

**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Pwyllgor Amgylchedd a Chynaliadwyedd
Egwyddorion cyffredinol Bil yr Amgylchedd (Cymru)
Ymateb gan Y Sefydliad Cynllunio Trefol Brenhinol
yng Nghymru (RTPI Cymru)
EB 18**

**National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
General principals of the Environment (Wales) Bill
Response from The Royal Town Planning Institute
Cymru (RTPI Cymru)
EB 18**



Royal Town Planning Institute
Cymru (RTPI Cymru)
PO Box 2465
Cardiff
CF23 0DS
Tel +44 (0)29 2047 3923
email walespolicy@rtpi.org.uk
Website: www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_cymru

12 June 2015

e-mail response sent to: SeneddEnv@Assembly.Wales

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to: Environment and Sustainability Committee inquiry into the general principles of the Environment (Wales) Bill

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe, representing some 23,000 spatial planners. RTPI Cymru represents the RTPI in Wales, with 1,100 members. The Institute seeks to advance the science and art of spatial planning for the benefit of the public. As well as promoting spatial planning, 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 comment on the above consultation.

The response has been formed drawing on the expertise of the RTPI Cymru Policy and Research Forum which includes a cross section of planning practitioners from the private and public sectors and academia from across Wales.

We have the following points to make in relation to some of the proposals outlined in the Bill.

RTPI Cymru supports the general principles of the Bill and its underlying themes, however further clarification is required regarding its position in relation to the various other related Bills – including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Planning (Wales) Bill. There is a need for strong and clear links between the Environment (Wales) Bill, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Planning (Wales) Bill. We agree that the principle that connects these three pieces of legislation is the ‘commitment to sustainable development’, (para 125 of the Explanatory Memorandum) however further information is now required on the direct practical implications of this. See our comments below on links with the NDF, SDPs, Areas Statements, LDPs, Place Plans, and Well-being Plans etc. A table showing the hierarchy of plans, statements and documents could usefully clarify the

links and leads amongst the various documents. This table should also set out the timings of each document, including which takes precedent and when they will be revised etc.

We support the principles for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources set out in Part 1 of the Bill, as introduced – in particular their relationship to payment for ecosystem services (PES), to projects within wider catchments, the relationship to the newly published water strategy, interim standards on SuDS and opportunities for Natural Flood Management.

The Bill aims to provide Natural Resources Wales (NRW) with “a clear purpose which embeds the principles of sustainable management of natural resources into the decision-making of the body and an overarching objective for the delivery of its functions”. (para 52, Explanatory Memorandum) While we welcome this update of NRW’s core purpose we refer back to our comments presented to the National Assembly for Wales Environment and Sustainability Committee to inform their annual scrutiny (2015) of NRW - http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1309807/rtpi_cymru_nrw_response.pdf. In our evidence we noted some difficulties in the transition from separate authorities to NRW and in general felt the organisation to be struggling to deliver in some key areas. RTPI Cymru’s main cause for concern is around resources and whether NRW are adequately resourced, particularly in taking forward the changes set out in the various Bills and Acts that have made, or are making their way through the National Assembly. It is vital that NRW adequately resourced to fulfil their updated purpose.

The Bill sets out a proposal for “a general biodiversity and resilience of ecosystem duty”. (para 68, Explanatory Memorandum) This will apply to public authorities. RTPI Cymru supports the principle of the proposal however further clarification is required, in particular relating to how this will be put in place and how it fits with other existing requirements and processes, without duplicating or creating an additional layer of policy.

Paragraph 80 places “a statutory duty to provide an assessment of the state and trend of natural resources in Wales to identify whether progress is being made to meet the objectives of the sustainable management of natural resources”. This will take the form of a State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) published by NRW. In addition “Welsh Ministers are required to prepare, produce and review a National Natural Resources Policy (NNRP) document”. (para 85 Explanatory Memorandum.) Further information is required on the purpose of the report and NNRP. How does this fit with other policy documents, both existing – such as Planning Policy Wales (PPW), and those proposed under the various new Bills/Acts – such as the National Development Framework (NDF). What role will the NNRP play? We note that paragraph 89 of the Explanatory Memorandum sets out the intention to

“promote integrated policy development, aligning the national policy within the context of the development of the Welsh Ministers’ well-being objectives (in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) and the National Development Framework (as proposed in the Planning (Wales) Bill”, however further explanation is required on specifically how this will be achieved. This requires further clarification and should be clearly set out on the face of the Bill. The level of scrutiny also requires consideration and should be comparable with other documents playing a similar role.

NRW are required to “prepare, produce and review area statements in order to implement one or more of the priorities and opportunities outlined in the NNRP at an appropriate spatial scale”. (para 92 Explanatory Memorandum) Again we question the relationship of area statements with other documents, including Local Development Plans (LDPs) and the new Strategic Development Plans (SDPs), Place Plans and Well-being Plans etc. This is particularly important given that we note the Bill, as introduced states, NRW “must consider whether— (a) another plan, strategy or similar document should be incorporated into the area statement, or (b) the area statement should be incorporated into another plan, strategy or similar document.” (pages 6/7). What scrutiny process will be in place to oversee this?

In relation to climate change the Bill provides for a number of measures to ensure that regular updated information is made available to the National Assembly for Wales on progress in relation to meeting the targets and how the targets and budgets can be met. Further information is required in relation to who would be expected to collect the information. In relation to Local Planning Authorities this could have major implications on their already stretched resources and would need to be dovetailed with the existing data they are required to collect and report to Welsh Government.

Clarification is needed on the implications for the management of designated landscapes. In relation to this we refer to the current independent Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales -

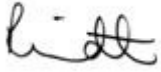
<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/countrysidecoastalaccess/landscapes/?lang=en> and RTPi Cymru responses to both Stage 1 and 2 of the Review.-

<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/the-rtpi-near-you/rtpi-cymru/policy-in-wales/>

If you require further assistance, have any queries or require clarification of any points made, please contact RTPI Cymru on 029 2047 3923 or e-mail Roisin Willmott at

walespolicy@rtpi.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Willmott', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Roisin Willmott MRTPI

Director
RTPI Cymru