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## Title Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

### Purpose

The purpose of this briefing is to summarise the main provisions of: Future Wales: The National Plan 2040, which is of interest to agriculture and our membership in Wales and to outline what we may seek to prioritise in the key areas outlined in the plan. The plan can be found using the following link:

[Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 | GOV.WALES](#)

### Background

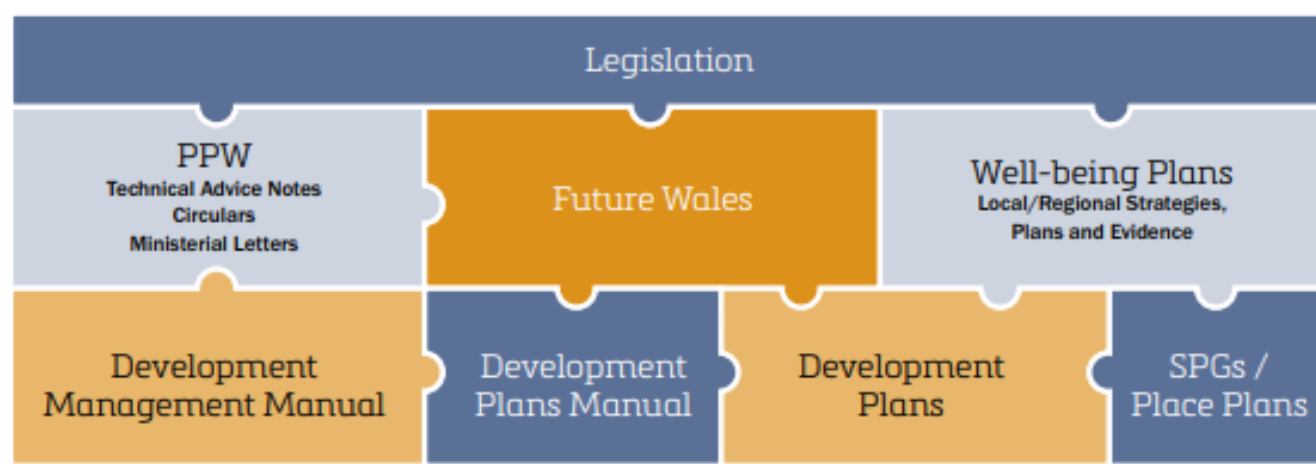
Published on the 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021, Future Wales is the Welsh Government's highest tier of the development framework and is the first national spatial development plan to be published anywhere in the UK. It sets out the desired direction of travel for development in Wales for the next 20 years and sets out a strategy for addressing some of the key national priorities through the planning system including: generating and sustaining economic development, achieving carbon neutrality and climate resilience, and developing strong ecosystems and green infrastructure.

The document is non-statutory, but all subsequent strategic and local plans are required to conform to its policies and must be regularly updated to ensure they continue to work effectively together with Future Wales.

Planning decisions at every level of the planning system in Wales must be taken with regard to the policy requirements of Future Wales and must be taken in accordance with the plan as a whole.

Future Wales replaces the Wales Spatial Plan.

The following diagram shows where Future Wales is placed within the planning policy framework.



Excluding the introduction, the document is set out across 3 sequential sections covering:

- DATA
- Specific and Strategic policies
- Regional Strategic Policy

This document is unique amongst UK planning policy as a significant proportion of the plan is given over to exploring rural issues and making the distinction between peri-urban and rural areas, rural areas adjacent to urban areas and remote rural communities. Planning authorities are told to be confident in identifying which areas are which, using their unique understanding of the issues and geography of an area to prepare appropriate definitions. Future Wales clearly communicates the understanding that a rural location with proximity to a major urban settlement will experience different issues compared with a more isolated rural location and it may not be appropriate for policies to be applied to both locations equally.

The plan also covers areas such as the low carbon economy, renewable energy and natural resources but the following policy areas have the most resonance with our membership at the moment.

## Significant Policies

### Policy 4: Supporting Rural Communities

Strategic and local plans in Wales must now identify their rural communities, assess their needs and set out policies that support them. The key areas for NFU members identified in Future Wales are:

- Age balanced communities
- Reversal of de-population
- Role of new affordable and market housing
- Employment
- Local services
- Mobility

### Policy 5: Supporting Rural Economies

Future Wales states that economic growth in rural towns and communities should be planned and managed through strategic and local development plans. Strategic and local development plans must plan positively to meet the employment needs of rural areas including employment arising from the foundational economy; the agricultural and forestry sector, including proposals for diversification, start-ups, and micro businesses.

The Welsh Government also strongly supports the development of innovative and emerging technology businesses and sectors to help rural areas unlock their full potential, broadening the economic base and creating higher paid jobs.

### Policy 7: Delivering Affordable homes

The plan contains a comprehensive housing needs analysis and shows that around 110k additional homes will be needed in the plan period. 2/3 in SE Wales, 1/5 in SW Wales and the rest in the North. 48% will be affordable homes and 52% will be at market rate.

The Plan recognises the decline in the delivery of affordable homes and states that the Welsh Government is committed to increasing the delivery of affordable housing, with a focus on social housing, in the areas where it is needed and will use its funding, land, planning and housing policies to drive delivery.

**Policy 8: Flooding**

The likelihood of increased rainfall and rising sea levels caused by climate change over the period of this plan is significant. This will increase the likelihood of damage caused by flooding and will be a constraining factor to development. This plan puts in place a robust framework that will direct development away from areas at risk of flooding but also accepts that many communities already exist in areas susceptible to flooding so the Welsh government is proposing to deliver nature-based and Green Infrastructure solutions to flooding as a priority as well as enhancing existing defences. Specific details will be published in local and strategic spatial plans and by the relevant public agencies but would typically include large scale SuDS and attenuation systems, extensive planting, and wetland habitat protection.

**Policy 9: Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure**

The Welsh Government will work with local authorities and Natural Resources Wales to reverse the decline in biodiversity, enhance the resilience of ecosystems, build, maintain and enhance biodiversity, promote the resilience of ecosystems and to maximise the provision of green infrastructure.

There is a need to extend and connect the existing designated sites to increase the ability of species and ecosystems to adapt to climate change and pollution. Local and strategic plans should consider how sites fit together within the wider network and any developments must consider the long-term needs of the habitats, ecosystem services and functions.

**Policy 10: International Connectivity**

The government will support the development of international connectivity hubs including Cardiff airport and the ports at Holyhead, Milford Haven, Pembroke and Fishguard.

Developing these strategic gateways will be critical in developing effective supply chains between Welsh agriculture and the rest of the world

**Policy 11: National Connectivity**

The government will work with partners and will support and invest in better rail and road networks including faster rail and a rapid charging network for Electric Vehicles.

**Policy 12: Regional Connectivity**

The government will support the roll out of Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEV) fuelling infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. Non-residential developments requiring car parking should expect to provide at least 10% of those spaces with an EV charging point.

**Policy 13: Supporting Digital Communication**

The government supports the provision of digital comms infrastructure (DI) across Wales. Local Planning Authorities must actively engage with DI providers to identify any future needs and set out specific policies in the strategic and local plans showing how this will be delivered. Any development proposals coming forward must include the provision of Gigabit capable broadband from the outset.

**Policy 14: Planning in Mobile Action Zones**

Mobile phone network coverage will be increased and will identify mobile action zones (MAZ) or “not-spots” showing where network coverage is low, poor, or non-existent. The WG, LPA’s and telecoms operators must work together to provide coverage in any MAZ identified.

Poor connectivity contributes significantly to poor productivity and impacts on a business’s ability to remain sustainable.

**Policy 15: National Forest**

Appropriate sites and mechanisms will be identified for the development of a national forest. At least 2000 hectares per year will be planted to provide a quality environment which comprises connected ecosystems, biodiversity, and habitats. The forest will provide new jobs and associated uses such as leisure and tourism. Any rural enterprise putting forward an application for planning permission which incorporates, or forms part of this policy strand will be supported.

**Policy 16: Heat Networks**

Heating for comfort and hot water is responsible for around 40% of a building's energy footprint. When agricultural or industrial process are included, this could be much higher. Clean energy derived from renewable sources or energy and heat from waste delivered via a heat network can be an effective way of achieving an ultra-low or zero net carbon outcome.

Scale is an issue for district scale heat networks and work well in proposals of 100+ dwellings. Farm scale heat networks are possible using air-source heat pumps or AD bio-gas fuelled CHP generators.

**Policy 17: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure**

The government will strongly support renewable and low carbon energy generation development at all scales. Local authorities must give significant weight to the need to meet Wales's global commitments to generate 70% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2030. A presumption in favour of large-scale wind is now in place other than in National Parks where both wind and solar have been excluded. There is an abundance of opportunity for members to consider generating electricity and the government requires that at least 1GW of renewable capacity to be locally owned by 2030.

**Policy 22: Green Belts**

Green belts remain the most effective way of managing urban form and growth and protecting agricultural land from development. Local development plans and development management decisions should not permit major development (10 or more dwellings or 1000m<sup>2</sup> non res) in green belts or areas being considered as GB, except in very exceptional circumstances.

**Policy 25: Regional Growth Areas- Mid Wales**

Mid Wales is a predominantly rural area comprising 39% of the land mass of Wales but only having around 7% of the population. Government strongly supports the growth and development of new and existing economic opportunities. Local and strategic plans must develop policies that support agricultural, and land based traditional rural enterprise and that which provides a flexible framework to support the development of new, innovative, and emerging technologies and sectors.