PLACE PLANNING IN WALES
**Introduction**

Welsh Government is encouraging local planning authorities to work with communities to create ‘Place Plans’. The services offered below, will provide opportunities for local planning officers and community representatives to understand:

- The context to Welsh Government’s ambitions for Place Plans.
- Recent innovations in delivering Place Plans using case studies, tools and techniques.
- How to develop ideas for future work to develop the Place Plan concept in Wales.

People care about the places they come from, where they live, and want to know that things will get better for themselves, their families and future generations.

There is a disconnect between what people see as important and the sense of control (or influence) they have over how things might improve. This is why there is considered to be a so called ‘democratic deficit’, not just in Wales, but across the UK. One of the reasons cited for so many people voting to leave the EU was the sense of “not being heard” and just as importantly, their lives, their families and places, not benefitting from being part of the EU.

Recent changes in planning and ‘well-being’ legislation in Wales, and proposed changes to way in which councils work, will have a significant impact on the way in which local communities interact with all public sector bodies and the services they provide.
People care about places

“We need more affordable housing”

“We need better public transport and cycle routes”

“We need more jobs”

“We need cleaner places, people care about”

Talk to any business owner, community group, parent at the school gate or person in the street about the place where they live and at least one, if not more, of these requests will be highlighted.

When asked about who they see providing the leadership in tackling local issues, many people will point to “the council”, some might point to “the government” and a significant number will say “I don’t know”. Even fewer seem to know about any existing plans by any organisation, to tackle these issues and unsurprisingly most will shrug their shoulders and look blank faced.
Certain places have already started to successfully develop Place Plans, as a way of reconnecting with local people, identifying, in a rational and systematic way, (but also in a representative and inclusive way), what local concerns there are and how things might be changed to address these. This information is then used to join up the efforts of different organisations and different departments within organisations, to better target scarce resources to meet local needs.

Place plans can be viewed as bringing together two important objectives from two key pieces of legislation

1. The Planning Wales Act 2015 which seeks to encourage greater community involvement in local planning

2. The Well Being of Future Generations Act 2015 which requires public bodies to demonstrate how the decisions they make and the money they spend takes account of the needs of future generations and help meet a set of national well being goals.

Using extensive community consultation and all available statistical data, Place Plans can:

- provide a finer local level of detail on specific issues such as housing need,
- views on specific development sites to supplement the adopted county Local Development Plan (Positive Planning Implementation Plan Welsh Government Dec 2015)
- put in the public domain what the evidence based priorities for action will be in improving local prosperity, health and the local environment
- indicate who will take the lead in making things better.
Who might want to commission a Place Plan?

Town and Community Councils

- To have a greater influence over potential development in the local area
- To inform priorities for the use of any Community Infrastructure Levy
- To meet their duty under the Well Being of Future Generations Act to demonstrate how they contribute to achieving national and local well being goals
- To identify the key changes local people highlight, that the TCC could lead on implementing and the sources of funding to do this
- To provide evidence to lobby for changes in the way county resources are allocated and services are provided
- Place plans pay for themselves many times over in terms of increased funding and investment accessed
- Local authority Public Service Board leads
- To help secure community area engagement in the development of Well Being and HSSWB needs assessments
- To establish community area arrangements for delivering actions set out in Well Being Plans
- To provide local monitoring information and ongoing engagement processes for assessing progress on delivering Well Being Plan goals and supporting actions
Local Authority Planning Departments

- To encourage greater community involvement in planning to help people shape their localities
- To provide more detailed thematic and site specific guidance to supplement LDP plans and policies
- To help inform decisions regarding Community Infrastructure levy spending

Development Trusts, Local Regeneration Partnerships, Local Business Forums

- To help support a business case for funding a specific project
- To assist with lobbying for important changes to their local area
- To act a mechanism for bringing people and agencies together to deliver on identified priorities
Sustainable Regeneration Solutions & The Urbanists

Sustainable Regeneration Solutions and The Urbanists are two Welsh “place making” organisations that have come together to offer a comprehensive package of support in the development, implementation and on-going monitoring of Place Plans.
These elements are available as an overall package or as distinct elements as required by local stakeholders:

**A. Development of Place Plans**

These elements are available as an overall package or as distinct elements as required by local stakeholders:

**i) Data Profile**

Collation of all latest available statistical data to produce a data profile of the whole area and distinct communities within it, comparing key information (housing, employment, health) with county and national averages to identify local strengths and deficits.

**ii) Local Development Plan place audit**

Review of key LDP themes and specific sites highlighting issues for further research and or consultation as the apply to the area in question

**iii) Community engagement**

A customised programme of community engagement designed to secure a representative cross section of local opinion and establish arrangement for ongoing dialogue. Methods of engagement include community workshops, business events, school gate surveys, online self completion questionnaires, vox pops and high street canvassing. We take great care to develop specific methods of engaging with harder to reach groups as identified by the data profile. All our techniques are developed in line the National Principles for Public Engagement set out by Participation Cymru and all methods can be delivered bi –lingually.

The workshops follow a format of sharing key issues from the data profile and LDP place audit to enable discussion on community priorities and potential actions.
iv) Synthesis of data, audit and community feedback

Analysis of all research data to establish key issues and proposed actions under each of the national Well Being goals

v) Engagement with mainstream service providers

Collective Workshop sessions with key service managers with a community area responsibility; health, social services environmental services, police, economic development to discuss research findings, confirm the scope and scale of any existing or planned responses to tackle key issues, agree any additional local actions or project responses along with designated leads for these.

vi) A Place Plan with an accompanying three year Action Plan

A final document clearly setting out the quantitative and qualitative evidence base informing priorities, the actions to be taken and the location of resources to make change happen, providing further information on the local planning context to help inform Community Infrastructure Levy spend, aligned to the national Well Being goals.
B. Implementation

As part of the Place plan development process we would seek to identify resources at the local level to assist communities with implementing the actions set out in the plan. Where needed, we can provide hourly, daily, and bespoke support to take forward specific projects in terms of making funding applications or establishing delivery partnerships.

C. Monitoring

As part of the Place Plan development process a set of key indicators of ‘Well-Being’ would be established to supplement any specific milestones for progress set out in the three year action plan.

We can undertake bi-annual reviews of overall progress with implementation of the Place Plan in terms of on-going engagement, collaborative working and individual project progress and annual update of the data profile to assess measurable progress towards improving Well Being.
Case Studies

Llanelli Rural Council - Whole Place Plan

We have recently completed a Place Plan for Llanelli Rural council where all of the elements the a Whole Place approach were deployed. The Place plan sets out a vision for the area and the key actions to address local issues are set out as contributions to the national well being goals.

The process took around 4 months and the area now has a plan which sets out short, medium and long term actions to achieve the vision. All the key local agencies actively contributed to the development of the plan and will be supporting the key actions by adapting core services or working with the council to do things differently. Over 300 people took part in surveys and workshops and members of the council were closely involved throughout.

Since adopting the plan the rural council has accessed funding to launch a system of “Time Credits” across the area where local people are rewarded for taking part in local clean ups and other voluntary work and seen a dramatic increase in activities provided in local community halls

“We were delighted with the support we had from Chris Ashman in developing our Whole Place plan for the Llanelli Rural area.

We are now in an excellent position to work with partners and our communities in addressing the national well being goals, but most importantly undertaking practical steps to make the lives of local people better”.

(Mark Galbraith, Clerk of the Council)
Llanelli Rural Area
Whole Place Plan - 2015 to 2030
Delivering local well-being - now and in the long term

www.llanelli-rural.gov.uk
Monmouthshire County Council commissioned Place Plans for two of its Community Areas in 2012 and 2013 from Sustainable Regeneration Solutions.

Since their initial development, local councils and community groups have continued to refine and shape the local priorities set out in these plans for local economic, social and environmental change. A Wales Audit office review of this initiative published in 2014 welcomed the approach and recommended increasing corporate commitment to their implementation.

**Seven for Severnside and Bryn Y Cwm (Abergavenny)**
The Urbanists were commissioned by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council in partnership with the Welsh Government to prepare a Regeneration Plan for Glynneath Town Centre.

We worked with Chris Ashman of Sustainable Regeneration Solutions, an independent socio-economic regeneration consultant who has extensive knowledge of the local area and its socio-economic context.

The brief from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council set out the need to deliver two distinct outputs: a Regeneration Plan and series of projects for Implementation.

The objectives of the commission were to produce a plan that defined a vision for the development of Glynneath Town Centre and promote its regeneration within the current statutory and policy context at the national, regional and local level. This considered the physical environment and economy of the town centre, including a detailed assessment of the central retail area to help define the role of the town; where new investment could locate; propose possible uses for such sites; the impact of proposed new development; providing targeted recommendations on initiatives to improve town centre properties.

**Summary**

- Data showed that there was a decline in West Glynneath in the number of key indicators such as employment, health, income and child poverty.
- There was a strong community capacity [sports clubs, Town Council]
- A lack of affordable housing
- High demand for a Welsh Education
- A demand for all weather sports facilities
- Impact of mining on the local economy
- Tourism potential
Chris Ashman

Chris is the Owner/Director of Sustainable Regeneration Solutions and is one of Wales’ leading Place Plan practitioners.

He has over 25 years experience of working with communities across Wales to help identify local priorities, develop practical, fundable responses to key issues and enable greater partnership working between businesses, local communities, third sector organisations and all tiers of government.

Particularly skilled in community engagement, brokering agency partnerships, data analysis and undertaking evaluation on the impact of investment Chris leads on Place Plan development on behalf of both companies working with Unitary Authorities, town and community councils, Business Improvement Districts and third sector clients.

Chris led on the delivery of the Llanelli Rural Place Plan which is the first adopted Well Being of Future Generations compliant Place Plan in Wales.

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Martin Sullivan

Martin is the managing director of the Urbanists and has more than 30 years professional experience of working in planning and regeneration.

Much of this has been at a senior level in consultancy, where he has advised clients across the public, private and voluntary sectors. He is a chartered town planner who specialises in masterplanning, regeneration and sustainable community development.

He frequently acts as an advocate for local communities in devising regeneration strategies for their town or village, but has worked upon a wide range of place related projects that have focused on a range of activities such as education, health, leisure and housing.

He recently assisted Powys County Council to set its strategic regeneration priorities for the next 15-20 years, in order to deliver regeneration in a way which is more resilient to the physical, economic and environmental challenges it faces as a place at the heart of Wales.

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Key Personnel

James Brown

James is an experienced planner and project manager with a broad background and specialism in regeneration.

He has previously led the preparation of over 20 regeneration projects across South Wales as well as the West Midlands and Oxford. In addition to managing these projects, James has advised Welsh Government on the management of design, implementation and maintenance of European funded projects.

James is a director of the Urbanists and is passionate about providing solutions that enhance the character of places and the lives of the people who live there. James has more than fifteen years experience of sustainable placemaking and urban design.

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Liam Hopkins

Liam is a chartered town planner with a particular interest and experience in community development and public engagement strategies.

He has helped design and deliver a range of consultation programmes including: Community Design and Training in Bettws, Brackla and Wildmill for Valleys to Coast Housing Association in Bridgend; and St Dials and Lower New Inn for Bron Afan Community Housing Association in Cwmbran; along with Glynneath in the western valleys.

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