

Wales planning news

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Headline news

8 June general election

A snap general election will take place on 8 June, the House of Commons having voted by 522 votes to 13 to bring forward the scheduled election date from 2020.

Parliament will be dissolved on 3 May, and it is anticipated that the major parties will publish their manifestos during the following week.

Pre-election 'purdah' currently affects both local elections in Wales and the general election, and has potential implications that can include delay for planning legislation, government policy-making and decision-taking - both centrally and locally.

Once the incoming government is in office, an announcement sooner rather than later would be expected on the stance being taken to recently consulted-on Industrial Strategy Green Paper - and confirmation or otherwise would also be likely in the first few weeks of the new administration, on current infrastructure initiatives including Heathrow's expansion. It also may be the case that Osborne's/ Clark's legacy of planning-related initiatives would be pronounced on relatively quickly, including the review of the community infrastructure levy.

Other news

Appeal process changes

On 11 April, a series of planning-related Statutory Instruments were laid before the National Assembly for Wales, dealing with changes to the appeal process and as proposed by the Welsh Government in its recent response to the consultation on appeals, costs and standard daily amounts.

LICHFIELDS

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The Regulations and Orders all come into force on 5 May and are as follows:

- The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2017;
- The Town and Country Planning (Trees) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2017;
- The Planning (Hazardous Substances) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2017;
- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2017;
- The Town and Country Planning (Referred Applications and Appeals Procedure) (Wales) Regulations 2017;
- The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2017; and
- The Town and Country Planning (Enforcement Notices and Appeals) (Wales) Regulations 2017.

As reported in last month's Lichfields' planning news, the main proposed changes include:

1. A requirement for the submission of the appellant's full statement of case with the notice of appeal, or in the case of call-ins, within 4 weeks of the notice of reference;
2. A reduction in the initial timetable for appeals and called-in applications, through ensuring that all full statements of case and responses are received by week 6;
3. The removal of the statutory requirement for a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) but with new guidance being published to seek to ensure early submission of any SOCG, where one is agreed to be submitted between parties;
4. A restriction on new matters being raised and application amendments, once an appeal has been submitted; and
5. A requirement for applicants to apply for costs at the earliest possible stage. ■

QUOTE OF THE MONTH



Local government reform is essential if we're to make these services stronger and more resilient to cope with the demands of the future

Welsh Local Government Secretary, Mark Drakeford, calling on the public to have their say on local government reform.

THE LICHFIELDS PERSPECTIVE

Welsh Government guidance promotes a careful but 'business as usual' approach to planning in Wales during this busy election period. But there have been examples of local authority planning committee meetings being cancelled and agenda items being removed. There can often anyway be case by case reasons for such last minute changes but those that can be put down to the elections can be frustrating for the development industry. We look forward to getting back to normal in the middle of June.

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The size and composition of planning committees

Welsh Chief Planner Neil Hemington has written to all Local Authority Chief Executives and Chief Planning Officers to update them with regard to changes to the size and composition of planning committees.

The changes come into force on 5 May, so that 'following the May 2017 local government elections, planning committees will be appointed in accordance with these requirements [...]'.
Regulations made to bring into effect

s39 of the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 require that:

- Planning committees are composed of no less than 11, and no more than 21 members (in any case, by no more than 50% of the authority members);
- When wards have more than one elected member, only one member can sit on the planning committee.

Another set of Regulations requires that:

- A quorum of 50% at each planning committee meeting is needed to make decisions; and
- The use of substitute members is forbidden.

Ports Development Fund announced

Welsh Economy Secretary Ken Skates has announced the allocation of £2m by the Welsh Government to the Ports Development Fund, aimed at ensuring that ports continue providing economic growth and employment opportunities. The application process will close on 9 June.

The Welsh Economy Secretary said:

'I look forward to seeing the proposals and to carry on working with ports across Wales to build on the good work already evident, ensuring they are ready to overcome any challenges and maximise all opportunities.'

New Regulations for environmental impact assessments

On 24 April, the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 were laid before Parliament.

The Regulations revoke and restate, with necessary amendments (as a consequence of EU Directive 2014/52/EU), the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2016.

The new Regulations come into force on 16 May 2017.

Design Commission for Wales Board reappointed

Lesley Griffiths, the Welsh Environment and Rural Affairs Secretary, has reappointed Ewan Jones and Philip Jardine to the board of the Design Commission for Wales; the reappointment will run until 31 March 2020.

The Design Commission for Wales was established in 2002 with the aim of promoting good design across different sectors, in collaboration with a range of other bodies and organisations to support the development of better buildings and spaces.

Lesley Griffiths said:

'I have no doubt their experience will continue to prove to be invaluable as we seek to improve our built environment and make Wales a better place for future generations.' ■