



NEWS

Wales planning news, March 2018

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Headline news

Draft Planning Policy Wales (Edition 10) published for consultation

The Welsh Government has published a consultation on a 'completely revised' version of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) to reflect 'the spirit of the Well-being of Future Generations Act', as Welsh Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths has highlighted.

Draft PPW 10 has been revised into policy themes around well-being goals, and policy updated to reflect new Welsh Government strategies and policies.

The related consultation, which closes on 18 May, seeks views on the new PPW structure, the place-making concept and the new or revised policy requirements.

[Welsh Government, Draft Planning Policy Wales: Edition 10, Consultation Document](#)

[Draft Planning Policy Wales: Edition 10](#)

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Quote of the month



The new PPW [...] embeds the spirit of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, through moving us towards a low carbon, resilient society, of providing secure and well-paid jobs, and of building well-connected environments for everyone in Wales that improves our lives and health and enhances our well-being.

Welsh Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, in the foreword to the draft Planning Policy Wales

Wales Act powers to be tested with vacant land tax idea

The Welsh Government has announced the intention to bring forward a vacant land tax idea, to test Wales Act 2014 powers as part of the its tax policy work plan, the Welsh Finance Secretary has announced.

The idea was first announced at the draft Budget in October 2017, alongside another three potential tax ideas, these being a social care levy, a disposable plastics tax and a tourism tax.

The decision to test the vacant land tax has been taken, as it could help support more timely development, as well as helping to prevent dereliction and fostering regeneration.

The Welsh Finance Secretary, Professor Mark Drakeford, said:

‘Housing is a priority for the Welsh Government. A tax on vacant land could prevent the practice of land banking and land not being developed within the expected timescales.’

[Welsh Government, vacant land tax idea to be used to test Wales Act powers](#)

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5-Year housing land supply remains an issue for 76% of local planning authorities

The Housing Land Availability in Wales Summary for 2017 has been published, highlighting how a large majority of Welsh authorities is unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply.

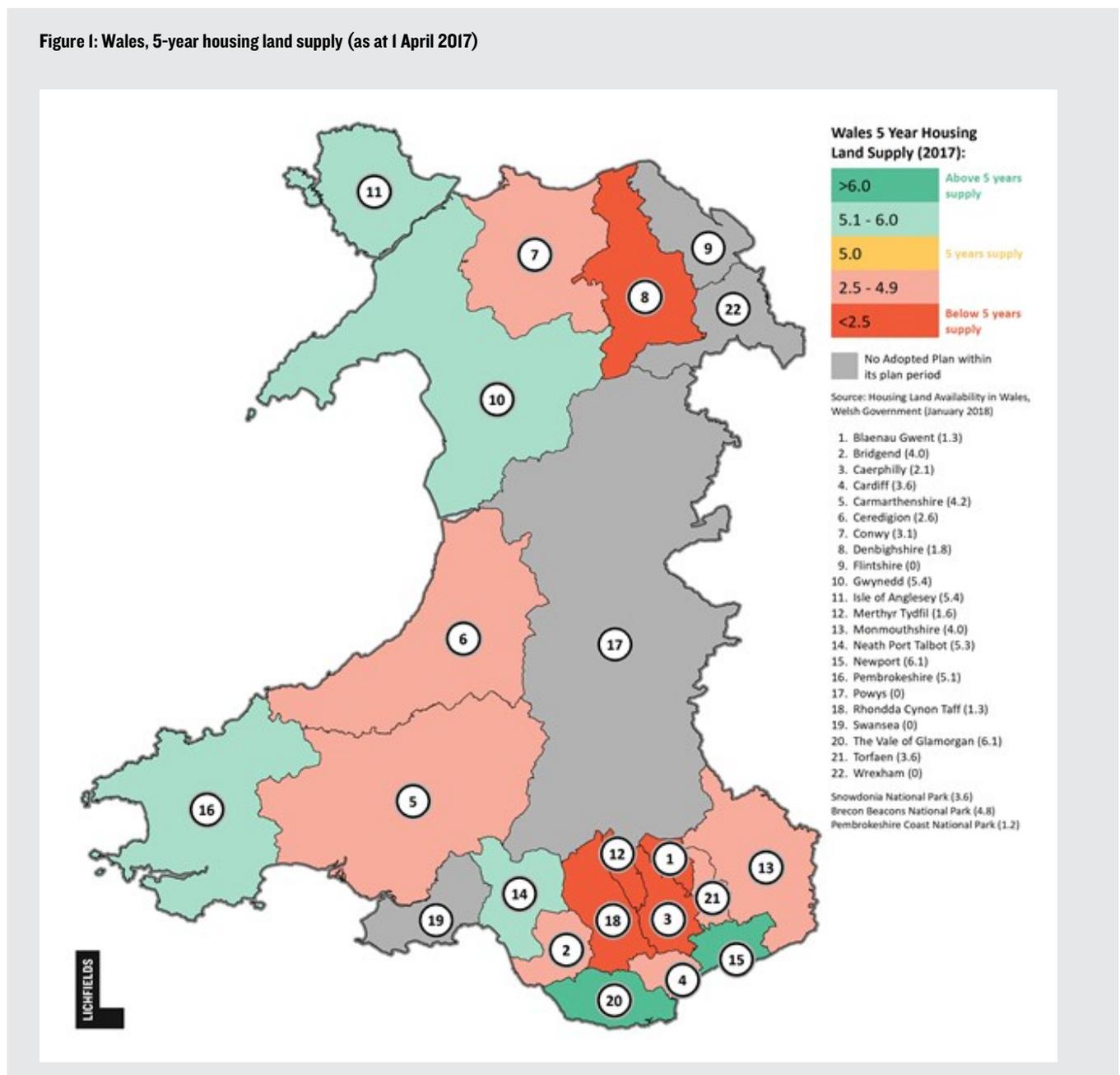
Specifically, the 2017 Summary shows that 19 out of 25 local planning authorities (76%) do not have a robust 5-year housing land supply in place, as at 1 April 2017; the figure is similar to that of 2016, when the same number of authorities were not able to demonstrate a sufficient land supply.

At the time the studies were undertaken, 7 authorities were not able to undertake a Joint Housing Land Availability Study as they did not have an adopted local development plan or unitary development plan in place. However, since April 2017 three of these authorities (Anglesey, Gwynedd, and Vale of Glamorgan) have adopted a local development plan.

The Lichfields map at Figure 1 shows the housing land supply position for each of the 25 Welsh authorities.

Welsh Government, housing land availability in Wales, summary for 2017

Figure 1: Wales, 5-year housing land supply (as at 1 April 2017)



Research briefing on air quality published

The National Assembly for Wales Research Service has published a briefing paper which looks at air quality in Wales, considered to be amongst the worst in the whole UK according to the report's introduction.

As highlighted in the introductory text, air quality strategy in Wales is mostly determined by EU Regulations, and delivered by local authorities. The Welsh Government has had a limited direct role in managing air quality to date (their only direct intervention being in the Neath Port Talbot Air Quality Management Area), although the announcement of a Clean Air Plan for Wales (expected to be published for consultation in April 2018) suggests that it is considering taking more action in the future.

[National Assembly for Wales Research Service, air quality research briefing](#)

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Welsh Enterprise Zones face shake-up

In a speech delivered to the National Assembly for Wales' Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee on 14 February, Welsh Economy Secretary Ken Skates announced that four of the eight Welsh Enterprise Zones' boards will cease to exist from 31 July 2018.

Specifically, the Cardiff, St Athan, Deeside and Ebbw Vale boards will disappear, while the related Enterprise Zones will continue to exist; boards in Port Talbot and Haven Waterway will remain in place, while those for Snowdonia and Anglesey are set to merge.

The Welsh Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

'There will still be eight enterprise zones, but there will be less and slightly different, in some respects, bureaucracy, which will then lead to a saving for the public purse. I think that's what taxpayers would want.'
National Assembly for Wales' Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee, Scrutiny of the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport – Enterprise Zones

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Future Generations Commissioner for Wales questions environmental permitting process

The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, Sophie Howe, has written to Natural Resource Wales requesting information on how the Well-being of Future Generations Act is considered and applied during the environmental permitting process.

Sophie Howe said:

‘The approach Natural Resources Wales takes in their environmental permitting decisions has emerged as a common thread in the concerns raised to me by the public and local representatives. [...] I have therefore formally requested further information from Natural Resources Wales including worked examples of how the Act has been applied alongside the requirements of other legislation.’

[Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, commissioner seeks clarity on environmental permitting decisions](#)

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Welsh Government details its land management vision post Brexit

The Welsh Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, has detailed the Welsh Government’s vision for land management in Wales, post Brexit.

Speaking at the National Farmers Union (NFU) conference in Birmingham, Lesley Griffiths outlined the five core principles that underpin the vision, including keeping local farmers on the land, ensuring the agricultural sector remains prosperous and resilient, and ensuring that Welsh land delivers public goods for local communities.

During her speech, Lesley Griffiths said:

‘As we prepare to leave the EU, the case for devolution is stronger than ever. The nature of our farming is different and our rural communities are different. There is no one size that fits all.’

[Welsh Government, Lesley Griffiths outlines her vision for land management in Wales post Brexit](#)

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Consultation launched on Geological disposal of radioactive waste

The Welsh Government has launched a consultation on radioactive waste disposal, seeking views on the proposed arrangements for engaging with local communities in Wales.

In particular, the consultation focuses on geological disposal facilities (GDFs) for higher radioactive waste (HAW) and how communities should be involved in the process for deciding whether to voluntarily host GDFs within their areas. Welsh Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, issued a statement to clarify that:

‘Although the Welsh Government supports geological disposal, this does not necessarily mean a GDF will be built in Wales or that the Welsh Government will seek to have a GDF built in Wales. The Welsh Government has not considered or identified any potential sites or communities for a GDF in Wales. Our policy is very clear, a GDF can only be sited in Wales if a community voluntarily comes forward to host it.’

The National Assembly for Wales Research Service has also published an online post that looks at GDFs and whether these should be built in Wales.

The consultation, which runs in parallel to a UK Government consultation on the same issue, will close on 20 April.

[Welsh Government, Geological disposal of radioactive waste, Consultation Document](#)

[National Assembly for Wales Research Service, Should a Geological Disposal Facility be built in Wales?](#)

[Welsh Government's Written Statement, Geological disposal of radioactive waste: working with potential host communities](#)

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The Lichfields perspective



The introduction of a land tax shows a misunderstanding of the term ‘land banking’ that is further compounded by proposed changes to planning applications set out by the Law Commission, in the consultation that ended on 1 March. Whilst we continue to digest the proposals set out in the PPW consultation, so far it is not apparent how the Welsh Government will use this raft of changes to address the ever-pressing need to build more homes in Wales – indeed it might serve to do the opposite.

Helen Ashby-Ridgway, Associate Director

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