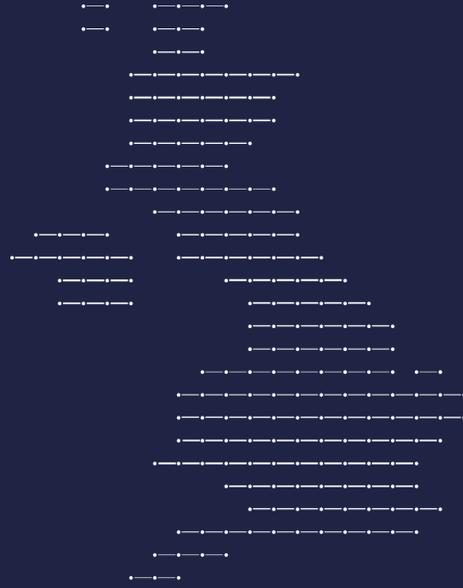


Spatial Planning in the Devolved Nations



6.0 Lessons for English spatial planning 6

6.1 Spatial planning in England is patchwork and underdeveloped. Under New Labour, regional development agencies were responsible for creating Regional Spatial Strategies but this arrangement fell victim to the coalition government's early reforms which abolished regional development agencies and further fragmented England's planning geography.

In 2011, the cross-party Communities and Local Government Committee issued a sombre warning: "the intended abolition of regional spatial planning strategies leaves a vacuum at the heart of the English planning system which could have profound social, economic and environmental consequences set to last for many years" (UK Parliament 2011).

Since then, levels of inequality in England have grown. The prosperity gap between English regions, reinforced by spatially blind investment choices and fragmented decision making, remains one of the largest in the OECD. There is no ideal type for what this plan should look like, but the devolved nations' experiences highlight several generalisable lessons.

The issue of scale

England is far bigger than the devolved nations and so will need to take a different approach. In Scotland, local coalitions have - often successfully - lobbied national government (Vigar 2009), but this sort of "governance village" is less plausible in England which is home to roughly ten times more people. Academic evidence suggests that spatial planning is best coordinated across population sizes of 6-12 million.

This suggests that a regional approach to planning is most appropriate for England. Although some Local Enterprise Partnerships and Mayoralties are making positive steps, they are generally too small to drive ambitious change. One Powerhouse seeks to fill this void in England, promoting high-level spatial planning at the mega-regional level.

The unavoidable trade-offs

Spatial plans are often criticised for lacking detail and clout, as has been the case in all three devolved nations. But spatial planning is meant to facilitate discussion, integrate policy areas and drive progressive change, which calls for a long-term, permissive approach. If they are too prescriptive, plans can be derailed by parochial disputes - hence why difficult decisions about housing allocation and land-use are usually better made in local areas rather than at the national or mega-regional level. Where regional land use frameworks already exist, more holistic spatial blueprints should be adjoined.

But if plans are too detached then stakeholders lose interest and political support dwindles. On-the-ground traction and buy-in can be built through local engagement efforts, perhaps channelled through intermediary tiers such as city-regions, combined authorities and LEPs. Even so, spatial planners cannot dodge all contentious matters.

The importance of collaboration

In the interests of legitimacy and effectiveness, planning processes must involve a wide range of voices. Through citizen and stakeholder consultation, plans can secure wide-ranging buy in and better identify the distinctive needs and contributions of different communities.

Ongoing consultation should form part of a strong evidence base that supports regular updates, helping a plan to accommodate changing circumstances and new expressions of place.

Evidence from other developed nations shows the merits of bottom-up planning, based on detailed local plans, coherent regional strategies and a light-touch national framework. At its most effective, this form of planning initiates a two-way process: high-level strategy influences local practice which in turn helps to inform strategy. Regional planning can help to reconcile incompatible local visions and join them up as part of a coherent strategy but - as argued earlier - difficult decisions will have to be made. These decisions should be based on ongoing dialogue with local communities and stakeholders from various sectors.



5.0 Northern Ireland 5

5.1 Northern Ireland was the first of the home nations to fully embrace spatial planning and -unsurprisingly given the context - its vision was distinctive.

The RDS, published in 2001, engaged with the realities of geographical segregation, violent struggle and contested identity (Murtagh and Ellis 2011). "Community cohesion" was established as one of the plan's guiding development principles and the use of extensive consultation was considered important for brokering agreement between groups (the same judgement was made later in Wales and Scotland, albeit in less acute conditions). RDS 2025 is an interesting, if extreme, example of how spatial planning can be used to manage territorial and identity divisions.

Northern Ireland was an important test bed for spatial planning more generally in the UK. Setting planning within a social and environmental framework, the RDS primed the ground for the sustainable development strategy that emerged several years later. It was also a marked departure from previous Belfast-centric strategies, flagging various gateways, hubs and corridors in a push for balanced development.

Most prominently, a new cross-border 'gateway' was identified in the West of the country linking Derry and Letterkenny. 2013's Framework for Co-operation - Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland mapped the links between each nation's spatial strategy in greater detail and highlighted cross-border commitments. For previously-blinkered policy makers in the north, island-wide perspectives like this arguably gave rise to a broadened regional awareness.

Since the Brexit vote, public and private actors in the border areas have started to think of this space as distinct from the rest of the country, with a different type of economy centred on local assets and community-driven enterprises.

The East Border Region has called for a separate governance regime in the area to coordinate investment decisions and forestall the damage to jobs and the economy predicted in the coming years (Murtagh 2019).

These emerging ideas about the border space contrast those mapped in the RDS, but this should not be a problem. National spatial planning should engage with and arbitrate between locally-derived understandings of place. This would assist a more effective channelling of resources to local need and help national spatial plans accommodate the distinctive economic models and contributions of different places.

Unfortunately, some of the more progressive commitments of the RDS (relating to poverty, balanced development and interfaith mixing) were removed from the most recent version (RDS 2035). The narrower focus on economic competition and growth in RDS 2035 limit the scope for Northern Irish planning to harness ambitious and diverse place-based agendas.

It is evident that when plans are too high-level, they are disparaged for being detached and unclear. But when focused too narrowly on the economy, planning loses its flexibility and its trend-setting power. In the context of Brexit and the associated political and geographic uncertainties, Northern Irish planning cannot afford to lose its strategic spirit. The challenge is creating processes through which broader national strategy can be transposed to the local level, where detailed planning decisions are made.



1.0 A Vision for Britain. Planned 1

1.1 The One Powerhouse Consortium, supported by The Sir Hugh and Lady Ruby Sykes Charitable Trust, believes that a substantial part of the problem of regional inequality in the UK can be solved not just by money, but by the transformative potential of spatial planning.

Spatial planning is the 'where' of decisions. It looks at a defined geographical area and makes an assessment of everything contained in that area - towns, cities, housing, schools, universities, roads, rails, airports, offices, factories, hospitals, energy sources, museums, parks and leisure activities - and makes a plan to develop those assets for the benefit of the people who live in that region, now and for the future.

It is well understood that countries and regions around the world have used spatial planning to focus political will, economic activity and social reform to great effect. Notable examples include Germany's Rhine-Ruhr, Holland's Randstad and New York City's Regional Plan Association.

1.2 There is evidence that spatial planning has already begun to deliver results in the UK. We are not alone in recognising that the two 'regional economies' that have the highest levels of productivity are those where there are coherent regional economic plans: London and Scotland.

Indeed, in England, there is good work taking place through some Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Combined Authorities and Mayoralties but not all. In strategic planning and investment terms, these tend to be rather small and the outcome is rather patchwork.

1.3 The clear 'gap' in terms of economic planning in the UK, therefore, is at the level of the English regions. Any spatial strategy needs to bring together the best local industrial strategies and plans within a wider regional strategy framework. The foundations of how this can be achieved are already present. The regions of England are already coming together: The Northern Powerhouse, The Midlands Engine, The Great South West and The Wider South East all exist as functional identities.

Our ambition is, in short, to work with these regional networks to prepare a series of draft spatial plans that will better enable decision-making and prioritisation of investment across the country and thus help the UK as a whole develop over the long term - creating opportunity for all, jobs for all and prosperity for all.

We are also delighted to be supported on the technical side by some of Britain's most respected planning consultancies: Atkins in the North, Barton Willmore in the Midlands and The South West and Aecom in the South East. Together, we hope to show how well thought out, long-term spatial planning can start as words and diagrams on a page and end up changing lives for the better - wherever in the UK those lives are lived.

The Value of Place and Scale

Our Plan

2.0 Planning in the Devolved Nations 2

2.1 Devolution was a watershed moment for spatial planning in the UK. Prior to 1997, the spatial planning methods trialled with great success across Europe were paid little mind in Whitehall and local land-use planning remained the order of the day. National planning policy remained overly preoccupied with regulatory activity and spatial dynamics were overlooked.

But with devolution things began to change, as the newly-devolved nations sought a break with the UK government departments that previously held sway. In this context, spatial planning was an important tool for nation-building, helping the new political units assert their distinctiveness and express their territorial cohesiveness.

European ministers were meanwhile in the process of finishing the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), released in 1999 to promote the coordination of national plans and policy sectors across Europe. Responding to the ESDP, Northern Ireland published its Regional Development Strategy 2025 (RDS 2025) in 2001 and became the first of the UK nations to advance a formal approach to spatial planning. Wales and Scotland followed the lead in 2004 with the Wales Spatial Plan (WSP) and the Scottish National Planning Framework (NPF 1).

There were significant differences in approach between the three nations' plans, many of which are plainly visible on the maps printed on the flipside of this foldout. While Northern Ireland's 2001 RDS categorised 'high-', 'medium-' and 'low-growth' areas, the Wales Spatial Plan took a less hierarchical approach, capturing spatial relationships through the European-inspired language of networks, hubs, gateways and nodes. In Scotland, the planning framework identified city-regions, each with their own strategic plans, whereas the Wales Spatial Plan - especially since the 2008 update - focuses on larger functional areas which cover the whole territory of Wales.

Nonetheless, there are also important similarities between the nations' plans, partly due to the influence of the ESDP and the pressures of globalisation. There has been an ongoing process

of peer learning between the jurisdictions resulting in a convergence of styles over time. All the devolved nations created sub-national delivery mechanisms and each established formal agreements between central government and local authorities.

For a period, the English planning system participated in this knowledge-transfer. Lessons from the devolved nations informed the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS), set up by the Labour government in 2004. Nonetheless, a national spatial plan never formed in England and the RSS approach was dismantled from 2010 onwards, leaving a void in the UK planning system that has yet to be filled.

The One Powerhouse Consortium is arguing that England needs its own spatial strategy for sustainable, inclusive and coordinated development based on regional economic plans covering four emerging mega-regions. These would be flanked by the devolved nations' existing plans and informed by their experiences with spatial planning since devolution. This paper sets out these experiences and summarises lessons for future planning practice in the UK.



3.0 Scotland 3

3.1 The Scottish parliament published the first version of its NPF in 2004. In 2006, it became a statutory document and later that year RTPI Scotland claimed that "Scotland is now ahead of England, Wales and Northern Ireland in national spatial strategy and working towards what Holland and other countries have achieved" (RTPI Scotland 2006).

The NPF was indeed an impressive document. It provided a foundation for strategic decision-making at all levels of government and a framework for spatial planning in the Scottish city-regions. It was broad-ranging, identifying 10 'key elements' which spanned economic, social, environmental and infrastructural matters and it was promoted as a tool for achieving the independent, prosperous and low carbon Scotland that the SNP envisioned for the future.

Planning is often thought to be the preserve of cloistered technocrats, but the NPF was notable for the degree to which stakeholders were consulted during its preparation. This approach helps to explain its positive reception, both in Scotland and in spatial planning communities abroad; enthusiasm which was buoyed by early successes. The NPF was supporting the integration of planning with other important policy sectors and inspiring a more general embrace of long-term strategic thought in Scotland (Purves 2019).

Of course, the plan did have its critics. As has also been the case for spatial planning in Wales, many felt that the NPF was disconnected from the investment priorities of infrastructure providers and scant on practical guidelines for implementation. The legislative changes in 2006 were partly in response to these criticisms and the 2009 update identified 14 infrastructure priorities, some of which have already been delivered.

However, from 2007 onwards the emerging austerity agenda generated a more general suspicion of planning and regulation, which were held responsible for the sluggish economic

recovery. The result has been a weakening of the strategic spirit of Scottish planning, most notably with the abolition of Strategic Development Plans - the key tools of city regional planning - in 2017 (Lloyd 2019).

This criticism overlooks the positive contributions of spatial planning in Scotland since 2004. The latest 2014 update of the NPF incorporated progressive themes - such as social, geographic and environmental justice - which were largely absent from the National Planning Policy Framework for England. It continues to connect planning with other policy areas, especially where it has enjoyed broad-based support in the local policy community.

In these places, the NPF has provided a platform for dialogue, consensus building and the coalescing of strategies around a common vision. For Houghton et al (2010), the routines, cultures, and practices that have developed out of this dialogue establish a "kind of 'power to act'" which contrasts the "power over" role" that is traditionally associated with planning in the UK. This "soft institutional infrastructure" helps to down laws pushing for "horizontal integration" to work in practice.

Add to this sufficient funding and a renewed emphasis on high-level strategy and the NPF can serve a consistent and long-term approach to inclusive growth and sustainable development in Scotland in the future.



Harris, N. (2019) The Evolution Of National-Level Planning In Wales: Retrenchment From Spatial Planning To Land-Use Planning. In 'National' Spatial Strategies in an Age of Inequality (The Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place).

Haughton, G., Allmendinger, P., Counsell, D., Vigar, G. (2010) The New Spatial Planning: Territorial management with soft spaces and fuzzy boundaries (Abingdon, Routledge).

Lloyd, G. (2019) National Strategic Planning In Scotland: Past, Present And Future. In 'National' Spatial Strategies in an Age of Inequality (The Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place).

Morphett, J. (2011) Effective Practice in Spatial Planning (London, Routledge).

Morris, H. (2015) A new vision for Wales. The Planner, July 10. Available at <http://www.thepinner.co.uk/features/a-new-vision-for-wales>

Murtagh, B. & Ellis, G. (2011) Skills, Conflict and Spatial Planning, Northern Ireland, Planning Theory & Practice, 12:3.

Murtagh, B. (2019) The Regional Development Strategy Northern Ireland, Inequality And Balanced Development. In 'National' Spatial Strategies in an Age of Inequality (The Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place).

Purves, G. (2019) Strategic Development in Scotland, UK2070 Commission Think piece. Available at <http://uk2070.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Strategic-Development-in-Scotland-Graeme-Purves-April-2019.pdf>

Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland (2006) Response to the draft National Planning Bill.

UK Parliament, Commons Communities and Local Government Committee (2011). MPs warn that England needs more than a vacuum for strategic planning. Available at <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/news/report---rds---pr-/>

Vigar, G. (2009) Towards an Integrated Spatial Planning?, European Planning Studies, 17:11.

Welsh Assembly Government (2001) Wales Spatial Plan: Pathway to Sustainable Development. Consultation (Cardiff, National Assembly for Wales)

4.0 Wales 4

4.1 The Wales Spatial Plan was published in 2014, following an extensive period of stakeholder consultation. The document described spatial planning straightforwardly as "the consideration of what can and should happen where", but this betrays its detail and ambition. The WSP was the "spatial expression of the policies and programmes of the National Assembly of Wales", including transport, economy, environment and culture (WAG 2001). Coordinating these sectors through a strategic plan was considered crucial to achieving the Welsh Government's stated objectives post-devolution; promoting sustainable development, tackling social disadvantage and ensuring equal opportunity (Morphet 2011).

Within the plan, these objectives are expressed as 'five guiding themes' - each with their own associated actions and sub-objectives - which are in turn applied to six sub-regions with 'fuzzy boundaries' that do not correspond to previous planning areas. This mismatch was attractive to those who wanted the document to challenge planning orthodoxy but concerned others who feared the break from traditional planning geographies would limit the plan's on-the-ground influence.

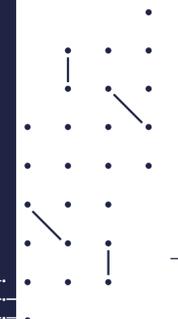
The document's final section on implementation did not quell these concerns. To many, the WSP's relation to the land-use planning system was unclear and the plan was considered too high-level to effectively guide investment decisions and local planning activity. Neither did it carry a

great deal of statutory weight: Local Development Plans (LDPs) simply had to pay 'regard' to the plan. In light of these criticisms, an independent review of the WSP in 2012 recommended that it be replaced with a National Development Framework (NDF), which will be produced in 2020. The NDF will have more power to decisively steer land use policy than the WSP and it has already been described as a "renaissance of strategic planning" in Wales (Morris 2015).

But there are significant trade-offs. The narrower focus on land use planning in the NDF risks isolating planning from other policy areas. Planning might return to its more traditional role of managing change, rather than helping to shape it (Harris 2019). Many of those particularly critical of the WSP were planners, but others saw value in attempts to build consensus around broad strategic priorities. Those producing the plan were anxious to avoid the resistances and setbacks that tend to blight more prescriptive policies.

As was the case in Scotland, the WSP supported a process of dialogue and negotiation through which various local public and private institutions could reach agreement on a broad direction of travel. The Welsh government understood spatial planning as a process guided by principle, rather than a specific destination. Even if establishing common ground was only the first phase of this process, it was no small achievement. By contrast, the NDF will probably require more centralised decision-making (Harris 2019).

If the NDF does take the form we expect, then it would be complemented by a parallel reboot of holistic spatial planning. This dual-purpose document would offer more clarity for land-use planners, while continuing to coordinate places and policy sectors in service of an environmentally sustainable and economically progressive agenda.



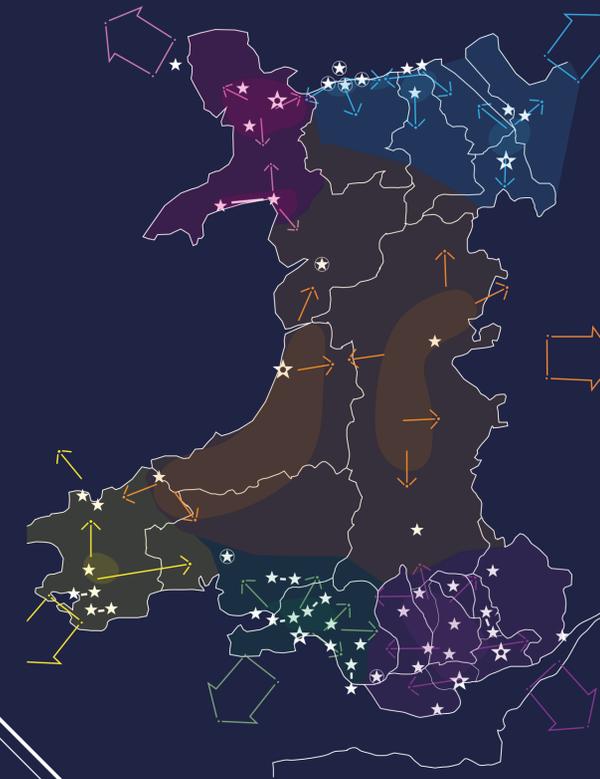
Scotland (adapted from Scotland's Third National Planning Framework, 2014)



Key

- Ravenscraig 1
- Dundee Waterfront 2
- Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) Network and Thermal Generation 3
- A High Voltage Energy Transmission Network 4
- Pumped storage 5
- Central Scotland Green Network 6
- Metropolitan Glasgow Strategic Drainage Partnership 7
- A National Long Distance Cycling and Walking Network 8
- High Speed Rail 9
- Strategic Airport Enhancements 10
- Grangemouth Investment Zone 11
- Freight on the Forth 12
- Aberdeen Harbour 13
- A Digital Fibre Network 14

Wales (adapted from People, Places, Futures: The Wales Spatial Plan, 2008)



Key

- North West Wales (Eryri a Mon) 1
- North East Wales (Border and Coast) 2
- Central Wales 3
- Pembrokeshire - The Haven 4
- Swansea Bay (Waterfront and Western Valleys) 5
- South East - Capital Region 6
- Areas with Socio-economic Hubs 7
- International/Inter-regional Links 8
- Regional Links 9
- Key Settlements with National Significance 10
- Primary Key Settlements 11
- Cross-boundary Settlements 12
- Linked Centres representing a single 'Key Settlement'; 13

Northern Ireland (adapted from the Regional Development Strategy 2035, 2010)



Key

- Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area 1
 - Londonderry-North West Region 2
 - Gateways 3
 - Main Hubs 4
 - Local Hubs 5
 - Clusters 6
 - Ports 7
 - Belfast International Airport 8
 - Airports 9
 - Strategic Natural Resource 10
 - Keytransport Corridors 11
 - Link Corridors 12
 - Trunks Roads 13
 - Railways 14
 - NSS - National Spatial Strategy Gateway 15
 - NSS - National Spatial Strategy Hubs 16
1. Causeway Coast 2. Foyle Estuary
3. Antrim Coast & Glens 4. Strangford Lough & Coast 5. Lough Neagh
6. Sperrins 7. Mourne 8. Ring of Gullon
9. Fermanagh Lakeland

England has no national spatial plan or regional strategy.



Key

- 1. North
- 2. Midlands
- 3. South East
- 4. South West