

# Wales planning news

AUGUST 2017



## Headline news

### Details revealed about new Local Government Bill

On 17 July, the Welsh Government launched a consultation on electoral reform in local government in Wales; on the same occasion, the Local Government Secretary Mark Drakeford unveiled additional details about a Local Government Bill, which will follow on from the White Paper published earlier this year.

The Bill will see mandatory regional working between all of Wales' 22 councils on economic development, strategic land use planning and strategic transport; the intention is for these services to be undertaken in three large regions - North Wales, Central and South West Wales, and South East Wales. Moreover, there will be also scope for further sub-regional working as part of these larger groupings.

It is proposed that councils would be requested to work regionally on other services, including other aspects of land use planning; however, councils will have more flexibility for these services in terms of the footprint in which they work together.

### Wales' heritage sector worth £900m

The Welsh Historic Environment Group has estimated that the heritage sector in Wales is generating over £960m into the local economy each year, while also supporting over 40,000 jobs. These are just two of the findings reported in 'Heritage Counts Wales 2016', which is based on data collected from 18 Welsh Heritage organisations.

Welsh Economy Secretary Ken Skates has welcomed the report and stated:

'In Wales we have a unique, diverse heritage which is the envy of many and a source of great pride to us all. We will continue to work closely with the sector to support them in ensuring that these positive trends continue.'

### Enterprise Zones in Wales reach five year milestone

Welsh Government Economy Secretary Ken Skates has announced the latest figures regarding the Enterprise Zone Programme in Wales, via a written statement to the Welsh Assembly.

Figures included in 'Key Performance Indicators Full Financial Year Annual Report for 2016-17' show that targets for the eight Welsh Enterprise Zones were all either met or exceeded. Since 2012, more than 10,000 jobs have been supported and over £300m of investment secured from both public and private sectors.

The Economy Secretary said:

'I place great importance on a place-based approach which is tailored to local needs and circumstances and I am reviewing the Enterprise Zone offer to ensure that it will continue to deliver against a more regional approach to economic development [...].'

### Welsh Assembly report incorporates RTPI Cymru's transport advice

The Welsh Assembly's Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee has published a report that provides recommendations regarding the Rail Franchise and South Wales Metro. The report is the outcome of an inquiry that the Committee on Rail Franchise & The Metro began in October last year. ►►

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH



I have spoken to and consulted widely with councils [...] and we now have a Local Government Bill that will strengthen services through systematic and mandatory regional working and build a new relationship between citizens and their councils.

**Welsh Secretary for Local Government Mark Drakeford announcing further details on the new Local Government Bill**

## THE LICHFIELDS PERSPECTIVE

Proposals for all of the Welsh local authorities working regionally and sub-regionally on planning and infrastructure - at some point in the future - makes very interesting reading. We are already encouraged by cooperation building particularly between the SE Wales authorities.

**Helen Ashby-Ridgway, Associate director**

## CONTACT US

**Gareth Williams**  
gareth.williams@lichfields.uk  
T: 029 2043 5880

**Margaret Baddeley**  
margaret.baddeley@lichfields.uk  
T: 020 7837 4477

**Helen Ashby-Ridgway**  
helen.ashby-ridgway@lichfields.uk  
T: 029 2043 5880

**Giorgio Wetzl**  
giorgio.wetzl@lichfields.uk  
T: 020 7837 4477

LICHFIELDS

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The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Cymru gave written evidence to the Committee in February, and the final report draws on the advice provided by the Institute. Specifically, the Committee has taken on board the suggestion that links joining Swansea and Bristol city regions with Cardiff were critical for future economic growth. RTPI advice is directly quoted, in mentioning that '[i]t is important that planning for the Metro sits within a strategic transport and development planning framework that looks beyond South East Wales alone'.

### **Funding to improve community facilities in deprived areas**

Welsh Communities Secretary Carl Sargeant has announced that thirteen projects will benefit from more than £3.5m funding from the Welsh Government's Community Facilities Programme. The programme is aimed at providing capital grants (of up to £0.5m) to support the development and improvement of facilities for communities in deprived parts of Wales.

The Communities Secretary has also announced:

'While this is the last round of awards under the current funding arrangements a revised scheme will reopen this summer.'

### **Progress made in abolition of Right to Buy**

The Welsh Government proposal to abolish the Right to Buy, in order to protect the stock of social housing, has moved forward. A Welsh Assembly vote has agreed the general principles of the Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill.

Moving the motion to agree the general principles of the Bill, Communities Secretary Carl Sargeant said:

'By abolishing the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire, the Bill will also encourage social landlords to invest in new social housing safe in the knowledge that it won't be at risk of having to be sold after only a few years.'

Following agreement on the general principles of the Bill, a consultation on the information document for tenants of social landlords has been launched; the consultation closes on 13 September.

### **Newport selected for new rail production facility**

The Celtic Business Park in Newport has been selected by Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles (CAF) as the preferred location for its new 'Centre of Excellence'. An overall investment of £30m will support the creation of 300 highly skilled jobs.

The new facility will provide the company with a site to assemble, test and commission new vehicles and have capacity to undertake future manufacturing projects.

### **Wrexham Energy Centre granted development consent**

UK Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark has granted development consent for the Wrexham Energy Centre, at Kingmoor Park South, near Wrexham. The proposal is for a combined cycle gas turbine ('CCGT') power station that includes up to two gas turbines capable of generating up to 299 MWe.

The examining authority's recommendation to grant development consent to the proposal is accepted, with the decision letter concluding:

'Given the national need for the proposed Development, as set out in the relevant National Policy Statements referred to above, the Secretary of State does not believe that this is outweighed by the Development's potential adverse local impacts, as mitigated by the proposed terms of the Order.'

### **Planning Series publication: 07 - Enforcement**

In Brief, the National Assembly for Wales Research Service, has published a new research briefing paper providing an overview of how the planning enforcement system works in Wales.

The publication details what enforcement is, when enforcement

actions are needed, the different types of actions that can be taken, related time limits, the scope for Welsh Government enforcement and appeals against enforcement action. The document also provides an update on the planning enforcement regime following changes originated by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015.

### **New guide on design and access statements**

The Welsh Government has published new guidance on design and access statements, aimed at showing how 'good design can be reflected' in a design and access statement (DAS).

'Design and Access Statements in Wales Why, What and How' was prepared for the Welsh Government by the Design Commission for Wales. It explains the requirements for a DAS, the benefits of their preparation, what should be included (while also covering 'how to communicate the proposals'), what constitutes good practice, and 'some of the pitfalls that should be avoided when preparing the document'.

### **Severn Bridge tolls**

The UK Government has announced that the tolls on the Severn crossings are to be abolished for all vehicles at the end of 2018. It is said that more than 25 million drivers a year would benefit from the removal of the charges and regular users of the two bridges by car could save as much as £1,400 a year.

The Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns has said that ending the tolls would 'strengthen the links between communities and help to transform the joint economic prospects of south Wales and the south-west of England'. The tolls have been in place since the first Severn Bridge was opened in 1966; the bridges will be operated by Highways England when they return to public ownership next year. ■