



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

National Development Framework 2020-2040

Explanatory Paper – Rural Areas

December 2019

Why have we published these explanatory papers?

During the consultation on the Draft National Development Framework (NDF) some stakeholders suggested further details should be made available setting out how the NDF has been prepared. To assist stakeholders we have produced a collection of explanatory papers to set out the evidence that supports the draft NDF. These papers include:

- The Spatial Strategy
- The Assessments of the NDF
- Future progression of the NDF
- The Regions
- Rural Areas
- Housing need
- Welsh National Marine Plan and Ports
- Evidence compendium

What is this document?

This explanatory paper has been prepared to assist readers of the draft NDF in understanding how the Draft NDF seeks to address rural issues across Wales, highlighting the key evidence that has informed the rural elements of the plan.

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper identifies the key Welsh Government strategies, policies and research outcomes that have informed the development of NDF Policy 4 Supporting Rural Communities (summarised below). It describes how the Draft NDF seeks to address rural issues across Wales and the reasons for this, and how existing guidance in Planning Policy Wales, and Technical Advice Notes provide comprehensive coverage of rural planning issues. This is followed by information on the range of established practice guides which provide further details on implementation of these policies. Welsh Government commissioned evidence on Regions and Rural Areas is outlined in section 6 below.

2. Draft National Development Framework (NDF)

2.1 The following sections summarise the rural elements of the NDF.

- 2.2 The NDF seeks to create vibrant rural places with access to homes, jobs and services. The NDF recognises rural areas are diverse, with both prosperous and deprived communities, with distinctive histories and cultures. The NDF also recognises there are many challenges facing rural areas including climate change, economy, housing, services, population movement and the Welsh language (NDF p.20-21). Brexit is also a major issue going forward as both agricultural funding and regeneration programmes are areas of major public policy which have been shaped by wider European policies and funding (NDF p.17).
- 2.3 The NDF identifies 11 outcomes which are a collective statement of where the Welsh Government wants to be in 2040. Outcomes are overarching ambitions based on Planning Policy Wales's national planning principles and national sustainable placemaking outcomes. All 11 NDF outcomes apply to rural areas. The NDF (NDF p.18) visualises a rural Wales where people live:

- and work in connected, inclusive and healthy places
 - in vibrant rural places with access to homes, jobs and services
 - in distinctive regions that tackle health and socio-economic inequality through sustainable growth
 - in places with a thriving Welsh language
 - and work in towns and cities which are a focus and springboard for sustainable growth
 - in places where prosperity, innovation and culture are promoted
 - in places where travel is sustainable
 - in places with world class digital infrastructure
 - in places that sustainably manage their natural resources and reduce pollution
 - in places with biodiverse, resilient and connected ecosystems
 - in places which are decarbonised.
- 2.4 The NDF recognises that rural areas are important as providers of food, energy, tourism, recreational activities, and mineral resources, and that areas designated for their landscape or ecological importance should be protected from inappropriate development. The NDF Spatial Strategy focuses large scale growth in urban areas, directing development away from the countryside and productive agricultural land (NDF p.24).
- 2.5 The NDF also recognises the challenges facing the rural economy and that the planning system should respond by supporting rural communities and appropriate new development and diversification. The NDF aims to secure growth in housing and the economy, to maintain and improve access to services, and retain and attract working age population.

Draft NDF Policy 4 – Supporting Rural Communities (NDF p.29)

The Welsh Government supports sustainable rural communities and appropriate proportionate growth in rural towns and villages.

The future for rural areas are best planned at the regional and local level. Strategic and Local Development Plans should plan positively to meet the needs of rural communities with regard to housing, transport, businesses, services and diversification in the agricultural sector.

- 2.6 The NDF identifies Strategic and Local Development Plans as the appropriate policy vehicles to support rural growth, conservation and protection. Development Plans should ensure people living in rural areas have access to jobs, services and social infrastructure of appropriate scale.
- 2.7 The NDF identifies regional growth areas within which regional centres should be supported as focal points of activity. For example (in relation to centres with rural hinterlands) Carmarthen, Aberystwyth, Llandrindod Wells, and Newtown (NDF p.24 and NDF Spatial Strategy map p.25).
- 2.8 Rural communities also need access to wider job and economic markets (NDF p.29). Decisions on regional economic development and transport infrastructure and services should be made at all levels and consider the needs of all parts of Wales.
- 2.9 Strong rural economies support stable and resilient communities, and reduce the reliance on a small number of larger economic centres. Priority should be given to economic activities with strong links to rural areas, such as foundation economy activities like food and drink processing, and tourism and leisure, and energy

generation, the environmental economy and businesses ancillary to farming, forestry and other rural economic activities. The improved provision of broadband in rural Wales supports an increasingly diverse business base (NDF p.29).

- 2.10 Development plans should support the needs of their rural communities with strong and ambitious policies. Where growth is identified it should be proportionate to the communities and local areas needs and be evidenced through the development plan (NDF p.29).
- 2.11 Those preparing and making decisions based on Strategic and Local Development Plans should be confident in identifying what constitutes 'rural'. Different considerations apply to rural issues near large urban areas and in deep rural locations. It may not be appropriate for rural focussing policies to be applied to both places equally (NDF p.29).
- 2.12 NDF policies supporting urban centres, delivering affordable homes, supporting communities through the use of publicly owned land, mobile action zones and the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure all apply to Wales' rural areas. Strategic and Local Development Plans should ensure these issues are addressed (NDF p.29).
- 2.13 The NDF recognises the challenges facing the rural economy and that the planning system should respond by supporting appropriate new development and diversification.

3. How the NDF Seeks to Address Rural Areas and How Evidence Relates to it

- 3.1 The draft NDF spatial strategy is a framework for where large scale change and nationally important developments should be focused. The strategy encourages sustainable and efficient patterns of development, based on co-locating homes, jobs, services and resources and contributing to decarbonisation

and biodiversity objectives. In order to achieve these principles, the strategy has sought to identify Wales' cities and large towns as the main growth and development areas. Outside of these areas, proportionate growth of towns and villages in rural areas will be supported where it meets local needs and compliments growth in larger cities and towns. The NDF identifies regional growth areas outside of the large urban clusters where such development should be focussed, this includes settlements which serve largely rural areas.

- 3.2 NDF Policy 4 recognises the importance of rural areas in Wales and supports sustainable growth in rural communities, reflecting the overarching objectives of the spatial strategy. Whilst rural areas are faced with many challenges including climate change, Brexit, economic and demographic change, conservation of the countryside, and provision of and access to infrastructure and services it is considered that in most instances these are best planned at the regional and local level. Most rural issues, whilst not necessarily addressed in detail in the draft NDF, are recognised and mostly comprehensively covered by existing guidance in Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Notes as described in section 4 below. These issues should be guided by decisions at a regional and local level in Strategic Development Plans, Local Development Plans and through the development management process.

4. Existing Planning Policy and Advice for Rural Areas

4.1 Planning Policy Wales (2018)

- 4.1.1 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) is the national land-use planning policy document for Wales. PPW applies across the planning spectrum and sets the basis for all Development Plans. It is used by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to inform policies and land-use allocations in Local Development Plans (LDPs). It is a material consideration for decision makers in determining

individual planning applications. The NDF builds on PPW by providing a spatial policy context for nationally significant planning issues. The following aspects of PPW address issues which face rural areas or types of developments which may be located there.

Placemaking in Rural Areas

- 4.1.2 The planning system should seek to create sustainable places in rural areas to promote well-being.
- 4.1.3 In line with sustainability and placemaking outcomes, rural areas should be conserved and, where possible, enhanced for the sake of its ecological, geological, physiographic, historical, archaeological, cultural and agricultural value and for its landscape and natural resources. Conservation should be balanced against the economic, social and recreational needs of rural communities and visitors.
- 4.1.4 Rural places must be adaptable and resilient to maintain vibrant communities and availability of services. Rural areas face challenges such as the impact of climate change, but can help mitigate its effects by protection of carbon sinks and as locations for renewable energy sources in line with the Resilient Wales well-being goal.
- 4.1.5 In rural areas opportunities for reducing car use and increasing walking, cycling and use of public transport are more limited. Most new development should be located in settlements which have good accessibility by non-car modes. Development should embrace national sustainable placemaking outcomes and, where possible, offer active travel connections to the centres of settlements to reduce the need to travel.

- 4.1.6 Sustainable local service centres, and clusters of smaller settlements should be designated as preferred locations for most new development including housing and employment provision.
- 4.1.7 The planning system must promote viable urban and rural retail and commercial centres as the most sustainable locations to live, work, shop, socialise and conduct business.

Rural Economy

- 4.1.8 A strong rural economy is essential to support sustainable and vibrant rural communities. New enterprises and the expansion of existing business support growth and stability in rural areas.
- 4.1.9 Planning Authorities should allocate new rural sites for economic development in development plans.
- 4.1.10 Development sites, with the exception of rural diversification and agricultural development to which separate criteria apply, should generally be located within or adjacent to settlement boundaries, preferably where there is public transport provision.
- 4.1.11 Absence of allocated employment sites should not prevent proposals for small-scale enterprises in or adjoining small rural settlements. Criteria based policy in development plans should be used to assess such proposals.

Rural Diversification

- 4.1.12 Diversification strengthens the rural economy and brings additional employment and prosperity to communities.
- 4.1.13 Planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to diversification. Small business activities sustainably located on farms can provide important additional income streams.

- 4.1.14 Diversification can also contribute to community viability by providing a focus for community life and hubs of economic activity. Diversification can include both agricultural and non-agricultural activities, ranging from agricultural processing to tourism and renewable energy generation.

Tourism

- 4.1.15 Tourism is vital to economic prosperity and job creation in many parts of Wales and can be a catalyst for regeneration, improvement of the built environment and environmental protection.
- 4.1.16 PPW encourages tourism where it contributes to economic development, conservation, rural diversification, urban regeneration, social inclusion, and sense of place, and where it supports the needs of visitors and local communities.

Telecommunications

- 4.1.17 PPW promotes the development of modern and fast telecommunications infrastructure to support economic and social needs.
- 4.1.18 Telecommunications infrastructure should be carefully planned in sensitive landscapes and other designated areas. Rural areas are affected economically and socially by lack of mobile coverage; proactive but considered planning is important.
- 4.1.19 Development plans should set out policies for delivering telecommunications development.
- 4.1.20 Mobile operators should share masts to maximise use of infrastructure and minimise impact.

4.1.21 Access to superfast broadband in rural areas is essential for business and social purposes. Development Plan policies should address the need for broadband infrastructure.

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

4.1.22 The planning system should secure an appropriate mix of energy provision, maximising economic and community benefit, whilst minimising environmental and social impacts.

4.1.23 Planning authorities should support and guide renewable and low carbon energy development to ensure their area's potential is maximised.

4.1.24 An integrated approach to planning for energy developments and grid network should be adopted.

4.1.25 PPW supports community scale renewable and low carbon energy projects. For example, district heat networks, small scale wind, co-location of development and combined heat and power

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/planning-policy-wales-edition-10.pdf>

4.2 Technical Advice Notes

4.2.1 Technical Advice Notes (TANs) should be read in conjunction with *Planning Policy Wales* (PPW) which sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. PPW and TANs should be taken into account by local planning authorities in Wales in the preparation of Strategic development Plans (SDPs) and Local Development Plans (LDPs). They may be material to decisions on individual planning applications and will be taken into account by Inspectors and the Welsh Government in the determination of appeals and called-in planning applications.

Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010)

4.2.2 Promotes a strong rural economy to support sustainable and vibrant rural communities, social inclusion and service provision.

4.2.3 Encourages Local Planning Authorities to adopt a positive approach to development in rural areas, and provide sufficient sites and criteria based policy for employment and market and affordable housing in their development plans.

4.2.4 Supports rural diversification (including on farms) to provide employment opportunities, increase prosperity and reduce need to travel.

4.2.5 Encourages development of self-employment and micro businesses, and provision of new communications infrastructure which is vital to support economic growth in communities and businesses, enable access to services, and reduce need to travel.

4.2.6 Isolated residential development in the open countryside must be justified. TAN 6 defines Rural Enterprise Dwellings, which are an exemption from the policy restricting general development in the countryside, which enable rural enterprise workers (including new entrants to farming) to live at or near their place of work.

4.2.7 Encourages Local Planning Authorities to adopt a positive approach to proposals which improve the viability, accessibility or community value of existing services and facilities, such as shops, post offices and rural public houses.

<https://gov.wales/technical-advice-note-tan-6-planning-sustainable-rural-communities>

Technical Advice Note 23 Economic Development (2014)

- 4.2.8 Supports a wide range of economic activities in rural areas, from B1, B2 and B8 classes of employment to agriculture, forestry, tourism and leisure.
- 4.2.9 Supports a sequential approach to new employment sites in development plans to ensure they are sustainably located, but recognises some existing businesses may need to expand in situ in less sustainable places. Criteria based policy should be produced to address unallocated employment provision.
- 4.2.10 Supports provision of broadband and other forms of technology infrastructure to support rural economies.
- 4.2.11 Supports the re-use and adaptation of existing rural buildings where they meet the needs of rural areas for commercial and industrial development, and tourism, sport and recreation.

<https://gov.wales/technical-advice-note-tan-23-economic-development>

Technical Advice Note 13 Tourism (1997)

- 4.2.12 Recognises the importance of tourism to the Welsh economy and contribution to employment in a wide variety of occupations bringing benefits to local economies in both urban and rural areas.
- 4.2.13 Development plans should address issues raised by tourism, and where appropriate help enable facilities in the countryside or designated areas or support larger scale or innovative projects in the right locations. However, special consideration should be given to proposals in sensitive or designated areas.

<https://gov.wales/technical-advice-note-tan-13-tourism>

Technical Advice Note 16 Sport and Recreation (2009)

- 4.2.14 Supports the provision of sport and recreational facilities and informal open spaces, as well as protecting existing facilities in urban and rural areas in Wales.
- 4.2.15 In rural areas, facilities should be located in or adjacent to settlements. Any proposed developments in the open countryside would require special justification. Appropriate proposals linked to farm diversification may be given favourable consideration.
- 4.2.16 Encourages access to the countryside to support the rural economy, community services, public transport and, when linked to recreation, as a means of improving health and well-being.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/tan16-sport-recreation-open-space.pdf>

Technical Advice Note 20 Welsh Language (2017)

- 4.2.17 Section 62 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a Sustainability Appraisal of a Development Plan to include an assessment of the likely effects of the plan on the use of the Welsh language in the area.
- 4.2.18 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 includes the goal “A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language”. Development Plans must have regard to well-being when being prepared.
- 4.2.19 Development Plans should assess the potential cumulative effects of development on the Welsh language across the plan area. Areas sensitive to the Welsh language may be defined in the development plan.

4.2.20 The appropriate mix of land uses and allocation of sites to support growth could benefit the Welsh language.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/tan20-welsh-language.pdf>

Technical Advice Note 4 Retail and Commercial Centres (2016)

4.2.21 Promotes urban and rural retail and commercial centres, as the most sustainable locations to live, work, shop, socialise and conduct business. A sequential test should be applied when locating retail development.

4.2.22 Rural Local Planning Authorities should assess requirements for additional services in their areas and set these out in their Development Plans.

4.2.23 Local Planning Authorities should develop a retail strategy for their area including a local hierarchy classifying retail and commercial centres in order that appropriate policies are applied to those centres.

4.2.24 Place plans and masterplans should outline visions for centres in urban and rural areas.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/tan4-retail-commercial-development.pdf>

5. Rural Practice Guides

Rural Enterprise Dwelling Practice Guide (2011)

5.1 The Rural Enterprise Dwelling Practice Guide provides detailed advice on TAN 6 Rural Enterprise Dwelling implementation.

5.2 This guide assists applicants and Local Planning Authorities understand the nature of the rural enterprise dwelling exemption, sets out the process whereby proposals will be justified and assessed and provides practical advice relevant to planning applications.

5.3 The guidance establishes what qualifies as a rural enterprise dwelling in terms of the corresponding enterprise, what evidence is required to support an application and what is required to meet the key determining tests.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/rural-enterprise-dwellings-guidance.pdf>

One Planet Development Practice Guide (2012)

5.4 This guidance describes the planning requirements for One Planet Developments (OPD) in the open countryside, it is a companion guide to Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities which set out the policy for One Planet Development.

5.5 The guidance provides practical support for applicants putting together proposals for One Planet Development in the open countryside and for planning authorities assessing them. One Planet Development in the open countryside is an exemplary form of sustainable and low impact development which should provide for the minimum needs of the inhabitants in terms of income, food, energy and waste assimilation. The practice guide provides detailed explanation of a proposals management plan requirements and how these should be monitored as the development matures. One Planet Developments can be either single homes, co-operative communities or larger settlements, but they are generally small scale.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/planning-permission-one-planet-developments-in-open-countryside.pdf>

6. Regions and Rural Areas Research Study (2019)

6.1 The purpose of the study is to develop an evidence base for each NDF region, to identify broad rural areas and the issues and spatial areas NDF policies should focus on. Regional and rural workshops were held across Wales in the evidence gathering stage followed by a SWOT analysis. A summary of the conclusions is provided below.

Research Study conclusions

6.2 There is limited need for further rural specific planning policies beyond what the planning system already offers in Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Notes.

6.3 However, the NDF can help the planning system support development and positive outcomes in rural areas.

6.4 A summary of the study's conclusions are set out below. The NDF should focus on:

- In rural areas housing and new settlements should be connected by sustainable forms of transport to community facilities, services and employment.
- Define growth areas and consider infrastructure provision at a national and regional level to support sustainable development.
- Tourism assets, the natural environment and visitor destinations should be connected to sustainable forms of transport, with easy access by walking, cycling, public transport and then the car.
- The Welsh language should be promoted and protected, acknowledging variation across regions, by identifying priority areas and policies that would support the prevention of loss and offer the opportunity for growth in Welsh language and culture.

- Digital infrastructure should be prioritised in rural areas to facilitate home working, community cohesion, online education and reduce the need to travel.
- Economic opportunities in rural areas should be linked to infrastructure and placemaking, linking communities and education facilities with areas of employment.
- Transport infrastructure should connect people to key sites and services and futureproof the network with electric vehicle infrastructure in rural areas.
- An integrated approach to energy development should be adopted, whereby local communities needs, grid capacity, accessibility and land management considerations are taken into account.
- Planning should support a flexible approach to agricultural industry and development and enable appropriate forms of diversification.
- Identify where infrastructure is needed to support rural diversification at a national and regional level.

<https://gov.wales/national-development-framework-study-regions-and-rural-areas>

Other Key Evidence

Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan (March 2019)

- Promotes the growth of an inclusive economy, spreading opportunity and well-being, whilst contributing toward delivery of the National Strategy: Prosperity for All.
- Supports growth and development of the rural economy. Recognises the importance of the foundation economy in rural areas, in particular the food and tourism industries and is committed to helping rural diversification and to supporting business needs.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/prosperity-for-all-economic-action-plan.pdf>

Prosperity for All: The National Strategy (2017)

The Welsh Government's overarching strategy that takes the key commitments in our Programme for Government, Taking Wales Forward, and places them in a long-term context and sets out how they fit with the work of the wider Welsh public service to lay the foundations for achieving prosperity for all.

The Welsh Government's objectives in Prosperity for All are to reduce our carbon emissions, promote active travel, encourage more active lifestyles, maintain local facilities and get the most from our spending on public transport.

The NDF provides a framework for the planning system to shape places and urban growth to achieve these objectives.

Supports rural businesses to diversify and take advantage of supply chains, including the need to increase their processing capacity and add greater value.

The countryside is one of Wales' greatest assets, and has shaped our economy over centuries. Today, it supports a range of sectors, including a vibrant tourism and leisure sector, an agricultural industry that sustains viable rural communities and a world class, home grown food and drink sector.

With the geography of Wales and the needs of sparsely populated rural communities, cars will remain important, but new powers over buses and the rail franchise mean that we can take a more joined up view across all types of transport, enabling us to reduce our carbon emissions, promote active travel, and get the most from our spending on public transport.

<https://gov.wales/prosperity-all-national-strategy>

Mobile Action Plan (2017)

- Shows how the Welsh Government will work with the mobile phone industry and Ofcom to provide better telecommunications connectivity to meet the needs of people and businesses across Wales.
- Includes a key action to scope the extent of any public intervention required to implement infill solutions for areas of poor or no mobile telecommunications coverage in Wales including rural areas.
- Has led to research in to the identification of land across Wales where mobile services are limited and infill solutions such as Mobile Action Zones could be considered.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/mobile-action-plan.pdf>

Future Trends Report (2017)

- Wales' population is projected to increase by approximately 5% over the next 20 years.
- The difference in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas is around 8 years, while the difference in healthy life is around 18 years. Over the next 50 years life expectancy in Wales could rise 15%.
- The number of households in Wales is projected to grow faster than population leading to smaller household sizes.
- Wales's GVA performance is less positive due to demographic factors (including a high dependent population) and lack of 'economic mass'.
- Wales has untapped growth potential to generate energy, including from renewable sources. Community level low carbon energy sector in Wales continues to grow.
- Broadband infrastructure is developing despite demographic challenges and a high level of rural households. Growth in mobile internet will help rural households.
- Despite growth in rail use, private vehicles will remain the dominant mode of transport in the short to medium term. Autonomous vehicles could have implications for our transport systems.
- Infrastructure is increasingly exposed to climate hazards. Flooding poses the greatest long-term risk, but risks from heat, water scarcity and slope instability are also growing.
- Wales' biodiversity and habitats are under increasing pressure and natural resources, ecosystems resilience and species continue to decline (SoNaRR 2016). Air pollution, from transport, agriculture and domestic heating, are a growing concern.
- Housing need is growing due to the number of households increasing faster than available properties. Single person households are predicted to rise by over 30% in the next 20 years.
- Poverty levels are slightly higher in Wales than the UK. Poverty amongst older people and people in persistent poverty has fallen slightly whilst poverty in under 18s has increased.
- Numbers of Welsh speakers declined in the 2011 Census, but more recently those speaking less fluently increased.
- Brexit could have a significant and wide ranging impact on Wales.
- Healthcare decisions will impact on future health trends, including those potential preventative policies concerning lifestyle illnesses and mental health.
- Future technological advances such as artificial intelligence (AI) and increased automation could impact on the structure of the economy. Risks include future wellbeing of the population and potential job losses. Technological advances could improve the effectiveness and availability of low carbon energy.
- Advances in household, transport and energy technologies could have a transformative effect on population behaviours, over fairly short timescales.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2018-12/170505-future-trends-report-2017-en.pdf>

National Development Framework Engagement Events - January/February 2017

- The events were organised in order to raise awareness of the NDF, gather views on the issues to be addressed, highlight the Call for Evidence and Projects, and provide an opportunity for people to ask questions.
- The main consultation responses on rural issues were as follows:
 - the NDF should focus on tourism as a key economic opportunity for the whole of Wales
 - the NDF must provide a vision and strategy for the rural economy, supporting agriculture and forestry. Rural resilience should be a key theme. It should recognise different solutions will be required for some issues
 - the NDF should support growth that creates careers and not just jobs, particularly in rural Wales where young people often leave to further their careers
 - the NDF should support Welsh language objectives and economic opportunities in Welsh speaking areas. People leaving to find work is one of the biggest issues impacting language
 - the NDF should support the agricultural sector and respond to the challenges of Brexit. Rural diversification will become a major issue and must be prepared for
 - the NDF must help create an economic base for Mid Wales.

National Development Framework Issues, Options and Preferred Option – Consultation Summary June (2019)

- The National Development Framework (NDF) 'Issues, Options and Preferred Option' consultation took place between 30 April and 23 July 2018. The report summarises the responses to the consultation exercise, the Welsh Government's response and outlines the next steps.

The main consultation responses on rural issues were as follows:

- Need for criteria for determining that an area is 'rural'.
- Concerns raised about specific aspects of the Preferred Option in relation to the objectives, including the need to strengthen references to rural Wales.
- Concern about treatment of rural areas compared with urban areas, in particular that rural areas be given the same opportunities for economic development as urban areas.
- Rural Wales needs a comprehensive agenda for rural Wales to address implications of Brexit and climate change.