



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru  
The National Assembly for Wales

# Wales Spatial Plan - Pathway to Sustainable Development Consultation



September 2001

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Pathway to Sustainable Development

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**The National Assembly for Wales**

## Foreword

As Assembly Minister for Environment I am personally committed to the preparation of the Wales Spatial Plan promised in our strategic plan Better Wales.

In simple terms, spatial planning helps manage the location of human activities and their relationship to the environment. I believe that a spatial plan for Wales is needed to address the strengths and weaknesses of present development patterns, and provide the land use context for achieving the environmental, social and economic objectives identified in Better Wales.

It will mean facing up to some challenging issues and difficult decisions. As part of this process we need to look into the future, some 15 –20 years ahead, and to ask ourselves where we want to be as a nation, and how we see ourselves as part of the United Kingdom and Europe.

This consultation is the first step towards developing the **Wales Spatial Plan**. The document charts the background to the Wales Spatial Plan, states its purposes, identifies issues, and suggests ways to deliver it. It gives you the chance to shape the plan we are developing. We have already had initial consultations with local authorities, public and private agencies, representatives of the business community, academic institutions and voluntary groups. It is important that we consult widely to ensure that everyone's views are considered and integrated into this plan. I encourage you to take part in this consultation so that it properly reflects opinions across Wales and invite you to make comments by December 14 2001.

Sue Essex AM  
Minister for Environment

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# Wales Spatial Plan

## Pathway to Sustainable Development

### Consultation September 2001

#### Introduction

1.1 The National Assembly for Wales is committed to preparing a new 'national spatial framework for planning' by 2003 (subsequently referred to as the Wales Spatial Plan (WSP)). This is to be 'linked to Assembly policies and updated regularly with the help of those affected' (Better Wales March 2000 and endorsed by the Partnership Agreement).

1.2 The Plan will set a clear context for the development necessary for Wales to fulfil its ambitions for economic success, social inclusion and a quality environment. It will reflect the guiding themes of the National Assembly i.e. sustainable development, tackling social disadvantage, and equality of opportunity. It will be prepared in partnership with local government, business and the voluntary sector. It will build on lessons learned from contacts with nations both in the UK and Europe. We want to ensure that it reflects **your** views.

#### What is a Spatial Plan?

**A spatial plan is a means of considering how to plan the future location of human activities to contribute best to meeting environmental, social and economic aims.**

*Figure 1*

## How can the Wales Spatial Plan do this?

2.1 The specific purposes of **our** plan are to:

- support and **influence the** spatial expression **of** the policies and programmes of the National Assembly and others, including the Sustainable Development Scheme, Planning Policy Wales, the National Economic Development Strategy, Objective 1 Single Programming Document, Transport Framework, and Rural Development Plan;
- address national issues of development and restraint on the broad scale; balancing the needs of environmental protection, enhancement and the sustainable use of environmental and other resources, with development which is necessary to support economic well being and successful communities;
- provide a spatial context for major decisions and for the allocation of resources by the Assembly and others;
- provide a strategic context for local planning authority plan-making and decisions; assisting the preparation of unitary development plans, local transport plans and community plans which express local needs and circumstances.
- reflect a wider perspective on strategic links, regional issues and matters extending beyond the boundaries of a single authority, and;
- reflect European spatial planning programmes and initiatives, including the European Spatial Development Perspective, which requires the spatial implications of European, national and local policies, plans and programmes to be identified within a framework of “balanced competitiveness, economic and social cohesion, and sustainable development” and provide a context for the strategies developed to implement the Objective 1 programme in Wales.

*Do you agree with the proposed purposes of the Plan?*

*Are there any additional purposes which should be considered?*

## Building blocks for the Plan

3.1 A **Key Challenges** event was held in Cardiff on 7 December 2000 to which significant decision takers in the Assembly, local government, public agencies, community bodies and private sectors in Wales were invited. This event explored the key challenges for Wales that could be addressed by the plan within the Assembly's commitment to sustainable development. The event identified the need for the plan to balance the economic, environmental and social aspects of the key land use challenges facing Wales. A summary report of the event is published on the Assembly web site at

[http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiplanning/content/spatial/spf\\_2000\\_e.htm](http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiplanning/content/spatial/spf_2000_e.htm)

3.2 Preparation of the Plan will also build upon a **Research Study** on Comparative Spatial Planning Methodologies commissioned from Cardiff University and ECOTEC Research and Consulting. A copy of the final report is on the Assembly web site at

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiplanning/content/spatial/spatialresearchstudy-e.pdf>

3.3 The objectives for the research study were:

- to take forward the National Assembly for Wales vision for the Wales Spatial Plan and suggest the most appropriate spatial planning methodologies for use in its preparation;
- to advise on the range of issues to be addressed by the Wales Spatial Plan; and
- to assess the data and research requirements for preparation of the Wales Spatial Plan.

3.4 The key components and recommended approach of this research are set out below.

### *Comparative Methodologies Research Findings*

#### **Key components**

- Stated, or understood, rationale for the spatial strategy
- Identified purpose
- Statement of key principles
- Agreed status
- Appropriate format
- Suitable approach
- Clarity in its relationship to the wider planning system
- Clarity of relationship to other strategies
- Choice of type of strategy
- Choice of type of background work
- The degree of consultation undertaken
- Scrutiny process
- Sustainability appraisal
- Appropriate timescales
- Monitoring and review procedures

#### **Options:**

- Vision statement;
- Strategic framework (either analytically focussed, or based on key principles); or
- Master plan.

#### **Preferred approach:**

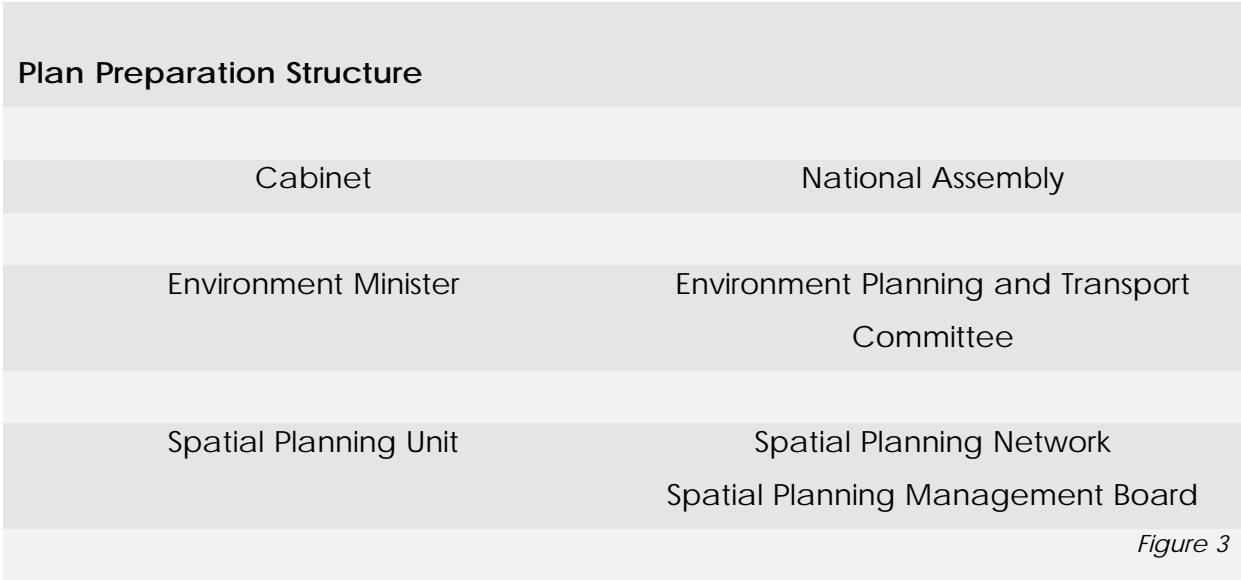
- A strategic framework based on research and analysis.

*Figure 2*

## The Way Forward

4.1 The recommendations of the research study have been accepted by the Environment Minister as the basis for developing the Wales Spatial Plan, subject to the result of this consultation exercise.

4.2 Figure 3 illustrates the main contributors to plan preparation. To co-ordinate preparation of the plan a **Spatial Planning Unit** has been established in the National Assembly's Planning Division. The team will receive support from other officials in Planning Division and other parts of the Assembly as necessary. In addition to the general management of the project the Spatial Planning team will have the responsibility to ensure that the Assembly Minister for Environment; other Assembly Ministers; Environment, Planning and Transport Committee; and other partners are kept fully informed of progress.



4.3 Preparation of the plan will be assisted by a **Management Board**. The members have been drawn from representative bodies in the voluntary, business and local government sectors as well as from the Assembly and its agencies (Figure 4). The Board will meet on a regular basis, having begun in June 2001. Its remit is to:

- provide advice on the management, scope, form and content of the WSP taking into consideration the priorities of the National Assembly for Wales;
- provide advice and guidance on the research and data requirements necessary to support the preparation of the WSP;
- monitor progress on WSP preparation to ensure that it remains on time, including the provision of advice on corrective action where necessary, and
- advise on the form and content of the WSP consultation process.

<b>Spatial Planning Management Board</b>	
Academic representative	Wales Wildlife and Countryside Link
CBI Wales	Welsh Development Agency
Construction Industries Council	Welsh local Government Association
Countryside Council for Wales	National Assembly for Wales
Environment Agency Wales	

*Figure 4*

4.4 A larger **Spatial Planning Network** has also been established to provide a forum for informed participation and consultation on the scope, form and content of the plan. It includes wide representation from key interests including senior representatives from local authorities, regional groups, business, the voluntary sector, academia, and Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies. Regional planning, economic and transport partners are also represented, to ensure that regional interests and issues are reflected fully in the plan. The Network will meet at key stages in the process of preparing the plan but its members and other interested organisations and individuals will also have opportunities to contribute throughout the process. The first meeting was held on 20 June 2001 to consider the outcome of the methodology research and possible issues that the plan should address.

- *Are the processes set up to manage the preparation of the plan the right ones to meet the ambitious timetable?*
- *Will they secure full involvement and inputs from partner organisations and all with an interest in the process?*
- *If not, what improvements could be considered?*

4.5 Wide consultation will take place on this document and again when the draft plan is published. Involvement will be sought from the diverse range of communities within Wales. Copies of the consultation documents and a regularly updated Progress Report will be available on the Wales Spatial Plan web pages on the Assembly's Internet site. However in order to facilitate the exchange of information and inputs from partner organisations and all others interested in the emerging plan participation will not be limited to traditional consultation periods or methods. Participation will be designed to be an ongoing process. For example a discussion forum will be established on the WSP web pages and regular media briefings will be held, and press releases issued, during the preparation of the plan for the general and technical media. This is intended to secure wide public awareness of, contributions to, and in due course broad support for, the plan.

4.6 Information, research findings and spatial planning ideas will be exchanged regularly with officials in Government in England (including Regional Offices), Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It is hoped that wider consultation can develop based on Wales' twinning links to other nations and regions within the European Union and beyond.

- *Are the proposals for consultation and for providing information about preparation of the Plan adequate?*
- *What other means is there to spread information and gather ideas and support?*

## Plan Issues

5.1 A preliminary list of issues which the plan could address have been identified from the conclusions of the methodology research and meetings with partner organisations, including the Key Challenges event, first meeting of the Spatial Planning Network and meetings with the 4 regional planning groups.

### Possible Plan Issues

- identifying distinctive features and characteristics of Wales and the forces of change that may impact on them;
- identifying the spatial effects of relevant land use and non land use issues;
- looking at how to secure sustainable growth while protecting and enhancing the environment;
- promoting spatial balance appropriate to the different regions and areas within Wales;
- addressing the spatial consequences of globalisation;
- identifying broad measures of provision required for economic and housing development to support economic well being and successful communities;
- identifying strategic areas of economic opportunity such as gateway locations, strategic sites, clusters of linked activities and centres of academic and specialist or technical excellence;

- identifying factors which support balanced development including, telecommunications, energy and water supplies and inhibiting factors such as land form, land instability and flood risk;
- addressing both distinct urban and rural issues and their interface including regeneration, making best use of existing settlements to accommodate growth, securing viable and diverse rural economies and market towns;
- providing a framework for the local designation of Green Belts in pressured areas;
- identifying how to make best use of existing transport systems, identifying necessary and sustainable improvements for long distance links, the removal of bottlenecks, improved gateways and accessibility;
- supporting local distinctiveness and cultural identities in Wales including the well being of the Welsh Language;
- supporting the protection of statutorily designated areas, the countryside, landscapes, the historic environment, natural habitats, the undeveloped coast, and the best and most versatile agricultural land;
- safeguarding non-renewable resources, such as minerals, against alternative and inappropriate forms of development, and ensure their prudent and efficient use;
- considering the implications of climate change, and;
- taking account of cross border linkages and relationships to adjacent areas of England , to Ireland, and internationally.

Figure 5

- *Are the issues identified the right ones for the Plan to address?*
- *If not, what are the key issues?*
- *Or should the Plan concentrate on a smaller number of key issues and if so which?*

## Proposed Duration and Status of the Plan

6.1 The plan will cover a period of 20 years, although some of its conclusions will be for a shorter period whilst others may address longer term issues. It is expected there will be a need for continuous monitoring, and review approximately every 2 to 5 years. The period covered will roll forward as the plan is monitored and revised so that it responds to, and influences, economic, technological or cultural changes in society.

6.2 The plan is proposed to have the status of national planning policy. This means that it will be adopted by the National Assembly and its agencies as setting the strategic direction. It will also have to be taken into account by local planning authorities in preparing unitary development plans and where appropriate be material to planning decisions. It will be a valuable guide for other organisations and interests in their activities.

- *Do you agree with the proposed time scale and status proposed for the plan?*
- *If not what alternatives would you suggest?*

## Form and Content

7.1 The plan will be:

- focused – by concentrating on spatial issues which impact on development, land use patterns and transport;
- strategic – by leaving matters of detail to other appropriate plans and programmes of the Assembly, its agencies, local government and others;

- joined up - by addressing issues in a thematic way, rather than as individual topics;
- flexible – by providing clear direction on key issues, yet having the flexibility to cope with uncertainty;
- accessible – by providing a written report accompanied by clear maps of key spatial data, issues and strategic proposals, and;
- evidence based – by using means such as Geographical Information Systems will provide a flexible means of displaying and using data. Other tools may be added, if so they will be simple to understand and use.

- *Do you agree with the initial conclusions on form and content?*
- *What additional elements or improvements do you suggest?*

## Further Research

8.1 Research is being commissioned as a priority to:

- identify the main drivers of spatial change in Wales and its constituent regions;
- identify realistic spatial development scenarios for Wales, its regions and sub-regions, and;
- identify the land use and transport implications of these scenarios.

8.2 The research will provide an opportunity to achieve a regional input into preparation of the plan. Involving regional planning, transport and economic groups will also help to focus debate on the appropriate spatial issues and scenarios within regions and generate consensus on strategic solutions. Valuable contributions can be expected from the strategic work and documents prepared as a result of collaborative working by groups of local planning authorities in Wales including:

Strategic Planning Guidance For South East Wales Volume 1 – Prepared by the South East Wales Strategic Planning Group, January 2000;

Regional Planning Guides for North Wales – Prepared by the North Wales Planning Group (Revised Draft);

Mid and West Wales Strategic Planning Statement - Prepared by the Mid and West Wales Strategic Planning Group. Superseded by Regional Planning Guidance (South West Wales) for the authorities of Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, and;

Regional Planning Guidance (South West Wales) – Prepared by the South West Wales Strategic Planning Group, April 2000.

8.3 Key cross-border issues identified by the above collaborative documents, Regional Planning Guidance for Regions of England adjacent to Wales and the emerging National Spatial Strategy for the Republic of Ireland will also be examined. Preparatory work on the Corus Strategy will also provide a valuable input into the plan.

8.4 In addition there are a number of regional documents prepared by the Regional Economic Forums and by the various transport consortia in Wales that will be relevant to this work. A fuller list of relevant strategies is provided by the Regional Strategies Scoping Study Wales on the Assembly's web site [http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiplanning/content/research/rsss-1\\_e.htm](http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiplanning/content/research/rsss-1_e.htm)

***What other key areas of data collection or research should be considered?***

## Timetable

9.1 The key outputs are:

Key Outputs	
Consultation on Plan Brief	September - November 2001
Publication of Draft plan	Spring 2002
Publication of Plan	December 2002

*Figure 6*

9.2 This timetable is considered to be achievable provided that the purposes and outputs are kept focussed, that preparation is project managed and the emphasis is firmly on inclusive working designed to develop consensus in the final product.

*What suggestions do you have for how this ambition can be achieved in practice?*

## Appraisal, Monitoring and Review

10.1 The developing plan will be subject to a sustainability appraisal throughout its preparation.

10.2 The plan will be subject to regular monitoring and review. To facilitate this a range of indicators, linked to the WSP objectives, will be identified. The success of the WSP will be measured against these indicators. An annual monitoring report will be produced for approval by the Minister and Environment Planning and Transport Committee (EPT).

10.3 To ensure that the plan remains relevant to the needs of Wales a review will take place at intervals of no more than 5 years. Review of the WSP will be linked, as far as possible, to the review of other Assembly strategies such as the National Economic Development Strategy, Transport Framework and Sustainable Development Scheme although timescales are unlikely to match exactly. Monitoring of indicators will also be used to identify whether earlier review is required.

*Are the proposed appraisal, monitoring and review arrangements adequate?*

## Scrutiny

11.1 The preparation of the plan will be the subject to regular reports to the Assembly's Environment, Planning and Transport Committee. The draft plan will be subject to wide consultation. A final version will be considered by the Assembly Cabinet and presented to the National Assembly in a plenary session. These arrangements will provide opportunities for democratic discussion and endorsement. In addition the input of local authorities, their regional groupings and other bodies during the process of preparation of the plan will have ensured a

wider scrutiny and input. It is not presently envisaged that any further mechanism for scrutiny of the plan will be required. However, this is an issue on which views are invited and which will need to be tested as work progresses.

*Are the proposed scrutiny mechanisms adequate to ensure the plan is widely supported?*

*What alternative or additional scrutiny mechanisms could be considered within the tight timetable for plan preparation*