



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Transforming and Sustaining Towns

Regeneration Division & Planning Division, Welsh  
Government

RTPI Cymru Spring Conference  
*Delivering Vibrant High Streets*

# Session content

- Planning Policy Wales – Town Centre First / Future Wales
- Placemaking Plans
- Transforming Towns Programme
- Wrexham case study
- Town Centres Position Statement – next steps

# Planning Policy

- PPW
- Future Wales
- TAN – 15
- Placemaking plans context

# PPW

## Placemaking:

- 93 references to it in PPW
- Creation of Sustainable Places is the goal and organising principle of PPW

## Retail/Commercial Sequential Test:

- A feature of PPW for over 20 years
- Requires new retail and commercial development to locate in town centres in the first place and only if no suitable town centres sites exist should edge of centre and then out of town locations be considered

## Higher Densities:

- Must be encouraged on sites in town centres and other sites which have good walking, cycling and public transport links

# Future Wales

FW is a the only National Development Plan in the UK and covers every part of Wales

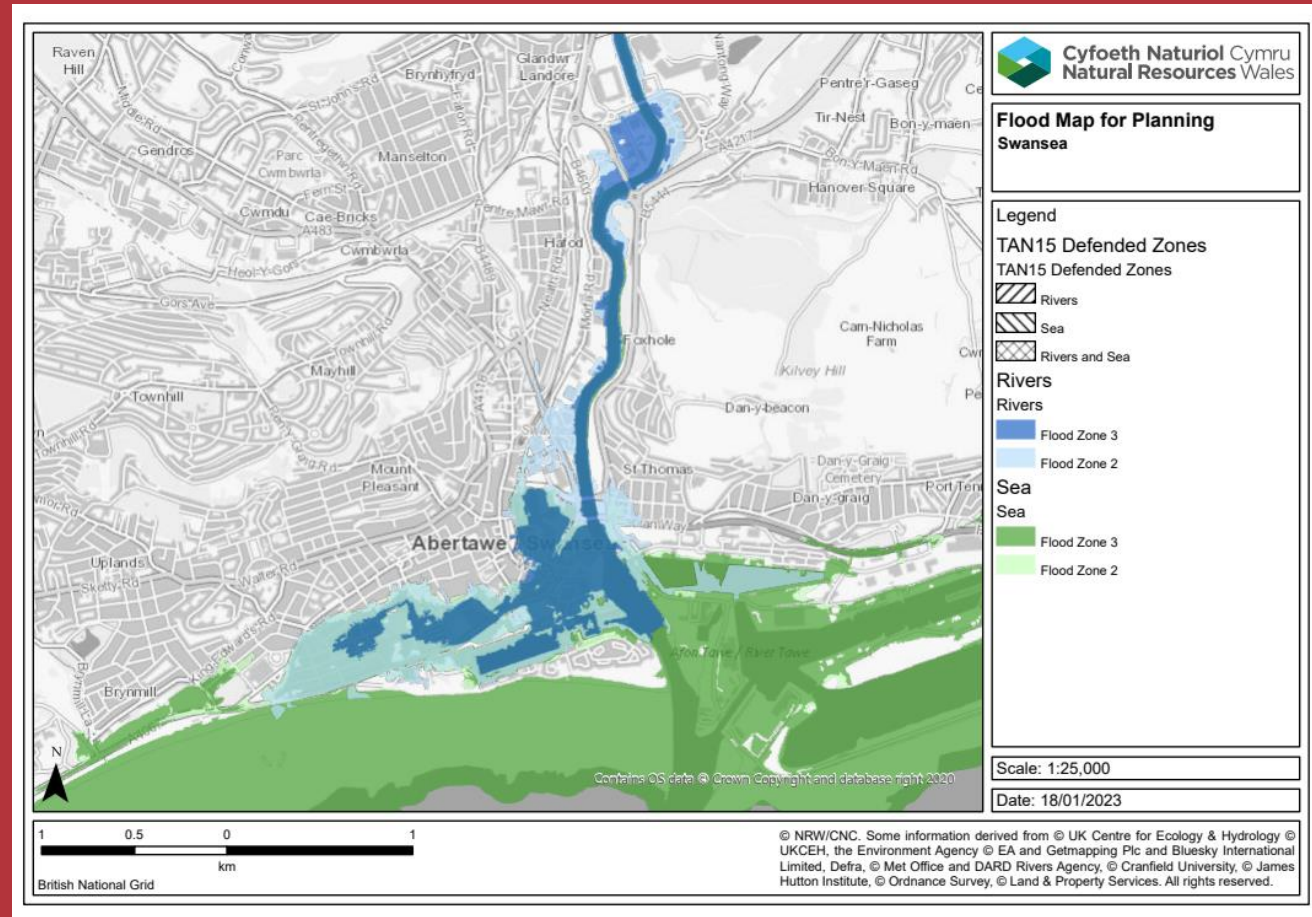
## Policy 6 – Town Centre First

Significant new commercial, retail, education, health, leisure and public service facilities must be located within town and city centres. They should have good access by public transport to and from the whole town or city and, where appropriate, the wider region. A sequential approach must be used to inform the identification of the best location for these developments and they should be identified in Strategic and Local Development Plans

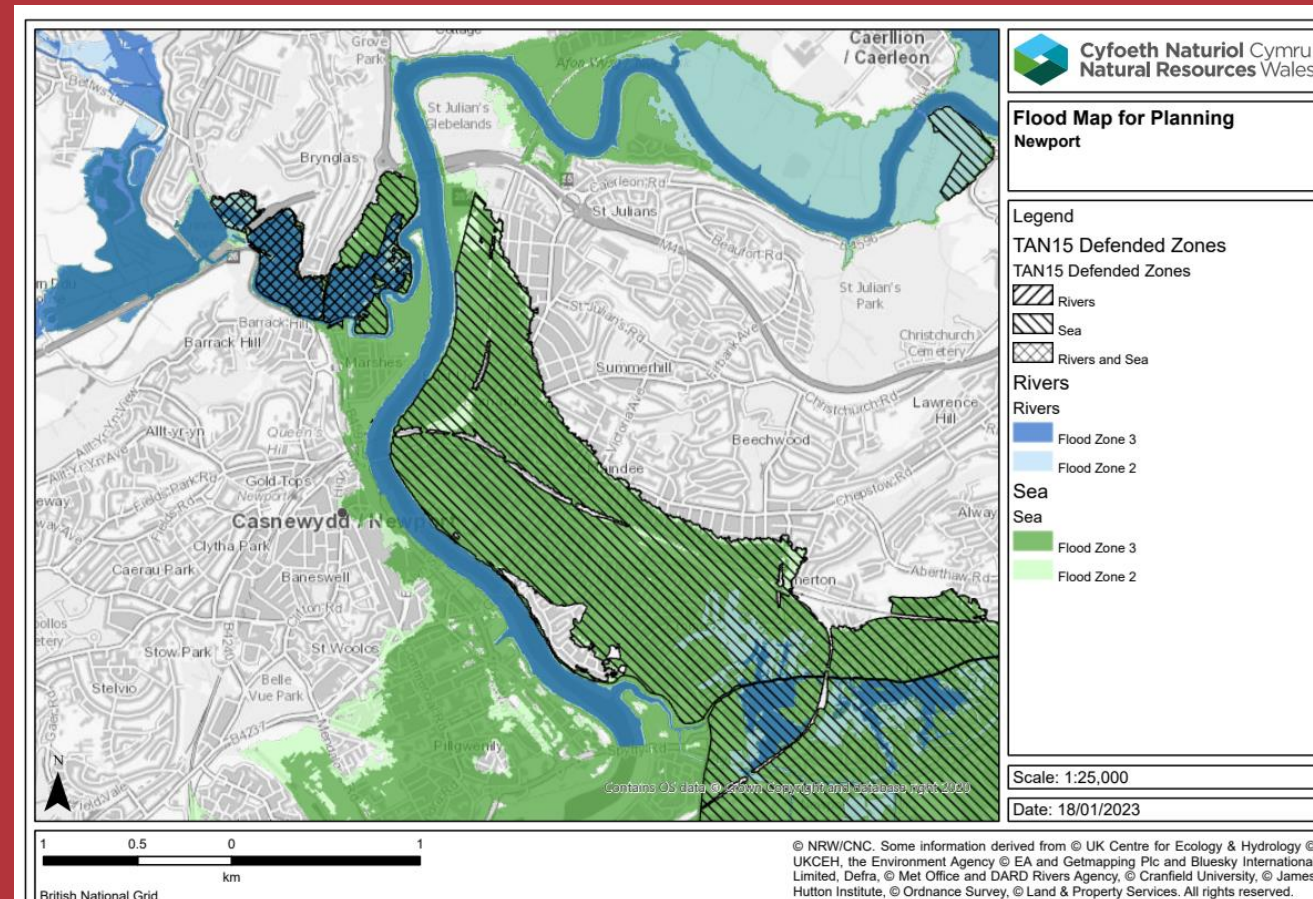
# TAN 15

- Many of our towns and cities are located on the coast or at the confluence of rivers
- Climate Change is an undeniable reality and WFGA requires us to think about the future consequences of our actions
- Regeneration of our towns and cities must take place in the context of the science around Climate Change
- FW policy 8 sets planning framework for flood works
- TAN15 currently out for consultation
- Proposals will require Local Planning Authorities affected by climate change who wish to undertake strategic regeneration to prepare a Community Resilience & Adaptation Plan setting out what flood defences are required and how they will be provided

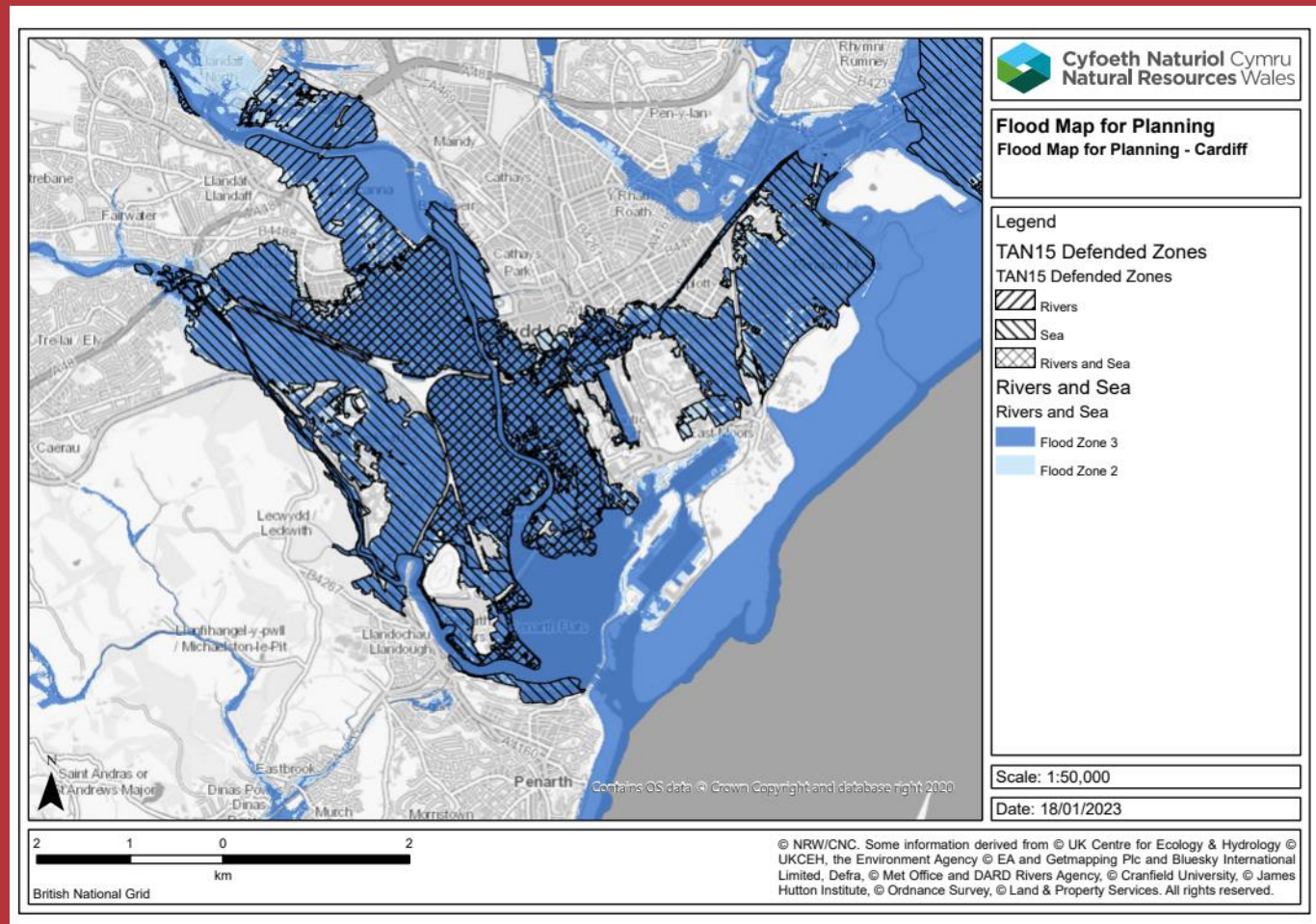
# Swansea



# Newport



# Cardiff



# Placemaking Plans

**‘Placemaking involves working collaboratively across sectors and disciplines to comprehensively consider the future development of distinctive and vibrant places’**

- To inform strategic direction and underpin all investment activity through the Welsh Government Transforming Towns programme.
- Collaborative and Strategic – to inform the needs and opportunities of place, engagement at each stage of the process.
- Designed in line with the principles of the Placemaking charter and Planning Policy Wales.
- Can be long term in nature, but should respond to opportunities during life cycle.
- 2022-23 - Transitional year of targeted support for Placemaking Plans.
- Funding to support a review of existing plans, gap analysis, incorporation of Planning Policy Wales objectives but also opportunity to support the development of briefs for future commissions.
- Enhanced involvement of the Design Commission for Wales (DCfW) to support this transitional year.
- To inform funding decisions from differing portfolios and bodies. Underpin a range of investment.

# Transforming Towns Programme

- Launched in 2020 – support revitalisation and sustainable growth of towns across Wales through interventions such as reuse of derelict buildings; increasing the diversity of services in towns; creation of green space and improving access.
- Planned and coordinated package of support – loans, grants and planning enforcement.
- Individual towns can benefit by identifying the mix of interventions which best suits their specific characteristics, local strengths, culture and heritage.
- Working in collaboration with local leaders, BIDs, Town and Community Councils.
- Cross cutting support, leveraging in funding and working across Welsh Government.
- Underpinned by Placemaking Principles.
- Delivering Key Programme for Government commitments

# Transforming Towns Programme

- **£100m over 3 years**
- **Development funding:** Eligible activity includes: feasibility studies, site investigation and due diligence works, any masterplans or design briefs and Place-making/ town plans.
- Transforming Towns **Place-Making Funding** to support delivery of smaller schemes that require no more than £250,000 grant funding and is designed to be accessible to a number of delivery partners across the private, public and third sectors.
- Transforming Towns **Strategic Funding** to support the delivery of a specific project led by a local authority where more than £250,000 grant or loan funding is required.
- Transforming Towns **Loans**
- Transforming Towns **Planning Enforcement.**



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# Wrexham – case study

# North Wales Regeneration Plan

- 6 LA's working in partnership joint SLA – Regional Regeneration Group
- 12 key towns – with 4 priority Town Centres
- Strategic, Thematic & Placemaking projects – 2021/25 c£8m pa capital budget
- North Wales regional TC action group with dedicated sub groups

WREXHAM



RHYL



COLWYN BAY



BANGOR



# Town Centre Masterplan

Vision: “Wrexham will be an attractive, distinctive and accessible 21st century town centre where people want to live, learn, work, visit and invest.”

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- Improve the visitor experience  
Increase the vitality and viability of the town centre through improved visitor attractions such as arts and culture, events, leisure, facilities for families and through an attractive, safe, vibrant, high quality, clean and well maintained environment.

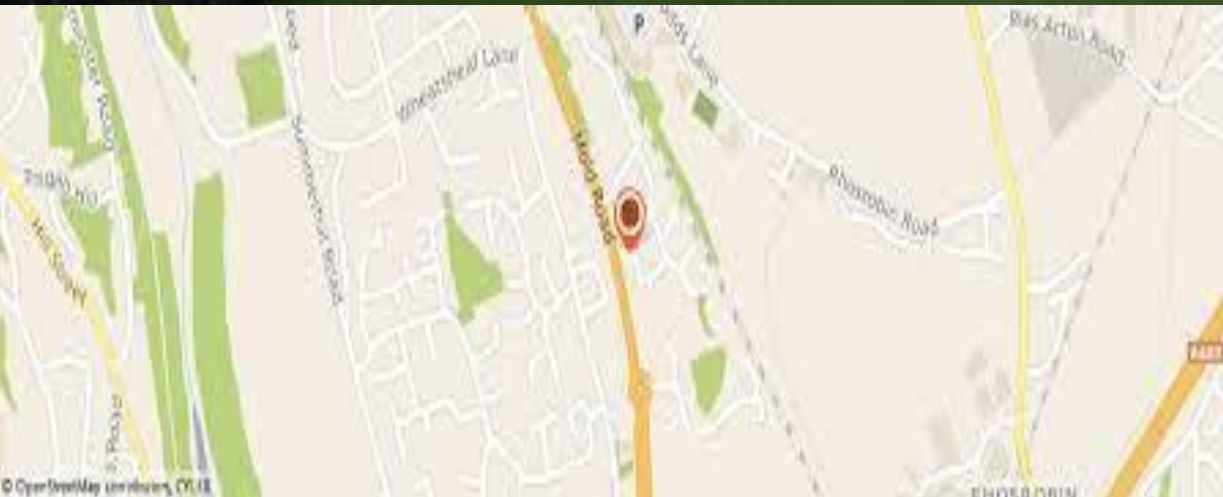


# ty pawb

Marchnadoedd — Cymuned — Celfyddydau  
Markets — Community — Arts



# Xplore!





# Crown Buildings Well Being Hub

# Wrexham

- New life to old market:
- Niche Retail / Food offer
- **New Market Provision**
- **Modern Town Centre Space**
- Chapter Court, Queen Square



# Foundational Economy Research – “Small Town, Big Issues”

## Audit Wales – “Regenerating Town Centres in Wales”

### KEY MESSAGES

- Restraining edge of town development and re-use because there is an unequal competition for activity between town centres and edge of development
- Town centre development of clusters/corridors based on robust place making plans and cross-gov/authority approach to public service delivery rather than single institution approach or private development desire.
- Redevelopment of town centre neighbourhoods/districts to drive a need for mixed tenure town centre living.
- Public transport and car parking challenges for town centres need addressing and are in direct competition with out of town provision.
- Whilst the level of funding made available is significant, needs longer term and more joined up deployment balanced across capital and revenue.
- Broader strengthening of the implementation of Town Centre First principle.

# Welsh Government Response to the reports

- Town Centre Advisory Group was already established and a series of sub groups were set up “deep dive” areas of the report(s)
- The Deputy Minister for Climate Change established the Town Centre Delivery Group (TCDG) to support the operationalisation of the recommendations in the report(s)
- The work of the group highlighted that the problems are not universally understood
- To establish a shared understanding of the problems and to therefore propose a set of agreed actions, members of the TCDG systematically worked through the challenges diagnosed in the report.
- Turning things around for our towns cannot be a government top-down action, though the WG is the key enabler through coordinated and consistent policy direction.
- Aim to develop and publish a **Position Statement** to set out the **key challenges** and proposed **actions**. What can be done at a national and cross-Government level to set the foundations for change and enable local delivery.
- Significant consultation as the work develops – both internally and externally of Welsh Government.

# Challenges – potential actions

## Withdrawal from town centre to out of town / Business Model Issues

- Long term planning of location and/or relocation of a broad range of public services into town centres – asset management and governance structures of public service bodies.
- Revenue and capital spending and procurement frameworks of key public sector institutions (e.g., health, education) to ensure they are aligned with the Town Centre First policy.
- Strengthen the implementation of the Town Centre First policy in planning
- Support social landlords and private developers to deliver town centre mixed tenure housing underpinned by placemaking

# Challenges – potential actions

## Out of town propped up by car dependency

- Regional Transport Plans – require CJsCs to consider Town Centre First.
- Fair and equitable ‘benefits and charges packages’ - improve services before charges and/or introduce lower fares when charging starts.

## Climate and Nature Emergencies

- Green Infrastructure and nature-based solutions embedded in decision-making for town centre public space.

## Local Capacity to deliver

- Transforming Towns targeted at transformational opportunities under a placemaking plan.
- Support capacity for delivery and the provision of specialist support – DCfW.



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