# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Implementation of the Planning (Wales) Act 2015** |
| **DATE** | **14 July 2016** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths AM, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs** |

Last July the Welsh Government delivered the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, putting in place the key legislative foundation for a positive, enabling and resilient planning system. Excellent progress has been made to implement the Act, with three quarters of the provisions now fully or partially in force.

Implementation of the Act has been prioritised to ensure those parts with the greatest impact are brought in first. The delivery of a National Development Framework is a key priority, given its importance in addressing land use issues of national significance. The first stage of preparation has begun, with a draft Statement of Public Participation, setting out the detailed timetable for preparing the National Development Framework and the steps to be taken to engage with stakeholders and the public during its preparation, issued for consultation. The draft statement can be accessed using the following link - <http://gov.wales/consultations/planning/proposals-relating-to-the-statement-of-public-participation-for-the-national-development-framework/?status=closed>

Planning applications for infrastructure projects which are of greatest significance to Wales due to their complexity and impacts are now considered and determined by the Welsh Ministers. The new process for consenting Developments of National Significance ensures decisions on applications are made within a statutory time period, creating certainty for developers and communities while stimulating economic growth.

Since October Local Planning Authorities have been able to come together to start the process of preparing a Strategic Development Plan (SDP). The preparation of Strategic Development Plans should be given high priority by Local Planning Authorities in areas which have completed the first round of Local Development Plans and have issues which would benefit from being considered over a wider geographic area than a single Authority.

To ensure that communities have a greater voice we have placed a requirement on developers proposing major development to undertake pre-application consultation with the public, town and community councils and relevant statutory consultees, and to take account of their comments before formally submitting a planning application. This early and meaningful engagement will ensure communities can more readily influence development proposals. A number of technical improvements to the development management system have also been introduced, focusing on the planning application process and the enforcement system to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The remaining provisions of the Act will be implemented over the next two years. I will consult on a national delegation scheme ensuring that similar applications are decided either by planning committee or delegated to officers consistently across Wales. I will also consult on changes to the structure of planning committees, improvements to the planning appeals system and revisions to the process for handling planning applications and town and village green applications.

Having delivered the necessary legislation to implement many of the improvements resulting from the Act, I implore Local Planning Authorities, the development industry, statutory consultees and other partners to work with me to fully realise the benefits from a positive, enabling and resilient planning system.

More information about our co-ordinated and phased approach to delivering the improvements and supporting secondary legislation from the Act is set out in the Positive Planning Implementation Plan (December 2015). An update to the Implementation Plan (April 2016) provides more detail on the progress made in implementing the Act. Both documents can be access using the following link - <http://gov.wales/topics/planning/legislation/planning-wales-act-2015/positive-planning-implementation-plan>

Work on improving planning law in Wales will continue. I am pleased that the Law Commission are carrying out a preliminary consultation on their initial ideas for a separate planning code for Wales focusing on the core of the planning system - plan making and development management.

The consultation paper is available for download from Law Commission website

<http://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/planning-law-in-wales/>. Once the consultation is complete the Law Commission will formulate substantive proposals on the shape and content of an initial piece of consolidating planning legislation for Wales which could be introduced later this Assembly.