

Value of Planning in Wales

In May 2017 Arup and JLL working with the RTPI Cymru and in association with the Welsh Government, hosted a launch event for their research into the Value of Planning in Wales.

1 Introduction

Purpose of the research

The research seeks to take forward the challenge set at the RTPI Cymru Wales Planning Conference in June 2016, where AM Lesley Griffiths set out five ‘asks’ of the planning system and those involved in delivering it.

She stated that:

“If we want a more sustainable Wales we all need to recognise the value of planning including the economic value it creates. I look forward to working with the RTPI to explore how we can measure and explain the value of planning, including making the case for investment in the planning service.”

The research project is being undertaken to capture the economic, social and environmental value delivered by local authorities and public sector-led planning in Wales and to create a Tool that will help measure and promote the value of planning to a range of policy and practice audiences.

The current research builds on two previous reports into the value of planning which have demonstrated the significant benefit planning delivers to society, informing the debate about the relationship between planning and economic growth.

Purpose of the event

The purpose of the launch event was to bring together various representatives from the planning and built environment professions and ask them *“What they thought we should measure for the Value of Planning research and how we should measure it?”*

In order to focus the event, the 7 well-being goals outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 were used to guide discussions and organise four breakout groups as follows:

1. A prosperous and globally responsible Wales;
2. A healthier and more equal Wales;

3. A Wales of cohesive communities and vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language;
4. A resilient Wales and the Tool.

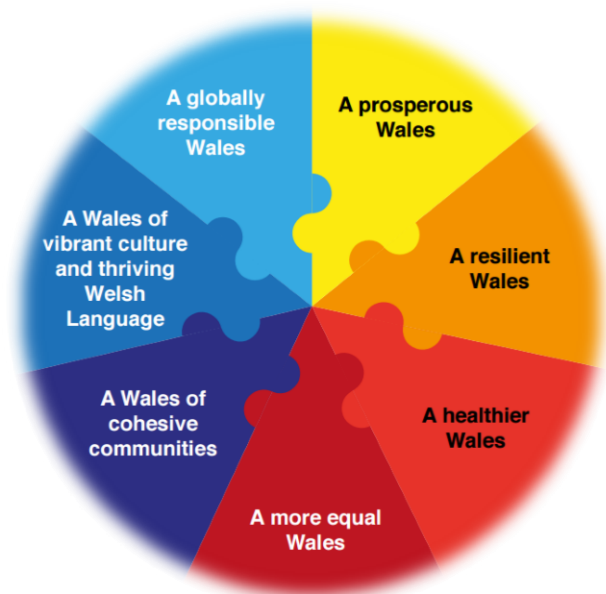
The event attracted representation from a range of planning bodies and organisations with an interest in the planning system including:

- Local planning authorities;
- The Welsh Government;
- Statutory consultees;
- Industry bodies;
- House builders;
- Land agents; and
- Sports and health representatives.

Representatives from the organisations were split into the breakout group most relevant to their background and each discussed a different set of goals.

Each group was facilitated by representatives from Arup who guided the discussion and helped the group identify what should be measured under each goal.

A summary of the group discussions is provided overleaf.



2 Event Summary

A summary of the discussions held in each breakout group is provided below.

In addition to the key indicators identified by each group, representatives also identified a number of data sources and key literature sources which have been further considered in the development of the research Tool.

1. A prosperous and globally responsible Wales

Prosperous Wales

The discussion focused on planning's contribution to viability, sites and value uplift, infrastructure investment and the environment. Key indicators included:

- Site viability and interventions to aid the delivery of new development;
- Providing a balanced portfolio of sites through the local planning process;
- Assisting to create and allocate sites that are development 'ready';
- Value created at the various stages of the planning process:
 - Allocation (Hope value)
 - Permissions (increase in land value)
 - Completions (value of the development completed)
- Remediation of sites, particularly in certain areas of Wales;
- Protection of key environmental resources (e.g. Wales' National Parks);
- Provision of open space, parks and recreation;
- Value associated with the tourism industry in Wales;
- Investment in key infrastructure which in turn can enable spin-off benefits through business growth and investment;
- Ensuring that infrastructure investment is in the right place through strategic planning; and
- Value generated through application fees (jobs in planning) and S106.

Globally responsible Wales

The discussion in relation to the value created through being globally responsible focussed on the environment and protection of valued assets, sustainability in its broadest sense and well-being. Key indicators included:

- Planning's promotion of sustainability objectives through policy and decision making;
- Protection of the environment;
- Protection of other assets (e.g. historic landscapes and buildings);
- Contributions to reductions in air quality and noise;
- Providing for sustainable energy and renewable energy resources and the benefits of this (e.g. resilience / carbon savings);
- Provision of infrastructure and new development that allows for sustainable transport choices – model shift;
- Waste and recycling and how planning contributes to this;
- Making Wales an attractive location to live and visit;
- Recognising the value of key sports, arts and cultural events on the global scale; and
- Well-being and quality of life.

2. A healthier and more equal Wales

A healthier Wales

The discussion focused around the selection of standardised approaches and tools used by the Public Health Observatory and NICE in the field of public health economics in Wales. The Tool must shift thinking on what is a valued outcome from the planning system away from purely 'growth' related metrics to a balanced portfolio which includes health, well-being and equality. Key indicators and consideration points identified included:

- Health and well-being effects of access to green-space;
- Health benefits of being in work and the creation of job opportunities;
- Health benefits of sport facilities planning;

- Health benefits of making town centres more accessible via cycling and walking provision;
- Health benefits of reduced congestion and improved air quality;
- Consider public health metrics such as Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALY);
- Recognise the value of the qualitative – make reference to the Wales National Well Being Indicators;
- Outcomes - quality of staff, relationships and processes should be considered as important as the quantitative outputs;
- Schools as community hubs for health and well-being. The role planning plays in community facility planning via planning obligations; and
- Cumulative impact of health and planning strategies on health and well-being.

A more equal Wales

The discussion focused around the benefits planning can facilitate in terms of equality in access to life opportunities (e.g. housing, education, careers and care). Key points for consideration included:

- Work equality. Delivering opportunities in a wide range of higher skilled jobs;
- Role of planning in the reduction of in work poverty;
- Role of planning in the diversification of Welsh economy to make more resilient;
- Access to work – investment in walking, cycling and strategic infrastructure including rail electrification;
- Role of planning in the provision of access to affordable housing and housing quality (Decent Homes Standard/Welsh Housing Qualities Standard); and
- How engaged in decision making and public life do people consider they are? National Survey for Wales. Statistically robust 12,000 respondents. Started in 2012.

3. A Wales of cohesive communities and vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

A Wales of cohesive communities

Discussions focused on the benefit planning can bring to connectivity and community collaboration. Key indicators identified included:

- The creation of local jobs and facilities;

- The creation of City Regions;
- The establishment of Enterprise Zones;
- The provision of strategic development;
- The preservation and protection of the environment;
- The preservation and creation of community facilities i.e. religious buildings, community centres;
- Regional housing supply;
- The creation of urban extensions, connected to existing communities;
- The creation of well-connected communities through the provision of public transport schemes and car infrastructure for rural communities;
- The duty for Local Planning Authorities (LPA) to collaborate; and
- The provision of facilities and initiatives that are community owned.

A Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh Language

Discussions focused around the protective values planning can instil and how contributions can foster and enhance culture. Key indicators identified included:

- The creation and provision for cultural centres and events and the wider economic benefits associated with these;
- The value of local heritage preservation and conservation;
- The value of bringing historic buildings back into community use;
- Local Development Plan (LDP) identifications of Welsh Language Impact Areas;
- The provision of planning obligations to ensure a thriving Welsh Language including for schools, facilities and cultural events;
- Active travel and accessibility to Welsh Language schools and faith schools with larger catchments;
- Planning contributions to the creation and preservation of sports provision;
- Welsh Language Impact Assessments; and
- The creation and contribution to Welsh Language Impact Plans.

4. A resilient Wales and the Tool

A resilient Wales

Discussions drew on the protective and adaptive nature of planning and the role it plays in creating sustainable and future proofed developments and environments.

- The prevention of inappropriate development;
- The protection of special values including SSSIs, environmental protection, green corridors;
- The provision of passive and local carbon housing;
- The requirement for homes heated by decentralised heating networks;
- The provision of climate change resistant infrastructure including SuDs, water and sewerage;
- The delivery of sustainable places;
- LDP delivery and design indicators;
- The fostering of a digital economy and home working;
- The provision of market interventions for securing community facilities;
- LPA well-being objectives and well-being plans;
- The ability to design out crime; and
- The provision of active travel to school.

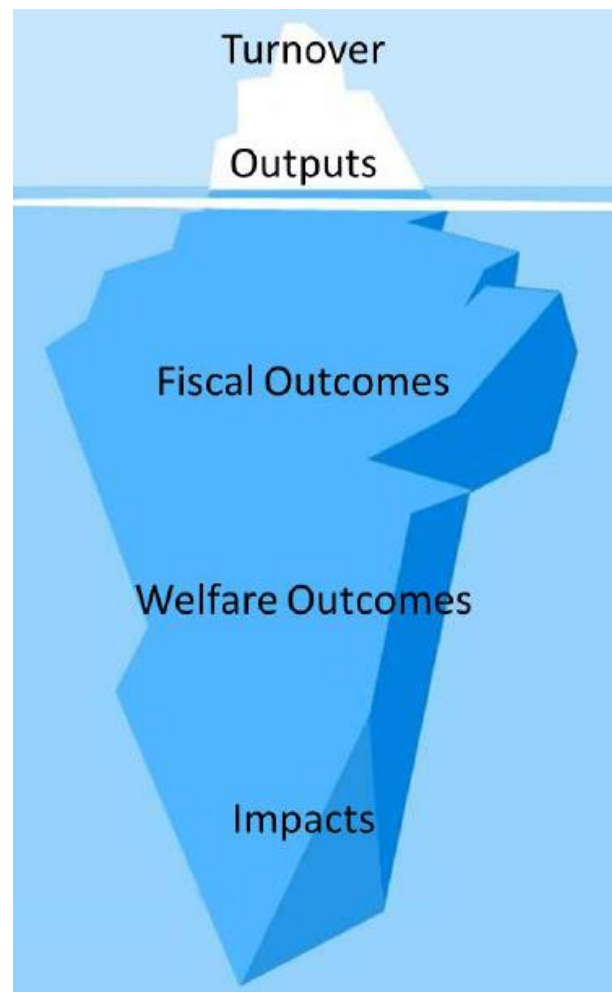
The Tool

In addition to discussing the well-being goals, breakout groups group also discussed what they wanted to see from the Tool and how it would work.

The Tool will aim to create a mechanism that can measure the value of planning. The principle metric for measurement will be financial, as a common base and one which is almost infinitely universal and comparable. However, at its most basic, these fiscal estimates are indicators of the relative scale of impact. In areas where monetary estimation is challenging, the event has helped us to consider what other metrics might be useable. Key points raised about the Tool included:

- The Tool should help LPAs bid for resources and perhaps flag warnings where the value might not be what's expected;
- The Tool should measure what we are proud of in planning;
- The Tool should be transparent, it should provide narratives, explanations and caveats;

- When using the Tool expectations should be managed. It will be important to recognise that the tool will only ever be a broad estimate;
- The Tool should be kept simple, it won't be used is members and users if they can't understand it;
- Consideration should be given as to whether LPA's could weigh up some factors over others – to personalise their priorities;
- The Tool needs to be user friendly and flexible. Could have a dashboard and should be able to drop it into a report;
- Whilst the Tool needs to measure monetary values it should not just measure that and also needs to measure homes, jobs, investment, leverage;
- Potential risk that the Tool could be misused by developers, FoI requests and complaints that their scheme wasn't included or not valued correctly;
- Consideration should be given to the Tool being rolled out to a wider user base i.e. PINS, NRW, CADW, DCWW; and
- The Tool should be positive and help planning shout about what we do.



3 Next Steps

Following the launch event the project team have been developing the next steps of the research. Key next steps include

- Tool development/specification;
- LPA survey gathering key data to build the tool;
- Tool pilot with a small selection of Welsh LPAs;
- Tool refinement;
- Full Tool run; and
- Final report and Tool launch.

Further updates will be provided as the study progress.

