



**RTPI Cymru**  
Royal Town Planning Institute  
Sefydliad Cynllunio Trefol Brenhinol

# LIVING LOCALLY IN RURAL WALES

Planning policy and practice

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**RTPI  
Discussion  
Paper**

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# The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

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## About this paper

This study has been carried out by RTPI Cymru. It explores the concept of living locally in rural areas in Wales and whether the guiding principles behind the urban, 15 minute neighbourhood model can be applied in more remote rural areas. It also explores what role the planning system can play in supporting more sustainable, local living in rural Wales, not only to encourage less reliance on motor vehicles and support decarbonisation, but also to encourage the wider practice of placemaking within rural communities in Wales.

This paper is aimed at planning practitioners and other professional stakeholders interested in the planning system and sustainable rural communities in Wales.

## Acknowledgements

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In particular we would like to express our gratitude to the many individuals and organisations who took part in discussions and case studies and gave up their time to provide valued views which have helped to inform this work.

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# Executive summary

This study was carried out by the Royal Town Planning Institute in Wales (RTPI Cymru) to understand the concept and application of the 15 minute neighbourhood model<sup>1</sup> in a rural Wales context.

It comprises a review of planning policy and practice in relation to living locally, through desk-based review, discussions with a range of stakeholders and a series of case studies, concluding with several recommendations.

The full report can be found at on the RTPI Cymru website <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/find-your-rtpi/rtpi-nations/rtpi-cymru/policy-and-research/>

This paper focuses on the originally urban, 15 minute neighbourhood model, exploring the idea of living locally in rural areas in Wales and asking whether the guiding principles behind the model can be applied in more remote rural areas.

It also considers the role of the planning system in supporting local living in rural Wales; not only to encourage less reliance on motor vehicles and support decarbonisation and sustainability, but also to support the wider practice of placemaking within rural communities in Wales, through planning policy, skills and tools available to planners.

There are vast differences across areas and regions of Wales, including demographics, geographical and economic contexts and interconnectedness with the rest of Wales and the UK.

Areas of rural Wales face a number of interrelated issues, many of which are highly complex in planning terms, including an aging population, access to services and sustainable, accessible transport systems.

The principles and features of the 15 minute neighbourhood model resonate well with the provisions set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015<sup>2</sup> and the rural policy framework set out in Future Wales: The National Plan 2040<sup>3</sup> and Planning Policy Wales<sup>4</sup>, along with Well-being Indicators<sup>5</sup>, the National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes<sup>6</sup> and Placemaking Charter Principles<sup>7</sup>. The model itself is a useful tool in re-enforcing a local focus in planning policy and decision making.

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<sup>1</sup> TED: Ideas worth spreading. [TED: Ideas worth spreading](#)

<sup>2</sup> Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/#:~:text=The%20Future%20Generations%20Act%20defines,out%20five%20ways%20of%20working>

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. [Future Wales: the national plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Planning Policy Wales Ed11. February. [Planning Policy Wales - Edition 11 \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Wellbeing of Wales: National Indicators. September. [Wellbeing of Wales: national indicators | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Planning Policy Wales Ed11. February. [Planning Policy Wales - Edition 11 \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> Wales Placemaking Charter. [Placemaking Charter - Design Commission for Wales \(dcfw.org\)](#)

The adaptable nature of the concept of living locally means it can evolve to suit the individual place, considering the local context and what makes it distinctive. If applied, the principles and approach would need to remain flexible for different contexts and localities.

The project makes several recommendations:

- Retain and strengthen national, regional and local planning policy which promotes the principles of living locally to deliver sustainable development outcomes.
- Move the planning system to a more outcome focused performance measurement to support the delivery of sustainable places on the ground.
- Funding pressures have had a significant impact on rural local authorities and service provision in rural areas. There is a strong case for Welsh Government to be pro-active in encouraging and supporting local planning authorities in ensuring that these important services are adequately resourced.
- Support joint working involving planners, other partners, agencies and sectors, to align strategic goals, investment priorities and outcomes and indicators collaboratively, to facilitate meaningful impact.
- Digital and technological advancements should be developed around supporting local where possible, rather than a continued use of larger regional or national distribution centres for goods and services that require significant transportation and which by-passes local services and does not support the local economy. Planning has a role to play in supporting this wider local agenda through development planning and decision making.
- Further consideration and targeted funding for connecting rural locations to services and facilities. For example, exploring new or enhanced public rights of way / bridleways / cycleways etc. and improvements to public transport.
- Resource, training and support for local planning tools such as community led Place Plans, community engagement etc. Resources within communities, town and community councils and local planning authorities, would assist in improving understanding and provide the capability and capacity to support joined up working.
- The sharing of resources and good practice across rural authorities, similar to that which has taken place in relation to holiday homes and short term lets in Wales.
- Continued investigation, discussion and learning on how planning can support sustainable living in rural areas and the impacts and outcomes of living locally in rural Wales.

# Introduction

The 15 minute neighbourhood concept was originally conceived by Carlos Moreno<sup>8</sup> in 2016. His theory focuses on urban areas, with the aim of encouraging regeneration, improving social cohesion, thriving communities, health and well-being, while reducing the use of motor vehicles and promoting more sustainable living.

This place-based approach essentially promotes the idea of all residents of all ages and abilities being able to “access their daily needs (housing, work, food, health, education, and culture and leisure) within the distance of a 15 minute walk or bike ride.”<sup>9</sup>

Both the definition and the term have developed along with interest in the concept, regularly referred to as 15 minute cities, 15 minute neighbourhoods, 20 minute neighbourhoods along with extended variations including liveable or walkable neighbourhoods etc. However,

“the name is not the point, nor is the number of minutes specified. What matters is that, at its best, this is a holistic and transformational approach to place-making, with significant potential to improve people’s health and wellbeing.”<sup>10</sup>

At its heart lies the notion of sustainable, efficient, accessible and connected places where local residents can access daily goods, services and places by a short walk or cycle, or without the use of a private motor car. Places support community bonds and social cohesion, where dwellers feel part of a community and through participation in decision making have a feeling of ownership within their local area.

During the coronavirus pandemic the idea of living locally began to attract interest as a way to “eliminate commuting time ... using it towards a better work-life balance”<sup>11</sup> and re-addressing our pace of life. Moreno believes that our acceptance of dysfunction in the places we live and work has now reached a peak, following the pandemic, and we need to change; not only for the climate but also our well-being.<sup>12</sup>

The recent rise in home working, a renewed recognition of the importance of our environment and access to green open space, along with concerns for our health and well-being, all brought about by the health crisis and highlighted during the pandemic lockdowns, has resulted in greater freedom to choose where we live and increased interest in rural living. Research by Rightmove revealed that the pandemic has prompted a “desire to live somewhere quieter and with access to green spaces, ... almost a third of buyers (30%) say they want to live in a rural area.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> TED: Ideas worth spreading. [TED: Ideas worth spreading](#)

<sup>9</sup> TRT World (2021) The 15 minute city brings the Obel Award to scientist Carlos Moreno. October. [The ‘15-minute city’ brings the Obel Award to scientist Carlos Moreno \(trtworld.com\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> Town and Country Planning Association (2021) 20 Minute Neighbourhoods. March. [20MN\\_Main.qxd \(tcpa.org.uk\)](#) pg7

<sup>11</sup> TRT World (2021) The 15 minute city brings the Obel Award to scientist Carlos Moreno. October. [The ‘15-minute city’ brings the Obel Award to scientist Carlos Moreno \(trtworld.com\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> TED: Ideas worth spreading. [TED: Ideas worth spreading](#)

<sup>13</sup> Rightmove. How home movers’ priorities are shifting. [How home movers' priorities are shifting - exclusive research - Rightmove Hub](#)

Recognition of the additional pressures and opportunities, along with an ambition to address key issues including climate, environmental, economic, societal and health factors, heightened by the pandemic, is driving planners and other stakeholders to ask if the, originally urban, 15 minute neighbourhood concept, has more to offer, and whether the basic principles of this model could provide a guide for a more sustainable, holistic, place-based focus for rural areas in Wales?

## Methods and approach

This study will investigate the following question:

**Can the 15-minute neighbourhood principles be applied in rural Wales to achieve more sustainable rural places? If so, how can the planning system support living more locally in rural areas in Wales?**

To address this question, the study sets out to:

- Establish the key principles of the 15-minute neighbourhood model;
- Explore the key issues for living locally rural Wales;
- Investigate the key benefits, challenges and opportunities of the 15-minute neighbourhood model / living locally in rural areas;
- Identify case studies in rural parts of Wales that support and enable living more locally;
- Draw conclusions on whether it is possible to apply the 15-minute neighbourhood principles in a rural Wales context and if so, how the planning system can support living more locally and;
- Identify any changes to planning policy and practice which may be required to better support living locally.

## Methodology

This practice-based project was carried out by RTPI Cymru, between July 2021 and December 2021. Using qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve a comprehensive picture of the issues around living locally in rural Wales. The study comprised:

- A desk-based review of existing policy, research and other works on living locally in rural areas. This provided the opportunity to draw on the wealth of existing work, giving a broader understanding of the issues and an evidence base on which to develop initial thoughts.
- A series of eight one-to-one discussions with planning practitioners and built environment professionals. These one-to-one discussions provided fact and opinion surrounding the deeper issues of living locally in rural areas. This gave a wider perspective in addition to richer material and the opportunity to clarify views and opinions.
- A set of case studies supporting living more locally in rural areas were produced following a study of online information and discussions. The case studies provide factual, practical information, building on the theory and opinions of stakeholders. They set out the practicalities of implementing projects and initiatives, providing the opportunity to share experiences and lessons learnt.

- A discussion group comprising the RTPI Cymru Policy and Research Forum examined the initial findings of the project and discussed the development of recommendations and conclusions. A stakeholder profiling exercise was carried out with the Forum to identify interested parties affected or involved in living locally in rural areas. The key stakeholders identified were approached to participate in the project.

## Study area

There is not a common definition of what is considered to be rural Wales. “Different definitions of rurality will be required when considering 'rural people', 'rural land' and 'rural activities'”.<sup>14</sup>

A recent study by Aberystwyth University<sup>15</sup>, ‘A Rural Vision for Wales’, discusses the different definitions of rural Wales. The study found:

At a local authority level, ‘rural’ was largely accepted to comprise the nine local authorities represented in the Welsh Local Government Association Rural Forum<sup>16</sup>. This definition is based largely on population density and includes the Anglesey, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire and Powys local authorities.

The Office for National Statistics’ rural-urban classification<sup>17</sup> broadens this definition to include areas beyond the nine rural local authority areas.

And taking a different approach again, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in their report on Rural Wellbeing<sup>18</sup>, divide rural areas into groups based on their proximity to urban areas.

As the complexities around a definition suggest, there are vast differences in rural areas across Wales. “A rural location within proximity of major urban areas experiences different issues compared with a more isolated rural location. It may not be appropriate for policies to be applied to both types of location equally.”<sup>19</sup>

The importance of specialist, local knowledge in policy formation and implementation is recognised by Welsh Government, who require planning authorities themselves to “be confident in identifying which areas are rural, using their understanding of the issues and geography of an area to prepare appropriate definitions”.<sup>20</sup>

This study adopts the Welsh Local Government Association Rural Forum local authorities as a guide to defining rural Wales.

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<sup>14</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2008) Statistical Bulletin. March. [SB10/2008 - Rural Wales: Definitions and how to choose between them \(llyw.cymru\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> Woods, M., Heley, J., Goodwin-Hawkins, B., & Howells, H. (2021). A Rural Vision for Wales: The Evidence Report. [Evidence Report English .pdf \(aber.ac.uk\)](#) pg5

<sup>16</sup> WLGA Rural Forum (2018) Rural-Urban Governance Arrangements and Planning Instruments. [G-MWA3 WLGA Rural Forum \(rural-urban.eu\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> ONS 2011 Rural/Urban Classification. [2011 rural/urban classification - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> OECD (2020) Rural Well-being. October. [Rural Well-being : Geography of Opportunities | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. [Future Wales: the national plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#) pg68

<sup>20</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. [Future Wales: the national plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#) pg68

“Many towns are traditionally market towns and have retained the function of being gathering places for people living and working in rural places”.<sup>21</sup>

There are deep rooted links between rural towns and the wider, more sparsely populated villages, hamlets and dispersed dwellings that they serve. In some cases, rural towns may already be functioning 15-minute neighbourhoods in themselves where “one destination may be meeting the needs of a wide range of local communities. This is especially the case in smaller towns and villages”<sup>22</sup>.

While this paper recognises this important relationship between rural towns and the outlying population they serve, the primary focus of the study will be the application of the 15 minute neighbourhood principles in rural villages and hamlets.

## Definitions

To avoid confusion, some terms require preliminary definition for the purpose of this paper:

- **15 minute city / neighbourhood / 20 minute neighbourhood etc:** A place based, originally urban model, defined by its key focus to provide all residents access, to all daily goods and services, within a given timeframe, by walking, cycling etc, or without the use of private motor vehicles – aligning with active travel ambitions in Wales. It is essentially a “tool that activates the array of principles that promote livable, healthy, sustainable societies”.<sup>23</sup>
- **Living locally:** Given the remoteness of some rural areas in Wales this paper uses the term ‘living locally’, rather than placing a specific measure on what can be deemed as local, such as 20 minutes, 15 minutes, 30 miles,<sup>24</sup> liveable or walkable. However, quotes and other evidence referred to in this report may refer to various other terms including those mentioned above.
- **Local:** For the purpose of this paper the term ‘local’ is taken to mean the area (in and around) where a person lives or considers themselves to belonging.<sup>25</sup>
- **Placemaking:** Planning Policy Wales defines placemaking as “a holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes”.<sup>26</sup>
- **Sustainable development in Wales:** The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 defines sustainable development in Wales as, “the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. [Future Wales: the national plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#) pg64

<sup>22</sup> Sustrans (2020) What is a 20 minute neighbourhood? December. [What is a 20-minute neighbourhood? - Sustrans.org.uk](#)

<sup>23</sup> Public Square; CNU Journal (2021) Defining the 15 minute city. February. [Defining the 15-minute city | CNU](#)

<sup>24</sup> Campaign to Protect Rural England. [Our New Feature on Local Food - CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough \(cprecambs.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> Collins Dictionary. [Local definition and meaning | Collins English Dictionary \(collinsdictionary.com\)](#)

<sup>26</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Planning Policy Wales Ed11. February. [Planning Policy Wales - Edition 11 \(gov.wales\)](#) pg14

<sup>27</sup> Future Generations Commissioner for Wales; Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/#:~:text=The%20Future%20Generations%20Act%20defines,out%20five%20ways%20of%20working>

# Literature Review

This literature review draws on academic publications, existing research and articles on living locally, sustainability in rural areas and the implementation of local initiatives.

## Key issues for rural Wales and living locally

The rural context and rural living are significantly different to that of a town or city. There are different pressures and challenges that require different policy and practice approaches.

There are vast differences across areas and regions of Wales, including demographics, geographical and economic contexts and interconnectedness with the rest of Wales and the UK. The following section focuses on some of the key issues facing rural Wales, many of which are interrelated and highly complex in planning terms.

Large areas of Wales are rural in character, “with 40% of the population living in settlements with fewer than 10,000 people.”<sup>28</sup> However, population change can be affected by different factors, for example the recent rise in second homes and short-term holiday lets in Wales which has become a significant challenge for some rural communities<sup>29</sup>.

Research by Aberystwyth University found a “small shift in the geographic distribution of the population of rural Wales towards more accessible rural areas in South Wales”<sup>30</sup>. This provides a valuable insight into the interdependence and connectivity between rural areas and the towns that serve them. “Wards with significant increases in population since 2011, of 10% or more, tend to be in close proximity to towns”<sup>31</sup>.

The sparsity of rural communities means that rural areas often lack services, including transport links which are usually not viable in such areas. This “necessity for residents in many rural communities to travel in order to access key services is reflected in the higher than average car ownership”<sup>32</sup>, indicating that the key issue in relation to living locally is getting services to communities, rather than people to services, or shaping their mode of travel.

Much of the existing literature on living locally in rural areas focuses on distinct elements, rather than a holistic approach. For example, addressing rural housing, rural services, accessibility, etc. separately. The 30 Minute Rural Community: Future Mobility study focuses primarily on mobility and also uses the 15 minute neighbourhood concept as a basis for discussion, concluding that by “reimagining the mobility eco system within our rural communities we could connect dispersed healthcare, retail, education and leisure facilities so that more people have easier access as well as improving connectivity to local jobs and our major centres of activity such as market towns and cities.”<sup>33</sup> The study recognises the barriers to effective implementation of a 30 minute rural

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<sup>28</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. [Future Wales: the national plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#) pg68

<sup>29</sup> RTPI Cymru (2021) Holiday Homes in Wales. October. [www.rtpi.org.uk/holidayhomesinwales](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/holidayhomesinwales)

<sup>30</sup> Woods, M., Heley, J., Goodwin-Hawkins, B., & Howells, H. (2021). A Rural Vision for Wales: The Evidence Report. [Evidence Report English .pdf \(aber.ac.uk\)](#) pg9

<sup>31</sup> Woods, M., Heley, J., Goodwin-Hawkins, B., & Howells, H. (2021). A Rural Vision for Wales: The Evidence Report. [Evidence Report English .pdf \(aber.ac.uk\)](#) pg9

<sup>32</sup> Woods, M., Heley, J., Goodwin-Hawkins, B., & Howells, H. (2021). A Rural Vision for Wales: The Evidence Report. [Evidence Report English .pdf \(aber.ac.uk\)](#) pg38

<sup>33</sup> WSP, Foot Anstey (2021) The 30 minute rural community future mobility. [Let's think differently about rural mobility | WSP](#) pg 8

community to include legislation, established ways of working, creativity, relationships and viability<sup>34</sup>.

Other studies into rural mobility suggest that technology exists and is continuously improving the efficiency and possibilities of sustainable rural transport, noting that “co-ordination remains an issue, alongside licencing, governance, safety, pricing.”<sup>35</sup>

While the private motor car is heavily relied on in rural areas, those without access to a motor vehicle often rely on “non-existent public buses, kindness of neighbours or increasingly community transport”<sup>36</sup>. This trend highlights the potential for enhanced community transport networks, that in turn could support service accessibility with initiatives such as community minibus schemes.<sup>37</sup>

Llwybr Newydd, the Wales Transport Strategy, commits to “transport solutions tailored to the needs of different communities and different parts of Wales, including rural Wales.”<sup>38</sup> This includes extending the “geographical ‘reach’ of public transport into every community, especially in rural Wales”.<sup>39</sup> The Strategy is also concerned with affordability of transport options, recognising “the fact that some people, particularly those who live in rural areas, may have fewer transport choices for low-cost independent mobility”.<sup>40</sup> In such cases, the Strategy notes the provision of “alternatives such as shared car schemes or other options”<sup>41</sup> to meet the needs of those communities.

Welsh Government’s Active Travel Guidance, addresses “the isolated nature of communities, sparsity of services and the increased length of journeys”<sup>42</sup> requiring a different approach. In line with enabling living more locally, the guidance suggests that rural local authorities could prioritise walking and cycling links to public transport services, such as bus and rail stations and supports the mapping of routes that extend outside the local area, linking to other settlements and centres that already attract local trips to access goods and services etc. The difficulties of encouraging active travel provision in rural areas is widely accepted, although there are initiatives that attempt to address this issue, such as Quiet Lanes, the Slow Ways<sup>43</sup> initiative etc.

Connectivity and movement are one of many key issues to tackle in achieving more sustainable rural local living. It is predicted that advances in household, transport and energy technologies

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<sup>34</sup> WSP, Foot Anstey (2021) The 30 minute rural community future mobility. [Let's think differently about rural mobility | WSP](#) pg11

<sup>35</sup> Bosworth, G., Price, L., Collison, M., Fox, C. (2020) Unequal Futures of Rural Mobility: Challenges for a Smart Countryside. [Unequal futures of rural mobility: Challenges for a “Smart Countryside” - Gary Bosworth, Liz Price, Martin Collison, Charles Fox, 2020 \(sagepub.com\)](#)

<sup>36</sup> Bosworth, G., Price, L., Collison, M., Fox, C. (2020) Unequal Futures of Rural Mobility: Challenges for a Smart Countryside. [Unequal futures of rural mobility: Challenges for a “Smart Countryside” - Gary Bosworth, Liz Price, Martin Collison, Charles Fox, 2020 \(sagepub.com\)](#)

<sup>37</sup> Wales Centre for Public Policy (2018) How community based solutions can improve rural transport in Wales. [How community-based solutions can improve rural transport in Wales | WCPP](#)

<sup>38</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd: Wales Transport Strategy. March. [Llwybr Newydd A New Wales Transport Strategy 2021: full strategy \(gov.wales\)](#) pg32

<sup>39</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd: Wales Transport Strategy. March. [Llwybr Newydd A New Wales Transport Strategy 2021: full strategy \(gov.wales\)](#) pg17

<sup>40</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd: Wales Transport Strategy. March. [Llwybr Newydd A New Wales Transport Strategy 2021: full strategy \(gov.wales\)](#) pg33

<sup>41</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd: Wales Transport Strategy. March. [Llwybr Newydd A New Wales Transport Strategy 2021: full strategy \(gov.wales\)](#) pg33

<sup>42</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Active Travel Guidance. July. [Active Travel Act guidance | GOV.WALES](#) pg42

<sup>43</sup> Slow Ways. [Slow Ways has the walks for Powys](#)

could have a significant impact on population behaviours, “over fairly short timescales”.<sup>44</sup> The challenge of implementing fast charging infrastructure to rural communities will form part of this,<sup>45</sup> along with improvements in digital coverage and technologies. “Dispersed settlements and distinctive topography”<sup>46</sup> along with outdated infrastructure prove a challenge with respect to enhancing digital coverage in Wales. “The level of digital exclusion in Wales is higher than in the UK, with as many as 10% of the population, not using the internet”.<sup>47</sup> A lack of “equipment, connectivity, motivation and digital skills needed to make full and confident use of the online services”<sup>48</sup> often results in individuals being excluded.<sup>49</sup> However, current work through the Unlocked Project sets out the case for developing 5G in Wales.<sup>50</sup>

Agriculture plays a vital role in rural communities across Wales: maintaining landscapes, framing the culture and identity of many rural communities, along with maintaining long standing social networks and connections that support community bonds and cohesion in rural areas.

Recent interest in living more sustainability has also prompted a renewed enthusiasm for local produce and a rise in initiatives to support local food production and sales<sup>51</sup>. This has played an important role in providing social interaction, supporting small rural enterprise, as well as providing locally sourced produce and supporting the local economy.

Welsh Government supports a town centre first approach. Market / principal town centres are vital economic, community and social hubs for outlying local rural communities. While the closure of non-essential businesses, as a result of the pandemic, has had a significant impact on larger high streets and town centres, some smaller local centres and independents have seen a boost. Local innovation and adaption to circumstances in some cases offered rural dwellers improved local options. However, recent independent research into town centres in Wales found a disconnect between business models and the aspirations of planning policy: “the business models of the main actors shaping our towns point in a different direction to that envisaged in government strategy and policy guidelines of the Welsh planning system. This threatens to undermine delivery”.<sup>52</sup>

While the tourism industry clearly has an important role to play in the rural Welsh economy, by creating opportunities and economic benefits for rural communities and the local area, it equally can attract high visitor numbers, contributing to increased congestion and traffic pollution etc. This can have an overbearing impact on smaller rural villages and therefore require careful planning and management. The tourism industry has been criticised “for attracting relatively low value tourism that places pressure on services and infrastructure but contributes comparatively little to local business,”<sup>53</sup> suggesting there is a balance to be found.

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<sup>44</sup> Welsh Government (2019) National Development Framework Explanatory Paper: Rural Areas. December. [National Development Framework 2020-2040 - Rural Areas \(gov.wales\)](#) pg12

<sup>45</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy. March. [Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>46</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. [Future Wales: the national plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#) pg40

<sup>47</sup> Welsh Government; Digital inclusion in Wales. [Digital inclusion in Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>48</sup> Welsh Government; Digital inclusion in Wales. [Digital inclusion in Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>49</sup> Welsh Government; Digital inclusion in Wales. [Digital inclusion in Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>50</sup> 5G Wales Unlocked. <https://www.5gwalesunlocked.co.uk/>

<sup>51</sup> Example: <https://our-food.org>

<sup>52</sup> Foundational Economy Research (2021) Small Towns, Big Issues. June. [Small Towns, Big Issues: independent research report \(gov.wales\)](#) pg12

<sup>53</sup> Woods, M., Heley, J., Goodwin-Hawkins, B., & Howells, H. (2021). A Rural Vision for Wales: The Evidence Report. [Evidence Report English .pdf \(aber.ac.uk\)](#) pg28

In a recent household survey of Wales “62% of people [reported] that their local area had a good sense of community; this means that they feel they belong in the area.”<sup>54</sup> The National Survey for Wales<sup>55</sup> (2018-19) reported on those factors that are linked with people feeling that their local area has a sense of community, which included: being older; having positive mental well-being; feeling safe in different situations (e.g. walking in the area after dark); being satisfied with the local area as a place to live; having a good understanding of what the local councillor does for the community; feeling able to influence decisions affecting the local area; and feeling satisfied with the availability of local services and facilities.

It is important to recognise the different demographics within rural areas and their experiences of rural. For example, the experience and needs of an elderly rural dweller may differ from that of a younger person needing to access employment, or a local farmer that has ties to the local area and land.

The average age in Wales is projected to rise over the next 20 years - “we will have 30.6% more people aged 65 and over, and 64.9% more people aged 75 and over by 2043.”<sup>56</sup> This growth is echoed in rural areas, where the population “is older in profile than that of urban areas and is becoming more elderly”<sup>57</sup>.

An ageing population has implications for living locally, particularly in more dispersed rural settlements and can bring additional demand on services such as health and social care and transport etc. However, the more positive aspects of an ageing rural community can sometimes be overlooked. Often, older or retired “individuals offer considerable energy and expertise to community activities, engage in part-time and voluntary work and bring significant disposable income to support local services and businesses”.<sup>58</sup>

The Wales Rural Youth Research survey<sup>59</sup> reported a willingness among the young rural community to participate in their communities. However, some felt they do not necessarily feel they have a say in their community. The survey highlighted the need for decision makers to listen to rural young people in their decision-making process.

A large percentage of rural young people explained that they live in rural areas because of “emotional connections”<sup>60</sup>. Housing, jobs, transport and internet connectivity, were considered challenges for young people living in rural Wales.

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<sup>54</sup> Welsh Government (2021) National Survey for Wales. [National Survey for Wales \(quarterly survey\): January to March 2021 | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>55</sup> Welsh Government (2020) What factors are linked to people agreeing that their local area has a sense of community? [What factors are linked to people agreeing that their local area has a sense of community? \(gov.wales\)](#) pg6

<sup>56</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. Available here [Future Wales: the national plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#) pg21

<sup>57</sup> Woods, M., Heley, J., Goodwin-Hawkins, B., & Howells, H. (2021). A Rural Vision for Wales: The Evidence Report. [Evidence Report English .pdf \(aber.ac.uk\)](#) pg12

<sup>58</sup> Bosworth, G., Price, L., Collison, M., Fox, C. (2020) Unequal Futures of Rural Mobility: Challenges for a Smart Countryside. [Unequal futures of rural mobility: Challenges for a “Smart Countryside” - Gary Bosworth, Liz Price, Martin Collison, Charles Fox, 2020 \(sagepub.com\)](#)

<sup>59</sup> Rural Youth Project (2021) Survey of Rural Youth in Wales. [New survey of rural youth in Wales highlights that only 11% of respondents feel their voice is heard. | Jane Craigie](#)

<sup>60</sup> Rural Youth Project (2021) Survey of Rural Youth in Wales. [New survey of rural youth in Wales highlights that only 11% of respondents feel their voice is heard. | Jane Craigie](#)

Beyond the rural towns and villages, Wales's countryside and landscapes are under increasing pressure. The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) for Wales assesses Wales's sustainable management of natural resources and reports that Wales is "not yet meeting the four long-term aims of sustainable management of natural resources, and it is vital that future policy decisions are rooted in evidence."<sup>61</sup>

The RTPI are currently undertaking a study<sup>62</sup> into rural communities in the UK and Ireland and the challenges they are facing in the 2020s. The 'Rural Planning in the 2020s' project seeks to address how rural planning will need to change to deal with these challenges, as well as how rural communities can meet policy and practice objectives for achieving sustainable development. The final report will provide guidance and recommendations regarding the legislative, policy and process changes that will be required in each UK nation and in Ireland to ensure rural communities and local authorities are equipped to meet these challenges. The research is due to be published in May 2022.

## Welsh legislation and planning policy

There is increasing recognition that the planning system and Wales' sustainable development, well-being and placemaking ambitions, are intrinsically linked and together can support planning in responding to new opportunities and challenges; balancing economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives with a holistic, joined up approach.

The legislative framework in Wales provides a strong foundation for planning policy and practice and the opportunity for positive change. Well-being is a central part of the legislative framework in Wales, with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 defining sustainable development in Wales as, "the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales"<sup>63</sup> and setting out seven Well-Being Goals to ensure a shared vision: "a prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities, a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and a globally responsible Wales".<sup>64</sup>

Other key legislation such as the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013<sup>65</sup> and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016<sup>66</sup> supports Wales in working towards long term sustainability goals, including climate action, ensuring they remain priorities and at the forefront of planning policy and practice.

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<sup>61</sup> Natural Resources Wales (2020) The Second State of Natural Resources Report. December. [SoNaRR2020 Executive Summary \(cyfoethnaturiol.cymru\)](#) pg 9

<sup>62</sup> RTPI (2021) Rural Planning in the 2020s. [RTPI | Rural Planning in the 2020s \(tender\)](#)

<sup>63</sup> Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/#:~:text=The%20Future%20Generations%20Act%20defines,out%20five%20ways%20of%20working>

<sup>64</sup> Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Available here <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/#:~:text=The%20Future%20Generations%20Act%20defines,out%20five%20ways%20of%20working>

<sup>65</sup> Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 makes provision for integrated network maps of the new and improved active travel routes. [Active Travel \(Wales\) Act 2013 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>66</sup> The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets out requirements for the sustainable management of our natural resources in Wales, which will help to address the impacts of climate change. [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 aims to strengthen the plan-led approach, making provision for development plans at a national level (Future Wales: the National Plan 2040<sup>67</sup>) and strategic / regional level (emerging Strategic Development Plans). At the national level, Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 sets out a clear vision for “vibrant rural areas with services to meet the needs of those living there in a sustainable way.”<sup>68</sup> It recognises the challenges for many rural areas in Wales:

“Where housing, employment, key services and infrastructure are not sufficient to accommodate current or future needs, or are not easily accessible, the resilience and sustainability of an area may be undermined, possibly leading to economic and social decline. This may manifest itself in rural depopulation, age imbalance, deprivation, inequality or social isolation. If people move away to seek opportunities elsewhere, the viability of services and facilities can become compromised, especially in smaller settlements.”<sup>69</sup>

It addresses a number of critical issues in relation to rural areas if we are to live more locally, including accessibility and connectivity, addressing the role of public transport, low emission vehicles and charging networks, a strong rural economy that supports diversification, local enterprise and the broadening of skills. It recognises the need to improve digital and mobile communications in rural areas and the impact this has on isolation and exclusion. It also acknowledges the vital role of the countryside in the wider context of decarbonisation and renewable energy generation.

Future Wales addresses the issue of proximity in rural areas, stating “within settlements different uses should be situated in close proximity to each other, reflecting the strategic placemaking principles, to help create vibrant active places where people can walk and cycle and are less reliant on cars”.<sup>70</sup>

Planning Policy Wales<sup>71</sup> sets out the national land use planning policies of Welsh Government and requires that most new development be located in settlements that are accessible by non-car modes and that offer good active travel connections.

“An essential component for a sustainable place is where development is to be located. Local Development Plans will provide the basis for this by identifying areas and sites for new development. This will be based not only on the consideration of the needs of existing urban and rural areas but also future relationships between urban settlements and their rural hinterlands, particularly in the light of ensuring strong rural and urban communities, maintaining places which are resilient to the effects of social and economic change and are resilient in the light of the impacts of climate change.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. [Future Wales: the national plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>68</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. [Future Wales: the national plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#) pg68

<sup>69</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. [Future Wales: the national plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#) pg68

<sup>70</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. [Future Wales: the national plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#) pg 69

<sup>71</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Planning Policy Wales Ed11. February. [Planning Policy Wales - Edition 11 \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>72</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Planning Policy Wales Ed11. February. [Planning Policy Wales - Edition 11 \(gov.wales\)](#) pg33

Place Plans are non-statutory plans and do not form part of the development plan hierarchy in Wales, however they offer an opportunity for communities to engage “creatively with the planning process and for planners to support place-making initiatives with local people”<sup>73</sup> providing an opportunity to address place-based local issues.

## The key principles of the 15 minute neighbourhood

The term and definition of the 15 minute neighbourhood have broadened over time, along with the principles on which the idea is based. These principles have adapted and extended, often into guiding features that go beyond the original four basic principles envisaged by Moreno, which are as follows:

- “Ecology – a green and sustainable city,
- Proximity – live with reduce distance to activities,
- Solidarity – links between people,
- Participation – involved people from neighbourhood”.<sup>74</sup>

Whilst the above model has been mainly applied in urban areas, more recent discussion has generated around its application in rural areas<sup>75</sup>. However, there remains little in-depth consideration as to the means of the model's application in rural areas, or if indeed it can be applied in rural areas.

Recent independent research into town centres in Wales, ‘Small Towns, Big Issues,’<sup>76</sup> reflects on the increasing interest in local compact settlements. In relation to Wales and living more locally, the research reported that “the language and direction of Welsh strategic documents suggest that the national vision incorporating sustainability and sociability shares many of these aspirations. In principle, the compact settlement with local services could be applied in towns and larger villages.”<sup>77</sup>

The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales also supports the idea of living locally through the implementation of 20 minute neighbourhoods in Wales commenting, they are “crucial to creating connected, low carbon and active communities.”<sup>78</sup>

In addressing the study question, it is important that we understand what Moreno’s principles could mean in a rural context. For example, the daily requirements of rural communities may differ, in terms of both the material requirements and the scale, to the requirements of more urban communities. Access to green open space, good air quality, places for local food production etc. might be important daily factors in urban areas. In contrast, proximity, travelling time, connected places, together with access to services and social contact etc. might be more familiar daily challenges facing rural communities.

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<sup>73</sup> Planning Aid Wales; Introducing Place Plans. [Introducing Place Plans](#)

<sup>74</sup> TED: Ideas worth spreading. [TED: Ideas worth spreading](#)

<sup>75</sup> Example: [20 Minute Neighbourhood | Scottish Rural Action \(sra.scot\)](#)

<sup>76</sup> Foundational Economy Research (2021) Small Towns, Big Issues. June. [Small Towns, Big Issues: independent research report \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>77</sup> Foundational Economy Research (2021) Small Towns, Big Issues. June. [Small Towns, Big Issues: independent research report \(gov.wales\)](#) pg12

<sup>78</sup> Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. (2020) Climate Week: How 20 minute neighbourhoods can help us fight the climate emergency. [Climate Week: How 20-minute neighbourhoods can help us fight the Climate Emergency and save our towns and cities – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

- **Ecology** – The principle of ecology might address the need for increased biodiversity and habitats, with access to open green space and improved air quality. Meeting the long term aims of the sustainable management of natural resources, set out in the SoNaRR report<sup>79</sup> or more specifically addressing issues set out in Area Statements,<sup>80</sup> or working towards the required targets in relation to the level of phosphate in local watercourses.<sup>81</sup>
- **Proximity** – While proximity is an important aspect of living locally in rural Wales, it must be recognised as just one interconnected element alongside others and should not be the sole focus.

The principle of proximity in rural areas might be equally thought of as ‘connectivity’, whereby the consideration is how well-connected rural communities are to daily requirements rather than their proximity i.e. number of minutes from daily requirements.

Equally, for rural areas the principle of proximity could be flipped to mean bringing goods, services activities etc. to rural communities by other sustainable, innovative means. For example, the Village Agents scheme which works closely with, “Parish Councillors, Community Nurses, Police Community Support Officers, social group organisers, transport providers, religious groups etc.”<sup>82</sup> creating innovative ways to bring services to rural people.

- **Solidarity** – Rural communities can face both social and economic challenges, ranging from isolation, exclusion, poverty or a lack of access to services and employment etc. The principle of solidarity has direct links to the national goal set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 of more “cohesive communities”<sup>83</sup> in Wales and therefore local authorities will need to identify how planning for more cohesive communities is being delivered and embedded.
- **Participation** – While the principle of participation has strong links with the planning process at a local level, through the development plan and development management processes, there are also important links to be made with the Ways of Working<sup>84</sup>, set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Involvement is one of the five ways of working.

## Benefits and challenges of living locally

### Benefits

The benefits of living locally have been well documented. The concept encourages a holistic approach to maximising sustainability, health and well-being benefits. Many of the benefits are interconnected and have a knock-on effect, influencing other factors.

<sup>79</sup> Natural Resources Wales (2020) The Second State of Natural Resources Report. December. [SoNaRR2020 Executive Summary \(cyfoethnaturiol.cymru\)](#)

<sup>80</sup> Natural Resources Wales. Area Statements. [Natural Resources Wales / Area Statements](#)

<sup>81</sup> Natural Resources Wales (2021) Tighter phosphate targets change our view of the state of Welsh Rivers. January. [Natural Resources Wales / Tighter phosphate targets change our view of the state of Welsh rivers](#)

<sup>82</sup> Village Agents. [gloucs-village-agents.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>83</sup> Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. Cohesive communities. [Cohesive-Wales-Topic-1.pdf \(futuregenerations.wales\)](#)

<sup>84</sup> Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. Ways of working. Available here [The 5 ways of working – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

Reducing the need to travel is central to the concept of living locally, providing environmental gains and in turn supporting wider, linked agendas including decarbonisation, air quality, ecology and health. The RTPI's Net Zero Transport study advocates the 15 minute neighbourhood model as "one of the foundations upon which net zero transport networks can be built,"<sup>85</sup> supported by improved connections between places and strengthening the local economy.

The principles of solidarity and participation encourages community engagement within a local area, improving community ownership, social cohesion and allowing for cultural distinctiveness, for example in some communities in Wales the Welsh language would be an important factor in living locally.

## Challenges

The different challenges experienced in implementing the concept are discussed in various literature and summarised below:

- **Implementation and impact** – While there is support for the concept of living locally, there is equally some concern that the idea of the 15 minute neighbourhood could lead to "increased marginalisation of disadvantaged neighbourhoods"<sup>86</sup>. Moreno believes this can be addressed in an urban context, by concentrating on those disadvantaged areas at the outset.

In a rural context there are many complexities and interlinked issues, from a planning perspective. Understanding these issues and impacts and maintaining a flexible and inclusive approach, adapting to different places and situations is vital.

- **Cross sector and departmental working** - The need for improved collaborative working, both across sectors and within local government departments, to achieve a more co-ordinated approach and delivery of outcomes.
- **Capacity and skills** - The RTPI's Place Based Approaches to Climate Change<sup>87</sup> suggests that while there are significant opportunities for joint working between planning officers and climate and sustainability colleagues, there is also a resourcing and skills gap within the planning profession that needs to be addressed so planners can play a leading role in the place-based response to the climate and ecological emergency from within local authorities.
- **Strong local policy framework** - Setting a clear inclusive vision and with 'buy in' from all stakeholders, including developers, communities etc.
- **Disruption** - The Covid-19 pandemic has shown the importance of being prepared for disruption. In a rural area this might be because of local circumstances, such as an ageing population, a rise in second home ownership, changes to local school catchment areas etc. or broader issues such as resilience to climate change.

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<sup>85</sup> RTPI (2021) Net Zero Transport. January. Available here <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/june/net-zero-transport-the-role-of-spatial-planning-and-place-based-solutions/> pg18

<sup>86</sup> TRT World (2021) The 15 minute city brings the Obel Award to scientist Carlos Moreno. October. [The '15-minute city' brings the Obel Award to scientist Carlos Moreno \(trtworld.com\)](https://www.trtworld.com/news/the-15-minute-city-brings-the-obel-award-to-scientist-carlos-moreno/)

<sup>87</sup> RTPI (2021) Place based approaches to climate change. March. [RTPI | Place-Based Approaches to Climate Change](https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2021/march/place-based-approaches-to-climate-change/)

- **Engagement and involvement** - Local initiatives etc must involve the local community from the outset. Different generations experience rural areas very differently and it is therefore important that engagement is inclusive, reaching out to all members of the community. “Getting people to shape their future communities and addressing multiple challenges, including connectivity and access to services through placemaking”<sup>88</sup> was a challenge also recognised by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

Town and Community Councils are important stakeholders in this regard and are a potential resource. The sector is well placed to be actively involved in Place Plans and community engagement but requires some guidance and support.

- **Behaviour change** - “Behavioural attachment to cars, and the idea that streets and roads are primarily for the movement and storage of vehicles, is perhaps the most intractable barrier to delivering place-based solutions to decarbonisation.”<sup>89</sup>

Welsh Government’s Active Travel Act Guidance<sup>90</sup> recognises the need for a behaviour change to encourage a modal shift. For some, thinking locally in terms of accessing goods and services will also require a behaviour change, given the relative ease goods and services can be purchased online and distributed regionally, nationally or even internationally.

“Policymakers have realised that just because an individual has the intention to change, this may not actually result in adaptations to their behaviour”<sup>91</sup>. The Wales Centre for Behaviour Change has recognised that many people often have “sustainable intentions”<sup>92</sup> but few keep up new behaviours in the longer term.

- **Investment and viability** - “Crucially, local living, active travel and zero emissions modes need to be accessible and cost competitive for providers and travellers. There are currently multiple cost and accessibility barriers that limit the scope for significant mode shift,”<sup>93</sup> these include, the viability of local services; the disconnected nature of active and public transport when balanced against convenience and sometimes cost; the cost of upgrading the electricity transmission grid and installing the necessary charging infrastructure. Community facilities, services or transport infrastructure in rural areas can often be impacted by viability issues, due to the population being spread over a wider area and therefore making a project less viable.

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<sup>88</sup> Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. People shaping their future communities. [Case-studies New template \(futuregenerations.wales\)](#)

<sup>89</sup> RTPI (2021) Overcoming Barriers to Net Zero. January. [RTPI - Overcoming Barriers to Net Zero Transport](#) pg13

<sup>90</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Active Travel Guidance. July. [Active Travel Act guidance | GOV.WALES](#) pg 59

<sup>91</sup> Wales Centre for Behaviour Change. [Aims & Mission | Wales Centre for Behaviour Change | Bangor University](#)

<sup>92</sup> Wales Centre for Behaviour Change. [Aims & Mission | Wales Centre for Behaviour Change | Bangor University](#)

<sup>93</sup> RTPI (2021) Overcoming Barriers to Net Zero. January. [RTPI - Overcoming Barriers to Net Zero Transport](#) pg12

# The role of the planning system in supporting living locally

“Sustainable Places are the goal of the land use planning system in Wales”.<sup>94</sup>

## Outcomes and impacts of planning

Breaking down Moreno’s basic principles of living locally and considering a long term, successful approach to implementing the living locally model in rural areas, it is important to recognise the aspects of this model over which planning has a direct influence, as well as those aspects which are not often directly related to planning.

Planning contributes directly to the provision of housing, employment, education etc and contributes indirectly to many wider outcomes such as happiness and health<sup>95</sup> etc. Without effective planning systems, many of these benefits would not be captured, affecting the quality of life for residents.”<sup>96</sup> The planning system is vital in promoting and shaping place quality, value and sustainability and in this regard.

The RTPI Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes Research<sup>97</sup> stresses the importance of planning working collaboratively “with other agencies and sectors, to align strategic goals, indicators and investment priorities”<sup>98</sup> to achieve meaningful impact.

“The planning system can be used to influence the provision of new services in areas where current provision is poor, particularly in more rural areas.”<sup>99</sup>

## Placemaking and living locally

The Placemaking Wales Charter<sup>100</sup> has been developed by Welsh Government, the Design Commission for Wales<sup>101</sup> and the Placemaking Wales Partnership. It aims to build on the increasing focus and importance of placemaking in policy and practice in Wales. The Charter promotes local community involvement, sustainable transport modes, well designed streets and public spaces to encourage social interaction, reducing the need to travel and encouraging mix use spaces that support all communities.

The placemaking principles in the Charter, arguably resonate well with the principles of living locally. The placemaking principles set out the components for good places and if followed, would shape developments which in turn meet the principles of living locally.

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<sup>94</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Planning Policy Wales Ed11. February. [Planning Policy Wales - Edition 11 \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/planning-policy-wales-edition-11) pg12

<sup>95</sup> RTPI (2020) Measuring What Matters. November. [Measuring What Matters \(rtpi.org.uk\)](https://www.rtpi.org.uk/measuring-what-matters)

<sup>96</sup> RTPI (2020) Invest and Prosper. October. [RTPI | Invest and Prosper](https://www.rtpi.org.uk/invest-and-prosper) pg4

<sup>97</sup> RTPI (2020) Measuring What Matters. November. [Measuring What Matters \(rtpi.org.uk\)](https://www.rtpi.org.uk/measuring-what-matters)

<sup>98</sup> RTPI (2020) Measuring What Matters. November. [Measuring What Matters \(rtpi.org.uk\)](https://www.rtpi.org.uk/measuring-what-matters) pg7

<sup>99</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Building Better Places. July. [Building Better Places: The Planning System delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures - placemaking and the Covid-19 recovery \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/building-better-places-the-planning-system-delivering-resilient-and-brighter-futures-placemaking-and-the-covid-19-recovery) pg19

<sup>100</sup> Wales Placemaking Charter. [Placemaking Charter - Design Commission for Wales \(dcfw.org\)](https://www.dcfw.org/placemaking-charter)

<sup>101</sup> [Home - Design Commission for Wales \(dcfw.org\)](https://www.dcfw.org/home)

<b>Moreno's 15 minute neighbourhood principles</b>	<b>Placemaking Wales Charter principles</b>
Ecology	Public Realm Identity
Proximity	Location Movement Mix of Uses
Solidarity	People and Community Location Identity
Participation	People and Community Identity

“The placemaking principles fit well with the general concept of living more sustainably and locally in rural areas. The location of development and how rural places are connected are key if we are to move away from car dependency in line with climate action. However, the challenges of connectivity and access to services in rural areas are more acute than in our towns and cities where there is a higher population density. Investment is needed to support cross sector, partnership working to explore new ideas and achieve more sustainable places in the future.”<sup>102</sup>

### **Measuring living locally**

“Planners have a role beyond the statutory processes to engage with the implementation of plans to ensure that the national placemaking outcomes are achieved in practice. The skills planners possess can help make change occur.”<sup>103</sup>

In considering the principles and features of living locally, it is important to be clear how we monitor and measure implementation and success. How do we know if we are achieving successful rural local living?

“Performance assessments historically have tended to be narrowly centred on process metrics such as the speed of processing applications, the number of consents given and the amount of housing units delivered. However, if we are seeking better quality placemaking outcomes this will require a change in how we measure performance.”<sup>104</sup>

The Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes Research<sup>105</sup> published in 2020 by the RTPI provides a toolkit to support moving towards an outcomes-based approach to measuring planning performance. The move away from a system of measuring process and speed to a more holistic outcomes and impact-based approach is widely accepted to be complex. However, it is equally recognised as “essential to determine whether and how the potential wider benefits of planning are

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Jen Heal, Design Advisor, Design Commission for Wales (October 2021)

<sup>103</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Building Better Places. July. [Building Better Places: The Planning System delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures - placemaking and the Covid-19 recovery \(gov.wales\)](#) pg5

<sup>104</sup> RTPI (2021) 20 Minute Neighbourhoods. March. [Plan The World We Need \(rtpi.org.uk\)](#) pg10

<sup>105</sup> RTPI (2020) Measuring What Matters. November. [Measuring What Matters \(rtpi.org.uk\)](#)

being realised,<sup>106</sup> with the aim of better connecting policy, decision-making and quality of outcomes across social, economic and environmental contexts.

Planning Policy Wales edition 11<sup>107</sup> defines a series of National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes, which set out what a ‘sustainable place’ is, requiring plans or proposals to be assessed against them. “The National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes provide a framework which contains those factors which are considered to be the optimal outcome of development plans and individual developments.”<sup>108</sup> Some of the outcomes are directly relevant to living locally in rural areas, such as “resilient to climate change”; “not car dependent”; “minimises the need to travel”; “has good connections”; “promotes physical and mental health and well-being”; “has community-based facilities and services”; and could assist in the consideration of measuring the impact and outcomes of living locally in rural areas.

Well-being indicators<sup>109</sup> show progress against the well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. These fit well with the principles and features of living locally, for example: being able to influence local decisions (indicator 23); ability to access facilities and services (indicator 24); satisfaction with place (indicator 26); belonging to an area (indicator 27) and the health of local ecosystems (indicator 43).

In relation to measuring living locally outcomes, indicators could be derived from the original four guiding principles, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to different communities, with input from those communities. The importance of “relevant, transparent and robust evidence base and indicators for monitoring purposes, which are continuously kept up to date”<sup>110</sup> are discussed in the RTPI’s Implementing 20 Minute Neighbourhoods in Planning Policy and Practice<sup>111</sup> for Scotland.

## **The role of Place Plans**

Place Plans were introduced by Welsh Government to encourage local community engagement in the planning process and decision making.

Interest and enthusiasm in Place Plans continue to grow with a number of rural communities progressing Place Plans, which could be adopted by the local planning authorities as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Place Plans provide the opportunity to address a wide range of local place-based topics that have a direct relevance to local living. However, the process and preparation of Place Plans can take up to three years. Consequently, the challenges, commitment and resources required must be understood at the outset.

It is widely recognised that Place Plans are not appropriate for all communities, but they can be a useful tool for those that wish to pursue this route. While there is currently no systematic recording

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<sup>106</sup> RTPI (2020) More effective way to measure the impact of planning. November. [RTPI | More effective way to measure impact of planning published by RTPI](#)

<sup>107</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Planning Policy Wales Ed11. February. [Planning Policy Wales - Edition 11 \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>108</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Planning Policy Wales Ed11. February. [Planning Policy Wales - Edition 11 \(gov.wales\)](#) pg16

<sup>109</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Wellbeing of Wales: National Indicators. September. [Wellbeing of Wales: national indicators | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>110</sup> RTPI (2021) 20 Minute Neighbourhoods. March. [Plan The World We Need \(rtpi.org.uk\)](#) pg7

<sup>111</sup> RTPI (2021) 20 Minute Neighbourhoods. March. [Plan The World We Need \(rtpi.org.uk\)](#)

of Place Plans across Wales, it is estimated that fewer than twenty Place Plans are adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance throughout Wales.

Planning has a number of tools to support community engagement and participation in addition to Place Plans, including online engagement tools such as [PlacePlans.org.uk](https://placeplans.org.uk)<sup>112</sup> and Shape My Town etc.<sup>113</sup>.

“While there is growing support for Place Plans<sup>114</sup> across Wales, capacity and capability (skills) should be improved to enable stakeholders to properly commit to and support effective Place Planning.

“Partnership working is key, particularly between communities and local planning authorities and this requires resources and support to ensure a successful, collaborative process with meaningful community engagement and achievable outcomes.

“The sharing of resources across local planning authorities, Town and Community Councils and other organisations could help. This is particularly the case in rural areas where connected communities are a key issue for Local Development Plans and many Place Plans.”<sup>115</sup>

### **Initiatives and investment**

Planning policy seeks to protect the countryside from inappropriate and unjustified development, instead directing growth towards more sustainable, well-connected settlements, accessible by public transport.

It is therefore unlikely that rural areas would have a level of growth where Section 106 contributions can be sought to provide comprehensive new infrastructure. Whilst small scale developments may be acceptable in rural locations, the level of Section 106 has to be proportionate to the scale of development. However, the proactive use of Travel Plans, and their implementation by condition or Section 106 agreement, could bring forward opportunities and encourage more interconnected mobility in the longer term.

The most recent Active Travel Guidance<sup>116</sup> supports a flexible approach to mapping active travel routes in rural settlements for the next generation of Active Travel Network Maps, which are currently being produced by local authorities. This allows local authorities to propose and map routes that extend beyond designated settlement boundaries and connect to other settlements where there may be employment and services that could be accessed by active modes of transport.

Opportunities such as co-working spaces and maximising the use of village halls as meeting spaces, pop-up shops and services etc. may also be a sustainable solution for some rural areas following the pandemic, taking into account Welsh Government’s working from home ambitions<sup>117</sup> and net zero targets<sup>118</sup>. Alternative approaches such as walking buses, car sharing initiatives, and

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<sup>112</sup> Planning Aid Wales; Place Plans. [Splash \(placeplans.org.uk\)](https://placeplans.org.uk)

<sup>113</sup> Shape my Town. [Making a Plan for your Place — Shape My Town](#)

<sup>114</sup> Planning Aid Wales; Place Plan Support. [Place Plan support – Planning Aid Wales](#)

<sup>115</sup> Interview with James Davies, Chief Executive, Planning Aid Wales (October 2021)

<sup>116</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Active Travel Guidance. July. [Active Travel Act guidance | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>117</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Aim for 30% of the Welsh workforce to work remotely. September. [Aim for 30% of the Welsh workforce to work remotely | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>118</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Net Zero Wales. October. [Net Zero Wales | GOV.WALES](#)

community transport, may be solutions to overcome some of the issues in a more cost effective, albeit in a more informal way, that relies on volunteers.

### Local planning authority resources

A well-resourced, plan-led, positive planning service offers an established and effective process to support a sustainable future for Wales. However, the service is under particular pressure and scrutiny, with specialist resources under particular strain.

While the planning system has tools available to support sustainable rural communities, the best of tools requires adequate resources to deliver the best outcomes. Research by Aberystwyth University found, “Revenue Support Grant (RSG) payments to the nine rural local authorities fell by an average of 3.3 per cent between 2010-11 and 2019-20, compared with an average 2.25 per cent increase in RSG payments to other local authorities in Wales”.<sup>119</sup>

Effective service delivery becomes a challenge with reduced resources and capacity. For example, the RTPI’s Implementing 20 Minute Neighbourhoods in Planning Policy and Practice<sup>120</sup> in Scotland suggests that pre-application consultation could play a role in helping to support local living, however, adequate resourcing of the service is required to implement this effectively and as part of a bigger picture.

## Case Studies

The RTPI research suggests that “an array of interventions need considering to support the implementation of 20 minute neighbourhoods.”<sup>121</sup> The following case studies have been selected from within those authority areas classed as rural and forming the Welsh Local Government Association Rural Forum. The case studies set out initiatives that support living locally in rural Wales and align with Moreno’s principles.

### **Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn Place Plan**

Newtown is a market town and Llanllwchaiarn is a smaller settlement on the outskirts of Newtown in Powys.

The Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn Place Plan aims to put local people at the heart of the plan, and the centre of the planning process, to identify areas for future investment and provide a local evidence base on which to make decisions.

“Though starting out as something concerned only with land use and the built environment, the Plan has an expanded scope, taking in ‘health, wealth, and well-being’ so that it reflects the community’s wider aspirations and intentions. Throughout the process the community has developed a sense of place and provided evidence of its own depth and breadth of community assets.”<sup>122</sup>

[Newtown & Llanllwchaiarn Place Plan : Newtown](#)

<sup>119</sup> Woods, M., Heley, J., Goodwin-Hawkins, B., & Howells, H. (2021). A Rural Vision for Wales: The Evidence Report. [Evidence Report English .pdf \(aber.ac.uk\)](#) pg36

<sup>120</sup> RTPI (2021) 20 Minute Neighbourhoods. March. [Plan The World We Need \(rtpi.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>121</sup> RTPI (2021) 20 Minute Neighbourhoods. March. [Plan The World We Need \(rtpi.org.uk\)](#) pg4

<sup>122</sup> Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn Place Plan. [Newtown-Place-Plan-V5-Adopted-26.7.21.pdf](#) Foreword.

## **Llangors Community Shop**

The village of Llangors is part of a rural community in Powys, 6 miles from Brecon and 15 miles from Abergavenny. Llangors is the largest of six villages that are located around Llangors Lake.

The last of several shops in Llangors closed in 2005. Two villages, each about 4 miles from Llangors have small shops but villagers now have to travel by car or taxi to reach the nearest large supermarkets in Brecon or Abergavenny. There was no bus service through Llangors, until recently. There is now a twice weekly service to Abergavenny, but no service is available to Brecon, the nearest town. Most village households shop using their own car, but there are a small percentage of villagers without access to a car, many of whom are elderly. There are delivery services from the larger supermarkets, but few villagers do their grocery shopping online, with the majority still preferring to visit the local shops and supermarkets in person.

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 places Llangors among the 10% most deprived local areas for access to services.

The Llangors Community Shop project was launched in June 2019. The objectives established for the shop include: generating sufficient turnover to sustain the business by year 3, to reduce the average 'food mile' round trip from 12 miles to 4 miles; to maintain a team of 60 volunteers willing to staff the shop and to support quality local suppliers within a 30-mile radius.

A Community Benefit Society has been established to own and operate the shop allowing residents who purchase its shares to control how the enterprise is run.

The building has been constructed using two donated pre used portacabins with a newly installed over-roof and boundary walls to add insulation and improve appearance. In addition to the convenience store the building provides a small coffee shop, a store room and an accessible toilet.

Planning permission and building control approval were obtained as a necessary precursor to raising the project's funding. Successful applications were made to the National Lottery Community Fund, the Prince's Countryside Fund, The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Sustainable Development Fund and Brecon Rotary Community Chest. Other funding was raised through the sales of shares in the Community Benefit Society and a crowdfunding campaign in the early days of the project. The project has been supported by the Llangors Community Council and received much help and encouragement from the Youth and Community Centre which is itself a community project.

The community shop will open early in 2022.

Further information on Llangors Community Shop can be found [here](#).

Significant research and analysis was carried out at the outset of the project to determine the level of need and the potential viability of a volunteer supported shop, including [an analysis of the best location of the shop](#) and [a survey with local residents](#).

## **Yr Wyddfa Partnership: Local Parking and Transport Review**

Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) is the most visited mountain in the UK, attracting around 500,000 visitors each year, not only from Wales, but from across the UK and overseas. Beyond the mountain itself, there are a number of smaller settlements within the Snowdonia National Park which also attract a large number of visitors themselves.

The Yr Wyddfa Partnership is a group of stakeholders that together implement a management plan for the mountain. Driven by the need to address parking, traffic, pollution and noise, primarily from tourism, but also in response to local community transport needs and provisions, the Partnership has led a Local Parking and Transport Review.

The Review found that “the current over-reliance on cars to access key honeypot sites and the chronic parking problem at busier times of the year is failing the National Park’s core purposes. It also means that local communities and the local economy suffer negative impacts associated with visitor levels, whilst not receiving as much benefits as they could.”<sup>123</sup>

The Partnership recognises the importance of focusing on the area holistically, not just local ‘honeypots’. Following a community master-planning exercise, gateway villages have been identified and communities are working together to build their agendas for the future of their communities. This might include, better connections between villages, encouraging young people to stay or return to their local area with the increase of new tourism related jobs etc.

The Transport Strategy for the future of Yr Wyddfa and the surrounding area has the local communities at its very heart and residents are taking an active, lead role in shaping their communities. The Strategy identifies various transport initiatives over the short and longer terms and it is proposed that locals will benefit from free or significantly reduced public transport fares, bus time tables built around local people accessing employment and other daily activities, zero carbon buses, walking, cycling and shuttle bus provision, along with visitor access passes to encourage the use of local businesses.

“The Partnership is aware that tourism can be challenging and confronting for local communities and it is therefore widely accepted that a transport strategy for the future is needed. In bringing about such a significant change it is important to identify and understanding the local dynamics and the correct issues and their implications, then influence for the better - but this must be approached from a local level with the local communities actively engaged throughout the process.

“A good communications campaign will be key to ensuring the success of the Strategy. It will be supported by a one stop shop, with online apps to direct visitors to local businesses etc. The goal is to improve public transport and offer a high quality, reliable, zero carbon shuttle bus service which will ensure that people are happy to leave their cars behind.

“The Partnership are working closely with Welsh Government through Transport for Wales to ensure that the plans sync with the wider aspirations for North Wales.” Angela Jones, Partnerships Manager, Snowdonia National Park Authority.

[Home — Partneriaeth Yr Wyddfa \(snowdonpartnership.co.uk\)](http://snowdonpartnership.co.uk)

<sup>123</sup> Paertneriaeth Yr Wyddfa. [Parking and transport — Partneriaeth Yr Wyddfa \(snowdonpartnership.co.uk\)](http://snowdonpartnership.co.uk)

### **Brecon Beacons National Park Authority: LDP2 Preferred Strategy (revisited).**

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic set out a clear need for the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority to revisit the Preferred Strategy phase of their Local Development Plan (LDP) 2.

The pandemic raised some fundamental issues for the National Park's Planning Team around health, well-being and social imbalances; the economic resilience of town centres and rural areas; access to services, including transport and digital connectivity; the value of the Parks natural resources and the need to strive to meet climate and environmental targets etc.

These issues were echoed in the drive to 'build back better' post pandemic and resulted in the National Park revisiting their Preferred Strategy.

The revised document sets out the social, economic and environmental evidence that is driving the shift in policy and sets out a number of proposals, one of which is to work with all communities across the National Park, using Place Planning to help address key issues in their area. The aim is to create 20 minute neighbourhoods across the National Park.

“LDP2 will seek to ensure that we distribute new development to support our principal towns to be true 20 minute towns. This will mean that we will need to work closely with our partners in transport, town centre regeneration and housing provision in Powys County Council to ensure that we are all contributing to this vital aim. Outside of our towns our villages face real challenges to become 20 minute neighbourhoods. The rural nature of the National Parks settlements means that there is significant reliance on the private car to access goods and services. Some Settlements have no services and facilities within the community. Our aim here will be to use Place Planning to work with communities to help them develop into 20 neighbourhoods.”<sup>124</sup>

“The key elements needed for 20 minute neighbourhoods to work in more remote rural areas, such as the National Park is strong partnership working, with local communities fully engaged throughout the process; sustainable transport infrastructure, including safe active travel provision where appropriate; and strong, collaborative place planning. Commitment and effort from all sectors, communities and stakeholders is key to achieving positive sustainable places.” Helen Lucocq, Strategy and Policy Manager, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

[Preferred-Strategy-Revisited-for-uploading.pdf \(beacons-npa.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Thrive Platform: Addressing rural transport, loneliness and isolation**

Working with Box Clever Digital and the Bridges Community Car Scheme, Monmouthshire County Council are working to develop the 'Thrive Platform'.

The Thrive Platform is targeted at solving rural transportation issues alongside isolation and loneliness.

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<sup>124</sup> Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (2020) Preferred Strategy revisited. [Preferred-Strategy-Revisited-for-uploading.pdf \(beacons-npa.gov.uk\)](#)

Thrive is a new online platform that can match those requiring transport with suitable volunteer drivers in rural areas. The Platform seeks to minimise the risk of digital exclusion among older people and those in more isolated rural areas with limited connectivity by including two co-ordinator positions as points of contact for the platform, to ensure those unable to access the online platform can still use the service. While the service offers individual trips to access goods and services it can also incorporate opportunities for groups to meet and socialise, linking with the Grass Routes Community Transport service.

Thrive can demonstrate smart features which support the post-Covid response more intelligently. For example, journeys can be limited to only those starting or ending at a healthcare location; the platform can maintain a low occupancy rate of people from different households but can allow an increased occupancy from people from the same home address; there is also the potential to link the platform to Track & Trace.

The partnership is close to the stage of trialling the system for usability and practicality.

[Government uses innovative tech companies to tackle rural isolation and loneliness - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-uses-innovative-tech-companies-to-tackle-rural-isolation-and-loneliness)

### **E-Move: E-bike Loan Scheme in Rhyl**

E-Move is a Sustrans and Welsh Government project that offers an electric cycle loan scheme, currently being piloted in a number of towns across Wales with the aim of offering a healthy and sustainable way to travel.

The project's Liveable Cities and Towns Project Officer works to establish collaborations with existing community organisations.

In Rhyl momentum quickly started to build and more eBikes are being loaned out. E-Move is working in collaboration with The Foryd Centre, a charity in the heart of Rhyl offering a food bank, affordable cooked meals, benefits advice, job seekers advice, IT services, community transport and soon-to-be community bakery. Two eBikes have been placed within the centre and staff help to promote the E-Move Project as well as identifying the most suitable beneficiaries.

The Salvation Army Employment Plus are making use of the eBikes to help people with mobility/transport issues to access interviews and work.

Rhyl Rugby Club has recently built a new cycle store and repair station to encourage and facilitate staff and members to travel by bike and plans are underway to commission a green-roof bike store to be built in the courtyard of the co-working hub.

The project is working with the local authority to develop safe cycle storage infrastructure throughout the town, which aims to remove one of the main barriers to people cycling and participating in the E-Move scheme.

Options to support the E-Move legacy, once the project comes to an end are currently being discussed. This includes seeking funding options to purchase a permanent base for the eBike fleet, as well as a small workshop facility to help maintain the eBikes and establishing an on-line focus group for family cycling.

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/projects/2021/wales/e-move-piloting-e-bike-and-e-cargo-bike-loans-in-wales>

# Findings

Can the 15 minute neighbourhood principles be applied in rural Wales to achieve more sustainable rural places? If so, how can the planning system support living more locally in rural areas in Wales?

Living locally in a rural Wales context raises many complexities and interlinked issues, from a planning perspective. Understanding these issues and impacts and maintaining a flexible and inclusive approach, adapting to different places and situations is vital.

The 15 minute neighbourhood (or living locally) principles and features resonate well with the provisions set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the rural policy framework set out in Future Wales: The National Plan and Planning Policy Wales, along with Well-being Indicators, the National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes and Placemaking Principles. The model itself is a useful tool in re-enforcing a local focus in planning policy and decision making. For example, improving digital connectivity, online skills and ways of working, should be developed around supporting local areas, with less need to travel, rather than accessing goods and services further afield. Providing local services to people in innovative, sustainable ways.

While the benefits of living locally are clear and well understood, there are substantial challenges and complexities surrounding the concept's implementation in rural areas. Throughout this study, discussions around applying the principles of living locally in rural areas remained thought provoking and recognised the many challenges, including around implementation and outcomes, yet discussions remained positive.

More in depth discussion around the original principles of the 15 minute neighbourhood (ecology, proximity, solidarity and participation) raised the need for flexibility in these principles. When considered in a rural context, for example, some rural communities might require the addition of a further principle to specifically address 'Local Productivity and Enterprise'. This might relate to agricultural diversification or support for local business to cater for the needs of the local community etc.

The case studies show how the principles can be reflected through practice initiatives on the ground. While each of the case studies set out in this report focus on very different elements of rural living, the importance of community involvement and ownership is a common theme running through each case study from conception to delivery. This aligns with key messages in the literature review in relation to the need for people to feel involved in their communities.

The adaptable nature of the concept of living locally means it can evolve to suit the individual place, taking into account the local context and what makes it distinctive etc. The principles and approach would need to remain flexible for different contexts and localities.

The key issues identified for Wales set out a number of connected and interrelated issues. The reality varies for different places based on many influencing factors. A holistic approach supported by planners, other service delivery partners and local communities, with specialist knowledge and skills, is vital. There are several planning tools that can support living more locally including Place Plans and planning engagement tools. They will not suit or necessarily be needed by all communities, but the key is to integrate inclusive and meaningful engagement within and throughout the process.

As the planning system moves towards a more outcome focused measurement of performance, local planning authorities could work towards quantifying and measuring the success of local living on the ground and striving for continuous improvement. However, a significant behavioural change is likely to be required to support local projects or interventions. Strong communication along with active participation and ownership, by the local community is necessary, with a view to achieving longer term goals and behaviour change.

Creativity, partnership working, funding, flexibility and understanding of the issues and impacts, along with a holistic approach will all be important factors in working towards more local living. In relation to planning, the elements of living locally in rural areas might include, but are not limited to:

- Continuing to focus housing development within established, well connected communities;
- Developing digital infrastructure to support local productivity, services, enterprise and communities;
- Improving sustainable and inclusive local bus and rail services;
- Investing in active travel networks where suitable which provide connectivity to centres of services and public transport hubs; and
- Encourage investment and creative initiatives which focus support services in accessible centres, including post offices, banking services, community and public services.

## Recommendations

The following steps could be further explored by stakeholders including the RTPI to further support the application of the living locally concept in rural Wales, which would in turn support the delivery of placemaking, sustainable communities and climate action with backing from the planning system:

- Retain and strengthen national, regional and local planning policy which promotes the principles of living locally to deliver sustainable development outcomes.
- Move the planning system to a more outcome focused performance measurement to support the delivery of sustainable places on the ground.
- Funding pressures have had a significant impact on rural local authorities and service provision in rural areas. There is a strong case for Welsh Government to be pro-active in encouraging and supporting local planning authorities in ensuring that these important services are adequately resourced.
- Support joint working involving planners, other partners, agencies and sectors, to align strategic goals, investment priorities and outcomes and indicators collaboratively, to facilitate meaningful impact.
- Digital and technological advancements should be developed around supporting local where possible, rather than a continued use of larger regional or national distribution centres for goods and services that require significant transportation and which by-passes local services and does not support the local economy. Planning has a role to play in supporting this wider local agenda through development planning and decision making.

- Further consideration and targeted funding for connecting rural locations to services and facilities. For example, exploring new or enhanced public rights of way / bridleways / cycleways etc. and improvements to public transport.
- Resource, training and support for local planning tools such as community led Place Plans, community engagement etc. Resources within communities, town and community councils and local planning authorities, would assist in improving understanding and provide the capability and capacity to support joined up working.
- The sharing of resources and good practice across rural authorities, similar to that which has taken place in relation to holiday homes and short term lets in Wales.
- Continued investigation, discussion and learning on how planning can support sustainable living in rural areas and the impacts and outcomes of living locally in rural Wales.

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