

Wales planning news



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Headline news

Housing land supply in decline in Wales

New figures published by the Welsh Government covering housing land availability in Wales for 2016 have shown that only six out of 25 Welsh local planning authorities (LPAs) are able to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (as at 1 April 2016) and four local authorities were unable to undertake a Joint Housing Land Availability Study this year.

The situation has worsened in comparison to April 2015 figures, as eight Welsh (LPAs) could demonstrate a five-year supply at that time.

As explained in the document's summary, the Welsh Government-commissioned 'Longitudinal viability study of the planning process' (February 2017) found that viability is a key reason for delay in delivery. The findings of the research are still being considered by the Welsh Government.

Heritage impact statement requirement in force

From 1 September, any application for listed building or conservation area consent in Wales is required to provide a heritage impact statement (HIS); the HIS replaces the design and access statement (DAS) previously required as part of the application process for listed building consent.

The requirement is detailed in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Wales) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2017. Guidance on the new requirement and the preparation of

HIS is included in the best practice guide, 'Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales' (published in May this year). Further details can be found [here](#), a new Lichfields' blog on the HIS requirement.

It is worth noting that a DAS will continue to be required in support of a planning application within a World Heritage Site or conservation area, when one or more dwellings are planned or when the floor space created is 100sqm or more; further guidance is available in 'Design and Access Statement in Wales' (July 2017).

First-ever Wales Natural Resources Policy published

The Welsh Secretary for the Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, has published the first-ever Natural Resources Policy (NRP); this is the second statutory 'product' of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The NRP details three national priorities for the management of natural resources aimed at delivering the Welsh Government's well-being goals to benefit communities and the economy, as well as improving the environment.

The identified priorities are:

- The delivery of nature-based solutions;
- Increasing renewable energy and resource efficiency; and
- Adopting a place-based approach.

The Welsh Environment Secretary, Lesley Griffiths, said:

'Everyone has a stake in our natural resources and a role to play in ensuring these resources are sustainably managed. [...] we cannot take this for granted. Climate change, the decline of biodiversity and our ecosystems and other factors are already driving change, with very real consequences for our communities.' ■

QUOTE OF THE MONTH



Working with nature and being more efficient with our natural resources has crucial benefits – less pollution, less waste and less impact. Managing them to best effect can play an important role in supporting our communities and future competitiveness, creating jobs and new business opportunities in Wales.

Welsh Environment Secretary Lesley Griffiths, announcing the publication of the first-ever Natural Resources Policy for Wales

THE LICHFIELDS PERSPECTIVE

The decline in authorities having a five year housing land supply is disappointing. Whilst viability is a significant area of developer concern, there are other reasons for councils' decreasing performance. Addressing them all is vital to overcoming the housing crisis. More flexible and innovative solutions are needed, including incentivising making a step change to improve their housing land supply position.

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National Development Framework for Wales: summary of consultation responses published

The Welsh Government has published a summary of responses received, following last year's Call for Evidence and Projects i.e. for information to assist with the development of spatial planning policies in the National Development Framework (NDF) for Wales.

The document highlights that almost 80 submissions were made in response to the Call for Evidence and Projects, which led to the identification of almost 190 individual pieces of evidence and the submission of almost 230 projects.

On the latter, more than 50% of the submitted projects relate to transport, while another 10% to decarbonisation and energy. Almost half of all project submissions were located in Mid Wales (67 overall) and South east Wales (43 overall).

The summary document specifies that all the submissions are now part of the extensive evidence base for the NDF. The next step in the NDF's development is the publication of a consultation on NDF Issues and Options which is expected to take place in April next year.

Suspension of Right to Buy in Cardiff

Wales Communities and Children Secretary Carl Sargeant has announced the suspension of Right to Buy in Cardiff, to 'ensure social housing is available' in the city.

The announcement came as the necessary legislation to abolish the Right to Buy in Wales is currently proceeding through the Assembly. As reported by the Welsh Government, over the past 30 years almost 140,000 council homes were sold as a result of the policy, leading to an overall 45% reduction in social housing stock.

The Welsh Communities Secretary said:

'I have agreed to Cardiff Council's application to suspend the Right to Buy to help them deal with the pressure their social housing is facing and to ensure that homes are available to those who need them. While this will help one area

for a short period of time, we also need to address this issue for the long term. This is why we are legislating to abolish the Right to Buy in Wales.'

Additional EU investment to support growth in Port Talbot

The Welsh Government has announced that £3.5m of EU funds have been secured to be invested in the first phase of a major development project that aims to create a new business hub in Port Talbot's former docks.

The funding is to support a 2-year redevelopment project for three hectares of brownfield land, the construction of a new access road and the upgrade of an existing road at Harbourside, Port Talbot. The scheme will prepare the ground for the development of almost 18,600sqm of industrial and office space, which is expected to be able to accommodate around 1,600 jobs.

Welsh Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

'This is an exciting milestone in the redevelopment of the Harbourside area of Port Talbot, which will bring new business opportunities and jobs. The investment is great news for the area and provides another valuable boost to drive the local economy.'

The Planning Series: 10 – Environmental Impact Assessment

The National Assembly for Wales Research Service has published a brief guide which provides an overview of environmental impact assessment (EIA).

The paper highlights: what EIAs are; when they are required; the screening procedure; what happens to planning applications without an Environmental Statement; what EIAs have to include; how Environmental Statements are taken into account; and revisions to the EIA Directive. ■