


A new planning bill for Wales: What will this mean?

27 June 2025  Bill Cordingley and Ben Standing

Planning law is often not easy to understand and navigate, even with up to date legislation and guidance. This is made considerably more difficult with legislation which is often over 30 years old, and is being amended differently in both Wales and England.

This can make it difficult for those using the planning system to understand which rules apply. To counter this, the Welsh Government is planning on introducing the Planning (Wales) Bill to Senedd in September. It aims to:

- Bring together the main planning Acts and some subordinate legislation.
- Create a single bilingual Act.
- Modernise the structure and wording of the law to make it easier to understand and use.

Although the structure and wording of the law will change, its legal effect will remain unchanged. Consolidation is a technical process to improve clarity, not to change policy or reform planning law.

We explore this in more detail below.

Key points

The [Planning \(Wales\) Bill, recently published in draft](#), aims to consolidate and simplify existing planning legislation in Wales. While the changes introduced are relatively modest because of the limitations of the procedure used (those who desire to know more can delve into standing order 26C and the [guidance to support it](#)).

The changes are designed to enhance clarity and efficiency within the Welsh planning system. The bill consolidates various pieces of legislation into a coherent format, improving accessibility and functionality. Notably, the bill introduces a new numbering system for orders, which differs from the established framework used in England under the [Town and Country Planning Act](#) (TCPA). This change requires practitioners to adapt to new references and shorthand specific to Wales.

In addition to consolidating current Welsh planning law, the bill's introduction of a distinct Welsh planning regime is sets the stage for future divergence from the TCPA framework in England. This new foundation increases the likelihood of further divergence in related areas such as environmental law and habitats regulations. As Wales continues to develop its own legal identity, more tailored approaches that address specific Welsh priorities and challenges are expected.

The Planning (Wales) Bill will be formally introduced in the Senedd in September 2025, with several stages of scrutiny and debate to follow before it becomes law.

Practicalities for practitioners

The Bill introduces several changes to the names of certain notices and orders to enhance legal clarity and improve accessibility.

For instance, what were previously known as "*completion notices*" under section 94 of the 1990 Act will now be referred to as "*termination orders*" under section 98 of the Bill. Similarly, "*planning contravention notices*" from section 171C of the 1990 Act will be renamed "*enforcement investigation notices*" in section 114 of the Bill.

"Section 215 notices", which dealt with the maintenance of land under section 215 of the 1990 Act, will now be called "*maintenance of land notices*" as per section 214 of the Bill. Other changes affect section 330, section 386 and Schedule 9 to the 1990 Act.

One of the key features of the Planning (Wales) Bill which will affect practitioners is its new numbering system for orders. This system differs from the established framework used under the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA). For example, Section 106 of the TCPA, which deals with planning obligations, seems likely to become section 165 under the new Welsh system.

Practitioners familiar with the TCPA framework will need to adapt to these changes, learning new references and shorthand specific to Wales. This adjustment, while necessary, is not expected to be overly burdensome but does require some effort from those not regularly engaged in Welsh planning work.

The renumbering of orders is a notable change (whether it will be seen by practitioners as a bug or a feature perhaps remains to be seen), but it is part of a broader effort to create a distinct Welsh planning regime. This new system aims to reflect the unique needs and priorities of Wales, providing a foundation for future divergence from the TCPA framework in England. While the changes introduced by the bill are currently modest, they arguably signal the beginning of a more independent Welsh approach to planning.

A new base from which Welsh planning law can diverge from English law also increases the likelihood of further divergence in the future. This is particularly relevant in areas that are closely linked to planning, such as environmental law, conservation and other linked areas.

As Wales continues to develop its own legal identity, we can expect to see more tailored approaches that address specific Welsh priorities and challenges. This divergence could lead to more innovative and locally appropriate solutions in areas like environmental protection and habitat conservation.

The legislative process

The Planning (Wales) Bill has been published early to allow practitioners and stakeholders to understand its provisions before it is formally introduced. The bill is scheduled to be introduced in the Senedd (Welsh Parliament) in September.

Following its introduction, the bill will undergo several stages of scrutiny and debate before becoming law. These stages include the Committee Stage, where the bill will be examined in detail, the Report Stage, where any amendments will be considered, and the Final Stage, where the bill will undergo a final debate and vote. The exact dates for each stage have not yet been set and will depend on the legislative timetable.

Conclusion

Whilst the Planning (Wales) Bill introduces some changes, these are relatively modest and aimed at improving the clarity and efficiency of the Welsh planning system. The new numbering system for orders, exemplified by the renumbering of Section 106 TCPA, is a key practical feature of the bill. The legislative process for the bill is well-defined, with several stages of scrutiny and debate expected to be completed in the coming months.

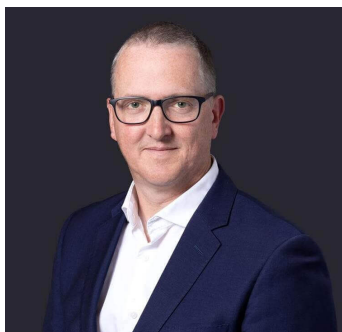
As Wales continues to develop its own planning identity, the Planning (Wales) Bill will serve as a crucial foundation for future divergence from the TCPA framework in England. This new foundation also increases the likelihood of further divergence in related areas such as environmental law and habitats regulations, paving the way for a more distinct and locally tailored Welsh legal landscape.

Local Authorities will need to prepare for these changes and update much of their material and documentation to reflect the changes. We will continue to provide updates as the Bill makes its way through the Senedd.

Contact

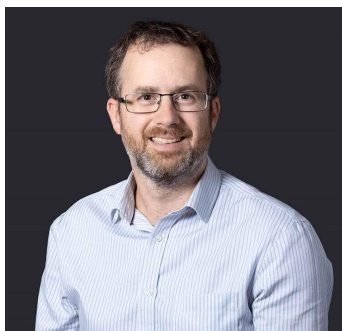
Bill Cordingley

Barrister (Senior Associate)



bill.cordingley@brownejacobson.com

+44 (0)330 045 1000



Ben Standing

Partner

ben.standing@brownejacobson.com

+44 0330 045 2400

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