



RTPI Cymru

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2 December 2024

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to: Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional body for town planners in the UK and Europe and represents around 27,000 members in over 80 countries worldwide, with over 1300 members in Wales. The Institute has been shaping planning policy and raising professional standards for over 100 years and is the only body in the UK to confer Chartered status to planners, the highest professional qualification. The RTPI champions the power of planning in creating prosperous places and vibrant communities. Our ambition is to promote healthy, socially inclusive, economically and environmentally sustainable places.

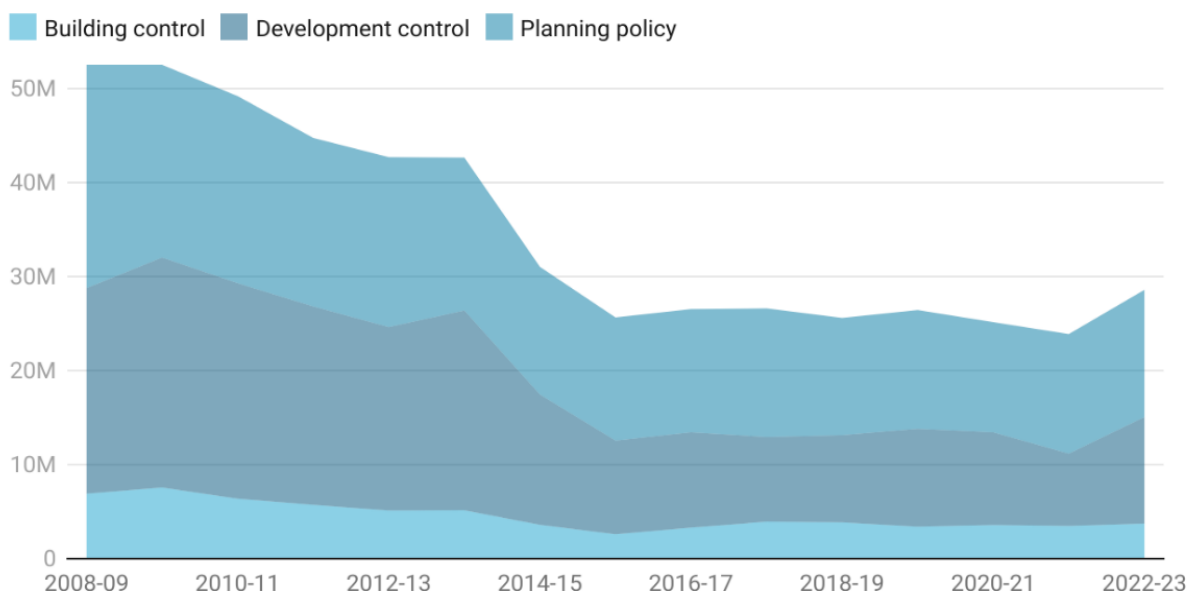
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Welsh Government Draft Budget for 2025-2026. Planning plays a key role in addressing the climate and nature emergencies, supporting green growth and the rapid transition to net zero carbon. "Good planning ensures the right development is put in the right place" (Future Wales: The National Plan 2024) which is vital to meeting ambitious targets and achieving a 'just transition'.

The planning system, if used effectively, can be a significant part of the solution to social, economic and environmental challenges, however, resourcing is a key challenge for planning and its supporting sectors and services.

Recent data collected for Wales by the RTPI shows, net expenditure on planning was cut by 50% from 2008 to 2021 in real terms, while the ambitious Planning (Wales) Act was introduced in 2015, putting high expectations on the planning system to implement policy and contribute to sustainable development (RTPI State of the Profession Report 2023 [Plan The World We Need](#))

Real net expenditure on planning in Wales was cut by over a third between 2008-09 and 2022-23

Based on the revenue outturn of Welsh local authorities on planning-related services. Adjusted to base inflation.



The inflation measure used for adjustment is the GDP deflator or base inflation, which is different from the CPI (headline inflation).

Chart: RTPI • Source: gov.wales • Created with Datawrapper

The RTPI has long called for the proper resourcing of planning services. It is essential that the strain planning and its supporting services and sectors, including the wider public sector is currently under is recognised in developing budget proposals, so that achieving ambitious policy and targets is realistic. Sufficient resourcing of public bodies and investment in key skills and specialisms for the longer term are all important aspects of meeting targets. This includes the adequate resourcing of Natural Resources Wales, Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) and the Welsh Government’s own Planning Directorate to enable it to support Local Planning Authorities, and ensure the policy aspirations of Welsh Government are understood and implemented.

A well-resourced, Plan-led, positive planning service can deliver Local Authority and Welsh Government objectives, which, if properly supported can bring together objectives across services and sectors.

While Wales benefits from a strong legislative and an evidence-based policy framework, the delivery and implementation of this into outcomes and impact on the ground has been slow to be realised. Adequately resourcing and supporting the planning system for the longer term would help to ensure that legislation and policy, including the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 along with the ambitions of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013,

the Environment (Wales) Act 2015 and Planning (Wales) Act 2015 is implemented as planned, and its delivery on the ground is not compromised.

Neither Welsh Government nor individual sectors have direct influence over many of the factors that contribute to achieving net zero. Collaborative efforts between stakeholders are required. However, given the strong policy context in Wales, Welsh Government is well positioned to provide a convening role in this joint working approach, to drive positive and proactive discussion and practice.

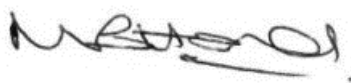
It is essential to make links between policy areas including planning, flooding, transport and connectivity and energy etc. if we are to address adaptation to climate change. The latest Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy (WIIS) 2021 makes progress in this area, including a section on placemaking. We very much hope this sets a standard for further integration, not only in relation to outcomes on the ground, but future iterations of the WIIS and all plans, strategies and levels of Government, including regional and local. Wales faces a number of issues such as geographic connectivity, grid infrastructure and investment which could be addressed in a proactive and joined up way, by bringing together relevant stakeholders to focus on key issues and challenges, providing evidence and supporting the transition. 'Future Wales: The National Plan 2040', emerging Strategic Development Plans, along with Corporate Joint Committees, and Local Authorities all have a role to play in addressing the spatial impacts of the transition to net zero.

Collaborative working across sectors needs to be supported and resourced with clear expectations and a common goal. For example, land use planning directly impacts on transport policies and vice versa. Yet there appears a disjointed approach to funding a modal shift, with the delivery of active travel routes encouraging non-car transport, while significant funding uncertainties for public transport results in fewer routes and increasing car usage.

On-going education and communication are required to support a wider behaviour change. The Wales Centre for Behaviour Change has recognised that many people often have “sustainable intentions”, but few keep up new behaviours in the longer term. “Policymakers have realised that just because an individual has the intention to change, this may not actually result in adaptations to their behaviour” ([Wales Centre for Behaviour Change | Bangor University](#))

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

Yours faithfully,



Mark Hand MRTPI
Director