

1st April 2024 –
31st March 2025



Annual Report

2024/25

Contents

Chair's Foreword, Ewan Jones	4
Overview: Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive	6
About us, our activity and reach	10
Objectives, targets and performance, 1 April 2024 – 31st March 2025	15
Look ahead – strategic priorities for 2025-26	37

Appendices

Governance Statement and Board of Directors	40
Equalities and inclusion	45
Note on financial and human resources, support in-kind	46

Chair's Foreword, **Ewan Jones**



Good design in our built environment has never been more important for delivering economic as well as social advantage. The design process is an effective means to consider places right across transport, regeneration and homes and how they all work together in our towns, cities and rural areas. Good design demands a true joined-up, placemaking approach.

This is what we at the Design Commission for Wales do. We provide input, guidance and support on embedding good design at the heart of placemaking – for public and private sector clients, local authorities and public bodies. We contribute to policy with knowledge drawn from best practice and support planning, development and construction professionals to deliver it. That way we help create places that work for people, for business and for the economy, using land and natural resources efficiently, addressing climate and nature imperatives and create the conditions for high quality environments where everyone can thrive.

Small but mighty – our low headcount of just four core staff belies a wealth of expertise. Assisted by specialist practising professionals giving their time and commitment voluntarily, we can galvanise an agile network driven by commitment to the greater economic and social good delivered by good design. Every development or regeneration project in Wales that works better, feels better and last longer, by design, adds value to public investment.

“Good design creates high quality places that are easy to use, attractive places to live and work. They attract talent and investment.”

Ewan Jones, DCFW chair

The focus of our continuing work, including input to major projects and strategic relationships with clients across sectors, are noted in our Annual Remit Letter and Framework which are aligned with our company purpose. We are engaged with colleagues in Welsh Government to ensure we have sufficient resources to deliver on our remit and the increased expectation placed upon us. We value their constructive approach to our working relationship, via our Sponsor Partnership team and across departments responsible for place, transport and regeneration.

We also value our excellent staff team and extend our gratitude to our Board members, including those who completed their terms on 31 March 2024, and warmly welcome newly appointed Commissioners, taking us into 2025/26 and beyond.

As we head into this period we are delivering against our plans to support greater Strategic Placemaking to help refine visions for settlement growth and accelerate delivery of place-led regeneration and high quality affordable homes, as well as providing input to Strategic Development Planning in Wales and to further enhancing design capacity within local authorities and Transport for Wales.

Many of the greatest opportunities for achieving high quality, long lasting buildings, resilient spaces and places are at the earliest stages when a common vision is essential for success. Sharing more of the ways good design can bring together a shared vision and clear objectives – saving time and money – at the early stages, is our core priority and sits at the heart of everything we do. We look forward to working even more closely with all our stakeholders to remove barriers to achieving lasting quality and value.



Ewan Jones

Chair, Design Commission for Wales

Overview:

Carole-Anne Davies,

Chief Executive



Our strength lies in our experience, agility and ability to add value. We are uniquely placed to convene and connect stakeholders in the broad design, planning, regeneration and housing ecosystem, through a common approach to design and placemaking. Early engagement is key and we are always ready to work with stakeholders at the earliest stages – sowing the seeds of success and avoiding unnecessary risk, cost and delay.

Design is a critical part of regeneration and placemaking as well as for new buildings, transport and other infrastructure. Bringing experienced design professionals to provide strategic support for clients and public authorities – where resources are stretched and value is critical – is fundamental to our approach.

Throughout 2024-25 our small team continued to add value to Welsh Government investment in our revenue funded activities via our £442,130K budget (Table 1). Whilst our resources have been extremely stretched during the plan period, we are working closely with Welsh Government colleagues to resolve the tensions between rising costs in this period, additional activity and static revenue. We very much appreciate the approach our Sponsor Partner team has taken to working with us on this, while we have continued to focus on delivery. Applying our in-house skills and experience we also continued to bring the expert in-kind support of 38 voluntary professionals, from the private sector, to assisting the delivery of our activities throughout the year.

Table 1: Budget and in-kind support 2024-25

BUDGET	2024/25
Core Revenue	£372,130
Transforming Towns Revenue	£70,000
Total Revenue	£442,130
Value of In-kind support of 38 voluntary professionals	£108,975

In 2024-25 we delivered:

- 13 Events attended by 1425 sector professionals and local authority members
- 7 professional development sessions, with 272 delegates attending
- Expert speakers for 6 partner events, reaching 707 attendees
- 12 Design Review days across Wales for 13 Local Authorities across Wales including three in North Wales
- Support for 3 inter-disciplinary research partnerships with five Universities from all parts of the UK
- Attracted in kind support from the private sector to the value of £108,975K
- Maintained professional input to Cardiff University Planning and Urban Design Schools as well as the Welsh School of Architecture
- Provided strategic input to the Affordable Housing Task Force

Design is fundamental to development and regeneration practice and the Design Commission has this front and centre in all its work. In the period 2024-25 our Remit Letter reflected our wider role in the **Transforming Towns** initiative with specific focus on placemaking in the context of regeneration across Wales - supporting Welsh Government housing, regeneration and economy officials along with local authorities. This makes explicit the key advisory role we have developed in supporting local authorities with the development of their town centre Placemaking Plans under the Welsh Government **Transforming Towns** funding programme.

Also reflected in the remit is our increasing work in renewable energy, our transport design expertise and our client-side, capacity building role with Transport for Wales.

We have expanded scope for training and professional development through opportunities to attend and observe our **National Design Review Service**; provided work experience placements and board level mentoring and shadowing opportunities.

Two board level mentees joined us from the Welsh Government's pilot mentorship scheme for people with leadership potential. We provided one-to-one direct mentoring experience for a full year, coaching mentees to advance the skills appropriate for Board level leadership and governance roles. This helps us to identify talent and contributes to our desire for greater inclusion, connecting us with a broad range of perspectives and skills.

In 2024-25 as part of our **Client Support** services for the public sector in Wales – effectively the largest client body – we provided robust strategic feedback on the important Regional Transport Plans for Wales and developed an additional upstream input for local authorities to identify opportunities for Strategic Placemaking. We expect this work, which continues into 2025-26, to complement the Local Development Plan process, help refine visions for settlement growth and create the conditions for bringing forward early opportunities for intensification that help respond to the needs of people in their places.

Looking further ahead to 2025-26, recognising the power of the public sector as a major client body capable of bringing about the practices needed to deliver on policy ambition - we will increase our client facing services by:

- **Supporting clients and development teams in all sectors to formulate their requirements early in their brief** so as to attract and appoint high quality, integrated design teams through open, competitive procurement, engaging appropriate design consultants at the right stage.
- **Helping local authorities and other public bodies** at their earliest stages of strategic planning and local development plan process including side by side support, opportunities for Training & CPD and professional development and by delivering informative events sharing knowledge from our research and academic links as well as practical development experience.
- Providing **practical input appropriate to all stages of development** planning and strategic placemaking for small and large scale developments, from residential and neighbourhood proposals, masterplans, and development briefs to long-term national infrastructure projects, including transport, solar, wind and other renewable energy proposals.
- Providing **Strategic Placemaking support** aligned with our advisory work on Strategic Development Plans and feedback on Regional Transport Plans. Building on early strategic opportunities and engaging key stakeholders is vital and in this work Transport for Wales, the Corporate Joint Committees and Local Authorities will be important. This offers an opportunity to refine ways of working and optimise visions for settlement growth, influence location and site selection, maximising opportunities for sustainable transport and connectivity, as well as good quality homes and mixed use development that can meet strategically identified need.
- Consistently maintaining and developing our **National Design Review Service** through the voluntary commitment of outstanding practitioners and attracting a strong field from which to make new appointments in successive years – ensuring consistency for all users. The service is available across sectors and we encourage early engagement to maximise opportunities for added value through expert input on development proposals throughout Wales, well in advance of the submission of planning applications.

Working with the people that shape our built environment we encourage a culture of quality, genuine partnership, and essential rigour. We bring our skills, agility and perspective as an expert organisation which values people and nurtures creativity, competence, and confidence. We aim for transparency, and mutual respect, in a culture where knowledge is shared with all stakeholders. We nurture a professional, constructive, and creative culture and work to continuously improve the efficiency and quality of our services.

We bring our values to everything we do and use our convening power to create constructive environments for collaborative, creative, practical problem solving – for better places everywhere for everyone. Adding value through good design, helping to deliver major projects of lasting quality for public good, is our priority.



Carole-Anne Davies

Chief Executive 1 April 2003 – 31st December 2025

“Working with the people that shape our built environment we encourage a culture of quality, genuine partnership, and essential rigour.”

Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, Design Commission for Wales

About us, our activity and reach

The Design Commission for Wales (DCFW Ltd) is the national advisory body for the promotion of design excellence across Wales' built environment, set up by the Welsh Government to help make Wales a better place for everyone.

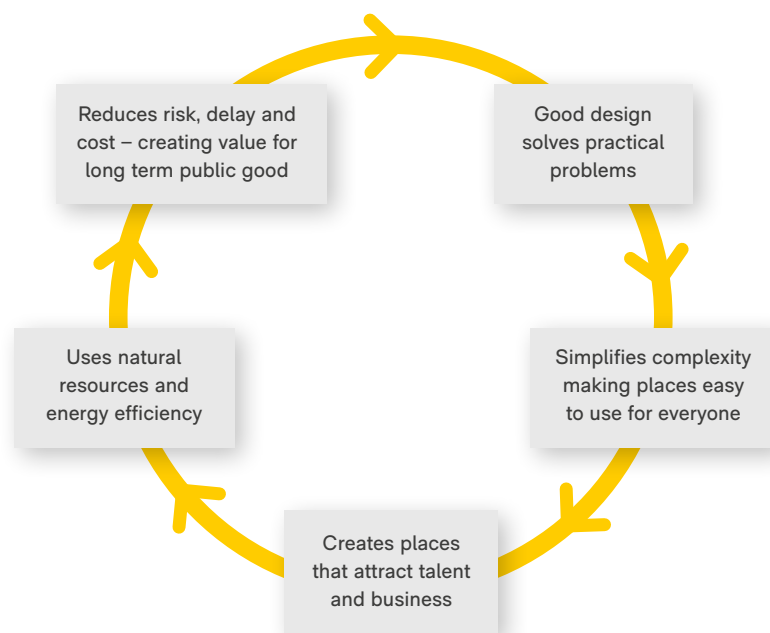
Our role is to promote and advance good design across all sectors, for places, buildings and public spaces, and to communicate the benefits of good design everywhere for everybody, supported by our panel and associates comprising 38 independent, leading built environment professionals.

We work with the Welsh Government to help develop design-related policy, and support local authorities, developers and built environment professionals to deliver well-designed places.

We support continuous professional development in design and placemaking with training and events, unique cross-disciplinary built-environment networks, and expert guidance.

Our expert services and peer-led Design Review strengthen large or small developments at all stages: from proposals for small scale development, masterplans, development briefs for new neighbourhoods and large scale, long-term national transport and energy infrastructure.

Good design is essential for good place-making, sustainable development, social inclusion and long term public value.



DCFW Client Support:

If you're planning a new project, we can help you deliver good design and value-for-money as well as public value. While we can help at any stage, early involvement strengthens delivery of all three. We can help you detail the challenge, develop your project brief and budget for a funding bid or design competition, and support your procurement and design team selection processes, as well as upskill your in-house team to manage the project. We work with commissioners, local authorities, charitable bodies, public sector organisations, community groups, investors and developers to steer the design process to excellent delivery of any type of built environment projects, all with sustainable placemaking at their centre.

DCFW Training & CPD:

We support your continuous professional development in design and placemaking through training and events which explore key areas of development, debate current issues and advance good design practice. We work with local authorities, town and community councils, and third sector groups to tailor training based on their specific needs in relation to the different aspects of design and placemaking in Wales, and equip teams to address design issues.

DCFW Design Review:

We provide the national Design Review Service in Wales, with an established reputation for quality, integrity, expertise and robustness. It is funded by the Welsh Government and provided free-of-charge to you with the aim of capturing and maximising the value of good design.

Our independent, multi-disciplinary panel of practising professional experts discuss your development plans and proposals with you and provide constructive feedback. Available across the whole of Wales, Design Reviews are also open for attendance for professional development and training purposes – unique in the UK.

The Design Commission for Wales has been involved with and has provided early stage input through its national Design Review Service on major projects under construction in Wales. We continue to provide expert design review on developments of national significance and large scale wind or solar projects being proposed in Wales, but determined through the Infrastructure Planning Inspectorate. These include among others, Maen Hir solar on Ynys Môn and Mona Offshore Wind – both large scale, high capacity energy generation projects. We also expect to be further involved in Developments of National Significance in Wales and on the associated development that accompanies such projects.

Other projects include transport related development and rail stations as well as commercial developments in the capital city and across Wales, of regional and national importance and represent multi-million pound investment. In just one example, for **Velindre Cancer Centre Cardiff** DCFW provided early and sustained client support on the brief and procurement for this project, as well as continuous Design Review for the client, Cardiff Council and the Welsh Government – through design, planning and post-planning contract stages. This project has the potential to demonstrate best practice in many areas. The design approach employed has already won the international Future Healthcare Design category in the European Healthcare Design (EHD) Awards, which recognises excellence in design for healthcare environments around the world.

Policy input & research:

The Design Commission for Wales supports Welsh Government to put good design at the heart of policy in priority areas, including placemaking, affordable housing, sustainable transport, renewable energy and new approaches to creating Local Development Plans. We then enable the implementation of those policies on the ground by supporting project delivery throughout Wales.

We take part in cutting edge research with leading academic institutions within Wales and beyond to advance and support the latest thinking on good design and placemaking. We also provide an important connection between academia and industry, bringing existing and future leaders from both worlds together.

How we are run

The Design Commission for Wales was established as a first term initiative of the Welsh Assembly, now Welsh Government. The Commission is a private company limited by guarantee (DCFW LTD), without share capital, incorporated in 2002 as a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Assembly for Wales, now Welsh Government.

The Design Commission receives funds from the Welsh Government to carry out activities in pursuit of the Objects of the Company as set out in its Memorandum of Association and the Annual Remit Letter and Term of Government Framework, set out by Welsh Government.

The Design Commission has its own Board of Directors appointed via the Ministerial Public Appointments process, who carry out their duties as Directors of the company with care, diligence, and skill.

The Design Commission Chief Executive reports quarterly to its Sponsor Partner in the Welsh Government, at its own quarterly Board meetings sub-committee meetings, its annual AGM and in through audited financial year-end reports. More detail about our governance and our Board of Directors can be found in Appendix 1.

How we deliver value

We are uniquely positioned to make Wales a better place because we:

- work strategically and seamlessly across the built environment professions, government, academia and the public and private sectors
- convene and support all built environment professions
- promote best-practice, sustainable, inclusive design in all aspects of placemaking – e.g for energy efficiency, accessibility for buildings, homes and places, public transport and connectivity.
- support the development of Welsh Government policies that relate to placemaking, design and architecture and its delivery across the development sector
- work with all scale of projects throughout Wales

We deliver value

- **By being uniquely non-partisan**

We are independent, expert and not affiliated with any single profession. That means we are the only organisation in Wales with a singular focus on the long-term public value that excellent built environment design and development can bring.

- **Through client services and support for any project at every stage**

Consideration of design and placemaking at the earliest stage of a project is key to successful development. We encourage early involvement in proposals throughout Wales, to provide **early, long-term, strategic design advice, expert resources, support and constructive challenge.**

The range, scale and scope of projects mean we work with many and varied clients, from local authorities to private sector multi-disciplinary teams. We help them to take a strategic view and consider the broader placemaking context of their projects, maintain high design quality through the planning process and through delivery.

- **By effectively convening all professions within the built environment sector** through events and networks and sharing knowledge and best practice because we understand the key issues and challenges. Our **seminars and conferences** are well-attended by the people well-placed to address these together. These events foster collaboration and debate, and share best practice.
- Through **publications** that focus on the key topics for the design and development industries and that share insight informed by our **research and practice** activity.

“The Design Commission for Wales supported the new Velindre Hospital team through the process of design specification, design competition and design development. This support took the form of both formal review and structured facilitation. The engagement was extremely constructive and helped add value to the final design proposals and the project currently under construction. The principal reasons that this engagement was successful were:

- The Design Commission team was experienced and had good reference points for the discussions;
- The team had continuity i.e. able to maintain the same team throughout the engagement;
- The team had a wide range of experience from health building through to sustainability and landscape;
- The team were flexible in their approach and prepared to tailor engagement sessions based on the requirements of the project.
- The Design Commission's ability to convene all stakeholders in a structured dialogue meant we were able to avoid potential areas of conflict, risk and delay.”

David Powell, nVCC Project Director
Velindre University NHS Trust
Transforming Cancer Services in South East Wales



Image courtesy of Velindre NHS Trust Cancer Centre, Cardiff

Objectives, targets and performance

1 April 2024 – 31st March 2025

The Welsh Government sets our strategic objectives and annual targets in our Annual Remit Letter and accompanying Framework. These sit alongside the company objects (See Appendix 1), and our core services for local authorities and commissioning clients across sectors.

Our strategic objectives for 2024/25 prioritised:

- supporting the development and implementation of Welsh Government policies in relation to placemaking, design and architecture, including Planning Policy Wales, Technical Advice Notes and Future Wales: The National Plan 2040
- promoting the highest standards of development, including inclusive design, sustainable development and climate resilience, in accordance with the Planning (Wales) Act, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Equalities Act
- embedding placemaking across the development sector through the implementation of the Placemaking Wales Charter and engagement with its signatories, in partnership with the Welsh Government's Planning Directorate

In addition, the Remit letter for 2024/2025 specifically set out our key roles in:

- Transforming Towns, with a specific focus on placemaking in the context of regeneration across Wales, while supporting Welsh Government housing, regeneration, and economy officials along with local authorities
- providing guidance on renewable energy schemes
- supporting the Welsh Government to develop requirements to integrate land use and transport planning policy so that sites are considered for the sustainable transport solutions that they offer at the same time as being assessed for meeting strategically identified housing needs
- focussing on improvements to the quality of planning applications for affordable housing schemes, inputting into potential exemplar sites being brought forward by Welsh Government.

Our core service targets for 2024/2025 remained consistent with the previous year:

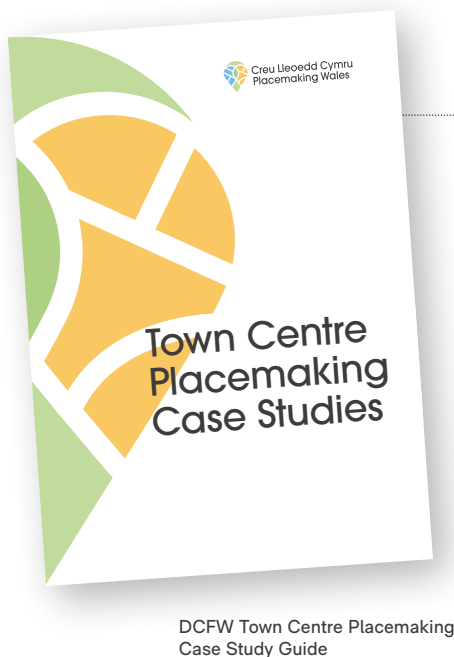
- eight professional development sessions planned and delivered
- 350 built environment professionals/local authority members attending training/seminar events
- 22 Design Review Days including a minimum of four in north Wales (where demand requires)

Delivery and engagement in numbers 2024-2025

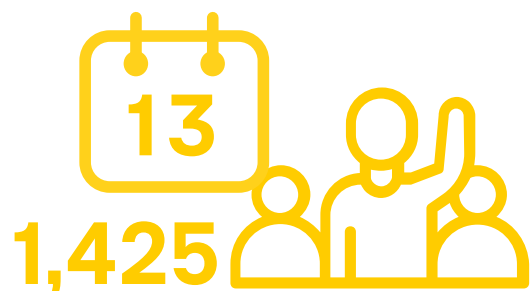
We delivered events, seminars, design review, training and workshops, online and in person, throughout the year and all over Wales:

In 2024-25 we delivered

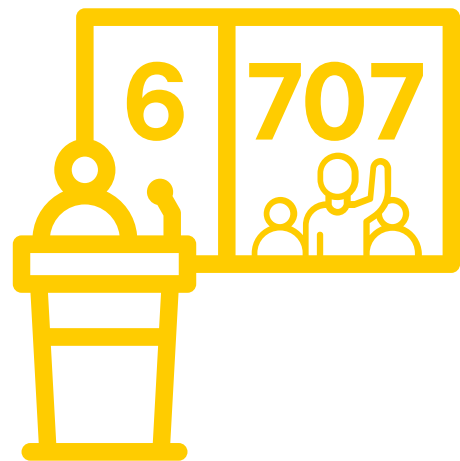
- **13** Events attended by **1425** sector professionals and local authority members
- **7** professional development sessions, with **272** delegates attending
- Provided expert speakers for **6** partner events, reaching **707** attendees
- Carried out **12** Design Review days across Wales for **13** Local Authorities across Wales
- Partnered in **3** inter-disciplinary research projects with five universities from all parts of the UK
- Published Wales first Placemaking Practice Guide
- We were consulted on major housing, health and transport developments in the capital city – as well as Wales-wide regeneration and transport proposals of multi-million pound value including: Velindre New National Cancer centre, Atlantic Wharf Leisure, Cardiff Crossrail, Central Square, Cardiff and Vale Education campus; North Wales transport, as well as active travel and mixed use proposals; five new stations for south east Wales and large scale solar proposals for Ynys Môn and Mona offshore wind renewable proposals.
- Attracted in kind support from the private sector to the value of **£108,975K**
- Maintained professional support to Cardiff University Planning and Urban Design Schools as well as the Welsh School of Architecture
- Provided strategic support to the Affordable Housing Task Force



13 Events attended by 1,425 sector professionals and local authority members



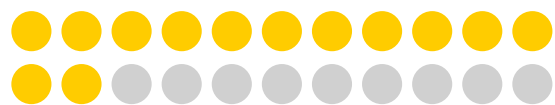
**Expert speakers for
6 partner events,
reaching 707 attendees**



**12 Design
Review days
delivered**



**13 of 22 Local
Planning Authorities
used the Design
Review service**



**7 professional
development
sessions, attended
by 272 delegates**



**In-kind support from
the private sector:**

£108,975



2024/25

Highlights:

April 2024:

Joined TAI 2024 for Positive Placemaking Annual Conference

In May, June and July 2024:

We considered regionally and nationally significant proposals for North Wales Metro; Convened the Placemaking Wales Partnership, delivered Placemaking training in Powys and supported Bridgend with their regeneration strategy before addressing the RTPI Cymru Wales Planning Conference. We provided further training for Placemaking Plans with local authorities, published expert comment on Cardiff Crossrail, Callaghan Square (to Cardiff Council and TfW) and contributed to TfW Transport and Development Team Days.

Through August and September 2024:

We provided Placemaking Plan support to Ynys Môn, North Wales, for Newport in south east Wales; Swansea, Cowbridge and the Vale of Glamorgan. We spoke at the Chartered Institute of Highways & Transportation/Institute of Civil Engineers/ Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport webinar; Delivered two of three round table events with Cardiff Business Club; supported housing decarbonisation groups, delivered a new Porthcawl Waterfront workshop with Bridgend County Council, training for Powys officers and Agents Forum and delivered our Placemaking Webinar: *Embedding Placemaking in Local Authorities*.

October and November 2024:

Design Reviews included proposals in West, north and south east Wales which preceded our Placemaking Webinar: *Promoting Private Investment* which was followed by further input at Porthcawl, and delivery of our conference: *A Place-led Future for North Wales*, in Wrexham. We added some teaching input at Cardiff University and Placemaking Plan input for Cwmbran, whilst delivering our third DCFW/Cardiff Business club round table considering the future of the workplace. We followed up with our Webinar: *Empowering Communities through Placemaking* and four sequential strategic Design Reviews for Mona Offshore wind energy proposals and input into their application process for a major infrastructure Development Consent Order. Publishing our comment on Electric Vehicle Charging in Residential and non-Residential Buildings and providing input to Caernarfon Gateway with TfW took us up to Chairing and addressing the Royal Society of Architects in Wales (RSAW) National Conference: *Architecture beyond aesthetics: Designing for the public good*, in November.

December 2024 to January 2025:

Design Reviews included Cardiff Central Station enhancements, Morriston Hospital Access and Masterplan; a full day DCFW Design Workshop with Welsh Government estates; Placemaking Plan input for Merthyr Tydfil and we published our Consultation response to Parc Pencrug, Llandeilo amended residential planning application as well as our response to Promoting a Resilient and High Performing Planning Service (to Welsh Government); We delivered another well attended webinar: *Placemaking and tackling vacant units*; provided Placemaking Plan input to Swansea; led a Placemaking breakout session workshop a Tai ar y Cyd launch; ran a full day DCFW workshop

for Torfaen County Council and delivered Cardiff Metropolitan University Lecture to Architectural Students on the Placemaking Wales Charter

February to April 2025:

For TfW we helped embedding placemaking workshops and provided Placemaking Plan meetings in towns with Llantwit Major, Barry and Penarth. We delivered our large scale *Placemaking for Town Centres Conference*, Cardiff and published comment on Pen Caer Lan Solar Farm, Neath in response to Greentech Invest UK. We welcomed and addressed the Global Leaders Common Purpose cohort at DCFW; delivered our final webinar of that quarter: *Repair and share in town centres* and rounded off with Design Review for Caerphilly streets and open spaces strategy; Caerphilly hotel and leisure quarter; Cardiff Central Station enhancements; Wrexham Gateway.

We published consultation responses on the North Wales Regional Transport Plan to Ambition North Wales; Mid Wales Regional Transport Plan to Growing Mid Wales; South West Wales Regional Transport Plan – to the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

At Board level we completed a successful Public Appointments process meaning we could welcome four new Commissioners to join our Board, announced by Rebecca Evans MS, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning (effective 1 April 2025).

Throughout 2024-2025 in addition to the headlines above, our work across all services continued apace and at greater scale with *Client Support, Training & CPD* expanding and moving upstream to the strategic position we have pursued for several years. Our *Design Review Service* saw a fall in smaller individual schemes but greater early strategic engagement particularly on regionally significant transport, energy proposals and masterplanning. We delivered more events in person including two large scale conferences, many more smaller engagement events and made them all more widely accessible online.

We continued to support development projects at every stage while targeting specific support for delivery against Welsh Government policy in relation to design and placemaking and key initiatives such as Transforming Towns and Placemaking for Town centres. We continued at every opportunity and via all our platforms, to emphasise the need for skills and capacity in the Welsh public sector to enable delivery on statement policy and legislative ambition.

In relation to our role supporting local authorities with the development of their town centre placemaking plans under the Welsh Government *Transforming Towns* funding programme we had already held introductory meetings with all local authorities in Wales, published guidance for them on the scope of placemaking plans, and provided direct regular meetings to assess, provide input and feedback on placemaking plans.

We provided expertise free of charge to local authorities over **12 town placemaking days**, working directly with **88 professionals** at Bridgend; Merthyr Tydfil; Newport; Powys; Swansea; Torfaen; Vale of Glamorgan; (Barry, Cowbridge, Llantwit Major, Penarth); Ynys Môn and with Transport for Wales.

Activity and reach – a closer look

We highlighted and shared our work, by publishing case studies that address different aspects of town centre placemaking. These resources have been shared with all local authority regeneration teams and published on our website and social media. They are a key component of our support to local regeneration teams and help bring about wider understanding and ownership of design and placemaking throughout their authorities. We are adding to these as we continue to review emerging placemaking plans and their delivery.

Our placemaking for town centres webinar series which shares more resources from experienced practitioners is permanently available on our [YouTube channel](#) and we share our insights on our [LinkedIn page here](#).

Articles / Erthyglau



Mapping Ynys Môn with Children and Young People

Mapio Ynys Môn gyda Phlant a Phobl Ifanc

Professor Flora Samuel, University of Cambridge, introduces research on community participation and the development of inclusive engagement techniques in Ynys Môn.

[Read more >>](#)



Wood for Good

Coed Er Lles

Lydia Huws, Senior Architect at Down to Earth, discusses how the community and nature are benefitting from a project developing products from the woodland estate in Treherbert.

[Read more >>](#)

Lydia Huws, Uwch Bensaer gyda Down to



Renewable Energy and Rural Communities

Ynni Adnewyddadwy a Chymunedau Gwledig

Alister Kratt, Director at LDA Design, explores how we can plan and have nonresale in plans



Townbuilding in Wales - Getting Growth on the Rails

Datblygu trefi yng Nghymru – Rhol twf ar y cledrau

Create Streets consider the opportunity of the investment in public transport in Wales to create a new generation of thriving communities.

[Read more >>](#)

Create Streets yn ystyried y cyfle sydd ar gael drwy fuddsoddi mewn trafniadaeth gyhoeddus



Making Density Feel Generous

Datblygu dwys sy'n rhoi digon o le

Ash Sakula Architects show how different housing typologies can maximise accessible locations, create walkable neighbourhoods and create a great place to live by presenting a hypothetical masterplan for Newport West railway station.

[Read more >>](#)



Goldsmith Street - How Norwich City Council Brought Quality Back to Social Housing

Goldsmith Street - Sut mae Cyngor Dinas Norwich wedi adfer ansawdd da mewn tai cymdeithasol

Public Practice look in more detail at exactly why Goldsmith Street was the first social housing development to win the RIBA Stirling Prize and how they created a dense housing scheme with terraced housing and

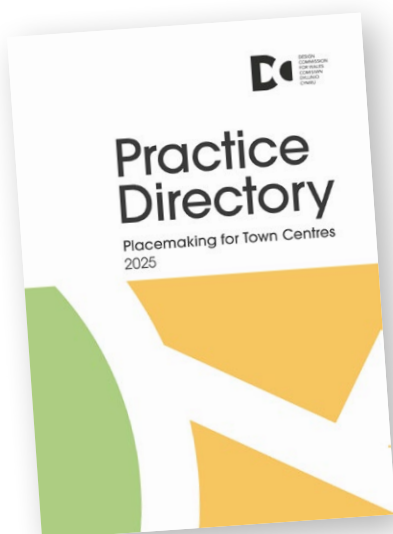


DCFw Placemaking Newsletter

Both our key conferences on placemaking during the year of this period were well attended and well received. The first, held in Wrexham in October 2024, **attracted 60 delegates** to consider the advantages of taking **A Place-Led Future for North Wales**. Then our Cardiff conference in February 2025, **Placemaking for Town Centres**, we welcomed UK and international speakers to share examples from the delivery of a range of projects with **132 delegates**. Including a keynote from Minister Jane Bryant MS we also used this event to launch our **Placemaking Directory**, a guide to placemaking expertise and experience, also available on our website.

“A fantastic opportunity to move everyone forward together, facilitate collaboration, share best practice and ignite the private economy around Placemaking in Wales.”

Victoria Mann, CEO and entrepreneur, Near Me Now,
on our Placemaking for Town Centres Conference, February 2025



DCFW Practice Directory 2025



Placemaking for Town Centres, Cardiff, 20th February 2025

“It was great to get an event that was focussed on north Wales’ issues across a range of subjects from rural placemaking to Wrexham, county towns to community-based tourism. It was all very thought provoking and hopefully the start of further conversations on design and the issues that we work with in the region.”

Simon Richards, landscape architect, Land Studio, and DCFW Design Review panellist,
on our Place-Led Future for North Wales conference, October 2024

“Some great takeaways related to agile placemaking, long-term meaningful engagement and doing more with less.”

Emma Halford, Principal Physical Regeneration Manager,
City and County of Swansea Council

“So many interesting and inspiring stories from Wales and abroad. Thanks to the team at DCFW for organising such a thought-provoking event.”

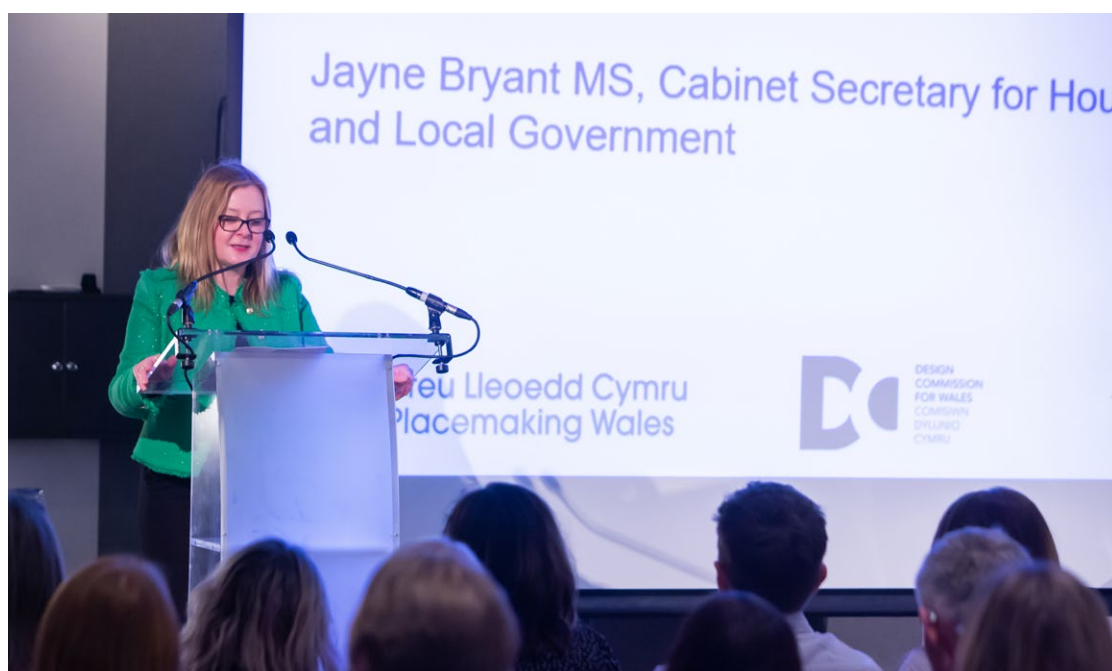
Toby Adam, Director, Gaunt Francis Architects, Cardiff & London

“A packed event with great energy.”

Laura Alvarez, Senior Principal Urban Design and Conservation Officer,
Nottingham City Council

“Everyone should be supported to be placemakers.”

David Engwicht, Urban Planner, Brisbane



Continuing promotion of the Placemaking Charter and supporting the Partnership

The Placemaking Wales Partnership brings together more than 25 organisations who are vital to and committed to promoting placemaking across disciplines, throughout Wales. The partnership co-created the Placemaking Wales Charter with the Design Commission, and has attracted over 160 signatories, pledging to:

- Involve the local community in the development of proposals
- Choose sustainable locations for new development
- Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport
- Create well designed, safe and welcoming streets and public spaces
- Promote a sustainable mix of uses to make places vibrant
- Value and respect the positive distinctive qualities and identity of existing places.

In September 2025 we will mark the 5th Anniversary of the Placemaking Charter and case study place-led projects throughout Wales.

Our Placemaking Partnership signatories include:



Our work will continue throughout the coming year 2025-26 in relation to placemaking for town centres including:

- Publishing a guide to brief writing for projects emerging from placemaking plans – supporting ways to ensure clarity on requirements, saving money, raising quality and reducing risk in procurement.
- Ongoing review of emerging placemaking plans and key projects coming from these.
- Sharing further webinars and case studies.
- Practical resources and examples to promote and enable active citizen/community/business involvement in delivery.
- Promoting consistent measures of success.
- A new and exciting collaboration with Public Practice.

Integrating placemaking work with Transport for Wales

Our third full year with our renewed Memorandum of Understanding in place has seen us continue to provide client support to Transport for Wales (TfW) to promote and embed a consistent approach to design quality in all that TfW does, from the outset. We have supported TfW in the appointment of additional personnel to their internal Design Office to help build and strengthen in house design capacity and capability as well as embed placemaking expertise within the organisation.

During 2024-25 in addition to the strategic review of major projects led by TfW and local authority partners we also contributed to a **Transport and Development Team Day** at TfW, attended by 50 of their colleagues, as well as running an **Embedding Placemaking** workshop with key members of staff at senior level. Our comment also informed work on plans for the North Wales Metro, plans for Cardiff Central Station enhancements, Wrexham Gateway and Caernarfon Gateway. These are major projects for economic development and connectivity -and key drivers for capturing land value, providing greater connectivity and delivering lasting public value.

Our input into the potential for delivering five new stations in south east Wales arising from the South East Wales Transport Commission is continuing and we expect it to feature prominently in 2026-27 and beyond.

Our relationship with TfW is ongoing and in 2026-27 will involve further design review, strategic regional workshops, TfW input into strategic placemaking work, and promoting opportunities for high quality Transport Oriented Development (TOD).

The Design Commission is sympathetic of the proposition outlined in the Railway Industry Association's discussion paper "*Stations as Engines of our Communities*" which sets out a vision for rail stations as vital drivers of economic and social growth, serving as community hubs and

catalysts for development rather than transport nodes alone. The concept, emphasises a place-based, collaborative approach involving public and private sectors to unlock station potential for housing, local businesses, retail, and public spaces, ultimately fostering stronger, more sustainable communities. The Design Commission's design and place-led approach to working with Transport for Wales shares much in common with the perspective set out in this paper and its predecessors. We must use design and the power of place to deliver more than minimum for transport nodes and stations across Wales.

<https://www.riagb.org.uk/RIA/RIA/Newsroom/Publications%20Folder/Stations-Engines-of-Communities-Discussion-Paper.aspx>

“Good design ensures that whatever transport solutions we develop, they are all centred around people’s needs and how this helps them in their everyday lives. Having conversations that challenge our thinking, bring in new perspectives and view priorities through a different lens helps us to improve the projects and services we deliver. I look forward to future conversations on these important topics.”

James Price, Chief Executive, Transport for Wales

“Transport needs to be designed to meet the needs of people. Creating an integrated transport system and increasing the availability of services – so that people can easily choose and change between bus or train to cycling or walking or utilise multiple modes of travel with one ticket – is key to enabling greater use of public transport. Good design creates high quality places that are easy to use, attractive places to live and work. They attract talent and investment. Taking a longer-term view and joined-up strategic approach is essential for land use and project portfolio planning, and will help create conditions where good design can thrive and a transport system that connects people to opportunity from capital to country.”

Ewan Jones, Chair, Design Commission for Wales

Upstreaming strategic placemaking

In 2024-25 we finalised the development and testing of a methodology to enable our earliest involvement with local authorities in their development of Local Development plans. This 'strategic placemaking' approach would help ensure the location of developments – fundamental to strategic placemaking, design quality and connectivity – is considered at the outset. It is also essential to supporting town centres, promoting opportunities for affordable housing, and enabling sustainable development. We have also proposed wider connections with Corporate Joint Committees and the development of Regional Transport Plans and Strategic Development Plans to ensure joined-up thinking. This proposal, which requires additional resources and support to engage local authorities meaningfully and at the right time, has recently been approved by the Welsh Government's Planning Directorate and begins in 2025-26.

More and better homes

Improving proposals and planning applications to accelerate affordable housing delivery has been challenging and there is much more to do with the sector. Further work is necessary among affordable housing providers to improve the quality and consistency of applications – making better clients and attracting good integrated design teams for delivery. There is alignment here with DCFW's upstreaming of strategic placemaking and we included reference to it in five papers prepared for the Affordable Housing Taskforce Chaired by Lee Waters MS, to inform its recommendations.

We are engaged with the Welsh Government Housing Scrutiny team, Community Housing Cymru and the Chartered Institute of Housing, promoting key design and delivery messages and emphasising the importance of early engagement to take advantage of our services, to improve the quality of proposals and therefore applications.

It is vital that organisations directly involved in bringing forward more affordable homes of the quality articulated in national policy, collaborate and make use of the expert services we provide, so that Wales can accelerate the delivery of more and better homes.

In 2025-26 we expect to play a further role in the proposed Affordable Housing Delivery Group Chaired by Cabinet Secretary Jane Bryant MS and will continue to promote multi-disciplinary teamwork within local authorities, better briefing and procurement in the housing sector and greater investment in skills for good design and placemaking – all of which are needed for the delivery of more and better homes.

A new partnership - collaboration with Public Practice

Early in 2025-26 we expect to strengthen our collaboration with Public Practice, a social enterprise with a mission to build the public sector's capability to improve the quality, equality, and sustainability of places.

Public Practice shares the Design Commission's view that local government's role is crucial in creating and managing everyday places that work for everyone and that to achieve this, it must be well-resourced with diverse placemaking skills and the right support to lead the way. They deliver services which help the public sector build capacity and develop its placemaking capabilities. Public Practice has placed 'Associates' in local authority positions in England since 2018. Now working closely under a signed MoU the Design Commission and Public Practice will collaborate to further build design and placemaking expertise in the public sector and public authorities in Wales. This collaborative, mutually supportive approach by both organisations will support common aims without duplicating any current functions of the organisations.



Image courtesy of Public Practice <https://www.publicpractice.org.uk/>

Events and participation

As noted in brief in our highlights, we devised and delivered two key placemaking events during the year convening delegates from the sectors and professions that shape our environments: the first, in October 2024, was delivered in partnership with Land Studio in Wrexham.

A Place-Led Future for North Wales held at Ty Pawb in Wrexham brought together the built environment and infrastructure community to consider the future of rural and urban communities in north Wales. It explored the potential for a place-led, people-focused approach to help shape the region's future and to capture wider benefits. **More than 60 delegates** heard from speakers including private practice urban design and architecture professionals, academics and local authority officers and officials leading on regeneration.



A Place-led Future for North Wales, Ty Pawb, Wrexham

Our second major conference **Placemaking for Town Centres**, took place in February 2025 in Cardiff, a day of inspiration and sharing experiences of grappling with the challenges and opportunities of placemaking in town centres in Wales. Themes of the day included meaningful community involvement, doing more with less, getting to delivery action more quickly for accelerated positive change.

Funded through the Transforming Towns initiative, workshops and speed briefings provided by public and private sector experts and free places were available for local authority regeneration and related departments with delegate tickets open to all to help promote joined-up thinking and integrated ways of working. The day was opened by Jane Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government and extremely well-received by delegates.



Placemaking for Town Centres, DCFW 20th February 2025

We launched a new series of roundtable events through 2024/25 and in partnership with Cardiff Business Club, connecting expert, decision-maker panels with invited business sector audiences. Speakers from private and public sectors with experience in delivery and investment, shared expertise with business sector delegates across three linked events – **Connecting Capital and Country**, **Workplace Futures** and a third on **Thriving Cities**. Speakers included James Price, Chief Executive of Transport for Wales, Ewan Jones, Chair of DCFW, Zoe Humphries of Cushman Wakefield, Denz Ibrahim, Head of Futures at Legal & General and Professor Juliet Davis, Head of the Welsh School of Architecture.



New webinars

As highlighted earlier these conversations also came through our online platforms when in 2024-25 we ran a series of six placemaking webinars attended **by over 600 people** and covering:

- Embedding placemaking in local authorities
- Promoting private investment
- Empowering communities through placemaking
- Placemaking and tackling vacant units
- Transforming your town
- Repair and share in town centres

Our strong stakeholder relationships afforded us key opportunities to promote good design and placemaking at their events throughout the year. These included speaker platforms at the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Cymru annual conference, Tai; the Royal Town Planning Institute Cymru Wales annual Planning Conference; and the Chartered Institute of Highways & Transportation (CIHT)/Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE)/Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport (CILIT) webinar. We also chaired and addressed the Royal Society of Architects in Wales (RSAW) national conference on designing for public good.

Our spotlight webinar February 2025 in partnership with Community Housing Cymru highlighted our services to support the planning and design of high quality social housing. We explored the challenges and opportunities for design and placemaking and discussed the issues housing associations face during the design process. Promoting our early value adding services is important to encourage take up and collaboration across the housing sector.



DCFW Webinar Series



Research and policy input

Promoting the role of design in placemaking to the next generations and being at the forefront of research and best practice are key parts of our role. We have strong longstanding academic links at Cardiff University as a first class school for architecture, urban design, planning and geography, and with Universities around the UK and internationally.

— **Cardiff University**

Our involvement with the MA Urban Design course where Deputy Chief Executive, Jen Heal is a regular guest contributor to this and other related design and planning courses through the academic year. Our design advisor, Max Hampton, also contributes to their community-led housing work, including a series of workshops this year, and their UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) Wales Hub.

— **Welsh School of Architecture External Advisory Board**

At their invitation in 2021 our Chief Executive, Carole-Anne Davies helped create and continues to chair, the external advisory board of the prestigious Welsh School of Architecture (WSA). The Welsh School of Architecture (WSA) is consistently ranked among the top architecture schools in the UK and globally. Specifically, it is often listed among the top 5 in the UK and in the top 100 worldwide for architecture/built environment World University Rankings with its international reputation for teaching excellence. The advisory board provides constructive challenge and a developmental forum for the WSA and forges key links between, teaching, students, industry and practitioners.

— **International study visits**

The Design Commission helps facilitate international study visits with academic partners at Cardiff University annually as part of its international programme for post graduate students and teaching professionals. In March 2024-2025 the Design Commission hosted and ran an engagement session for colleagues and students attending a Planning Law and Property Rights with Wales, UK, European and British Columbian colleagues. Hosted at the DCFW office 70 colleagues joined the Commission as part of a walking tour and knowledge exchange session within this two day international conference programme.

— Research Partnerships

The Design Commission for Wales is pleased to be a partner in a series of leading university research proposals. These include:

— *Urban Retrofit UK research project:*

Scaling up place-based adaptations to the built environment through the planning and development system. This ESRC funded research project examining shaping and repairing existing places, and the barriers to delivery - challenging the accepted logic of the UK's existing, growth-orientated planning and development system. Our Design Advisor, Max Hampton, will be presenting at the project's International Symposium in Glasgow on the 8-9th September 2025 on how we are advancing 'urban retrofit' through the Strategic Placemaking work.

— *Public Map Platform:*

Our Deputy Chief Executive, Jen Heal is a member of the Wales Advisory Group for the major multi-million project, Public Map Platform, led by Professor Flora Samuel of Cambridge University with collaborators in Wrexham University, Cardiff University and the public, voluntary and private sectors. This is one of four innovative, large-scale, design-led research projects funded through the Design Museum's Future Observatory: design the green transition programme in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The project focuses on creating more sustainable and resilient places, involving people in decision-making and developing a maps and data-based planning system so decisions are made on a range of evidence. The project has received support from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, Welsh Government, and Natural Resources Wales.

— *AD[A]PT (Architectural Design and Humanities Promoting Transformation)*

Our Chief Executive, Carole-Anne Davies, is leading the Design Commission's contribution to research into barriers to creating healthier places—for people and the planet. These will be investigated by a consortium of academic and industry partners, with support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The Architectural Design and Humanities Promoting Transformation (AD[A]PT) consortium, will support 20 fully funded postgraduate studentships at three partnering universities, Oxford Brookes, Cardiff University and Falmouth University, starting from October 2026. The consortium, led by Oxford Brookes, received the funding under the AHRC's inaugural Doctoral Focal Award and the initiative aims to bridge the gap between research and practice in designing healthy places. Doctoral students will work on projects shaped in collaboration with a 13-member Industry Steering Group representing key sectors:

- Architecture, design and planning: Royal Institute of British Architects, Design Commission for Wales and Royal Town Planning Institute
- Heritage: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, Historic England, Cadw
- Landscape: Landscape Institute

-
- Housing: Chartered Institute of Housing – Cymru
 - Construction and engineering: Chartered Institute of Building, Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
 - Health and life enrichment: Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust, and Circus Eruption

Studentships will be shared across the three universities, hosted within their respective schools of architecture, design and the built environment. Students will benefit from shared training and development opportunities across the consortium.

- **PEAR (Planning Expectations, Aspirations and Results – PEAR)**

The Design Commission for Wales is working with Cardiff University, the University of the West of England (UWE), the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) on a submission addressing the challenges of managing design quality post-planning permission. The bid focuses on aligning housing development aspirations with practical delivery via the planning system, and examines the tension between policy and completed developments, particularly in relation to sustainability and green infrastructure and active travel networks. Its scope includes the working practices of developers, planners and residents across different geographical and policy contexts in Wales, Scotland and England.

- **Active Travel and the Welsh Planning System**

Our Design Advisor Max Hampton provided expert input on Active Travel in the Welsh Planning System. The working group was convened by a Cross-Party Group on the Active Travel Act to identify how active travel ambitions in Planning Policy Wales can be realised. Recommendations have been provided for Ministers.

Addressing the needs of Future Generations

Unlocking the benefits of good design is critical for long term resource efficiency, climate resilience and well-being. We are therefore wholly committed to the principles and goals of Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) and also see ourselves as playing an important role in delivering them.

Our ways of working

We share the Commissioner's ambition to improve the lives of the people of Wales now and in the future. We choose to operate in the spirit of and in support of the Act, contribute to its goals and practise its five ways of working. Understanding and promoting design as a process of practical, creative problem solving, lends itself effortlessly to this approach:

- We take an **integrated**, strategic and systemic approach to design for positive change development and renewal in the built environment
- We **collaborate** with partners and stakeholders, placing our skills and expertise at the disposal of others to help them identify and **prevent** problems occurring or being worsened
- We can play an independent brokering role **involving** others and helping them to collaborate more effectively or more easily
- We understand the benefits of good design and promote the value it brings for **long-term** public good.

Designing for Well-being

The Design Commission routinely promotes good sustainable design; well-connected, well-designed, inclusive, attractive and safe neighbourhoods that help support cohesive communities and sustainable places. Well-designed environments, transport systems, blue-green infrastructure, high performing buildings, well connected settlements, active town and streetscapes are all vital for climate responsiveness and de-carbonisation. They are distinctive, culturally rich places where people can thrive and prosper.

We particularly emphasise the need for the highest standards of design and development to come forward where public resources are invested. Publicly-funded regeneration and infrastructure projects, schools and healthcare must be efficient and of the highest quality. In these projects the costs of poor design are multiplied through the negative impact on attainment, health and recovery outcomes, well-being and safety. The well-being and quality of life available for all communities in Wales must be a priority and the public purse should not inherit the costs caused by poor design.

The Mutual Investment Model (MIM) procurement, joint ventures and other forms of Private Public Partnerships (PPP) are important means of delivering public assets, improved health and education facilities and services. However, delivering better design and improved construction quality and

performance must be a key objective within these models, if public projects are to be sufficiently ambitious and fully contribute to realisation of the aims of policy and legislation in Wales. They must address the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, climate imperatives, decarbonisation and place-led policy. Legacy assets which ultimately return to the public balance sheet must be of sufficiently high quality to capture public value in the long-term and ensure fitness for the future.

How we contribute to the Well-being Goals:

The Design Commission's work is rooted in the pursuit and promotion of sustainable development. Promoting a well-designed, resource efficient, inclusive built environment, easy for everyone to experience and enjoy, means we contribute directly to the goals set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

A prosperous Wales:

We contribute to a prosperous Wales by promoting the skills and processes inherent in excellent design for quality and innovation in design outcomes for the whole of the built environment. A well-designed Wales is a creative, distinctive Wales with competitive edge and inspirational places. We promote the economic and social value of design careers, industries and entrepreneurship, nurturing talent and highlighting enriching career pathways and purpose-led, high quality employment opportunities.

A resilient Wales:

We contribute to resilience, decarbonisation and response to climate and nature emergencies by sharing our knowledge and skills in effective, environmentally responsible design which reduces demand on land, materials and other natural resources. We promote well-designed, well-connected places which minimise negative environmental impacts and use land efficiently, protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

A healthier Wales:

We recognise health in the holistic way it is defined by the World Health Organisation, as '*a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity*'. Our expert input and advice strongly emphasise a people and place-led approach to the change, development and management of a built environment which can provide the physical, environmental, social and economic support required for a nation that can thrive.

A more equal Wales:

We emphasise the importance of change, development and regeneration in the built environment being inclusive from the outset. Access to safe, comfortable spaces, good homes, amenities and services must be easy for all rather than exclusive to some. Our advice, guidance and input emphasise the need to design and deliver inclusive places that directly address the needs of people, and especially those who may be disadvantaged.

In our own day-to-day operations among our staff team, board, appointed advisors and network, we promote fairness and inclusion, professional and personal balance, flexibility and family-friendly working.

A Wales of cohesive communities:

We contribute to this goal by promoting well designed places that are well located and connected and which respond to the richness and diversity of our communities. We promote the importance of recognising the needs of people at the heart of proposals for change and development with particular emphasis on engagement processes and inclusive decision-making from outset to completion.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language:

We emphasise the importance of Wales' distinctive and rich cultural assets including landscape, language and distinctive heritage in all our work.

A globally responsible Wales:

In our operations we take every opportunity to reduce our impact on environmental assets and resources as well as minimising our carbon impact through office processes, travel and transport. Our expert advice promotes and emphasises environmentally responsible design and procurement practices including materials sourcing and use.

In essence, we see the Well-being of Future Generations Act as an enabling framework for our core purpose of promoting and securing a Wales that is simply a better place.

Look ahead – strategic priorities for 2025-26

The Design Commission for Wales has, year on year, extended its reach and consolidated its partnerships across sectors in industry, business and academia. The Commission is fully engaged with major developments in Wales and with the strategic spatial planning and transport context in which they sit. In line with our operating model and the resources available to us for activities we must ensure that we are focussed on the upstream, strategic items that have the greatest potential for ensuring development is in the right place, well-connected and can support thriving communities.

Earlier in this report we looked ahead to activity we expect to lead on 2025-26. Along with, our passion for such strategic focus and commitment to sharing skills and expertise in order to enable others, we must also be clear about frustrations – notably in the skills for delivery and the resources needed to create the capacity for delivery high quality places, that are environmentally sound and economically vibrant. Along with the skills challenge we have routinely highlighted, comes the availability of resources and the change needed in attitudes to managing them. We remain committed to sharing practice based experience in collaborative, integrated multi-disciplinary working to front load input and impact on quality. Whether in housing, civic buildings, commercial centres or public realm – however among the commissions and delivery players in Wales, this combination of the right skill at the right time is crucial. Making more of a difference relies on these factors being addressed.

We have already made specific mention of workstreams to come from 2025/26 onwards. As we pursue strategic placemaking, cutting edge research and capacity building across the public sector – Wales' largest client – we also continue to focus on ways to address the characteristics of procurement in Wales that can at times fail to deliver the skill, capacity and quality needed – given the scale of national policy ambition.

In autumn 2025 we will be in a position with the Board of Directors to consider resources available to us, strategic scope and direction for the coming 2-5years. That direction will build on our advocacy for excellence in the design of the systems, buildings and places that support public services and enhance quality of life. A built environment – homes, school, healthcare, transport – that fails to maximise the value of design excellence is one where structural inequalities will be compounded. The most disadvantaged in society will be further negatively affected. Quality of life, connectivity, access to opportunity and efficient services that last and are easy to use for everyone, are all diminished in a poor quality built environment.

We will continue to focus on the opportunities for good quality well-designed places which attract talent, enhance connectivity, are more competitive and economically vibrant. Regional transport design, planning and clean energy as well as strategic placemaking and the delivery of more and better homes remain at the core of our mission. At the same time, we know there is a need to more strongly call out the expedience which too often displaces value and the lack of commitment to quality that is essential, if Wales is to be better, by design.

Appendices

Governance Statement and Board of Directors

The Design Commission for Wales Chair and Board of Directors are referred to as Commissioners. In law, they are Directors of Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru Design Commission for Wales, the trading name of the company limited by guarantee, without share capital, that is DCFW LIMITED Company No: 04391072, incorporated in England and Wales as a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Assembly for Wales (now Welsh Ministers). Its registered office is at 4th Floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL. Commissioners are unremunerated and are appointed by Welsh Ministers through the Public Appointments process, reflecting the Nolan Committee Standards in Public Life.

The Chief Executive of DCFW reports to the Chair and Board of Directors at its quarterly meetings and AGM, and to the Welsh Government, through the Planning Directorate, on a quarterly basis.

The Chair and Board of Directors are guided by DCFW's Handbook for Directors. This is informed by the Nolan Principles, the Companies Act and by other relevant and current guidance. Directors are responsible for carrying out their duties under the Companies Act, including agreeing the strategic direction, exercising their fiduciary duty by acting always in the interests of the success of the company, with care, diligence, and skill.

The Board of Directors is supported by a Finance and General-Purpose Sub-Committee with full and regularly updated terms of reference. DCFW's Resource and Finance Manager (R&FM) monitors and updates compliance matters on a regular basis and reports to the Board of Directors via the executive team papers, circulated in advance of meetings. All DCFW policies including Risk Management are regularly updated and included in the Handbook for the Board of Directors. Induction and further training are offered and provided regularly for the Board of Directors and staff team as required and as identified as necessary and valuable.

The Chair and Board of Directors, in the day-to-day delegation of their powers to the Chief Executive, aim to achieve the critical balance between strategic direction and operational management.

The Chair and Board of Directors are mindful that, while they delegate their powers and authority to an executive team, they do not delegate their responsibility. They exercise independent thought whilst accepting collective responsibility. They are correctly and appropriately addressed and listed on the DCFW website and other company information.

Our Board of Directors

With a remit spanning the whole of the built environment in Wales, we are an independent expert, multi-disciplinary team. We are not a membership organisation and we do not represent the interests of any single profession. Currently, including our Chair Ewan Jones (since 1 June 2024), our board consists of nine Commissioners.



Ewan Jones, Chair since 1 June 2024

Appointed Chair of the Design Commission for Wales in April 2024 and taking up the role in earnest in the following June, Ewan was born in Newport and raised in Porthcawl. He was a partner at Grimshaw for almost three decades and is now Managing Principal at 10Design a practice with design excellence at the core of its ethos, working internationally via offices in Edinburgh and London. He has over 30 years' experience working on infrastructure, commercial and education projects in the UK, Europe and Australia. Ewan's design work promotes the integration of architecture, engineering, and construction to create distinct places tuned to their individual context. His achievements include the St Botolph Building and Lloyds Bank headquarters in the City of London, the Stirling Prize shortlisted Bijlmer Arena Station in Amsterdam, and Newport City Footbridge. He also worked extensively on Grimshaw's designs for HS2's Euston Station. Projects currently underway include construction of the Colne Valley Viaduct for HS2 and detailed design for Caerphilly Interchange.



Zaynub Akbar

A former journalist from Cardiff, Zaynab brings expertise in policy and public affairs within the sport sector, and is passionate about ensuring our built environment is inclusive and promotes active lifestyles. An alumna of the Future Generations Leadership Academy, she also champions sustainable development, considering the long-term impact of our actions and protecting the planet for both current and future generations.

Appendix 1



Mike Biddulph

Mike Biddulph is an urban designer working for Cardiff Council. An urban design graduate of Oxford Brookes University, he began his career with Oxford City Council and then lectured in urban design at Liverpool University, then Cardiff University, where he founded and initially directed their MA Urban Design.

Mike has a keen interest in how design is dealt with by UK planning systems and has published extensively on urban design, neighbourhood planning and design, master planning and design coding, urban regeneration and renewal approaches, and street and public realm design. He was at the forefront of efforts to introduce home zones into the UK and has made contributions to Design Review, completed research and led training programmes across Wales.



Barny Evans

Barny is a director at Turley in Cardiff, with a focus on sustainability and energy. He has over 20 years' experience working in the built environment all over the world on new developments of all scales, from city strategies to technical advisory. Barny is also an advisor to a tech start-up, MapMortar, that uses artificial intelligence (AI) to help decarbonise building portfolios. His passion is for understanding and communicating how the net zero transition can be successful from all perspectives.



Jon James

Jon is a registered architect, certified Passive House designer and listed on the RIBA Conservation register. A graduate of the University of Plymouth, he worked for several award-winning practices around the south west of England and south Wales. A conservation specialist with thorough knowledge of conservation practice, principles and philosophy, Jon has designed and delivered buildings within conservation areas and converted Grade II listed buildings for the residential and education sector. Passionate about sustainable design and driven by the need to act on the climate emergencies, he founded Jon James Studio Architecture, with sustainability as the backbone of the studio. Jon works with the Welsh School of Architecture as a consultant and examiner for final year graduates. He has collaborated with the Low Carbon Research Institute including working on the European education research paper and speaking at their annual conference. Jon has also spoken at several other national conferences including a national BIM conference and the Education Estates conferences.



Simon Jones

Simon is chief executive of the Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE) and a chartered engineer who has led major infrastructure initiatives in the private and public sectors. Cardiff-based, he was previously Director of Economic Infrastructure at the Welsh Government, where he led on transport and telecommunications, following 20 years with Atkins, the international engineering consultancy. Simon and his team have drawn upon DCFW's client support service in the past to help attract design-led consultant teams.



Cora Kwiatkowski

Cora is an architect with over 20 years' international experience, and a divisional director and sector lead for Stride Treglown Universities, a Sustainability Champion and member of the internal Research and Innovation and Consultancy Initiative steering group. She has been design lead and client advisor for high-value, award-winning projects, including for higher education, student accommodation and workplace schemes. Cora has also led multidisciplinary teams on award-winning projects in the UK, Germany and Sweden, including masterplans, design codes, large mixed-use, residential and transport projects. She was a Best Woman Architect finalist at the Women in Construction & Engineering European Awards 2019. With a focus on user-experience, Cora is passionate about collaborative stakeholder engagement and has contributed to ground-breaking social media-based research at the University of the West of England and the Inhabitant publications. She has chaired the Design Review Panel at the Design Commission for Wales and Design West for several years and is a RIBA Client Adviser, Design Council Expert, board trustee for the Architecture Centre Bristol, and member of the Higher Education Design Quality Forum research group.



Simon Power

Simon is a chartered town planner and environmentalist with 30 years' experience in major infrastructure site design, consenting and assessments. His career in interdisciplinary consultancy includes major UK road, rail, energy, water, ports and urban regeneration projects and is experienced in design processes and quality at scale, and in special landscape settings. Simon is a past Chair of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Wales and has been a DCFW design review panel member for several years. His doctorate from Cardiff University centred on place-based leadership for net zero in cities.



Joanna Rees

Jo Rees is a partner with law firm Blake Morgan in Cardiff, specialising in construction and development schemes and heading the firm's cross-discipline Infrastructure team. She has considerable experience in large-scale public and private development work, regeneration schemes and infrastructure projects.

Originally from Porthcawl, Jo graduated from Bristol University and worked in the city before returning to Wales. Her clients recognise her as a trusted advisor who is unafraid to challenge complex issues, finding acceptable pragmatic resolutions within governance requirements. Jo's career to date has featured several key transport systems which are a testament to the regenerative power of infrastructure – such as Croydon Tramlink, Docklands Light Railway, Jubilee Line, Transport for Wales Core Valley Lines together with major road schemes. She has been involved in several key regeneration schemes in south Wales including the inner-city development of Swansea, and Porth Teigr and Loudon Square in Cardiff, and in wind, solar, tidal and anaerobic digestion schemes. Jo is a trustee of Wales Millennium Centre, a Cardiff Business Council member and a Welsh-speaker.

Equalities and inclusion

DCFW acts in accordance with equalities guidance and legislation and has arrangements in place for fairness, flexibility, and family friendly policies. DCFW is committed to enhancing equality and diversity in its own practice and culture and in playing a part in helping to address barriers to achievement and recognised inequalities in the wider design and built environment professions.

DCFW's recruitment process for new Commissioners, via its 2016 Public Appointments process was case studied by the Welsh Government's Fairer Futures Division as a model of good practice – to which we remain committed. Our approach to the board level Public Appointments, allows for familiarisation, shadowing, mentoring and training opportunities. We continue to find ways to enhance this approach.

DCFW is committed to greater inclusion, equality, and diversity. In our aim to reflect the reality of a diverse world, we continue to develop all aspects of governance and operations. We aim to promote opportunities providing appropriate induction, shadowing, training, and mentoring opportunities at all levels.

As we promote good design across sectors, we continue to seek well-designed buildings and places that are inclusive, accessible, and safe for everyone to use. Equity and inclusivity are among the most powerful tools we have to help create good places and to draw upon the widest talent pool available to us. A well-designed built environment includes everyone.

Welsh Language

Wales is a bilingual nation, and we are keen to maximise all opportunities to mainstream the Welsh language. We are keen to use the Welsh we have every day and build on it with our team and all those we work with. As a small company operating at a scale below Welsh Language Standard thresholds, and with limited resources, DCFW is nevertheless committed to treating both languages equally and to the use of the Welsh language in our activities and in publishing and disseminating our core materials, where resources allow. DCFW strives to treat the Welsh language as equal to that of English and makes provision for training and other events to be conducted with facilities for the use of the Welsh language and in bilingual settings. In its commitment to mainstreaming the Welsh language it is informed by the guidance of the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner. We continue to enhance our approach in our day-to-day activities all our communication platforms wherever possible.

Note on financial and human resources, support in-kind

All revenue grant in aid funds from the Welsh Government are directly allocated to DCFW's overheads and activities. After fixed costs, including salaries, pension fund commitments, administration, and premises, DCFW allocates financial resources toward its activities throughout Wales. From time to time the Welsh Government may seek specialist assistance from DCFW and may outline additional and separately funded capital projects. All such projects are outlined in detailed scoping documents and agreed in advance by the Planning Directorate and administrated appropriately to facilitate project delivery.

The financial information presented in this report represents total income, including committed project funds, and the budget position for the financial year 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025. It reflects the annual revenue Grant in Aid from Welsh Government.

Our identification as 'small but mighty' is borne out by the substantial additional, in-kind contribution that private sector professionals bring, as mentioned earlier in this report. This private sector commitment supports the unique business model of DCFW and significantly contributes to underwriting our core services, in particular the national Design Review Service and local authority training and support.

As a publicly-funded organisation, our appreciation of such partnerships and their capacity to maximise the value of public investment cannot be overstated: they effectively underpin the delivery of our national Design Review Service.

Our small core staff team is supported by these private sector expert volunteers serving as Design Review panellists, who are experienced in all kinds and scales of development projects. Their skills and experience span commercial property, regeneration, architecture, sustainability, urban and landscape design, community engagement, energy infrastructure including coastal and on/offshore wind, as well as engineering, planning and transport.

They are unpaid and appointed by competitive interview, for a term of two years, subject to performance review and reappointment, and give their time and expertise each month for a minimum of two days, more usually three. The panellists also assist DCFW in its advocacy, events, seminars and the delivery of expert design comment and client-facing advisory work.

Appendix 3

As a result of their invaluable expertise and their organisations' generosity in affording them the time they give to DCFW, our national strategic Design Review Service – unique in the UK – is available free-of-charge to all users, all over Wales and is of the highest quality.

The value of the regular and repeated commitment of the Design Review Panel members, largely drawn from the private sector, has been calculated and presented in the table below. The value is informed by RIBA-published recommended rates for senior partner roles in private practice, who comprise our panel, and by expert witness rates which are applicable to panellists who contribute to the reviews on transport and energy as well as Developments of National Significance (DNS) and also Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPS) decided by the Planning Inspectorate.

The value of this support is shown here in our budget table annually. The significant figure demonstrates not only the commitment of private sector to in-kind support of the highest calibre to our operational model and services, but also the value we are able to deliver for the Welsh Government.

Our Design Review Service is open for professional development and training purposes. Our reputation for quality, integrity, expertise and robustness is safeguarded by our thorough risk assessments and high standards, and we are rewarded by an ability to attract skilled board members, staff and experienced, committed panellists.

As a result, DCFW's board of directors, staff team and Design Review panellists together represent the largest independent multi-disciplinary network of expert design professionals in Wales with extensive reach across the UK. They form an active and engaged, independent, nationwide network of talented designers and innovators who share the common aim of promoting good design to help make Wales a better place.

Appendix 3

Private sector in-kind support for 2024/25

2024/25 Date		Meeting	No of DRPM	Panellists	Total hours	Representative cost
Apr	17	Design Review	5	EJ/SP/AL/SR/SS	72	£10,800.00
May	15	Design Review	3	JB/RW/CJ	29	£4,350.00
Jun	18	Powys Training	1	KD	3	£450.00
	19	Bridgend Regen strategy mtg	2	WM/MT	4	£600.00
Jul	9	Design Review	4	EJ/SR/SP/AL	79	£11,850.00
	18	TfW development day	2	SP/EJ	15	£2,250.00
Aug	7	Anglesey place plan	1	WM	1	£150.00
	14	Design Review	3	CK/SP/AB	31	£4,650.00
	19	Newport place plan	2	MH/SP	2	£300.00
Sept	9	Swansea Place plan	2	AS/GH	2	£300.00
	10	Cowbridge place plan	2	AS/TA	2	£300.00
	17	Cardiff Business Club event	1	EJ	9	£1,350.00
	18	Design Review	5	WM/TA/BE/RW/SS	68.5	£10,275.00
Oct	16	Design Review	5	KD/AS/CJ/MH/CW	43	£6,450.00
	22	Porthcawl place plan	2	TA/MH	2	£300.00
	25	Place led future for N Wales	1	SR	8	£1,200.00
Nov	7	Cwmbran place plan	2	WM/TA	2	£300.00
	21	Design Review	4	EJ/SR/SP/AL	58	£8,700.00
	22	Caernarfon Gateway project	2	SP/SS	4	£600.00
Dec	4	Design Review	6	WM/TA/JB/MK/CJ/SS	74	£11,100.00
	18	WG workshop	1	SS	4	£600.00
Jan	9	Merthyr place plan	2	AS/SP	2	£300.00.00
	13	Swansea place plan	2	AS/MH	2	£300.00.00
	22	Design Review	3	KD/TA/BE	21.5	£3,225.00
	31	Torfaen CC workshop	1	SS	9.5	£1,425.00
Feb	5	TfW embedding placmaking	1	SS	9	£1,350.00
	12	Design Review	6	JVS/KD/LS/SS/SP/BE	81	£12,150.00
	13	Llantwit Major place plan	2	WM/TA	2	£300.00
	13	Barry place plan	2	WM/TA	2	£300.00
	13	Penarth place plan	2	WM/TA	2	£300.00.00
Mar	25	Design Review	4	CS/GH/AS/BE	38	£5,700.00
	26	Design Review	3	EJ/SP/SS	45	£6,750.00
				Total = 25% of annual turnover (£442,130): £108,975.00		



www.dcfw.org