E-SUPPLEMENT TWO: UK PLANNING SYSTEMS OF SCOTLAND, WALES, NORTHERN IRELAND AND LONDON

FOUR MORE COUNTRIES

Following devolution other countries which with England, make up the United Kingdom, now have their own planning systems. However, at present, there are strong similarities particularly in terms of shared policy concerns and objectives. This section provides a summary of these other systems. For more detail consult the web pages given which will lead you to detailed information on each country’s planning structures, policies and procedures. London has been included because the Greater London Authority (GLA) has very strong planning powers different from those in the rest of the UK, and a population of eight million making it virtually a country in its own right.

In terms of definitions, the United Kingdom (UK) is defined as England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The total area of the UK is 240.9 thousand square kilometres (94,201 square miles). Great Britain (and Britain) means England, Scotland and Wales, but not N. Ireland, the Channel Isles, nor the Isle of Man. The British Isles is all of the U.K plus all of Ireland and other islands. The planning acts and system discussed in the book mainly apply to England and Wales only although approaches to planning policy and dealing with urban issues are similar across Britain. Official government statistics by the ONS are generally produced for the United Kingdom as a whole but check carefully.

PLANNING IN SCOTLAND

Scotland has a population of around 5.2 million. Since the devolution of certain government powers and responsibilities to Scotland in 1997 the country has had its own directly elected Parliament based in Edinburgh. The parliament building at Holyrood is a striking example of modern architecture and was officially opened in October 2004. The powers of the Scottish Parliament are subject to amendment and approval by the national parliament in London, and do include significant areas of planning and the environment. The Scottish Parliament also has the power to raise directly a certain level of taxation. The Parliament is made up of 129 directly elected Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and the majority party or parties in the Parliament appoint the First Minister and a number of Cabinet Secretaries, including one for Sustainable Growth, which includes responsibility for planning, and one for Cities. The Scottish Parliament is responsible for running the Scottish Government. This is the civil service for Scotland and is made up of professional staff, including planners, organised into a number of Directorates. A referendum on whether Scotland should remain a part of the United Kingdom is likely at some point.

Planning policy is expressed in a strategic document known as the National Planning Framework, the first edition being published in 2004, and the second in 2009. This is a spatial policy for the development of Scotland, and it is supplemented by Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), a single statement of national planning policies. Within this policy context it is the responsibility of the 32 Unitary Authorities and the two National Park Authorities (Loch Lomond and The Trossachs; and the Cairngorms), to produce local Development Plans and carry out development control / management functions for their area. For the four main cities (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow) and their surrounding areas there is a two-tier system of plans, with a strategic plan for the area as a whole and local development plans for each of the local planning authorities (Collar,2010, Slater,2012). In all other areas, the development plan is made up of the local development plan and any other supplementary guidance. Scotland still retains a regional level of planning which was abolished in England under the Coalition government. As explained in Chapter Two, Scotland is a very diverse country comprising both highly built up urban areas along the central corridor, which contains the major cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, but also contains many under-populated, mainly rural and agricultural areas such as the Highlands and Islands (McMaster et al, 2013). Since there are so many islands and so much coastline especially in the most northerly parts of Scotland is has extended planning control beyond the land by introducing the Scottish (Marine) Act 2010 which seeks both to conserve wildlife and also to protect fishery resources.

Scottish Planning Web Links

[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk) – the Scottish Executive Government ‘s section on *planning and building*. Also see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/built-environment/planning>

For the Scottish Parliament’s Guide to the Scottish planning system see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/281542/0084999.pdf>. In particular see the new National Planning Framework 3 Document at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/NPF3-SPP-Review/NPF3> .

PLANNING IN WALES

Wales has a population of around 3 million. Since the devolution of certain government powers and responsibilities to Wales in 1997 the country has had its own directly elected assembly based in Cardiff. The powers of the assembly are subject to amendment and approval by the national parliament in London, and do include significant areas of planning and the environment. The Welsh Assembly (National Assembly of Wales (NAW)) is made up of 60 directly elected Assembly Members (AMs) and the majority party or parties in the Assembly appoint the First Minister and a number of other ministers, including one for Environment and Sustainable Development, which includes responsibility for planning. The Welsh Assembly meets in the Senedd, a splendid building on the waterfront in Cardiff Bay designed by the Richard Rogers Partnership and officially opened in 2006. The Assembly is responsible for running the Welsh Government and is supported by its own civil service including town planners. However the Assembly, at present, lacks its own financial and legislative powers. Wales also has its own versions of various planning bodies, for example CADW is the equivalent of English Heritage dealing with listed buildings. Wales may not have executive powers in terms of taxation and overall governance yet. But it does have its own language, and it is a statutory requirement that all government documents and correspondence, including the work of local planning departments, should be available and undertaken in Welsh as well as English.

Planning policy is expressed in a strategic document known as Planning Policy Wales, the 4th Edition of which was published in 2011. This is effectively a national plan, a spatial policy document for the development of Wales. (Their first national plan was produced in 2005). It is supplemented by a number of more specific Technical Advice Notes (TANs). Within this policy context it is the responsibility of the 22 Unitary Authorities and the three National Park Authorities (Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia) to produce Local Development Plans and carry out development control / management functions for their area.

There is no longer a regional planning level in Wales, but it should be noted that parts of Wales as economically deprived areas (since the closure of the mines and local industry) have been the subject of EU ESDP attention and have receive Objective One structural funding under the INTERREG.

However there is a strong emphasis on trying to bring back a city-regional level within Welsh planning, because of the importance of Swansea and Cardiff and their hinterlands. In 2012 a report commissioned by the Assembly recommended the creation of a number of city-regions within Wales, which could if implemented lead to greater co-ordination of planning, transport and economic development policies and actions particularly in south Wales, based around Cardiff and Swansea (Welsh Government, 2012).

The future of Wales should be watched carefully as it is likely that the Assembly will receive greater financial powers, and greater policy-making independence from Whitehall, which will impact on the scope and ambit of the Welsh planning system

Welsh Web Links

The main website for planning in Wales, available in English and Welsh is: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/?lang=en>

[www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk) – Also see the Welsh Assembly Government – look for the section on *planning*. Note all Welsh government websites are available in English and Welsh.

Welsh matters can also be accessed through the UK planning portal web site at: <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/general/glossaryandlinks/links/wales>

PLANNING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland has a population of around 1.8 million. Since the devolution of certain government powers and responsibilities to Northern Ireland in 1998 the country has had its own directly elected assembly based in Stormont, Belfast. The powers of the assembly are subject to amendment and approval by the national parliament in London, and do include significant areas of planning and the environment. The Northern Ireland Assembly is made up of 108 directly elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). The Assembly appoints the First Minister, Deputy First Minister and a number of other ministers, including one responsible for the Department of the Environment, which includes responsibility for planning.

The situation in relation to planning is different in Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK due to historic reasons and “the troubles”. Instead of local authorities being responsible for planning in Northern Ireland this function is carried out centrally by the Department of the Environment. The department is responsible for drawing up planning policy, including all local development plans, and for administering the system of development control and management. All planning applications are determined by the Department, following consultation with the relevant local council. Local government in Northern Ireland consists of 26 unitary authorities, which have responsibility for providing a range of local services. There have been attempts to reform the structure of local government in the recent past, and to devolve certain powers, such as planning, to the local councils, but these have been caught up in political disagreements and have not come much. The Department of the Environment is also responsible for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, which has responsibility for overseeing natural resources and built heritage in the country. Housing allocation and policy is also centralised in Northern Ireland where there is still a much higher proportion of council housing under the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Since the Good Friday Peace Accord signed in 1998, it has been possible to plan the future of Northern Ireland in a more confident and united manner (Reeves and Greed, 2005). All local development plans have to be in general conformity with the Regional Development Strategy (which is effectively a form of National Plan). Known as *Shaping Our Future* this document was published in 2001 and reviewed in 2008. It provides a strategic and long-term perspective on the future development of Northern Ireland up to the year 2025. There are also a series of Planning Policy Statements giving guidance on a range of specific topics. Local development plans are drawn up by the Department of the Environment in consultation with the local authority / authorities concerned and other interested parties including the public. The plans are similar in form to those found elsewhere in the UK and can cover a part or the whole of a local authority’s area, or a number of local authorities where this makes sound planning sense. In terms of plan making it is therefore necessary to understand who has the power and responsibility (often referred to as the *competence*) to make the plans; and what institutions of government are involved and how they relate to the tiers above and below them in the institutional hierarchy. Whilst the Northern Ireland planning and housing system has been run more centrally than the situation in England and Wales, the Coalition government (as at January 2013) are proposing to abolish the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and decentralise planning powers.

Much planning policy is concerned with employment and housing issues, and with urban regeneration, there is a strong theme of urban conservation and architectural heritage particularly in Belfast (Purdue, 2013). Belfast was known as a highly industrialised city in the nineteenth century with shipbuilding and international trade having a major role in the economy. But it also has a heritage of Georgian, Edwardian and Victorian buildings of note that are the subject of urban conservation policy. However, architecturally Belfast is often overshadowed by Dublin in the Irish Republic which has fine heritage of Georgian town houses and public buildings.

Please note that Northern Ireland is quite separate from the Republic of Ireland which is a country in its own right with a population of around 4.5 million. But both are covered by European Union policies, and spatial planning regimes, such as ESPD, and INTERREG which involve regional liaison between the two territories.

Web Links for Northern Ireland

[www.northernireland.gov.uk](http://www.northernireland.gov.uk) – On this Northern Ireland Executive Government’s website look for the section on *government departments*, then go to *Department of Environment*, then *planning* then *development plans and planning policies* for all planning matters. Also see <https://www.planningni.gov.uk/>

There is also a combined Planning Portal for Northern Ireland and Scotland at

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/general/glossaryandlinks/links/scotlandnireland>

PLANNING IN LONDON

London is the largest city and capital of the UK and England and has a population of around 8 million making it larger than Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, or for that matter the Republic of Ireland. Most planning matters in London are dealt with by the 33 London Boroughs. These are essentially unitary style authorities, having a wide range of local powers and service provision. They are democratically elected councils, except for the City of London, which covers the capital’s financial heart, which is made up of council members mostly elected by businesses in the Square Mile. All of the London Boroughs and the City have to produce a local plan and have responsibility for development control / management. The difference in London is that there is an upper tier of sorts: the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority.

The Mayor is elected by the people of London every four years. The first Mayor was Ken Livingstone; he was followed by Boris Johnson, who was first elected in 2007. The Mayor has an office and an extensive staff who are responsible for a number of important strategic and other planning matters. The Mayor is responsible for setting the overall vision for the future of London and to oversee the development of strategies, plans and policies to put this into effect. These include plans and strategies relating to planning and development, transport, housing, environment and a wide range of other planning related activities. In particular the Mayor is responsible for publishing the London Plan. This is the spatial development strategy for London as a whole. The first London Plan was published in February 2008 and a replacement version was published in July 2010. The London Plan acts as the strategic planning policy for London. The Mayor also has a number of other important planning policies that affect development in the city, including a policy for London’s strategic views and for the Community Infrastructure Levy in London. The Boroughs have to consult the Mayor on their local plans (which should reflect a degree of conformity with the London Plan). The Mayor has considerably more powers than any other local authority leader (Reeves and Greed,2005) and can, for example, determine (decide) planning applications that are of potential strategic importance to London. Boris Johnson the mayor at the time of writing is an elected mayor (not a ceremonial mayor) with the powers of a city manager along American lines (Hambleton and Sweeting,1999).

The Mayor works alongside the Greater London Assembly. This is a directly elected body made up of 25 Assembly Members. The Assembly holds the Mayor to account, has a say in approving the Mayor’s budget, and produces reports on matters of importance to London. Both the Mayor and the Assembly are supported by the equivalent of the civil service, called the Greater London Authority. This is made up of professional staff, such as planners, and also comprises a number of important bodies such as Transport for London and the London development Agency. The Mayor and the Assembly hold meetings in City Hall, which is located on the south bank of the Thames near to Tower Bridge, and was designed by Foster and Partners.

Web Links for London

[www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) and [www.gla.gov.uk](http://www.gla.gov.uk) will give access to the London Assembly web in relation to planning policy, also check [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk), which is the Transport for London website, which includes transport planning policy material and updates on major projects such as Cross Rail (as well updates on how the trains are running!)