the amount raised and the impact on viability.

Step 1 should follow naturally from the LDP and steps 2 to 5 should be part of the LDP evidence base to show that the development planned in the LDP can be delivered.

The following should also be taken into account:

1. What impact will the CIL rate(s) have on the overall viability of development in the area
2. The potential impact of any differential rates, location/ boundaries of zones
3. Timescales for implementation

The CIL should not just be used as a mechanism for delivering policy; the justification for the rate must be based on the viability evidence. Consequently, setting a low rate for all commercial development because there is a policy to promote jobs will not be sufficient. It will also need to be shown that any charge set is informed by evidence of viability.

The Planning Inspectorate

Honours List Recognition

Above: John Davies MBE

John Davies formerly Director for Wales in the Planning Inspectorate, was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours, announced in June. John is well known across the planning community in Wales. John retired from the Planning Inspectorate earlier this year.

Also receiving an MBE is Dr Jeremy Davies, formerly Honorary Research Associate of the British Geological Survey. Dr Davies was awarded an MBE for services to science in Wales. From a planning persepective, he has greatly extended our knowledge of mineral resources in Wales.

Householder Appeal Service Update

A pilot introducing a speedier way of dealing with householder development appeals was introduced by the Planning Inspectorate in Wales one year ago. Starting with just nine, the pilot now includes all but two Welsh local authorities. Over 70 cases have been received with 47 cases being decided within 8 weeks of receipt, against a target of 90% within 12. Feedback from appellants and authorities alike has been positive with access only required site visit's proving to be an efficient and cost saving benefit.

To find out more about the pilot e-mail: wales@pins.gsi.gov.uk or telephone 02920 823866.

A procedural guide to how Inspectors will approach a need for additional / alternative sites in a LDP

It is not likely that it will become apparent that additional sites (of whatever type) are required until the Inspector has considered the quantum, the strategy and the suitability/deliverability of the sites allocated in a LDP.

If the Inspector has serious doubts regarding the ability of the sites allocated in the LDP to deliver its vision and strategy he/she will arrange a Hearing session at which his/her concerns will be outlined. The Inspector will aim to produce a paper before the Hearing as this may enable an agreement as to the way forward to be reached at the Hearing. If a note is produced it will be published on the LDP website. If it is not possible to produce a note, the Inspector will seek an agreement with the LPA regarding a time for its response at the Hearing.

The Hearing will be publicised on the local planning authority's website. It is not likely to be necessary or appropriate to notify all representors to the LDP of the time and date of the Hearing. Who will be notified will depend on the circumstances of each Examination and the Inspector will determine which representors should be notified directly.

The LDP is the LPA's plan and if it is agreed that additional sites are required it will be for the LPA to put forward alternatives to those allocated in the submitted LDP. Candidate and alternative sites should have already been subject to public consultation and sustainability appraisal (SA) and identifying sites from this existing pool is likely to limit the amount of additional work required and reduce delay. However, if such sites are chosen further publicity should be carried out to make sure that everyone knows that the local planning authority has changed its stance and is now proposing to allocate them in the LDP. The LPA will also need to consider whether further SA work is required.

Depending on how long this will take the Examination may be formally suspended. Once this work has been done additional Hearings may be needed if representors object to the new allocations or if the Inspector has any doubts regarding any of the new sites.

As stated above, the LDP is the LPA's plan and the Inspector will not look beyond the local planning authority's proposed alternatives if they are considered to be sound. However, in considering which sites to put forward LPAs should be open to engagement with the proponents of candidate and alternative sites not allocated in the submitted LDP.

Who's Who in the Welsh Government

Above: John Griffiths AM

Following the elections for the National Assembly for Wales in May, as you will no doubt be aware, Labour secured 30 of the 60 seats, one seat short of a majority. Carwyn Jones has decided to govern in a minority government.

But who in the Welsh Government's Cabinet has a link to planning?

Firstly of course, we have John Griffiths AM, Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, whose portfolio includes town and country planning, along with other related responsibilities.

Huw Lewis AM is Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage. The portfolio includes: matters relating to the supply of market and affordable housing to meet need (but not planning policy or Building Regulations); Strategic Regeneration Areas and legacy regeneration; provision of sites and premises, derelict land and environmental improvements relating to regeneration; protection (including designation) of ancient monuments and historic buildings in Wales, and related matters; conserving and protecting the historic environment of Wales and promotion of heritage-led regeneration.

Responsibility for the Wales Spatial Plan rests with Carl Sargeant AM, Minister for Local Government and Communities, as does Transport policy, including the development of an integrated transport system in Wales.

Edwina Hart MBE, Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science will, amongst other issues deal with property issues: provision of sites, premises, services and facilities for business; and bringing derelict land in Wales into use or improving its appearance.

In addition to other matters, the First Minister, Carwyn Jones AM has responsibility for major energy facilities and infrastructure, including devolution in energy matters, steel and coal.

Biographical details of the Ministers are available from: www.wales.gov.uk

The Localism Bill in Wales

The Localism Bill is a long and complex piece of draft legislation - but what applies to Wales? Here is a guide to its application in Wales.

The Localism Bill, the latest version of which can be found at www.parliament.uk, had its second reading in the House of Lords on 7th June and began its Lords Committee stage on 20th June. The Bill, according to the UK Government, aims to devolve greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and give local communities control over decision making, including through the use of financial incentives. It is a major piece of legislation that affects a wide range of existing planning, housing and local government legislation. The majority of the provisions in the Bill relate only to England, although a number apply also to Wales. The explanatory notes to accompany the Bill that can also be found on the web site referred to above, provide a Territorial Application Table at annex A, setting out which provisions will apply to Wales.

In particular readers will wish to note that in Part 5, which deals with proposed reforms to the planning system, Chapters 1, 3, 4 and 5 relating to Plans and Strategies, Neighbourhood Planning, Consultation and Enforcement are England only provisions. Chapter 2 of Part 5 containing provisions relating to the Community Infrastructure Levy, however, applies to Wales, as do the provisions in Chapter 6 relating to nationally significant infrastructure projects. Chapter 4 of the Part 1 local government provisions, which aims to clarify the rules on predetermination, to allow councillors to freely discuss issues and then speak or vote on those issues are also included on an England and Wales basis.

A detailed discussion of the Bill from a legal perspective can be found on Page 8.

Study Published on Planning for Sustainable Economic Development

Last year the Welsh Government commissioned a research study to investigate how the planning system helps to deliver economic development in Wales. The research was commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of existing planning policy for economic development and to establish future planning policy and guidance requirements against the 'Economic Renewal: a new direction'.

The research identifies a number of improvements that should be made to the planning system to support economic growth and jobs.

The research was carried out by Roger Tym & Partners with Asbri Planning and was informed by a comprehensive evidence base including a detailed review of national policy, case studies from local authorities; lessons learnt from other UK administrations; and discussions with stakeholders. A research steering group made up of representatives from the business sector, (including the CBI and FSB) environment sector, planning profession (including RTPI Cymru) and local authorities, have overseen the project and endorsed its findings and recommendations.

John Griffiths AM presented the new study on how the planning system could help deliver economic growth at the annual Wales Planning Conference. He said. "It is clear from the research report that there is more that all participants in the planning system can do to improve planning for economic development."

"The Welsh Government accepts the recommendations in full. In taking them forward I will be consulting on revised economic development planning policies and a framework economic development Technical Advice Note later this year. I will discuss with Cabinet colleagues how we take forward the recommendations."

"In implementing the report, planning will do more to support economic growth and jobs by making Wales a better place to do business."

The recommendations for improvement include:

- the need to refresh economic development national planning policy supported by a new technical advice note;
- the provision of a central economic information resource to inform the evidence base for Local Development Plans (LDPs) and development management decisions;
- closer working between planning and economic development functions at the local level, with economic development teams playing a greater role in LDP preparation and providing advice on planning applications for economic uses;
- the need for businesses to do more to identify and promote the economic value of development through both LDP and development management processes;
- the requirement for a new strategic planning arrangement at above local planning authority level.

The report is available to download from the Welsh Government's website: www.wales.gov.uk, and follow the links to 'Planning'.

Economic Renewal Considered

In March the RTPI Cymru Spring Conference, sponsored by DPP, put the economy on the agenda for discussion. Chaired by Richard Summers, RTPI President, who said that planning and planners play an important role in delivering economic growth and have a positive approach to economic renewal. RTPI Cymru's Chair, Anna Prescott, highlighted that economic growth does not just bring jobs and spending, but also important contributions to public finances and generates local economic growth. She stressed planning's role in delivering economic growth, but noted that planning cannot do everything.

Setting the context, Neil Ashbridge, Bank of England, Agent for Wales, explained monetary policy in the UK, the role of the Bank of England, and the wider impacts on economic performance. DPP's Gareth Hooper then provided a developer perspective.

Bryn Richards, Welsh Government, gave the latest position of the Economic Renewal Programme, whilst Neil Hemington of the Planning Division delved into more detail on the planning aspects of the Government's actions to deliver sustainable economic renewal. He highlighted the initial findings from the study into national economic development planning policy (see above). Taking the policy to the local level, Nicola Gulley, of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, discussed their approach to economic development policies in their LDP.

dpp Planning Sustainability Heritage Urban Design

Owain Wyn, Burum, presented on using Land Map as a tool for assisting economic development, renewal and regeneration, using a case study from the Llŷn Landscape Partnership. Shelagh McNerney from DPP Shape discussed the work taking place to regenerate the north Wales coastline, focusing on Colwyn Bay and Rhyl; two very different places. Jonathan Cawley of West Coast Energy, concluded the presentations with an illustration of how the new green jobs sector can contribute to local economic renewal and also the value of investing in sustainable buildings to support business investment decisions, illustrated by the Company's decision to invest in a BREEAM Excellent HQ.

Policy & Research Forum

The newly formed RTPI Cymru Policy and Research Forum (see Cynllunio Spring edition) met for the first time in March in Swansea and appointed Lesley Punter as its Chair and Karen Potter as its Deputy Chair.

The Forum is currently reviewing the priorities set out in the RTPI Cymru Manifesto for the National Assembly elections and the Welsh Government's Manifesto commitments to develop its own proactive work programme, as well as responding to consultations.

Reflections on Culture Change and Development Plans in Wales

After almost ten years of the new development planning system in Wales, it is time to reflect on how change has been embraced by the profession, Lesley Punter discusses.

In both England and Wales, when the new systems appeared, there was rhetoric about the need for 'culture change'. In England this referred mainly to implementing spatial planning, the new development plan system and development management. In Wales, we already had the beginnings of a Spatial Plan (WSP), which also caused a need for reorientation by the profession. Development plans remained land use based but with a hybrid development plan system, the Local Development Plan (LDP).

The English government included two seemingly opposing aims: to increase the speed of planning processes to improve the drive for development and regeneration while increasing the emphasis on early collaboration and participation. In Wales, both are aims of the LDP system. These are the government defined cultural changes to be achieved through mechanisms like the Community Involvement Scheme (CIS) and delivery agreement.

The RTPI throughout the decade attempted to be very clear about the relative merits of the new systems and to promote similar ideals. The main change came in 2009 when climate change became a more dominant principle.

Planning Theory and Practice, September 2010 contains an article, which attempts to assess whether and why certain practitioners in England were able to 'change culture'[1]. It defines professional/organisational culture as something people use to shape their sense of self and their public roles. But for planners, this can create tensions from competing influences - a government defined planning culture, a professionally defined culture and a local authority culture.

Having been responsible for promoting LDPs to LPA planners in 2003/4 in Wales, I found it notable that many saw these as adaptations to the UDP system and not a cultural shift. At the RTPI manifesto debate in Cardiff in the autumn of 2010, it was clear that the concept of public consultation on strategy remained a difficult one for a number of players, that a slower process was being indirectly supported and that the role of the WSP was still unclear to many. Is this a "collective identification with old values and ways of thinking"?[2]

It is interesting to speculate about how much any resistance to LDP changes could be due to:

- a professional's personal perspectives about his/her role as planner;
- the culture of the local authority in which s/he works; and/or
- the nature of the changes themselves.

The first point, especially when considering participation, relates to whether an individual planner sees him/herself as a participation facilitator rather than someone whose role is to consult on the best professionally drawn options. It also relates, especially with timetables, to the degree to which local planners consider themselves to be 'leaders' in their authorities. In a broader sense, one's purpose in being a planner may be driven by built and natural environmental protection or more by the desire to shape and promote spatial development. These drivers can have an impact on the proposed strategic role of an LDP.

The culture of a local authority, including politicians and the chief executive may also have an impact on the approach to an LDP. Is it a necessary evil or an essential tool for implementation of a community or regeneration strategy or even the WSP? What is the local culture concerning public consultation? This is a valid consideration when analysing the degree to which the LDP cultural shift has been absorbed and progress made. Also within each authority there are likely to be planners at a number of places along the paradigm shift, which means that leadership is essential from the top if change is to be embraced.

And finally, did the change from UDP to LDP have seeds of self-destruction? This is as yet hard to judge and needs some further research as LDPs come through.

These factors will have had a differential effect on each LDP. The output could easily be described as a "messy mediated product of interaction between the new system, local planning cultures" and personal drivers.[3]

The factor over which planners have most control is their own attitude to change. In my view, the professional planner should be a convincing advocate, tailoring explanations of, and suggestions and adaptations to new process and policy to meet local contexts. Planners though generally excellent at physical and economic analysis, are often less experienced in analysing the political and social context for a development plan and engaging others accordingly. It is perhaps easier in Wales than England to find compromises, given the better integration and more frequent debate between the Welsh Government and local planners. Given that change is always with us, those who use their skills to grasp change as an opportunity to lead and shape the places for the better are the planners of the future.

Reference:

[1] Inch, Andy, "Culture Change as Identity Regulation: the Micro-Politics of Producing Spatial Planners in England", pp 359-374, Planning Theory and Practice, Volume 11, No. 3, September 2010, Routledge, Abingdon.

[2] Ibid, p. 367

[3] Ibid, p.371.

Lesley is Chair of the RTPI Cymru Policy and Research Forum

LDP Update

Since the Spring edition of Cynllunio, Rhondda Cynon Taf's LDP has been adopted.

Snowdonia National Park and Merthyr Tydfil have recently received their Inspectors' letters and will hopefully move to adoption shortly.

Denbighshire, Wrexham, Brecon Beacons NP, and Ceredigion are all expected to submit their plans before the end of 2011.

As previously reported, Pembrokeshire Coast and Caerphilly have both adopted their plans.

Wales & the Localism Bill:

A new way of doing business

Mair Coombes Davies gives us the legal perspective on the Localism Bill in Wales

Above: Mair Coombes Davies

One way or many new ways

The Localism Bill does not point to a new way.

It points to many new ways of doing business in planning throughout the UK.

Yet for Wales, the Localism Bill points in possibly only three directions (though the last is the same as now). Those directions are:

- Community Infrastructure Levy.
- Nationally significant infrastructure projects.
- Planning permission material considerations.

At a glance

The Localism Bill is a weighty document. Its 215 clauses within 8 parts together with 25 schedules cover 430 pages.

Part 5 of the Localism Bill deals in seven chapters with the reform of the planning system. Only three of its chapters apply to Wales. They are chapter 2 clauses 99 and 100, chapter 6 clauses 112 to 114 and 117 to 123, and chapter 7 clauses 124 to 125. The three chapters deal respectively with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), nationally significant infrastructure projects and material considerations in applications for planning permission.

By the third reading of the Localism Bill the government had put forward more than 200 amendments. On 18 May 2011 the bill was approved and completed its progress through the House of Commons third reading with 300 votes to 216 in favour, a government majority of 84 votes. The following day, 19 May 2011, the Localism Bill received its first reading in the House of Lords. This stage was a formality that signalled the start of the Bill's journey through the House of Lords. The second reading which is the general debate on all aspects of the Bill took place on 7 June 2011.

Latest news on the Localism Bill

The latest news on the Localism Bill (especially the three chapters which most closely affect town and country planning in Wales) to emerge from its progress through Parliament is as follows.

Chapter 2. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): A charging authority will have greater control over setting their charging levels as limits are placed on the binding nature of independent examiners (the Planning Inspectorate) recommendations on CIL. The independent examiners will consider whether the charging schedule is unreasonable, it will be for the authority to decide how to make it reasonable. Funds can be spent on the ongoing costs of providing infrastructure and there is potential for maintenance, operation and promotion activities to be also funded. However, unlike in England, in Wales financial assistance via CIL cannot be given to neighbourhood planning for the simple reason that the Localism Bill's provisions for neighbourhood planning do not apply to Wales. In Wales the 22 county and county borough councils and the three national park authorities have the power to charge a CIL. It is anticipated that within about the next two years possibly half of Welsh local planning authorities with have a CIL. Anecdotally, Caerphilly County Borough Council may be actively preparing CIL proposals whereas Pembrokeshire Coastal National Park may not be progressing CIL at the present time but may be reviewing it in the future.

Chapter 6. Nationally significant infrastructure projects: The consent procedures for nationally significant infrastructure projects are fundamentally changed. The Infrastructure Planning Commission will be abolished and its functions transferred (or rather, restored) to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will be able to appoint an inspector, or a panel of three to five inspectors to examine an application and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State as to the decision to be made on the application. However, of more interest to the man in the street, and of more concern to those who have to pay, could be the easier procedure within Chapter 6 for getting compensation for the effects of development as well as for the depreciation of land value by physical factors caused by public works.

Chapter 7. Other planning matters: One of the latest and most unexpected amendments is the introduction of what has been called the 'cash for planning permission', clause or to give it its more formal title, clause 124, 'Applications for planning permission: local finance considerations'. The clause replaces what was clause 119, 'Powers of the National Assembly of Wales', which conferred legislative competence on the National Assembly for Wales to pass Assembly Measures in relation to various aspects of development management. The new clause 124 amends section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which sets out the matters to which regard is to be had when determining a planning application, namely, the development plan for the area and any other material considerations. These two matters are retained in the new clauses 124(2)(a) and 124(2)(c) respectively and apply to both England and Wales. However, the radical clause 124(2)(b) only applies to England. It adds a new material consideration to which a local authority is to have regard in determining applications for planning permission, 'any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application' (a phase which is defined in a new subsection 124(4) as either, 'a grant or other financial assistance that has been, or will or could be, provided to a relevant authority by a Minister of the Crown', or, 'sums that a relevant authority has received, or will or could receive, in payment of Community Infrastructure Levy'). The government has explained that it is not intended to ascribe any particular weight to, 'local finance considerations'. It will remain for the local planning authority

to decide this in the context of each application. The RTPI has pithily described the new clause as a, 'cash for sprawl'. Whilst the RIBA President, Ruth Reed, has said, 'The RIBA shares the RTPI's concerns about the Localism Bill amendment which flies in the face of a most crucial principle: to distance planning decision making from financial gain'.

Two other amendments to the Localism Bill (applicable in England) worth knowing about are, firstly, the government intends to introduce a presumption in favour of, 'sustainable development', in its green paper, 'Open Source Planning'. A local planning authority will have to adhere to the presumption when making planning decisions. Secondly, the threshold for how many people will be required in order to establish a neighbourhood planning group in England has increased from 3 to 21. The amendment was not unexpected as the low original number was effectively an invitation for the town and country planning system in some areas to virtually grind to a halt. Indeed, one conservation group had said (before the amendment) that it intended to object to every development in its conservation area.

On the horizon

It seems that the Localism Bill is on course for being brought into law by the end of 2011.

New ways of doing business within the planning landscape are not here yet, but the sign is well and truly on the horizon.

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To see what is relevant to Wales in the Localism Bill, see page 5.

Shifts in the political balance

Andrew Matheson talks about the recent elections and looks to next year's local elections and highlights the RTPI's network for politicians in planning: PIPA and an extended offer Summer School

In 2011 there will inevitably be changes for planning both at the local and the Welsh Government levels – not least via the personalities involved. As you read this, many local Councils will be deciding on the Councillors that will carry the responsibilities of the Planning Committee for 2011/12. And centrally, following the National Assembly for Wales elections, the new Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development John Griffiths will be starting to exert influence in the office vacated by Jane Davidson. Perhaps, marginally, our sympathies at the start of the 'new term' should be with any local Councillors new to the Planning Committee since they are likely to experience the double whammy of just settling into their new role when they feel the ground shifting beneath them as planning policy moves in accord with the Labour election pledges made in the run up to the Assembly elections.

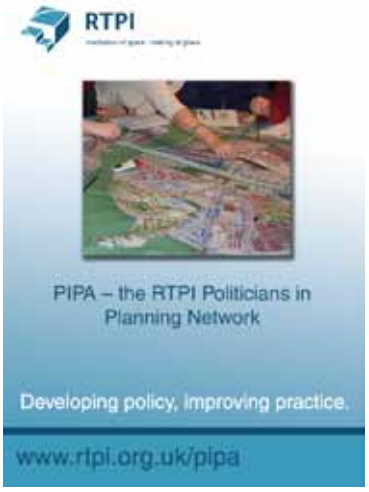
One change that was not dependent on the election outcome is that, from 5th May, the Welsh Assembly will be able to make laws on subjects in all of the 20 areas it already has powers for, without needing the UK Parliament's agreement. Further, subject to the Assembly's standing orders, individual Assembly Members will be able to introduce legislation; this is similar to the UK system where Bills can be introduced both by Government and private members. It may be interesting to see whether this could become a route for further Welsh flavours to be added to the planning system.

From the Labour Manifesto and statements before the Assembly election it may be possible to glean a few indicators of the distinctive issues that might be on the horizon for planning:

- Sustainable development to be made the central organising principle in all actions across government and all public bodies
- Further integration of economic, education, skills and planning policies across all relevant Welsh Government departments and other delivery bodies
- A 55 per cent improvement in building standards over 2006 levels by 2013
- A new Heritage Preservation Bill to improve the listed building regime
- A national infrastructure planning system for waste, energy and water schemes
- By 2050 almost all Welsh energy needs to be met by low carbon electricity production
- Welsh Assembly responsibility for determining renewable energy schemes of up to 100 megawatts both on land and at sea
- The Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission and the Countryside Council for Wales to be brought together in one body
- Broadband to be classified as a utility for planning purposes.

Many of these commitments will be delivered by planning guidance to which local Councils will be obliged to have regard and, whatever the political balance locally, the influences on decision-making will have shifted.

The RTPI is very much aware that democratic planning works through locally elected politicians being objectively advised by professional officers. The Institute therefore provides two routes by which local Councillors and Assembly Members – not just the ones new to planning – may attune themselves to core planning principles and keep abreast of the changing face of planning in Wales and across the UK. PIPA – the RTPI Politicians in Planning Network – offers both a website and a regular



Bulletin that both inform and provide routes for experiences to be exchanged and shared ideas to be explored. PIPA is free to join and is open to any politician with an interest in democratic planning; joining is simple and there are full details at www.rtpi.org.uk/pipa; we hope that local Officers will encourage membership amongst their Councillors and political representatives.

The RTPI also supports the annual Planning Summer School which includes 3-day sessions for Elected Members as well as 0fficers – for 2011 these sessions will overlap with a shared day in the middle. In 2011 the Summer School will be in Swansea – between 3rd and 7th September, starting with the Elected Members' School – and the programmes include, plenary, workshop and study tour sessions. Fuller details and booking forms will be found at www.planningsummerschool.org.

Special offer to Cynllunio readers – early-bird booking rate retained until end of July if you quote 'Cynllunio' in an email to: info@planningsummerschool.org

Andrew is the RTPI's Network Manager for PIPA, e-mail: pipa@rtpi.org.uk

Designed for Business - Ruthin Castle, 26 May 2011

Carole-Anne Davies discusses a recent Design Commission initiative which discussed design issues, business and partnerships

At the RTPI Cymru annual conference last year I focussed on town centres and the role good architecture and urban design plays in helping to deliver and support 'places for life'. The changing face of our high streets is widely reported in the press as is the 'doughnut effect' caused by edge of town retail, creating a hole where high streets used to be. The Mary Portas frenzy shines an even brighter spotlight on the topic. On 26 May in Ruthin, among a whole week of events celebrating people, place and potential, the Commission hosted a public debate 'Whose Town is it Anyway?' and a seminar Designed for Business, examining the economic value of a well designed built environment, and the forces that shape the vitality of our towns. In particular we looked at the future for market towns and Ruthin provided a key case study, with its people working hard to shape its future, exchange knowledge, experience and good practice.

Successive reports over the last decade have demonstrated the economic value of good design and in his presentation Andy Foster, architect, reminded us of the 2007 report from Places Matter!, the North West Regional Design Review Panel – part of England's North West Regional Development Agency. This demonstrated that good architecture and urban design had real economic impact, showing that good design could add up to 20% in rental and capital value and speed up lettings and sales. In 2009, the follow-up tested the findings in the context of economic downturn and the research held fast. It also revealed, as DCfW has consistently argued, that good design significantly mitigates the costly effects of poorly designed environments which are detrimental to social, environmental and economic success.

Good design draws multiple benefits, achieving stronger market attractiveness due to enhanced profile and image. It bolsters civic pride and supports access to goods, services and amenities; it stimulates local supply, delivers energy and carbon efficiency, helps reduce pollution and strengthens ecological benefits. As Simon Venables, architect, pointed out in his slot, good design is often a catalyst for regeneration and forms part of a skilled employment sector, setting career paths for talented creative people, capable of delivering innovation.

Gavin Harris, town councillor and local businessman galloped enthusiastically through an overview of the work being done at grass roots in Ruthin and the ways in which they have built on town and county local authority relationships and an active community. Retailers, arts and faith communities, schools, hoteliers and the wider public have achieved much – from the re-design to RIBA award winning standard of the Ruthin Craft Centre, to a reputation for local food, good markets and great hotels – garnering national and international press coverage. The Bro Rhuthun partnership has worked with local businesses on a website, some very swish jute bags, a town loyalty card in partnership with local retailers and have even secured a loan, to make more things happen. Ruthin's historic and contemporary architecture is a distinctive characteristic and forms part of its USP, its key differentiator, and this legacy of good design, is now being effectively exploited.

We were also fortunate to be joined by Rhona Pringle of Accend, and Catherine Hammant chair of Action for Market Towns (AMT), both of whom were able to share examples of good practice in town partnerships and benchmarking practice. Without doubt both could point to increased business activity as a result, bucking the trend of declining high streets. Rhona led the ground breaking Rural Capitals programme for Yorkshire Forward, encompassing the Renaissance Market Towns, Low Carbon Rural Capitals and Enterprising Rural capitals programmes. Catherine, a Chartered Surveyor with a background in commercial property focused on market towns and the work with AMT which encourages the creation of vibrant market towns and through its Towns Alive programme supports the transfer of best practice, skills training for town partnerships and influencing policy makers.

The highlight of the afternoon saw our very own Roisin Willmott, Sue Essex and

Above: Delegates discuss designing for business

Above: Delegates debate whose town is it anyway?

Welsh Future Homes

The Works, Ebbw Vale

Steven Trythall talks about Young Planners Cymru's recent trip to visit the Welsh Future Homes project in Ebbw Vale

Trevor Skempton join the speakers for a panel debate chaired by Alan Francis. Concepts of flexible, affordable retail/work units, town centre living for critical mass and genuine mixed use all got a good airing and of course the all important need to get involved in and influence the LDP process - it's not too late! Our guests and delegates ensured a lively debate and feedback so far shows that we were able to broaden understanding of the forces at work and how the quality of our built environment can be employed to best effect. At the end of the day, one councillor told me the event had been a revelation and that her healthy scepticism at the outset had been completely turned around. Several local authority officers, attending from a range of authorities, also said it had been a really positive experience, with practical outcomes. As part of our commitment our report will go back to delegates and we will be following up with a smaller event in the autumn – to see how they're doing and play our part in helping them maintain the momentum. Ruthin is of course just one of the places DCfW can play this role, so we look forward to the next time we head for a town near you.

The Design Commission for Wales wishes to thank our partners, Bro Rhuthun, Manorhaus, Ruthin Craft Centre, Design Research Unit at the Welsh School of Architecture, Beacon for Wales, Ruthin Town Council and Denbighshire County Council.

Material from the seminar will shortly be available on the DCfW website: www.dcfw.org

Carole-Anne is Chief Executive of the Design Commission for Wales

On Thursday 31st March, young planners from across Wales descended on the town of Ebbw Vale to attend the 'Welsh Future Homes' event at 'The Works'. The event was organised by Young Planners Cymru in association with BRE Wales and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (CBC). This highly anticipated event was the second of a number of events to be arranged by Young Planners Cymru throughout the year.

After taking in the vast scale of the 'The Works' site, delegates arrived at the Welsh Future Homes exhibition where they immediately entered one of the show homes.

To kick off the afternoon a number of brief but informative presentations were arranged to provide background information and the basis for further discussion.

Andrew Charles, Senior Planning Manager at the Welsh Government outlined the Welsh policy set out in Planning Policy Wales and TAN 22: Planning for Sustainable Buildings. The policy has a major role to play in delivering more sustainable buildings across Wales. Colin King of BRE followed with a useful introduction to the Code for Sustainable Homes, outlining what it covers and how its seemingly complicated scoring system works. To round off the presentations, Anthony Pyne, Planning officer for Blaenau Gwent CBC, who has been seconded to The Works project, gave an introduction to the Masterplan.

The Works

The 'General Offices' and the 'Basement Parks' are the only remains of what was once the driving force of Ebbw Vale town, the Steelworks. As part of the Heads of the Valleys Low/zero Carbon Hub, the old steelworks site is due to become one of the most exciting and farthest reaching sustainable development projects in the UK. The masterplan will provide hundreds of new homes, a learning zone, community hospital, leisure centre, school, business hubs and a riverside park. The Welsh Future Homes area is located in 'Res J', the first of a number of residential areas to be built out.

The Larch House

Following the introductory presentations, delegates were given an opportunity to tour one of the 'Welsh Future Homes'. Designed by Bere Architects, The Larch House is the first Code 6, Zero Carbon Passive House in the UK. The house was first showcased at the National Eisteddfod for United Welsh and its partners in the summer of 2010 and is a clear statement from the social housing sector in Wales. The ultra energy-efficient home features 'passive' building techniques such as high levels of insulation, airtight construction, good interior air quality, as well as bolt on technologies such as solar panels. As part of Code 6 requirements the home was also built to 'Lifetime Homes' standard. Delegates were in awe of the amount of natural sunlight and fantastic views across the landscape that large, floor to ceiling, south facing windows provided. The potential reduction in utility costs and the home user manuals were also big winners.

There were however, some serious discussions such as how the private sector would be encouraged to build to similar standards consistently and how building to higher standards is only one factor in creating sustainable neighbourhoods. The success of 'The Works' project and future projects across Wales will ultimately depend on how sustainable building technologies and neo-traditional design principles as set out in TAN 12 can be fused togther with minimal compromise.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Colin King (BRE), Anthony Pyne (BGCC) and our very own Andrew Charles (WG) for their presentations on the Code for Sustainable Homes, The Works Masterplan and Welsh planning policy respectively.

Above: Young Planners Cymru visit Welsh Future Homes in Ebbw Vale pictured outside the Larch House

Steven is the Student Representative, Young Planners Cymru

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Linked In & Facebook: Search for Young Planners Cymru

Boll***s to it all

Helen Ridgeway discusses the messages from an RTPI Cymru seminar run by South Wales Police in Cardiff and Swansea on design issues for crowded places

Such language in a planning magazine is not particularly appropriate, but no look again, I am talking about bollards and how they have become the automatic weapon of choice in the fight against crime for the built environment professional.

The threat and indeed the impact of terrorism has been affecting our lives for longer than perhaps we would realise. Whilst the Cold War years are long behind us and the devastating activities of the Provisional IRA are not as prominent in the news as it was in the 80s and 90s, we are all acutely aware of the underlying threat posed today by organisations and individuals which are troubled by the free society that we are lucky enough to live within in Great Britain.

Most notably highlighted by 9/11, we have seen the nature of terrorist activity change. Today we are now confronted with global movements which have one goal – to cause the great social, economic and political destruction most often with no warning and with the maximum number of civilian casualties possible. This can most effectively be achieved through the targeting of crowded places. These tend to have little or no security, have ease of public access, cause impact beyond the loss of life and can be extremely high-profile buildings or events.

The similarities between New York and the cities and towns of Wales might not be immediately apparent but they are all potential targets – just look at the case in Exeter. Even those of us who live in the most rural of areas are likely to visit these cities and towns at one time or another: for a shopping trip, to see their sports teams compete at a stadium or even visit an out of town music festival, are just a few examples. While some of us experience the busy train commute, a day at university, or in my case work in one of the tallest office buildings in Cardiff every day. This is not supposed to scare anyone but I have used it to serve to demonstrate that as we go about our daily lives we unknowingly rely on those who create these places, and the spaces between, to protect us.

As planners, we have a significant role to play, whether we work in the public or private sectors or whether our expertise lies in retail or leisure, urban design or conservation or any of the other sectors or specialisms for that matter. We need to work with the security experts, with the architects and with others to create successful and safe places.

Legislation and Policy

For local authorities, the requirement to protect is directed through legislation. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) dictates a legal obligation to consider the need to prevent crime and disorder in all decisions that they take. For the rest of us, Planning Policy Wales and TAN12 include policies that make crime and public safety material considerations in the determination of planning applications.

Impact of Terrorist Activity

We are all familiar with the role that Secured By Design principles and architectural liaison officers have in influencing the design evolution of schemes and the way that people will interact with these new developments. Every time we are faced with a new client, a new development, or a new policy we should ask ourselves whether the proposal could create a target for terrorist activity. The impact of not doing so could be unthinkable. Apart from the obvious immediate loss of life and wreckage, for businesses, developers and local authorities there is the risk of criminal prosecution, insurance consequences, disruption to business continuity and the potential loss of reputation and goodwill both for an individual company and at a city level with cumulative economic impacts.

Project Argus

On a damp couple of mornings back in February, RTPI Cymru, on behalf of the Regeneration Skills Collective, welcomed the National Counter Terrorism Security Office's (NaCTSO) Counter Terrorism Security Advisor (CTSA), Simon Rees. With representation from built environment professionals stretching across development control, policy and private sector planners, engineers, landscape architects, urban designers and students, Simon presented to us Project ARGUS – a multimedia simulated terrorist attack created to provide opportunities to consider how our professional decisions could both help and hinder the public, staff and assets in such an event.

The session started by briefly outlining the types of attack that could take place: An explosion, hostile vehicle attack, chemical, biological or radiological attack, firearms and weapons and suicide attacks. It is obvious that through the design of the built environment alone we cannot eliminate all risk, but with our building and engineering colleagues, the effective management of these spaces and of course the security services, there is a lot that we can achieve.

I now return to the matter of bollards. The one main gripe of planning officers with whom I have spoken is that the all too often suggested answer is that a bollard or two will sort it out. Whilst undoubtedly they have a time and a place, there are far more creative solutions.

Perhaps the best known is the concrete letters spelling out ARSENAL at the Emirates Stadium which doubles as public art. However, there are more:

- The National Assembly for Wales' Senedd: Public plaza and staircases used to create stand-off areas

Above: The Senedd, Cardiff Bay

- Cabot Circus: Anti-hostile vehicle street furniture and realignment of side streets leaving no direct lines of entry into the public space
- Westminster: The use of ornate reinforced security barriers rather than grey steel fencing
- Hudson River: Proposal for a glass walkway linking to the ferry terminal which could accommodate weight of pedestrians but collapsed with the weight of a vehicle
- London City's Ring of Steel: which includes a series of small chicanes to force drivers to slow down so that they can be recorded by CCTV cameras.

There are other options which have been suggested:

- Transparent street furniture to reduce the opportunity to hide explosive devices
- Eliminate parking/ vehicular access under buildings where possible unless other security measures are in place
- Reduce the number of recesses in buildings
- Oversized reinforced planters

And of course, this can also be accompanied by other

measures such as:

- CCTV cameras which are carefully designed so not to harm historic buildings
- The screening of people who enter buildings such as at Welsh Government buildings and at the O2 arena in Greenwich.

This is of course not a complete list but a starting point for ideas. And well if you have to use bollards, what about doubling up their function and turning them into

Above & below: Bollards in the Hayes, Cardiff, doubling up as public art

public art with secret artwork hidden inside.

Innovation

A recent competition held by the Home Office and RIBA encouraged students to think creatively about designing-in to buildings counter terrorism features. The winner of the competition, Peter Hughes developed the concept of pocket territories as a way of dispersing occupants of a site as well as protecting people from falling debris. This new idea was coupled with more mainstream ideas such as passive surveillance. Peter told me, "I wanted to create a safe public place, that wasn't a bunker, didn't have sniper towers, and did not search everyone when they came in – otherwise it's like the terrorists win; it's destructive enough". This novel idea helps to show that there are opportunities to be imaginative with counter terrorism measures in the built environment.

Reality Check

A key question which we need to ask ourselves is to what extent do we impose measures which leave both the terrorists and the end users (i.e. you, me, our families and our neighbours) in no doubt that a place is protected. What is the balance between inconspicuous security solutions and measures that are so invisible people do not feel safe. We do not want to create fortress societies and we do not want to stop the symbols of economic growth that are features of our built environment.

However, the consideration of terrorism is only one design factor that we, working in the built environment, need to balance. TAN12 sets out some of the best practice objectives that we should be seeking to achieve. In creating successful communities, these also have to be balanced with the need to deliver other (planning) policy objectives such as regeneration or climate change resilient development, for example.

There is not a bottomless pit of money to spend on measures and therefore the need to identify protection that is proportionate to the risk is vital. As with most things, the earlier that the issues are discussed, the easier that it is to incorporate less costly measures.

Best Practice Design Objectives

- Accessible
- Inclusive
- Permeable
- Legible
- Adaptable
- Robust
- Diverse
- Natural surveillance

Further Advice

We are very fortunate to have access to the excellent advice and pragmatism offered by the CTSAs. Their shared experience of projects from across the UK and events across the globe, starts with an assessment of vulnerability and risk and continues with practical suggestions and the commitment to work with us to reach solutions appropriate for the project.

If you are interested in learning more about how to protect our crowded places, a further project ARGUS training course will be held on 22 September in partnership with the Design Commission for Wales (see the Events section).

This article and Project ARGUS has focused on the risk that crowded places present and how that risk could be minimised. However, crowded places are not the only terrorist target - hazardous installations and critical infrastructure projects also present vulnerabilities which we need to consider carefully.

If there is only one message that you remember today, is that if we want to be successful in creating these successful place, the conventional bollard must be rejected as the automatic response to the prevention of crime and that we should, and indeed can be, more imaginative in our approach.

DC Simon Rees, Counter Terrorism Security Advisor, Wales Extremism & Counter Terrorism Unit, is able to offer specialist advice, e-mail: simon.rees@south-wales.pnn.police.uk

Further information:

www.nactso.gov.uk

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism

Think…

- Inclusion of measures from design concept stage
- Pre-application discussions with LPA and Security Advisors
- Proportionality
- Remember TAN12 and other policy objectives
- Be creative

Above left and right: Peter Hughes' plans

S106 Agreements and Affordable Housing

As part of the new programme of Housing network events held in Wales in May, delegates heard about a project to develop S106 agreement clauses which do not inhibit lenders from lending.

Increasing the supply of affordable housing remains a key policy goal of the Welsh Government, including maximising the contribution through the planning system.

A number of issues have been raised with the Welsh Government by lenders, local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in connection with the use and operation of s106 agreements to secure affordable housing. These particularly relate to 'mortgagee in possession' clauses and the 'local occupancy cascades' which operate when a property is sold. The Principality Building Society has indicated that over the past 12 months they have rejected more s106 agreements than approved them, despite being committed to lending in Wales, illustrating the problem.

In order to try to address these issues, the Welsh Government asked Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to provide examples of 'mortgagee in possession' clauses and 'local occupancy' clauses from their s106 agreements. Lenders were asked to provide examples of clauses which effectively prevented them from lending.

18 out of 25 LPAs provided examples of their s106 agreements relating to 'mortgagee in possession' and the 'occupancy cascade' clauses. Some information was also received from the lenders regarding the type of clauses that they are likely to reject. In addition the Principality Building Society has indicated that the good practice note on Promoting mortgage access for affordable housing, issued by CIH and the Homes and Communities Agency in England, provides clear guidance on the approach and likely response of lenders.

The responses from the 18 LPAs show the current position as:

- 4 LPAs have 'mortgagee in possession' clauses that would be rejected by lenders as the period of time before they could dispose of the property free of restrictions is longer than 3 months;
- in addition, a further 3 LPAs include a requirement that on disposal the mortgagee must pay the authority the difference between the 'affordable price' and the 'sale price'. It is unclear how lenders view such requirements.
- 7 LPAs have 'occupancy cascades' that would be rejected by lenders as the period of time before a property could be sold on the open market exceeds 6 months.

Lenders are likely to refuse to offer mortgages where:

- mortgagee in possession clauses do not allow lenders who have repossessed a property to operate free of restrictions until more than 3 months have elapsed;
- occupancy cascades exceed six months (an optimal 'cascade' will generally operate over three months)
- the period of time living in an area that qualifies someone as being in local need of affordable housing (e.g. 10 years) is considered to be too restrictive;
- provisions that restrict value with reference to something other than open market value; and
- overly complex s106 clauses.

A meeting was held in May between representatives of the LPAs (via the WLGA) and lenders' representatives to discuss their respective requirements for s106 agreements and the ways in which the wording of agreements can meet these requirements with a view to maximising the delivery of affordable housing. Also attending the meeting were RTPI Cymru, Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), and Community Housing Cymru (CHC), representing Housing Associations. The outcome of these discussions could be the preparation of an agreed guidance note for use by LPAs in the drafting of their s106 agreements.

At the meeting the Lenders indicated that due to the amount of work involved to agree 'products' (as a result of financial regulations) they need any system to be as simple and consistent as possible. Many lenders are often put off developing a 'regional' product for what is relatively a small market to them.

As already mentioned, the Principality Building Society considers that the good practice note issued by the CIH and HCA could provide a good basis for preparing guidance for Wales. For example, the CIH / HCA note explains how to minimise the impact of local occupancy rules on the mortgageability of homes through the appropriate use of clauses ('cascades') which widen eligibility over time, leading to general marketing. Other concerns from lenders are also highlighted (with examples), including mortgagee in possession clauses and periods for qualifying for local need affordable housing that are considered too restrictive.

The meeting in May agreed to take the work forward, forming a smaller working party which will include representatives from the WLGA (including LPAs), Welsh Government Planning and Housing, CIH (as co-authors of the English guidance) and CHC and of course the Council of Mortgage Lenders.

Updates will be reported as the work develops.

The Planning for Housing Network is a joint Institute-level initiative involving the RTPI and the Chartered Institute of Housing, with the aim of drawing together planners and housing professionals together to discuss issues of common interest. RTPI Cymru and CIH Cymru are working together to deliver joint seminars in north and south Wales during the year on a regular basis. The next seminars will be held in the autumn - so keep an eye out for details.

To join the Network, free of charge, go to: www.planningforhousing.org.uk

Profile: Phil Williams

Phil Williams, elected to the RTPI's General Assembly in 2011, takes time out to talk about his career and the positive role of planning

How did you come into planning in the first place?

Having read a Geography Degree at King's and the LSE in the 1970s and specialising in socio/economic geography and planning, it seemed the obvious career path. To be truthful, I had no burning ambition at 21 to reshape the planning system [!], although I did recognise the tensions between economic, social and environmental needs. This was exemplified by one student vacation job, which was working on a new oil refinery located at the entrance to Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. This location prompted as many questions about environmental impact as answers to economic regeneration.

What has been your career path to date?

I have worked in Local Government throughout my career in London, the Valleys of South Wales and Cardiff. Whilst interfacing at various levels with the private sector over many years, I have always been driven by the need to represent local communities and improve their opportunities, or, at least, guide those elected to do so.

From the initial days at Surrey County Council of remembering which senior officers took sugar in their tea, I have worked in policy and research, regeneration and development control. I moved from offices overlooking the duck ponds of Carshalton Beeches to offices overlooking the demise of Bargoed Colliery Surface in Aberbargoed! I felt more valued and having more purpose in the latter environment, and developed my career at a time of significant challenge to Valley communities. Being involved in major reclamation schemes and enabling alternative employment opportunities to be created through the planning process gave me particular job satisfaction.

What does your job involve?

I am currently the Strategic Planning and Development Manager in Cardiff County Council, having responsibility for the planning function. The Council's LDP is currently being prepared and represents the key strategic land use document for the City, and, I believe, its region. Other policy frameworks include the City Centre Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy, Sustainability Strategy and Major Regeneration initiatives throughout the County. Recent key projects, such as St David's Phase II, the Leckwith Development at Cardiff City Stadium, and BBC Production Village in Cardiff Bay have required strong programme management and dedicated staff.

I spend most of my working days negotiating, enabling, and communicating with elected members.

What do you like about it?

I enjoy the variety, the unpredictability and the feeling of turning a Monday morning problem into a Friday afternoon solution. Planners, in my view, are well placed and have an inherent ability to see the bigger picture, and find solutions where others cannot. They are, on occasions, undervalued and receive more criticism from the wider community than the praise they deserve.

I like, to a lesser degree, the legal complexities in the planning system, and suggest the desire to make it more responsive and simplified has achieved the opposite effect. Is it, for example, sustainable for a Country of circa 3,000,000 to produce 25 Local Development Plans at a cost of several million pounds and within different timeframes?! Is this a credible system from a customer perspective? I think not.

How does the devolution improve your work and that of your organisation?

My question in the previous section suggests that Wales can, and should, use the emerging powers of the Welsh Government to shape planning policy to fit the needs of Wales. Devolution offers that opportunity, and despite many positive initiatives having being developed, I believe a more radical and 'Welsh fit' approach should be pursued.

What does your election to the RTPI's General Assembly mean to you and what does it involve?

I have been a Corporate Member of the RTPI for 30 years, and, following my two years as Chair of the Planning Officers Society for Wales, felt that a more direct involvement in lobbying for changes in national planning policy was important. I have only been to two GA meetings to date, and recognise that its contribution in effecting change needs a review of its internally focussed arrangements, as well as its 'persona' externally. Strident attempts are being made to underline the value of the planning profession in the workplace, and I believe our role needs to be stressed, particularly in times of a recession.

How optimistic/pessimistic are you about the future of planning in Wales?

Some, particularly the business sector, on occasions, see planning as an impediment to change and a necessary but painful process. It is often cited as the reason why development doesn't take place, or, if it does, it does so with too many controls too slowly. My response to that rather pessimistic view is to question the quality of submissions received, the short term horizons within which the development sector operates, and the legislative framework within which planners work.

I believe that planning is an enabler not an impediment. It achieves the best practical solution and adds value to society at large. I am, therefore, optimistic about its future in Wales, and see planning as a key vehicle in realising 'Wales' future aspirations.

The above response are the personal views of the author, and do not reflect those of his current or previous employers.

Wales Planning Conference: *New Beginnings?*

The Wales Planning Conference 2011: *New Beginnings?*, was held on Tuesday 7 June 2011 at City Hall, Cardiff. The Wales Planning Conference has established itself as Wales' primary conference to discuss planning and related issues and this year was its 4th and most successful year, drawing delegates from across Wales and from all fields of planning, with a record number of delegates.

Thank you to everyone who supported the Conference.

The Conference discussed planning for Wales in the context of changing circumstances, including primary legislative powers for town and country planning, a new Session of the National Assembly for Wales and a new Minister in the Welsh Government, as well as "the new landscape" in the Planning Inspectorate and the Infrastructure Planning Commission, and not least the tight budgetary and economic circumstances we are faced with.

The Conference, chaired by Malcolm Hockaday of Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, was addressed by the new Welsh Government Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, John Griffiths AM, who announced the publication of a new study on planning for economic renewal and a Cabinet Written Statement responding to the Study's recommendations (see page 6). He also indicated a new policy in the future of a presumtipon in favour of sustainable development where no up to date development plan was in place.

The Minister stated that planning is "not about making popular decisions, it's about making the right decisions." In conclusion he emphasised that "delivery, improvement and collaboration are all watchwords" and sent out a message to planners that "we need you to deliver wellbeing in Wales."

Anna Prescott, RTPI Cymru Chair, welcomed delegates to the Conference, using her recent wedding and adopted dog, to demonstrate the new beginnings we all find ourselves in from time to time, not least now in planning, she also highlighted the need to raise the profile of the role of planning to discourage ill-informed comments in the media bluntly attacking planning.

The Conference also heard from the new Director for the Planning Inspectorate in Wales, Peter Burley, who discussed the "new landscape" in Wales within the Inspectorate relating to Wales, including a new Major Infrastructure Planning Unit and also changes on procedures. This is the most significant change to PINS in its history.

Andrew Farrow, Head of Planning at Flintshire County Council and Vice Chair of POSW set out an example of how Local Planning Authorities are adapting their services to deliver positively for customers, as well as addressing resource issues.

For the remainder of the morning delegates attended workshops on a variety of topics. Reports on each of these workshops will be available shortly on the RTPI Cymru Conference webpage.

In the afternoon, the Conference heard from speakers on a "kaleidoscope" of topics, all contributing to the Conference question of whether new begiinings should mean a change in planning in Wales? Firstly, Professor Terry Marsden set out the discussion around delivering sustainable places, particularly during hard times and set out the research agenda taking place within the Cardiff University Sustainable Places Research Institute and looked for ways of making this applicable to practitioners; highlighting that "planning is central to sustainable development" and that "Planning's day has come."

Sir Michael Pitt discussed infrastructure planning and, expanding on Peter Burley's presentation, the changes taking place with regard to determining large infrastructure projects and current progress on determining applications. He stated that "tidying-up of arrangements in Wales may come in the future" but did not expand on this any further.

The final plenary speaker of the day took us west of Wales to Ireland; Des Cox, Chair of RTPI Ireland, provided an entertaining yet poignant view of the recent history of the celtic tiger, illustrating the positive role planning could have played, if allowed.

The plenary debate challenged the role of statutory planning, asking whether it was the problem or the answer? Supporting statutory planning was Rosemary Thomas, Chief Planner in the Welsh Government who proposed that the planning system serves a modern complex society with competing demands and Peter Geraghty, RTPI Junior Vice President who argued that statutory planning prevents the worse types of development and does not inhibt the best development. In opposition were Alan Francis, Chair of the Design Commission for Wales who argued for a system which encouraged the return of patronage and Gareth Williams, Head of the Cardiff Office at Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, who argued for a review of the LDP System and a move away from development control which is encouraged by statutory planning. The audience voting was both before the debate and following more in favour of statutory planning, but there was a shift in voting in support of statutory planning!

The Speakers' presentations are available from www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_cymru (follow the link to the Wales Planning Conference page).

RTPI Cymru would like to thank the 2011 Conference sponsors and supporters: Nathaniel Lichield & Partners, JBP Associates Ltd, Civitas Law, and the Design Commission for Wales.

Planning has now started for the 2012 Conference - so make sure the date is in your diary for Thursday 7 June 2012.

See the back page for more images from the Conference.

Professional doctorates for senior planners

Jon Talbot discusses the role of professional doctorates in planning

For some time now in Welsh planning circles Neil Harris of Cardiff University has performed a service for us all by acting as a bridge between the world of higher education and planning practice. But this relationship between gown and profession does not exist in all parts of the country and as with many other professions there is often a large divide between the two. There are a number of reasons why this is the case but at least part of the problem relates to the kind of knowledge each group uses and generates and the training they receive for it.

Most academics complete their apprenticeship via a PhD which trains them in the ways of formal research. Their career is then substantially built on their ability to conduct research. The Five Star rating the University of Cardiff received during the last Research Assessment Exercise is a tribute to their success in this endeavour. But the research they generate is usually of little relevance to the practitioner. Practitioners learn their trade on the job, that is experientially supplemented with occasional bits of formal CPD. Their skill sets and knowledge requirements are simply different from those of academics.

Until fairly recently the highest level of academic achievement, the Doctorate, was only really available to people at the beginning of an academic career. The precise means by which a doctorate can be obtained varies between nations and institutions but for most the central part is the submission of a thesis of original research. The use of the word 'thesis' conveys something of the purpose of a doctorate as it involves some sort of engagement with theoretical knowledge. This is because at its heart, academics attempt to provide better explanations of the world and our understanding of the world can only really progress through better theories. As a result there has always been some tension about the nature of PhDs in vocational subjects like planning which, as many planners know, has an uneasy relationship with any sort of theory. For most planners planning is a practical business defined by a statutory framework, within which they must work. It is not a theory, it is simply a fact of life and there are a myriad of things which have to be done.

In recent years the differences between academic and practice knowledge has been more explicitly recognised. The broader context is the development of the 'knowledge economy' and the recognition that the success of an advanced economy like the UK's depends increasingly on higher level economic processes which in turn requires heavier investment in lifelong learning. The recognition of the importance of knowledge is no longer confined to the formalised knowledge held by academics but also practice knowledge held by professionals.

Alongside this change in knowledge requirement has been advances in understanding the way we learn. Learning used to be thought of as something that happens to individuals in classrooms when they are told something. We now know that much of our learning is social (i.e. with others), occurs in informal settings and usually at the point where we work something out for ourselves, rather than being told. Moreover the things we learn are things we need to. Much of our learning is highly 'situated'- of use in a specific context only. That is the way we learn to become professional planners. Like many people I am not sure I learned that much about planning in Planning School. The learning really started the day I started work as a professional and I was given a copy of the GDO and began to really understand what 'development' actually is. As I quickly realised, if it is not

development, it is not planning and you do not do it - someone else does.

Changes in conceptions of knowledge and learning and the need to cultivate both among practitioners are having a slow but profound effect on academic institutions. One of the consequences is the development of Professional Doctorates. Like PhDs, they are the highest form of award but not intended to create theoretical knowledge but knowledge which is of use and benefit to practitioners. There are many award titles, such as Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), Doctor of Ministry (DMin) and Doctor of Education (DEd). A professional doctorate involves a contribution to knowledge in the field of professional practice. Like a PhD there is a research element but the purpose is different. DProfs are widely undertaken in certain professional fields such as engineering, education and professional psychology.

Unlike a PhD they are taken either mid-career or towards the end. They are exclusively part time and aimed at senior practitioners. Their purpose is partly about conferring public recognition of professional excellence but they also denote a mastery of a chosen field and the ability to generate knowledge of value to practice. Unlike PhDs they are credit rated and therefore involve progressive submission and not just one final submission. There are variations in models but they all involve a major research element with exam by viva voce and like PhDs are ungraded.

Which brings us to planning. The only DProf programme aimed specifically at planners is at the University of West of England in Bristol but to my knowledge there has only ever been one student enrolled. More successful is a DProf at Salford aimed at all the landed professions, which has some planners on it. There is a long standing interest in DProfs at the RTPI but no immediate plans to accredit any. Here I have to declare an interest because I am programme leader of a trans-disciplinary DProf at the University of Chester and I still have my MRTPI. I would very much like to see some planners on the programme - not because we need the numbers - recruitment is very good. As a planner my motives are pure and lofty - I would like to see wider acceptance of the idea of properly researched practice knowledge and I would also like to see the idea of Professional Doctorates in planning gain currency. It would also be good to see senior members of the profession receive public recognition of their ability and contribution. As you are still reading this I will conclude by promising to provide more details in the next edition of Cynllunio.

Jon is Programme Leader at the University of Chester. Jon is also Chair of the North Wales Chapter.

Events Corner

Connecting landscapes through 'A Living Wales'

Monday & Tuesday 11th & 12th July 2011

Location: Future Inn, Cardiff Bay

As the new Welsh Government develops its 'A Living Wales' agenda, this important Symposium explores why the value, and functions of all Welsh landscapes and seascapes should help guide the future stewardship of our Welsh countryside.

Drawing on experience from Wales and beyond, this focussed event brings together expert views of those who recognise the need for the principles of sound landscape stewardship to feature strongly in the emerging 'Living Wales approach'.

Further details available from: carys@cprwmail.org.uk

Masterclass for a sustainable future: CIL, Significant Developments & Dispute Resolution

Thursday 21st July 2011

Location: Civitas Law Chambers, Cardiff Bay

With nationally significant infrastructure, sustainable development and the Community Infrastructure Levy all playing a dominant role in the future implementation of the Localism Bill, Civitas Law has united a group of leading lights in the legal, development and planning sectors to discuss first-hand issues and remedies for professional in the private and public sectors.

The seminar is free, but places are limited and pre-booking is essential.

Further details available from: www.civitaslaw.com/seminars

RTPI Cymru at the Eisteddfod

August

Location: Wrexham

Further details available from: www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_cymru

Planning Summer School

Saturday 3rd – Wednesday 7th September 2011

Location: Swansea University

See the article on the next page for more details and a special discount for readers of Cynllunio!

Further details available from: www.planningsummerschool.org

North Wales Chapter: Career Support

Wednesday 14th September 2011

Location: Wrexham

This North Wales Chapter event is to focus on the personal needs of members. Advice and support will be available for those considering early retirement, perhaps struggling to enter the profession or those faced with the prospect of redundancy.

Further details available from: www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_cymru

Wales Enforcement Conference

Wednesday 21st September 2011

Location: Powys County Hall, Llandrindod Wells

RTPI Cymru, POSW and NAPE are coming together to organise the annual enforcement conference for Wales.

Further details available from: www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_cymru

Project Argus

Thursday 22nd September 2011

Location: Cardiff University

Built environment professions have been identified as being able to play a significant role in reducing vulnerability around these sites – areas where the public mix, including shopping areas; the aim of Argus Professional is to encourage debate, and demonstrate that counter terrorism measures can be designed into structures and space to create safer crowded places.

RTPI Cymru and the Design Commission for Wales are organising this interactive workshop to provide the opportunity to discuss design issues to reduce the built environment's vulnerability to terrorism—and it's not just about bollards everywhere!

For further details about Argus Professional course see the article on page 12

Places are free, but are limited.

Further details available from: www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_cymru

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) 3 Day Training Course

Tuesday -Thursday 27th, 28th & 29th September 2011

Location: Gregynog, Newtown

The Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) is running a 3 day HIA course, the course is aimed at practitioners who have some knowledge of HIA and the process. It will arm them with the tools and practical skills in order to feel confident to undertake, review or be a part of a HIA. For those who are new to HIA, we can also offer a pre-course introductory workshop on the 26th September (if there is sufficient demand) at a highly competitive rate, before going on to do the 3 day course.

The course is not limited to those in Wales but discounts are available for those working in the public service and third sector in Wales, students or for any bulk bookings.

Further details available from: www.whiasu.wales.nhs.uk

Planning Guidance for Historic Estates, Parks and Gardens

Wednesday 12th October 2011

Location: Gregynog, Newtown

RTPI Cymru has teamed up with the Welsh Historic Garden Trust to deliver this joint study day on planning for historic estates, parks and gardens.

Further details will be available from: www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_cymru

Regenerating Excellence

Thursday 3rd November 2011

Location: County Hall, Cardiff

The Regeneration Skills Collective Wales's Annual Conference.

Further details available from: www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_cymru

RTPI Cymru Annual Dinner

Friday 18th November 2011

Location: Hilton Hotel, Cardiff

This year's Annual Dinner will be brought to you from the Hilton Hotel in the centre of Cardiff.

Further details will be available from: www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_cymru

Diary Markers:

RTPI Cymru AGM

Friday 2nd December 2011

Location: tbc

Wales Planning Conference 2012

Thursday 7th June 2012

Location: City Hall, Cardiff

Mark it in your diary ready!

New Look Planning Summer School Delivers Excellent Content

Just once a year, planners and elected members from across the UK meet to hear the latest thinking on planning, share best practice, network with colleagues in other areas and gain up to 20 hours of CPD.

This rare opportunity is afforded by the Planning Summer School. For nearly 80 years, the School has been a fundamental resource for learning and ongoing career development for a wide range of professionals working in the planning sector; be they at the start of their career or well established.

The 2011 School takes place at Swansea University over five days, 3rd to 7th September, and is based around the theme of 'Planning with Communities'. Elected members are the key focus for the first two days with presentations and workshops around enforcement, housing, tourism and infrastructure. Planners, including professionals working in private practice, will get particular value from attending the latter two days, the agenda for which has been designed specifically with them in mind.

Perhaps the most exciting addition to the programme this year is the one day Planning Summit sandwiched between the elected members' school and the planners' school. The Summit will offer a unique environment for planners and elected members to work together to further their understanding of each others' roles and discuss and consider shared challenges.

The stellar line-up of speakers at the School includes Russell Harris QC, Steve Quartermain from DCLG, Arup Fellow Corinne Swain, Adrian Penfold of British Land and Trudi Elliott from the RTPI.

Travelling Scholarship Winner

Each year, Planning Summer School awards a scholarship for one candidate to carry out a research project overseas. In return, they are asked to attend the annual Planning Summer School and present their findings to the assembled audience.

The 2011 winner is Clare Healy, a planner with Arup in London, who is currently on full-time secondment to Thames Water. Clare's project will see her travel to South Korea to study the Cheonggyecheon River Restoration Scheme.

Until 2005, the 5.8 km long river was 'lost' as a polluted sewer beneath a four-lane elevated highway, a victim of Seoul's rapid post-war economic growth. After a 40-year absence from Seoul's streetscape, the

Cheonggyecheon was opened up, following a multi-million dollar investment programme.

Clare will present her research findings on Wednesday 7th September at 11am.

Tickets for the 2011 School start from just £225 for a day ticket and delegates can choose from a menu of packages to include the elements they require. Full details and booking forms are available on www.planningsummerschool.org or by calling 01722 339811.

Special offer to Cynllunio readers – early-bird booking rate retained until end of July if you quote 'Cynllunio' in an email to: info@planningsummerschool.org

Encourage elected members to attend also - see page 9.

Do you receive a bi-monthly bulletin by e-mail from RTPI Cymru?

If you don't it probably means that we don't have your up to date e-mail address, or you haven't registered with us. You might be surprised to know that only half of our members have given us their address to keep in contact with them.

Please e-mail wales@rtpi.org.uk with your current e-mail address and we will be able to keep you in touch with up to date information.

We do not pass your details on to anyone else and we are selective about the e-mails we send to you.

North Wales Chapter update

Following the AGM in December the Chapter Executive met in early February to plan out activities for the year, based upon the issues members say they want and our collective judgement. The standard pattern is four afternoon events a year, including an AGM, two in North East Wales, two in the North West, £10 attendance fee. We are sticking to that pattern again this year.

Although we arrange speakers, the purpose is really to allow practitioners to exchange experiences. We welcome any suggestions members may have for the way the workshops and events are conducted, or if anyone would like to lead a discussion themselves.

The first event in late April, hosted by Denbighshire County Council in Denbigh, was an LDP workshop. The second event in Caernarfon, hosted by Gwynedd Council, at the end of June was a Planning Law update, focussing in particular on developments in case law.

The third event in September, back in the North East will be a different kind of event, more related to the personal needs of members in the current difficult climate. Advice and support will be available for those considering early retirement, perhaps struggling to enter the profession or those faced with the prospect of redundancy.

The AGM in December will be in the North West and we plan to include an update on what by then may be the Localism Act, focussing in particular on those aspects which affect Wales, such as the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Last year was a very successful year for the Chapter with record numbers attending events. We hope this year will continue that success.

Trefnu Lleoliadau Mewn Cynllunio

Huw Thomas yn trafod rhai o'r cysylltiadau rhwng cynllunio yng Nghymru a gweddill y DU

Mis yma lansiwyd cynllun sydd yn trefnu lleoliadau byr gwirfoddol am raddedigion mewn cynllunio sy'n byw yng Nghymru ac yn parhau heb swyddi ar ôl fisoedd o chwilio. Prifysgol Caerdydd a'r RTPI sy'n gweinyddu, ond wrth gwrs mae parodrwydd cyflogwyr i greu lleoliadau yn angenrheidiol i lwyddiant y cynllun. Diolch o galon iddynt.

Siŵr o fod, bydd rhai o'r sawl sy'n elwa o'r cynllun yn ennill swydd yn Lloegr Ni fydd hynny yn synnu cynllunwyr profiadol. Ond o bryd i'w gilydd bydd ymgeisydd am le ar ein cwrs cynllunio yng Nghaerdydd yn gofyn a ydym yn paratoi myfyrwyr am weithio yn y system cynllunio yn Lloegr. Ofni ydynt mai dim ond hyfforddiant technegol cul yn addas am gynllunio yng Nghymru yn unig sydd ar gael. Nid yw hi'n gwestiwn anodd ei hateb. Gallwn fod yn ddigon onest, a dweud mai paratoad cyffredinol ydy gradd cynllunio; serch hynny rydym yn gwneud yn siŵr bod myfyrwyr yn deall egwyddorion a threfn cyfundrefnau cynllunio yng Nghymru ac yn Lloegr. Ceir esiamplau o gynllunio o'r Alban hefyd, ond llai ohonynt.

Paham llai o esiamplau o'r Alban, a bron dim o Ogledd Iwerddon? Un rheswm yw bod ein myfyrwyr fel arfer yn chwilio am swyddi yn Lloegr neu Gymru . Rheswm arall yw bod cyfundrefnau Cymru a Lloegr wedi bod llawer mwy tebyg i'w gilydd, dros y blynyddoedd nag ydynt i'r un yn yr Alban neu Ogledd Iwerddon. Yn wir, efallai bod y gwahaniaethau wedi lledi ar ôl datganoli, oherwydd roedd gan yr Albanwyr sylfaen hanesyddol o annibyniaeth ddeddfol, ac wrth gwrs ar ôl 2000 roedd ganddynt y cynnig o fwy o annibyniaeth nag oedd ar gael yng Nghymru.

Ond mae pethau'n newid, a gallwn erfyn i'r gyfundrefn cynllunio Gymreig i ddatblygu i fod yn unigryw dros y blynyddoedd nesaf. Pwy a ŵyr, efallai gwelwn sefyllfa ble bydd llai o symud dros y ffin (o'r ddwy ochr) gan gynllunwyr sefydlog am swyddi mewn cyfundrefn ddiarth. Yn sicr bydd hi'n bwysig i wneud yn siŵr bod trafodaethau am gynllunio yng Nghymru yn parhau i elwa o esiamplau a phrofiad cyfundrefnau cynllunio eraill - yn Lloegr, yr Alban a Gogledd Iwerddon wrth gwrs, ond hefyd o wledydd eraill yn Ewrop ac efallai ymhellach i ffwrdd na hynny.

Un o gyfraniadau cymdeithasol pwysicaf prifysgolion ydy pontio cymunedau. Yn yr achos yma, bydd hi'n ddyletswydd ar brifysgolion Cymru, yn enwedig Caerdydd , sydd gydag adran cynllunio, i sicrhau bod 'dialogue' rhwng cynllunwyr Cymru a chynllunwyr ledled y byd. Rhaid meddwl ymlaen llaw - hynny yw, cynllunio - am sut i wneud hyn: trwy ddarlithio ac ysgrifennu, siŵr o fod; ond beth am deithiau astudio (study visits)? Neu fforwm ar-lein? Pethau i'w trafod gyda RTPI Cymru yn sgil llwyddiant esiamplau eraill o gyd-weithio.

Darllenydd ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd ydy Huw.

Students' Recognised

The School of City and Regional Planning at Cardiff University recently recognised those who completed placement experience as part of the course. On 1st June 2011, students attended an informal ceremony to award the City and Guilds Licentiateship in Planning. This is an interim qualification within the BSc City and Regional Planning to recognise students' placement learning. Rosemary Thomas of the Welsh Government's Planning Division attended to award the certificates to students. The ceremony recognised the significant support given to the School and its students by employers that support the placement year.

The School continues to offer its traditional sandwich programme and will also introduce a three year undergraduate planning course from 2012. Both courses are recognised by both the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

The School is also introducing a new BSc in Human Geography from September 2012 entry to extend its provision of undergraduate courses.

Information on all of the School's postgraduate and undergraduate courses can be found at www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan

Employers interested in the placement year programme can contact the placement tutor, Pauline Card, on 029 2087 6092 or CardPD@cardiff.ac.uk

Above: (left to right, with placement employer details) are all of those students completing placements and work experience in Wales – with Rosemary Thomas (Welsh Government), Neil Harris (Cardiff School of City and Regional Planning), Daniel Jones (Asbri Planning), Emma Morris (Welsh Government), Sean Thomas (Newport CC), Emily Napier (Cardiff CC), Morgan Williams (Vale of Glamorgan CBC), Philippa Vickery (Newport CC), Rachel Salmon (Welsh Government), Matthew Allsopp (Newport Unlimited), Michael Corbett (Conwy CBC), Marcus Thomas (Carmarthenshire CC), Jamie Donegan (Powell Dobson Urbanists), and Grant Strong (CDN Planning).

Institute Tightens Belt

The 2009 recession has had an effect throughout the UK and the RTPI has also felt the impact of the downturn. As an organisation the RTPI has seen its revenues fall and in a similar fashion to many other planning organisations and we have had to make hard choices to ensure that we can continue to deliver services to members and to train the next generation of planners.

Helping our members at this difficult time has been a key priority for the RTPI and since 2008 we have frozen subscription rates, with 2011 now being the third year of no subscription rate rises. We have also developed our Planners in the Workplace programme which offers support and advice to planners facing redundancy or difficulties at work.

However freezing subscription rates doesn't mean that we can freeze inflation and the RTPI has been working hard to make sure that we live within our income. Not only have we faced tightening subscription income we have also seen declining revenues from our commercial activities such as advertising jobs in Planning and event income from RTPI Conferences.

In order to maintain services we undertook a comprehensive review of all RTPI activities with the aim of finding savings wherever possible. As a target we asked most RTPI departments to find 5% savings. Those departments critical to delivering frontline member services such as the Regions and Nations had their budgets protected so that they could continue providing low cost CPD. In 2009 we found £400k worth of savings and in 2010 we managed to find an additional £200k worth of cost reductions.

We found savings in a number of different areas, for example we looked at our travel budget and made sure that all journeys were strictly necessary and we always buy advance tickets. Where possible we have combined meetings to reduce the number of trips. We have expanded the use of teleconference and online meeting technology. The RTPI also revisited our suppliers and looked for improved value and more cost effective solutions – for example, this led to cheaper contracts for printing services. It is not only in big costs that we have sought to make savings but also in the detail. We have found more cost effective lunches for committees, timed meetings to avoid peak time fares, used cheaper venues or hosted smaller meetings, all helping to keep the Institute's costs down.

The RTPI has additionally taken a long hard look at recruitment. Since 2009 we have had a recruitment freeze on creating new posts and as members of staff have moved on we have considered whether their job could be outsourced or combined with another role. In this way over the last three years we have managed to make the RTPI leaner and more efficient.

One of the biggest financial changes for the RTPI is the Coalition Government's decision not to renew the Planning Aid England grant after the 31 March 2011. This grant was worth £3.6million and supported over 60 staff.

As members are no doubt aware the RTPI has had to reduce the scope of Planning Aid England and unfortunately close many of the regional offices and make staff redundant. 2011 will see the RTPI looking to find new ways of delivering the Service and rethinking our financial models.

The drive for improved value for money will continue, the RTPI will not only rigorously scrutinise and question all expenditure; we are also looking at ways of growing our income and ensuring that our subscription structure is the right model.

The RTPI is a membership organisation and we want to make sure that we use members' money as effectively as possible. In difficult economic times we have looked again at how we do things and found savings whilst maintaining standards. We will continue to make sure we spend your money wisely and continue to look at how we raise money and new opportunities to improve the RTPI.

Above: Students from Cardiff University's School of City and Regional Planning who successfully completed their placements in 2010/11

Key Cardiff University role in landmark ecosystem assessment

A new landmark assessment on ecosystems and theiur role in the economy has been published by Desfra, with key contributions from researchers at Cardiff University

Just what is the value of nature? How are ecosystems changing, and what are the consequences for our society? How can we balance the uses of our environment to satisfy human needs into a sustainable future?

These were some of the critical questions addressed for the whole UK in a landmark study just published by Defra – the Department for Food and Rural Affairs – with the devolved governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The National Ecosystem Assessment, co-chaired by Defra chief scientist Bob Watson and presented to government on June 2nd, is being hailed as one of most important pieces of environmental thinking of the last 30 years.

In a striking example of partnership working, over 500 scientists and economists contributed. Cardiff University's School of Biosciences had a central role, with Professor Steve Ormerod a member of the 27-strong expert panel and co-leader of the assessment for the UK's fresh waters. In one of the most high profile contributions so far from the University's new Sustainable Places Research Institute, Dr Isabelle Durance provided critical maps on which both the freshwater and Welsh ecosystem assessment were based, while Dr Ian Vaughan co-authored the fresh water chapter.

In over 1,000 pages, the report emphasises the value of broad ecosystems such as Britain's woodlands, enclosed farmlands and wetlands. More radically, the assessment asked what ecosystem services each provides – in other words the life support systems on which we all depend. Obvious examples are the provision of food, fibre and water. But ecosystems also regulate our climate, provide breathable air, clean our polluted water, and provide protection from flooding. They enrich our lives through recreation, education and the sheer beauty of organisms or landscapes.

Although controversial, one of the report's most important contributions has been to attempt to value the benefits of nature. Working from information provided by ecologists such as Professor Ormerod, economists estimated, for example, that inland wetlands are worth up to £1.5billion per year to the UK in providing clean water, while the amenity benefits of living close to rivers, coasts and other wetlands is worth up to £1.3billion. At the same time, the report emphasises that nature has many values that can't be captured in purely monetary terms.

"There have been two key lessons for me" said Prof Ormerod. "First, our natural environment has enormous value that we overlook or erode to our very major detriment. Second, we need to rebalance the way we use ecosystems away from the current emphasis on exploitation towards uses that safeguard other less tangible but nonetheless critical benefits. For example, it's no good using fertilizers and pesticides to squeeze every last gram of maize or meat from our farmlands if the end result is a major downstream cost in river pollution and water treatment."

Caroline Spelman, Secretary of State at Defra, said at the report's launch that "the environment is the bedrock on which our economy is built", and that "conservation was a vital facet of our economic development". Oliver Letwin - a key policy figure in the UK Cabinet Office - declared this "one of the most important things the Government has done for some time and marks a paradigm shift in the way we balance prosperity against nature conservation".

Already, the report is affecting Government policy, with the recent Defra white paper on the natural environment drawing on some of the key findings.

For further information, go to:

www.cardiff.ac.uk/research/sustainableplaces/

The Sustainable Places Research Institute's mission is to bring together leading scholars and research clusters across academic disciplines to explicitly address the question of how cities and their regions - which are all developing under different combinations of market and governance arrangements - can adapt and be guided towards more sustainable spatial strategies. The disciplines include city and regional planning and applied social and psychological sciences, business and law, biological and earth sciences, engineering, architecture and health.

The Institute is based in Cardiff University's School of City and Regional Planning, and Professor Terry Marsden is the Director.

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Are we consulting or engaging?

Elwyn Thomas probes a problem of planning terminology

Land use planning is the only regulatory system which gives the public a right to comment on emerging policies and proposals. Welsh local communities are given opportunities to get involved in preparing Local Development Plans; local occupiers and others are consulted on most planning applications.

From our perspective, there is a fundamental and clear-cut distinction in planning between the terms 'engagement' and 'consultation'. Engagement is proactive; it invites people to participate in making choices and trade-offs when considering a range of possible policy options, such as during the earlier 'big picture' option stages of plan-making. Consultation is quite different; it invites people to react to pre-defined proposals by submitting their comments on planning applications or final draft policy documents.

The statutory requirements on planning authorities to involve communities in policy-making and to consult on planning applications serve as a vital safety valve in the planning system. The valve is designed to contain and help relieve the considerable pressures which build up around planning policies and new development proposals; it helps to protect public confidence in an open and public-facing planning system designed to operate for the benefit of all.

Consultation has been an essential and enduring feature of the planning system for over sixty years. However, expectations on planning authorities to involve and engage are much more recent and have led to steady increases in pressure on the planning safety valve. We see three possible options for the future: either the safety mechanism gets some urgent maintenance, or it is radically overhauled, or it is replaced with a new mechanism designed for the 21st Century.

Option 1 - maintenance

The maintenance option requires a clear understanding of what the safety valve does and how it operates in planning. In essence, the valve is essential and it has done some good work over the years. However, it is getting quite long in the tooth and facing greater and different pressures than it was originally designed for.

Maintenance is urgent and requires an explicit and widely-recognised distinction between the two different types of pressure the valve is now controlling - engagement and consultation. Too many planners and some planning authorities still appear to be using the two terms interchangeably. This is confusing for the public and places excessive pressures on the valve. If the current terminological and procedural abuse continues, the valve will blow and public confidence in a public-facing planning system will suffer.

Option 2 - overhaul

The majority of people in most areas do not take up the opportunity to get involved in policy-making or to respond to planning application consultations. Response rates are particularly low in disadvantaged areas and communities. Unfortunately, these are the very areas and people which stand to gain most from effective community involvement in a planning system designed to allocate valuable development rights for wider social benefit.

Pressures on the safety valve are currently coming mostly from the 'usual suspects', who recognise the planning system as an allocator of scarce development value in which they should be involved. The overhaul option would require planning professionals in all sectors to hone their public participation skills and work much more closely with local communities to build capacity and harness local energies. All planning communications with the non-specialist public would need to be expressed in clear, unambiguous language. There could be no confusion between the duty to involve in policy-making and the duty to consult on planning applications.

Option 3 – replacement

Planning reforms have radically changed the way development plans are prepared. A Community Involvement Scheme agreed at the outset describes how the community will be involved during the early strategic stages of development plan preparation, and how they will be consulted later on.

The theory is sound; involvement in developing 'broad brush' strategy reduces public antagonism later down the line. Also, people gain an understanding of the process, the examination is less adversarial and the final plan enjoys public confidence.

It still remains to be seen how effective early stage engagement has been in the first tranche of approved Local Development Plans. A review of experience to date would help to identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of the variety of approaches adopted by different authorities. Such a review would also allow development of a more robust and systematic framework for community engagement in Welsh planning policy-making, supported by a suite of solid guidance and good practice examples.

In relation to planning applications, planning authorities currently offer a selection of non-specialists (neighbours, community councils, interest groups, etc) and big player specialists (Environment Agency, CCW, highways, etc) an opportunity to comment on most planning applications. For the non-specialists the experience is all too often negative, leaving them feeling their time has been wasted and their opinions ignored.

Following the decision, only a small minority receive an explanation of how their comments were taken into account and officers' reports do not always adequately cover this difficult ground. In our view, consultation on planning applications is not currently encouraging of public involvement or responsive to wider local opinion.

While regulations define basic consultation procedures for planning applications, in practice there is substantial variation between the consultation practices of the twenty-five Welsh planning authorities. Too many consultations are still being phrased in highly technical language and without reference to broader context.

We recommend that planning authorities develop with their communities' local consultation protocols to define minimum standards. These include: who gets consulted and in which circumstances; the methods of consultation to be applied in different circumstances; what information is provided; how long is given to respond; what happens when the response is received; and what happens after the decision.

Where next?

The planning safety valve is under more pressure than ever and the pressure looks likely to increase. This problem won't go away and planners and politicians need to be considering the available options. The key question is: do we consult on one pre-determined option or do we creatively engage the Welsh public in considering a range of possible options. It would be foolish and counter-productive to try to do both.

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