



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Chief Planning Officers
Wales Planning Forum Members
RTPI Wales Members
WLGA

Adran yr Amgylchedd, Cynllunio a Chefn Gwlad
Department for Environment, Planning and Countryside

Eich cyf . Your ref:
Ein cyf . Our ref:
Dyddiad . Date: 23 May 2007

Dear Colleagues,

You will be aware of the publication this week (21 May 2007) of the Planning White Paper by the UK Government's Departments of Communities and Local Government, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and Trade and Industry.

It might be helpful if I briefly outline how this relates to Wales, including picking up on some of the main issues identified by the media. Links to the documents are available at www.communities.gov.uk/planningwhitepaper, should you wish to assess the White Paper (221 pages) or the summary document (25 pages).

1. Does the Planning White Paper apply to Wales?

The Planning White Paper was published by the UK Government and comprises two parts. One deals with town and country planning issues in England, covering a range of policy issues, as well as detailed procedural implementation matters, such as on development plans and processing planning applications and appeals in England.

The second part of the White Paper sets out the UK Government's proposals to streamline the consents process for major infrastructure projects, including transport, waste, water and energy projects. It is proposed to transfer decisions on these projects from Ministers, such as the Minister for Transport, to a new independent Infrastructure Planning Commission from April 2009. As decisions on major energy applications in Wales are currently made by the Minister for Trade and Industry, the UK Government proposes that these decisions would transfer to the IPC.

The IPC would be responsible for assessing applications for major infrastructure projects and determining them in line with UK Government policy, set out in National Policy Statements. These Statements would be prepared by UK Government departments on a range of topics, following extensive consultations.

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A Planning Bill is scheduled to be tabled in Westminster in the Autumn.

We will be briefing incoming Ministers so that they can consider the White Paper proposals.

2. What about changes in retail policy?

The White Paper includes a section on retail policy in England but does not introduce a presumption in favour of such development. UK Government Ministers remain committed to promoting the vitality and viability of town centres. However they propose to replace the "needs test" with a revised approach to assessing the impact of unplanned out of town development.

Subject to the views of incoming Ministers, it is not currently proposed to amend the "needs test" in Wales.

3. Will the Welsh Assembly Government consult, like England, on changes to permitted development- the Householder Development Consent process?

The proposed changes in England were underpinned by research which we commissioned with DCLG. We will advise the incoming Minister about how the conclusions of this research can best be taken forward in Wales.

4. Does the Welsh Assembly Government intend to do the same as England on permitted development for micro-generation equipment - reducing the need for planning permission?

We commissioned research on this with DCLG last year. We will advise the incoming Minister about this work and the content of an emerging consultation paper.

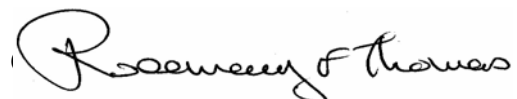
5. What about the proposed changes to the Planning Inspectorate, as it is an England & Wales agency?

A number of changes are proposed to secure greater efficiencies within the Planning Inspectorate in England, to ensure performance targets are met. In Wales PINS are currently meeting their performance targets. However, we are not complacent and we are actively considering with PINS the need to amend appeal procedures in Wales to secure efficiencies. We will advise the incoming Minister on the changes, if any, that may be appropriate in Wales.

6. Are there any plans to issue a policy document in Wales along the lines of the Planning White Paper?

There are differences in the planning framework in England and Wales. Officials will discuss with incoming Ministers what might be appropriate for Wales.

Yours faithfully



ROSEMARY THOMAS
Head of Planning Division