



RTPI Cymru
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e-mail response sent to: SeneddFinance@senedd.wales

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to: Welsh Government Draft Budget 2023-24

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe, representing some 27,000 spatial planners. RTPI Cymru represents the RTPI in Wales, with 1,300 members. The Institute seeks to advance the science and art of planning, working for the long-term common good and well-being of current and future generations. The RTPI develops and shapes policy affecting the built environment, works to raise professional standards and supports members through continuous education, training and development.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above Inquiry. Our planning related comments are set out below and are relevant to the following consultation questions.

4. Are Welsh Government plans to build a greener economy clear and sufficiently ambitious? Do you think there is enough investment being targeted at tackling the climate change and nature emergency? Are there any potential skill gaps that need to be addressed to achieve these plans?

Investing in resilience measures will reduce costs in the long term by reducing the impact of flooding, drought and other climate change impacts. RTPI Cymru has more recently called for the issue of climate adaptation policy to be considered further at a national level. This will require joined-up working across sectors, along with funding to support delivery of policy on the ground. Adequately resourced, collaborative working will be the key to involving a wide range of stakeholders. How this collaboration can be properly encouraged, funded and structured is an important discussion.

7. The Committee would like to focus on a number of other specific areas in the scrutiny of the Budget. Do you have any specific comments on any of the areas identified below?

- Whether there has been adequate investment from the Welsh Government in basic public sector infrastructure.**
- Whether it is clear how evidence and data is driving Welsh Government priority setting and budget allocations.**
- What are the key opportunities for Government investment to support 'building back better' (i.e. supporting an economy and public services that better deliver against the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations Act)?**

The planning system sets the context for development and creates the enabling conditions for a sustainable and healthy built environment. Planning looks to the long term, acting in the public interest, balancing competing interests and setting the framework for a sustainable future.

Building on the RTPI's Plan the World we Need, we published a paper on [Plan the Wales we Need](#). The paper examines how planning can contribute to calls for a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery, setting out our views on the key opportunities for investment. These are summarised below:

- Deliver long-term climate mitigation and resilience actions, including biodiversity enhancement;
- Invest in and seize the opportunities from Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 to prioritise the right investment decisions;
- Support and use the hierarchy of plans to make long-term decisions, including supporting the delivery of Strategic Development Plans;
- Introduce the Infrastructure Consenting Bill;
- Support and invest in the delivery of quality homes in the right places across Wales;
- Enable the delivery of active travel;
- Support the delivery of vibrant town centres;
- Invest in planning as an essential public service.

Planners have a forward looking and key, co-ordinating role and have the skills to think systemically and work strategically, to shape the vision for better places and lead positive change. While planning offers an established and effective process to facilitate a sustainable future for Wales, it needs to be invested in and strengthened to be able to deliver expectations. The RTPI and other stakeholders have long called for the adequate resourcing of the planning system in order for it to achieve its full potential in addressing the complex and challenging issues society faces.

For the planning system in Wales to fulfil its statutory duties and deliver quality placemaking there is a critical need for more investment. Local planning authority departments are

significantly underfunded, and research shows that planning services are suffering most severely of all local government services due to budget cuts. Analysis by the [Wales Audit Office](#) shows that “all planning services – policy, development and building control – have, since 2008-09, seen significant cuts in expenditure with budgets having fallen by 50% in real terms, considering inflation. Net expenditure has fallen from £45 million in 2008-09 to £22.8 million in 2017-18. The biggest cut has been to development control budgets where spend has reduced by 59%.”

Responding to a request by the Minister for Climate Change to understand the well-being of planners in Wales operating under challenging circumstances, RTPI Cymru is exploring the issues, impacts, causes and potential solutions to support the profession deliver the planning system. The aim of this is to better understand the pressures being faced and undertake a health check of the profession in Wales. It will also provide indicators of action which could be taken, not just by the RTPI, but also Welsh Government and other parties.

Planning plays a crucial role in delivering a wide range of valuable outcomes; addressing the climate and biodiversity emergencies, economic development and supporting communities across Wales. However, it is widely recognised that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), along with the wider public sector, are struggling to meet expectations and unlock the value planning has to offer with the current investment. RTPI Cymru recognises that addressing the shortfall in investment at the current time is not straightforward and there is a need to consider wider additional solutions.

Financial support to increase the number of public sector planners employed, funding for specialist knowledge and investing in efficiency-saving digital technologies can help support a stronger, proactive and strategic planning system. A well-resourced, plan-led, positive planning service can deliver corporate objectives helping to achieve local and national sustainable development and climate action goals. The RTPI believes that making the role of the Chief Planning Officers a more prominent and strategic position within local authorities would positively influence the outcomes of planning and support good growth and a balanced recovery.

In 2020 the RTPI commissioned a report into the business case for investing in planning, '[Invest and Prosper](#)'. “Analysis and research for this report finds that the planning systems across the UK underpin economic, social, environmental and health outcomes.”

If you require further assistance, please contact RTPI Cymru on [REDACTED] or e-mail Roisin Willmott at walespolicy@rtpi.org.uk

Yours sincerely,



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Director
RTPi Cymru