

## Appendix B

### Alternative Option 1 – A spatial strategy focussing growth in the strongest market areas

#### Summary Overview

This option focuses the long term growth and development of Wales around the strongest market areas. It seeks to support economic growth in areas where markets are strongest and which have the best potential to grow. This option recognises that many objectives – deprivation, regeneration, physical and mental health, language, resilience of natural resources - are directly linked to economic prosperity.

The role of the NDF will be to direct growth to these areas and provide the infrastructure required to support growth. It will take a top-down approach to the delivery of major infrastructure and make clear choices on which parts of Wales will grow and how they should grow. The planning system will be responsive to opportunities for supporting economic growth and will not constrain or delay investment in identified growth areas.

#### Why has this option been developed?

There was a consensus during the engagement at the start of 2017 on the need for a national spatial plan which provided a framework for nationally important infrastructure. The need for greater certainty and speed of delivery were identified as important and it was recognised that the national planning tier is the appropriate level at which to plan for national needs. Local and regional planning cannot easily balance local impacts with national interests. We were told there is a need for a clear top-down approach to dealing with national issues.

There was recognition that many of the challenges faced in Wales stem from economic issues and that much health, deprivation, well-being and other issues can be addressed through improving economic circumstances. Over the long term, there is a need to support a dynamic and growing economy and there was recognition that strong businesses and new investment have positive benefits for Wales. There is a need to support economic growth and investment.

It was identified that silo thinking and un-coordinated approaches mean that investment is not focussed on a clear goal and decisions made through the planning

system lack coherency. A NDF focussed on economic growth, offers the opportunity to ensure all land-use decisions at all levels are working towards a common goal. There is a need to ensure a clear, economic focus.

This option has been developed and subject to further engagement in October 2017.

### Full Overview: How would this option help meet the objectives?

#### Cultural Assets

This NDF supports existing and the provision of new heritage, sporting and arts development assets where they provide economic opportunities. It recognises that these should be economically viable and promotes appropriate housing and commercial uses around them, to maximise economic potential. Culture-led regeneration projects are supported where they provide direct opportunities for economic growth. Developments at all scales and opportunities for cross-subsidisation with other developments are supported. Cultural projects unable to demonstrate an economic value are not prioritised.

#### Housing

House building is viewed as a significant economic driver in its own right with large potential multiplier effects for local economies. Housing development which meets market demand is facilitated, helping to attract and retain a skilled labour force. New housing provision is particularly targeted at areas within commuting distance of economic growth areas. Significant new land allocations are made to accommodate development, with release of large sites in and around settlements if necessary. This may include managed release of greenfield land, following policy and capacity reviews. Affordable housing initiatives are progressed in areas where economic growth is particularly concentrated, aiming to meet the needs of key workers. Market housing is directed to areas attractive to the market, with unattractive areas reliant on public investment only. Opportunities for cross-subsidisation of housing and other developments are supported.

#### Climate change, decarbonisation & energy

Investment in energy is driven by the private sector. Development patterns continue to focus primarily on the most viable technologies including wind energy developments (with large-scale schemes predominating). Off-shore developments would be facilitated through appropriate on-shore infrastructure. Opportunities for green jobs within these sectors are high on the agenda.

Issues arising from climate change, such as rising sea levels and flooding are approached from an economic perspective. Steps will be taken to address these challenges in so far as they minimise risks to growth. Decarbonisation objectives will be supported where they provide economic opportunities and growth. Economic land allocations take climate change into account to minimise risks to business.

**Broadband & digital infrastructure**

Telecommunication and digital technology is a key priority, with the NDF supporting provision of the required infrastructure through the market, as well as encouraging technological capacity to be built into the design of new buildings, infrastructure (including transport infrastructure) and areas of urban expansion and renewal. Infrastructure will be provided on the basis of market demand only and to serve the areas of greatest growth potential.

**Economic prosperity & economic regeneration**

This NDF responds to market demand as well as need, and is based on active engagement with business and industry, with an emphasis on increasing land supply and minimising business development costs. Significant new land allocations are made to accommodate development, with release of sites in and around settlements. This includes the release of greenfield land, following policy and capacity reviews. This NDF would support commercial development in the most viable locations, including both in-town and out-of-town locations. Town-centre focussed development would not be prioritised over out-of-town and the market would determine the most viable location. Brownfield sites (including those in use) attractive to the market would be released for new economic uses. Enterprise Zones are a key focus of intervention. Existing commitments to community regeneration are reviewed, so that future investment can be targeted at people with the most significant economic potential rather than those with greatest social need. Poverty will be tackled by improving the overall prosperity of Wales rather than focussing on specific areas.

**Rural Wales**

This NDF supports increasing prosperity in all parts of Wales, though its focus will be on the most profitable urban areas and it will only support significant investment in rural parts of Wales where this is market driven. It will not seek to reverse depopulation and will actively provide opportunities for people to move to more prosperous, better served areas to support growth objectives. Support for agriculture would be primarily focussed on food security. National Parks and AONBs would be supported for their economic value.

**City Regions & Growth Deals**

Cities are the primary drivers of the economy and the primary focus of economic investment. Wider regions provide both workers and potential consumers and this NDF supports wider regional interventions that improve economic productivity. A larger, dynamic workforce provides a larger employment pool and this is attractive to the market. Whilst this NDF will support the principles of city regions, its focus will be on the most profitable economic core and it will be expected that the benefits of growth will spread across the region over time predicated on accessibility.

**Transport**

Large scale strategic infrastructure projects are taken forward, such as metro

projects, directly through the NDF to allow a high level of growth and facilitate land release. Road and public transport infrastructure are upgraded. Internal (inter-city region) and external links by air, sea and high speed rail are promoted. International profile is important to promote Wales and attract investment. Projects which seek to promote external connectivity are taken forward. Transport links to key gateways are substantially improved to help stimulate private sector investment, and in response to business needs. Facilitating the easy movement of international freight, through key gateways by road and rail will be a key priority. Expansion of Cardiff Airport if required, improvements to the infrastructure that support it and economic opportunities for growth in and around the airport will be facilitated.

### **Natural Resources**

This NDF supports the realisation of the economic potential of Wales's natural resources. It would also support the principle of the circular economy and ensuring the full economic potential is realised of all resources, including waste. Investment would be driven by the private sector. Environmental quality is recognised as a strong potential driver of growth, making Wales attractive to visitors and potential investors.

Ecological, biodiversity and landscape designations, particularly at the local and regional level, will be reviewed where they prevent growth and the delivery of physical infrastructure. Over the life of the NDF, the role of national and international designations will be reviewed, in particular in light of Brexit, to understand their role in supporting national economic priorities. Agricultural land could be released for other uses including the best quality land.

### **Welsh Language**

This NDF will support all initiatives that support economic growth and by delivering new employment opportunities, help retain Welsh speakers in Wales. Its focus will be on areas with the strongest economic potential and movements of Welsh speakers from weaker to stronger market areas will be supported.

### **Health**

Good health and well-being enable economic potential to be fulfilled. This NDF focuses growth and services in the strongest urban areas. Health facilities will be planned to support growth.

### **What are the key assumptions that support this option?**

- Cities and their regions are viewed as the primary drivers. Growth is focussed in these areas, with more limited growth in mid-Wales, small towns and

regeneration areas.

- The identification of national transport projects is driven by their potential to facilitate economic growth in particular in the strongest market areas. Internal connectivity is improved by substantial multi-modal infrastructure investment. External connectivity is actively improved including enhanced air and sea links, and new high speed rail links to England and beyond to Europe. Freight links between continental Europe and Ireland are also improved.
- There are significant levels of investment in transport, energy and digital infrastructure as key drivers of growth, with prioritisation of projects which offer the greatest improvements in connectivity and support the widest range of objectives.
- Public investment in new infrastructure is driven by the desire to facilitate and attract new investment, both in existing strong market areas and areas of the greatest economic potential.
- The identification of Developments of National Significance would be important, providing clear direction from the Governmental, certainty and greater expediency in decision making.
- There will be higher rates of housing and economic development and increased land take overall.
- Greenfield land for development is released, with development focusing on areas that are already most accessible and in strong market areas.
- Planning controls are streamlined in priority investment areas and some environmental regimes, particularly at the local level, are relaxed where legislative requirements provide scope to do so.
- Planning controls are less prescriptive. Wider planning policy, the sequential test and proximity principle for example are relaxed to give wider spatial choices.
- Affordable housing provision focuses on links with the economy, in terms of locational decisions and market sectors (e.g. key worker housing).
- Environmental initiatives focus on place-making and therefore coincide with areas with greatest economic investment potential. Environmental quality is recognised as a driver of growth, but there is reduced emphasis on environmental justice. Multiple benefits are not necessarily pursued.
- Businesses themselves seek to be more sustainable in operational terms, pursue energy efficiency and are assisted in adapting to climate change to reduce potential economic effects.

- The private sector leads investment in energy sector and waste, leading to variation in types and levels of provision.

## What would Wales in 2040 look like?

### **Cultural Assets**

National investment in cultural assets is economically driven and has focussed on the strongest market growth areas, as part of a package of wider investment initiatives.

### **Housing**

Both private and social housing has focussed in strongest market growth areas. The NDF has facilitated through SDPs and LDPs, major urban expansion and greenfield release. Parts of Wales outside of these areas deal with local issues only and do not have a national strategic role.

### **Climate change, decarbonisation & energy**

Nationally scaled infrastructure has been delivered directly through the NDF and the planning system is aligned at all levels to support their expedient delivery. Areas of greatest potential for wind, solar, tidal and other energy generation are the focus for new development. Grid, transmission and storage infrastructure is facilitated. Strong support has been given to new economic opportunities in these sectors.

### **Broadband & digital infrastructure**

The planning system is aligned at all levels to support delivery of infrastructure. The market determines investment and is primarily focused on strongest market growth areas.

### **Economic prosperity & economic regeneration**

Has focussed on the strongest market growth areas, driven by the delivery of new transport, energy and telecommunications infrastructure and a clear direction for the land-use system to support growth in these areas.

### **Rural Wales**

Has been supported to ensure food, energy and water security for wider societal benefits. New investment has been limited to that promoted by the market and there has been no active intervention to reverse depopulation and other social trends.

### **City Regions & Growth Deals**

There has been strong support for city regions in Cardiff, Swansea and North East Wales. Investment in new infrastructure has supported their growth, which has been facilitated by alignment of the land-use system at all levels.

### **Transport**

Nationally scaled infrastructure has been delivered directly through the NDF and the

planning system is aligned at all levels to support its expedient delivery. The focus has been on supporting the strongest market growth areas and improving international connections that support economic growth.

### **Natural Resources**

Driven by the market, the economic realisation of natural resources has been strongly promoted across the whole of Wales.

### **Welsh Language**

The primary focus has been on improving the economic health of Wales. Opportunities to support the Welsh language have been supported from an economic rather than spatial perspective. Welsh language speakers have moved away from the traditional heartlands in North-West and Mid-West Wales to the strongest market growth areas.

### **Health**

The provision of services and facilities have been planned to support growth areas.

## **What did the October 2017 engagement say about this option?**

### **Positive**

There was a strong sense that cities are economic drivers and it is unrealistic to think national scale growth objectives can be met without a strong and clear focus on them. Providing infrastructure to support cities and their regions is necessary and generally supported. These are ultimately the areas where the majority of people in Wales live and work.

The importance of identifying key infrastructure and providing a framework to ensure its expedient delivery is a key role for the NDF. In doing so it will provide clear national direction and by focusing growth in key urban areas, will help shape the investment of national utility providers. Focussing investment in a geographically smaller area (as opposed to all-Wales) can help leverage funding and send a clear statement to potential investors.

The NDF is the opportunity to drive national projects from national level and provide a clear spatial strategy for all other Government policies. This is currently missing. Notwithstanding the concerns that a market driven approach does raise, it is important that it is recognised Wales is a poor country and this type of nationally driven, economic focus is required to break the cycle.

This option can help overcome local political barriers. It also recognises that you do need to create prosperity to address other environmental, social and cultural objectives. The failure to link economic prosperity to other outcomes and the belief that we can do everything equally prevents us from addressing some of the major issues affecting Wales. This is well intentioned thinking but doesn't provide the

necessary leadership and avoids us from having to take difficult decisions. This option would be an important step in moving Wales forward and is what long term strategic decision making is about.

### **Negative**

There was a strong sense that this option was the opposite of long term planning. It only reflects where Wales is now and does not seek to deliver real change. It supports existing growth patterns and does not provide a spatial strategy for the whole of Wales. It would not be transformational but rather the opposite.

Focussing on the strongest urban centres and cities will not address issues outside these immediate areas. It will both reinforce existing inequality and create new inequalities, as areas outside of the preferred growth regions are not supported. Social, environmental and cultural objectives should not be viewed purely through an economic lens and it is unlikely that these objectives can be met if the sole focus is what is attractive to the market. Such an approach is contrary to the Well-being Act.

There was clear recognition that economic growth is important and, if it is planned and assessed appropriately, has positive outcomes that provide a wide range of benefits. However, the long term spatial development of Wales cannot simply be left to the market to determine and the planning system exists to influence growth and how our places should change, to ensure the widest possible benefits. What happens if markets collapse? What is the role of the Government if not to consider and plan for the long term interests of the whole nation?

Environmental quality is not a barrier to overcome. It adds value and is intrinsic to our well-being. This option lacks environmental consideration and risks short term economic gain over long term environmental resilience. It would not ensure the sustainable management of our natural resources. Markets are short term and are not strategically orientated. Strong concerns were expressed regarding the loss of agricultural land to other uses, including potentially the best farming land.

This option is too outward looking and is not about Wales. It doesn't play to the strengths of Wales - green space, landscape and biodiversity.

### **Realistic**

This option was considered to be realistic. Some considered that as it would reflect current development patterns and trends, it would be the easiest option to adopt. It was also the easiest option to grasp and it was clear how this option could shape other relevant strategies. It was clear how investment in infrastructure could be prioritised to support this option. Others thought that this approach did not represent the status quo; it would represent a major policy shift but that if we decided to do it, we could.

## Alternative Option 2 – A spatial strategy focussed on creating strong communities across all Wales

### Summary Overview

This option focusses on the whole of Wales and seeks to address the issues we face through a dispersed approach, which does not seek to prioritise one area over another. Long term objectives will be met through actions and investment across the whole of Wales and by direct support to local communities to support bottom-up solutions to national issues. This option will deliver strong local communities, providing access to jobs, housing, services and facilities that they need and with a strong focus on people, their well-being and sustainability.

The role of the NDF will be to distribute growth and infrastructure across the whole of Wales with a focus in particular on supporting areas of greatest need and where markets are weaker. It will retain a clear focus on the delivery of national objectives and co-ordinate the actions at the regional and local level to meet these aims.

### Why has this option been developed?

There was a consensus during the engagement at the start of 2017 on the need for a national spatial plan. There was also a belief that as well as having a national perspective which considered Wales as a whole, the NDF should relate to local communities and support them to deliver their aspirations. A NDF which considered, for example, south east and north east Wales only would not be a national plan. A NDF which was seen to impose top-down housing, energy or transport policies without taking the opportunity to consider bottom-up solutions as well would not reflect the views of many. It was felt by some that the impact of national decisions on local communities was not recognised enough.

There was a view that the NDF should not seek to pick ‘winners’ or focus too heavily on a one-size fits all approach. Local communities experience different housing issues, language issues, different depopulation and social challenges. The NDF must be flexible enough to allow different, appropriate solutions and create the space for SDPs and LDPs to find solutions.

This option has been developed and subject to further engagement in October 2017.

## Full Overview: How would this option help meet the objectives?

### Cultural Assets

This NDF would recognise the importance of our heritage in shaping Wales and seek to maintain and promote our distinctively Welsh communities. It would require that new development actively contributes to, rather than detracts from, our cultural capital. Our existing cultural assets will be protected, promoted and enhanced and new cultural developments supported. There will be strong support for local scale community projects that could provide cultural and associated benefits. For example, culture led projects benefitting health and wellbeing through the provision of both formal and informal recreation activities.

### Housing

Access to housing and in particular affordable, energy efficient housing would be a key consideration, ensuring all in the local community have access to good quality, affordable housing. Interventions would seek to support affordable housing over other types of housing where necessary. Support will be given for new and innovative housing designs and self and custom build developments will be facilitated, where they provide additional opportunities for new housing and help meet community housing needs. As well as meeting housing needs, new housing will help sustain local communities and support vital services.

In addition to affordability, lifetime homes and the provision of housing to meet the needs of people at all stages of their lives will be prioritised. The type of housing needed will be an important issue, recognising that we need to build the right type of housing in the right places and not focus only on the number of houses required.

### Climate change, decarbonisation & energy

This NDF would over the longer-term seek to make a strategic shift from major infrastructure programmes, such as large-scale energy and transport infrastructure and move towards a 'bottom-up' approach. Whilst recognising that there will always be a need for individual projects that will be of a national scale, this option will require that all options are considered fully and that realistic smaller scale, dispersed options are supported where it is realistic to do so and support wider objectives. Local ownership of energy projects and decentralised grid and storage infrastructure will be strongly supported.

The functioning of communities and their needs would be the primary focus. Policies would focus on local, place-based solutions and maximising community benefits. Decentralised energy generation and distribution would be supported including community owned renewable energy schemes. For larger scale energy policy, there would be a strong emphasis on assessing the impacts on local communities and ensuring the economic opportunities arising from such investment, directly benefits local communities, in terms of jobs, energy costs and other benefits. Actions to

increase energy efficiency, in both new and existing developments will be supported, helping meet wider energy objectives, reduce energy costs and address issues of fuel poverty.

### **Broadband & digital infrastructure**

The provision of modern digital infrastructure would be supported, with an emphasis on ensuring all communities in Wales are connected to the latest and best technology. Areas that may not otherwise be served by the market in a timely manner will be the focus of Government investment and this NDF will support all steps to increase access to digital services and resources.

### **Economic prosperity & economic regeneration**

This NDF would support local employment opportunities, diverse local economies and vibrant local centres. It would encourage local distinctiveness and recognise that economic prosperity helps support well-being. Providing better jobs closer to homes, will both reduce the need to travel and allow those who wish to stay and live in their local communities to do so. Regeneration objectives and tackling deprivation would shape major strategic investment decisions, focussing investment on those areas in greatest need. This NDF would seek to avoid reliance on trickle down economics or prosperity growing outwards from key growth poles and instead promote strong, local centres across all parts of Wales. Poverty will be tackled by focussing on the different issues affecting communities across Wales and shaping responses to meet these needs.

### **Rural Wales**

Reversing population decline would be a priority in rural areas. This NDF would seek to address housing, employment and connectivity (digital and transport) issues and sustain social infrastructure through all levels of the planning system, thereby helping to ensure Wales's rural communities retain and attract all ages and all members of our society. Investment decisions, the delivery of new infrastructure and the co-ordination of other key Government strategies would be aligned to support these objectives.

### **City Regions & Growth Deals**

The city regions would be supported and this NDF would place a strong emphasis on ensuring that investment and opportunities within city regions benefit all. Investment would be supported where it maximises the benefits for all communities and where potential positive outcomes are achieved wider than the central regional urban core. Connectivity will be an important feature.

### **Transport**

This NDF would over the longer-term seek to make a strategic shift from major infrastructure programmes, such as large-scale transport infrastructure and move

towards a 'bottom-up' approach. Whilst recognising that there will always be a need for individual projects that will be of a national scale, this option will require that all options are considered fully and that realistic smaller scale, dispersed options are supported where it is realistic to do so and support wider objectives.

The functioning of communities and their needs would be the primary focus. Transport policies would focus on local accessibility, with public transport connecting homes, jobs and key services, and places will be shaped around walking and cycling. Ensuring accessibility to key transport hubs will be a priority. Supporting active travel initiatives would be a key objective. This NDF would seek to tackle the negative consequences around transport choices. Health objectives would be a key influence, supporting healthy transport modes and addressing directly air and noise quality issues. Traffic reduction measures, including potentially significant changes to road networks would be pursued if necessary, to secure benefits for local communities.

### **Natural Resources**

This NDF would strongly support the principles of SMNR, recognising the unsustainable management of our resources will negatively impact upon all communities in Wales. Through actions such as increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution, the aim is to build greater resilience into our ecosystems and biodiversity and support the delivery of national objectives. Agriculture, forestry, renewable energy, water and tourism provide the opportunity to develop high quality jobs across the whole of Wales and secure the long term economic sustainability of our communities. They also provide resources that are fundamental to the prosperity and security of wider industries and ultimately that of our towns and cities. Securing social, economic, health, cultural and environmental benefits and enhancements for local communities through the SMNR approach will be a key priority.

### **Welsh Language**

Welsh speaking communities will be supported and the consequences of planning decisions fully assessed and understood at the community level. This NDF will support all communities by identifying appropriate employment opportunities for every area and planning the provision of new homes so that population change is carefully managed.

### **Health**

The NDF would promote good health and well-being for everyone. Supporting the creation of high quality places with improved access to integrated community facilities and services, including digital access. The NDF will look to tackle inequalities throughout Wales and deliver a range of high quality houses and improved access to the natural environment, to support health objectives.

**What are the key assumptions that support this option?**

- The planning system and locational choices will ensure that all parts of Wales support the development of sustainable settlements.
- Sustainable settlement patterns are key – homes close to jobs and key services and facilities, reducing the need to travel and ensuring sustainable transport options when required. A strong emphasis is placed on maintaining a good range of accessible community facilities.
- Land-use planning principles will be used to ensure the jobs, services, facilities and recreational activities people use will be close to home. Where they cannot be provided locally, they will be easily accessible by sustainable transport options. Communities will not be disproportionately disadvantaged because they are outside the largest urban areas.
- It is accepted there will remain a need for large-scale national projects. A full assessment process will be required, to ensure that alternative options are considered including locally scaled approaches.
- The provision of local, affordable housing is a key issue with strong support for local and self build housing.
- The NDF seeks to enable the most disadvantaged communities to benefit from growth, and supports community empowerment and good governance.
- Accessibility is central to decision making and locational choices must maximise accessibility to all members of society.
- Improving health is a key objective and influences all policy decisions. Air quality improvements are directly targeted. Local well-being and quality of life is the key objective in land use decisions.
- Regeneration and tackling deprivation are a key strategic focus. Tackling the legacy of previous development and industry is a priority as well as addressing all areas of poor environmental quality.
- The NDF emphasises digital connectivity, thereby encouraging more flexible and home working, a better work life balance and reducing the need to travel and congestion. Communities will not be disproportionately disadvantaged because they are outside the largest urban areas.
- Community owned renewable energy schemes are prioritised. Initiatives to

increase energy efficiency in homes and end fuel poverty are supported by the planning system. Areas where renewable energy is being generated receive direct community benefits and emphasis is placed on schemes being located closer to where people live. Support for distribution and storage networks.

- Strong support for principles of circular economy.

## What would Wales in 2040 look like?

### **Cultural Assets**

Strong focus on community scaled projects across all parts of Wales has created distinctive communities.

### **Housing**

Dispersed across all of Wales, housing has focussed on meeting community needs and helped build sustainable communities.

### **Climate change, decarbonisation & energy**

Energy needs are met through a dispersed, community scaled approach following a move away from fewer, large scale developments. Communities are energy exporters. Land use principles have sought to reduce the need to travel and where trips are made, by the most sustainable methods.

### **Broadband & digital infrastructure**

The planning system is aligned at all levels to support delivery quickly and facilitate new technologies as they emerge. Investment has focussed on peripheral and rural areas, accepting landscape change.

### **Economic prosperity & economic regeneration**

Public investment has been balanced across all parts of Wales. The focus on ensuring strong local economies through the planning system and key Government strategies has increased prosperity nationally.

### **Rural Wales**

Depopulation has been reversed and there is strong demand for housing in rural areas.

### **City Regions & Growth Deals**

Successful city regions have been planned to ensure the widest possible benefits for their full regions, recognising the needs of communities across the region.

**Transport**

Communities have been shaped to reduce the need to travel within them and where trips are made, including between settlements, they are done so by sustainable and accessible transport methods.

**Natural Resources**

Agriculture, forestry, renewable energy, water and tourism have all supported the growth in high quality jobs across the whole of Wales and helped secure the long term economic sustainability of our communities.

**Welsh Language**

Strong support and investment in local communities has ensured Welsh language objectives are being met.

**Health**

Strong focus on integrated community health facilities, ensuring communities can access facilities locally and digitally. Investment in good quality places and increased access to the natural environment,

**What did the October 2017 engagement say about this option?****Positive**

There was welcome support for the principle of developing a fully all Wales spatial strategy. It was identified as important that the NDF process does not start on the assumption of a top-down, directional strategy and that understanding how national issues could be addressed from the local, community level was important. Housing, energy, employment and transport are typically cited as examples of where the top-down approach of the planning system fails to recognise what local communities want and does not properly assess the uneven impacts of these national decisions on all parts of Wales.

There was concern that city regions, growth deals and major projects such as the M4 focus on defined, urban parts of Wales only. This option, by consciously focussing on the whole of Wales, is a positive attempt to think beyond the usual areas.

There was support for the principle of seeking to focus public investment in the areas of greatest need and ensuring private investment in the strongest market areas is planned to deliver the widest possible benefits.

The ability to develop local approaches under a unified national framework was welcomed. Housing and economic growth were frequently given as examples of areas where issues vary greatly across Wales. Focussing only on a single, narrow aspect such as housing numbers rather than the type and quality of housing, does not support the delivery of wider objectives. Community focussed approaches would be more flexible and allow appropriate solutions to be developed.

This option was considered to be a good fit with the Well-being Act, seeking not to prioritise one area or one outcome over another but rather seeking to understand how objectives could be met across the whole of Wales.

**Negative**

Whilst the overall aspiration of this option was supported, many thought it lacked focus and it was not clear what the spatial strategy would be. Rather than directing growth and the delivery of infrastructure, this option would create the conditions for bottom-up approaches to be developed but not provide certainty on where or how.

It was expressed that this option would be a missed opportunity to positively drive change from the national level. There was uncertainty about what the relationship would be between different tiers of the planning system. LDPs were considered the most appropriate plan to plan for local areas. Climate change, economic prosperity, solutions to housing issues and tackling many of the issues Wales will face between now and 2040 will require big, national solutions. We should not be afraid of setting a clear national spatial strategy and this is the role of Government.

Rather than provide a strategy to consider how national issues could be addressed from the bottom-up, there were strong concerns that this option could become a NIMBY charter. A point made frequently was that those most likely to be involved in the planning process do not necessarily represent the wider community and that one of the key drivers for the introduction of the NDF, was the ability to consider and address issues at the national level.

Views were expressed that the understanding of the relationship between the planning system and the Well-being Act required careful consideration. Everywhere can't have everything and all goals cannot be met equally in all cases. The aspiration is welcome but this is not realistic and decisions have to be made. A spatial strategy and the development of a NDF should be about making important decisions in the right way.

**Realistic**

Given existing plans, strategies and Government commitments, it was considered that in the short term it would be difficult to move to this spatial approach. In light of this, the option and underlying assumptions have been amended to reflect that, particularly in the short term, large scale projects will be supported, and over the life of the NDF there may be a need for large, nationally scaled projects. The primary focus under this option will however, be clearly on locally-scaled solutions and ensuring that future strategic decisions start from a bottom-up perspective. With this amendment, this option was considered realistic.

## **Alternative Option 3 – A spatial strategy to deliver decarbonisation and climate change objectives.**

### **Summary Overview**

This option focuses on decarbonisation and climate change and makes our response to these issues the primary consideration for the NDF. There is overwhelming evidence supporting the need for urgent action on climate change. The planning system has a pivotal role in facilitating the transition to a low carbon society by ensuring decarbonisation is at the forefront of land use choices. Targets for renewable energy and green house gas emissions and emerging carbon budgets will significantly shape this spatial strategy. This NDF focuses particularly on land use, the relationship between different uses and the connectivity between them. It places a strong emphasis on planning how our settlements will grow, interconnect and understanding the consequences that will arise from the choices we make and the opportunities arising from doing things differently.

Existing urban and rural patterns will be adapted to improve their sustainability. This NDF will support major changes to urban form and development patterns, including in existing areas, if they are required to meet objectives and contribute to the realisation of a low-carbon economy.

### **Why has this option been developed?**

Across all the issues and discussion of potential spatial options for the NDF, the strongest consensus emerged around the importance of tasking the NDF with responding to climate change issues and supporting the decarbonisation agenda. It was suggested that this option has no plausible counter view to it (e.g. support carbonisation, worsen climate change issues) and as such must be considered across the NDF process. There was also a clear view that this option was not and should not be a negative option. It offered a positive opportunity to develop our society and economy in new ways and this should be embraced.

There was a belief that land-use planning principles were key and that the planning system should take the lead in ‘planning’ our future. Problems have been exacerbated by a lack of joined-up thinking, short-term goals and a failure to understand the interrelated consequences of many of our decisions.

This option has been developed and subject to further engagement in October 2017

## Full Overview: How would this option help meet the objectives?

### **Cultural Assets**

This NDF would focus on the location of new development, connectivity between uses and energy efficient, sustainable design. It would influence locational choices and require that new development is located in sustainable locations. As well as movement within and across towns and cities, this NDF will focus on the relationship between settlements and regions and would require that decisions are fully informed by their wider context. It would support cultural development that helped achieve our decarbonisation objectives.

### **Housing**

This NDF would focus on the location of new development, connectivity between uses and energy efficient, zero carbon sustainable design. It would influence locational choices and require that new development is located in sustainable locations. As well as movement within and across towns and cities, this NDF will focus on the relationship between settlements and regions and would require that decisions are fully informed by their wider context. Housing will be provided in the context of wider social, economic, cultural and environmental uses and will be planned alongside these. Speculative and unplanned housing development will not be supported.

As a first principle, the NDF will seek to direct housing to areas that minimise the need to travel; and as a second principle, to areas where trips can be made by sustainable modes of transport. Actions to improve the efficiency of existing transport infrastructure will be supported. This NDF would support housing development in the most sustainable locations, which may be green and brownfield, with a focus on resource efficiency, quality and innovative design.

### **Climate change, decarbonisation & energy**

This NDF will adopt a positive and proactive approach to increasing the generation of renewable and low carbon energy through a range of technologies and support innovation and growth in the renewables sector. The decarbonisation of energy and other sectors will be a key priority. The NDF will direct renewable energy generation to the most appropriate locations and provide a framework to support its delivery. As well as large scale projects, this alternative option will support regional and local scale energy projects, maximising the potential for sustainable projects at all levels. It will also provide flexibility to ensure that new emerging technologies and opportunities are supported.

The storage and transmission of energy will be planned for to support a modern and efficient energy sector. Actions to increase energy efficiency, in both new and existing developments will be supported. Land use patterns and the provision of new infrastructure will be shaped by the potential risks from climate change. This NDF will anticipate the risks from flooding; increases in temperatures; loss of habitats and

vegetation; increasing urban heat islands; and harmful effects on ecosystems and ensure future development patterns consider, are shaped by and build resilience to these. There will be an acceptance that some areas will remain vulnerable to potential impacts and the consequences of this planned for. Coastal changes and the potential impacts upon cities, towns and communities will influence spatial choices.

The NDF will promote SUDs as an integral part of new development, encouraging water (including floodwater) to be a more normalised feature of the built environment through planned and managed schemes. Actions to increase energy efficiency, in both new and existing developments will be supported.

### **Broadband & digital infrastructure**

This NDF would fully support the provision of new digital infrastructure, recognising the potential it offers to provide services in new ways, support new working practices and reduce the need to travel.

### **Economic prosperity & economic regeneration**

This option will positively support sustainable low-carbon growth. Emerging opportunities in sectors helping deliver decarbonisation objectives will be strongly supported and the framework will support innovation, R&D and the development of new technologies. Green growth and the circular economy will be strongly supported.

This NDF would focus on the location of new development, connectivity between uses and energy efficient, sustainable design. It would influence locational choices and require that new development is located in sustainable locations. As well as movement within and across towns and cities, this NDF will focus on the relationship between settlements and regions and would require that decisions are fully informed by their wider context. Employment and regeneration initiatives will be provided in the context of wider social, economic, cultural and environmental uses and will be planned alongside these. Speculative and unplanned development will not be supported. Land use choices will reduce the need to travel and ensure connectivity and accessibility are key priorities. Major projects will be required to demonstrate their contribution to these objectives and that they have been planned to support the widest range of benefits. Choices on the location of strategic employment centres will be shaped by existing and proposed centres of populations and sustainable transport networks. Poverty will be tackled by providing modern, high quality housing, addressing fuel poverty, supporting a transition to a prosperous, low-carbon economy and improving well-being for all in Wales.

### **Rural Wales**

This NDF will seek to address housing, employment and connectivity (digital and transport) issues and sustain social infrastructure in rural areas. There will be support for community energy projects which can help subsidise local services and infrastructure. It would support locally focussed communities, which reduce the need

to travel and when trips are made, can be done so sustainably. It will require a clear focus on how growth, investment and new infrastructure is planned across the whole of Wales, to ensure that spatial choices support decarbonisation objectives in both rural and urban areas.

### **City Regions & Growth Deals**

This NDF will support the development of connected, accessible and well planned city regions, which co-ordinate the delivery of growth and infrastructure in a manner that maximises positive outcomes. The delivery of regional transport infrastructure which supports decarbonisation objectives will be a priority and the NDF will provide a clear framework for their delivery. Key projects and infrastructure must be planned in the context of wider social, economic, cultural and environmental uses.

### **Transport**

Land use choices will reduce the need to travel, ensuring that connectivity and accessibility are key priorities. Major projects will be required to demonstrate their contribution to meeting these objectives. This NDF will support actions and investment to decarbonise the transport sector and ensure the land use planning system at all levels is aligned to facilitate delivery. Walking, cycling, electrification and public transport are prioritised. Bus as well as rail services will be important. Major new road investment will be supported where it significantly reduces congestion; supports significant improvements in efficiency; and supports wider objectives including those in relation to air quality and the environment.

Airport expansion may be limited or offset. Investment supports improvements to external rail and sea links. Emerging technologies such as electric cars will be supported where they help decarbonise transport movements. As a first principle this NDF would seek to minimise the need to travel and as a second principle, ensure trips are made in the most sustainable manner.

### **Natural Resources**

This NDF supports the core SMNR principles of improving efficiency, minimising the unsustainable use of resources, reducing pollution and delivering renewable energy. Alongside steps to reduce carbon emissions, this NDF will support actions to build resilience to climate change in our communities, businesses and natural environment. This NDF will support nature-based solutions to strengthen biological diversity, including the provision of green networks and infrastructure. The contribution of rural and upland areas towards water management will be of national importance and the NDF will provide a framework to facilitate appropriate management. This NDF will have strong support for the principles of the circular economy and resource efficiency. Solar, wind and other renewable energy development (including biomass) will be directed away from the best quality agricultural land to ensure this land remains in long term agricultural use.

**Welsh Language**

Welsh speaking communities will be supported and the consequences of planning decisions fully assessed and understood at the community level. This NDF will support all communities by identifying appropriate employment opportunities and planning the provision of new homes so that population change is carefully managed.

**Health**

This NDF will co-ordinate delivery of infrastructure to reduce the need to travel and provide digital ways of accessing services. Resilience measures for climate change provide opportunities to increase health and well-being including improved air and water quality. The reduction of fuel poverty will have a positive impact on people's health and well-being.

**What are the key assumptions that support this option?**

- Renewable and low carbon energy generation through a range of technologies is positively and proactively pursued and generation from fossil fuels phased out as far as is practicable.
- Renewable energy generation is directed to the most appropriate locations and the NDF facilitates its delivery, supported by smaller scale, community-based schemes distributed across Wales.
- Solar, wind and other renewable energy development (including biomass) will be directed away from the best quality agricultural land to ensure this land remains in long term agricultural use.
- There is a presumption in favour of actions to address climate change.
- There will be strong alignment between land use and transport planning at the national, regional and local levels.
- Energy efficiency is promoted strongly and energy storage and transmission infrastructure is proactively provided, aiming to both unlock renewables potential and to withstand future climate change.
- Strong focus on the location of new development, connectivity between uses and energy efficient, sustainable design. Locational choices require that new development is located in sustainable locations.
- Relationship between settlements and regions will be planned in the context of wider social, economic, cultural and environmental objectives and to

support the delivery of decarbonisation aims.

- As a first principle, the NDF will seek to direct new development to areas that minimise the need to travel; and as a second principle, to areas where trips can be made by sustainable modes of transport. Actions to improve the efficiency of existing transport infrastructure will be supported.
- Spatial choices will be shaped by the location of main population centres and sustainable transport infrastructure. As well as reducing transport movements, reducing congestion and emissions will shape key decisions.
- Land use, major projects and infrastructure must be resilient to climate change impacts.
- Options for rail and bus connectivity are actively prioritised. Targeted road improvements are made to accommodate sustainable development. UK and international connections will be rail and sea based in preference to air. The sustainable movement of freight will be a priority considering rail, water and electric vehicles options.
- SUDS and sustainable flood management proposals are developed on a large scale. Infrastructure is provided to ensure a steady supply of water.
- Housing will be provided in the most sustainable and integrated locations, with access to jobs, services and facilities, and sustainable transport options central to the choices on new housing.

## What would Wales in 2040 look like?

### **Cultural Assets**

National projects have been developed in the most sustainable accessible locations, planned alongside other land uses.

### **Housing**

Energy efficient, well designed housing has been planned and built to create sustainable, accessible communities.

### **Climate change, decarbonisation & energy**

There has been an increase in the generation of renewable and low carbon energy across Wales through a range of technologies. There has been strong growth in the renewables and low carbon sectors. Sound planning has ensured key spatial choices have supported the delivery of national objectives and Wales is on its way to exceeding its 2050 decarbonisation targets.

**Broadband & digital infrastructure**

The planning system is aligned at all levels to support delivery quickly and facilitate new technologies as they emerge.

**Economic prosperity & economic regeneration**

There has been strong growth in renewable and low-carbon sectors, supporting a transition to a low-carbon society and an increase in prosperity for all parts of Wales. Wales is recognised as a world leader in these fields.

**Rural Wales**

Spatial choices have supported decarbonisation objectives in both rural and urban areas and supported the delivery of wider social, economic, environmental and cultural goals. Community energy schemes and improved digital and low carbon infrastructure have helped tackle depopulation.

**City Regions & Growth Deals**

Well planned regions and new infrastructure, have supported prosperous regions which have helped deliver climate change and decarbonisation objectives.

**Transport**

Strong alignment between national planning and transport strategies has resulted in well planned, sustainable and accessible communities across Wales and supported a switch to low carbon transport and public transport.

**Natural Resources**

SMNR principles have helped improve efficiency, minimise the unsustainable use of resources, reduce pollution and deliver renewable energy.

**Welsh Language**

Strong support and investment in local communities has ensured Welsh language objectives are being met.

**Health**

Delivery of well planned and designed places with connected infrastructure, have improved air quality.

**What did the October 2017 engagement say about this option?****Positive**

There was little, if any, dissenting opinion on the importance of this option. The majority of discussions focussed on the actions required to deliver it, rather than whether it was appropriate.

There was recognition that this option offered a positive opportunity to support and grow the renewable energy and low-carbon sectors in Wales and for Wales to become a world leader.

There was a strong feeling that of all the options, this option is the one which the land use planning system is best placed to deliver. Where things are built, how things are built, how places will change and the co-ordination of different actors, are all integral to the planning system.

**Negative**

Rather than being contrary to the spirit of the option, the negatives that were raised focussed mainly on the challenges of delivering it.

It was considered a big, cultural shift was required to deliver this option. The planning system is too focussed on local issues and sites and not used to delivering national, spatial goals. It is important that it is recognised this option will facilitate big, major projects and not just small-scaled actions.

Viability and cost implications are real and affect investment decisions. It needs to be recognised that some decisions may lead to less investment.

Some concern was expressed regarding the potential for different Government strategies to focus in different areas and unintentionally dilute the ability to deliver this objective.

**Realistic**

Given the strong buy-in from all sectors; the clear commitment from the Welsh Government to achieve climate change and decarbonisation targets; and the development of aligned decarbonisation, transport and planning strategies, it was considered this option is both realistic and deliverable. It was accepted that this option is not without its challenges but notwithstanding this, offers the potential for transformational change.

## Alternative Option 4 – A spatial strategy focussed on the sustainable management of Wales’s natural resources

### Summary Overview

This option focuses on the sustainable management of our natural resources. It recognises that unsustainable management will negatively impact upon future generations and provides a positive framework to help realise the social, economic, environmental and cultural value of our natural resources and ensure key ecological networks and habitats are adaptable and resilient to change. Through increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution, this NDF will help build greater resilience into our ecosystems and biodiversity. Agriculture, forestry, renewable energy, water and tourism provide the opportunity to develop high quality jobs across the whole of Wales and secure long term economic sustainability.

This NDF would use baseline evidence to guide development to the most suitable locations, strongly prioritising natural resource implications in spatial decision-making. It will have a strong focus on how decisions are taken and the outcomes that should be achieved, using the NDF’s development plan status to firmly embed key principles into the decision making process at all levels.

### Why has this option been developed?

The Environment (Wales) Act positions Wales as a low carbon, green economy, ready to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Act is intended to help secure Wales’ long-term well-being, so that current and future generations benefit from a prosperous economy, a healthy and resilient environment and vibrant, cohesive communities. This option has been developed to test how the national spatial plan can support the delivery of the requirements of the Environment Act.

This option has been developed and subject to further engagement in October 2017

### Full Overview: How would this option help meet the objectives?

#### Cultural Assets

This NDF would recognise that our natural environment and landscapes, both urban and rural, can provide a strong sense of place, inspiration and belonging, and

contribute to the distinctive cultural identity of Wales. It would seek to protect and enhance our landscapes and natural resources for the multiple well-being benefits they provide, including for tourism, outdoor recreation, local employment and physical and mental health. It would particularly support landscapes, and local facilities such as parks, playgrounds and other green spaces, that represent both cultural and ecological assets. Development that undermined the integrity of our landscapes or natural resources would be strongly resisted and would be directed towards less culturally sensitive locations.

### **Housing**

This NDF would focus on the location of new development in terms of its relationship to ecological networks, and the need to create attractive and healthy environments for people to live in. It would direct housing away from areas likely to have a significant impact on ecological networks and flooding issues and towards locations that reduce the need to travel. New housing development would embrace the multiple benefits that green infrastructure can provide for health and well-being, and would support the creation of and promote access to open space and wider ecological networks.

### **Climate change, decarbonisation & energy**

This alternative would prioritise adaptability to change for both people and species. Networks of green and natural spaces would be enhanced and protected in order to help adapt to climate change. This NDF will anticipate the risks from flooding, air quality, increases in temperatures, loss of habitats and vegetation, increasing urban heat islands and harmful effects on ecosystems and ensure future development patterns consider, are shaped by and build resilience to these.

Habitats vulnerable to development pressure including floodplains, woodlands and urban green infrastructure would be prioritised for proactive and preventative action. Actions would include steps to safeguard and encourage urban tree coverage, avoid the fragmentation of floodplains through development, secure sustainable drainage systems, ensure water sensitive design and deliver appropriate soil carbon management. This option would strongly support greater energy efficiency and realising the opportunities across Wales to generate renewable energy.

### **Broadband & digital infrastructure**

This NDF would support the provision of new digital infrastructure, recognising the potential it offers to provide services in new ways; support new working practices and reduce the need to travel; and support our aspirations for lower carbon living.

### **Economic prosperity & economic regeneration**

This NDF would recognise that Wales' abundance of natural resources is one of our greatest economic assets, underpinning our vibrant tourism and leisure sector, agricultural industry, and world-class home grown food and drink sector. This NDF would realise the economic opportunities of Wales' natural resources (alongside

other resources), while building their resilience to create an environment which will nurture the businesses of the future. Economic development would be directed away from areas where there was the potential for conflict with important ecological networks, and new development would incorporate green infrastructure and support the creation of wider ecological networks. Opportunities for green growth and realising economic opportunities from the sustainable management of resources would be supported. Poverty will be addressed by ensuring local communities benefit from Wales's natural resources and by supporting positive energy, housing and economic development.

### **Rural Wales**

This NDF would focus on maintaining and supporting our natural resources as the bedrock of our rural economy, particularly our agricultural and tourism sectors. Maintaining healthy and resilient ecosystems and distinctive local landscapes will be important for supporting rural Welsh communities' sense of place and identity. The focus would be to support nature-based solutions that harness the multiple benefits of our natural resources to support the economy and culture of rural communities, and to ensure that ecological networks are managed to support the delivery of cultural, economic, social and environmental objectives. It would support development in rural areas that helped achieve ecological and resilience objectives and seek to resist development that could undermine the integrity of key networks.

### **City Regions & Growth Deals**

This NDF will recognise that green spaces and networks are vital if our city regions are to be attractive places to live and work. It would support the development of ecological networks including green infrastructure across well planned city regions. The provision of infrastructure and new development will be planned to respond to the impacts of climate change and support the protection and enhancement of ecological networks and the sustainable management of natural resources. It will support a greater regional understanding of issues, such as for example river catchments, and ensure decisions are planned and taken in the fullest regional context.

### **Transport**

This NDF would prioritise development locations that reduce the need to travel, and would focus on the role of public transport and interventions that encourage the reduction of air pollution. New transport infrastructure would incorporate green infrastructure and be designed to create green corridors and wider ecological networks, and would be located to avoid fragmenting habitats or adversely impacting air or water quality.

### **Natural Resources**

The principles of SMNR would shape this NDF, helping deliver key benefits for health and well-being, resource efficiency and security, economic prosperity and community identity, through prioritising the fundamental role that our natural

resources play in supporting these and a wide range of other beneficial outcomes. This option will work closely with the Natural Resources Policy. It would also focus on improving the resilience of ecosystems, including their diversity, connectivity, scale, condition and adaptability. Environmental enhancement would be prioritised, and the creation of habitats and networks to allow ecological resilience would be actively progressed. Solar, wind and other renewable energy development (including biomass) will be directed away from the best quality agricultural land to ensure this land remains in long term agricultural use. Improving air quality will be a key priority.

### **Welsh Language**

Welsh speaking communities will be supported and the consequences of planning decisions fully assessed and understood at the community level. This NDF will support all communities by identifying appropriate employment opportunities and planning the provision of new homes so that population change is carefully managed.

### **Health**

This NDF would recognise that our natural environment and landscapes, both urban and rural, can provide a strong sense of place, inspiration and belonging. It would seek to protect and enhance our landscapes and natural resources for the multiple well-being benefits they provide, including reducing pollution, increasing access to natural green spaces, benefitting physical and mental health. Increasing prosperity through green growth will help to reduce inequality in health.

### **What are the key assumptions that support this option?**

- Principles of SMNR as a key driver of this alternative and are firmly embedded in the planning system through the NDF.
- Agriculture, forestry, renewable energy, water and tourism are strongly supported.
- Solar, wind and other renewable energy development (including biomass) will be directed away from the best quality agricultural land to ensure this land remains in long term agricultural use.
- Strong links with the Wales Marine Plan and Natural Resources Policy provide a coherent framework for all activity in Wales and provide the focus for considering the environmental effects of development and the assessment of reasonable alternatives.

- Other policy and regulatory areas are aligned, respecting spatial constraints and pursuing sustainable development opportunities.
- All land (including urban) is considered a natural resource capable of supporting biodiversity and integration of green infrastructure, or nature based solutions, to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, will be an expectation of development.
- Increasing the extent of innovative green networks and high quality and biodiverse habitats, particularly in city regions, will help foster our connection with nature.
- SUDS and sustainable flood management will be prioritised. Infrastructure is provided to ensure a steady supply of water. River catchments are a key consideration in plan making and decisions.
- Natural green spaces are safeguarded and enhanced including alongside key transport routes to form green networks and across city regions. Green networks take on new spatial forms, including approaches following linear patterns and linking with natural biodiversity networks.
- Green networks seek to deliver strategic benefits for habitat continuity and species movement.
- Impacts on biodiversity, landscapes, water bodies and soil are avoided, mitigated and adapted. Species populations and their habitats will be enhanced.
- Renewable & low carbon energy generation through a range of technologies is positively and proactively pursued and generation from fossil fuels phased out as far as is practicable.
- Renewable energy generation is directed to the most appropriate locations and the NDF facilitates its delivery, supported by smaller scale, community-based schemes distributed throughout the country.
- Energy efficiency is promoted strongly and energy storage and transmission infrastructure is proactively provided, aiming to both unlock renewables potential and to withstand future climate change.
- Presumption in favour of actions to address climate change.

## What would Wales in 2040 look like?

### **Cultural Assets**

National projects have been developed based on Wales' distinctive landscape and natural environment.

### **Housing**

Housing has been built across Wales, in locations that maximise the multiple benefits of Wales' natural resources, supporting health and well-being objectives and with no significant impacts on important ecological areas.

### **Climate change, decarbonisation & energy**

Wales has planned for and adapted to climate change risks, ensuring resilience across Wales. There has been an increase in the generation of renewable and low carbon energy.

### **Broadband & digital infrastructure**

The planning system is aligned at all levels to support delivery quickly and facilitate new technologies as they emerge.

### **Economic prosperity & economic regeneration**

There has been strong growth in agriculture, forestry, renewable energy, water and tourism, supporting a transition to a low-carbon society. Wales is recognised as a world leader in these fields.

### **Rural Wales**

Rural areas are prosperous, healthy and resilient having benefited from growth and investment in maintaining and supporting our natural resources.

### **City Regions & Growth Deals**

City regions, planned around green infrastructure and natural resources, are attractive, healthy and prosperous. They are exemplars of how growth has been shaped to deliver our well-being objectives.

### **Transport**

Transport solutions have delivered new green networks, supporting health and ecological goals and the sustainable movement of people.

### **Natural Resources**

Wales leads the world in realising the multiple benefits of its natural resources.

### **Welsh Language**

Strong support and investment in local communities has ensured Welsh language objectives are being met

### **Health**

Delivery of high quality places with sustainable access to facilities and services.

Improved access to nature and a reduction in pollution.

### What did the October 2017 engagement say about this option?

#### Positive

This option was considered to be the most distinctive option. Distinctive in the sense of being a new and different approach to spatial planning and distinctive in the sense that a spatial strategy developed around Wales's natural resources, would be uniquely Welsh.

This option was believed to advocate a better measure of 'prosperity'. Rather than being purely economically driven, it seeks to realise wider values. There was strong support for tourism and recognising the importance of this to Wales.

It was expressed that in uncertain times, with the changes that will follow Brexit over the medium term (and maybe longer), focussing on the resources we have in Wales is a sensible approach.

Some suggested that all land, including urban areas, is a natural resource and this option was therefore applicable to the whole of Wales. Others believed this option very strong for parts of Wales. For Mid and rural Wales in particular, a focus on natural resources would be positive and the basis of investment and action.

#### Negative

There was a strong feeling that this option was not the basis of a national spatial strategy. It had a focus for parts of Wales, but not the whole of Wales and would potentially be silent on some of the most pressing issues Wales faces. Whilst there were many positive ideas, this option represents a generalised ideal. It does not outline how the positives would be realised and cannot reconcile itself to wider issues.

Other options were considered to provide a strong focus on a particular set of objectives or outcomes. This option was considered strong in some areas and weak in others and it was considered this uncertainty would be unhelpful in a national strategy.

There was a belief that this option would put a break on the economy and be used to prevent development that didn't fit with its narrow focus. Views were expressed that this option and the principles behind it were well intentioned but representative of a narrow outlook, which did not reflect the reality of Welsh life. There were also concerns that it was too inward looking and did not seek to place Wales in a wider national and international context.

**Realistic**

This option was considered less immediately tangible than the others. It represents a different way of thinking spatially and raises different questions. Many felt that the core principles should be taken forward but as part of a wider spatial strategy. Others that it was unreasonable to discount this approach at the outset of the process, on the basis that not all the answers were known. Testing, assessment and refinement are the purpose of this stage and this option should be explored and developed further.

Despite the concerns raised, the view that it is premature to conclude this option is unrealistic at this stage is agreed with. There was general consensus that many of the key assumptions should feature in the emerging strategy and much of the difference in opinion was around whether this should be to a greater or lesser extent rather than they should not be considered at all.

## Benchmark Option - Do Not Prepare the NDF

### Summary Overview & Why has this option been developed?

This alternative option would involve not preparing a NDF. The existing Wales Spatial Plan would remain the national spatial plan. The WSP does not have development plan status.

The Planning (Wales) Act requires the preparation of a NDF. This option is therefore not realistic.

It does however provide the opportunity to consider what would happen if a NDF were not prepared and how national strategic planning decisions would be taken. It provides an important benchmark against which to understand the other potential options.

The WSP remains an important strategic plan and much of the key policy approaches remain valid. One of its key weaknesses is its lack of development plan status and an ability to influence decision making. This situation would remain. The ability of the planning system to respond to the requirements of the Environment Act, Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Welsh Government's decarbonisation objectives would be restricted to actions at the local level and without an overarching strategic view.

### Full Overview: How would this option help meet the objectives?

#### Cultural Assets

Culture would be promoted at community and local levels. There is recognition of links to economic prosperity but overall this would not be a priority area.

#### Housing

Climate change would be an urgent issue and major development would be determined in the context of its impact upon climate change objectives. Ensuring resilience to sea level rises would be important, reducing risks to both people and property.

#### Climate change, decarbonisation & energy

Actions at the local level would be required to ensure all development contributed to climate change objectives, with support for example, for active travel and greening

spaces initiatives. Energy policy would reflect national policies (e.g. decarbonisation and energy targets) and would be based on a regional approach, with regions expected to utilise their strengths and competitive advantages.

### **Broadband & digital infrastructure**

Broadband coverage would be viewed as a regional issue, with challenges such as 'not spots' a matter for regions to address themselves. High speed broadband would be a priority for areas of high value economic activity. Government intervention would be re-active, addressing issues unable to be addressed by the market.

### **Economic prosperity & economic regeneration**

Regeneration would be a key tool to improving prosperity across Wales. Projects would be regional in scale with the Welsh Government playing a key role in identifying project areas, drivers and setting ambitions for future outcomes. Maximising existing regional strengths is central to economic prosperity objectives and actions at regional and local levels are the primary lever in helping reduce inequality and deliver prosperity to all.

### **Rural Wales**

There would be a very strong focus on rural areas. Delivering accessible community facilities and services to rural areas would be a key priority. European and Government funds will be made available to help achieve this. Transport and jobs are also key issues in helping maintain vibrant rural life and there would be strong support for actions in these areas.

### **City Regions & Growth Deals**

The development of city-regions to drive economic prosperity, around Cardiff, Swansea and in the north east would be supported. Each city region has distinct strengths and these will form the basis of efforts to develop strong regional economies. The regional approach outlined in the WSP for other areas of Wales would be supported.

### **Transport**

Day to day transport issues will be addressed through a bottom-up approach. Issues across an area will be brought together to identify regional priorities and regional issues brought together to identify national priorities. Transport investment is seen as a key tool in supporting regeneration and economic objectives.

### **Natural Resources**

Natural resources are considered from a local perspective. They are local assets which help determine the nature and scale of development appropriate in an area. There is no overriding national policy or approach other than the need to ensure they are used in a sustainable way.

**Welsh Language**

There is support for a modern bilingual society, where the Welsh language is a community attribute. Planning will help provide spaces for community life to flourish. There is no strong alignment between language and prosperity.

**Health**

Building sustainable communities through tackling inequality, improving health and eradicating child poverty. Creating and sustaining the right set of services and locating the services within or close to key settlements, accessible by public transport.

**Relationship with SDPs/LDPS**

The position would remain as it currently stands, with SDPs and LDPs having to have regard to the WSP but with a limited relationship in practice. Strategic development plans would be left to define their own strategic objectives in the absence of an all-Wales context. Issues in relation to renewable energy, depopulation and uneven housing development would be dealt with through LDPs in those areas not covered by a SDP (or where an SDP has not yet been prepared).

**What are the key assumptions that support this option?**

- No national development plan.
- The local development planning system would be the primary tier of plan making and decision taking. In time in parts of Wales, SDPs may be prepared.
- Current trends will continue and progress towards key Welsh Government targets and objectives would remain on their current trajectories.
- Spatially, the national planning policy position would not be changed to reflect the requirements of the Environment and WCFG Acts.
- Regeneration and rural areas will be a major focus.
- Broadband is a relatively minor consideration.
- Housing would be viewed in isolation and not linked to wider objectives.
- Transport objectives would be linked in part to prosperity objectives but not seen as a central component in the delivery of wider objectives.

- Natural resources and energy would be viewed as regional matters, with no national perspective and no priority status.
- Climate change would be a central and priority issue.