



RTPI Cymru

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to: Welsh Government Draft Budget 2022-23

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe, representing some 26,000 spatial planners. RTPI Cymru represents the RTPI in Wales, with 1,300 members. The Institute seeks to advance the science and art of planning, working for the long-term common good and well-being of current and future generations. The RTPI develops and shapes policy affecting the built environment, works to raise professional standards and supports members through continuous education, training and development.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above Inquiry.

What, in your opinion, has been the impact of the Welsh Government's 2021-22 budget including funding related to COVID-19?

How do you think Welsh Government priorities for 2022-23 should change to respond to COVID-19?

How financially prepared is your organisation for the 2022-23 financial year, and how can the budget give you more certainty in planning and managing budgets given the ongoing volatility and uncertainty?

The pandemic has had a significant impact on all our lives and the economy. Whilst there are many uncertainties around how we will emerge from the pandemic, it is likely that many of the issues which Wales already faced will continue and even be compounded.

Areas of Wales have traditionally faced complex place-based issues, including a decline in economic growth, changes in our high streets, poverty and inequality, the delivery of quality

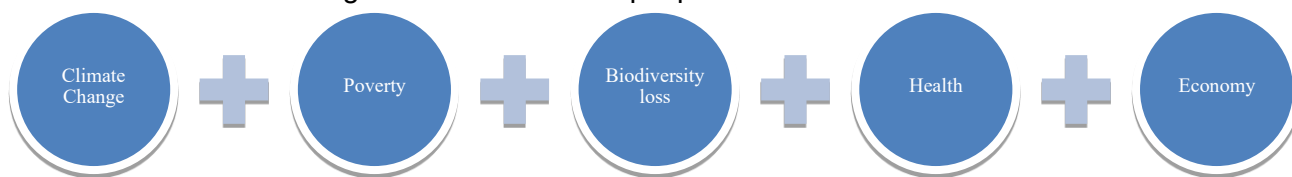
housing in the right locations and the resilience of Wales is frequently tested by severe weather events. The role of planning is to look to the long term and act in the long-term public interest, making a balance between competing interests and setting the framework and decisions for a sustainable future.

The Welsh Government's [Building Better Places Guide](#) puts planning and planners at the centre of responding to the recovery.

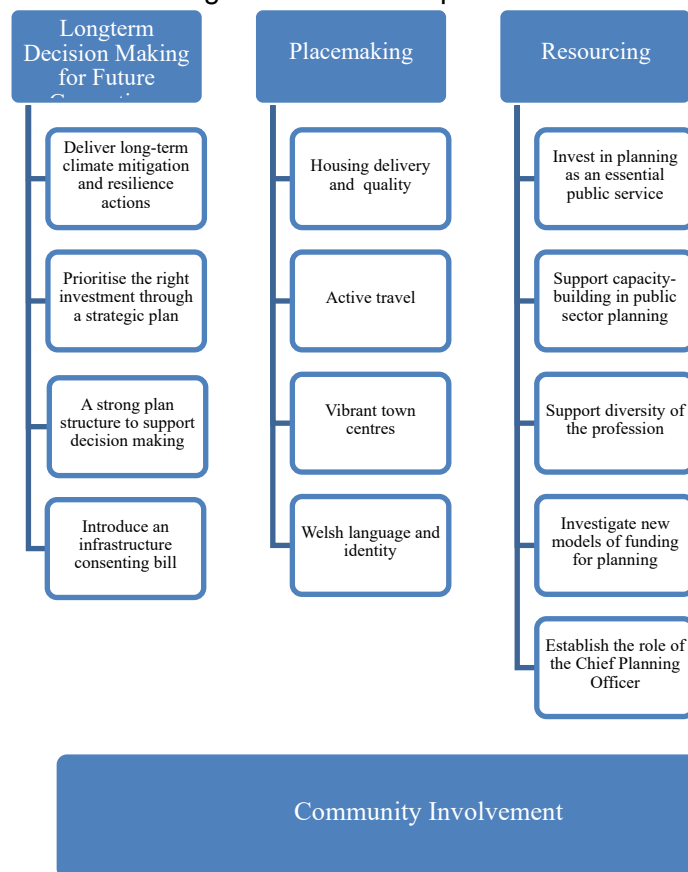
“Planners have a forward looking and key, co-ordinating role. This is not just about the statutory functions of local planning authorities. Planners’ skills mean that they can be proactive at the implementation of policies to aid in the recovery period, identifying opportunities, and bringing people together. Planners are uniquely placed to think systemically and work strategically, to shape the vision for better places and lead positive change.”

The planning system sets the context for development and creates the enabling conditions for a sustainable and healthy built environment. Planning shapes the environments where people work, live, learn and interact. Through strategic spatial planning, the system can ensure that all residents and businesses have a good level of access to services and infrastructure, resources are appropriately accounted for in development decisions, and that new developments make efficient use of resources and technologies. Planning can also address potential negative impacts of development which can be harmful to human health.

Wales' current and future generations face multiple place based and interrelated issues.



Planning services can be positioned to enable the solutions.



While planning offers an established and effective process to facilitate a sustainable future for Wales, it needs to be invested in and strengthened to be able to deliver expectations. In 2019 the Auditor General concluded that: “Planning Authorities are not resilient enough to deliver long term improvements because of their limited capacity.” The RTPI and other stakeholders have long called for the adequate resourcing of the planning system in order for it to achieve its full potential in addressing the complex and challenging issues it faces and this is even more relevant as we emerge from the pandemic and work towards meeting challenging environmental targets.

Financial support to increase the number of public sector planners employed, funding for specialist knowledge and investing in efficiency-saving digital technologies can help support a stronger, proactive and strategic planning system.

A well-resourced, plan-led, positive planning service can deliver corporate objectives, which, if properly encouraged and effectively organised can bring together objectives across services and help achieve local and national sustainable development and climate action goals.

Local authority corporate management teams provide leadership, vision and priority setting for areas, by shaping the strategic operational direction and investment decisions of local authorities. The implications of these corporate decisions on new investment, infrastructure, development activity, local services and policy delivery are significant, particularly at this time. The RTPI believes that making the role of the Chief Planning Officers a more prominent and strategic position within local authorities would positively influence the outcomes of planning and support good growth and a balanced recovery.

Given the ongoing uncertainty and rapidly changing funding environment do you think there should be changes to the budget and scrutiny processes to ensure sufficient transparency and Ministerial accountability?

No comment

Does the Fiscal Framework adequately reflect the impact of the public health emergency in Wales compared to other UK countries and do you support increasing the annual and/or overall limits, £150 million and £1 billion respectively, to current Welsh Government capital borrowing within this Framework?

No comment

The Committee would like to focus on a number of specific areas in the scrutiny of the budget, do you have any specific comments on any of the areas identified below, particularly in light of the COVID-19 situation and how these should be reflected in the 2022-23 budget?

– How resources should be targeted to support economic recovery and what sectors in particular need to be prioritised.

The Welsh Government's [Building Better Places Guide](#) puts planning and planners at the centre of responding to the recovery.

See above in relation to the leading role planning plays in supporting economic recovery.

– To what extent alleviating climate change should be prioritised in supporting economic recovery

It is vital that our initial response to the pandemic does not overlook existing good work and that we retain quality and standards in the short term, for long term benefits. Wales' environment and its natural resources are one of its particular strengths and even economic advantages.

Planning that protects natural environments, safeguarding the landscapes and places we will value in the future must be supported and balanced against social, economic, environmental and cultural factors. Investing in resilience measures will reduce costs in the long term by reducing the impact of flooding, drought and other climate change impacts.

– How resources should be prioritised to address the pressures felt in sectors that need to “catch-up”, such as Health and Education.

See above in relation to the planning sector

– Welsh Government policies to reduce poverty and gender inequality.

No comment

– Approach to preventative spending and how is this represented in resource allocations (Preventative spending = spending which focuses on preventing problems and eases future demand on services by intervening early).

Investment in planning services can return dividends by directing investment spatially. Planning can drive development outcomes by creating efficient spaces and safeguarding critical resources. The planning system shapes the built and natural environments where people work, live and interact. Through strategic spatial planning, the system can ensure that all residents and businesses have a good level of access to services and infrastructure, resources are appropriately accounted for in development decisions, and that new developments make efficient use of resources and technologies. Planning can also address potential negative impacts of development which can be harmful to human health.

– Sustainability of public services, innovation and service transformation.

No comment

– How evidence is driving Welsh Government priority setting and budget allocations.

No comment

– How the Welsh Government should use taxation powers and borrowing.

No comment

– What specific support is needed in the budget for businesses, economic growth and agriculture, related to post EU transition.

No comment

– What are the key opportunities for Government investment to support 'building back better' (i.e. supporting an economy and public services that better deliver against the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations Act).

In 2020 building on the RTPI's Plan the world we need, we published a paper on [Plan the Wales we Need](#). The paper examines how planning can contribute to calls for a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the current health and economic crisis in Wales and sets out our views on the key opportunities for investment to support 'building back better'. These are summarised below:

- Deliver long-term climate mitigation and resilience actions, including biodiversity enhancement;
- Invest in and seize the opportunities from Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 to prioritise the right investment decisions;
- Support and use the hierarchy of plans to make long-term decisions, including supporting the delivery of Strategic Development Plans;
- Introduce the Infrastructure Consenting Bill;
- Support and invest in the delivery of quality homes in the right places across Wales;
- Enable the delivery of active travel;
- Support the delivery of vibrant town centres;

- Invest in planning as an essential public service.

Our comprehensive report into the business case for investing in planning – Invest and Prosper - can be viewed here: www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/october/invest-and-prosper/#_Toc52359878

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

Yours sincerely,



Dr Roisin Willmott OBE FRTPi

Director
RTPI Cymru