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Research
Paper

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Measuring What Matters:

Planning Outcomes Toolkit for Wales



Scottish Government
 Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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An Roinn Tithíochta,
 Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
 Department of Housing,
 Local Government and Heritage



Oifig an
 Rialaitheora Pleanála
 Office of the
 Planning Regulator



Ministry of Housing,
 Communities &
 Local Government



Llywodraeth Cymru
 Welsh Government

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This is part of a suite of documents for the **Measuring What Matters Research**. This document on the Toolkit for Wales provides a contextualisation of how the toolkit would operate in Wales. The Handbook offers practical guidance alongside the excel sheets that provide the framework for implementing this new process of measurement. The full research report covers the research background, process and findings before presenting a practical toolkit that can be used to begin the process of measuring the impact of planning.

1. Wales context and toolkit

1.1. The Wales context for measuring planning outcomes

The **Measuring What Matters**: Planning Outcomes toolkit in a Wales context is a mechanism to link national wellbeing goals and indicators, and national sustainable placemaking outcomes, with the review of local development plans.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015¹ defines a series of **goals**, linked to a definition of sustainable development, and sets out ways of working. Planning Policy Wales² aims to maximise contributions to these goals by (1) promoting the **concept of placemaking** and (2) defining a series of '**national sustainable placemaking outcomes**³'. Planning Policy Wales² translates the well-being goals and ways of working into the planning system. There is nevertheless a need to strengthen how national planning policy connects with the practices of local planning authorities.

The Welsh Government **planning performance framework** focuses principally on local planning authorities and on process and efficiency indicators. Local planning authorities also issue their own **Annual Monitoring Reports** as a means of evaluating the implementation of their local development plans. Reviews of the effectiveness of local planning authorities raise some important concerns about how well they are connecting with the well-being agenda and goals. There are also significant concerns about the capacity of local planning authorities to address this due to available resources. There has been work conducted in Wales in demonstrating **the value of planning** in Wales and this has attempted to align with the well-being goals.

1.2. Stakeholder expectations of using the toolkit in Wales

Stakeholders in Wales set out a series of expectations about a toolkit for measuring planning outcomes:

¹ Welsh Government, Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, <https://legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/contents/enacted>

² Welsh Government (December 2018), Planning Policy Wales, Edition 10

³ Welsh Government (December 2018), Planning Policy Wales, Edition 10, P.19

- The toolkit should align closely with the policy context in Wales, especially the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the sustainable placemaking outcomes in Planning Policy Wales.
- The toolkit should be used principally by local planning authorities and linked to the periodic review of Local Development Plans. The toolkit should also be capable of being used in preparing Strategic Development Plans as they come forward.
- The toolkit will have an important role in communicating the medium to long-term outcomes of planning activity to the wider public and external audiences.

1.3. Planning policy Wales

Planning Policy Wales edition 10 identifies itself as a means of delivering the vision set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The themes set out in the **Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes** toolkit provide opportunity to address the objective to move *‘towards a low carbon, resilient society, providing secure and well-paid jobs, and building well-connected environments for everyone in Wales that improves our lives and health and enhances our well-being’*.

Placemaking is defined in Planning Policy Wales as *‘a holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes⁴’*. The document defines a series of ‘national sustainable placemaking outcomes’. These are statements of what a ‘sustainable place’ is. For example, a sustainable place *‘makes best use of natural resources⁵’*. There are 37 stated national sustainable placemaking outcomes. These outcomes are organised in five categories.

⁴ Welsh Government (December 2018), Planning Policy Wales, Edition 10, P.16.

⁵ Welsh Government (December 2018), Planning Policy Wales, Edition 10, P.20

Planning Policy Wales states that plans or proposals should be assessed against the national sustainable placemaking outcomes (*'How must Planning Policy Wales be used?'⁶*). This is described as *'a key gateway test'⁶*. Planning Policy Wales recognises that *'Monitoring and learning from development outcomes so as to drive sustainable improvements in planning practice is also important'⁷*.

1.4. Planning performance framework

The **Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes** toolkit is designed to primarily assess substantive planning outcomes over the medium term. It does nevertheless include a theme on **'process + engagement'** that can capture some of the procedural activities and outcomes of the planning system.

The Welsh Government planning performance framework includes a 'traffic light'⁸ system of performance using the categories **'improve, fair and good.'** There are 19 indicators across five different categories, ranging from plan making to engagement and enforcement. Some of the indicators have associated targets. In summary:

- Most plan making indicators are procedural except for one on housing land supply figures.
- The efficiency indicators are focused on development management decision-making.
- The quality indicators are focused on the 'quality' of decisions as measured by varying forms of consistency of decisions (e.g. appeal decisions, costs awarded).
- The engagement indicators are expressed principally in the form of whether a service is provided by the local planning authority.
- The enforcement indicators are procedural and based on time taken for investigation and action.

⁶ Welsh Government (December 2018), Planning Policy Wales, Edition 10, P.22

⁷ Welsh Government (December 2018), Planning Policy Wales, Edition 10, P.6

⁸ Please refer to the Welsh Government (March 2018, March 2019), Planning performance framework table to view the traffic light system.

<https://gov.wales/planning-performance-framework-table-april-2018-march-2019>

The framework is essentially a system for indicating if a planning service is performing well or needs support. The **Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes Toolkit** performs a different role to the Planning Performance Framework. There may be some value in integrating the performance framework, the toolkit, and other measurement activities into one framework.

1.5. Local development plans and annual monitoring reports

The **Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes Toolkit** is designed to integrate with the existing activities carried out by local planning authorities in preparing Annual Monitoring Reports [AMRs] and engaging in plan review. Stakeholders were clear that planning outcomes are usually achieved over the medium to longer-term. In Wales, the toolkit is therefore best used as a mechanism for periodic review of planning outcomes rather than annual review.

The Monitoring Planning Outcomes Toolkit is best used in parallel with the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of a Local Development Plan. Sustainability Appraisal is principally a mechanism for use in plan preparation, yet can provide a useful foundation for measuring planning outcomes. The Local Development Plan Manual indicates setting around 12-20 objectives in the scoping stage of Sustainability Appraisal and that indicators and targets should be identified for each objective.

1.6. The Welsh language

'**A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language**' is one of the seven well-being goals for Wales. Enabling the Welsh Language to thrive is also one of the national sustainable placemaking outcomes set out in Planning Policy Wales. The application of the toolkit in Wales therefore needs to include measurement of planning outcomes related to the Welsh language. Two of the National Well-being Indicators for Wales also relate to the Welsh language (indicators 36 and 37).

1.7. Development of the toolkit in Wales

The **Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes** project has identified some useful lessons and opportunities for further embedding the toolkit in practice in Wales. The following steps could be explored to further support the identification and measurement of planning outcomes in Wales:

- Establishing a more direct relationship between planning, placemaking and the cluster of ‘place-based’ national well-being indicators, as well as the well-being goal of ‘**A Wales of Cohesive Communities**’.
- The development of a series of measures and indicators for each of the national sustainable placemaking outcomes set out in Planning Policy Wales. This will assist with developing these from evaluation criteria to measures of planning outcomes. Annex B of Planning Policy Wales could be developed with a suite of measures and indicators for the qualities of ‘a sustainable place’.
- An increased emphasis in the advice in the Welsh Government Local Development Plans Manual on the **evaluation** of planning **outcomes** rather than the **monitoring** of objectives, policies and proposals.
- Revision of advice and guidance to local planning authorities so that the wider range of themes linked to wellbeing are better promoted alongside a current focus on housing and the economy.
- The integration of several measurement frameworks - addressing performance, monetised value, planning outcomes, and local development plan monitoring – into one simplified framework.

1.8. Mapping of wellbeing goals and national sustainable placemaking outcomes to the toolkit

Planning Policy Wales edition 10 sets out five National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes:

1. Creating And Sustaining Communities
2. Growing Our Economy In A Sustainable Manner
3. Making Best Use Of Resources
4. Maximising Environmental Protection And Limiting Environmental Impact
5. Facilitating Accessible And Healthy Environments

These have been mapped onto the eight main themes of the toolkit to ensure the delivery of planning outcomes are in alignment with Welsh Government planning policy (see Figure 1 below.)

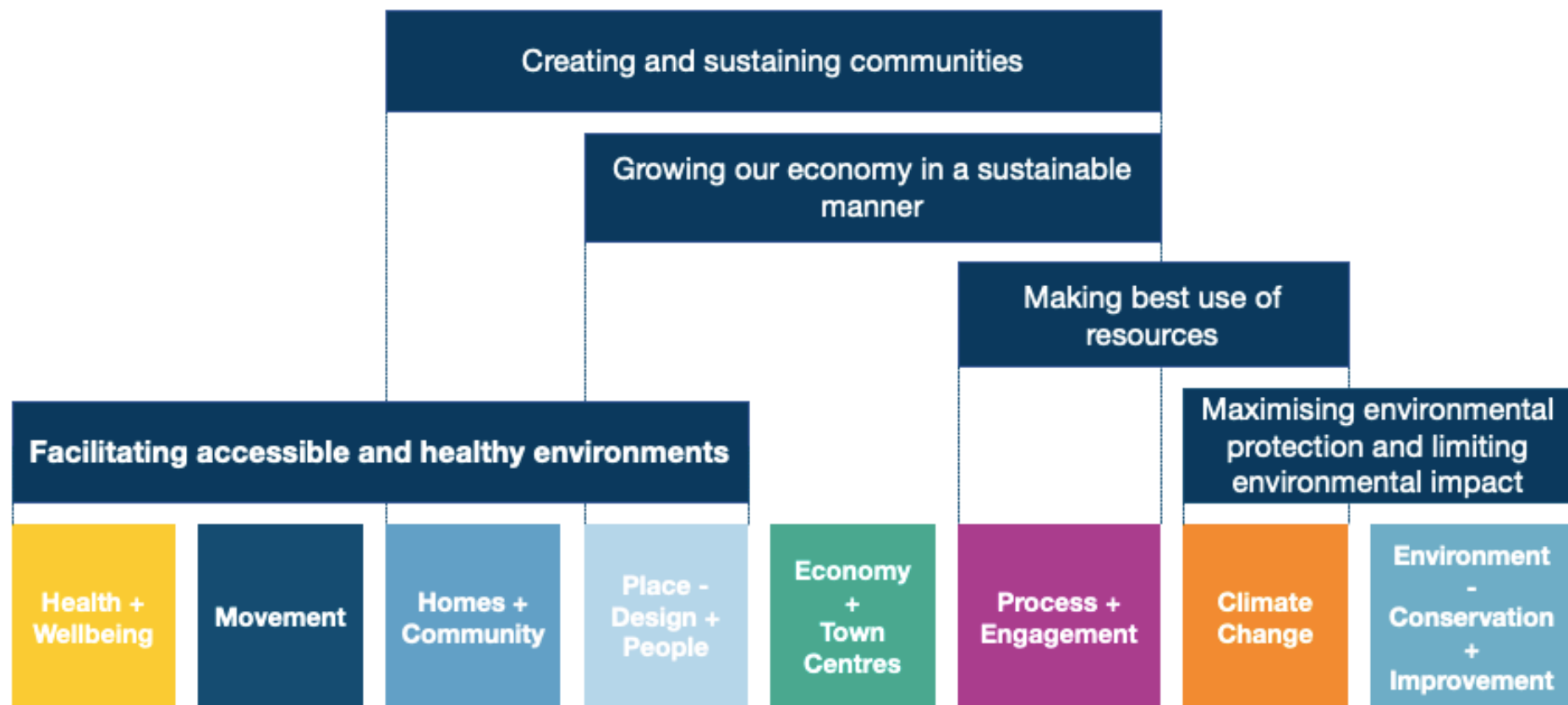


Figure 1 Wales's National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes and the Toolkit Themes.

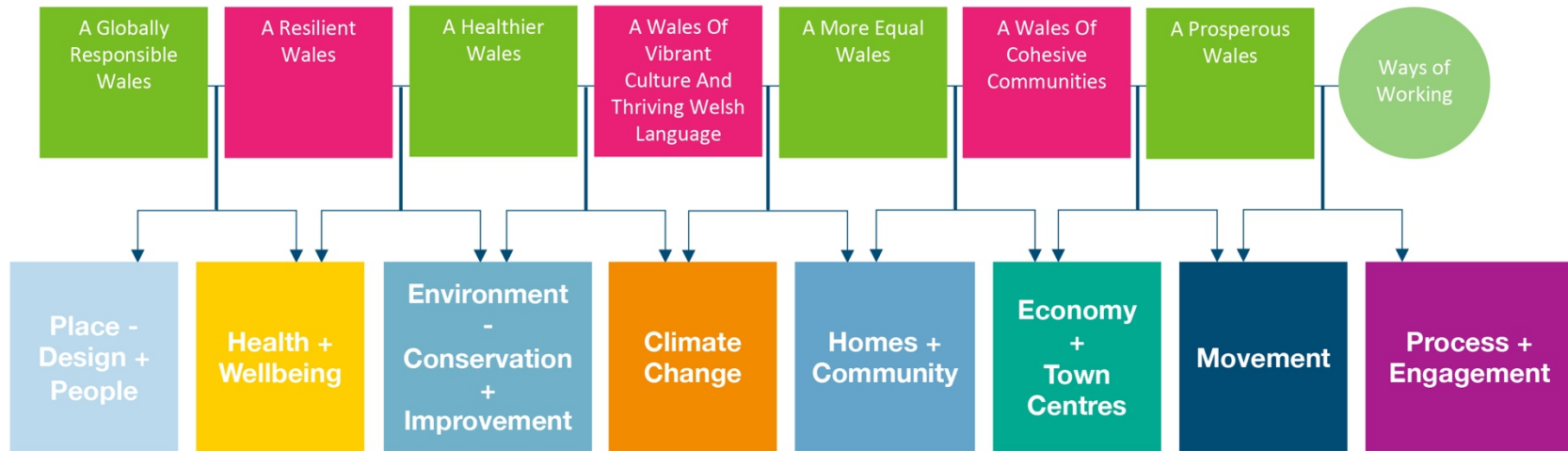
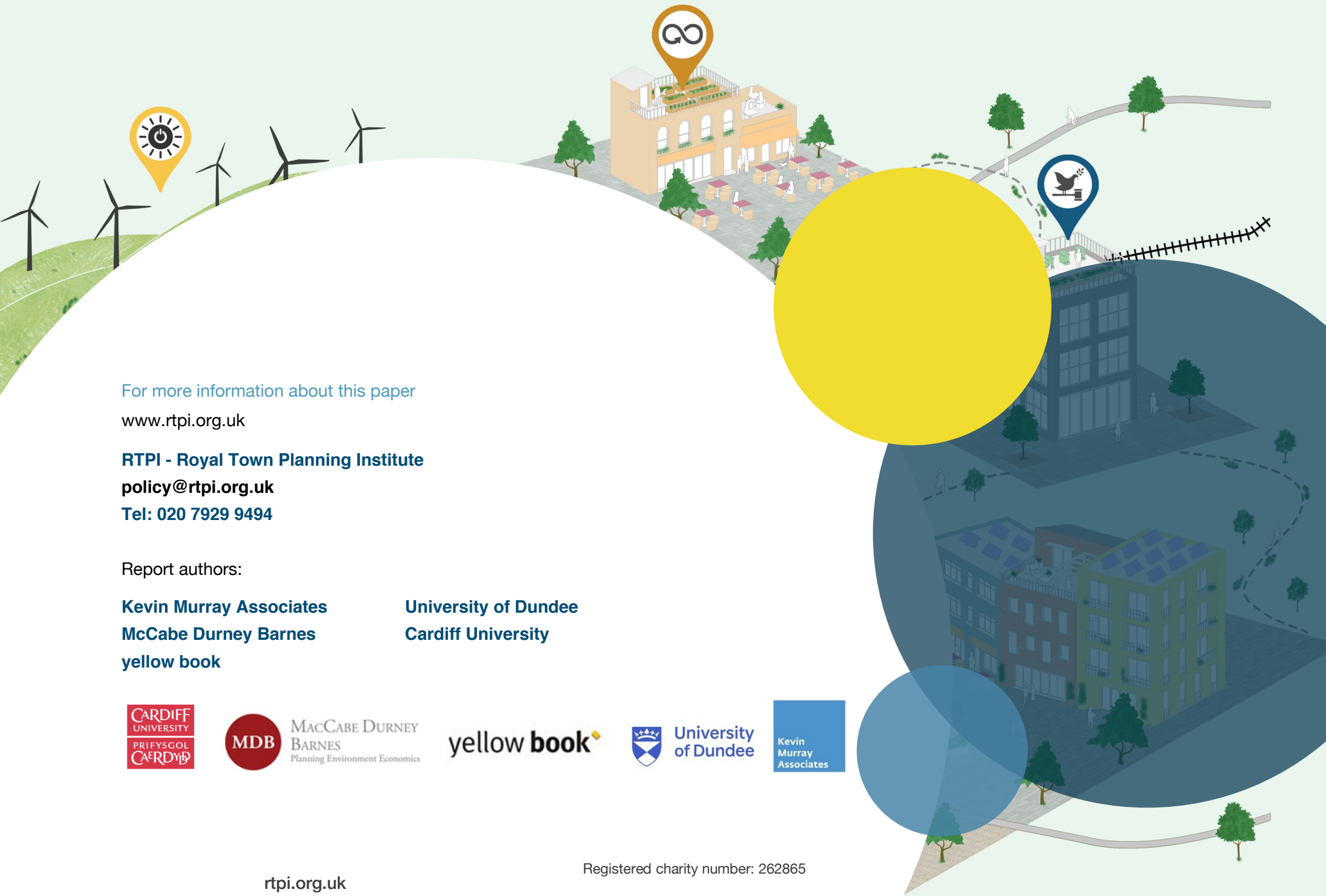


Figure 2 Alignment with National Planning Framework and National Strategic Outcomes



For more information about this paper

www.rtpi.org.uk

RTPI - Royal Town Planning Institute

policy@rtpi.org.uk

Tel: 020 7929 9494

Report authors:

Kevin Murray Associates

McCabe Durney Barnes

yellow book

University of Dundee

Cardiff University



**MACCABE DURNEY
BARNES**
Planning Environment Economics

yellow book



**University
of Dundee**

