

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Positive Planning / Draft Planning (Wales) Bill

Joint submission by One Voice Wales and Planning Aid Wales

This submission is made jointly by Planning Aid Wales and One Voice Wales. It follows evidence given by both organisations to the Environment and Sustainability Committee meeting on 19th March 2014.

1. One Voice Wales and Planning Aid Wales support the general thrust of proposals contained in the Positive Planning consultation.

2. Other evidence has highlighted barriers to effective community engagement in planning, principally lack of resources and raised expectations. We recognise these barriers but believe they can be avoided over time through:
 - Unitary authorities facilitating co-operation with and between Community and Town Councils;
 - Better use of Community and Town Council resources;
 - Making engagement real.

3. We identify the following aspects of the suite of evidence base reports as being particularly important.
 - 7 out of 10 people in Wales know very little about planning.
 - 6 out of 10 people want to have a greater say in planning.

[3.1.1 and 4.3.2, Public attitudes towards the planning system in Wales, Beaufort Research, June 2012]

- Front-loading the planning process improves public confidence.
- Town and Community Councils should have a more explicit role in planning.
- The crucial time for community engagement is during the preparation of Local Development Plans.

[3.46 and 3.47, Independent Advisory Group report, June 2012]

- The most prominent area of interaction between community and town councils and principal authorities is land use planning.
- Place Plans can contribute to sustainable development by providing a new focus for community engagement.
- Place Plans can aid resource allocation and support fine grain local regeneration.

[6.16 and 6.29, Developing a comprehensive understanding of Community and Town Councils in Wales, Professor Michael Woods, October 2013]

4. We see the following as essential requirements for effective community engagement in planning:

- The general public understands the broad 'shape' of the planning system.
- There are opportunities to engage at meaningful points in the planning process.
- All players have a clear understanding of the rules and constraints of engagement.
- There are clearly signposted routes and opportunities for participation.
- Unitary Authorities have a systematic approach to working with Community and Town Councils in their area.
- Training and accreditation.

5. Looking twenty years ahead, the Planning (Wales) Bill presents an opportunity to introduce new routes for effective community engagement. The following will help to realise the potential:

- A clear, integrated explanation of opportunities for public participation in planning at national, regional and local levels.
- Dedicated resources to support local planning authorities preparing Local Development Plans.
- Secondary legislation to define expectations on local planning authorities, developers and local communities.
- A clearly defined linkage between Place Plans and adopted Local Development Plans.