

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Towards an Ecotopia? An assessment of Wales's One Planet Development policy as a facilitator of open countryside low impact developments, 2010-2021

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**Towards an Ecotopia? An assessment of Wales's One Planet Development policy as a facilitator of open countryside low impact developments, 2010-2021.**

**By  
Brett Sanders**

**PhD**

**July, 2022**

# **Towards an Ecotopia? An assessment of Wales's One Planet Development policy as a facilitator of open countryside low impact developments, 2010-2021.**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

July, 2022



## Abstract

This research examines the Welsh Government's One Planet Development (OPD) policy, assessing its success in facilitating Low Impact Development (LID) in the open countryside. The thesis assesses OPD across each of the 55 determined applications in the period of 2010-2021. Having established that OPD does, on paper, open up a legal space for LID in Wales, it subsequently focusses on the policy's implementation across three stakeholder groups: the policy's applicants, the decision makers (planning officers and elected members of planning committees) in Local Authorities, and the local communities into which OPDs must socially and economically integrate. The research is rooted in a mixed method approach, utilising interviews and archival research of the policy's implementation, in addition to an examination of the policy's newspaper coverage.

The findings of this research show that OPD has been successful at facilitating LID in the open countryside in Wales, demonstrated by the 39 successful OPD applications in the period of the study. However, this thesis argues that both the policy's stringency and the unique personal profile requirements of its applicants has resulted in a low number of applications. In addition, the policy was also hampered by initial resistance from decision makers, partly explained by the policy being under-resourced. This issue has been partially resolved by the Welsh Government publishing additional technical guidance in 2012, and the emergence of the grassroots advocacy group, the One Planet Council, in 2014, who have provided training to planning professionals.

Elected members of planning committees, however, have affected OPD's implementation and passage through the planning system. This has taken two forms: deficient decision making (failing to adhere to material policy considerations) and the fostering of divisive narratives (that have served to affect the social integration of OPDs into their local communities). As a result of this and the limited policy uptake, particularly by those from Welsh farming communities, OPD is often associated with alternative lifestyles and perceived as offering an incomer advantage at the expense of local communities. The study concludes, therefore, that

whilst OPD represents a significant progression from the status quo seen in England, its stringent nature has affected a limited uptake. The potential for LID could be expanded in Wales by adjusting the OPD policy to streamline the application process, reduce the risk placed on applicants, alongside the provision of additional training and resources for Local Authorities.

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## List of Abbreviations

BedZed – Beddington Zero fossil Energy Development

BBNPA – Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

BCBC – Bridgend County Borough Council

CAP – Common Agricultural Policy

CCC – Carmarthenshire County Council

CeCC – Ceredigion County Council

CaCC – Caerphilly County Council

DCC – Denbigshire County Council

DD – Delegated Decision

DNPA – Dartford National Park Authority

EFA – Ecological Footprint Analysis

EU – European Union

ELC – Ecological Land Cooperative

IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

LDP – Local Development Plan

LID – Low Impact Development

LA – Local Authority

LILAC – Low Impact Living Affordable Community

LPA – Local Planning Authority

LWA – Land Workers Alliance

MCC – Monmouthshire County Council

NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework

NCC – Newport Coty Council

PCC – Pembrokeshire County Council

PCNPA – Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

PC – Planning Committee

PoCC – Powys County Council



PPM – Parts Per Million

PPW – Planning Policy Wales

OCOPD – Open Countryside One Planet Developments

OPD – One Planet Development

SSDC – South Somerset District Council

TAN – Technical Advice Note

TLIO – The Land Is Ours

UNCED – United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

WCED – World Commission on Environment and Development

WG – Welsh Government

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On a personal level, I am grateful to my wife, Amy, who has put up with me as I've focussed on my study. Her patience and understanding as I was holed up in my office typing away has made completing this project less stressful than it might have been. Her kindness and positivity have helped me more than she will know to overcome the challenges, perceived and real, of finishing this thesis. Amy – you can have your husband back now.

Finally, this work is dedicated to the memories of my mother, Jackie, and my brother, Karl.

## Introduction

Climate change due to anthropogenic activity is likely to be the defining issue of the twenty-first century. Human activity is leading to a rapidly warming planet as a consequence of rising carbon emissions.<sup>1</sup> The amount of carbon in the atmosphere has risen from 280 parts per million (ppm) in the pre-industrial period to 353 ppm in 1990, and to 403 ppm by 2016.<sup>2</sup> By 2019, the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide was higher than at any time in the last two million years, whilst methane and nitrous oxide levels were higher than any time in the last 800 000 years.<sup>3</sup> The human impact on the natural world has resulted in notions of a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene, which represents a step beyond the climatic stability of the Holocene in which all human civilisation has been built.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the scale of the issue becomes even more acute when the chronology of anthropogenic emissions is understood. The most drastic rise in emissions has occurred in the period after 1945 and, alarmingly, largely in the period after which the impacts of carbon emissions were known.<sup>5</sup> As David Wallace-Wells has written, the “story of the world’s kamikaze mission is the story of a single lifetime – the planet brought from seeming stability to the brink of catastrophe in the years between a baptism or bar mitzvah and a funeral”.<sup>6</sup>

This has led to increasing alarm from scientific bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). By 2018, the IPCC warned that there were 12 years to affect positive change before irreversible changes were unleashed.<sup>7</sup> This report led to the

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin, *The Human Planet how we Created the Anthropocene* (UK: A Pelican Book, 2018), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Arnaud Brohé, *The Handbook of Carbon Accounting* (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Arnaud Brohé, *The Handbook of Carbon Accounting* (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin, *The Human Planet how we Created the Anthropocene* (UK: A Pelican Book, 2018), p. 5-6.

<sup>5</sup> David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2020), p. 3-4.

<sup>6</sup> David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2020), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C Approved by Governments* (Switzerland: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Secretariat, 2018).

See also, "We have 12 Years to Limit Climate Change Catastrophe, Warns UN," last modified 8 October, 2018, accessed 22 October, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/08/global-warming-must-not-exceed-15c-warns-landmark-un-report>.

emergence of a renewed wave of environmental activism, with Extinction Rebellion's co-founder, Roger Hallam, identifying it as the catalyst for their taking to the streets.<sup>8</sup> By 2021, Sir David King, the UK's former chief scientific advisor, was warning that there were three or four years left before tipping points were reached.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, also published in 2021, was described by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, as a "code red" for humanity.<sup>10</sup> While the discourse on sustainable development was initiated by the publication of *Our Common Future*, in 1987, and institutions, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), were established as part of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio, in 1992, it is clear that the international attempts to reduce global emissions sufficiently, like the Kyoto Protocols, have failed. Moreover, the Paris Climate Accords of 2015, though met with much acclaim, are, on current predictions, leading to global temperature rises of 2.4 degrees by 2100, far beyond the 1.5 to 2 degrees warming target agreed at Paris.<sup>11</sup> There is, then, a pressing need to consider new ways of living, particularly in the high emissions consumer-based cultures of the Global North.

Consequently, this research is interested in grassroots responses to climate change that reduce carbon emissions and contribute to restoring planetary health. In particular, it is interested in the development of sustainable low impact smallholdings in the open countryside in England and Wales. In doing so, it is concerned with the pursuit of low carbon lives that are rooted in principles of self-reliance, environmental stewardship, and seeking to take individual actions to reduce environmental harm. Directly related to this, this study explores and renews interest in notions of the 'good life', emanating out of the self-sufficiency pioneers of the 1970s, such as John Seymour, and popularised by the BBC sitcom *The Good*

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<sup>8</sup> Roger Hallam, *Common Sense for the 21st Century: Only Nonviolent Rebellion can Now Stop Climate Breakdown and Social Collapse* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2019), p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> "Forget 2050, Experts Say It's 2030 Or Bust for Net Zero Emissions," last modified 12 February, 2021, accessed 14 March, 2022, <https://www.thecitizen.org.au/articles/forget-2050-experts-say-its-2030-or-bust-for-net-zero-emissions#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWe%20have%20to%20move%20rapidly,determine%20the%20future%20of%20humanity.>

<sup>10</sup> "IPCC Report: 'Code Red' for Human Driven Global Heating, Warns UN Chief," last modified 9 August, 2021c, accessed 18 June, 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097362>.

<sup>11</sup> Climate Analytics and New Climate Institute, *Warming Projections Global Update* (Online: Climate Action Tracker, 2021), p. 1.

*Life*, which first aired in 1975. However, the British countryside has been shaped, in the modern period, by the dual effects of enclosure and industrial agriculture which has separated people from the land and concentrated them in urban spaces.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, following the introduction of the planning system after 1947, a formal delineation between urban and rural spaces was created with the intention of protecting the countryside from development and, especially, suburban sprawl.<sup>13</sup> This has meant that the British countryside has been an exclusionary space, limiting the capacity to trial and develop sustainable livelihoods in the open countryside.

This research is therefore specifically concerned with exploring the ways in which low carbon lives can be incorporated into land use systems to facilitate the development of low impact residential smallholdings in the open countryside, whilst also contributing to national sustainability agendas. As will be explained in the Literature Review, Low Impact Development (LID) emerged in the 1990s as a term pertaining to rural sustainability, an idea rooted in allowing for the repopulation of the British countryside in the pursuit of sustainable and subsistence lifestyles. In view of this, LID represents the potential to contribute to sustainability initiatives by empowering individuals to become more self-reliant and less dependent on fossil fuels and globalised food systems. In addition, by being land-based, LID represents an opportunity for reskilling and the revival of small-scale farming methods that stand in contrast to the post-1945 agricultural system which has been dominated by large-scale intensive agriculture, dependent on high energy and artificial fertiliser inputs. In the context of an environmental crisis shaped by carbon emissions and a loss of biodiversity, LID may be considered as one potential avenue to contribute to national emissions reduction targets and ecological improvement. In addition, it has the capacity to affect debates of rural regeneration by offering the prospect of more affordable rural housing, as well as local resilience by providing locally grown produce.

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<sup>12</sup>Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. xi.

<sup>13</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 8.; Larch Maxey, "Low Impact Development into the Future," in *Low Impact Development: The Future in our Hands*, eds. Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey (Leeds: Creative Commons Attribution, 2009b), p. 67.

Though LID emerged in the 1990s, its application in England has been limited, with only a small number of Local Authorities having provided specific LID policies, such as Dartmoor National Park Authority. By contrast, Wales has, since 2010, offered a national LID policy under the rubric of One Planet Development (OPD). Wales has therefore provided a useful case study of the capacity of LID to contribute to sustainability initiatives, and to broader debates about rural regeneration. This is particularly relevant as OPD emerged from Wales's sustainable development strategy, *One Wales: One Planet* (2010). OPD is, then, not simply an isolated planning policy, but one that forms part of a national sustainable strategy that seeks to reduce Wales's ecological footprint to use only its fair share of resources within a generation.<sup>14</sup> This study therefore aims to assess the capacity of OPD to facilitate LID in Wales. In particular, it will assess whether Wales's national LID policy has, in practice, provided the conditions to facilitate access to more affordable agricultural land in the open countryside, an area previously precluded from residential development since the establishment of the British post-war planning system.

In addition, it will assess whether OPD, as formulated, has allowed for the policy to be effectively applied at local level. In doing this, this study is based on a systematic assessment of the policy's implementation amongst OPD's key stakeholders. These stakeholders are defined as the applicants seeking to use the policy to develop sustainable smallholdings in the open countryside; the decision-makers, planning officers and elected members of planning committees, who are charged with adjudicating the policy at local level; and local communities, those into which OPDs must socially and economically integrate. Though there exists a limited literature on LID as well as a nascent literature on OPD, there is yet to be an analysis of this policy's capacity to facilitate LID on a national scale, and its implementation amongst its key stakeholder groups. This study therefore fills a void in the literature on LID and that on OPD by assessing the policy's first 11 years of existence. In this view, this study is an evaluation of the policy's efficacy and can be used to help to inform the policy's future.

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<sup>14</sup> Welsh Government, *One Wales: One Planet the Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2009), p. 3.

This thesis is divided into six main chapters. The first chapter, the Literature Review, will locate this research within the writing on grassroots sustainability initiatives and the broader scholarship on ecocultures. Moreover, it will demonstrate that there has, to date, only been limited attention drawn to LID, especially in terms of assessing the ways in which planning policies have been enacted and implemented. Indeed, there is very little research on the small group of local LID policies trialled in England and only a small and nascent research on Wales's OPD policy. The Literature Review will, then, highlight the originality of this work.

The subsequent Methodology Chapter will outline the mixed method approach adopted in this study, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. In particular, this research is based on interviews, with 52 individual respondents, in addition to extensive archival research. The archival research assessed each of the 55 determined OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021, representing the full sample of the policy's application in its first 11-year lifespan. This study is consequently based on an original data set, whilst its approach of systematically assessing the Welsh Government's facilitation of LID and its implementation in key stakeholder groups adds to the literature on LID and OPD as part of the Welsh Government's sustainability agenda.

The first chapter assessing original data, Chapter Three, assesses the formulation and composition of the OPD policy itself. It will evaluate whether the policy, on paper, has the potential to facilitate LID in Wales. The chapter will highlight that OPD's location as part of the Welsh Government's sustainable development agenda, enumerated in *One Wales: One Planet* (2010), is of fundamental importance to understanding the relative success of LID in Wales. In addition, the chapter will also demonstrate that Wales had a further two key characteristics that fostered a fertile environment for LID to flourish. First, Wales has a rich legacy of self-sufficiency pioneers, such as John Seymour who moved to west-Wales in the 1970s. Second, OPD was also made possible in Wales by having a policy champion, Jane Davidson, the Welsh Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, 2007-2011, who, as a smallholder, provided the political will to drive forward a LID policy in the newly devolved Welsh Assembly. The chapter will thus argue that this unique constellation of factors



combined to create the conditions whereby LID, under the rubric of OPD, came to be facilitated in Wales.

Chapter Three will, indeed, show that OPD opened up a legal space in Wales for LID which allows for the residential development of more affordable agricultural land. By legislating for OPD, the Welsh Government initiated a new rural exception policy which reversed the central presumption of the post-war planning system of preventing residential development in the open countryside. This, as the chapter will argue, is of paramount importance for prospective LID projects as it makes the pursuit of a subsistence lifestyle possible. However, whilst OPD opened up a legal space for LID in Wales, a significant capital investment is still required to purchase land, even at a reduced rate, in addition to turning an often bare-field site into a sustainable land-based enterprise and dwelling. As a result, the chapter will argue that while OPD, on paper, represents a progression from the status quo in England where an equivalent does not exist, that OPD is still only affordable to those with financial muscle. It is, then, often not an affordable option for young people or those from less affluent backgrounds which is reflected in the demographic of the policy's applicants identified in Chapter Four.

After OPD, as conceived, has been assessed as a policy framework, the next three chapters will analyse this policy's implementation focussing on OPD's three key stakeholder groups assessed in this study. Chapter Four assesses the implementation of OPD amongst its applicants. It will be shown that, at every level, the policy is rigorous, notably in terms of the application process and the ongoing compliance monitoring. It will also highlight the evident tension between the academic nature of the application process and the practical day-to-day lived of the policy which, it will be argued, will limit the appeal of OPD. Indeed, OPD is very demanding on its applicants, even after planning permission is granted: in terms of the academic and land-based skills required, the challenging targets, an invasive monitoring regime, and the risks involved. This has resulted in a limited appeal of the policy. There is, in fact, a propensity towards a more middle-class, university educated demographic, often English, and a negligible uptake amongst those from traditional Welsh farming communities. In view of this, this chapter reveals that whilst the Welsh Government has opened up a legal

space and facilitated LID, with a functioning policy that has led to 39 successful applications and, to date, no failed projects, it is currently too rigorous to be appealing to a wider demographic.

Chapter Five will assess the implementation of OPD amongst the second stakeholder group: the decision-makers. This group comprise planning officials and elected members of planning committees. The chapter will argue that planning professionals have come to largely implement OPD applications capably, especially in the period after 2016. It will be highlighted that this has been largely achieved as a result of the training provided by the One Planet Council (OPC), a grassroots advocacy group for OPD. It will also reveal that the policy's implementation has been less successful in the second branch of the decision-making apparatus, the elected members of planning committees. Indeed, it is clear that councillors have affected the implementation of OPD with deficient decision-making, rooted in a flawed understanding of the policy and its applicants' approach to farming. In addition, they have often internalised OPD as an undesirable imposition of the Welsh Government, one that is perceived to be a drain on local resources. Councillors have, for example, come to doubt the capacity of Local Authorities to monitor successful OPDs which, they fear, will lead to unwarranted and sporadic development in the open countryside to the detriment of their local constituents. This has led to narratives of unfairness as OPD has become associated with incomers to local, Welsh-speaking communities.

Chapter Six will assess the implementation of the OPD policy in local communities, the third stakeholder group. It will be argued that the OPD policy's requirement for applicants to produce a Community Impact Assessment (CIA) as part of the application process, submitted in their management plan, has baked in the opportunity to build social capital. This has seemingly been successful given that in just 24% of OPD applications have the number of objections outnumbered the expressions of support. However, the key finding of this chapter is that there exists a fault line in the notion of 'community'. In fact, it will be shown that OPD has found a receptive audience amongst a wider 'non-local community' supportive of its emphasis on sustainability, whilst the 'local community', defined by this study as those living

within a three-mile radius of the applicant site, are more concerned over the effects of additional housing in the open countryside and the OPD applicant site's perceived impact on local resources, such as road infrastructures and water. The research in fact found a significant negative narrative circulating amongst elements of local community opinion, partially as a consequence of the OPD policy becoming associated with alternative cultures and incomers to Welsh-speaking farming communities.

Drawing on these five chapters, the overall findings of this study are that OPD represents a progression for LID. By opening up a legal space and making more affordable land available for the development of residential sustainable smallholdings, the Welsh Government has facilitated LID in Wales. However, the formulation of the OPD policy has proven to be too demanding and restrictive to attract a significant uptake, with only 39 successful applications in the period of 2010-2021. While this can be partially explained, or mitigated, by the policy's emphasis on 'exemplars' of sustainable living, the evident picture is one of a novel and ambitious policy with a limited appeal, in its current form. Scaling up this policy would be possible, however, should OPD be allocated more resources to embed it more effectively amongst its decision makers. Likewise, OPD could be made more appealing to potential applicants by employing a more generous monitoring framework in terms of reducing the bureaucratic burden on participants, making the burden of proof less invasive, and by permitting longer time periods for smallholdings to reach the policy's thresholds. The reward for these more generous policy terms would most likely be a greater number of applications, and, consequently, more low impact developments emerging, itself helping Wales realise its 'one planet' sustainability objectives.

## Chapter One

### Literature Review

This chapter will locate this research within the scholarship of grassroots approaches to sustainability, with a particular emphasis on Low Impact Development (LID). It is divided into five parts. The first part of this Literature Review will assess the genesis of the discourse on sustainable development, notably *Our Common Future* (1987) from which it emerged. It will also identify some of the coverage of approaches taken to mitigate anthropogenic climate change, with a focus on international agreements, in addition to grassroots sustainability initiatives. The focus on this literature will serve to show that rural grassroots sustainability schemes represent an understudied aspect of the discourse on establishing low carbon lives.

The second section will stake out the literature on Low Impact Development, as formulated by Simon Fairlie, who first defined the term in 1996, and which has been adapted in the Welsh Government's OPD policy description. It will critically evaluate the ways in which his definition(s) have positioned LID in the planning system as a means to facilitate the development of sustainable smallholdings on land not earmarked for development. It will also develop the subsequent debates about the core features of LID and its relationship to space, landscape, permaculture, and as a form of sustainable living.

The third section will assess the ways in which the academic literature has identified the British countryside as being an exclusionary space. This will be examined by an assessment of historical processes, including industrialisation and enclosure, which, it will be shown, separated people from the land and limited opportunities for LID in the contemporary context. This theme will also be developed in the context of the post-1945 conceptualisation of rurality. It will be shown that post-war vision for agriculture, based on intensive production methods, and the introduction of the planning system in 1947, reinforced the historical legacy of enclosure by aiming to concentrate people in urban spaces.

The fourth part of this Literature Review will evidence the tensions between the conventional wisdom of the British planning system and LID, specifically the ability to live in the open countryside, by an assessment of the literature on LID projects in England. It will focus on them as forms of ‘counter-conduct’ given that they have almost exclusively been developed by seeking planning permission retrospectively having settled on land without state approval. It will serve to further underline the policy gap for LID in the British land use system, while also highlighting the alternative model for community land-based projects in Scotland.

The final section will assess the literature on the experience of LID, specifically in Wales, which, as it will be shown, has become a more fertile environment for LID after devolution. Attention will be drawn to the scholarship on Pembrokeshire’s LID policy, introduced in 2006, and One Planet Development (OPD), the national LID policy adopted by the Welsh Government in 2010 and the subject of this study. It will also place this research into the nascent scholarship on OPD, whilst identifying its unique contribution to this discourse.

## **Sustainability**

The issue of sustainability has generated a breadth of academic literature since the term, ‘sustainable development’, was coined by Gro Harlem Brundtland, in 1987, in *Our Common Future*. Emanating out of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report, aimed to resolve the issue of advancing the human condition whilst protecting the environment.<sup>15</sup> In that sense, and as Peter Rogers, Kazi Jalal, and John Boyd point out, “Sustainability is the term chosen to bridge the gulf between development and environment”.<sup>16</sup> *Our Common Future* defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising

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<sup>15</sup> Steffen Böhm, Zareen Pervez Bharucha and Jules Pretty, eds., *Ecocultures: Blueprints for Sustainable Communities* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Rogers, Kazi Jalal and John Boyd, *An Introduction to Sustainable Development* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 22.

the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".<sup>17</sup> In addition to seeking to mitigate the impact of economic development on the natural world, then, the core of sustainability is rooted in what Brian Barry has called 'intergenerational justice', that there exists a moral obligation to maintain the ecological integrity of the natural world for future generations.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the definition of sustainable development outlined in *Our Common Future* represented the need for integrated decision making that could balance the economic and social needs of humanity, while staying within planetary bounds. Sustainability therefore pertains to three key aspects – economic, social, and environmental, often referred to as the 'triple bottom line' and are the basic measure of success of any development programme.<sup>19</sup> As a result, it is clear that any discussion about sustainability, including the provision for the development of low impact smallholdings in rural spaces, will need to conform to these three base values.

While Paul Warde, Libby Robbin, and Sverker Sörlin attribute the emergence of a global conversation on environmental matters to the institutionalisation of science in the post-war period, others, like Lynton Caldwell, have ascribed it to the social activism of the 1960s.<sup>20</sup> In any case, *Our Common Future* was the product of escalating concerns over the human impact on the natural world, scarcity of resources, resource sovereignty, consumption, and population growth. These issues had gained prominence from the late 1960s and, certainly, by the time of the first UN Conference of the Human Environment, in Stockholm, in 1972, which represented the first international meeting of states to discuss the environmental

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<sup>17</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 2.1.

<sup>18</sup> Brian Barry, "Sustainability and Intergenerational Justice" *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, no. 89 (1997), 43-64.; Brian Barry, "Sustainability and Intergenerational Justice," in *Fairness and Futurity: Essays on Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice*, ed. Andrew Dobson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 93-117.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Rogers, Kazi Jalal and John Boyd, *An Introduction to Sustainable Development* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Warde, Libby Robin and Sverker Sörlin, *The Environment: A History of the Idea* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019).; Lynton K. Caldwell, "Globalizing Environmentalism: Threshold of a New Phase of International Relations," in *American Environmentalism: The US Environmental Movement 1970-1992* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992), 63-75.

question.<sup>21</sup> As Steffen Böhm, Zareen Pervez Bharucha, and Jules Pretty point out, it laid the foundations for the first Earth Summit in Rio, in 1992, and the subsequent international attempts to address the issue of climate change. It also resulted in Agenda 21, the international action plan to implement sustainability, as well as the international agreements, like the Kyoto Protocols, to limit global emissions.<sup>22</sup> It is significant for this study, as Tony Binns and Jennifer Elliot have noted, that Agenda 21, the action plan to implement sustainable development, consisting of some 40 chapters and 600 pages, identified that putting sustainability into practice would involve the participation “of a full range of sectors, groups and organisations; in business and science, youth and church groups within communities and by local authorities as well as international agencies”.<sup>23</sup> This highlights the need for sustainability schemes, such as those assessed in this study, to be based on integrated decision making that builds consensus between different stakeholder groups.

It should be pointed out, however, that the discourse on sustainable development is not without critique. While the term ‘sustainable development’ has been described by Michael Jacobs as the “common currency of almost all players in the environmental arena”, it is, nevertheless, a contested term.<sup>24</sup> Indeed Jacobs suggests that it is contested in three main ways, beginning with ‘sustainable development’ being only a loosely defined term, with people interpreting its meaning in different ways. Building on this, he contends that those labelled as ‘ultra-greens’ view this ambiguity as being a smokescreen to obscure the evident tensions between economic growth and ecological integrity and, furthermore, the inequalities between the global North and South. Jacobs’ final criticism derives from the notion that the discourse on ‘sustainable development’ is rooted in the same ‘cultural sources’ as “modernism, scientific positivism and realism, and technocratic social

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<sup>21</sup> Gary Haq and Alistair Paul, *Environmentalism since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 65.

<sup>22</sup> Steffen Böhm, Zareen Pervez Bharucha and Jules Pretty, eds., *Ecocultures: Blueprints for Sustainable Communities* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Tony Binns and Jennifer Elliott, *An Introduction to Sustainable Development* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Jacobs, "Sustainable Development as a Contested Concept," in *Fairness and Futurity: Essays on Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice*, ed. Andrew Dobson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 22.

democracy”, which, he argues, highlights how it is the same system which has created the problems that is seeking to resolve them.<sup>25</sup>

As with Jacob’s second critique of sustainable development, that it is representative of a smokescreen to maintain an exploitative economic model, Mike Hannis comments on the bias in the term ‘sustainable development’ by arguing that it is ‘development’ that “is to be sustained in this paradigm”.<sup>26</sup> In the context of assessing a ‘paradigm’, Bobby Banarjee has made an analogous argument, stating that “despite claims of a paradigm shift, the sustainable development paradigm is based on an economistic, not ecological, rationality”.<sup>27</sup> In other words, it is, from this point of view, economic growth that reigns supreme, not planetary health. Similarly, Shiv Visvanathan has drawn attention to the incompatibility between sustainability and development, stating that “Sustainability and development belong to different, almost incommensurable worlds. We were told in catechism class that even God cannot square the circle. Sustainable development is another example of a similar exercise”.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, Hannis further contends, that the type of ‘development’ intended is specific to “industrialised, market-economy societies on the US model” with the broader consequence that other social and economic models have been branded as ‘underdeveloped’.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Visvanathan describes this model of ‘development’ as a “contract between modern nation-state and modern Western science to reduce all forms of difference”.<sup>30</sup> As a consequence, the ‘paradigm’ of sustainable development has, from this point of view, been brandished as a neo-colonial project aimed at ensuring the participation of the Global South in global markets, usually on unequal terms, while also pacifying environmental objectors and

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Jacobs, "Sustainable Development as a Contested Concept," in *Fairness and Futurity: Essays on Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice*, ed. Andrew Dobson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> Mike Hannis, "After Development: In Defence of Sustainability" *Global Discourse* 7, no. 1 (2017), p. 30.

<sup>27</sup> Bobby Banarjee, "Who Sustains Whose Development? Sustainable Development and the Reinvention of Nature" *Organization Studies* 24, no. 1 (2003), p. 143.

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<sup>29</sup> Mike Hannis, "After Development: In Defence of Sustainability" *Global Discourse* 7, no. 1 (2017), p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Shiv Visvanathan, "Mrs. Brundtland's Disenchanted Cosmos" *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 16, no. 3 (1991), p. 378.



recruiting them into the cause.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva have referred to the notion of sustainable development as the 'third phase of colonisation' by the 'white man', following the initial quest to 'civilise' the peoples of the non-white world and the subsequent attempts to 'develop' the Third World.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, in the application of the term, Hannis has further argued that while the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals make reference to issues of poverty, food security, and inequality, there are no policy frameworks endorsed which might alleviate these issues.<sup>33</sup> While Hannis draws attention to the lack of policy provision, David Graeber and David Wengrow develop how the focus on 'inequality' has created a scale which, they contend, reduces the debate to tinkering with numbers.<sup>34</sup> It is clear, then, that while the 'paradigm' of sustainable development was born out of attempts to reconcile emerging environmental concerns and growing global inequalities in the 1980s, it has been a contentious term owing to its association with an exploitative economic model and a loose definition which has limited its potential application and implementation.

Despite this, the broader scholarship pertaining to the implementation of sustainable development includes analyses of the state-led international efforts to limit anthropogenic climate change via global environmental agreements, like the Kyoto Protocols. For example, Amanda Rosen has written how the flawed design of the Kyoto Protocols, including its short time frames, binding targets, and short-sighted thinking, led not only to the failure of that treaty, but also in subsequent agreements which, she argues, were based on the same founding principles.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Naomi Klein in *This Changes Everything* has written of the impact of the neoliberal agenda in the flawed designs of the international institutions developed to try and limit rising global emissions. By comparing the enforcement regimes of the World Trade Organisation and those of environmental agreements, Klein argues that

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<sup>31</sup> Mike Hannis, "After Development: In Defence of Sustainability" *Global Discourse* 7, no. 1 (2017), p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1993), p. 264–265.

<sup>33</sup> Mike Hannis, "After Development: In Defence of Sustainability" *Global Discourse* 7, no. 1 (2017), p. 30.

<sup>34</sup> David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything* (London: Penguin, 2022), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Amanda Rosen, "The Wrong Solution at the Right Time: The Failure of the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change" *Politics & Policy* 43, no. 1 (2015), 30-58.

‘trade trumps climate’ with the ideological commitment to neoliberalism in the period after 1988 leading to a failure to limit global emissions.<sup>36</sup>

While Klein has attributed the failure to limit global emissions as a result of an ideological commitment to neoliberalism and the design of the institutions, Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway have attributed the failures to regulate emissions to the impact of climate change denial. Tracing the method of climate change denial to the tobacco industry in the 1950s, they develop how the ideological incubator to climate change denial was Cold War hysteria, whereby regulation of greenhouse gas emissions has been rooted in the conflation of socialism and environmentalism.<sup>37</sup> Michael Mann makes a similar argument, though traces the historical lineage further back to the American gun lobby of the early twentieth century.<sup>38</sup> Building on this failure to limit global emissions, especially amongst the historic polluters of the Global North, Robert Nixon has referred to the state-led failures to limit emissions as ‘slow violence’ with reference to the asymmetrical power of the Global North in environmental diplomacy, in addition to the disproportionate impacts of climate change on the Global South, those communities with lower historic emissions and, therefore, not the primary drivers of climate change.<sup>39</sup>

Beyond the state-led responses to the climate crisis, there also exists a significant body of literature conceptualising the scale of change required to foster a sustainable world. Joana Macy has written of a ‘Great Turning’, with a sustainability revolution representing, she argues, a third major revolution in humanity’s lived experience, following the Neolithic and Industrial Revolutions.<sup>40</sup> Her Great Turning proceeds from the basis of failed international attempts to limit emissions and that the required changes would, instead, come from a revolution from below. While Macy, a Buddhist thinker, based her version of the Great

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<sup>36</sup> Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. the Climate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (London: Bloomsbury Paperbacks, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Michael Mann, *The New Climate War: The Fight to Take Back our Planet* (London: Scribe UK, 2022).

<sup>39</sup> Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (London: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Joana Macy, *World as Lover, World as Self: Courage for Global Justice and Ecological Renewal* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 2007).; Peter Reason and Melanie Newman, eds., *Stories of the Great Turning* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2013).

Turning on a shift in consciousness, David Korten has used the same term to argue that new community-led living economies are required in response to corporate power, which he depicts as the contemporary manifestation of Empire and the root cause of an unsustainable political economy.<sup>41</sup>

This idea has been referred to as the 'Great Transition' by Paul Raskin et al who also base their sustainable transformation on pressure on below, noting that it will be driven by "a connected and engaged global citizenry [which] advances a new development paradigm that emphasizes the quality of life, human solidarity, and a strong ecological sensibility—new values shape the planetary transition".<sup>42</sup> This assumes, they conclude, fundamental shifts in "desired lifestyles, values and technology".<sup>43</sup> The notion of a Great Transition rooted in technological changes has also been adopted by Lester Brown, the founder of the Earth Policy and Worldwatch Institutes, to refer to an energy transition from fossil fuels towards renewable energies to deal with climate instabilities.<sup>44</sup> Both of these terms imply significant changes to humanity's relationship to the natural world and, in particular, to the lived experience of those in the consumer based societies of the Global North. It is the scholarship interested in developing sustainable lived experiences that this research is to be located. It clear, at this point, that much of the literature has focussed on the attempts to build the international institutions and frameworks to tackle climate change, their limited successes, and the disproportionate impacts of rising emissions. Moreover, a body of literature has also coalesced around the idea of lifestyle transitions in the consumer cultures of the Global North, particularly in the context of failed international agreements to reduce carbon emissions.

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<sup>41</sup> David Korten, *The Great Turning* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2007).

<sup>42</sup> Paul Raskin et al., *Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead* (Boston: Stockholm Environment Institute, 2002), p. 91.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Raskin et al., *Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead* (Boston: Stockholm Environment Institute, 2002), p. 94.

<sup>44</sup> Lester Brown, *The Great Transition: Shifting from Fossil Fuels to Solar and Wind Energy* (New York: WW Norton & Co, 2015).

### *Eco-communities, eco-villages, and eco-cultures*

If the notion of the Great Transition and Great Turning provide the broad stroke framework for the transformations of the sustainability agenda, then there is also an extensive literature about the grassroots responses to meet these challenges, including civil disobedience and lived experience sustainability initiatives. Roger Hallam, co-founder of Extinction Rebellion, has written of the failures of the state-led responses to climate change, and of the broader environmental movement, to affect a reduction of global emissions. In view of this, he has advocated for non-violent civil disobedience and provided the strategy for Extinction Rebellion's activism.<sup>45</sup>

Beyond disruptive forms of civil disobedience, there is also an important literature on community-led approaches to developing low carbon lives. Rob Hopkins, a permaculture teacher, developed the concept of Transition Towns and the Transition Movement. Emanating out of Totnes, Devon, he argues for a grassroots response to the challenges of peak oil and the building of local resilience via relocalisation, shared spaces, and community activism.<sup>46</sup> In addition, there exists a literature on co-housing, future urbanism, and intentional communities as grassroots responses to climate change.<sup>47</sup> For example, Paul Chatterton has written extensively about sustainability transitions in urban spaces, drawing attention to solutions for post-carbon and car free future cities.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Roger Hallam, *Common Sense for the 21st Century: Only Nonviolent Rebellion can Now Stop Climate Breakdown and Social Collapse* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2019).

<sup>46</sup> Rob Hopkins, *The Transition Handbook from Oil Dependency to Local Resilience* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> For examples of this research, see, Anitra Nelson, *Small is Necessary: Shared Living on a Shared Planet* (London: Pluto Press, 2018).; Louise Meijering, Paulus Huigen and Bettina Van Hoven, "Intentional Communities in Rural Spaces" *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 98, no. 1 (2007), 42-52.; Paula Escribano, Miranda J. Lubbers and José Luis Molina, "A Typology of Ecological Intentional Communities: Environmental Sustainability through Subsistence and Material Reproduction" *Journal of Cleaner Production* 266 (2020), 1-14.; Iris Kunze, "Social Innovations for Communal and Ecological Living: Lessons from Sustainability Research and Observations in Intentional Communities" *Journal of the Communal Studies Association* 32, no. 1 (2012), 50-67.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Chatterton, *Low Impact Living: A Field Guide to Ecological, Affordable Community Building* (London: Routledge, 2015).; Paul Chatterton, *Unlocking Sustainable Cities: A Manifesto for Real Change* (London: Pluto Press, 2018).; Paul Chatterton, "Building Transitions to Post-capitalist Urban Commons" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 41, no. 4 (2016), 403-415.; Paul

These efforts of local, community-led approaches to sustainability have referred to as ‘eco-communities’. For example, Jenny Pickerill, a geographer, has written that these are “communities are about building and living overlapping lives. At the centre of many eco-communities is the quest to share – resources, objects, spaces, skills, and care”.<sup>49</sup> In addition, Pickerill continues, they are spaces for (re)developing the idea of the commons in order to foster both the environmental and social dimensions of community.<sup>50</sup> In addition to eco-communities, the term ‘eco-villages’ emerged, according to Jonathan Dawson, in the 1980s as a response from civil society to the falling quality of life, environmental degradation, corporate power, and the institutionalisation of the neoliberal agenda in the age of Thatcher and Reagan. In this context, he argues, a political vacuum emerged in which citizen groups began to create models for sustainable communities.<sup>51</sup> The idea of eco-villages being experimental is shared across the literature with Jon Anderson referring to them as ‘spaces of transformation’ and Frederica Miller as grassroots sustainability initiatives that are “intensive living laboratories”.<sup>52</sup>

This body of scholarship has also been referred to as ‘ecocultures’ and has been defined “as communities in which lives and lifestyles are organized around the recognition that social and ecological well-being are interlinked, and where sustainability and resilience are prioritized and actively nurtured. In other words, ecocultures are exemplars in the art and science of sustainable living”.<sup>53</sup> It is into this wider literature that this research is located – it seeks to examine one approach, the development of low impact smallholding in rural spaces in Wales, to provide a means for individuals to pursue sustainable lives, characterised by self-reliance,

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Chatterton, "Towards an Agenda for Post-carbon Cities: Lessons from Lilac, the UK's First Ecological, Affordable Cohousing Community" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 5 (Sep, 2013), 1654-1674.

<sup>49</sup> Jenny Pickerill, "Building the Commons in Eco-Communities," in *Space, Power and the Commons: The Struggle for Alternative Futures*, eds. Samuel Kirwan, Leila Dawney and Julian Brigstocke (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 31.

<sup>50</sup> Jenny Pickerill, "Building the Commons in Eco-Communities," in *Space, Power and the Commons: The Struggle for Alternative Futures*, eds. Samuel Kirwan, Leila Dawney and Julian Brigstocke (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 31.; Karen Litfin, *Ecovillages: Lessons for Sustainable Community* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> Jonathan Dawson, *Ecovillages: New Frontiers for Sustainability* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2015), p. 12.

<sup>52</sup> Jon Anderson, "Retreat Or Re-Connect: How Effective can Ecosophical Communities be in Transforming the Mainstream?" *Geografiska Annaler* 99, no. 2 (2017), 192-206.; Frederica Millar, *Ecovillages Around the World: 20 Regenerative Designs for Sustainable Communities* (Dyke: Findhorn Press, 2018), p. 17.

<sup>53</sup> Steffen Böhm, Zareen Pervez Bharucha and Jules Pretty, eds., *Ecocultures: Blueprints for Sustainable Communities* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p. 18.

resilience, and low carbon lifestyles. Indeed, it is noteworthy that the Welsh Government's definition of One Planet Development (OPD), the subject of this study, describes the policy as 'potentially an exemplar type of sustainable development'.<sup>54</sup> In this view, the people taking part in this rural sustainability experiment and the study of its implementation form part of ecocultures research.

It is important to point out, however, that much of the literature which explores the development of new sustainable living pathways is rooted in urban spaces. Chatterton has, for example, provided an account of LILAC, an acronym for Low Impact Living Affordable Community, "a member-controlled cohousing cooperative comprising of 20 highly insulated homes built from timber and straw with a shared common house".<sup>55</sup> LILAC's approach to 'low impact' is rooted in the environmental design principles of the dwellings, in addition to its affordability model called Mutual Home Ownership, which is an equity-based leaseholder scheme whereby its cost of living is defined by a proportion of income of no more than 35 per cent of net income. This, it is argued, reduces rent prices to below market rates, but above social housing.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to LILAC, Pooran Desai of Bioregional has reformulated ten principles of 'one planet living', defined as; "zero waste, zero carbon, the use of sustainable water, transport and materials, restoring biodiversity and using local and sustainable food, and enhancing local community ties, equity, health and happiness".<sup>57</sup> 'One Planet Living' is rooted in ecological footprinting which, Desai observes, "measures the impact each of us makes on the planet. It works out how much land and sea is needed to feed us and provide all the energy, water and materials we use in our everyday lives. It also calculates the emissions generate from the oil,

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<sup>54</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Chatterton, *Low Impact Living: A Field Guide to Ecological, Affordable Community Building* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Chatterton, *Low Impact Living: A Field Guide to Ecological, Affordable Community Building* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 133.

<sup>57</sup> Pooran Desai and Paul King, *One Planet Living* (Bristol: Alistair Sawday Publishing Co Ltd, 2006), p. 16.

coal and gas we burn at every-increasing rates, and it estimates how much land is needed to absorb all the waste we create".<sup>58</sup>

These principles have been applied to the 100-unit Beddington Zero fossil Energy Development (BedZED) eco-village in the London Borough of Sutton which also included an engagement with a car club provider, a woodchip supplier to provide a renewable energy source, local and seasonal vegetable providers were identified, and waste collectors to provide greater recycling were found.<sup>59</sup> Desai estimates that, depending on the lifestyle that any particular BedZED resident adopts, it is easy to reduce ecological footprint by about 40–50%.<sup>60</sup> Those invested in Bioregional's action plans sign up to targets to meet these aspirations and are, like Chatterton's LILAC, applied to city dwelling, not rural smallholdings.<sup>61</sup> It is significant, however, that the Welsh Government's One Planet Development policy, the focus of this study, has borrowed the 'one planet' and ecological footprint analysis from Bioregional and applied it to its policy formulation for rural LIDs.

Moving away from the urban bias, this research aims to add to the somewhat more limited literature on rural ecocultures, specifically in the British open countryside which has, as will be shown in more detail in the next sections, been precluded from development in the post-war period. As conversations about globalised food systems and high energy and fertiliser input farming systems come under increasing scrutiny, discussions about the future of the British countryside, and the potential for individuals to develop low carbon lives in it, offers an interesting and important perspective to the discourse on sustainability from which it is currently mostly absent.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Pooran Desai and Paul King, *One Planet Living* (Bristol: Alistair Sawday Publishing Co Ltd, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> Pooran Desai, "Creating Low Carbon Communities: One Planet Living Solutions" *Globalizations* 5, no. 1 (2008), p. 67.

<sup>60</sup> Pooran Desai, "Creating Low Carbon Communities: One Planet Living Solutions" *Globalizations* 5, no. 1 (2008), p. 68.

<sup>61</sup> David Thorpe, *The 'One Planet' Life: A Blueprint for Low Impact Development* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> A recent example of work that examines the impact of industrial agriculture, and potential alternatives, is George Monbiot, *Regeneration Feeding the World without Devouring the Planet* (London: Penguin, 2022).

*Low carbon lives in the open countryside*

The scholarship on developing new ways of living in the open countryside is, indeed, less extensive than that of its urban counterpart. There does exist a significant literature on historic back-to-the-land movements on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, ranging from nineteenth century cooperatives in the UK and farmsteads in the US, as well as those of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>63</sup> For example, Dona Brown published *Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* in 2011 and provides a historical overview of the American back-to-the-land movement.<sup>64</sup> Brown and Rebecca Gould's *At Home in Nature: Modern Homesteading and Spiritual Practice in America* develop the relationship between spiritualism and agrarianism in the American context.<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, Gould identifies the publication of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* in 1854 as the starting point on her timeline of the movement, and later writes that *Walden* represents "the original sacred text of homesteading for many".<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Jeffrey Jacob traces the roots of this ideal to Thomas Jefferson's vision for the fledgling nation, noting that the back-to-the-land tradition "is part of classic American agrarianism and has its philosophical roots in a rhetorical tradition that connects the thought of Thomas Jefferson to Henry David Thoreau".<sup>67</sup> Thoreau's *Walden* was, in fact, part of the transcendental critique of emerging industrialism which was perceived to be both morally corrupting, materialistic, and threatening the beauty of treasured landscapes.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> For histories of the back to the land movements, see: Dona Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).; Eleanor Agnew, *Back from the Land: How Young Americans Went to Nature in the 1970s, and Why they Came Back* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005).; Jeffrey Jacob, *New Pioneers: The Back-to-the-Land Movement and the Search for a Sustainable Future* (Michigan: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).; Merlin B. Brinkerhoff and Jeffrey C. Jacob, "Quasi-Religious Meaning Systems, Official Religion, and Quality of Life in an Alternative Lifestyle: A Survey from the Back-to-the-Land Movement" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 26, no. 1 (Mar 1, 1987), 63-80.; Andrew Wilbur, "Growing a Radical Ruralism: Back-to-the-Land as Practice and Ideal" *Geography Compass* 7, no. 2 (Feb, 2013), 149-160.

<sup>64</sup> Dona Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

<sup>65</sup> Rebecca Gould, *At Home in Nature: Modern Homesteading and Spiritual Practice in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>66</sup> Rebecca Gould, *At Home in Nature: Modern Homesteading and Spiritual Practice in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. xxix and 3.

<sup>67</sup> Jeffrey Jacob, *New Pioneers: The Back-to-the-Land Movement and the Search for a Sustainable Future* (Michigan: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *Walden: Or Life in the Woods* (London: Vintage Classics, 2017).



Placing its emergence at a similar point in time, Keith Halfacree, Peter Gould, Alun Howkins, Chatterton, Fairlie, and Andrew Rigby all relate the back-to-the-land impulse in Britain to economic changes associated with the birth of industrialism.<sup>69</sup> In fact, Gould writes that “The phrase Back to the Land’ originated in the social unrest of the 1840s, but the ideas that it embraced have a history dating at least to the Civil War Period”.<sup>70</sup> He asserts that the agrarian impulse was underpinned by the idea of a golden age whereby people had personal freedom to own and work on land of their choosing and enjoy their own produce. In addition, it was related to the restoration of Anglo-Saxon freedoms and land restitution providing the basis on which the Diggers attempted to seize land for common purposes in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>71</sup> As will be shown in a later section, the legacies of the Norman conquest and enclosure in Britain, and the separation of people from the land, particularly in the modern period, has served to make the open countryside an exclusive space. Moreover, it is clear that, both in Britain and America, the early back-to-the-land movements were rooted in a critique of industrial civilisation.

In contrast, the wave of back-to-the-land movements of the 1960s and 1970s took on a new direction – it is associated with the emergence of the modern environmental movement.<sup>72</sup> Jacob argues that the American back-to-the-landers of the 1970s should be understood as environmentalists.<sup>73</sup> In Britain, Halfacree notes that this new wave of back-to-the-land migration was aimed less at repopulating the countryside but seeking alternative realities.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Keith Halfacree, "Going 'Back-to-the-Land' again: Extending the Scope of Counterurbanisation" *Espace Populations Sociétés* 19, no. 1 (2001b), 161-170.; Peter Gould, *Early Green Politics* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1988).; Alun Howkins, "From Diggers to Dongas: The Land in English Radicalism, 1649-2000" *History Workshop Journal* 1, no. 54 (2002), 1-23.; Paul Chatterton, *Low Impact Living: A Field Guide to Ecological, Affordable Community Building* (London: Routledge, 2015).; Andrew Rigby, *Communes in Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).

<sup>70</sup> Peter Gould, *Early Green Politics* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1988), p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Gould, *Early Green Politics* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1988), p. 6.

<sup>72</sup> Dona Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).; Jeffrey Jacob, *New Pioneers: The Back-to-the-Land Movement and the Search for a Sustainable Future* (Michigan: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).; Keith Halfacree, "Going 'Back-to-the-Land' again: Extending the Scope of Counterurbanisation" *Espace Populations Sociétés* 19, no. 1 (2001), 161-170.; Keith Halfacree, "Back-to-the-Land in the Twenty-First Century? Making Connections with Rurality" *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 98, no. 1 (2007a), 3-8.

<sup>73</sup> Jeffrey Jacob, *New Pioneers: The Back-to-the-Land Movement and the Search for a Sustainable Future* (Michigan: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), p. 180.

<sup>74</sup> Keith Halfacree, "Going 'Back-to-the-Land' again: Extending the Scope of Counterurbanisation" *Espace Populations Sociétés* 19, no. 1 (2001), p. 167.

These 'alternative realities' were focussed idealists seeking an agrarian escape in "resistance to the Vietnam War, alienation from consumer culture, and environmental concern".<sup>75</sup> David Pepper also observes this, detailing that when British communes, most of which were in rural spaces, "were set up, mostly in the seventies, many of their founders shared the concerns of the time about imminent environmental crisis and limits to growth".<sup>76</sup> Sharon Weaver develops this ideological aspect of the 1960s and 1970s wave of the movement, asserting that it "was a move from an urban environment that had been degraded by human industry, from a culture that seemed to value only that which could be commodified – one that in Joni Mitchell's words "paved paradise and put up a parking lot" – to a rural environment that was perceived to be unspoiled.<sup>77</sup> It is evident that the core theme that runs through these waves of the back-to-the-land impulse, on both sides of the Atlantic, is a response to industrialisation's materialism.

While the advent of increasing concern over rising anthropogenic climate change has fostered the discourse on sustainability, relatively little attention has been paid to the potential of land-based approaches to facilitate low carbon lives. This research will, therefore, situate itself in and add to the limited research on lived sustainability praxis in rural spaces, focussing specifically on Low Impact Development (to be defined and addressed in the next section). It is noteworthy that Halfacree considers LID to be a back-to-the-land movement and discusses LID as a form of counter-urbanisation.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, he identifies Tinkers Bubble, Steward Woodland Community, and Kings Hill, all LID projects in England (assessed later in this chapter), and classifies them as 'new settlers' in a taxonomy of counter-urbanism.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Andrew Wilbur, "Growing a Radical Ruralism: Back-to-the-Land as Practice and Ideal" *Geography Compass* 7, no. 2 (Feb, 2013), p. 153.

<sup>76</sup> David Pepper, *Communes and the Green Vision: Counterculture, Lifestyle and the New Age* (London: Green Print, 1993), p. 199.

<sup>77</sup> Sharon Weaver, "First Encounters: 1970s Back-to-the-Land, Cape Breton, NS and Denman, Hornby and Lasqueti Islands, BC" *Oral History Forum D'histoire Orale. Special Issue "Talking Green: Oral History and Environmental History"* 30 (2010), p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Keith Halfacree, "From Dropping Out to Leading on? British Counter-Cultural Back-to-the-Land in a Changing Rurality," *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 3 (2006), 309-336.

<sup>79</sup> Keith Halfacree, "Constructing the Object: Taxonomic Practices, 'Counterurbanisation' and Positioning Marginal Rural Settlement" *International Journal of Population Geography* 7, no. 6 (2001a), p. 402. Keith Halfacree, "Going 'Back-to-the-Land' again: Extending the Scope of Counterurbanisation" *Espace Populations Sociétés* 19, no. 1 (2001c), p. 164.

Mark Waghorn also associates LID with the back-to-the-land movement and locates LID's heritage in counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s as a result of its critique of consumerism and search for self-reliance.<sup>80</sup> Building on its characteristic of jettisoning of consumerism, Katherine Jones has written that "as a practice and discourse in affluent societies where resources are abundant, it [LID] can be compared to the 'voluntary simplicity' movement in being about a way of life that is 'outwardly simple, inwardly rich'. In more academic terms, it can be called 'post-materialism'".<sup>81</sup> It is possible, then, in this view of LID, to posit that each 'wave' of the back to the land impulse has been a response to the materialism of industrial civilisation and, since the 1970s, as a response to environmental concern.

By contrast, Pickerill and Larch Maxey opine that whilst LID is inspired by "the successes and failures of communes, intentional communities and cooperatives", it is more than simply a back-to-the-land movement, rejecting LID's "consignment as a rural back-to-the-land phenomenon and instead view it as a radical movement, which is 'engaged in social transformation through everyday-lived practice'".<sup>82</sup> This is particularly pertinent in the context of LID's emphasis on seeking to live in spaces precluded from development. As Pickerill and Maxey further point out, LIDs are differentiated from other rural migration projects given their "predominant emphasis upon building new livelihoods in rural areas, often on so-called greenfield sites".<sup>83</sup> The need to research LIDs in the open countryside must therefore also be considered in the context of the literature on land use.

Commenting on this, Fairlie has written that "in all the vast literature that has emerged from the environmental movement in recent years there is barely one book that concentrates upon the nuts and bolts of the planning process from a green perspective".<sup>84</sup> Whilst not a study of

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<sup>80</sup> Mark Waghorn, "One Planet Development: Opportunities and Barriers," *Archidoc* 3, no. 2 (2016). p. 21

<sup>81</sup> Katherine Jones, "Mainstreaming the Alternative: The Lammas Eco Village and the Governance of Sustainable Development in Wales". PhD diss., (Aberystwyth University, 2015). p. 14

<sup>82</sup> Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Geographies of Sustainability: Low Impact Developments and Radical Spaces of Innovation" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009), p. 1518.

<sup>83</sup> Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Geographies of Sustainability: Low Impact Developments and Radical Spaces of Innovation" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009), p. 1521.

<sup>84</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. ix.

the 'nuts and bolts', this will be a study of the lived experience of those seeking to navigate the planning system to live sustainably in the open countryside. The limited policy context for living sustainably in rural spaces, outside of accepted development zones, will feature prominently, partially at least, filling the void identified by Fairlie.

## Low Impact Development (LID)

*Simon Fairlie*

The academic discourse on Low Impact Development (LID) was initiated with Fairlie's seminal text *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, first published in 1996. Fairlie is an editor of *The Land Magazine* and a founding member of Chapter 7, a planning advice organisation for those seeking to pursue a low impact life. The organisation's name is derived from Chapter 7 of Agenda 21, the UN's sustainable development strategy adopted at the first Earth Summit, in Rio, in 1992, which advocated for a more sustainable and equal land use.<sup>85</sup> Fairlie's work emerged out of his own experiences and was, in fact, "a book born out of the frustration of trying to obtain permission to live in a self-built, off-grid community in Somerset".<sup>86</sup>

Having returned from living in France for nine years in a self-built wooden shack on a smallholding, Fairlie returned to the UK to find that he could not live this way in England. He evolved the concept of LID having purchased a bare field smallholding in Somerset with a group of friends, pitching seven tents on the land, without planning permission.<sup>87</sup> The

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<sup>85</sup> Mark Waghorn, "One Planet Development: Opportunities and Barriers" *Archidoc* 3, no. 2 (2016b), p. 22.

<sup>86</sup> Simon Fairlie, "Foreword," in *Low Impact Development: The Future in our Hands*, eds. Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, 2009a), p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. x.; Colin Ward, *Cotters and Squatters Housing's Hidden History* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2002), p. 172-173.

subsequent engagement with the planning system formed the basis of *Low Impact Development Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, a book derived from the experience of the planned, rather than the planner(s).<sup>88</sup> Fairlie's LID must therefore be considered as a means to integrate the development of new sustainable smallholdings in the countryside, a space traditionally precluded from residential development into the British land use system.

Fairlie's own experience of being unable to live on affordable land as a result of the planning system, is reflected in Maxey and Pickerill's analysis who have, like Fairlie, asserted that LID emerged as a challenge to the "post-war British planning law which has been highly restrictive of rural development in order to protect particular conceptions of the rural idyll".<sup>89</sup> Building on the notions of the 'rural idyll' Halfacree has written that's LID emerged as a challenge to the idea that only wealthy people can live in the countryside.<sup>90</sup> However, whilst the term emerged in the context of planning struggles of those seeking to develop low impact smallholdings in the British countryside, it is important to acknowledge that these struggles must be seen in a broader context. Whilst Fairlie's work on LID was rooted in the planning system, LID emerged, as Pickerill and Maxey have further pointed out, as a "radical approach to housing, livelihoods and everyday living that began in Britain in the 1990s as a grassroots response to the overlapping crises of sustainability".<sup>91</sup> In this conception, LID was a product of a combination of related issues; environmental concern, the cost of rural housing, especially for those seeking a self-sufficient lifestyle, in addition to a form of resistance to an unsustainable economic system.

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<sup>88</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. x.

<sup>89</sup> Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Geographies of Sustainability: Low Impact Developments and Radical Spaces of Innovation" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009), 1515-1539.

<sup>90</sup> Keith Halfacree, "Going 'Back-to-the-Land' again: Extending the Scope of Counterurbanisation" *Espace Populations Sociétés* 19, no. 1 (2001), p. 166.

<sup>91</sup> Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Geographies of Sustainability: Low Impact Developments and Radical Spaces of Innovation" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009), p. 1516.

See also, Keith Halfacree, "From Dropping Out to Leading on? British Counter-Cultural Back-to-the-Land in a Changing Rurality" *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 3 (2006), 309-336.; Larch Maxey, "Low Impact Development in Context," in *Low Impact Development: The Future in our Hands*, eds. Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey (Leeds: Creative Commons Attribution, 2009a), 8-23.; Mark Waghorn, "One Planet Development: Opportunities and Barriers" *Archidoc* 3, no. 2 (2016), 20-33.

The experience in Somerset of seeking planning permission for Tinker's Bubble (to be addressed in further detail in a subsequent section) encouraged Fairlie to consider the ways in which this lifestyle could be adopted into the planning system. In view of this, he first defined LID as "one that, through its low negative environmental impact, either enhances or does not significantly diminish environmental quality".<sup>92</sup> This definition was updated in the republication of the book in 2009 to "LID is development which, by virtue of its low or benign environmental impact, may be allowed in locations where conventional development is not permitted".<sup>93</sup> Fairlie's updated definition places greater emphasis on the space in which the development can be permitted and, therefore, in the context of the planning system. Jones has, in fact, argued that this "refined the definition so that it was more in line with the possibilities of the planning system".<sup>94</sup>

The second definition is preferred by Fairlie as it is 'wrapped up' in the main argument for LID; that it need not be confined to the same restrictions to protect the countryside from what he calls 'high impact' developments - suburban sprawl - while 'low impact' also referred to affordability. Given its low environmental impact, LIDs should, according to Fairlie's second definition, be permitted to develop land not inflated in value by having residential planning permission.<sup>95</sup> In addition to this, he proposes two other 'principle' arguments in favour of LID: that a form of exception to planning policy is required because conventional housing in the countryside is too expensive for people who wish to work there and that, with the looming issue of climate change, that sustainable low impact lifestyles will need to be adopted by all and, therefore, pioneers should be encouraged.<sup>96</sup> For Fairlie, then, LID is a rural planning

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<sup>92</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. xiii.

<sup>93</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. xiv.

<sup>94</sup> Katherine Jones, "Doctoral Thesis - Mainstreaming the Alternative: The Lammas Eco Village and the Governance of Sustainable Development in Wales" Lammas Research (Lammas, Glandwr, Pembrokeshire, 2015), p. 15. <http://lammas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Mainstreaming-the-Alternative.pdf>

<sup>95</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. xiv.

<sup>96</sup> Simon Fairlie, "Foreword," in *Low Impact Development: The Future in our Hands*, eds. Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, 2009), p. 2.

concept that is aimed at facilitating sustainable lifestyles on more affordable land in areas usually precluded from development.

Fairlie conceptualised LID as a 'social contract' between practitioners of LID and the state, whereby people can be allowed to live in the countryside in return for providing environmental benefits.<sup>97</sup> Whilst there has been a presumption against residential development in the open countryside, his devising of LID as a social contract attempts to align it to the planning system by formulating it as an exception to rural planning policy. Fairlie posits that the benefits of this approach is that it allows for what he calls 'planning gain', requiring no structural change to planning policy.<sup>98</sup> He further devised LID as having nine features which characterise that the development is "temporary; is small scale; is unobtrusive; is made from predominately local materials; protects wildlife and enhances biodiversity; consumes a low level of non-renewable resources; generates little traffic; is used for a low impact sustainable purpose; is linked to a recognised positive environmental benefit".<sup>99</sup> The emergence of LID in 1996, though redefined in 2009, was imagined by Fairlie as being a way to develop sustainable lived experiences in the open countryside which were rooted in small-scale, subsistence smallholdings that improved environmental quality, while limiting the visual impact upon the landscape. The success of the Welsh Government's OPD policy which aims to 'take forward' these principles must therefore be measured, in part, against these characteristics.

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<sup>97</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. xi.

<sup>98</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. xiii.

<sup>99</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 55.; David Thorpe, *The 'One Planet' Life: A Blueprint for Low Impact Development* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 9.

### *Rural LID and sustainability*

While Fairlie defined the term 'low impact development' and sketched out its core features in applying it to rural planning, LID has since attracted further discussion of its praxis, its relationship to holistic design and permaculture, and as a lived form of sustainability. In fact, LID has been attributed by Maxey as meeting the three criteria of sustainable development; economic, social, and environmental.<sup>100</sup> This section will move on from Fairlie's conception of LID and assess the subsequent literature based these three aspects of sustainability, focusing on the discourse on LID's emphasis on improving environmental quality by whole system thinking, spaces for sustainable living, and a move away from profit driven economic thinking.

Though Fairlie has written about the environmental connotations of LID and applied it to the planning system, others, like Pickerill and Maxey, have associated it with broader issues of social needs, housing, and as an anti-capitalist strategy to develop new economic possibilities and ways of living.<sup>101</sup> Building on this, Alister Scott develops the jettisoning of the concept of economic growth as a key plank of LID. He has written that LID is "a lifestyle that involves subsistence-based development managed, as far as practicable, in order to maximize environmental and community benefits and produce self-sufficiency in food. Notably, concepts of economic growth are absent. It is the holistic dimension of community, land use and environment that is most attractive to notions of sustainability".<sup>102</sup> This conceptualisation of LID builds upon the planning frame of Fairlie, initiating a discussion about LID's ethical underpinnings to achieve sustainability in rural spaces. Hannis has, in fact, linked LID to the

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<sup>100</sup> Larch Maxey, "Low Impact Development into the Future," in *Low Impact Development: The Future in our Hands*, eds. Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey (Leeds: Creative Commons Attribution, 2009), p. 69.; Baker Associates, *Low Impact Development: Further Research* (Bristol: Baker Associates, 2004), p. 7.; Land Use Consultants, University of West England and The Welsh Institute of Rural Studies, *Farm Diversification and the Planning System* (London: Land Use Consultants, 2001), p. 66.; David Spero, *Settlements* (Dorchester: David Spero, 2017), p. 10.; Simon Dale and Larch Maxey, "Low Impact Development," in *Upsetting the Offset: The Political Economy of Carbon Markets*, eds. Steffen Böhm and Siddhartha Dabhi (London: Mayfly, 2009), p. 307.

<sup>101</sup> Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Geographies of Sustainability: Low Impact Developments and Radical Spaces of Innovation" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009), p. 1518.

<sup>102</sup> Alister Scott, "Contesting Sustainable Development: Low-Impact Development in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 3, no. 4 (2001), p. 276.; Richard Moyse, "Low-Impact Development: A Sustainable Future for the Countryside" *Ecos* 20, no. 2 (1999), p. 60.; David Spero, *Settlements* (Dorchester: David Spero, 2017), p. 10.



land ethics of Aldo Leopold by stating that its members aim to form their lives to be as part of a 'biotic community'.<sup>103</sup>

Moreover, Halfacree, a geographer interested in counter-urbanisation, has written of rural LIDs as being radical spaces for experimentation, noting that its praxis is defined by a number of core activities. He states that,

Associated with the overall practice of LID are a number of more specific activities that inscribe the locality. First, there is 'alternative' back-to-the-land migration. This usually seeks to combine farming at the scale of the smallholding and below, with a degree of food self-sufficiency and an ethics that centres our relationships with *all* human and non-human actors (livestock, crops, soil, 'nature', etc.) in the land-working 'network'. This movement of such critically 'committed' people to seek to live within the countryside, from both urban and other rural locations.<sup>104</sup>

It is, he continues, rooted in organic gardening and permaculture, artisan crafts and environmental education, local production and consumption, in addition to challenging the urban – rural division.<sup>105</sup> These assessments of rural LIDs therefore represent it as a step away from traditional agricultural methods, typified by large scale monocultures driven by the profit motive, towards small-scale subsistence farming which seeks, in its design and practice, to be in greater harmony with the natural environment by adopting a holistic approach. Indeed, David Thorpe has noted that rural LID typically "involves the practice of agroecology, a 'holistic' approach to designing land use, buildings, communities and businesses as sustainable systems".<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Michael Hannis, "Land-use Planning, Permaculture and the Transitivity of 'development'" *International Journal of Green Economics* 5, no. 3 (2010), p. 270.

<sup>104</sup> Keith Halfacree, "Trial by Space for a 'radical Rural': Introducing Alternative Localities, Representations and Lives" *Journal of Rural Studies* 23, no. 2 (2007b), p. 132.

<sup>105</sup> Keith Halfacree, "Trial by Space for a 'radical Rural': Introducing Alternative Localities, Representations and Lives" *Journal of Rural Studies* 23, no. 2 (2007), p. 132-133.

<sup>106</sup> David Thorpe, *The 'One Planet' Life: A Blueprint for Low Impact Development* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 9.

There is a continuum, in fact, across the literature on rural LIDs about its relationship to permaculture.<sup>107</sup> Permaculture emerged in the 1970s and was a reaction to the impacts of industrialised agriculture and the harnessing indigenous ways of knowing. It was defined by Bill Mollison as “the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way”.<sup>108</sup> In applying LID to permaculture, Pickerill attributes two key characteristics of permaculture’s holistic thinking to LID’s understanding of humanity’s interaction with the natural world; the need to adopt whole systems thinking, including the physical, social, economic, and psychological components, while acknowledging that the system’s individual parts cannot be understood in isolation.<sup>109</sup> The earlier literature on LID therefore engages it as a grassroots form of sustainability in rural spaces, seeking to locate itself within the planning system and focussing on the building of new low impact smallholdings in the open countryside, ones that employ a holistic design ethic. This conceptualisation will form the basis of this research.

Where Fairlie, having defined LID in 1996, does not view LID as a social movement but, rather an architectural one, others have come to associate it with spaces for transformation in its lived experience.<sup>110</sup> This is best explained by David Spero who describes this as an expression of “a desire to experiment with and shape a different future by designing and building alternative ways of living, both dwellings and livelihoods”.<sup>111</sup> LID has, in fact, been described as ‘everyday activism’ by Chatterton and Pickerill in its lived experience, or ‘autonomous activism’ developed by Pickerill and Maxey, engaging issues of land justice and challenging

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<sup>107</sup> Anitra Nelson, *Small is Necessary: Shared Living on a Shared Planet* (London: Pluto Press, 2018), p. 135.; Alister Scott, "Contesting Sustainable Development: Low-Impact Development in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 3, no. 4 (2001), p. 278.; Richard Moyse, "Low-Impact Development: A Sustainable Future for the Countryside" *Ecos* 20, no. 2 (1999), p. 62.

<sup>108</sup> Bill Mollison, *Permaculture: A Practical Guide for a Sustainable Future* (Washington: Island Press, 1990), p.9.; Bill Mollison, *Introduction Permaculture* (Tasmania: Tagari Publications, 1991), p. 1.

<sup>109</sup> Jenny Pickerill, "Permaculture in Practice: Low Impact Development in Britain," in *Localizing Environmental Anthropology: Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillage Design for a Sustainable Future*, eds. Joshua Lockyer and James Veteto (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 184-185.

<sup>110</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 141.

<sup>111</sup> David Spero, *Settlements* (Dorchester: David Spero, 2017), p. 7.

the capitalist quest to control access to property.<sup>112</sup> As part of that, LID can constitute part of what Andrew Dobson has called environmental citizenship, which “involves the recognition that self-interested behaviour will not always protect or sustain public goods such as the environment. Thus environmental citizens make a commitment to the common good”.<sup>113</sup>

Beyond the commitment to the common good, environmental citizenship is also associated, Dobson continues, with a “a responsibility to work towards a sustainable society, and this embraces all the activities one might normally think of as relating to good environmental citizenship: recycling, reusing, conserving”.<sup>114</sup> This has been referred to as ‘political entrepreneurs’ by Heather Lovell in writing about how low-energy housing entrepreneurs were influenced to act in the absence of government policy.<sup>115</sup> This is a significant juncture. Whilst Fairlie positioned LID as a form of experimentation for new ways of sustainable living in rural spaces, it has since been formulated as a form of resistance to the status quo and as an experimental space of activism. This reinforces the placing of this research in the wider eco-cultures scholarship.

The term ‘low impact development’ was, then, first defined in 1996. It served to place the prospect of living sustainably in the open countryside within the planning system. This has since been bolstered by discussions about its approach to space, land use, and design approach. In fact, LID has taken on a broader spatial identity, as well as being applied in the academic literature to its potential benefits to parenting and emotion.<sup>116</sup> In addition, the term

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<sup>112</sup> Paul Chatterton and Jenny Pickerill, "Everyday Activism and Transitions Towards Post-Capitalist Worlds" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35, no. 4 (2010), 475-490.; Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Geographies of Sustainability: Low Impact Developments and Radical Spaces of Innovation" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009), p. 1524.

<sup>113</sup> Andrew Dobson, "Environmental Citizenship: Towards Sustainable Development" *Sustainable Development* 15, no. 5 (2007), p. 280.

<sup>114</sup> Andrew Dobson, "Environmental Citizenship: Towards Sustainable Development" *Sustainable Development* 15, no. 5 (2007), p. 280.

<sup>115</sup> Heather Lovell, "The Role of Individuals in Policy Change: The Case of UK Low-Energy Housing" *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 27, no. 3 (2009), p. 501.

<sup>116</sup> Fiona Shirani et al., "Living in the Future: Environmental Concerns, Parenting, and Low-Impact Lifestyles," in *Geographies of Global Issues: Change and Threat* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2016), 441-461.; Gavin Brown and Jenny Pickerill, "Space for Emotion in the Spaces of Activism" *Emotion, Space and Society* 2, no. 1 (2009), 24-35.

Low Impact Development can also pertain, outside of the UK, to the management of storm drainage.<sup>117</sup> These additional branches of LID scholarship are not a feature of this research. Instead, this thesis builds on the earlier canon of LID scholarship, developing its application in rural settings. Indeed, specifically, this study is rooted in assessing LID as a form of rural development, based on a social contract between the individual and the state, that seeks to foster sustainable small-scale residential smallholdings in the open countryside. As the next section of this chapter will show, this rural focus is particularly relevant as the British countryside has become an exclusionary space in the modern period.

### **The British countryside as an exclusionary space**

Having assessed the emergence, characteristics, and developments in the scholarship on LID since 1996, the following sub-sections will critically assess the existing literature addressing the ways in which the British countryside has been an exclusionary space. It will show that the key obstacles faced by those seeking to develop LIDs in the open countryside has been access to land, rooted in historic processes which have concentrated land ownership and separated people from the land. In this view, the challenges faced by potential LID practitioners are connected to the agrarian movements of the past, particularly with regard to the loss of the commons and the countryside as a space to live a subsistence lifestyle.

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<sup>117</sup> For examples of this definition of Low Impact Development see: Jing Zhang et al., "Analysis of the Effect of Low Impact Development on Urban Runoff Control Based on the SWMM Model" *Journal of Coastal Research* 96 (2019), 62-67.; Jiake Li et al., "Evaluating Hydrological and Environmental Effects for Low-Impact Development of a Sponge City" *Polish Journal of Environmental Studies* 29, no. 2 (2020), 1205-1218.; Hong Men et al., "Mathematical Optimization Method of Low-Impact Development Layout in the Sponge City" *Mathematical Problems in Engineering* (2020), 1-17.

### *Concentration of land ownership*

There is a depth of research about the ways in which land ownership has been concentrated, to the detriment of those seeking to develop land-based livelihoods in Britain. Guy Shrubsole has recently written that, in 2019, 25,000 landowners, far less than 1% of the population, own half of England.<sup>118</sup> This, he suggests, means that to “see the world through the lens of land ownership is to survey a landscape of power”.<sup>119</sup> This is also evident in Marion Shoard’s account of the British countryside which, it is observed, “is owned by a small, tightly knitted group of individuals dedicated to retaining their power”.<sup>120</sup> In explaining this, Shrubsole has written that the Norman invasion in 1066 resulted in the concentration of land ownership, with William the Conqueror claiming land for the Crown, with, he notes, the 1087 Domesday Book showing that the King and his family owned 17% of England, around 2185302.47 hectares. This is particularly relevant, he suggests, because almost a thousand years later, the Crown still owns around 404685.642 hectares of land in England and Wales.<sup>121</sup>

Moreover, Peter Linebaugh, a Marxist historian, has argued that the Norman invasion initiated a separation of common people from the land by removing the rights to forage, hunt, or collect wood as part of a new set of ‘forest laws’ in order to preserve the hunting grounds of the Norman invaders.<sup>122</sup> This, he argues was achieved by creating new ‘forests’, whereby vast parts of the country were claimed by the new monarchy. It is important to note, as Simon Sharma points out, that ‘forests’ included not just woodland but tracts, pasture, meadow, farmland, towns, and even the entire county of Essex.<sup>123</sup> The Norman ‘afforestation’ therefore represents, for Linebaugh, the first assault of the commons as the right to forage in areas labelled as forests was now outlawed.

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<sup>118</sup> Guy Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?* (London: William Collins, 2019). p. 268

<sup>119</sup> Guy Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?* (London: William Collins, 2019). p. 22

<sup>120</sup> Marion Shoard, *This Land is our Land* (London: Gaia Books Limited, 1997). p. xviii

<sup>121</sup> Guy Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?* (London: William Collins, 2019), p. 49.

<sup>122</sup> Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).; Peter Linebaugh, *Stop, Thief!: The Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance* (Oakland: PM Press, 2014).

See also, Guy Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?* (London: William Collins, 2019), p. 17.

<sup>123</sup> Simon Sharma, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Harper Collins, 1995) p. 144.

Shoard describes this as representing the arrival of feudalism, writing that William divided the rest of England amongst 180 knights and that each knight controlled far more land than the average Saxon had done, eliminating the Saxon notion of land ownership, and thereby creating a land-based aristocracy.<sup>124</sup> As a result, she concludes, the “Saxons became ‘serfs’, providing their labour on the knight’s land in return for the right to till some parts of the knight’s holdings for their own benefit”.<sup>125</sup> This branch of the literature therefore locates the loss of the commons and the emergence of a landed elite with the Norman invasion in 1066, with a subsequent dependence of land workers on their landed masters. From this perspective, the issues of accessing land for the development of low impact smallholdings is more easily understood with land concentrated in the hands of the few, the legacy of which remains in place.

A significant literature exists about the impact of enclosure. Gordon Mingay writes that enclosure was the removal of common rights over the farmland and the commons of the parish and the abolition of the open fields in favour of private ownership with fencing, hedging, or stone walls.<sup>126</sup> Shrubsole has estimated that 27-30% of England consisted of common land around 1600.<sup>127</sup> However, between 1604 and 1914 some 2751862.37 hectares of common land were enclosed by Acts of Parliament – a fifth of all of England, while few commoners could vote to affect what happened in Parliament.<sup>128</sup> Mingay adds that there were, in England, 5,265 Enclosure Acts, of which 3,094 – 59% – concerned some open-field land.<sup>129</sup>

E.P. Thomson, like Linebaugh, a Marxist historian, depicts the enclosure movements as a process of removing people from the land, describing them as a “plain enough case of class robbery, played according to fair rules of property and law laid down by a Parliament of

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<sup>124</sup> Marion Shoard, *This Land is our Land* (London: Gaia Books Limited, 1997), p. 17.

<sup>125</sup> Marion Shoard, *This Land is our Land* (London: Gaia Books Limited, 1997), p. 18.

<sup>126</sup> Gordon Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England: An Introduction to its Causes, Incidence and Impact 1750-1850* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 7.

<sup>127</sup> Guy Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?* (London: William Collins, 2019), p. 214.

<sup>128</sup> Guy Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?* (London: William Collins, 2019), p. 214.

See also, Simon Fairlie, "A Short History of Enclosure in Britain" *The Land Summer* (2009b), p. 24.

<sup>129</sup> Gordon Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England: An Introduction to its Causes, Incidence and Impact 1750-1850* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 14.

property-owners and lawyers".<sup>130</sup> Though placing the separation of people from the land at different points in time, the Marxist scholarship addresses the issue of land through the lens of power with Linebaugh and Thompson both noting that 'laws' were created to separate people from land. It is worth pointing out, however, that beyond the Marxist historiography, Shrubsole has referred to enclosure as a "a land grab of criminal proportions" and by Fairlie as a "downright theft".<sup>131</sup> In any case, the enclosure of the British countryside resulted in the privatisation of land, the concentration of land wealth, and limited the capacity to develop subsistence lifestyles.

In assessing the social impacts of this, Peter Hetherington argues that throughout "the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, millions of acres of open fields – on which rural workers had commoners' rights for grazing and growing - were appropriated and enclosed in a long series of parliamentary acts, forcing the poor off the land".<sup>132</sup> Howkins goes further to suggest that not only were the poor forced off the land, but were forced into wage labour in the burgeoning cities.<sup>133</sup> Thorpe has developed this notion further and applied it to a more contemporary context in the locus of this study, Wales. He estimates that

Before the heyday of the industrial revolution and the Enclosures Act, the British countryside was much more densely populated. It has since fallen from a maximum of 3.84 million in 1851 to 1.2 million in 2001. By 1911, the population of rural districts in England and Wales had decreased by about half since 1850. By 2010, the population density for Wales was 145 people per square kilometre, with two thirds (slightly under two million) living in urban (greater than 10,000 population) areas, concentrated mostly in the southeast of the country".<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Classes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 218.

<sup>131</sup> Guy Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?* (London: William Collins, 2019), p. 214.

<sup>132</sup> Peter Hetherington, *Whose Land is our Land? the use and Abuse of Britain's Forgotten Acres* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), p. 17.

<sup>133</sup> Alun Howkins, "The Commons, Enclosure and Radical Histories," in *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History*, eds. David Feldman and Jon Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 118.

<sup>134</sup> David Thorpe, *The 'One Planet' Life: A Blueprint for Low Impact Development* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 14.

There is, then, according to the literature a long history in Britain about the separation of people from the land and the loss of the commons, resulting in rural depopulation. In the context of this research, any successful policy initiated to facilitate LID must provide access to affordable land to allow for the partial repopulation of the open countryside based on a subsistence lifestyle.

### *Land value*

This scholarship also points to the longer-term patterns of land ownership and land values in Britain, as well as their impacts on entrant farmers. Hetherington has written that the impact of enclosure was that the

enclosed land – appropriated by the powerful – assumed much bigger monetary value and became a commodity. It could be bought, sold, inherited, or bequeathed, thus conferring even more power, status and wealth on owners. Today, this is underlined with agricultural land prices reaching such dizzying heights that aspiring farmers are priced out of the market by an elite seeking advantageous tax havens to offload spare millions.<sup>135</sup>

While Hetherington attributes the rising land prices to tax havens, Monbiot et al, the Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC), and Shrubsole, attribute the rise in land values to the system of European agricultural subsidies.

George Monbiot et al writing in *The Land or the Many* report, published by the Labour Party, in 2020, argue that, after 2003, European farm payments decoupled farm subsidies from production meaning that these now rewarded landowners on the basis of how much they

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<sup>135</sup> Peter Hetherington, *Whose Land is our Land? the use and Abuse of Britain's Forgotten Acres* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), p. 17.



owned and without an upper limit. As a result, it is suggested, agricultural land prices have risen sharply.<sup>136</sup> The report further identified, in fact, that between 2002 and 2015, there was a 462% rise in the value of agricultural land which has “pushed it out of the reach of people whose primary interest is farming”.<sup>137</sup> In addition, and of particular interest to this study, Shrubsole also draws attention to the way in which these subsidies are only paid to holdings of over 4.86 hectares.<sup>138</sup> The subsidies system therefore favours large landowners to the detriment to low impact smallholders who seek modest sized-plots for a subsistence living in rural spaces. The literature clearly shows, then, that there is a systemic disadvantage to those seeking to live low carbon lives in the open countryside, which will not be overcome without policy change. However, it is worth pointing, as the *Land for the Many* report identifies, that while the European Union’s Common Agricultural Policy system has provided subsidies to large owners, its loss as a result of Brexit may reduce the cost of land and create opportunities for One Planet Developments in Wales, the subject of this study.<sup>139</sup>

### *Industrial agriculture*

In addition to the historical processes that have limited the opportunities for land-based sustainability schemes, the post-war view of rurality in Britain, including the intensification of industrial agriculture and the advent of the planning system have exacerbated these limiting conditions. Howkins develops how, following the conclusion of the Second World War and the landslide victory of the Labour Party in 1945, the incumbent government, led by Clement Attlee, set about their reformist programme for Britain. Farming, farmers, and land girls were

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<sup>136</sup> George Monbiot, Robin Grey, Tom Kenny, Laurie Macfarlane, Anna Powell-Smith, Guy Shrubsole, Beth Stratford., *LAND FOR THE MANY: Changing the Way our Fundamental Asset is used, Owned and Governed* (London: Labour Party, 2020), p. 27.; Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 59.

<sup>137</sup> George Monbiot, Robin Grey, Tom Kenny, Laurie Macfarlane, Anna Powell-Smith, Guy Shrubsole, Beth Stratford., *LAND FOR THE MANY: Changing the Way our Fundamental Asset is used, Owned and Governed* (London: Labour Party, 2020), p. 201.

<sup>138</sup> Guy Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?* (London: William Collins, 2019), p. 106.

<sup>139</sup> Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 12.

an essential part of the 'people's war', and they were to be rewarded by a restructuring of their industry to ensure against economic fluctuation.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, Rebecca Laughton has developed that this reformist programme for agriculture and agricultural modernisation was in response to wartime shortages and to facilitate greater national food security. In order to achieve that, she argues, farmers were to increase mechanisation and the use of artificial fertilisers to increase yields.<sup>141</sup>

Halfacree has developed how this conception of the countryside – or rurality – set the course for an industrialised, productivist agriculture.<sup>142</sup> This has been defined by Phillip Lowe et al as "a commitment to an intensive, industrially-based and expansionist agriculture with state support based primarily on output and increased productivity".<sup>143</sup> Post-war farming was therefore placed on an industrial setting and the countryside was seen as exclusively agricultural. Developing the impact of this, Spero identifies that this productivist view of the countryside separated the rural from the urban and largely precluded the ability to live in rural spaces, save for those involved in industrial agriculture.<sup>144</sup> The countryside was now conceived as purely agricultural – its place was to feed the city where economic development and capital was made.

Laughton has developed this, emphasising the demographic change caused by these legacies, noting that the British countryside has been conditioned "firstly by the severance of people from the land during the enclosure movements, and secondly the development of agricultural technologies, which replaced manual labour with machinery and, latterly, chemicals. In Britain in the twenty-first century, less than 2% of the population work in an agricultural industry that is highly dependent on fossil fuels".<sup>145</sup> This is also reflected in the consolidation

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<sup>140</sup> Alun Howkins, *The Death of Rural England* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 142.

<sup>141</sup> Rebecca Laughton, *Surviving and Thriving on the Land: How to use Your Time and Energy to Run a Successful Smallholding* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2008), p. 36.

<sup>142</sup> Keith Halfacree, "From Dropping Out to Leading on? British Counter-Cultural Back-to-the-Land in a Changing Rurality" *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 3 (2006), p. 311.

<sup>143</sup> Philip Lowe et al., "Regulating the New Rural Spaces: The Uneven Development of Land" *Journal of Rural Studies* 9, no. 3 (1993), p. 221.

<sup>144</sup> David Spero, *Settlements* (Dorchester: David Spero, 2017), p. 9.

<sup>145</sup> Rebecca Laughton, *Surviving and Thriving on the Land: How to use Your Time and Energy to Run a Successful Smallholding* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2008), p. 28.

of smaller holdings into larger farms. Laughton has further identified that there has been a pattern towards fewer, larger holdings, noting that “Between 1956 and 2003 the number of farm holdings in the UK fell by 40%”.<sup>146</sup>

This is corroborated in Shrubsole’s work, who writes that the majority of English soil is farmed by a small set of 25,638 farm holdings of 52% of England’s area, concluding that there are far fewer farms than sixty years ago.<sup>147</sup> As a consequence of this, as Pretty has pointed out, fewer farms and fewer farming jobs has affected growing poverty in rural areas, in addition to a loss of services, such as schools, shops, and doctors’ surgeries. The combined impacts of this have been to unravel rural communities and decrease their capacity to cope with environmental and economic change.<sup>148</sup> This reinforces the potential of LID as a means of fostering rural regeneration by repopulating the British countryside with sustainable smallholdings that provide local produce, contributing to the resilience of local food systems.

This is particularly relevant given, as the Ecological Land Cooperative’s *Small is Successful* report points out, that “a growing body of international evidence suggests that farming on a smaller scale is more productive per acre [0.4 hectares] in terms of yield, profit and other social and environmental benefits, including biodiversity”.<sup>149</sup> The notion of increasing agricultural yields without causing adverse environmental effects has been conceptualised by Pretty and Bharucha as ‘sustainable intensification’, a term pertaining to seeking alternative agricultural methods in the context of climate change and declining biodiversity.<sup>150</sup> There is potential, then, for OPD in Wales, as an ‘exemplar’ form of development, to help pioneer more new methods of farming on an existing ecological base.

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<sup>146</sup> Rebecca Laughton, *Surviving and Thriving on the Land: How to use Your Time and Energy to Run a Successful Smallholding* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2008), p. 51.

<sup>147</sup> Guy Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?* (London: William Collins, 2019), p. 87.

<sup>148</sup> Jules Pretty, *The Living Land* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 1998), p. 26.

<sup>149</sup> Ecological Land Cooperative, *Small is Successful: Creating Sustainable Livelihoods on Ten Acres Or Less* (London: Ecological Land Cooperative Ltd., 2011), p. 9.

<sup>150</sup> Jules Pretty and Zareen Pervez Bharucha, "Sustainable Intensification in Agricultural Systems" *Annals of Botany* 114 (2014), 1571–1596.

Despite this, the broader impact of this concentration of land wealth and consolidation of farm size has meant that there are smaller number of existing holdings available to those seeking to develop low carbon lives in rural areas, whilst existing ones carry financially out of reach, particularly for those seeking a subsistence lifestyle. This is significant, according to Laughton because “Unlike during the 1960s and 1970s, when the first wave of the ‘back to the landers’ was in full blood, there are now few abandoned farm labourers’ cottages, let alone small farms, available for less than £250,000, even in more remote parts of the UK”.<sup>151</sup> The ELC has also posited the same figure, stating that

Where growers can self-build on their smallholding, they have an affordable route into farming. Without this, costs are prohibitive. An entry level holding with residential permission costs at least £250,000, with growers required to demonstrate earnings over £50,000 in order to qualify for the requisite mortgage. Based on our knowledge of small-farm incomes, this is clearly impossible. The self-build route is therefore essential for any new entrant who cannot afford to invest over quarter of a million pounds in a dwelling.<sup>152</sup>

The concentration of land wealth, the rise of land values, alongside the historic process of enclosure has placed rural migration out of reach of many of those seeking to live a low impact life in the open countryside.

### *The British planning system*

In addition to the cost of land, and a changing rurality after 1945, restrictive planning laws represent a key barrier to LID and is a consistent theme across the literature on the obstacles

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<sup>151</sup> Rebecca Laughton, *Surviving and Thriving on the Land: How to use Your Time and Energy to Run a Successful Smallholding* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2008), p. 290.

<sup>152</sup> Ecological Land Cooperative, *Small is Successful: Creating Sustainable Livelihoods on Ten Acres Or Less* (London: Ecological Land Cooperative Ltd., 2011), p. 43.

to rural LIDs in Britain.<sup>153</sup> This section will critically assess the planning-based obstacles which are grouped into three key areas; post-war thinking, a tension between LID and planning orthodoxy, and the view that planning restrictions represent a continuation of the land-based issues addressed in the previous section.

The literature points towards the introduction of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act as limiting the capacity to develop LIDs in rural spaces. Maxey and Fairlie both note that its objective to prevent suburban sprawl, with Fairlie concluding that the introduction of planning policy “proceeded on the assumption that all forms of development, except agriculture, were an urban threat to the countryside, and needed to be strictly controlled”.<sup>154</sup> As a result, Hannis states, “The thrust of rural planning policy since 1947 has been that (apart from small numbers of workers in primary resource sectors such as water and forestry) only farmers, who *need* to be there to produce the nation’s food, should live in the ‘open countryside’ outside defined towns and villages”.<sup>155</sup> In terms of defining this ‘need’, Fairlie highlights that residential development in the open countryside has only been permitted if it was agricultural and of a ‘visible’ scale to protect areas of food production and wildlife.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009).; Keith Halfacree, "Back-to-the-Land in the Twenty-First Century? Making Connections with Rurality" *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 98, no. 1 (2007), 3-8.; Paul Chatterton, *Low Impact Living: A Field Guide to Ecological, Affordable Community Building* (London: Routledge, 2015).; Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Geographies of Sustainability: Low Impact Developments and Radical Spaces of Innovation" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009), 1515-1539.; Jonathan Dawson, *Ecovillages: New Frontiers for Sustainability* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2015).; Elaine Forde, "Planning as a Form of Enclosure: The Ambiguities of Nonproductive Accumulation in the West Wales Countryside" *Focaal*, no. 72 (2015), 81-94.

<sup>154</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 8.; Larch Maxey, "Low Impact Development into the Future," in *Low Impact Development: The Future in our Hands*, eds. Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey (Leeds: Creative Commons Attribution, 2009), p. 67.

<sup>155</sup> Michael Hannis, "Land-use Planning, Permaculture and the Transitivity of ‘development’" *International Journal of Green Economics* 5, no. 3 (2010), p. 275.

<sup>156</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 5.

He asserts that the current planning regulations makes life difficult for those seeking self-sufficiency as planning consent is based on income-generation aimed for agricultural businesses.<sup>157</sup> Scott elaborates on the policy context, identifying that

The issues involved are complex but depend on the ability of an applicant to pass functional and financial tests relating to the agricultural activities and the profitability of the enterprise as a basis for supporting a full-time agricultural worker. Specifically, the unit must have been established for three years, operated at a profit for at least one of them, be financially sound and have a clear prospect of remaining so. In addition the dwelling must be deemed essential for the worker to live on site and this will depend on the needs of the farm or forestry enterprise concerned and not on the personal preferences of the individual.<sup>158</sup>

This is particularly challenging given the organic and, therefore, labour intensive form of farming appropriated by LID, in addition of the minimal profits developed, bring it into conflict with the planning system as a legitimate form of agricultural activity.<sup>159</sup> Residential use of the countryside has therefore only been permitted for commercial enterprises. This conflicts with the subsistence model of LID which has limited the legal space for the development of new low impact smallholdings in the open countryside.

In addition, the literature identifies a further tension to the need to live in the open countryside. Hannis highlights the distinction in planning policy between the work and residential aspect of LID. He observes that whilst projects do not require specific permission to apply permaculture principles for land work, as this is still considered as agricultural work, they do require a change of use to be permitted to live on that land. He writes that

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<sup>157</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>158</sup> Alister Scott, "Contesting Sustainable Development: Low-Impact Development in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 3, no. 4 (2001), p. 280.  
See also Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 312.

<sup>159</sup> Alister Scott, "Contesting Sustainable Development: Low-Impact Development in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 3, no. 4 (2001), p. 280.

“Permaculture and low impact projects tend to happen on land zoned for agriculture, so their planning issues revolve around getting permission to change the use of at least part of the land to 'residential'. This brings them into conflict with the strong presumption against "new residential development in the open countryside" mandated by rural planning guidance and reflected in all local development frameworks”.<sup>160</sup> As a result, Halfacree has written how contemporary back-to-the-land projects are affected by planning issues because they often involve building new residential structures.<sup>161</sup> Jones has, in fact, written that if “there were no new buildings, this would not be a planning issue at all”.<sup>162</sup>

Laughton makes an analogous point, stating that the “struggle to gain planning permission to live on the land is a common cause of stress amongst small-holders who cannot afford to buy land with existing accommodation”.<sup>163</sup> In fact, the residential element is the key variable in the viability of a low impact project as recognised by the ELC who observe that “The ability to live on one’s smallholding is often the make or break factor determining its viability. It is imperative that smallholdings which clearly demonstrate high levels of economic, environmental and social sustainability be recognised by the planning system.”<sup>164</sup> Though writing about the successes British commune movements of the 1960s and 1970s, Rigby identifies that the “crucial factor appears to have been their ability to obtain secure tenure of the property necessary for their respective ventures to thrive”.<sup>165</sup> The British planning system, however, distinguishes between the residential and agricultural aspects of a potential project, thus limiting opportunities to develop this ‘secure tenure’. As a result, any policy, such as OPD,

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<sup>160</sup> Mike Hannis, "What is Development?" *The Land*, no. 9 (2010), p. 54.; Michael Hannis, "Land-use Planning, Permaculture and the Transitivity of 'development'" *International Journal of Green Economics* 5, no. 3 (2010), p. 278.

<sup>161</sup> Keith Halfacree, "From Dropping Out to Leading on? British Counter-Cultural Back-to-the-Land in a Changing Rurality" *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 3 (2006), p. 324.

<sup>162</sup> Katherine Jones, "Doctoral Thesis - Mainstreaming the Alternative: The Lammas Eco Village and the Governance of Sustainable Development in Wales" Lammas Research (Lammas, Glandwr, Pembrokeshire, 2015), p. 15. <http://lammas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Mainstreaming-the-Alternative.pdf>

<sup>163</sup> Rebecca Laughton, *Surviving and Thriving on the Land: How to use Your Time and Energy to Run a Successful Smallholding* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2008), p. 282.

<sup>164</sup> Ecological Land Cooperative, *Small is Successful: Creating Sustainable Livelihoods on Ten Acres Or Less* (London: Ecological Land Cooperative Ltd., 2011), p. 46.

<sup>165</sup> Andrew Rigby, *Communes in Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 140.

the subject of this study would, therefore, have to facilitate access to more affordable land with the potential to build new residential dwellings in the open countryside.

Moreover, a branch of the literature on the impact of this post-1945 land use paradigm points towards the way in which it represents a continuation of the separation of people from the land identified in the previous section. In fact, Elaine Forde makes the case that the current planning system should be seen as a form of enclosure.<sup>166</sup> This notion has been attributed by Emma Griffin et al to the ways in which the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act nationalised development rights and land-owners now had to seek permission on a case-by-case from the local authority to develop their land as private property.<sup>167</sup> As a result, Nick Rosen writes, this meant that the right to build a home had “to be released only at the political judgment of local authorities”.<sup>168</sup> The consequence of this, according to Colin Ward, is that the British planning system, centred around the Town and Country Planning Acts, passed by elected parliaments and administered by democratically elected local authorities, has been effective at excluding the urban poor from the rural hinterlands.<sup>169</sup>

While some have attributed the separation of people from the land to the ‘nationalisation’ of decision making, others have attributed it to a prevailing belief that living in the open countryside is inherently destructive to the landscape. Chris Smaje has, in fact, argued that “Current zoning regulations, allied to the symbolic economy of capitalism, make a reinvigorated countryside of smallholdings a virtual impossibility in England at present, and the idea of a countryside ‘ruined’ by people living and working in it is widely shared”.<sup>170</sup> In order to facilitate LID it is clear that a change of planning policy is required to foster a working

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<sup>166</sup> Elaine Forde, "Planning as a Form of Enclosure: The Ambiguities of Nonproductive Accumulation in the West Wales Countryside" *Focaal*, no. 72 (2015), 81-94.

<sup>167</sup> Emma Griffin, Katie McClymont and Adam Sheppard, "A Sense of Legitimacy in Low-Impact Developments: Experiences and Perspectives of Communities in South-West England" *International Journal of Housing Policy* (2021), p. 10.; Peter Hetherington, *Whose Land is our Land? the use and Abuse of Britain's Forgotten Acres* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), p. 16.

<sup>168</sup> Nick Rosen, *How to Live Off-Grid* (London: Bantam, 2007), p. 31.

<sup>169</sup> Colin Ward, *Cotters and Squatters Housing's Hidden History* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2002) p. 171.

<sup>170</sup> Chris Smaje, *A Small Farm Future* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2020), p. 266.



countryside, whilst simultaneously seeking to protect the cultural value of the British countryside.

In addition to the tensions between needs of LID and the basis of the planning system, the literature also reveals a discord between LID's ambition of residential development in the open countryside and the conventional wisdom of the planning profession, those charged with implementing policy. Laughton has written that "planning policy, as currently applied at local level, emphasises protection of the countryside and reduction of road traffic, whilst viewing the efforts of smallholders as economically insignificant compared with large-scale farmers".<sup>171</sup> Indeed, much like with planning policy, which is configured to avoid residential development in the open countryside, so, too, does the culture of planners. Waghorn has, in fact, written that "cultural differences between those responsible for enacting and enforcing regulatory systems and LID practitioners are the root of many of the barriers to LID".<sup>172</sup>

In explaining this Hannis emphasises the role of the residential aspect of rural LIDs, stating that "Planners' resistance is almost always focussed on on-site residency, which is a core aspect of permacultural land management".<sup>173</sup> By contrast, the ELC focusses on the different economic priorities of the LID and planners, noting that "There is a common view, particularly amongst planners, agricultural assessors and farmers, that for a holding to be viable it must be large. This is perfectly understandable given farming's productivist direction of travel since 1945 which has seen increasing mechanisation and standardisation within agriculture, and with it the expansion of field and farm sizes."<sup>174</sup> This points towards the need for planners to be trained in the potential of LID, particularly in the context of their shared emphasis on sustainability.

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<sup>171</sup> Rebecca Laughton, *Surviving and Thriving on the Land: How to use Your Time and Energy to Run a Successful Smallholding* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2008), p. 291.

<sup>172</sup> Mark Waghorn, "One Planet Development: Opportunities and Barriers" *Archidoc* 3, no. 2 (2016), p. 20.

<sup>173</sup> Mike Hannis, "What is Development?" *The Land*, no. 9 (2010), p. 55.

<sup>174</sup> Ecological Land Cooperative, *Small is Successful: Creating Sustainable Livelihoods on Ten Acres Or Less* (London: Ecological Land Cooperative Ltd., 2011), p.8.

Sure enough, the literature also identifies different cultural interpretations of sustainability adopted by LID and those implementing planning policy. As Scott has written, “The latter part of the twentieth century has witnessed a conceptual shift of the planning system towards sustainable development”.<sup>175</sup> Given the centrality of sustainable development to the planning system, Moyses notes, however, that “in theory, planners should kindly on proposals for low-impact dwellings; but, in reality, the practice has been very different indeed”.<sup>176</sup> To understand the reasons for this, Waghorn has identified that “LIDs have been at odds with the model of sustainable development sanctioned by planning orthodoxy”.<sup>177</sup> Whilst both cultures – planning and LID – support the same ends, their means are often antagonistic. These competing ideas means, according to Hannis, that “Applicants trying to get such projects legitimised by local authority planning departments sometimes complain that the two sides seem to speak different languages”.<sup>178</sup>

Rather than focussing on the cultural differences, Fairlie, instead, points towards the character traits of planning officials who, he claims, “sense that they are regarded as a race apart by more normal mortals: a queer grey-suited clique, living its own world, something of a cross between policemen and train spotters”.<sup>179</sup> The association with policemen, authority, and the maintenance of order, is, however, instructive. As the executors of a system which is rooted in urban containment, they are, as Moyses has pointed out “wary of granting residential permission for a low-impact settlement, as they might find it difficult to prevent that collection of tents being developed as an estate of executive homes”.<sup>180</sup> As a result of this, Fairlie suggests, planners will be inclined to refuse a LID application, regardless of the merit in the application, over concerns over ensuring that the project remains low impact and

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<sup>175</sup> Alister Scott, "Contesting Sustainable Development: Low-Impact Development in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 3, no. 4 (2001), p. 273.

<sup>176</sup> Richard Moyses, "Low-Impact Development: A Sustainable Future for the Countryside" *Ecos* 20, no. 2 (1999), p. 62.

<sup>177</sup> Mark Waghorn, "One Planet Development: Opportunities and Barriers" *Archidoc* 3, no. 2 (2016), p. 21.

<sup>178</sup> Michael Hannis, "Land-use Planning, Permaculture and the Transitivity of 'development'" *International Journal of Green Economics* 5, no. 3 (2010), p. 270.

<sup>179</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. ix.

<sup>180</sup> Richard Moyses, "Low-Impact Development: A Sustainable Future for the Countryside" *Ecos* 20, no. 2 (1999), p. 63.

setting a precedent.<sup>181</sup> This indicates the need for rural planning policies, such as OPD, to have a mechanism, as part of its implementation, to ensure applicants' continued compliance to sustainability benchmarks to maintain their exceptional permission to live in the open countryside.

It is clear that the literature points to the British land use paradigm creating a tension between state planning policy and the objectives of LID. Consequently, if any LID project is to be successful, it must overcome the issue of access to affordable land by opening up, via the planning system, to facilitate the right to develop new residential structures and the pursuit of a subsistence-based lifestyle. This will be further demonstrated by an examination of the literature on attempts to develop LIDs in the absence of such provision.

### **LID projects in England: a policy gap?**

Having identified the limited opportunities for LID in the dominant British land use paradigm, this section will, nevertheless, assess the limited scholarship on the small number of local policies that have sought to facilitate LID in England. It will also consider the cluster of work that can be found in the LID literature that has concentrated on the 'direct action' conduct by individuals and groups who have challenged the existing policy and legal frameworks assessed above. As will be seen in this section, this body of work serves to show that some 'victories' were won by LID practitioners through retrospective planning permission decisions having moved onto land without state approval. The literature suggests that the lack of policies to facilitate LID represents a key barrier to those seeking to develop new ways of sustainable living, with Spero referring to this as a 'policy gap'.<sup>182</sup> The final subsection will overview an

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<sup>181</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 114.

<sup>182</sup> David Spero, *Settlements* (Dorchester: David Spero, 2017), p. 9.

alternative approach to facilitating community land-based projects in Scotland, another devolved administration, like Wales, the subject of this study.

A small number of journal articles have addressed LID projects in England, placing them in a literature on counter-urbanisation and radical housing solutions.<sup>183</sup> It is also evident that where LID projects are discussed, that these are largely in the context of group efforts. This can be seen by referring to Pickerill and Maxey's work in which they produced, in 2012, an annotated map of LIDs in England and Wales. It indicates 23 'existing low impact developments', 20 of which are identified group projects and largely characterised as being based on shared land ownership.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, there are brief references to LID projects' role in shaping planning policies in rural areas of Milton Keynes, Oxford, Dartmoor, and South Somerset.<sup>185</sup> However, there is very little written about the implementation of these policies in England.<sup>186</sup> There is brief reference to Dartmoor's policy in Spero's *Settlements*, in which it is described as unworkable, given it specifically excluded 'cabins'.<sup>187</sup> Furthermore, Fairlie notes that local policies in Oxford and Milton Keynes were potentially useful, but that anyone interested in LID would not have been able afford land in those areas.<sup>188</sup>

In addition, there are two key themes that emerge from this small body of work about LID practitioners' journeys to establishing land-based projects in the context of a 'policy gap'.

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<sup>183</sup> For examples, see, Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Low Impact Development: Radical Housing Solutions from the Grassroots," in *Enterprising Communities: Grassroots Sustainability Innovations*, ed. Anna Davies, Vol. 9 (London: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2012), 65-83.; Keith Halfacree, "From Dropping Out to Leading on? British Counter-Cultural Back-to-the-Land in a Changing Rurality" *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 3 (2006), 309-336.

<sup>184</sup> Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Low Impact Development: Radical Housing Solutions from the Grassroots," in *Enterprising Communities: Grassroots Sustainability Innovations*, ed. Anna Davies, Vol. 9 (London: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2012), p. 66.

<sup>185</sup> Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Geographies of Sustainability: Low Impact Developments and Radical Spaces of Innovation" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009), p. 1531.

<sup>186</sup> Whilst there is little written, there is an MSc thesis which has studied these, see, Lisa Lewinsohn, "MSc Thesis - PLANNING POLICY AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENTS: What are the Planning Barriers to Low Impact Developments in Rural Areas in Britain and how might they be Overcome?" Lammas Research (Lammas, Glandwr, Pembrokeshire, 2008). <http://lammas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Lisa-L-MSc-LID-planning-thesis.pdf>

<sup>187</sup> David Spero, *Settlements* (Dorchester: David Spero, 2017), p. 10.

<sup>188</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 149.

First, it identifies a dominant pattern of settlement on land not allocated for residential development and seeking retrospective planning permission.<sup>189</sup> Explaining the process of this, Pickerill and Maxey have written that “Restrictive planning laws have meant that LIDs have tended to involve people moving onto land without planning permission and seeking to gain retrospective permission once they have become established or discovered. This has often involved long, costly and exhausting battles with planning authorities and has triggered a much-needed debate about the need for LID planning policies”.<sup>190</sup> Second, the literature points towards a successful trend of gaining retrospective planning permission, albeit via appeals. The limited research on the experiences of Tinker’s Bubble (Somerset), Kings Hill (Somerset), Landmatters (Devon), and the Steward Woodland Community (Dartmoor National Park), all in England, show that each was granted planning permission retrospectively and upon appeal, though largely only a temporary basis.<sup>191</sup> It is clear, then, that the literature reveals that the identified ‘policy gap’ has left LID advocates with limited options, other than to move on to land without planning permission. These actions have been described as a ‘direct action approach’ by Moyse and as forms of ‘counter-conduct’ by Harris.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009).; Keith Halfacree, "Going 'Back-to-the-Land' again: Extending the Scope of Counterurbanisation" *Espace Populations Sociétés* 19, no. 1 (2001), 161-170.; Elaine Forde, "Planning as a Form of Enclosure: The Ambiguities of Nonproductive Accumulation in the West Wales Countryside" *Focaal*, no. 72 (2015), 81-94.; David Spero, *Settlements* (Dorchester: David Spero, 2017), p. 9.; Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 26.

<sup>190</sup> Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Geographies of Sustainability: Low Impact Developments and Radical Spaces of Innovation" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009), p. 1530.

<sup>191</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009).; Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Geographies of Sustainability: Low Impact Developments and Radical Spaces of Innovation" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009), 1515-1539.; Keith Halfacree, "Going 'Back-to-the-Land' again: Extending the Scope of Counterurbanisation" *Espace Populations Sociétés* 19, no. 1 (2001), 161-170.; Elaine Forde, "Planning as a Form of Enclosure: The Ambiguities of Nonproductive Accumulation in the West Wales Countryside" *Focaal*, no. 72 (2015), 81-94.

<sup>192</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 26.; Richard Moyse, "Low-Impact Development: A Sustainable Future for the Countryside" *Ecos* 20, no. 2 (1999), p. 59.

### *Scotland: Community Land Trusts*

While this research is based on assessing the relative success of the Welsh Government's One Planet Development policy to facilitate LID in the open countryside, it is worth highlighting how another devolved part of the UK, Scotland, has engaged similar issues. As with the land ownership context in England and Wales discussed earlier in this chapter, the concentration of land ownership in Scotland has also been very narrow. In fact, Charles Warren has written that, as of 2009, land ownership in Scotland was more concentrated than anywhere else in Europe, whereby 608 landowners controlled half of the country.<sup>193</sup> This is corroborated by the Land Reform Review Group, an independent review group set up by the Scottish Government, who, by 2014, identified that 432 private landowners owned 50% of private land in Scotland. Placing this in a wider perspective, it is stated that half of this vital resource was therefore owned by 0.008% of the population.<sup>194</sup> It is evident, then, that the challenge of accessing land for grassroots sustainability initiatives has been a common theme across Britain.

This was directly addressed, after 1999 and the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, in particular with the Land Reform Act of (2003) and the Community Empowerment Act (2016).<sup>195</sup> Tom Moore and Kim McKee highlight how the Land Reform Act (2003) resulted in a 'right to buy' for communities in areas with a population below 10000 people.<sup>196</sup> From a legal perspective, the change in legislation allows land owing rights to be transferred from private to community ownership, via a land trust, managed by democratic elections by members of the community.<sup>197</sup> In assessing the uptake of this opportunity, Frank Rennie and

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<sup>193</sup> Charles Warren, *Managing Scotland's Environment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 48.

<sup>194</sup> The Land Review Group, *The Land of Scotland and the Common Good: Report* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Government, 2014), p. 159.

See also: Mike Danson and Kathryn A. Burnett, "Current Scottish Land Reform and Reclaiming the Commons: Building Community Resilience" *Progress in Development Studies* 21, no. 3 (2021), p. 288.

<sup>195</sup> Mike Danson and Kathryn A. Burnett, "Current Scottish Land Reform and Reclaiming the Commons: Building Community Resilience" *Progress in Development Studies* 21, no. 3 (2021), p. 284.

<sup>196</sup> Tom Moore and Kim McKee, "Empowering Local Communities? an International Review of Community Land Trusts" *Housing Studies* 27, no. 2 (2012), p. 282.

<sup>197</sup> Frank Rennie and Suzannah-Lynn Billing, "Changing Community Perceptions of Sustainable Rural Development in Scotland" *Journal of Rural and Community Development* 10, no. 2 (2015), p. 37.

Suzannah-Lynn Billing have calculated that over 50 communities in the Highlands and Islands have now purchased the land upon which they reside. In the Outer Hebrides, 50% of all land is community owned and 75% of the population now live on community owned land.<sup>198</sup> To put this into perspective, Rennie and Billing note that 202342.821 hectares are in community ownership, while Danson and Burnett place this figure at 218530.25 hectares, including in communities on islands such as Gigha and Eigg.<sup>199</sup> It is noteworthy, at this point, and as will be seen in Chapter Four, that OPD in Wales, the subject of this study, has resulted not in community projects but, rather, in single dwelling land-based projects at a family size scale. Therefore, whereas this Scottish model has as its focus the community, the findings of this research found that public policy giving options for family units to facilitate low impact development in the open countryside was of greater appeal in Wales.

In addition, it is important to highlight that the motivations of the Scottish land reforms are rooted in different priorities to OPD in Wales. Indeed, there is a general consensus that the Community land Trusts model in Scotland is rooted in sustainability, with Hamish Chenevix-Trench and Lorna Philip describing them as providing “a narrative of renaissance and appropriateness for sustainable living contexts”.<sup>200</sup> However, and as discussed above, sustainability falls into three broad factors: social, economic, and environmental. While OPD is, as will be demonstrated throughout this study, rooted largely in environmental metrics, such as Ecological Footprint Analysis, the Scottish model has given priority to the social and economic aspects, rather than on conservation objectives.<sup>201</sup> This analysis is apparent in Mike Dobson and Kathryn Burnett’s work, whereby they have more recently written that the Land Reform Act was aimed “to address uniquely high concentrations of ownership, which have

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<sup>198</sup> Frank Rennie and Suzannah-Lynn Billing, "Changing Community Perceptions of Sustainable Rural Development in Scotland" *Journal of Rural and Community Development* 10, no. 2 (2015), p. 37.

<sup>199</sup> Frank Rennie and Suzannah-Lynn Billing, "Changing Community Perceptions of Sustainable Rural Development in Scotland" *Journal of Rural and Community Development* 10, no. 2 (2015), p. 37.; Mike Danson and Kathryn A. Burnett, "Current Scottish Land Reform and Reclaiming the Commons: Building Community Resilience" *Progress in Development Studies* 21, no. 3 (2021), p. 289.

<sup>200</sup> Mike Danson and Kathryn A. Burnett, "Current Scottish Land Reform and Reclaiming the Commons: Building Community Resilience" *Progress in Development Studies* 21, no. 3 (2021), p. 284.

<sup>201</sup> Hamish Chenevix-Trench and Lorna J. Philip, "Community and Land Ownership in Highland Scotland: A Common Focus in a Changing Context" *Scottish Geographical Journal* 117, no. 2 (2001), p. 152.

stifled sustainable development and enterprise, limited homebuilding and employment creation, forced migration and perpetuated the legacy of the Highland clearances".<sup>202</sup>

Therefore, across two devolved nations in the UK, access to land as part of grassroots sustainability initiatives have taken on different forms, born out differing priorities. While Scotland has facilitated access to land for larger community projects based on shared ownership and management to encourage social and economic sustainability, the Welsh Government has, as will be shown throughout this study, legislated for a specific LID policy which is largely based on environmental metrics. In addition, whilst it does offer the potential for group projects, OPD has, thus far only resulted in family scale developments.

### **LID in Wales: resolving the policy gap?**

The final part of this Literature Review will assess the scholarship related to the experience of LID in Wales. This literature, although limited in volume, has coalesced around two issues which will form the structure of this section: commentary generated by Tony Wrench's roundhouse development at Brithdir Mawr, in Pembrokeshire, which, in turn, led to a local LID policy in Pembrokeshire (Policy 52); and a nascent body of work addressing the Welsh Government's national LID policy, One Planet Development, enacted in 2010.

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<sup>202</sup> Mike Danson and Kathryn A. Burnett, "Current Scottish Land Reform and Reclaiming the Commons: Building Community Resilience" *Progress in Development Studies* 21, no. 3 (2021), p. 291.



*From Brithdir Mawr to the Lamma Ecovillage*

A very small number of works have made reference to the planning disputes at Brithdir Mawr in Pembrokeshire, though these largely use it as an illustrative example of LID's friction with the planning system.<sup>203</sup> In addition, Tony Wrench has written about building roundhouses, with some biographical sections.<sup>204</sup> From these, it can be established that Brithdir Mawr is a 66.77-hectare farm in the open countryside in Newport, Pembrokeshire. It was formed as an intentional community rooted in values of community living and permaculture. As part of this, additional residential buildings were constructed, notably Wrench's roundhouse, built without planning permission after 1997, and subsequently spotted by the Local Authority's routine aerial reconnaissance. This led to a protracted dispute, including a planning refusal, failed appeal, and a public inquiry in November 2000.<sup>205</sup>

Only Scott's article concentrates directly on Brithdir Mawr, focussing on the contested notions of sustainability in dispute over Tony and Faith's roundhouse and the planning policy in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. It is argued that the planning system has been reluctant to accept alternative lifestyles, and forms of sustainability than those sanctioned by policy.<sup>206</sup> Scott further develops that though the general ethos of the planning system of protecting the countryside is sound, that the existing agricultural exceptions are unnecessarily restrictive and biased, to the detriment of those seeking to live a low impact life.<sup>207</sup> In particular, and in the context of his 'impression' of the appeal documentation of the Brithdir Mawr case, he identifies that LID, based on permaculture, was viewed "essentially a

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<sup>203</sup> For examples of these, see Michael Hannis, "Land-use Planning, Permaculture and the Transitivity of 'development'" *International Journal of Green Economics* 5, no. 3 (2010), 269-284.; *Low Impact Development: The Future in our Hands* (Leeds: Creative Commons Attribution, 2009).; Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey, "Geographies of Sustainability: Low Impact Developments and Radical Spaces of Innovation" *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009), 1515-1539.

<sup>204</sup> Tony Wrench, *Building a Low Impact Roundhouse*, Repr. ed. (Hampshire: Permanent Publications, 2001).

<sup>205</sup> Alister Scott, "Contesting Sustainable Development: Low-Impact Development in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 3, no. 4 (2001), p. 276.

<sup>206</sup> Alister Scott, "Contesting Sustainable Development: Low-Impact Development in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 3, no. 4 (2001), 273-287.

<sup>207</sup> Alister Scott, "Contesting Sustainable Development: Low-Impact Development in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 3, no. 4 (2001), p. 283.

lifestyle choice of the applicant and therefore not a valid land-use planning issue".<sup>208</sup> It is evident in this context that LID has been associated with alternative lifestyles, ones that were not deemed to correlate with state-sanctioned visions of sustainability. Indeed, in the final analysis, Scott comes to the conclusion that local authorities have come to regard those pursuing LID not as sustainability advocates, but as "potential law breakers".<sup>209</sup>

While the strategy of those at Brithdir Mawr mirrored that of the aforementioned LID projects in England, it led, as Spero identifies, to the commissioning of consultation studies that sought to consider the policy implications of facilitating LID in Wales.<sup>210</sup> The subsequent publication of the *The Land Use Consultants* (2002) and *Baker Associates* (2004) reports marked a significant juncture with both studies commissioned, in part, by the Welsh Government to examine the possibilities of providing a policy pathway for LID in Wales.<sup>211</sup> While *The Land Use Consultant's* report recognised the incompatibility between the existing planning system and LID and advocated for a 'criteria-based' policy at local or national level, the *Baker Report* identified the practical application of LID in Wales, including the ways in which prospective LIDs would have to show their impacts and contributions to environmental, social, and economic factors.<sup>212</sup> These reports, in turn, can be seen to have led to LID policies in Wales, beginning with Pembrokeshire's Policy 52.

As with the scholarship on Brithdir Mawr, there is little analysis offered on Pembrokeshire's Policy 52. The small literature that is available on this this topic largely concentrates on

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<sup>208</sup> Alister Scott, "Contesting Sustainable Development: Low-Impact Development in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 3, no. 4 (2001), p. 284.

<sup>209</sup> Alister Scott, "Contesting Sustainable Development: Low-Impact Development in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 3, no. 4 (2001), p. 285.

<sup>210</sup> David Spero, *Settlements* (Dorchester: David Spero, 2017), p. 9.

<sup>211</sup> University of West England and Land Use Consultants, *Low Impact Development - Planning Policy and Practice Final Report* (Bristol: University of West England and Land Use Consultants, 2002).; Baker Associates, *Low Impact Development: Further Research* (Bristol: Baker Associates, 2004).

<sup>212</sup> Baker Associates, *Low Impact Development: Further Research* (Bristol: Baker Associates, 2004), p. 29-36.; University of West England and Land Use Consultants, *Low Impact Development - Planning Policy and Practice Final Report* (Bristol: University of West England and Land Use Consultants, 2002), p. vii-viii.

documenting the nature of this policy.<sup>213</sup> It is evident that Pembrokeshire (both Pembrokeshire County Council and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority) introduced Policy 52 in its Joint Unitary Plan. It was a specific policy for LID and therefore opened up a legal space for those seeking to establish new residential smallholdings in the open countryside. Stringent standards needed to be met to gain planning permission under Policy 52, most notably: sustainable buildings with a low visual impact, and a requirement to derive 75 per cent of basic household needs from their local environment.<sup>214</sup> Pickerill noted that residents would have to be “innovative and take risks in order to achieve all these conditions on a limited budget.”<sup>215</sup> As will be seen in Chapter Three, these basic features would later become pillars in the Welsh Government’s national LID policy, One Planet Development (OPD), in 2010. Pembrokeshire’s Policy 52 should therefore be understood as a precursor to the national LID policy, the subject of this study.

In addition to its core features, there is some coverage in the literature pertaining to the implementation of Pembrokeshire’s Policy 52. Writing in the republication of *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, in 2009, Fairlie pays some attention to the policy, stating that the positive aspects of the policy were that it was premised on sustainability and that its supplementary planning guidance provided clear guidance for applicants to meet in order to satisfy the planning officers.<sup>216</sup> He remained cautious, however, about the ease at which applications could be refused by planning officials sceptical of LID.<sup>217</sup> In fact, Fairlie highlights that the first three applications were refused.<sup>218</sup> Following a similar analysis, Maxey, in a brief reference to the policy, asserted that “It is clear, however, that the current wording and application of Policy 52 is too restrictive and there

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<sup>213</sup> For examples, see, Jenny Pickerill, *Eco-Homes* (London: Zed Books, 2016).; Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009).; Larch Maxey, “Low Impact Development in Context,” in *Low Impact Development: The Future in our Hands*, eds. Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey (Leeds: Creative Commons Attribution, 2009), 8-23.

<sup>214</sup> Jenny Pickerill, *Eco-Homes* (London: Zed Books, 2016), p. 234.

<sup>215</sup> Jenny Pickerill, *Eco-Homes* (London: Zed Books, 2016), p. 234-5.

<sup>216</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 156.

<sup>217</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 155.

<sup>218</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 156.

remains a need for more forward thinking, appropriate LID policy”, concluding that the best chances of success still trying to get approval retrospectively.<sup>219</sup> Though limited in volume, the existing literature shows that despite the arrival of Pembrokeshire’s local policy, that it was not particularly successful in advancing LID given its restrictive modelling and the limited success rate of its implementation.

There is marginally larger literature that relates to the Lammas Ecovillage in Pembrokeshire, a 30.76-hectare site divided in to nine plots of 999-year leases on south-facing former grazing land. Most studies addressing Low Impact Development in Britain refer to Lammas, if only in passing, as this project was the first LID to gain planning permission prospectively in the United Kingdom, enabled by Pembrokeshire’s Policy 52. The vast majority of the substantive literature on Lammas focusses on its successful navigation of the planning system and, therefore, reversing the direct-action approach needed to establish LID identified above.<sup>220</sup> In view of this, Pickerill has stated that is considered to be at the “cutting edge of eco-communities”.<sup>221</sup> Despite this, the scholarship on Lammas is limited, though there have been references to it in work pertaining to community-led sustainability projects, including co-housing, planning struggles, and personal accounts.<sup>222</sup> For example, Nelson places Lammas’ experience within the discourse on co-housing, noting, from her perspective, that it is demonstrative of how community-led projects can collaborate to produce sustainable livelihoods that also improve environmental quality.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. 69.

<sup>220</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 27.; Jenny Pickerill, *Eco-Homes* (London: Zed Books, 2016), p. 127-8.; Mark Waghorn, "One Planet Development: Opportunities and Barriers" *Archidoc* 3, no. 2 (2016), p. 20-23.; Keith Halfacree, "Back-to-the-Land in the Twenty-First Century? Making Connections with Rurality" *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 98, no. 1 (2007), p. 3-8.; Larch Maxey, "Low Impact Development in Context," in *Low Impact Development: The Future in our Hands*, eds. Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey (Leeds: Creative Commons Attribution, 2009), p. 21.

<sup>221</sup> Jenny Pickerill, *Eco-Homes* (London: Zed Books, 2016), p. 234.

<sup>222</sup> Jenny Pickerill, *Eco-Homes* (London: Zed Books, 2016).; Paul Wimbush, *The Birth of an Ecovillage: Adventures in an Alternative World* (Wales: FeedARead Publishing, 2012).; Tao Paul Wimbush, *The Lammas Ecovillage: Deep Roots and Stormy Skies* (Wales: FeedARead Publishing, 2021).; Anitra Nelson, *Small is Necessary: Shared Living on a Shared Planet* (London: Pluto Press, 2018).; Simon Dale and Jasmine Dale, *The Compatibility of Building Regulations with Projects Under New Low Impact Development and One Planet Development Planning Policies: Critical and Urgent Problems and the Need for a Workable Solution* (Wales: Simon and Jasmine Dale, 2011).

<sup>223</sup> Anitra Nelson, *Small is Necessary: Shared Living on a Shared Planet* (London: Pluto Press, 2018), p. 134-138.

There does exist a peripheral literature on Lammas, in the form of MA and PhD theses that have looked at the project from the perspective of group dynamics and a land-rights, for example.<sup>224</sup> In addition, there are brief mentions in a report on affordable housing in Wales which noted the community tensions that have affected the social cohesion of the Lammas residents.<sup>225</sup> However, there is very little research that systematically examines how the Lammas experience, as the first LID project in Britain to have successfully navigated the planning system, can inform the potential for planning policies to more successfully deliver LID.

*The Welsh Government's national LID policy, One Planet Development (2010)*

Whereas Policy 52 applied only to Pembrokeshire, its principles were applied nationally, in 2010, with the introduction of the Welsh Government's One Planet Development (OPD). As with Pembrokeshire's Policy 52, however, OPD has not significantly attracted the attention of scholars, with only a handful of studies specifically about OPD, in addition to passing references in academic texts on co-housing and eco-communities, and personal accounts.<sup>226</sup> Indeed, since the policy was made available in 2010, there has only been one peer reviewed academic article, published by Harris, in 2019, which is rooted in planning policy scholarship.<sup>227</sup> Moreover, Forde engages the policy as part of a wider academic analysis of

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<sup>224</sup>For example, see Manon Bertrand, "Conflict and Group Development in a Young Alternative Community: Ethnographic Research in a Welsh Ecovillage" Lammas Research (Lammas, Pembrokeshire, 2016). <https://lammas.org.uk/en/research/>; Samson Hart, "Forward-to-the-Land: Land Rights and Reform for a New Rural Economy" Lammas Research (Lammas, Pembrokeshire, 2017). <https://lammas.org.uk/en/research/>

For more information on these, see the Lammas Ecovillage 'Research' page, <https://lammas.org.uk/en/research/>

<sup>225</sup>Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 92.

<sup>226</sup>Anitra Nelson, *Small is Necessary: Shared Living on a Shared Planet* (London: Pluto Press, 2018).; Tao Paul Wimbush, *The Lammas Ecovillage: Deep Roots and Stormy Skies* (Wales: FeedARead Publishing, 2021).; Tess Delaney, *NOPD: How to Fail Epically at One Planet Development* (UK: Blue Mountain Press, 2020).

<sup>227</sup>Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), 11-36.

'living off grid' in Wales.<sup>228</sup> It is clear, then, that there has been a relative lack of independent analyses of the policy.

In fact, two of the other main publications by Thorpe and Waghorn (assessed below) are produced by advocates for OPD and active participants in the One Planet Council, the grassroots advocacy group for OPD addressed in Chapter Four. As a result, the perspectives within the existing literature (and this chapter) lean towards those produced by practitioners and supporters for OPD. This is, however, not an editorial choice but, rather, the reality of the lack of scholarship pertaining the Welsh Government's OPD policy. There have been no studies from those who may be more critical of OPD. This does not diminish the value of this body of writing, but, rather, it is essential to identify the positionality of the authors in the existing writing on OPD which is heavily weighted towards those in favour of facilitating LID in Wales. That said, it should be pointed out that the absence of these critical voices is addressed in the Methodology Chapter which identifies how more critical voices were found. It also elaborates on the research methods employed to ensure that these alternative perspectives were treated equally to those of the policy's backers in the data analysis.

There are only three studies which focus entirely on OPD. As identified above, Thorpe, founder and director of the One Planet Centre in Wales has published widely on 'one planet' governance and development, including in rural and urban spaces.<sup>229</sup> Specifically related to this study, in 2015, he published *One Planet Life*, a field guide to those seeking to pursue OPD, focussing on the pragmatic aspects of developing an OPD smallholding, including finding appropriate land and the writing of the policy's management plan (assessed in Chapters Three and Four). It also provides a number of 'exemplary examples' of existing low impact projects in England and Wales, both in terms of different land-based enterprises and dwelling designs.<sup>230</sup> Writing a year later, Waghorn, and as a fellow advocate for OPD, discussed OPD's opportunities and barriers. He concluded that whilst OPD provides a unique opportunity for

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<sup>228</sup> Elaine Forde, *Living Off-Grid in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020).

<sup>229</sup> For example, see David Thorpe, *'One Planet' Cities: Sustaining Humanity within Planetary Limits* (London: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>230</sup> David Thorpe, *The 'One Planet' Life: A Blueprint for Low Impact Development* (London: Routledge, 2015).

LID in Wales, that the cultural differences between planners and LID, as well as tensions between LID's emphasis on ad-hoc self-build methods and regulatory frameworks would hinder the successful application of the policy.<sup>231</sup>

The third academic work dedicated to the study of OPD is an article written by Harris. Harris' work represents the most comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of OPD available in the literature. This article examines the policy from a planning perspective and applies Foucault's concept of 'governability' to assess "how the planning system promotes and regulates new and novel forms of sustainable development".<sup>232</sup> In particular, Harris focusses on what he terms the 'regime of practices' which regulate OPDs as an exception to normal planning rules, such as the use of ecological footprinting and the continued monitoring.<sup>233</sup> It is concluded that there are "tensions between enabling One Planet Development and the governance of individuals' lives and behaviours".<sup>234</sup> Specifically, it is identified that there are 'stark' controls on those are seeking to live sustainably, and the 'freedoms' of those continuing unsustainable lifestyles.<sup>235</sup> Similarly, Forde designates a chapter of *Living Off-Grid in Wales* to OPD. Like Harris, she applies a theoretical lens to examine OPD, in this case a 'cultural policy analysis' and draws attention to the challenges of reconciling administrative processes with the needs of LID.<sup>236</sup>

In addition to these academic works on OPD, the available literature on this topic also includes accounts of the lived experience of LID practitioners. It is striking how these personal accounts develop the same themes as the academic scholarship. They draw attention to the challenges of navigating the process established by the Welsh Government to facilitate LID, with Tess Delaney writing having 'epically failed' at OPD, that "OPD is, in its current form, an absolute

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<sup>231</sup> Mark Waghorn, "One Planet Development: Opportunities and Barriers" *Archidoc* 3, no. 2 (2016), 20-33.

<sup>232</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 12.

<sup>233</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 27.

<sup>234</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 11.

<sup>235</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 32.

<sup>236</sup> Elaine Forde, *Living Off-Grid in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020), p. 160.

nightmare”.<sup>237</sup> This is attributed to the strictness of the current policy design, including the amount of paperwork required. In addition to Delaney’s rather negative account of her OPD experience, Tao Wimbush has published two personal accounts of his experiences of LID in Wales, focussing on the establishment of the Lammas Ecovillage, which he co-founded, in addition to the evolution of OPD in Wales.<sup>238</sup> Though more positive than Delaney in his assessment of OPD, he has nonetheless concluded that “it is clear to most people on the ground that the OPD policy is too rigorous in its current form. Five years is not long enough to build small holding and establish a land-based livelihood from scratch. The requirement to produce annual monitoring reports forever is simply too onerous”.<sup>239</sup>

With these works it is evident that there is the start of scholarship evaluating OPD, though the bias is evidently skewed in favour of those in support of the policy. Academics have focussed on the planning mechanisms and noted a perceived tension between these mechanisms and the spirit of those seeking to live in off-grid spaces, regardless of their positionality. This analysis is backed up by literature written by OPD practitioners recounting their lived experience. What is absent from this literature, however, is any systematic assessment of OPD as a policy. Most notably, there has been no systematic appraisal of the policy framework, element by element, identifying flaws (and opportunities for improvement). Likewise, there has been no systematic evaluation of the implementation of this policy, assessing whether this planning policy is fit for purpose.

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<sup>237</sup> Tess Delaney, *NOPD: How to Fail Epicly at One Planet Development* (UK: Blue Mountain Press, 2020), p. 55.

<sup>238</sup> Paul Wimbush, *The Birth of an Ecovillage: Adventures in an Alternative World* (Wales: FeedARead Publishing, 2012).; Tao Paul Wimbush, *The Lammas Ecovillage: Deep Roots and Stormy Skies* (Wales: FeedARead Publishing, 2021).

<sup>239</sup> Tao Paul Wimbush, *The Lammas Ecovillage: Deep Roots and Stormy Skies* (Wales: FeedARead Publishing, 2021), p. 272.



## Original contribution

This chapter has explored the literature on sustainability and showed that there is a limited body of research regarding rural grassroots responses to climate change, particularly in spaces not usually considered for development. It has also identified the literature on LID, appraising its manner of seeking to facilitate low carbon lives in rural spaces and its relationship with previous waves of rural migration. The key issue identified, however, was the scholarship's coalescence around the key obstacle to LID in the British land use system, namely a policy gap that obstructs access to more affordable land. This has largely limited the opportunities of developing low impact lives to those willing to take the 'direct-action' approach.

In the final section of this literature review, the potential progress for LID in Wales was examined, showing that, with Policy 52 in Pembrokeshire from 2006, and especially after 2010 with the emergence of OPD, that LID has been more successfully applied in a policy context. However, having outlined the research on OPD to date, it is evident that much of the discussion has been rooted in technical, planning based terms. While Harris does allocate some of his article to the lived experience of OPD, there is an evident gap in the literature with regard to OPD's implementation. There is, in fact, no current understanding of the policy's reception in Local Authorities or in local communities. In sum, the OPD policy has existed in Wales for over a decade, yet there is little research which assess its real-world application to understand its capacity to meaningfully deliver LID in Wales.

This study, based on the collation of a unique data set, will add to the nascent discourse on OPD by evaluating whether the policy has, indeed, facilitated LID in Wales. This is based on a systematic examination of the Welsh Government's policy documentation, as well as the implementation of the policy. This research represents, then, the first major review of the policy. No previous work has dissected OPD element by element, assessing whether each of these elements is fit for purpose. Similarly, no previous scholarship has holistically evaluated the implementation of OPD amongst its stakeholder groups. This systematic investigation of OPD is important as it has the capacity to influence the broader discourse on the potential of

specific LID policies to facilitate low carbon lives in rural spaces and, in particular, the potential for small acreage low impact smallholdings in the open countryside to contribute to sustainability agendas. Moreover, in the context of rising global carbon emissions and increasing alarm over the impacts of globalised industrialised agricultural systems, this study contributes to the broader debates about the future of farming and the potential to develop more resilient local food systems in Britain, partially catered for by a repopulated countryside of sustainable low-acreage smallholdings.

## Chapter Two

### Methodology

In order to assess the capacity of Wales's One Planet Development (OPD) policy to facilitate LID in Wales, a rigorous methodology was developed to ensure that this study's conclusions would rest on reliable and valid results. The following chapter will overview the methodological approach taken. It is split into four parts. The first short section will outline the positionality of the author as well as the pragmatic worldview adopted in this study, in addition to detailing the mixed method approach used. The second section will develop the two key data collection methods used in this study, interviews and archival research. It will also quantify the research undertaken, breaking down the interview respondents into categories, while also explaining the depth and scope of the archival research. The third section will establish the data analysis methods employed, notably the use of a manifest content analysis to assess the third-party representations submitted to Local Authorities during the consultation process of the OPD applications considered in this study. The final section will identify the ways in which this study satisfied the Coventry University ethics protocols, including the use of research participants' personal information.

#### Positionality

Before the methodology of this study is developed, it is helpful to understand the positionality of the researcher. The term 'positionality' is described by Andrew Gary and Darwin Holmes as "an individual's world view and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context".<sup>240</sup> These are informed by the individual researcher's broader values and beliefs, which are, in turn, informed by, for example, their social class, gender, race, faith,

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<sup>240</sup> Andrew Gary and Darwin Holmes, "Researcher Positionality - Consideration of its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide" *Shanlax International Journal of Education* 8, no. 4 (2020), p. 1.

political views, and geographical location.<sup>241</sup> In view of this, scholars should analyse the extent to which their own experiences have affected their approach to social research, notably their interpretations of other people's lived realities.<sup>242</sup> In order to assess this, Gary and Holmes have noted that the researcher must be located in three key areas of the research, the choice of the research subject; the research participants; and the research process undertaken.<sup>243</sup> In other words, the entire construction of the research may be affected by the subjectivities of the researcher, conditioned by their own lived reality.

In order to disentangle these influences on a study, a process of reflexivity is required which represents a process of self-assessment to examine the ways in which the researcher's views may have affected the research design, data collection and analysis, and, ultimately, the findings of the project.<sup>244</sup> One way in which this process of reflexivity may be considered is via Robert Merton's notion of insiders and outsiders, in which "Insiders are the members of specified groups and collectives or occupants of specified social statuses: Outsiders are non-members".<sup>245</sup> Using this basic premise, it is worth highlighting here that the author of this research is a white, male, university academic member of staff with an interest in environmental politics and activism. In addition, the researcher has a personal interest in allotment growing and smallholding. As a result, and as will become clear over the course of this study, the researcher shares a similar personal profile with those pursuing OPD in Wales, notably as a white, English, university educated and middle-class member of society.

However, it is worth pointing out that, despite a similar personal profile, the researcher had no previous contact with the individual research participants or the broader 'movement', campaigns, or political actors who have sought to advocate for an expansion of land-based

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<sup>241</sup> (Andrew Gary and Darwin Holmes 2020, p. 1-2)

<sup>242</sup> Kristina M. Scharp et al., "Making Meaning of Parenting from the Perspective of Alienated Parents" *Personal Relationships* 28, no. 1 (2020), p. 173.

<sup>243</sup> Andrew Gary and Darwin Holmes, "Researcher Positionality - Consideration of its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide" *Shanlax International Journal of Education* 8, no. 4 (2020), p. 2.

<sup>244</sup> Andrew Gary and Darwin Holmes, "Researcher Positionality - Consideration of its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide" *Shanlax International Journal of Education* 8, no. 4 (2020), p. 2.

<sup>245</sup> Robert K. Merton, "Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge" *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 1 (1972), p. 21.

sustainability initiatives, particularly those that are based on reforms to the land use system in Wales (or elsewhere in the UK). As a result, while there are some base line demographic similarities, the researcher of this study is closer to being what Merton described as an 'outsider', though with a personal interest in the activities pursued by many of the research participants. Therefore, while not professionally connected to the research subject chosen, the concentration on LID and the potential of small-scale land-based projects to contribute towards wider sustainability targets is rooted in a personal interest in the subject matter. The researcher of this study therefore approached this work from a position of curiosity as to whether LID, in the form of OPD in Wales, would be able to facilitate subsistence livelihoods in spaces usually precluded from development and as a grassroots form of sustainability.

In terms of the impact of this on the three aspects identified by Gary and Holmes, the researcher's positionality clearly influenced the choice of research subject. However, it did not influence the choice of research design which, as later sections of this chapter will identify, was based on an analysis of a new policy framework in Wales. Moreover, nor did the researcher's positionality influence the selection of research participants as the approach undertaken was to capture the views and experiences of each of the stakeholder groups identified; OPD applicants, decision makers (planners and elected councillors), and local communities. While the representation of each stakeholder group is not equally weighted in the interview data, for example, this was not based on a particular research design but, rather, the reality of the responses to requests sent as discussed later in this chapter. In the final category, the data analysis and findings were presented based on a rigorous methodology which employed multiple research methods to ensure valid results. Thus, the findings of this research are presented having declared the researcher's influences and the results are one interpretation of the facilitation of LID by the Welsh Government, based on the researcher's standpoint as a white, middle-class male, and as an advocate for land-based sustainability initiatives.

## Conceptual approach

The nascent existing research on OPD has explored the policy from a narrow range of approaches. As was identified in the previous chapter, Neil Harris has assessed OPD's regulatory and enforcement regimes using Foucault's concept of 'governability'.<sup>246</sup> By contrast, Elaine Forde has applied a 'cultural policy analysis' to OPD based on ethnographic research.<sup>247</sup> However, no research has yet examined OPD's implementation systematically across the identified stakeholder groups. In order to achieve this, this study is rooted in a pragmatic worldview, which John Creswell and Vicki Clark state is focussed "on the consequences of the research, on the primary importance of the question asked rather than the methods, and on the use of multiple methods of data collection to inform the problem under study. Thus, it is pluralistic and orientated towards "what works" and real world practice".<sup>248</sup> In applying this worldview, this study is interested in the relative success of the Welsh Government of facilitating open countryside LIDs in the context of sustainability and, therefore, as a real world response to the increasing concern over the potential impacts of climate change.

To fulfil this pragmatic worldview approach, this study generated both qualitative and quantitative data derived from interviews, personal correspondence, and archival research. In view of this, the research was based on a mixed method approach, defined as an "approach to research in the social, behavioural, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (close-ended) and qualitative (open ended) data, integrates the two, and then draws interpretations based on combined strengths of both sets of data to understand the research problems".<sup>249</sup> The benefit of this methodological choice is that it provides

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<sup>246</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), 11-36.

<sup>247</sup> Elaine Forde, *Living Off-Grid in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020).

<sup>248</sup> John Creswell and Vicki Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (London: Sage, 2018), p. 37.

<sup>249</sup> John W. Creswell, *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research* (London: Sage, 2015), p. 2.; Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie, *Mixed Methodology: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (London: Sage, 1998), p. ix.; Jennifer C. Greene, Valerie J. Caracelli and Wendy F. Graham, "Toward a Conceptual Framework for Mixed-Method Evaluation Designs" *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 11, no. 3 (1989), p. 253.

several types of data that can be analysed using with different techniques, whilst the results can be interpreted from different positions.<sup>250</sup> In fact, Norman Denzin uses the analogy of the kaleidoscope to represent this pluralism as different methods and perspectives reveal the research subject in numerous ways.<sup>251</sup>

Moreover, Creswell and Clark have written how the mixed method approach provides ‘sound frameworks’ for collecting, analysing, and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data to address specific research purposes.<sup>252</sup> Given that this study assesses the facilitation of LID in rural spaces, in the context of a devolved Wales, and its implementation across three different stakeholder groups, a mixed method approach allowed for the collation of data from archival research, interviews, and personal written communications. This fostered the capacity to provide a range and depth of data, as well as allowing for various data streams to corroborate findings via process of triangulation. This has, in fact, been developed by Steve Chapman and Patrick McNeill who point out that “it is helpful to think of social research in terms of a qualitative/qualitative divide, but the reality is a propensity to use a mixture as part of a triangulation or methodological pluralism”.<sup>253</sup>

In terms of a practical example of this in this study, in Beeview Farm’s OPD application in Pembrokeshire, the tensions relating to the project’s community acceptance were raised by both the applicant and a local councillor in interviews. This was corroborated by an analysis of the third-party representations submitted to Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority during the application’s consultation process (examined as part of this study’s archival research), which demonstrated a significant number (29) of local objections, in addition to a 151-signature petition against the OPD proposal. Furthermore, these representations were subjected to an additional research tool, a quantitative content analysis, which was used to

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<sup>250</sup> Matt Henn, Mark Weinstein and Nick Foard, *A Critical Introduction to Social Research*, Second Edition ed. (London: Sage, 2009), p. 22.

<sup>251</sup> Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 298.

<sup>252</sup> John Creswell and Vicki Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (London: Sage, 2018), p. 105.

<sup>253</sup> Steve Chapman and Patrick McNeill, *Research Methods* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 66.

uncover the key reasons for these social tensions and to attain validity in the research findings.<sup>254</sup>

In addition, quantitative data, such as the determination periods of OPD applications, the balance of the means by which OPD applications were decided, and the proportion of OPD applicants identifying as being Welsh or Welsh speakers was developed from the qualitative material obtained in the archival research. This was subsequently compared to the assertions made about the implementation of OPD in the interviews with the policy's stakeholders and the narratives developed in the newspaper stories collated for this study.

### **Data collection**

This section will identify the data collection methods employed. This study is based on two main data collection methods, interviews and archival research. The following section will provide a theoretical discussion about the use of interviews in social research, drawing attention to its capacity to establish the views of those that are not represented in the documentary record. It will also describe the interview sample of this study, including the number and type of interviews conducted. It will also highlight the limitations of the sample and show how these limitations have been mitigated by the use of alternative research methods. The final part of this section will develop the archival research conducted, including the trawling of Welsh Local Authority's planning portals and newspaper research.

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<sup>254</sup> John D. Brewer and Albert D. Hunter, *Multimethod Research: A Synthesis of Styles* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 17.



## Interviews

Interviews represented an essential component of this research and are a qualitative research method. They are useful, as James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium point out, “to incite the production of meanings that address issues relating to particular research concerns”.<sup>255</sup> Interviews were chosen as they are able to provide data that is not available in other forms.<sup>256</sup> Given that this study is rooted in the experiences of OPD across stakeholder groups, interviews were the best possible means to generate this data. This study therefore borrowed from the methods of the oral historian, seeking to reveal the experiences of those often excluded from the record. It is noteworthy that one of the earliest recognised works of oral history focussed on a similar demographic. In fact, George Ewart Evans, in the early 1950s, recorded interviews with his neighbours in a Suffolk village and “captured agricultural and community traditions that had lasted thousands of years but would disappear very soon as mechanisation transformed agriculture. This led to the seminal book *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay* (1956)”.<sup>257</sup> In one sense, this study aimed to fulfil a similar role, to document and explore the personal experiences of those developing new ways of living, using Wales’s unique OPD policy, but who gain scant attention in the wider discourse on sustainability.

In addition, conducting interviews rather than relying on archival records alone allowed for a greater breadth of understanding and discussion. Keith Punch has developed this idea, stating that interviews represent “a very good way of accessing people’s perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality. It is also one of the most powerful ways we have of understanding others”.<sup>258</sup> In developing the approach to interviewing, key types of interviews were considered: structured, semi-structured, unstructured, focus group interviews, and telephone/online interviews.<sup>259</sup> Amir Marvasti has likened a structured

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<sup>255</sup> James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, *The Active Interview* (London: Sage, 1995), p. 17.

<sup>256</sup> Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching* (London: Sage, 2017), p. 115.

<sup>257</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 4.

<sup>258</sup> Keith F. Punch, *Introduction to Social Research Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* (London: Sage, 2014), p. 174-175.

<sup>259</sup> Darren R. Reid and Brett Sanders, *Documentary Making for Digital Humanists* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021), p. 130-132.; Steve Chapman and Patrick McNeill, *Research Methods* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 56.

interview to a mining operation, whereby gems of data are extracted from the research participant. The rigid structure of the interaction, for Marvasti, avoids an interaction with the 'mining' for data and, therefore, the shape of the data, or gem in this metaphor, is not shaped by the process of interviewing.<sup>260</sup> By contrast, Steinar Kvale, using the same metaphor as the miner, adds that of the 'traveller' to describe the role of the interviewer in an unstructured interview. For Kvale, this distinction is important because the 'traveller' interacts with the participant in a journey and therefore plays an active role in the creation of the research data.<sup>261</sup> In this view, the difference between structured and unstructured interviews is one of interaction with the interview subject, with an unstructured interview being conducted by a detached and neutral researcher, in contrast to one where the interviewer expresses their own thoughts and experiences about the research topic.<sup>262</sup>

For this study, semi-structured interviews were chosen, allowing the broad areas of the interview to be planned in advance, whilst allowing the interview participant to elaborate on their experiences. This can be likened to qualitative interviewing which "tends to be seen as involving the construction or reconstruction of knowledge more than the excavation of it".<sup>263</sup> This approach was chosen to ensure that each interview was based on the same core themes, but sufficient flexibility was allowed to expand on topics and to allow unexpected areas of conversation to breathe. Robert Burgess has referred to this approach as a 'conversation with purpose' given that the interaction is not based on a simple, and structured, question and answer format.<sup>264</sup> In other words, the conversations were shaped by the broad areas outlined by the researcher but filled in by the participant and determined by their personal experience. McNeil and Chapman argue that this type of interview allows for more in-depth information to be generated and that each interview can be of greater length.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Amir Marvasti, "Research Interviews: Measuring, Feeling, and Constructing Social Problems," in *Researching Social Problems*, eds. Amir Marvasti and A. Javier Treviño (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 49.

<sup>261</sup> Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (London: Sage, 1996), p. 110.

<sup>262</sup> Amir Marvasti, "Research Interviews: Measuring, Feeling, and Constructing Social Problems," in *Researching Social Problems*, eds. Amir Marvasti and A. Javier Treviño (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 49.

<sup>263</sup> Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching* (London: Sage, 2017), p. 110.

<sup>264</sup> Robert G. Burgess, *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 102.

<sup>265</sup> Steve Chapman and Patrick McNeill, *Research Methods* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 58.

This also allows for greater degrees of trust to be developed between the interviewer and the participant, and, as a result, facilitating more qualitative data about the subject's "beliefs, attitudes, and interpretations of the world or on the respondent's past".<sup>266</sup> This is achieved because the respondent is at liberty to speak about what they want, rather than what the interviewer may expect. It may also provide more revealing answers about the topic.<sup>267</sup> Therefore, the interview subject has a greater degree of freedom to discuss issues important to them, enabling an interview which builds rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. In fact, "A 'successful' interview – one that perhaps produces a nice coherent and fluent narrative containing a balance between information and reflection – is likely to be the product of shared values between the parties, a good rapport and the willingness of the interviewer to permit the respondent to shape the narrative, avoiding unnecessary interjections".<sup>268</sup> It is important, then, to consider the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.<sup>269</sup>

The interview process is, particularly in a semi-structured interview, an active one and is closer to a social encounter where both "parties to the interview are necessarily and unavoidably active".<sup>270</sup> The communication between the two actors must develop what Ronald Greele and Alistair Thomson have called a "conversational narrative: conversational because of the relationship of interviewer and interviewee, and narrative because of the form of exposition—the telling of a tale".<sup>271</sup> As a result, the role of the interviewer and the impact of their own subjectivities on the process must be considered. As McNeil and Chapman have noted, it is "important not to impose or influence the respondent's replies with the opinions of the interviewer", in particular as respondents often want "to agree, cooperate, and please

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<sup>266</sup> Steve Chapman and Patrick McNeill, *Research Methods* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 58.

<sup>267</sup> Steve Chapman and Patrick McNeill, *Research Methods* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 58.

<sup>268</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 10.

<sup>269</sup> The following two paragraphs are paraphrased from my own work, see Darren R. Reid and Brett Sanders, *Documentary Making for Digital Humanists* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021), p. 135.

<sup>270</sup> James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, *The Active Interview* (London: Sage, 1995), p. 49.

<sup>271</sup> Ronald J. Greele and Alistair Thomson, "Movement without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 44.

the interviewer so give the answers that they think the interviewer wants”, often referred to as ‘yea-saying’.<sup>272</sup>

The active participation of the interviewer in this ‘conversational narrative’ pushes aside the idea of neutrality as the interviewer helps to shape the story. In other words, and as Abrams has highlighted, the memories, experiences, and reflections elicited by the interview process are not an objective truth about the past. They are, instead, created narratives shaped in part by the personal relationship that facilitates the telling of the story.<sup>273</sup> This methodological conundrum has been referred to intersubjectivity which “describes the interaction – the collision, if you will – between the two subjectivities of interviewer and interviewee. More than that, it describes the way in which the subjectivity of each is shaped by the encounter with the other”.<sup>274</sup> The interviewer is therefore ‘active and reflexive’ in the process of generating data, rather than being a neutral data collector.<sup>275</sup> In view of this, the purpose of the interview is not for the search of fact, but the meaning, feeling, and experience of that fact.

Alongside the potential issues associated with intersubjectivity, attention has also been drawn to the potentially troublesome relationship between memory and truth. This idea is at the heart of A.J.P Taylor’s often used but uncited disapproval of oral history as ‘old men drooling about their youth’ – a scathing commentary on the ability of interviews to generate objective recollections of the past given the fallibility of human memory, and their propensity, unlike written documents, to change over time.<sup>276</sup> This does, however, ignore that written testimonies or minuted records are also based on the selection of information to be committed to paper, or the memories of those, for example, writing their memoirs. In addition, it is unlikely that the interviewer can subvert the record as “People remember what

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<sup>272</sup> Steve Chapman and Patrick McNeill, *Research Methods* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 62-63.

<sup>273</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 58.

<sup>274</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 58.

<sup>275</sup> Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching* (London: Sage, 2017), p. 115.

<sup>276</sup> Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 10.

they think is important, not necessarily what the interviewer thinks is most consequential".<sup>277</sup> So, whilst interviews deal with memory, they are a legitimate research method providing that the interview is considered and constructed in a way as to avoid leading the interviewee.<sup>278</sup>

In sum, interviews were an essential research method employed in this study. They allowed for the experiences and opinions of OPD to be captured, particularly from its applicants, which are not significantly represented in the archival material. The interviews conducted therefore helped to produce an original data set for this study. The interview sample will now be assessed.

### **Interviews: sample selection**

This study is based on interactions with 52 research participants, divided into personal interviews with 39 individuals, in addition to a further 13 exchanges via email correspondence (see Table 1.1 below).<sup>279</sup> Two of OPD's stakeholder groups assessed in this study were targeted for interviews, applicants and decision makers. In addition, and beyond these stakeholder groups, commentators on OPD, rural planning policies, and academic inputs were sought to add a deeper range of perspectives to this sample and the interview data.

In terms of the first stakeholder group, the 18 OPD residents spoken to represents a sample of approximately one third of the successful OPD applications in the period of this study, 2010-2021. This was supplemented with 12 further interviews or correspondence with prospective OPD applicants, those that have yet to make a formal application, as well with

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This quote first appeared in Brian Harrison's 'Oral history and recent political history', *Oral History* 1 (1972), 30–48, and is likely derived from personal correspondence rather than Taylor's published writings.

<sup>277</sup> Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 15.

<sup>278</sup> Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 15.

<sup>279</sup> Jane Davidson, the Welsh Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, 2007-2011, was interviewed twice which explains why there are 53 research interactions and only 52 research participants.

those living under other LID policy frameworks, in Wales and England. While there is a larger representation of this stakeholder group in the interview and personal communication data, this is explained by their increased willingness to take part in the research, rather than any design principle which sought to offer a greater voice to a particular stakeholder group.

Indeed, in seeking to organise interviews with this study's second stakeholder group, the decision makers, emails were sent to the planning departments of Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Carmarthenshire County Council, and Ceredigion County Council, and Powys County Council in addition to the members of their respective planning committees. None agreed to take part in the study via these approaches, though planners from Carmarthenshire County Council and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority were willing to offer details about the decision-making process, though wished to remain anonymous. Nevertheless, two planners in Wales, Caroline Bowen of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (contacted via LinkedIn) and Helen Lucocq of Brecon Beacons National Park Authority agreed to interviews independently having been contacted directly. Three further planners, based respectively in Milton Keynes Council, South Somerset District Council, and Dartmoor National Park Authority, those Local Authorities where LID policies have existed in England, agreed to speak about LID and offer their opinions on Wales's OPD policy. Finally, a group of local community councillors in Pembrokeshire, from Newport Town and Nevern Community Council agreed to interviews.

In terms of the wider sample, Jane Davidson, the Welsh Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, 2007–2011, and the political driving force of for OPD in Wales, was interviewed twice providing an insight to the ways in which the policy emerged and her reflections on its implementation. The policy's implementation was indeed discussed in a further six discussions with those with specific planning policy expertise, low impact architects, and a vocal online critic of OPD. In sum, then, the interview sample covers a good proportion of OPD applicants but is less extensive in terms of this study's two other stakeholder groups. Where the voices of, for example, councillors and particularly the local community is less evident in the interview data, they are represented in the archival data, in

the transcribed video recordings and printed minutes of planning committee meetings, as well as the third-party representations submitted to planning departments during the public consultations of OPD applications. These will be addressed in a later section.

There is, then, some similarity in terms of the perspectives captured in the interview data and those covered in the Literature Review. As was identified in the previous chapter, there is a limited scholarship on OPD, particularly from those without a direct connection to the policy. Indeed, only Harris' article and a chapter in Forde's *Living Off Grid in Wales* (2021) may be considered as independent voices in the study of the policy. Beyond these, the remaining literature on OPD has been produced by either supporters of the policy, as members of the One Planet Council, or existing LID practitioners in Wales reflecting on their own experiences. The positionality of those who have written about OPD is therefore largely from a position of advocacy, as well as from a narrow demographic, one that matches the sample of the interview data.

It is, in fact, evident that the interview sample is limited in the same way. There is an obvious bias in favour of advocates for OPD, as LID practitioners, OPD applicants, or those involved in the One Planet Council. More critical voices towards the OPD policy are less represented in the interview sample, though this is, as in the Literature Review, not an editorial choice, but, rather, the outcome of the response rate to the invitations sent. That said, and as a later section of this chapter will show, this study did incorporate methodological checks to make sure that the positive and critical voices were treated equally in the data analysis by, for example, subjecting the responses (both positive and negative) to OPD applications' public consultation to a quantitative content analysis. Thus, though there is a numerical weighting in favour of OPD policy advocates in the literature reviewed and interview sample, this has been mitigated by applying multiple research methods to ensure a balanced perspective in this thesis' analysis has been presented.

**Table 1.1 Number of research participants (by category)**

| <b>Participant Type</b>             | <b>Number of Participants</b> | <b>Category</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Welsh Assembly Member               | 1                             | Decision maker  |
| Planning and OPD policy experts     | 3                             | Commentator     |
| Planning Officers                   | 7                             | Decision maker  |
| Councillors                         | 5                             | Decision maker  |
| LID practitioners - England         | 5                             | Applicants      |
| OPD – applicants                    | 18                            | Applicants      |
| OPD – prospective applicants        | 3                             | Applicants      |
| Pembrokeshire Policy 52 – residents | 4                             | Applicants      |
| Online critic of OPD                | 1                             | Commentator     |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>52</b>                     |                 |

### **Approach to Interviewing**

The personal interviews were conducted in a mixture of face-to-face settings and, especially after the arrival of Covid-19, via Zoom, Skype, and telephone. In one regard, though the ongoing pandemic made access to archives challenging, it has normalised online interactions which made interviews more accessible. In the pre-Covid part of this study, this research included four field trips to Wales. The first visit, in July 2017, involved a public tour of the Lammas Ecovillage, in Pembrokeshire, led by residents Tao Wimbush and Cassandra Lishman. In August 2018 face to face interviews were conducted with Tao Wimbush at Lammas and with Faith Wrench at her and Tony’s roundhouse in Pembrokeshire. In the following month, in September 2018, a further field trip to Cardigan provided an interview with Stefan Cartwright who had recently been granted planning permission for OPD. The final visit to Wales, in September 2019, included visits to six successful OPD applicant sites in



Pembrokeshire as part of the One Planet Council's (OPC) Open Week, Hafan Y Coed, Pencedni, Bryn Y Blodau, Beeview Farm, Parc Y Dderwen, and Willow Farm, in addition to Green Apple, which was granted planning permission under Pembrokeshire's Policy 52, the precursor to OPD. Further face to face interviews were conducted at Clive Wychwood's OPD in Cardigan during the same week as the OPC Open Week, though this plot was not part of the OPC's programme, in addition to the interviews with Caroline Bowen, Senior Planner at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, and the community councillors.

These visits led to many of the subsequent interviews conducted with successful and prospective OPD applicants. As part of the earlier, pre-Covid research trips to Wales, additional contacts were established by asking these initial research participants for recommendations of other potential individuals to speak with. This provided a number of additional interviews. For example, when visiting Parc Y Dderwen as part of the OPC's Open Week, the applicants suggested speaking to Rebecca Laughton, writer and market gardener, and, having gained her permission to do so, provided her contact details. This networking therefore added to the texture of the interview sample and the plurality of voices in the study of OPD.

Other than those research participants that were engaged as part of the research trips to Wales, potential interviewees were approached online via Facebook, Twitter, and emails – the details of which were all available in the public domain. Potential participants were chosen by their involvement in LID, in Wales and beyond. In the first instance, requests for interviews were made. Where personal interviews were unavailable, questions were sent via email and answered by respondents in writing. In all, interviews were conducted over a period of three years, from the first interview with Tao Wimbush in August 2018 to the follow up interview with Jane Davidson, the former Minister who introduced OPD, in July 2021, which was the last interview conducted.

In preparation of the interviews, a list of twenty-five basic questions were developed. This number was identified by Paul Thompson in *The Voice of the Past* who, when reflecting on his own work, noted that “a list of twenty-five questions were prepared in advance on a variety of topics related to this project, primarily for my benefit as an interview agenda. However, the intention was not to produce highly structured interviews with responses similar to those of a questionnaire; rather they were designed to be semi-structured, patterned dialogue”.<sup>280</sup> This approach was mirrored in the sense that twenty-five broad questions were prepared, split into five sections which explored the interviewees’ personal relationship to LID, the OPD policy in Wales, and its implementation across the three identified stakeholder groups for this study – applicants, decision makers, and local communities. For example, in interviews with OPD applicants, the five key areas discussed were their own motivations for pursuing LID, the significance of the OPD policy for their decision to pursue LID in Wales, OPD’s lived experience, including the application process and day to day praxis, their experience of the decision-making apparatus and planning system, and their relationship to their local community.

In terms of the questions asked, there are two main forms of questions; open and closed. Open questions allow for greater depth of response, whilst closed questions typically invite a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer.<sup>281</sup> Interviews began with open ended questions, such as ‘*How did you come to learn about Low Impact Development?*’. This allowed the interviewee to explain what, to them, was the most important aspect of the topic. This was followed up with more specific questions in a process that Ritchie refers to as “funnel interviewing”.<sup>282</sup> In other words, interviews started with a general question before becoming more focussed. Moreover, Ritchie also suggests that a two-sentence format is preferable, whereby the first offers the problem, and the second poses the question.<sup>283</sup> So, for example, when interviewing an OPD applicant, a question was; ‘*Wales offers a unique LID policy in the UK. How important was having a legal space to pursue LID to your choice to pursue OPD?*’. Given the semi-

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<sup>280</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 225-226.

<sup>281</sup> Darren R. Reid and Brett Sanders, *Documentary Making for Digital Humanists* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021), p. 132-133.

<sup>282</sup> Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 81.

<sup>283</sup> Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 81.

structured approach to interviewing chosen, follow up questions were asked according to responses provided. The interviews conducted lasted between 30 and 90 minutes and were, as previously indicated, conducted either face to face, by telephone, or online via Zoom, Facebook, or Skype. These were recorded on a Dictaphone in accordance with Coventry University's ethical guidance, to be addressed in the final section of this chapter.

### **Archival research**

In addition to the interview data, this study is also based on extensive archival research. Though documentary research “conjures up an old fashioned image of a researcher digging away in a dusty archive, wading through piles of paper”, it is a key aspect of aspect of social research and describes places and social relationships.<sup>284</sup> Archival research was key to this study given that OPD is a sanctioned Welsh Government policy whose use and implementation is based on an administrative process, including application forms, planners' reports, committee minutes, and third-party representations submitted during an OPD application's public consultation. As was identified in the section relating to interviews, this study's second and third stakeholder groups – decision makers and local communities – are underrepresented in the interview data. Their impact and experiences of OPD's implementation was, however, captured in the archival data. In addition, the archival data, as part of the mixed method approach, served to supplement, corroborate, and validate the data derived from interviews.

The archival research of the planning documents was initiated by an examination of the online archives of each Local Authority's planning archive across Wales to establish the total number of OPD applications submitted in the period of 2010-2021. It was identified that there had been a total of 63 OPD applications across 11 Local Authorities in the period of this study.

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<sup>284</sup> Matt Henn, Mark Weinstein and Nick Foard, *A Critical Introduction to Social Research*, Second Edition ed. (London: Sage, 2009), p. 110.

Though there were 63 applications, eight of these were either withdrawn, cancelled, or deemed invalid. These have not been assessed in this study, as only those that have been determined have been included. This means, therefore, that this study is based on a total of 55 OPD applications (a complete sample) determined in Wales in the period of 2010 and 2021 (see Table 1.2 below). Other applications are awaiting determination and new ones are being made, however these have not been included in this study, though can form part of future research.

**Table 1.2 Determined OPD applications, by Local Authority, 2010-2021<sup>285</sup>**

| <b>Local Authority</b>                 | <b>Number of OPD applications determined</b> |
|--|--|
| Pembrokeshire County Council           | 17   |
| Pembrokeshire National Park Authority  | 10   |
| Carmarthenshire County Council         | 12   |
| Ceredigion County Council              | 8  |
| Powys County Council                   | 3  |
| Newport City Council                   | 1  |
| Denbigshire County Council             | 1  |
| Caerphilly County Council              | 1  |
| Brecon Beacons National Park Authority | 1  |
| Monmouthshire County Council           | 1  |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>55</b>                                    |

In addition to identifying 55 OPD applications, the means by which these applications were determined was also established. Planning applications, as will be shown in Chapter Five, can be determined in two ways in Local Authorities; a delegated decision whereby the decision is made by a professional planner or at a planning committee whereby a recommendation is

<sup>285</sup> Data compiled from OPD planning applications and their associated planning documentation, accessed through their respective online Planning Portals of each Welsh Local Authority. See Appendix One.

made by the planner, but the final decision is reached by a vote of elected councillors. Having established the way in which each OPD application was determined, the associated archival record was located respectively, a delegated report or the minutes of planning committee hearings. In addition, and where available, the recording of the planning committee hearing was obtained. In Pembrokeshire County Council, Carmarthenshire County Council, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, and Denbigshire County Council, planning committees are streamed online, and the recordings are made available on the council websites as 'Webcasts'.

While 29 (53%) of the 55 OPD applications have been determined at planning committees, 16 (55%) of these have been determined in Pembrokeshire County Council and Carmarthenshire County Council. As a result, councillors from these Local Authorities feature prominently in Chapter Five, which looks at the implementation of OPD amongst the decision makers, as the video recordings of the planning committees offer significantly more depth of data than the printed minutes. A key part of the archival research of planning committees involved the transcription of the discussions at these planning committees which provide a much greater insight into the attitudes of the elected members, in addition to other speakers which on occasion included applicants and local objectors. It should also be noted that whilst Pembrokeshire County Council archives these recordings indefinitely, Carmarthenshire County Council only makes these available for six months. Therefore, whilst many of these were accessed for this study, some recordings may no longer be available.

In addition to the archival record of planning reports and meeting minutes, data was also collected from documents generated by the consultation phase of the planning process. The final chapter's assessment of local community responses to OPD applications is based on the third-party representations submitted to Local Authorities during the consultation period of OPD applications. As will be shown in Chapter Six, following the submission of a planning application and the validation of the application by the Local Authority, a public consultation invites submissions from interested parties. The archival research for this study identified that the record is only complete for 51 of the 55 OPD applications, with three of the earlier OPD

applications in Ceredigion (applications A120169, A130164, and A110935) not being available given that the local planning archive has been closed due to Covid-19 restrictions, and the records have not been digitised. In addition, while there is a 'summary' of the representations received for application NP/12/0230 in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, the exact numbers are not available. Moreover, in four further OPD applications, one in Powys (P/2013/0338) and three in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (NP/15/0693/FUL, NP/15/0310/FUL, and NP/18/0134/FUL), the numbers of the third-party representations are available, but the actual documents are in archives that have not been available in the time period of this study owing to the pandemic or have been lost.

With a total universe of 513 third-party representations, the sample for this study was 393 (77%) representations, derived from 44 (80%) OPD applications where the documents were accessible. The 393 third-party representations collated took three main forms: online comments, emails, and written letters submitted to the respective Local Authority. It should be noted that Carmarthenshire County Council publishes all representations received on the planning section of its archive and is publicly available. By contrast, all other Local Authorities redact the third-party representations, with some, like Pembrokeshire County Council and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, only making these available by request. The archival data set collated for this study is therefore a new and significant one to understanding community reactions for OPD in Wales. It has not been assessed anywhere else.

In addition to the archival research of the planning archives, press coverage of Wales's OPD policy was also located. Stories related to OPD applications were identified in three ways. First, a key word search of the Lexis Newspaper archive was conducted, with search terms including 'one planet development', 'one planet', 'low impact development', 'low impact', and 'Lammas'. In addition, newspaper articles were located via Google searches, using the same search terms. A small number of newspaper articles were also collated having been posted on the One Planet Council Facebook page. It became apparent that though OPD is only a small branch of Wales's national planning policy, it has attracted some coverage in the local media. Articles in local publications such as *West Wales Chronicle*, *South Wales Guardian*,

*Pembrokeshire Herald*, *Wales Online*, *North Wales Online*, *West Wales Review*, and *Carmarthenshire Herald* were located and downloaded. The newspaper coverage of OPD rarely pertained to analyses to the policy itself but, rather, to its implementation at local level, including articles about councillor conduct, neighbour opposition, and the personal accounts of its lived experience.<sup>286</sup>

## Data Analysis

In terms of analysing the data, in order to create a textual data set from the interviews and the recorded 'webcasts' of planning committee meetings, relevant sections were transcribed. These texts, in addition to personal communication, third-party representations assessed in the final chapter, and the newspaper coverage of the OPD policy, were read in the positivist paradigm, which seeks to uncover the "attitudes and values of the author and the effects of the communication on the intended recipient".<sup>287</sup> For example, the third-party representations were read to establish the key reasons that were used to either support or object to OPD applications and the main reasons for doing so.

Having identified the main issues articulated by a reading of the submitted representations, a second data analysis method, a content analysis, was used to assess the implementation of

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<sup>286</sup> Examples of articles pertaining to OPD's implementation include:

"Neighbours' Antagonism Holds Up Carmarthenshire's First 'One Planet' Development," last modified 22 September, 2015a, accessed Nov 24, 2021,

<https://westwalesnewsreview.wordpress.com/2015/09/22/neighbours-antagonism-holds-up-carmarthenshires-first-one-planet-development/>.

"Council Criticised Over Delays to One Planet Developments," last modified 15 November, 2019, accessed Jul 13, 2021, <https://pembrokeshire-herald.com/56945/council-criticised-over-delays-to-one-planet-developments/>.

"Couple Express Frustration Over Refusal Recommendations for their 'one Planet Development' Application," last modified 28 December, 2019, accessed Jul 13, 2021, <http://www.tenby-today.co.uk/article.cfm?id=126480&headline=Couple%20express%20frustration%20over%20refusal%20recommendations%20for%20their%20%E2%80%98one%20planet%20development%E2%80%99%20application&sections=news&searchyear=2019>.

<sup>287</sup> Matt Henn, Mark Weinstein and Nick Foard, *A Critical Introduction to Social Research*, Second Edition ed. (London: Sage, 2009), p. 112.

OPD in this study's final group of stakeholders - local communities. This method was chosen, given, as Daniel Riff, Steven Lacy, and Frederick Fico point out, "the researcher can draw conclusions from content evidence without having to gain access to communicators who may be unwilling or unable to be examined directly".<sup>288</sup> In doing so, the identified lack of representation of local communities in the interview data, was mitigated. Content analysis is defined as "a multipurpose research method developed specifically for investigating any problem in which the content of communication serves as the basis of inference".<sup>289</sup>

This method was chosen to develop quantitative data and to avoid cherry picking quotes from the reading of the significant numbers of representations collated, as well as to add rigour to the process of triangulating the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data. In fact, as Riff, Lacy, and Fico have further written, "Quantitative content analysis is the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption".<sup>290</sup>

In Chapter Six, then, a quantitative content analysis was conducted with the aim of establishing the frequency of particular reasons for objecting or supporting OPD applications across the sample of 393 representations submitted to OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021. Given that the purpose of the content analysis performed for this study was to produce quantitative data, only the manifest content of the representations was considered, defined as the "elements that are physically present and countable".<sup>291</sup> This

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<sup>288</sup> Daniel Riff, Stephen Lacy and Frederick Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 30.

<sup>289</sup> Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), p. 1.

<sup>290</sup> Daniel Riff, Stephen Lacy and Frederick Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 20.

See also: Robert Weber, *Basic Content Analysis* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1990), p. 9.

<sup>291</sup> Judy Gray and Iain Densten, "Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis using Latent and Manifest Variables" *Quality & Quantity* 32 (1998), p. 420.



adopted approach was only interested in the surface meaning of the text.<sup>292</sup> It did not aim to assess its latency, the deeper meaning of the written communication. In this context, the approach to the content analysis is referred to as a methodology used to “code text into categories and then count the frequencies of occurrences within each category”.<sup>293</sup> Having identified the type of content analysis engaged in this study, the process established to assess the text must be established.

Klaus Krippendorff identifies that there are three types of units in a content analysis, sampling units, recording/coding units, and context units.<sup>294</sup> The sampling unit of this study is the 393 third-party representations collated from the 44 OPD applications where the data was available. These were broken down into two recording/coding units – 267 supporting and 126 objecting representations. In terms of the context unit, the entire content of each representation was included in the content analysis, rather than focusing on, for example, a particular paragraph or section. In sum, then, each of the 393 third-party representations was read in full to generate statistical data about the attitudes and values of the third stakeholder group assessed for this study, the local community. Once the sample, coding unit, and context were established, the manifest content analysis developed a coding scheme, a “process whereby raw data are systematically transformed and aggregated into units which permit precise description of relevant content characteristics”.<sup>295</sup> The coding scheme was based on 16 categories with the corresponding codes shown in Table 1.3 below. Having established the coding scheme, the process of renumeration involved the counting of these codes during the reading of the representations and presented as percentages and in graphs in Chapter Six and used to triangulate the data from the interview and other archival data.

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<sup>292</sup> Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), p. 12.

<sup>293</sup> Aaron Ahuvia, "Traditional, Interpretive, and Reception Based Content Analyses: Improving the Ability of Content Analysis to Address Issues of Pragmatic and Theoretical Concern" *Social Indicators Research* 54 (2001), p. 139.

<sup>294</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis* (London: Sage, 2004), p. 98.

<sup>295</sup> Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), p. 94.

**Table 1.3 Coding scheme for the third-party representations submitted to OPD planning applications, 2010-2021:**

| Categories              | Codes  |
|-------------------------|--|
|                         |  |
| <b>Business</b>         | Local business; will stock produce; local food networks; local cooperatives; seed catalogues; local food markets; retailers; shops.  |
| <b>Acquaintance</b>     | Friend; knows applicant; has volunteered at the site; has visited the site; applicant has volunteered; attended an open day; another OPD applicant; OPC member.  |
| <b>OPD policy</b>       | Good policy; bad policy; support LID; against local policies; danger of precedent; needed policy; loophole; incomers.  |
| <b>Policy criteria</b>  | Policy met; policy not met; good/bad management plan; good/bad financial targets; viable project; financial targets.   |
| <b>Sustainability</b>   | Sustainable; unsustainable; future generations; well-being of future generations; sustainable practices.   |
| <b>Environment</b>      | Climate change; climate crisis; biodiversity; wildlife; damage; sewerage; ecological footprint; use of fossil fuels; improve; enhance; enrich; native species; animal welfare; EFA.  |
| <b>Visual impact</b>    | Ugly; negative impact; negative/positive impact on landscape; eyesore; untidy; impact on countryside.  |
| <b>Housing</b>          | Rural housing; affordable housing; not modest; luxury; no need to live on site; not first-time buyer; property value; need to live on site; poor quality housing; uninhabitable; second homes; holiday homes; homes for locals; affordable houses.   |
| <b>Site</b>             | Suitable/unsuitable; too small; wrong soil; access; no water; location unsuitable; flood risk.   |
| <b>Produce</b>          | Good produce; local produce; saturated market; unwanted competition; supply local businesses; lack of market; food security; rural economy.  |
| <b>Transport</b>        | Negative/positive traffic impacts; reliance on cars; no cycle routes; cycling; car use; road safety; narrow track; damaged track; too many miles driven.   |
| <b>Legality</b>         | Settled on land illegally; unpaid council tax; raves; partying; noise; illegal access route.   |
| <b>Communication</b>    | Applicants have/have not communicated with neighbours.   |
| <b>Applicant(s)</b>     | Work ethic; knowledge; hard working people; hippies; valued member of community; isolated; no attempt to integrate; not specialists in building; rude.   |
| <b>Community impact</b> | Positive/negative community impact; wanted/unwanted services; unfairness; incomers; education; workshops; volunteering opportunities; skill sharing; events; open days; young people to the area; exchange labour; vibrancy of area; viability of area; local facilities; community resilience; benefits local area; asset to local community. |
| <b>Identity</b>         | Welshness; character of area; Welsh language; cultural heritage; historic environment.   |

The mixed method approach, data collection, and data analysis was successful in the completion of this study. The approach taken facilitated the collection of all of the archival data available, as well as having elicited a significant number of interviews with those engaged in OPD. As a result, each of the stakeholder groups are well represented in this study. In addition, the multiple sources of material used also ensured that there has been triangulation of the data which has added validity to the results. Moreover, the combination of qualitative data alongside quantitative data, particularly in Chapter Six, demonstrates that a variety of methods have been employed to corroborate the findings of this thesis, rather than relying on illustrative quotes from the reading of qualitative data sources. In sum, the aims of the method were achieved and the study's objective of assessing the facilitation of LID in Wales and the implementation of OPD was achieved.

## Ethics

The final part of this chapter will identify the ethical considerations of this study. Research ethics has been defined as “the conduct of the researchers and their responsibilities and obligations to those involved in the research, including sponsors, the general public and most importantly, the subjects of the research”.<sup>296</sup> This implies, then, that the researcher has a moral and legal obligation to consider the means and approaches of their activities. As McNeil and Chapman have written, the “researcher must always think carefully about the impact of the research and how he/she ought to behave, so that no harm comes to the subject of the research or to society in general. In other words, ethics or moral principles must guide research”.<sup>297</sup> Of particular reference to this study, the ethical considerations pertain to harm, informed consent, and the use of personal data in research outputs.

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<sup>296</sup> Derek Layder and Julia O'Connell Davidson, *Methods, Sex and Madness* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 55.

<sup>297</sup> Steve Chapman and Patrick McNeill, *Research Methods* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 12.

Given that a key research method in this study was interviewing, a fundamental ethical issue considered was of 'informed consent'. This refers to a "freely given agreement on the part of the researched to become the subject of the research process".<sup>298</sup> In addition, informed consent relates to the use of data, its storage, possible harm, and to ensure that research participants know exactly what they are consenting to.<sup>299</sup> This research was granted ethical approval by Coventry University's ethics panel in 2018 and was conducted according to its standards to harm, data storage, and the process for preparing for interviews.

In the preparation for the interviews and personal correspondence, each research participant was provided with a Participant Information Sheet which outlined the nature, purpose, and style of their participation (see Appendix Two). It also outlined that the data would be stored on a secure password encrypted hard drive only accessible to the researcher, whilst responses would only be used in academic outputs. In addition, an Informed Consent Form was prepared in order for participants to indicate their permission for the data to be used and any conditions on the use of their responses, such as anonymity (see Appendix Three). For example, some respondents wished to view a transcription of the interview before offering their consent. Moreover, as clearly outlined in the Participant Information Sheet, unless anonymity was requested, this study has used attributed quotes as part of its evidence and analysis.

It should be pointed out that James Shorten, the lead author of the Welsh Government's *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (2012), agreed to an interview which was conducted and recorded, however he subsequently did not respond to the Informed Consent Form, so his responses have not been included in this study. In addition, nine respondents wished to remain anonymous; their responses have been included in the study, though their identities have been withheld in the references as well as in the list of respondents included in the Bibliography. Anonymous responses were permitted for two main reasons; two planning

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<sup>298</sup> Tim May, *Social Research* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), p. 60.

<sup>299</sup> Robyn Dowling, "Power, Subjectivity, and Ethics in Qualitative Research," in *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, ed. Iain Hay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 33.

officers and one councillor wished to keep their identity off the record when discussing policies in their Local Authorities, while five current and prospective OPD applicants felt that they may face prejudice if their responses were deemed to be critical of those that may be involved in their ongoing relationship with their respective Local Authorities. Their reasons for requesting anonymity were deemed to be legitimate and would not have any material consequence on the validity of their responses or this study. The nomenclature used to describe them in-text was formed in consultation with these respondents.

In addition to the anonymity provision in the interview data, the use of personal data in the third-party representations followed the individual protocols of Local Authorities. As mentioned above, Carmarthenshire County Council publishes all representations received on the planning section of its archive and is publicly available. Any representations made are included on the public record and include the name and address of the respondents. By contrast, all other Local Authorities redact the third-party representations, with some, like Pembrokeshire County Council and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, only making these available by request. Therefore, when referring to representations submitted to Carmarthenshire County Council, the names of the authors are used.

The approach to personal data by Carmarthenshire County Council was, however, a useful source of data for Chapter Six as the location from which the representation was made could be used to measure the proximity to the applicant site. This helped to inform the argument that OPD's support is often from those without a direct spatial connection to the applicant site and, conversely, that its objectors do. In addition, the names those making comments at planning committees – councillors, planners, legal representatives, agricultural experts, and invited speakers – have also been included given that their contributions were made knowing that these events were being filmed and made available to the public record.

In summary, the research question for this study was formulated to add to the literature on developing new ways of sustainable living, with a particular emphasis on LID in rural spaces.

In examining the relative success of Wales's OPD policy in facilitating LID in the open countryside, this study has taken a pragmatic worldview and, therefore, applied the research methods which suited the research problem most effectively. This took three key forms. First, this study was based on a specific analysis of Wales's One Planet Development policy, as this represents a unique LID policy in the UK and represents an opportunity to assess a novel approach to sustainability in the open countryside. Second, the relative success of OPD's implementation was measured by an analysis of its three key stakeholder groups. Given that the opening of a legal space for LID in Wales affects those seeking to develop new ways of living in rural spaces, those charged with applying the policy at a local level, and those that have a direct spatial connection with applicant sites which would, under existing land use norms, be precluded from development, these groups were identified as being paramount to understanding the relative success of the policy's implementation.

The final manifestation of the pragmatic approach relates to data collection and analysis. As a result of the emphasis on stakeholder groups, a mixed methods approach was chosen to produce both qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of sources. In order to capture the experience of applicants, planners, and councillors, 52 individual research participants were engaged in personal interviews and correspondence. Alongside the interview data, significant archival research was conducted to elicit the values and attitudes of those stakeholder groups not covered in the interview data, in particular councillors and the local community. To triangulate this data further, newspaper coverage of OPD, particularly in local presses, was engaged. In addition, and in order to add validity to the qualitative data, a manifest content analysis provided a statistical data about the key issues arising in the third-party representations submitted to OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021. In total, then, this study's sample is comprehensive, having examined 100% of determined OPD applications in the period under consideration. In addition, approximately a third of OPD applicant sites have been engaged in this study, while 77% of the third-party representations, the voice of the local community, has been assessed. This, overall, represents a comprehensive and systematic examination of OPD's implementation over the period of 2010-2021.

## Chapter Three

### Welsh Devolution and One Planet Development: The Facilitators of Low Impact Development in Wales?

As was identified in the Literature Review, the primary challenge to developing new residential smallholdings in the open countryside, in England and Wales, has been the UK's land use system which has limited opportunities for Low Impact Development (LID). Since devolution, however, a new political environment has emerged in Wales, which consciously incorporated a focus on sustainability. The Government of Wales Act (1998) which created the National Assembly for Wales legislated that part of its statutory duties was to 'promote' sustainable development. The subsequent Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) upgraded this statutory duty to 'carry out' sustainability and public bodies in Wales, including the Welsh Government, now have an obligation to deliver sustainable development. Moreover, the sustainability strategy of the Labour and Plaid Cymru coalition government of 2007-2011, outlined in *One Wales: One Planet* (2010), made sustainability the 'central organising principle' in Wales, while simultaneously making available a national LID policy, under the rubric of One Planet Development (OPD). As a direct result of this, Wales is the first nation in the Britain to facilitate LID by recognising it as part of its sustainability goals, accommodating it within the planning system.<sup>300</sup>

This chapter seeks to test the extent to which Welsh devolution and the subsequent OPD policy has, indeed, facilitated LID in Wales. It will concentrate on the development of this new political environment in Wales after devolution, the OPD policy itself, its potential, and examine whether OPD is, on paper, a suitable foundation to facilitate LID in Wales. In order to achieve this, Welsh Government's OPD policy documentation will be examined to assess whether the policy is, on its own terms, likely to deliver LID in Wales. It will consider the Welsh Government's interpretation of the academic discourse of LID, including the definitions and characteristics of OPD described in *Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural*

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<sup>300</sup> David Spero, *Settlements* (Dorchester: David Spero, 2017), p. 9.

*Communities* (2010), in addition to the subsequent *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (2012). It is also interested in OPD's formulation, including the policy's benchmarks, targets, and ongoing monitoring regime. In addition, it will examine whether the policy can deliver access to more affordable land, by opening a legal space for the development of new residential smallholdings in the open countryside. After this chapter completes this assessment of the emerging support for LID, and the Welsh Government's legislative response, the subsequent chapters will then examine the policy's real-world application by assessing its implementation in this study's identified stakeholder groups. In short, this chapter assesses the OPD policy's conceptual efficacy at the point of formulation, while later chapters concentrate on the policy's implementation.

This chapter will argue that devolution has been critical to the facilitation of LID in Wales for three key reasons. First, Welsh devolution created a political environment that sought to incorporate 'sustainability' into public policy and One Planet Development (OPD), as a national LID policy, was incorporated into Wales's broader sustainability policy agenda from 2010. Second, it will be contended that devolution created a small and more rural polity than in England. This enabled an existing cultural history of rural migrants, and recent LID activists, to be recognised by the Welsh Government as having a role to play in its sustainability agenda. Third, devolution brought new personnel into government, policy makers who looked beyond the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. Specifically, it will also be argued that Jane Davidson, the Welsh Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, 2007–2011, with a portfolio that included sustainability and planning, as well as a personal connection with smallholding, was the driving force that connected an existing LID movement's experience with the national sustainability agenda, leading to the provision of a specific LID policy in Wales. In sum, Wales had a unique constellation of three key factors that led to the facilitation of LID in Wales – a newly devolved administration rooted in sustainability, a legacy of self-sufficiency pioneers, and a policy champion.



This chapter will further argue that OPD has delivered a suitable policy foundation for LID in Wales. As it will be seen, the policy, on paper, facilitates LID as it is based on already established definitions and principles of LID. As a result, OPD fills a policy gap and removes the primary obstacle of those seeking to develop residential sustainable smallholdings – affordable land – based on the pursuit of a subsistence lifestyle. OPD thus provides a different model toward a sustainable countryside.<sup>301</sup> The Welsh Government has opened up a legal space to develop low carbon lives in the open countryside, outside of existing development zones. In this regard, the policy should be understood as a social contract whereby the Welsh Government, as part of its sustainability agenda, has provided a more affordable rural housing option, in return for providing environmental benefits.

However, while OPD does make more affordable land available, this chapter will also show that the capital investment required is likely to be beyond the means of many seeking to develop LIDs in Wales, which may affect OPD's uptake. In addition, whilst OPD offers a unique policy context for LID in the UK, the benchmarks are set high, with demanding targets to be met and continuously monitored. The ongoing monitoring represents an inherent risk in pursuing OPD as the residential planning consent can be withdrawn if applicants fail to meet their targets. This risk is exacerbated by an incomplete policy provision whereby the potential consequences of a failure to meet the policy benchmarks as a result of ill-health, disability, old-age, or natural disaster has not been codified. There are also tensions with non-OPD regulatory environments that relate to agricultural production and the construction of dwellings which add additional financial and bureaucratic challenges those seeking a low carbon life. This raises questions of the policy's appeal, and this chapter will conclude that the stringency of the policy's formulation and its inherent risks has limited the appeal of the policy and the demographic of those pursuing it.

In terms of evidencing these findings, the current chapter is divided into five parts. It will start by demonstrating the extent to which Welsh devolution, supported by a tradition of rural

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<sup>301</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 26.

migrants and LID in Wales, alongside a sympathetic government minister, provided a new political environment ripe for the enactment of the OPD policy. The second section of the chapter will show how devolution provided the opportunity for Wales to develop its sustainability agenda according to its own demographic and environmental context. The third section will assess the OPD policy, specifically its core documents, demonstrating that Wales has, indeed, put in place a suitable framework for delivering LID. The fourth section will examine the policy's capacity to provide access to more affordable land, drawing attention to the capital investment required. This final section evidences the caveat discussed above concerning the challenges and risks that OPD smallholders are still compelled to take, and the reality that this will reduce the appeal of OPD to many potential LID practitioners.

### **Devolution and a new political environment in Wales**

This section will assess how Welsh devolution has proved to be a key factor for the facilitation of LID in Wales. In 1997, the Welsh electorate voted narrowly in favour of devolution from Westminster, with 50.3% in favour and 49.7% against, and a voter turnout of 50.1%.<sup>302</sup> The narrow majority, 0.6% was a difference of just 6,721 votes.<sup>303</sup> The subsequent UK legislation, the Government of Wales Act (1998), provided the legal mandate for the creation of the National Assembly for Wales.<sup>304</sup> The relevance of this constitutional change for this thesis is that Wales now had the opportunity to diverge its public policy from that of England, particularly after strengthening its devolved powers, with primary legislative competences being transferred to the National Assembly via the reformed Government of Wales Act (2006), and following the result of the subsequent referendum, in March 2011. The Welsh Government now had full jurisdiction over, amongst other areas, 'town and country planning' which, in

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<sup>302</sup> David Broughton, "The Welsh Devolution Referendum 1997" *Representation* 35, no. 4 (1998), p. 200.

<sup>303</sup> Richard Wyn Jones and Roger Scully, *Wales Says Yes Devolution and the 2011 Welsh Referendum* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2012), p. 24.

<sup>304</sup> Russell Deacon and Alan Sandry, *Devolution in the United Kingdom* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 137.

turn, created a pathway for a specific LID policy, as part of its wider sustainability objectives.<sup>305</sup>

The National Assembly for Wales was born into an intellectual and global environmental context which placed emphasis on the growing threat of anthropogenic global warming and of intergenerational responsibility. The term ‘sustainable development’ was formalised by the UN Report *Our Common Future* (often referred to as the Brundtland Report) in 1987 and instituted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio, in 1992.<sup>306</sup> As was identified in the Literature Review, it was defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.<sup>307</sup> The new National Assembly accepted the Brundtland Report’s definition of sustainable development which focuses on the search for strategies that promote economic and social development without environmental degradation.<sup>308</sup>

In doing so, Jane Davidson, the Welsh Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, 2007–2011, has written that “In 1999 this small country sought a new opportunity, through its legislature, the National Assembly for Wales, to reframe the traditional role of government by creating a new context in which to inspire better decisions in the interests of current and future generations”.<sup>309</sup> This is demonstrated by the Government of Wales Act (1998) which brought the National Assembly into being. It states that “The National Assembly for Wales has a duty under section 121 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 to promote sustainable development in the exercise of its functions, that is everything it does”.<sup>310</sup> As a result, from

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<sup>305</sup> Welsh Government, *Government of Wales Act 2006* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2006), p. 125.

<sup>306</sup> Gary Haq and Alistair Paul, *Environmentalism since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 56.

<sup>307</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 41.

<sup>308</sup> Jane Davidson, *#futuregen Lessons from a Small Country* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2020), p. 33.; Steffen Böhm, Zareen Pervez Bharucha and Jules Pretty, eds., *Ecocultures: Blueprints for Sustainable Communities* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p. 9.

<sup>309</sup> Jane Davidson, *#futuregen Lessons from a Small Country* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2020), p. 3 and 26.

<sup>310</sup> National Assembly for Wales, *Government of Wales Act 1998* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 1998), p. 64.

the inception of the Welsh Assembly in 1999, it was mandated to ‘promote’ sustainable development.

Moreover, the Welsh Government passed the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, in 2015, to mandate that public bodies now “carry out sustainable development”.<sup>311</sup> The essence of the Act is that the Welsh Government must now deliver rather than simply ‘promote’ sustainable development.<sup>312</sup> The Act requires the Welsh Government and other public bodies to improve the economic, environmental, social, and cultural well-being of future generations and, therefore, to consider the long-term impacts of any decisions made.<sup>313</sup> In demonstrating the impact of the Act, and the comparison with England, the example of the M4 extension is instructive.

Whilst the UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and the UK’s Conservative Government, wished to build a 13-mile extension of the M4 motorway around Newport, the Welsh Government cancelled the proposal in June 2020 citing its incompatibility with the Well-being of Future Generations legislation. The project was deemed to conflict with its carbon reduction targets, in addition to the Act’s goal of supporting resilient eco-systems and a healthier Wales.<sup>314</sup> In fact, the legislation comprises of seven key elements; “a prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales; a healthier Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language; a globally responsible Wales”.<sup>315</sup> In comparison to England, there has thus been a significant point of departure of government’s statutory duties relating to sustainability which has further led to more holistic sustainability schemes.

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<sup>311</sup> Welsh Government, *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2015a), p. 1.

<sup>312</sup> Jane Davidson, personal interview, St. Dogmaels, Wales, 9 January, 2019.

<sup>313</sup> Welsh Government, *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: The Essentials* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2015b), p. 3.

<sup>314</sup> "Scrapped M4 Relief Road Cash must be used to Fund Green Recovery, Says Future Generations Commissioner," last modified 14 July, 2020, accessed 07 February, 2022, <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/news/scrapped-m4-relief-road-cash-must-be-used-to-fund-green-recovery-says-future-generations-commissioner/>.

<sup>315</sup> Welsh Government, *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: The Essentials* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2015), p. 3.

In addition to the broader statutory duty to ‘carry out’ sustainable development, the Welsh Government passed the Environment Act in 2016. The Act represents a further statutory commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from their pre-1990 levels by 2050.<sup>316</sup> These objectives have subsequently been drawn together in the *Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales* plan which pulls together 76 existing policies from Welsh, UK, and EU legislation for the delivery sustainability targets, including the seven well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) identified above<sup>317</sup>. It is worth highlighting that the key areas identified are “agriculture, land use, transport, energy, the public sector, industry and business, waste and homes”.<sup>318</sup> In terms of practical policy examples, the Welsh Government has, as part of its Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan, committed to prioritising low carbon activities as part of its national decision making. This means, for example, that newly constructed health and educational facilities are designed to maximise energy efficiency.<sup>319</sup>

Furthermore, in the context of land use, the Welsh Government’s update on its objective of reaching ‘net zero’ noted the ambition to “planting a cumulative 43,000 hectares of mixed woodland in Wales to remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere as they grow, increasing to a total of 180,000 hectares by 2050”.<sup>320</sup> As will be developed in the next chapter, OPD sites, in (typically) adopting permaculture principles, are capable of turning bare-field agricultural land into smallholdings, including the planting of woodlands. They also use smaller parcels of land intensively to sustainably produce more food per hectare of land than conventional agriculture. This is potentially significant as the same Welsh Government report identifies that low carbon approaches to farming must be adopted, while simultaneously increasing the productivity of farms. Given, as will be developed in more detail below, that OPD facilitates access to more affordable land for the development of new homes in the open countryside that are rooted in finding exemplar ways of managing land, with new approaches to farming, as well as self-reliance in energy, water, and waste, whilst also reducing fossil fuel-based

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<sup>316</sup> Welsh Government, *Prosperity for all: A Low Carbon Wales* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2019b), p. 1.

<sup>317</sup> Welsh Government, *Prosperity for all: A Low Carbon Wales* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2019), p. 1.

<sup>318</sup> Welsh Government, *Prosperity for all: A Low Carbon Wales* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2019), p. 1.

<sup>319</sup> Welsh Government, *Prosperity for all: A Low Carbon Wales* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2019), p. 24.

<sup>320</sup> Welsh Government, *The Path to Net Zero and Reducing Emissions in Wales* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2020a), p. 19.

transport, there is an evident overlap between wider national sustainability priorities and the design of OPD.

Though this has been the subject of local scepticism, as will be developed in Chapter Six, the OPD policy's basis of seeking to develop 'exemplar' approaches to sustainability offers OPDs as potential laboratories for finding new ways of producing food that might be adapted for mainstream use as part of Wales's sustainability transition. This correlates with another branch of the *Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales* (2019) plan which recognises that this transition will require the "up skilling and re-skilling of people" to facilitate the decarbonisation of the Welsh economy, including farming.<sup>321</sup> This can include, as the plan acknowledges, aligning apprenticeships with the newly desired skills.<sup>322</sup> On the basis that OPD is, as will be demonstrated below, aimed at rural regeneration and facilitating young pioneers of sustainability, there is a potential opportunity for a synergistic alignment with OPD as a catalyst for developing both new approaches to farming and land-based skills. This will be tested in this thesis, particularly in Chapter Four.

In addition, and of particular relevance to this study, is the *One Wales: One Planet Sustainable Development Scheme*, "the Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Scheme made under the section 79 of the Government of Wales Act 2006".<sup>323</sup> It further enshrined sustainable development in Wales's policy agenda by making it the 'central organising principle' of the Welsh Assembly Government and public sector, as well as the strategic aim of all of its policies, programmes, and Ministerial portfolios.<sup>324</sup> *One Wales: One Planet* (2010)

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<sup>321</sup> Welsh Government, *Prosperity for all: A Low Carbon Wales* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2019), p. 26.

<sup>322</sup> Welsh Government, *Prosperity for all: A Low Carbon Wales* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2019), p. 26.

<sup>323</sup> Welsh Government, *One Wales: One Planet the Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2009), p. 3.

It is worth noting that the second Government of Wales Act (2006) changed the structure of the National Assembly for Wales from its corporate structure by separating government and legislature (the National Assembly). This meant that the commitment to sustainable development was now to the government of Wales, not the National Assembly.

<sup>324</sup> Welsh Government, *One Wales: One Planet the Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2009), p. 4.; Jane Davidson, *#futuregen Lessons from a Small Country* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2020), p. 53.

is a unique sustainable development strategy for two reasons.<sup>325</sup> First, it is based on ecological footprinting. As was shown in the Literature Review, Pooran Desai, who coined the term 'One Planet Living', identified that ecological footprinting "measures the impact each of us makes on the planet. It works out how much land and sea is needed to feed us and provide all the energy, water and materials we use in our everyday lives. It also calculates the emissions generate from the oil, coal and gas we burn at every-increasing rates, and it estimates how much land is needed to absorb all the waste we create".<sup>326</sup>

Indeed, there are two main ways of calculating a nation's emissions, 'production-based accounting' and 'consumption-based accounting'. The former, sometimes referred to as 'territory-based accounting', calculates emissions from the domestic production of goods and services, regardless of whether the consumption of these is domestic or exported. By contrast, consumption-based accounting attributes all emissions, from the production to consumption, to the final consumer of the product(s).<sup>327</sup> The key point of difference in accounting terms, then, is which trade partner's balance sheet the emissions appear on, with the production-based accounting assuming the emissions in the producer's accounts. This is usually to the benefit of nations who have outsourced their emissions, often to a developing economy.<sup>328</sup> Moreover, it is worth pointing out that in international emissions targets, such as the Kyoto Protocols and the Paris Climate Accords, production-based accounting has been employed, therefore obscuring the actual emissions caused by the consumer cultures of the Global North, the UK (including Wales) for the purposes of this study.

It must be understood, then, that Wales's employment of the ecological footprint is based on a 'consumption-based approach' which is a more holistic indicator of a society's total

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<sup>325</sup> Elaine Forde, "From Cultures of Resistance to the New Social Movements: DIY Self- Build in West Wales," in *Self-Build Homes Social Discourse, Experiences and Directions*, eds. Michaela Benson and Iqbal Hamiduddin (London: UCL Press, 2017), p. 83.

<sup>326</sup> Pooran Desai and Paul King, *One Planet Living* (Bristol: Alistair Sawday Publishing Co Ltd, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>327</sup> Etem Karakaya, Burcu Yılmaz and Sedat Alataş, "How Production-Based and Consumption-Based Emissions Accounting Systems Change Climate Policy Analysis: The Case of CO2 Convergence" *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* 26 (2019), p. 2.

<sup>328</sup> Etem Karakaya, Burcu Yılmaz and Sedat Alataş, "How Production-Based and Consumption-Based Emissions Accounting Systems Change Climate Policy Analysis: The Case of CO2 Convergence" *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* 26 (2019), p. 2.

environmental burden.<sup>329</sup> Therefore, Wales's sustainability agenda, embodied by *One Wales: One Planet* (2010) moves beyond seeking to account for and mitigate the emissions associated with production, towards a fuller strategy to engage its wider consumption and global 'footprint'. It should be pointed out, however, that an alternative measure of environmental impact is carbon footprinting which describes "the total amount of CO2 emissions that is directly and indirectly released by an activity or is accumulated over the life stages of a product".<sup>330</sup> In other words, it also accounts for both production and consumption. In this context, ecological and carbon footprints are both 'consumption-based' indicators.<sup>331</sup>

In this view, 'cutting carbon' as term often used by policy makers and OPD applicants as a means of reducing environmental impacts also serves as a proxy for wider discourses on sustainability, including critiques of materialism. However, it is clear that the Welsh Government's emphasis on the ecological footprint, and the wider consumption-based accounting of emissions, is rooted in the environmental aspect of the sustainability issue. As was identified in the Literature Review, the discourse on sustainability has three key pillars: environmental, social, and economic. Therefore, whilst the Welsh Government's sustainability *One Wales: One Planet* (2010) agenda does pertain ideas of community, equality, and prosperity as outlined above, its key measurement is via an environmental metric. This is different to other indicators, such as the UN Human Development Index which considers human factors, such as life expectancy and educational standards (see Appendix Four).

As a result, by focussing on consumption based accounting, Wales's sustainability agenda aims to reduce its environmental impact by making positive change, rather, and as is the case in England for example, relying on offsetting which presumes the almost limitless availability

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<sup>329</sup> GHD Stockholm Environment Institute and, *Ecological and Carbon Footprints of Wales Update to 2011* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2015), p. 4.

<sup>330</sup> T.V. Ramachandra and Durga Madhab Mahapatra, "The Science of Carbon Footprint Assessment," in *The Carbon Footprint Handbook*, ed. Subramanian Senthilkannan Muthu (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 4.

<sup>331</sup> GHD Stockholm Environment Institute and, *Ecological and Carbon Footprints of Wales Update to 2011* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2015), p. 4.



of other space to absorb the impact of development.<sup>332</sup> This is also reflected in its stated ambition which was of Wales “using only our fair share of the earth’s resources, and becoming a fairer and more just nation”.<sup>333</sup> Its stated aim is to reduce Wales’s ecological footprint to the global average availability of resources to 1.88 global hectares per person, the global availability of resources in 2007. It was 4.4 global hectares per person at the time of publication.<sup>334</sup> A one planet ecological footprint is a challenging target for a western society and would require an average person in the UK to reduce their consumption by two-thirds.<sup>335</sup> Second, *One Wales: One Planet* directly engaged LID and, according to Elaine Forde, provided “a rare policy context for living off-grid, under the rubric ‘One Planet Development’”.<sup>336</sup> Welsh devolution has, then, created a new political environment which has a greater emphasis on delivering sustainability. This, in turn, opened the door for a specific Welsh LID policy, to be addressed in more detail in a subsequent section.

### **Devolution and rural sustainability in the Welsh context**

Devolution also permitted the Welsh Government to focus its sustainability policy on the specific needs of Wales, as opposed to a policy context previously shared with England. This theme has been developed by Paul Chatterton, Professor of Urban Geography at Leeds University, who stated that LID’s facilitation in Wales was part of “a whole discussion that’s opened up since devolution”.<sup>337</sup> The devolution process opened up a space for the new National Assembly to consider its founding principles based on late twentieth century issues,

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<sup>332</sup> Elaine Forde, *Living Off-Grid in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020), p. 43.

<sup>333</sup> Welsh Government, *One Wales: One Planet the Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2009), p. 3.

<sup>334</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 1.

<sup>335</sup> Pooran Desai, *One Planet Communities. A Real-Life Guide to Sustainable Living* (Chichester: Wiley, 2010), p. 19.

<sup>336</sup> Elaine Forde, "From Cultures of Resistance to the New Social Movements: DIY Self- Build in West Wales," in *Self-Build Homes Social Discourse, Experiences and Directions*, eds. Michaela Benson and Iqbal Hamiduddin (London: UCL Press, 2017), p. 83.

<sup>337</sup> Paul Chatterton, personal interview, Leeds, England, 12 September, 2019.

in addition to its demographic context. Jasmine and Simon Dale, co-founders of the pioneering Lammas Ecovillage in Pembrokeshire, elaborated on this point, observing that

The Welsh Assembly was formed as a new body in a contemporary world. Commitments to green living and reducing Wales's resource footprint in the light of an emerging consensus on climate change (leading to OPD policy) must have seemed totally logical. Combined with rural depopulation and the relatively low productivity of the land points to regenerating land use and strategies to keep people in the countryside. England presumably does not have the same considerations, with a higher urban population and not in the position to create a new, contemporary constitution from scratch.<sup>338</sup>

Wales is, indeed, a more rural nation than England with around one in three people living in rural areas. England has fewer, with around one in five living in an area classed as rural.<sup>339</sup> In fact, 35.1% cent of the Welsh population live in rural areas.<sup>340</sup> This compares to 17% in England.<sup>341</sup> In addition, the rural areas of Wales cover the majority of the landmass.<sup>342</sup> Wales also has a lower population density with 152 people per square kilometre.<sup>343</sup> This compares to 432 people per square kilometre in England.<sup>344</sup> In terms of the total population, England has 56,286,961 inhabitants, compared to 3,152,879 in Wales.<sup>345</sup> The relatively small population in Wales, compared to England, combined with a greater degree of rurality,

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<sup>338</sup> Jasmine and Simon Dale, personal email correspondence, 27 November, 2018.

<sup>339</sup> Andrea Gartner, Rhys Gibbon and Neil Riley, *A Profile of Rural Health in Wales* (Cardiff: Wales Centre for Health, 2007), p. 6.

<sup>340</sup> Andrea Gartner, Rhys Gibbon and Neil Riley, *A Profile of Rural Health in Wales* (Cardiff: Wales Centre for Health, 2007), p. 6.

<sup>341</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, *Statistical Digest of Rural England* (London: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2020), p. 11.

<sup>342</sup> Andrea Gartner, Rhys Gibbon and Neil Riley, *A Profile of Rural Health in Wales* (Cardiff: Wales Centre for Health, 2007), p. 6.

<sup>343</sup> Welsh Government, *Summary Statistics for Wales, by Region: 2020* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2020b), p. 1.

<sup>344</sup> "Population Density in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2019 (People Per Sq. km), by Country," last modified 8 July, 2021, accessed 07 February, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/281322/population-density-in-the-united-kingdom-uk-by-country/>.

<sup>345</sup> Office for National Statistics, *Population Estimates for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: Mid-2019* (London: Office for National Statistics, 2020), p. 10.

indicates that rural sustainability schemes, such as LID, could be more easily absorbed into the legislative agenda of the Welsh Government.

This was pointed out by Rebecca Laughton, market gardener and academic, who, in a personal interview, stated that, the “reason for the One Planet Development policy in Wales was that the Welsh Government seems to be much closer to the people than Westminster is to the people of England. So, I think it was possible for campaigners such as James Shorten and Larch Maxey to be able to really influence the Welsh government to create the One Planet Development Policy”.<sup>346</sup> Alongside a focus on sustainability and a more rural population, Wales’s OPD policy can, in fact, also be attributed to the Welsh Government’s response to the pressures exerted by campaigners.

Wales has a long history of back-to-the-land pioneers, especially in west Wales, and as Forde has pointed out, the “OPD policy did not emerge in a void; it has precursors in policy and builds on a tradition of eco-building in rural Wales. Low-impact dwelling has historic and traditional roots in Wales”.<sup>347</sup> John Seymour and other pioneers of the self-sufficiency movement settled in west Wales in the late 1960s and 1970s, inspired by the availability of affordable farmhouses.<sup>348</sup> Seymour has been referred to as the ‘ancestor’ to OPD by OPD advocate David Thorpe, given that the praxis of his seminal book, *Self-Sufficiency* (1976), the gospel of the self-sufficiency movement, was developed on a farm in Pembrokeshire, the

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<sup>346</sup> Rebecca Laughton, personal telephone interview, 17 February, 2020.

The same argument was also made by Mel Robinson, personal telephone interview, 12 November, 2019.; Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.

James Shorten is the lead author of the Welsh Government’s *OPD Practice Guidance* (2012). Larch Maxey was involved in the planning stages of the Lammas Ecovillage project and has, more recently, been involved in Insulate Britain and the anti-HS2 protests.

<sup>347</sup> Elaine Forde, “From Cultures of Resistance to the New Social Movements: DIY Self- Build in West Wales,” in *Self-Build Homes Social Discourse, Experiences and Directions*, eds. Michaela Benson and Iqbal Hamiduddin (London: UCL Press, 2017), p. 83.

See also Pat Dodd Racher, *Solving the Grim Equation* (Wales: Cambria, 2015b), p. 146.

<sup>348</sup> Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.; Jane Davidson, personal interview, St. Dogmaels, Wales, 9 January, 2019.

See also Jane Davidson, *#futuregen Lessons from a Small Country* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2020), p. 13.; Elaine Forde, *Living Off-Grid in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020), p. 37.; Pat Dodd Racher, *Solving the Grim Equation* (Wales: Cambria, 2015), p. 146.

same region of Wales where the Lammas Ecovillage and Brithdir Mawr are located.<sup>349</sup> In addition, west Wales also has a cultural history of those seeking alternative lifestyles. For example, the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), near Machynlleth, and Tipi Valley, a community living in Native American-style tepees, in Carmarthenshire, formed in 1973 and 1974 respectively represent two existing examples of west Wales's vintage of experimental communal spaces.<sup>350</sup> In addition, and as was shown in the Literature Review, the struggles at Brithdir Mawr and the controversies over the building of Tony and Faith Wrench's roundhouse from the winter of 1997 resulted in the Land Use Consultants and Baker Report consultation studies and, eventually, Pembrokeshire's Policy 52 in 2006.

Pembrokeshire's Policy 52 can be seen as the precursor to OPD in Wales and made available in 2006 under Pembrokeshire's Joint Unitary Plan. It was a specific policy for LID and opened up a legal space for those seeking to establish new residential smallholdings in the open countryside. It established significant standards to meet, these included: sustainable buildings with a low visual impact, and a requirement to derive 75% of basic household needs from their local environment.<sup>351</sup> As will be seen in a later section, OPD's formulation came to mirror this approach, though with slightly lower percentage targets for the land-based enterprise. Pembrokeshire's Policy 52 was to facilitate the emergence of the Lammas Ecovillage, the first legally constituted LID in Wales, whilst also retrospectively allowing the two roundhouses at Brithdir Mawr and John Hargrave's Green Apple site, in Cosheston, Pembrokeshire.<sup>352</sup>

The deeper back to the land tradition, especially in west Wales, in addition to LID pioneers is key to understanding the emergence of OPD in Wales for two key reasons; they gained the attention of policy makers and, in the process, opened up a legal space for others to follow. Davidson, in a personal interview, in fact, referenced the experience of Lammas and the

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<sup>349</sup> David Thorpe, *The 'One Planet' Life: A Blueprint for Low Impact Development* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 10.

<sup>350</sup> Mike Peter and Paul Whitfield, *The Rough Guide to Wales*, 3rd ed. (London: Rough Guides, 2000), p. 58.

<sup>351</sup> Jenny Pickerill, *Eco-Homes* (London: Zed Books, 2016), p. 234.

<sup>352</sup> "Approved Applications," last modified 21 December, 2021a, accessed 29 June, 2022, <http://www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk/approved-applications/>.

implementation of Pembrokeshire's Policy 52 in her determination to advocate for a national LID policy, stating that

The reason Lamma brought it home to me is that the new National Assembly for Wales had encouraged Local Authorities to reward planning applicants who demonstrated a positive environmental, social and economic contribution. Local Authorities were remarkably resistant to actually creating policies in terms of supporting sustainability, and, even where they had adopted them, such as in Pembrokeshire, with its section 52 planning policy, the councillors took decisions against their own policies.<sup>353</sup>

Therefore, a national policy could provide the impetus to actually deliver LID in Wales, particularly if framed as part of its national sustainability agenda. Moreover, a number of OPD applicants interviewed for this study stressed the significance of west Wales's self-sufficiency cultural history, and the pressures exerted by the earlier LID campaigners, to push for a policy provision that would open up a legal space for others. For example, Lauren Simpson of Parc Y Dderwen, an OPD granted planning permission in Pembrokeshire, in 2018, explained that "we wouldn't be here if Tony Wrench hadn't come, John Seymour and Tao hadn't been the pioneers and we are able to do it the legal way, the proper way without being those pioneer types and putting ourselves in the way, physically or putting your head above the parapet the way those people did".<sup>354</sup> Those 'pioneers' were key to offering a legitimate and secure route to pursue LID in Wales, the significance which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

In addition to the establishment of a fertile political environment and a rich tradition of self-sufficiency pioneers, Wales's provision of a LID policy can also be attributed to having a policy champion. The role played by Jane Davidson, the Welsh Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, 2007–2011, is fundamental to the establishment of OPD in Wales.

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<sup>353</sup> Jane Davidson, personal interview, St. Dogmaels, Wales, 9 January, 2019.

<sup>354</sup> Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

The same point was made by Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.; Stephen De Waine, personal telephone interview, 19 August, 2019.

Faith Wrench, whose roundhouse at Brithdir Mawr gave rise to Pembrokeshire's Policy 52 in 2006, described her as a "gift" to those seeking to live a low impact life in Wales.<sup>355</sup> This is explained by Davidson's personal interest in the subject matter, with her personal website stating that she "lives on a smallholding in west Wales where she aims to live lightly on the land".<sup>356</sup> Moreover, in her memoir, published in 2020, recalling the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015), states that whilst working as a young teacher in Pembrokeshire, where Seymour lived, she, with her friends, was interested in living lightly on the land, baking, foraging, walking, swimming, and gardening, the experiences of which "was the genesis of an idea that later became One Planet Developments".<sup>357</sup>

It is evident, then, that Davidson was connected to the broader cultural roots and praxis of LID and was able to open up a space for LID in her ministerial portfolio's agenda. In a personal interview, she stated that "Since the Welsh Government had a responsibility to promote sustainability in everything that it did, OPD was a microcosm of that policy in practice delivered in the open countryside".<sup>358</sup> In corroborating this, and emphasising the significance of Davidson as a driver for the delivery of OPD in Wales, Mark Waghorn, a low impact architect and patron of the One Planet Council (to be addressed in the next chapter), stated that Davidson was "absolutely instrumental in driving it [OPD] and what she did was allow what was for many years a grassroots movement, which had found a home in Wales since the late sixties and seventies. She spoke to the people that were trying to achieve low impact development and allowed for a policy route for people to achieve that legally".<sup>359</sup> Whilst Paddy Ashdown, Leader of the Liberal Democrats from 1988 to 1999, endorsed LID in the foreword to Fairlie's seminal text in 1996, there has been no equivalent to Davidson to lobby for LID in Westminster.<sup>360</sup> As a result, despite LID campaigners, such as those at Tinker's

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It is worth reiterating that John Seymour was a pioneer of the self-sufficiency movement, in Wales, in the 1970s; the dispute over Tony Wrench's roundhouse in Pembrokeshire led to the emergence of Policy 52, and Tao Wimbush was a co-founder of the Lammas Ecovillage, the first legally constituted LID in Wales, using Policy 52.

<sup>355</sup> Faith Wrench, personal interview, Newport, Wales, 27 August, 2018.

<sup>356</sup> "About," last modified 09 February, 2021a, accessed 14 February, 2022, <https://janedavidson.wales/about>.

<sup>357</sup> Jane Davidson, *#futuregen Lessons from a Small Country* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2020), p. 14.

<sup>358</sup> Jane Davidson, personal interview, St. Dogmaels, Wales, 9 January, 2019.

<sup>359</sup> Mark Waghorn, personal telephone interview, 22 July, 2020.

The same point was made by Paul Jennings, personal interview, Skype, 2 June, 2021.

<sup>360</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. i.

Bubble, Kings Hill, and Steward Wood, the status quo remains in England, as the political support of the sort provided by Davidson has not been present, while the political environment in England and the approach to sustainability has not converged with LID's principles, as in Wales, to facilitate a change in its national land use approach.

OPD therefore emerged in Wales due to a confluence of a back-to-the-land tradition and recent LID activists, a devolved administration which placed sustainability as its central organising principle, and a minister sympathetic to LID. As Tao Wimbush, pioneer of the Lammas Ecovillage, acknowledged,

We got such a lucky break. Thank goodness we had the right people, in the right place, at the right time to get that through. It's remarkable, really. It's totally unthinkable that something like that could have happened in England or Scotland, it could only have happened here in Wales. It had to be west Wales because the movement is already here. Lammas didn't create a movement. It's just the latest manifestation of a movement that already exists in west Wales. Could I have done it in England? No, why? Because the socio-political context there wouldn't have allowed it. It would have been too difficult, too much of an uphill battle.<sup>361</sup>

### **An assessment of the OPD policy: a policy framework capable of facilitating LID in Wales?**

Having assessed the significance of the political and cultural environment in Wales after devolution, this section will assess Wales's OPD policy, drawing attention to the policy's objectives as defined in the Welsh Government's policy documentation, in addition to examining the policy's key characteristics. As will be shown, OPD has facilitated the development of new LIDs in the open countryside based on a subsistence lifestyle, though these are tightly regulated and monitored for ongoing compliance.

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<sup>361</sup> Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.

Emanating out of the Welsh Government's *One Wales: One Planet* sustainability strategy, a specific national LID policy, under the rubric of One Planet Development, was enacted in 2010. The Welsh Government's new national LID policy was accommodated within Wales's planning system and the initial detail of the policy was published in the planning document, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (TAN 6)*. It is defined in *TAN 6* as,

One Planet Developments take forward Low Impact Development (LID) principles in the Welsh context. One Planet Development is development that through its low impact either enhances or does not significantly diminish environmental quality. One Planet Development is potentially an exemplar type of sustainable development. One Planet Developments should initially achieve an ecological footprint of 2.4 global hectares per person or less in terms of consumption and demonstrate clear potential to move towards 1.88 global hectare target over time. They should also be zero carbon in both construction and use.<sup>362</sup>

It is significant that the Welsh Government's documentation defining OPD specifically mentions its intention to 'take forward' LID principles and, in doing so, borrows heavily from Fairlie's first definition of LID, published in 1996, identified in the Literature Review. Fairlie's exact form of words were that "a low impact development is one that, through its low negative environmental impact, either enhances or does not significantly diminish environmental quality".<sup>363</sup> The Welsh Government's policy omits two words, 'low negative', from Fairlie's 1996 definition, but is otherwise identical. Moreover, and as will be seen in the subsequent paragraphs of this chapter, the spirit of OPD is rooted in Fairlie's updated definition of 2009, which defined LID "development which, by virtue of its low or benign environmental impact, may be allowed in locations where conventional development is not permitted".<sup>364</sup> Indeed, OPD allows for access to land previously not earmarked for residential

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<sup>362</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 24.

Technical advice notes (TANs) provide detailed planning advice. Local Planning Authorities take them into account when they are preparing development plans. See <https://gov.wales/technical-advice-notes>

<sup>363</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. xiii.

<sup>364</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter, 2009), p. xiv.



development, in return for the provision of environmental benefits, as long as strict guidelines are met, and monitored. As a result, Fairlie's concept, born as a peripheral idea in 1996, has migrated to be recognised as one, if small, part of Wales's path to becoming a sustainable nation.<sup>365</sup> As a result, the Welsh Government's OPD policy, on paper, has the potential to be sound facilitator of LID.

In addition, the name of the policy – One Planet Development – can be understood as an amalgamation of the *One Wales: One Planet* sustainable development strategy from which it emerged, which, in turn, borrowed from Desai's *One Planet Living*, combined with LID, Fairlie's terminology. The concept of LID is, therefore, baked into OPD. While the literature on LID drew attention to its emphasis on sustainability, subsistence, and part of a broader history of the rural poor, OPD was, according to its policy champion, introduced

as a planning opportunity unique to Wales where individuals could buy rural or edge-of-settlement land at agricultural prices if they are prepared to live zero-carbon lives, work the land for half national income, improve biodiversity and be subject to tight monitoring for five years. The purpose of the policy was to encourage particularly young people onto the land at affordable prices and develop a whole new generation of pioneers for sustainable living.<sup>366</sup>

The policy is, then, aligned with the broader cultural history of LID in aiming to facilitate sustainable livelihoods in rural spaces with an emphasis on affordability. In this view, low impact, in the context of OPD, refers to both environmental and financial considerations.

OPD was introduced as a new form of development, supported by planning policy.<sup>367</sup> In planning terms, OPD represents a shift in approach as it is the first national LID policy in the UK which prescribes for the development of new residential low impact smallholdings in the

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<sup>365</sup> Anon, "Wales Adopts Low Impact Development," *The Land*, 2010p. 62.

<sup>366</sup> Jane Davidson, *#futuregen Lessons from a Small Country* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2020), p. 115.

<sup>367</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 19.

open countryside, though there are stringent conditions.<sup>368</sup> The policy is, according to its accompanying *Practice Guidance*, published in 2012, “a new area of rural policy of which there has been relatively little experience to date”.<sup>369</sup> Though the Welsh Government’s policy documentation states that OPD’s can be “located within or adjacent to existing settlements, or be situated in the open countryside”, it is worth pointing out that the policy has only been applied in an open countryside context, the subject of this study.<sup>370</sup> In addition, *TAN 6* prescribed that OPDs can take a number of forms, from single homes, to cooperatives, and larger settlements. However, there have, thus far, only been single home applications.<sup>371</sup> This will be assessed in detail in the following chapter.

The Welsh Government’s OPD policy may be considered as a form of endogenous development, by building on locally available social and natural resources, rather than in the case of exogenous development which seeks investment and capital to modernise the countryside.<sup>372</sup> By facilitating LID, the Welsh Government has simply legitimised access to an existing ecological base by a change of policy for a group of people that are willing to carry forward the shared value of sustainability. By going against the grain of post-war UK Government land use thinking, OPD, on paper, therefore has the capacity to contribute to Wales’s sustainability agenda, create affordable rural housing, and improve environmental quality. However, whilst OPD does represent a significant shift in post-war land use terms, it must be understood that it retains the approach to managing development in areas outside of recognised ‘envelopes’ as it is a carefully defined exception which avoids undermining the rationality of urban containment.<sup>373</sup> The emergence of OPD has, therefore, facilitated LID in Wales by opening up a legal space for those seeking a low carbon life, while preserving the integrity of the planning system’s approach to rural spaces.

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<sup>368</sup> Mark Waghorn, "One Planet Development: Opportunities and Barriers" *Archidoc* 3, no. 2 (2016), p. 26.

<sup>369</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>370</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 24.

<sup>371</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 24.

<sup>372</sup> Jules Pretty, *The Living Land* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 1998), p. 8.

<sup>373</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 30.

Beyond the use of Fairlie's definition of LID being adopted by the Welsh Government in the policy documents of OPD, it is also important to assess the nature of OPD relative to the scholarship assessed in the Literature Review. The policy's *Practice Guidance*, published in 2012, defines OPD's essential characteristics as:

- Have a light touch on the environment – positively enhancing the environment where ever possible through activities on the site.
- Be land based – the development must provide for the minimum needs of residents in terms of food, income, energy and waste assimilation in no more than five years.
- Have a low ecological footprint – the development must have an initial ecological footprint of 2.4 global hectares per person or less with a clear potential to move to 1.88 global hectares per person over time – these are the Ecological Footprint Analysis benchmarks for all One Planet Development.
- Have very low carbon buildings – these are stringent requirements, requiring that buildings are low in carbon in both construction and use.
- Be defined and controlled by a binding management plan which is reviewed and updated every five years.
- Be bound by a clear statement that the development will be the sole residence for the proposed occupants.<sup>374</sup>

In addition to the definitional overlaps between OPD and the literature on LID, its key characteristics also match those of the scholarship. At its root, OPD conforms to Hannis's basic premise that LID seeks to integrate humans, dwellings, and food crops into local landscapes and ecosystems, while rejecting the view held in post-war planning policy that human presence in the landscape is necessarily destructive.<sup>375</sup> Furthermore, OPD, like Fairlie's LID, should be understood as a social contract between applicant and the Local Authority whereby

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<sup>374</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012a), p. 2.

<sup>375</sup> Mike Hannis, "What is Development?" *The Land*, no. 9 (2010), p. 53.

planning consent can be granted in return for providing environmental benefits, as long as stringent conditions are met and continuously monitored.

An analysis of OPD's description in *TAN 6* demonstrates that OPD's social contract is based on the provision of a management plan, which "should set out the objectives of the proposal, timetable for development of the site and timescale for review. It should be used as the basis of a legal agreement relating to the occupation of the site, should planning consent be granted".<sup>376</sup> Its six core features are a 'Business and improvement plan' which must justify the need to live on site by detailing how the land-based enterprise will support the household within a five-year period. The 'Ecological footprint analysis' obliges applicants to demonstrate that their proposed project will meet the initial 2.44 and longer term 1.88 global hectares target, while the 'Zero carbon analysis' should demonstrate that that the dwelling will be zero carbon in construction and use. In addition, a 'Biodiversity and landscape assessment' is required to provide a baseline of the site's ecological condition, alongside a plan to enhance it. The final two components, a 'Community impact assessment' and a 'Transport assessment and travel plans' are required to identify any positive and negative community impacts, and a plan to mitigate any negative impacts, alongside a proposal to minimise fossil fuel-based transport and to limit traffic impacts respectively.<sup>377</sup> It is worth pointing out, however, that despite these seemingly specific requirements, that OPD was introduced in 2010 in just three pages of *TAN 6* which, as will be shown in Chapters Four and Five, affected the policy's initial implementation given that applicants and the decision makers had limited detail to refer to.

The subsequent publication of the Welsh Government's *OPD Practice Guidance (2012)* added greater clarity to these requirements, especially in terms of the 'business improvement plan' by breaking this down into key sections on the land-based enterprise, land management, energy and water, and waste management.<sup>378</sup> The formulation of OPD thus marries up with

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<sup>376</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 25.

<sup>377</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 25-26.

<sup>378</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012).

the 15 criteria for sustainable rural developments produced by the campaign group *The Land Is Ours* (TLIO), an organisation that advocates access to land for all social classes, which is rooted in the submission of management plan that justifies access to affordable land by an explanation of the project's capacity to contribute to the occupier's livelihood, facilitating the public's access to the countryside, community integration (social and economic), community impact - including visual, noise, and traffic - water and waste, as well as its sustainability, ecological, and enterprise components.<sup>379</sup> As part of the application process, to be assessed in detail in the next chapter, applicants have to demonstrate that they are capable of meeting each of these key criteria. Of particular importance in this context is that OPD is a prospective application, unlike existing rural exceptions (discussed more below) which require a record of achievement, including the generation of a commercial profit, in order to justify its residential permission.

OPD's formulation does, however, move beyond the characterisations of LID identified in the literature and TLIO's 15 criteria in the way in which the subsistence lifestyle and sustainability are measured. OPD's measure of sustainability is via Ecological Footprint Analysis (EFA). Ecological footprinting measures a person or group's impact on the planet and articulates this as the amount of land required to sustain their consumption of natural resources.<sup>380</sup> OPD's adoption of the EFA is seemingly derived from the *One Planet Living* sustainability framework trialled at BedZED, an eco-village in South London in 2002 which was designed to make sustainable living informed and accessible using the concepts of ecological and carbon footprinting.<sup>381</sup> As is stated in the definition of OPD provided above, "One Planet Developments should initially achieve an ecological footprint of 2.4 global hectares per person or less in terms of consumption and demonstrate clear potential to move towards 1.88 global hectare target over time".<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> "DEFINING RURAL SUSTAINABILITY Fifteen Criteria for Sustainable Developments in the Countryside," last modified 10 September, 1999, accessed 14 March, 2022, <https://tlio.org.uk/chapter7/defining-rural-sustainability-2/>.

<sup>380</sup> Bioregional, *Implementing One Planet Living A Manual* (London: Bioregional, 2018), p. 5.

<sup>381</sup> Bioregional, *Implementing One Planet Living A Manual* (London: Bioregional, 2018), p. 5.

<sup>382</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 24.

The ecological footprint target of OPD is therefore the same as that of the national sustainability strategy from which it emerged, *One Wales: One Planet* (2010), though the timeline for its achievement is within five years. This contrasts with the national sustainability target of ‘within a generation’ as articulated in *One Wales: One Planet*.<sup>383</sup> As a result, OPD represents a radically different lived experience compared to contemporary western society; the existing footprint of Wales would, in fact, require 2.7 planets.<sup>384</sup> In order to achieve this ‘one planet’ footprint, the OPD *Practice Guidance* details that “residents of One Planet Developments have to live quite differently (much more sustainably) than is the norm in the 21st century. One Planet Development therefore is not just describing a physical development. It is describing a way of living differently where there is a symbiotic relationship between people and land, making a reduction in environmental impacts possible”.<sup>385</sup> The specific benchmarks must, then, be assessed.

In terms of the subsistence lifestyle, the Welsh Government’s initial documentation in *TAN 6* (2010) prescribed for applicants to demonstrate that they could support their ‘minimum needs’ from their plot. However, this was vague and, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, was a significant reason for the limited policy success in the period before 2016. It is informative that the *Land Magazine* has noted that the notion of ‘minimum needs’ was open to interpretation, though this was, it was argued, a preferable approach to attempts to rationalise this to a specific number, like “75 percent of basic needs” as in Pembrokeshire’s Policy 52 discussed in the Literature Review.<sup>386</sup> The OPD *Practice Guidance* published two years later, in 2012, adopted the approach of Pembrokeshire’s Policy 52. It states that OPD applicants must demonstrate that they will be “broadly self-sufficient”, whereby the site provides the minimum needs of its inhabitants over a period of no more than five years.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Welsh Government, *One Wales: One Planet the Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2009), p. 3.

<sup>384</sup> Welsh Government, *One Wales: One Planet the Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2009), p. 3.

<sup>385</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 2.

<sup>386</sup> “Wales Adopts Low Impact Development.” *The Land*, 2010, p. 62.

<sup>387</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 1.

This includes “food, income, energy and waste assimilation from the site”.<sup>388</sup> In terms of food, the expectation is that “an OPD site should be able to produce at least 65% of basic food needs”.<sup>389</sup> It should be noted, however, a minimum of 30% of basic food needs must be grown or reared on site, with the remaining 35% purchased or bartered using income or surplus produce from the site.<sup>390</sup> While providing much greater clarity as to the benchmarks required to achieve an OPD planning consent, the approach adopted is highly technical, based on mathematical minutia, and according to Forde, “boils down to an attempt to govern life off the grid”.<sup>391</sup> Indeed, as will be shown in Chapter Four, the lived experience of OPD is bureaucratic and based on rigorous standards, particularly in terms of the application process and the ongoing compliance monitoring.

The policy’s updated modelling to include these percentage targets in the OPD *Practice Guidance* (2012) has attracted criticism from Fairlie given, he argues, that seeking to control people’s ecological footprint and percentage targets through planning regulations is challenging “without draconian and ceaseless surveillance”.<sup>392</sup> OPD’s are, in fact, subject to an ongoing monitoring regime. To ensure that the targets of the policy are met and that the projects remain sustainable, the policy’s *Practice Guidance* notes that OPDs will be “closely scrutinised”.<sup>393</sup> This is achieved by a combination of the compliance monitoring, planning conditions, and legal agreements which ensure that the stringent targets are met in perpetuity, while legally tying the dwelling to the land-based enterprise to ensure that the residential permission is only retained by a continued compliance to OPD’s terms. In fact, as TAN 6 itself states,

There are two mechanisms that local planning authorities can use to ensure proper monitoring and control of approved One Planet Developments – planning

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<sup>388</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 3.

<sup>389</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 22.

<sup>390</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 20.

<sup>391</sup> Elaine Forde, *Living Off-Grid in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020), p. 170.

<sup>392</sup> Simon Fairlie, "View from England" *The Land*, no. 15 (2013), p. 59.

<sup>393</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 9.

conditions or legal agreements. These are applied at the time that the planning permission is granted. Planning conditions or legal agreements (i.e. section 106 agreements) should be used to tie the fulfilment of the management plan to the planning permission. Section 106 agreements should be used to tie dwellings to the land, ensuring that land is not separated from the development at a later date. This is important in that if the dwelling is separated from the land, then the justification for the One Planet Development as a whole is lost.<sup>394</sup>

In addition, and following the granting of planning permission, OPDs are monitored on an annual basis giving the Local Authority control over the development.<sup>395</sup> This is demonstrated in the appeal decision of an early OPD, whereby the Inspector wrote that “It is a critical component of OPD that performance against the objectives of the development is monitored and reported on to the Council annually. This is necessary to ensure the development continues to adhere to the special requirements of OPD and corrective action can be taken speedily. The Council retains effective control over the development in this way”.<sup>396</sup> The monitoring requires OPDs to submit an annual report, providing a commentary on any changes made to the management plan if they are likely to affect the EFA, a re-run of the EFA after 36 months, and a resubmission of a new management plan after 60 months. This cycle is repeated in perpetuity.<sup>397</sup>

OPDs must document, for the purposes of the EFA, the number of people in the household, household income, energy use, housing and infrastructure (mortgage, rent, and repairs), travel and transportation, food purchased, food produced on site for domestic use, consumable goods purchased (clothes, furniture, and electric goods), services (ICT, Insurance,

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<sup>394</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 12-13.

<sup>395</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 12.

<sup>396</sup> Aidan McCooley, "Appeal Decision" Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal -&nbsp;APP/N6845/C/16/3142514 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2016), p. 7. <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>  
See also Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 30.

<sup>397</sup> Welsh Government, *One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities: Practice Guidance* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012). p. 63



and professional services), and other transactions (savings and other fuel).<sup>398</sup> As with the application process, the ongoing monitoring is therefore a bureaucratic exercise, which has been likened to a self-employed tax return.<sup>399</sup> The lived experience of the compliance monitoring will be addressed in the next chapter (and assessed as a factor limiting the appeal of OPD to prospective applicants), though it is evident from the evidence presented here that OPD, in its current form, is demanding of applicants in terms of its documentation and reporting, while also introducing jeopardy into their planning consent. However, on paper, OPD delivers on LID's ethos of facilitating the pursuit of a sustainable subsistence lifestyle with its anti-consumerist bias, while representing an ongoing holistic lifestyle commitment.

### **Does OPD facilitate access to affordable land for LID in Wales?**

Having assessed Wales's political environment after devolution as well as the OPD policy framework, this section will assess whether the policy, on paper, successfully facilitates LID by providing access to more affordable land. It will draw attention to the ways in which OPD represents a divergence from the land use system in England making more affordable land available. In England, where a national LID policy does not exist, a legal space to facilitate the accessing of suitable land for LID has been challenging. This is primarily due to planning restrictions which prevent the development of agricultural land, whilst land which has been designated from agricultural to residential use increases in value by a factor of one hundred.<sup>400</sup> As Pedro Brace of Tinker's Bubble commented of England, there is "very little precedent and not much in planning law to promote low impact developments".<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Welsh Government, *One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities: Practice Guidance* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012). p. 59

<sup>399</sup> David Thorpe, personal interview, Zoom, 21 July, 2021.

<sup>400</sup> George Monbiot, Robin Grey, Tom Kenny, Laurie Macfarlane, Anna Powell-Smith, Guy Shrubsole, Beth Stratford., *LAND FOR THE MANY: Changing the Way our Fundamental Asset is used, Owned and Governed* (London: Labour Party, 2020), p. 22.

<sup>401</sup> Pedro Brace, Personal email correspondence, 11 July, 2019.

In England, national planning policy is delivered in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which “sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced”.<sup>402</sup> Those seeking to explore LID In England, outside of the limited local policies identified in the Literature Review, must refer to Section 79 of the NPPF on rural housing.<sup>403</sup> It states that:

Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- a) there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;
- b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;
- c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;
- d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential dwelling; or
- e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:
  - is truly outstanding or innovative, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and
  - would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.<sup>404</sup>

It is evident, then, that there is no mention of LID in the relevant section of the English NPPF with scant guidance for those seeking to develop land-based enterprises in England. It is left to a Local Authority’s Local Development Plan to define the scope of what constitutes a ‘rural worker’ and the terms and available means of living in the open countryside. Furthermore,

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<sup>402</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework* (London: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021), p. 4.

<sup>403</sup> The only remaining local LID policy in England is in the Dartmoor National Park Authority, while there has been recent progress in Cornwall that is yet to be officially announced.

<sup>404</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework* (London: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021), p. 22.

the focus on 'rural worker' is limited and ambiguous, though it usually pertains to agricultural and forestry workers.<sup>405</sup> In addition, though there is no qualification of what 'essential need' represents, this is taken to include a 'functionality test' of the need to live on site for the purposes of the enterprise, such as to look after live stock or to deal with emergencies, and a 'financial test' to demonstrate that the enterprise is financially sustainable and able to support a worker.<sup>406</sup> This clearly does not correlate with the core principles of LID which is rooted in a subsistence lifestyle, while aiming to develop new residential smallholdings which may yet have been able to develop the financial proof required under existing planning terms.

LID is also not based on using a heritage site, nor the re-use or subdivision of an existing building or residence. Furthermore, though LIDs may be considered 'innovative', the NPPF's notion of this is rooted in high end Grand Designs-style architecture. Daniel Janota, Head of Forward Planning and Economy at Dartmoor National Park Authority, identified that the language of the NPPF is not aimed at LID and, rather, that the "paragraph 79-type houses are only the sort of thing that is open to someone who has got an awful of money to chuck at it".<sup>407</sup> Therefore, though the English NPPF is based on a 'presumption' towards sustainable development, it does not provide opportunities for the type of sustainability initiatives offered by LID, particularly by limiting access to more affordable land.

As a result, before OPD, and as is still the case in England, potential low impact smallholders faced the same issue; smallholdings with an existing dwelling were too expensive, whilst it was not possible to get planning permission for a house if there was not already a building on the site.<sup>408</sup> Whilst the financial constraints may be overcome, the capacity to develop in the open countryside is very challenging without a change in policy. This was the experience of Joshua Wood, a low impact architect based in Bristol, who noted that in England, he "came to the conclusion that we needed shit loads of money and a nice chunk of land. The money is

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<sup>405</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Rural Planning Handbook for Low Impact Developers* (Glastonbury: Red Brick Books, 2018), 4.2.

<sup>406</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Rural Planning Handbook for Low Impact Developers* (Glastonbury: Red Brick Books, 2018), 4.4.

<sup>407</sup> Daniel Janota, personal telephone interview, 3 October, 2019.

<sup>408</sup> "One Planet Development and Access to Land: Paul Jennings, OPD Smallholder and Self-Builder," last modified 5 April, 2020, accessed 18 June, 2021, <https://www.lowimpact.org/one-planet-development-paul-jennings-part-1/>.

an area that you can slowly work at but getting a piece of land that is going to be designated for that type of thing is going to pretty much impossible".<sup>409</sup> By facilitating access to land designated as agricultural, OPD removes the primary obstacle to LID by making land in rural spaces available at a more affordable cost. The affordability aspect must, then, be considered.

The provision of the settlement on more affordable agricultural land allows for new smallholdings in the open countryside to be created, circumventing the need to purchase existing ones at market value. This makes subsistence land-based enterprises financially viable. This is significant given LID's emphasis on subsistence, as opposed to the pursuit of commercial profit required by other rural exception policies. Chris Vernon, member of the Rhiw Las OPD in Carmarthenshire and part of the One Planet Council, contended that OPD "has been adopted by a group of people who want to live on the land without buying into the existing pool of smallholdings because they are finite, the price is just crazy. The price is so crazy that you could never hope to run a land-based enterprise from them that would justify the £500,000 sticker price of the smallholding that's already on the market".<sup>410</sup> The requirement of a significant mortgage to pay the cost of the existing smallholding would, as a result, preclude the pursuit of a land-based enterprise, especially one based on a subsistence lifestyle.

OPD therefore opens up an opportunity to develop a new residential smallholding and for people to get into small-scale farming.<sup>411</sup> To Dave and Irene Triffitt, whose OPD was granted permission in 2018, OPD "allowed us to have a much larger piece of land than we would normally have been able to afford, as we would have needed to purchase an existing smallholding, which we could not have afforded".<sup>412</sup> It is clear, then, that the policy addresses the affordability aspect of LID in Wales. The issue of affordability of OPD and a lack of rural

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<sup>409</sup> Joshua Wood, personal interview, Bristol, England, 13 September, 2018.

<sup>410</sup> Chris Vernon, personal interview, Zoom, 25 May, 2021.

<sup>411</sup> Paul Jennings, "One Planet Development and Access to Land: Paul Jennings, OPD Smallholder and Self-Builder", lowimpact.org, accessed 18 June, 2021, <https://www.lowimpact.org/one-planet-development-paul-jennings-part-1/>.

<sup>412</sup> Dave and Irene Triffitt, personal email correspondence, 3 July, 2020.

All interviewees for this study who are pursuing or considering OPD stressed financial constraints of land and OPD's capacity to overcome these challenges.

housing is further demonstrated in the first failed appeal of Pwll Broga, an OPD in Pembrokeshire, where it was raised by Iwan Lloyd, the Planning Inspector, who wrote that “The Appellant and her family cannot afford to buy or rent locally and wanted a proper home for their young child. If the Enforcement Notice is upheld then they would be homeless, without income and dependant on the Council for accommodation”.<sup>413</sup> This particularly pertinent given the socio-economic context of rural Wales which has higher levels of poverty than the UK as a whole.<sup>414</sup> The rural west, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Gwynedd, and Môn, have been included among the poorest regions in the European Union (before Brexit), including eleven countries formerly in Eastern Europe and behind the ‘Iron Curtain’.<sup>415</sup> This is noteworthy, in the context of LID, as 33 (85%) of the 39 successful OPD applications are in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, and Ceredigion (see Appendix One), those areas identified as having higher levels of poverty. OPD therefore has the potential to satisfy Davidson’s stated aim of OPD of facilitating young pioneers of sustainable development.<sup>416</sup>

In spite of this, whilst the policy prescribes for the development in the open countryside, it does not address the market for land. For example, land vendors often seek to ensure that they benefit from any increase in value by inserting uplift clauses guaranteeing the selling landowner a percentage of the value added with a change of planning consent. A prospective OPD applicant addressed this issue, suggesting that “Most pieces of land come with an uplift clause attached, which obviously makes it impossible”.<sup>417</sup> It has also been posited that OPD has opened up a new niche land market and that the prices for agricultural land are rising to double.<sup>418</sup> Though this has been speculated by the Calon Cymru Network, Stefan Cartwright

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<sup>413</sup> Iwan Lloyd, "Appeal Decision: APP/N6845/C/13/2190452" Pembrokeshire County Council Planning Archive - 12/1070/PA (Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2013), p. 4.

[https://planningdocs1.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/PublicAccess\\_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=DC&FOLDER1\\_REF=12/1070/PA](https://planningdocs1.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/PublicAccess_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=DC&FOLDER1_REF=12/1070/PA)

<sup>414</sup> Emyr Williams and Rosaleen Doyle, *Rural Poverty in Wales: Existing Research and Evidence Gaps* (Cardiff: Public Policy Institute for Wales, 2016), p. 4.

<sup>415</sup> Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 44.

<sup>416</sup> Jane Davidson, *#futuregen Lessons from a Small Country* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2020), p. 115.

<sup>417</sup> Prospective OPD applicant #1 from Monmouthshire, personal telephone interview, 2 September, 2019.

<sup>418</sup> Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 22.

and Stephen De Waine, both OPD applicants, have, in personal interviews, rejected this assertion, noting that the number of OPD applications are too small to have an effect on land prices.<sup>419</sup> In addition, OPDs, if sold or transferred, continue to be based on the existing management plan and any purchaser would have to fulfil the terms of it to live on site, or submit their own to be approved by the Local Authority, which, given the stringent nature of the policy, is likely to limit the size of any OPD land market and, by extension, the value of the OPD development.

This was raised by Pete Linnell, an OPD policy expert, who stated that “an OPD consent adds no market value to land because of the extraordinary burden of compliance with and monitoring of the management plan”.<sup>420</sup> Though OPD does not engage the land market, it must be borne in mind that the land costs are still be significantly lower than land designated for residential development, especially as an OPD planning permission is not likely to add significant value given its stringent demands, thus partially negating the potential issues of uplift clauses. As a result, OPD, by providing for the development of new smallholdings in the open countryside, will continue to provide access to much cheaper land, even if there emerges a specific OPD land market. This notion was developed by Waghorn, who stated that

Land that’s good for OPD will never compare in price to development land. So, if you’re buying land that you can put a house on you might get a quarter of an acre [0.1 hectares] for eighty grand, say, in this part of west Wales, whereas agricultural land is maybe five grand, but if it looks really good for OPD it might be go up to eight or nine grand, but it is never going to go up to a couple of hundred grand.<sup>421</sup>

In sum, OPD does, on paper, facilitate LID in Wales as it removes the key obstacle to subsistence agriculture: access to affordable land. However, as the next section will show, the

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<sup>419</sup> Stephen De Waine, personal telephone interview, 19 August, 2019.; Stefan Cartwright, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 21 September, 2018.

<sup>420</sup> Peter Linnell, *Narratives of Obstruction: An Exploration of how Antagonistic Narratives can Result in Delay and Constraint on Roll Out of Welsh Government OPD Policy Objectives* (Wales: Peter Linnell, 2020), p. 5.

<sup>421</sup> Mark Waghorn, personal telephone interview, 22 July, 2020.

Welsh OPD policy is not without its flaws. OPD still requires a significant capital investment, with potential risks attached, while there are tensions with the regulatory frameworks that condition agricultural production and the construction of OPD dwellings. These issues have, when combined, limited the appeal of OPD and restricted its uptake to a somewhat narrow demographic.

### **The limitations and appeal of OPD**

Whilst OPD has prescribed for access to more affordable land, a significant capital sum is still required. Wimbush suggests a set up range between £50,000 and £100,000 per OPD smallholding.<sup>422</sup> In addition, whilst OPD homes can be built for between £10,000 to £50,000, they rely on significant inputs of labour, both from the self-builder and volunteers which, when accounted for, significantly increase the cost of construction.<sup>423</sup> The establishment costs are therefore still likely to be out of reach of those without significant financial resources. Neil Moyle, a current OPD applicant in Carmarthenshire, highlighted that “Financially it is tough. Our society have property and land set at an artificially high value whilst food is kept artificially low, this result for low impact developers means that a lot of necessary capital expenditure takes a long time to get back from the land itself. It basically means that on the whole OPD is only an option for folk from the middle classes”.<sup>424</sup> Therefore, whilst OPD does offer a more affordable route to LID in Wales, the financial resources required raises questions over its capacity to facilitate less affluent people to live off the land and the demographic that it might appeal to. Indeed, as Mel Robinson from the low impact

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<sup>422</sup> "Welsh Government's Environment & Sustainability Committee: Sustainable Land Management Consultation," last modified 1 February, 2014, accessed 18 June, 2021, <http://www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Inquiry-on-sustainable-land-management-Submitted-by-David-Thorpe.pdf>.

<sup>423</sup> Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 18.

<sup>424</sup> Neil Moyle, personal email correspondence, 6 October, 2020.

See also "One Planet Development and Access to Land: Paul Jennings, OPD Smallholder and Self-Builder," last modified 5 April, 2020, accessed 18 June, 2021, <https://www.lowimpact.org/one-planet-development-paul-jennings-part-1/>.

Cornerwood project, in Cardigan, which has been refused OPD permission, stated, “I don’t see many ethnic minorities or poor people in OPD”.<sup>425</sup>

Though OPD has made more affordable land available, its affordability is relative, with potential young pioneers of sustainability still potentially unable to afford land at agricultural prices, while those selling properties in more affluent areas can benefit more. In fact, Paul Jennings, permaculture teacher and part of the Rhiw Las OPD in Carmarthenshire, observed that

No reformist policy is going to achieve the high minded aims which one might imagine for OPD, under circumstances where there is a capitalist market in property where somebody can sell a house in Guildford and buy acres and acres of Wales where young people who live in Wales can't afford half an acre [0.2 hectares], even for a modest self-build, let alone to get out of rented accommodation in Neath or Swansea or Cardiff and take on a five acre [2.02 hectare] holding where they can make a case for being a viable OPD project.<sup>426</sup>

The consequence of this is a perception of the policy of being the preserve of middle classes, often English incomers labelled as ‘hippies’, rather than young Welsh people seeking to live off the land.<sup>427</sup> This is partially explained given that there is no equivalent to Wales’s OPD policy in England and many low impact practitioners have migrated to rural Wales to seek OPD permission.<sup>428</sup> This has resulted in some tension, evidenced in communication with a vocal online critic of OPD, blogger Jac o’ the North, who argued that “Wales may be a country with large rural areas, but most Welsh people live in town and cities. Wales is a fairly normal European country not a pastoral society in the third world in need of colonies of the enlightened”.<sup>429</sup> The issue of social integration of OPDs will be explored in the final chapter, but

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<sup>425</sup> Mel Robinson, personal telephone interview, 12 November, 2019.

<sup>426</sup> Paul Jennings, personal interview, Skype, 2 June, 2021.

<sup>427</sup> Simon Fairlie, "View from England" *The Land*, no. 15 (2013), p. 59.

<sup>428</sup> Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 22.

<sup>429</sup> Jac o' the North, personal email correspondence, 10 September, 2019.



is clear that in order for OPD to be successfully implemented at a local level, it will need to be adopted by a broad demographic, beyond those from the English middle classes and to include those from Welsh-speaking traditional farming communities. This is particularly noteworthy given that the children of aging farmers were specifically identified by Davidson as target audience for OPD.<sup>430</sup>

However, OPD has yet to attract an uptake from traditional farming communities, who are seemingly more likely to use other rural planning policies to develop new houses in the Welsh countryside. The Welsh Government, in fact, recognised the need to ease the transfer of existing farm businesses to younger generations in its *Practice Guidance Rural Enterprise Dwellings - Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (2011) and outlined ways to facilitate the building of new dwellings on existing farms. Though these are rooted in the same principles their English counterparts, the specific qualifications for the ‘functional need’ and the ‘financial test’ have been relaxed. In addition, the Welsh Government has extended the scope of the Rural Enterprise Dwellings exception to include a wider range of workers in rural enterprises to cover five areas, agriculture and forestry; activities which obtain their primary inputs from the site; land management related activities; land related tourism and leisure; and support services related to rural-based activities.<sup>431</sup> This may at least partially explain the limited representation of traditional Welsh farming communities in OPD, which has thus far been populated only by a smaller pool of those seeking a low carbon life and accepting of the policy’s rigid terms in return for access to more affordable land. It has seemingly appealed less to those seeking to continue existing farming businesses and practices.

In addition, the challenges of OPD’s strict controls are affected by extra-OPD regulatory regimes, particularly those relating to food production and buildings. OPDs operate in an asymmetrical power structure, as larger farms benefit from state subsidies and are not monitored for their impact on the natural world. In fact, the system of agricultural subsidies

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<sup>430</sup> Jane Davidson, personal interview, St. Dogmaels, Wales, 9 January, 2019.

<sup>431</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance: Rural Enterprise Dwellings - Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2011), p. 7.

favours large scale producers; only farms over 3.23 hectares are eligible for government subsidies (though this may change due to Brexit).<sup>432</sup> This disparity between large industrial farming and OPD's emphasis on sustainability is exacerbated by regulatory requirements for the production and sale of farm produce. These add a financial and administrative burden as OPD producers must conform to the same regulations as commercial producers, while their productivity is much lower and, therefore, conforming to these frameworks can have significant financial impacts which may serve to affect an OPD's capacity to reach its targets. As Wimbush pointed out,

The first thing that you've got to recognise is that being sustainable in an unsustainable society is a bit like trying to swim upstream. So, society and its mechanisms, its politics and its economics – you're working against them all of the time. So, let me give you an example, I've got one milking cow, the smallest registered dairy in Wales, producing milk nine months of the year and trying to sell milk. In order to jump through all of the bureaucratic hoops – the six-monthly TB tests, the quarterly milk testing, the milk parlour testing - all that kind of stuff, as well as the drain of doing it, there's a financial cost, £2000 a year. Now, if you're living off-grid on a pittance, and your dairy business brings in two grand a year or one and a half grand on a bad year, that's at least half of your profit, just to pay the bureaucrats off to enable you to produce raw milk and sell it to your neighbours who are all completely aware of the risks.<sup>433</sup>

Alongside this, there are tensions with the regulations surrounding construction methods and there are "certainly problems reconciling OPD-type housing with building regulations created for mainstream construction".<sup>434</sup> For example, though devolution has provided opportunities

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<sup>432</sup> Guy Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?* (London: William Collins, 2019), p. 106.; Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 12.; "One Planet Development and Access to Land: Paul Jennings, OPD Smallholder and Self-Builder," last modified 5 April, 2020, accessed 18 June, 2021, <https://www.lowimpact.org/one-planet-development-paul-jennings-part-1/>.

<sup>433</sup> Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.

<sup>434</sup> "One Planet Development Arrested: My Attempts to Build a Home on a Smallholding in Wales," last modified 8 October, 2015, accessed 10 June, 2021, <https://www.lowimpact.org/one-planet-development-arrested-my-attempts-to-build-a-home-on-a-smallholding-in-wales/>; Simon Dale and Jasmine Dale, *The Compatibility of Building Regulations with Projects Under New Low Impact Development and One Planet Development Planning*

for LID, the devolved Welsh Government introduced, in 2016, a requirement that all new houses and converted properties must be fitted with sprinkler systems as part of their fire prevention measures.<sup>435</sup> The water sprinkler aspect, in particular, means that OPD sites must either have a mains water supply already or close by, as installing this would likely fall foul of the policy's EFA and environmental impact qualifications. This has affected OPD sites' ability to meet the sprinkler requirement given the need for particular water pressure standards. Waghorn described this as "a very unwelcome legislative development".<sup>436</sup> Having to install a sprinkler system can add £1,000 to £2,500 to the cost of a build which is a significant addition to a home with is aimed affordability. OPD builders, if forced to conform to this regulation will either not be able to bring the project to fruition or will seek to operate outside of the regulatory system.<sup>437</sup> There have, in fact, been two major consequences of this tension between OPD and building regulations.

First, many OPD applicants, 17 (45%) out 38, have opted to classify their dwellings as caravans, using the 1961 Caravan Act to avoid being subject to building regulations as building regulations – and the sprinkler requirement – do not apply to park home and caravan standards.<sup>438</sup> This is, however, limiting, as the size of the dwelling is severely restricted by choosing a caravan classification.<sup>439</sup> With OPD being at least partially aimed at young families, the restricted size of dwellings on sites that choose to opt out of conforming to building regulations may not be viable. The second consequence is that the type and style of home now required to conform to building regulations has led to a significant shift from the vernacular of LID architecture in the 1990s. The added costs and professionalisation of OPD dwellings must also be linked to the risks of the policy.

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*Policies: Critical and Urgent Problems and the Need for a Workable Solution* (Wales: Simon and Jasmine Dale, 2011).; Mark Waghorn, "One Planet Development: Opportunities and Barriers" *Archidoc* 3, no. 2 (2016), 20-33.

<sup>435</sup> Building Regulations were devolved to Wales on 31 December 2011.

<sup>436</sup> Mark Waghorn, personal telephone interview, 22 July, 2020.

<sup>437</sup> Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Calon Cymru Network, 2017). p. 29

<sup>438</sup> Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Calon Cymru Network, 2017). p. 77

<sup>439</sup> Though there have been 39 successful OPD applications, the Rhiw Las application in Carmarthenshire is comprised of 4 dwellings which brings the total number of dwellings to 43. The information relating to these was, however, only available for 38 – see Appendix One.

A failure to demonstrate continued compliance to the policy benchmarks outlined above represents a breach of contract with the Local Authority with the potential consequence being the invoking the OPD policy's exit strategy. The exit strategy, the provision for failed projects can result in the loss of the residential element of the development, in addition to any aspects of it that may cause harm or become derelict.<sup>440</sup> Therefore, should OPDs fail to meet to meet the conditions of the planning consent, the residential rights of the permission may be withdrawn. This sanction has yet to be applied but, according to Caroline Bowen, Senior Planner at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority,

One thing that scares me about OPD is that I'm not sure how seriously people take the exit strategy. We haven't tested it yet and I'm not looking forward to testing it because some people have put their heart and soul into very permanent dwellings where if they don't meet it [the terms of the policy] at the end of the five years, you realise that in your management plan and by having your management plan, as far as the Welsh government is concerned the management plan says you come off the site. So, it's almost saying that you can't then go to appeal to try and keep the house because the inspector will say that it was quite clear in your management plan that if it fails you come off the land".<sup>441</sup>

One aspect of Bowen's response is particularly significant. Whilst OPD allows for the construction of a dwelling as long as it is zero carbon in construction and use, the residential permission granted by OPD is ultimately temporary in that it can be removed if the conditions discussed above are not met. This means that a failure to meet the legally binding targets might render an individual, family, group, or community homeless – they may keep their land, and continue their land-based activities, but the residential permission is withdrawn, and the dwelling must be removed from the site. In addition to the potential for being made homeless, the enforced removal of the dwelling represents a significant financial risk to those investing in building innovative, carbon zero homes.

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<sup>440</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 68.

<sup>441</sup> Caroline Bowen, personal interview, Pembroke, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

The risks associated with the ongoing compliance monitoring must also be understood in the context of the policy's incomplete provision. Alongside the risks associated with missing the agreed upon targets of the management plan, there are aspects which have yet to be legislated for – the potential impacts of disability, ill-health, old age, or the natural disaster.<sup>442</sup> A recent article in the Royal Town and Planning Institute described the policy as “bold and innovative, yet at the same time introduces risks and challenges”.<sup>443</sup> In addition to issues physical health considerations, there are uncertainties too, as families evolve, and personal circumstances change.<sup>444</sup> There is no mechanism to allow people to stay in their homes should they miss their targets as a result of any of these circumstances.<sup>445</sup> For example, Anne Hooper, who gained OPD planning permission in 2018, in Powys, identified that “I am in my sixties now and there have been various queries raised on the forums on the OPC about what happens when you got old and what happens if you get sick, what happens is you can't meet your targets”.<sup>446</sup> This is demonstrative that OPD's residential planning consent is contingent on future circumstances and, therefore, represents additional considerations compared to other forms of residential development.<sup>447</sup> However, there is no clarity in terms of how this will be managed if the impacts of ill-health, for example, cause long term issues that affect the capacity of the applicant to meet their targets.

There is, in fact, no practical guidance to how these circumstances can be dealt with, beyond the prescription of a yellow and red card system identified in the OPD *Practice Guidance* which

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<sup>442</sup> Tao Paul Wimbush, *The Lammas Ecovillage: Deep Roots and Stormy Skies* (Wales: FeedARead Publishing, 2021), p. 273.; Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 30.; Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 55-56.

<sup>443</sup> Neil Harris and Allan Archer, "One Planet Development: The Opportunities and Challenges of a Living Countryside" *The Journal of Royal Town Planning Institute Cymru* (Spring, 2020), p. 11.

<sup>444</sup> Neil Harris and Allan Archer, "One Planet Development: The Opportunities and Challenges of a Living Countryside" *The Journal of Royal Town Planning Institute Cymru* (Spring, 2020), p. 11.

An interesting and related discussion is whether the policy is potentially prejudicial towards those that are disabled.

<sup>445</sup> Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 55.

<sup>446</sup> Anne Hooper, personal telephone interview, 24 June, 2020.

The same point was made by Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.; Stefan Cartwright, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 21 September, 2018.

<sup>447</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 30.

is aimed at short term changes to the project and deemed “not be critical to the future of the site”.<sup>448</sup> The One Planet Council (the grassroots advocacy group for OPD which will be assessed in the next chapter) has recognised these issues in a ‘Position Statement’, published in 2019. It acknowledged that temporary issues of ill-health or crop failure could be dealt with using the existing yellow/red card system, but that in the case of more permanent issues “are of the opinion that there should be greater clarity in official guidance”.<sup>449</sup> In these circumstances, it advises that the management plan should be amended to reduce the targets to the minimum of 30% of food production and an amendment of the business plan to less labour intensive means of production. It also advocates the inclusion of a new ‘maintenance code’ based on environmental benefits of the site.<sup>450</sup> However, this is still an outstanding issue and, given the potential loss of the residential planning permission, the evident uncertainty and risks might affect the appeal and uptake of the policy.

This raises questions over the policy’s appeal, given the stringent nature of the policy’s formulation, risk, and limited contingency provision. Whilst OPD does represent a break from the land use norms held since 1947, it is formulated as a strictly regulated rural exception and its various aspects, in production and construction, must conform to non-OPD regulatory frameworks that are not easily applied. This issue was engaged by Anitra Nelson, academic and co-housing expert, who argued that “I think it’s problematic because a lot of the guidelines are quite rigid. They incorporate all of the standardisation of planning which makes it problematic in general. And, there would have been greater uptake of some of those initiatives, I think, if they’d been more generous in the way that they’ve been modelled...It’s all good and well bringing in certain guidelines, but the real proof of the pudding is once they’re applied; what is the uptake, are the planning authorities supporting that, encouraging that”.<sup>451</sup> As it stands, the policy is still small with 39 successful OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021. This suggests that the policy’s current formulation, while facilitating LID on

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<sup>448</sup>Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 67.

<sup>449</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 2.

<sup>450</sup> One Planet Council, *OPC Position Statement 2: One Planet Developments Provision for Illness, Incapacity and Disability* (Wales: One Planet Council, 2019), p. 2.

<sup>451</sup> Anitra Nelson, personal interview, Skype, 29 August, 2018.

paper, has not been sufficiently appealing to generate a larger uptake. The number of applications is, for example, significantly lower than those expected by Davidson, who, in a personal interview, suggested that uptake would be slow, but that there would be 100 successful OPDs in its first decade.<sup>452</sup> The key reasons for this disparity will be assessed in the subsequent chapters which examine the policy's implementation.

## Conclusion

The findings of this chapter indicate that OPD represents a significant progression from the status quo still present in England. A specific LID policy exists in Wales, one based closely on the definitions and characteristics identified in the Literature Review. In addition, the OPD policy has facilitated access to more affordable land, with land previously not earmarked for development now being available to those seeking to develop low carbon lives in the open countryside, providing they meet the strict policy benchmarks. As a result, OPD has, on paper, facilitated LID in Wales. Indeed, the policy is operational and attracting applications, with 63 applications in the period of 2010-2021. Of these, 55 have been determined and 39 applications have been successful (see Appendix One).

Though OPD has filled a policy gap, the relatively low uptake indicates that the policy's outward appeal has been limited. This can be ascribed to the strictness of the policy's formulation, notably the requirement to meet challenging targets, ones that are monitored in perpetuity. Of particular importance in this context is that the policy's rigour introduces a significant risk factor, namely the loss of the residential planning consent should the successful OPD applicant not fulfil the commitments made in their management plan. This is exacerbated by the policy's lack of clarity with regard to the potential outcomes related to factors such as old age, injury, or natural disaster. In the context of the ongoing Covid-19

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<sup>452</sup> Jane Davidson, personal interview, Zoom, 2 July, 2021b.

pandemic, the policy's documentation would benefit from the closing of this loop to lay out the process for an applicant's change of circumstances.

In addition, though the OPD policy allows for access to more affordable land, the capital investment required is still likely to be out of reach for many potential LID practitioners, particularly young people who are unlikely to have the prerequisite financial muscle. Moreover, the tensions between OPD practice and the broader regulatory environments, particularly building regulations, may limit the appeal of OPD given the limitations of the dwellings imposed by having to conform to the post-2016 sprinkler requirement. The restrictions on the size of a dwelling based on a caravan footprint may preclude growing young families from being able to be accommodated. Meanwhile, the additional costs associated with meeting the sprinkler condition, or being unable to develop a mains water connection owing to the policy's environmental qualifications, will likely limit the number of plots of land available for OPD. The policy's success in making more affordable land available has, then, been relative which raises questions over the demographic to which the policy is likely to appeal.

It is clear that OPD does represent a progression from the status quo, as represented by the status of LID in England. However, it is, it seems, too strictly governed to be more appealing. The subsequent chapters of this study will therefore examine the implementation of the policy across three key stakeholder groups to consider the potential issues that have hampered this broader uptake. It will examine the lived experience of the policy, including applicants' capacity to navigate the application process, its targets, and compliance monitoring. It will also assess the ways in which the decision makers have engaged the policy and how local communities have reacted to the arrival of new a form of development in areas usually precluded from development.



## Chapter Four

### The Implementation of OPD and Stakeholder Group One: Applicants

Having assessed the capacity of the OPD policy to facilitate LID in Wales, on paper, the following three chapters will assess its implementation across three identified stakeholder groups: OPD applicants, decision makers, and local communities. This chapter will examine, from the perspective of OPD's applicants, whether the policy, in a real-world setting, delivers upon its promise to facilitate the development of new sustainable residential smallholdings in the open countryside in Wales. It will also consider whether the policy's design has hampered its implementation amongst this stakeholder group, contributing to the limited number of applications in the period of this study, 2010-2021.

This chapter will argue that OPD, in opening up a legal space for LID, has been the primary driver for the relative success of LID in Wales. As will be seen, the opening of this legal space has been foundational in applicants' decision to pursue OPD in Wales. The OPD policy has therefore offered security to applicants by legitimating LID as a form of development, in addition to providing access to more affordable land. As a direct result of this, the policy has been able to attract potential LID practitioners beyond those willing to engage in a struggle against their respective Local Authority to gain retrospective planning permission, as has been the case in England, and the experience in Wales prior to devolution, as outlined in the Literature Review. In this regard, by establishing a process to follow and there having been 39 successful OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021, the policy is facilitating LID in Wales.

Nevertheless, this chapter will further argue that OPD is a complex and bureaucratic in both the application process and its lived experience which serves to undermine its potential to attract a broader uptake. As will be shown, the application process and, in particular, the writing of the management plan is a lengthy and academic task that requires a significant investment of time and financial resources. Moreover, the ongoing compliance monitoring necessitates a further all-encompassing and an ongoing lifestyle audit. The combined impact

of OPD's bureaucratic modelling, in terms of the application stage and the ongoing compliance monitoring, has served to restrict the appeal of OPD which partially explains the low uptake of the policy since 2010.

While the policy's benchmarks that require applicants to be able to meet their 'basic income needs' from the land are modest, this chapter will also highlight how the five-year establishment period of OPD negates the possibility for experimentation as the consequences of failure, addressed in the last chapter, are significant with the potential loss of the residential planning consent and the requirement to dismantle the dwelling. These issues combined have meant, as this chapter will conclude, that OPD requires a unique personal profile: those with the academic skills to navigate the application process and ongoing compliance monitoring, land-based skills, financial resources, in addition to being willing to accept the aforementioned risks. The policy's implementation, amongst this stakeholder group, has been affected by OPD being too rigid in its modelling and is therefore unlikely to be appealing beyond a limited group of pioneer projects.

In order to demonstrate these findings, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section will develop the importance of having the OPD policy available to develop low carbon lives in rural spaces. The second section will examine the application process, drawing particular attention to its length and complexity. It will also highlight the multiple challenges of writing the extensive management plan, the high level of academic skill required to produce it and address the apparent requirement for these to be ratified by third-party consultants in order to be approved by planning professionals. The third section will serve to examine the lived experience of the policy, with an assessment of its targets that compel applicants to demonstrate that they are able to cover the 'basic income needs' from the land within a five-year period. The final section will assess the somewhat bureaucratic ongoing compliance monitoring to demonstrate the extent of the detail required to be submitted and comment on the broader implementation and appeal of OPD as a combination of these factors.

## The OPD policy and the opening of a legal space to facilitate LID in Wales

As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, Welsh devolution provided a political environment in which LID came to be recognised and adopted as part of the Welsh Government's sustainability strategy. As a result, LID was legitimised as a form of development in the open countryside under the rubric of One Planet Development. The importance of OPD to the facilitation of LID was noted by Stefan Cartwright, an OPD practitioner in Cardigan, who stated that "Having a policy is absolutely *the* difference".<sup>453</sup> Moreover, Tao Wimbush, co-founder of the Lammas Ecovillage, affirmed that, "Like any planning framework it is crude and it is clumsy, but it is something, and it's there all across the country and it's all right, it's good, it offers an opportunity, and it's a welcome opportunity that enables society to have a shift in its direction and that's really important".<sup>454</sup> There are two aspects of this that are significant. First, OPD represents a shift in national policy which reversed the presumption against the development in the open countryside, though, as was shown in the last chapter, OPD is formulated as a rural exception which maintains the land use system's fundamental value of urban containment.

Second, OPD provides an opportunity to LID practitioners by opening up a legal space for those seeking to develop low carbon lives in rural spaces in Wales, especially by making more affordable land available. Indeed, this legal space has provided security to those investing in OPD.<sup>455</sup> In each of the interviews conducted for this study, current and prospective applicants identified the legal route offered in Wales as the key motivation for pursuing OPD. For example, Lauren Simpson, a successful OPD applicant in Pembrokeshire, acknowledged that, "we wanted to know how we could do this legally".<sup>456</sup> Moreover, the newly created legal space and the emergence of a legitimate process to follow has the potential to make OPD

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<sup>453</sup> Stefan Cartwright, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 21 September, 2018.

The interviewee placed an emphasis on 'the'.

<sup>454</sup> Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.

<sup>455</sup> Larch Maxey, "Low Impact Development in Context," in *Low Impact Development: The Future in our Hands*, eds. Jenny Pickerill and Larch Maxey (Leeds: Creative Commons Attribution, 2009), p. 22.

<sup>456</sup> Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

more appealing to more LID practitioners and, in particular, to those previously unwilling to consider taking a more direct-action approach.

In terms of this direct-action approach, and as was seen in the Literature review, LID campaigners in England and Wales, before OPD, often moved onto the land first, seeking retrospective planning consent to legitimise their developments. The importance of this was, in fact, identified by Rebecca Laughton, market gardener and author, who stated that

The fact that there is a policy that encourages a low impact life undoubtedly improves the chances of success because you can buy a piece of land and, as long as you put in a good application and then do what you say you are going to do, you can get permission and that's not possible in England. It's a much bigger risk to try and do it under the radar and because there's a policy that allows you to do it in Wales, it enables people who are less maverick about wanting to live a low impact life a way to do it.<sup>457</sup>

This can be demonstrated by the types of OPD that have emerged since 2010, as well as the patterns in which these have settled on their land. The trust created by having a legitimate process to follow since OPD's availability from 2010 has resulted in "a shift from retrospective to prospective planning applications for low impact and permaculture developments".<sup>458</sup> Moreover, the type of OPD applications submitted in the period of this study, 2010-2021, also suggests a group of OPD applicants beyond the 'mavericks' identified by Laughton.

Alongside the definition of OPD provided in previous chapter, *TAN 6* prescribes that

One Planet Developments may take a number of forms. They can either be single homes, co-operative communities or larger settlements. They may be located within or adjacent to existing settlements, or be situated in the open countryside.

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<sup>457</sup> Rebecca Laughton, personal telephone interview, 17 February, 2020.

The same point was made by Caroline Bowen, personal interview, Pembroke, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

<sup>458</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 26.

Where One Planet Developments involve members of more than one family, the proposal should be managed and controlled by a trust, co-operative or other similar mechanism in which the occupiers have an interest.<sup>459</sup>

It is revealing that of the 39 successful OPD applications since 2010, only one has been a group project – Rhiw Las, an 8.7-hectare OPD in Carmarthenshire. Nevertheless, despite being a group application Rhiw Las is, in actuality, four separate smallholdings each with their own individual planning obligations and the ‘group’ element only pertains to the need to split a larger plot of land. The four 2.02-hectare plots are owned in freehold and there is a management company, Rhiw Las Ltd. that all adults in the development are members and directors of. The company owns the barn which pre-existed on site, in addition to a small amount of land and the tracks. Its only business is maintenance; there are no formal communal obligations.<sup>460</sup> Therefore, though OPD allows for the development of multiple variants, the uptake to date shows no evidence of a propensity towards attempts to develop intentional communities, communes, or other forms of alternative communities.

As can be seen in Table 4.1 (below), OPD applications have not emerged from community endeavours and are, instead, rooted in a family-scale approach. Compiling data from the OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021, it can be seen that, at the point of application, these smallholdings were predominantly homes for two adults (39% of all applications), two adults and one child (21%), or two adults and two children (21%). The make-up of these households, in terms of numbers of people (per household), is therefore very much in keeping with household numbers in the wider community in Wales. Indeed, the national occupancy per household in Wales, as of 2021, was 2.26 people.<sup>461</sup> This finding is corroborated by the forthcoming review of the OPD policy by the One Planet Council whose own pie chart (Figure

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<sup>459</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 24.

<sup>460</sup> Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 94.

<sup>461</sup> "Average Household Size (Persons) by Local Authority and Year," last modified 23 September, 2021, accessed 12 November, 2022, <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Households/Estimates/averagehouseholdsize-by-localauthority-year>.

4.2 below) reflects this study's analysis of OPD occupancy rates derived from the management plans submitted to Local Authorities during the application process.

The pattern of only single unit applications – of single applicants, couples, and families – therefore suggests that the demographic of those applying for OPD has moved beyond those willing to engage in what Richard Moyse described as the 'direct action approach'.<sup>462</sup> The opening up a legal space for LID in Wales has, then, legitimised it as a form of development and brought the idea of a low carbon life towards the mainstream. It has built trust and confidence in an established process which has the capacity to attract a broader demographic than those willing to engage in protracted legal battles with the planning system as seen in England and in Wales before the advent of OPD. OPD has facilitated LID by removing the legal barrier to entry, particularly to more affordable land. This has, according to Tracy Styles, from the low impact Cornerwood project in Cardigan, meant that "The policy has enabled many more people to move back to the land".<sup>463</sup>

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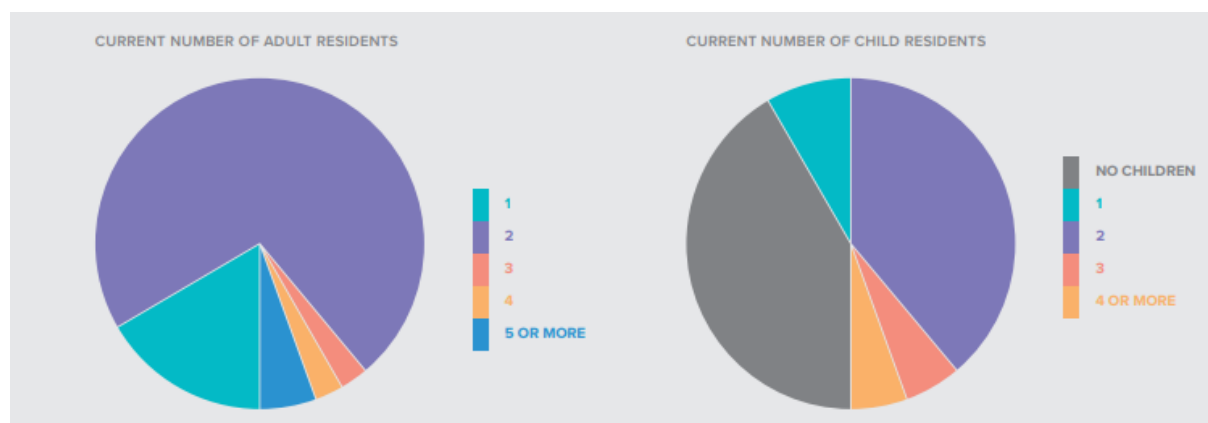
<sup>462</sup> Richard Moyse, "Low-Impact Development: A Sustainable Future for the Countryside" *Ecos* 20, no. 2 (1999), p. 59.

<sup>463</sup> Tracy Styles, personal telephone interview, 15 January, 2020.

Table 4.1 Occupancy of OPDs at the point of application, 2010-2021<sup>464</sup>

| Type of occupation            | Number of Applications |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| One adult and no children     | 3                      |
| Two adults and no children    | 15                     |
| One adult and one child       | 1                      |
| One adult and three children  | 1                      |
| Two adults and one child      | 8                      |
| Two adults and two children   | 8                      |
| Two adults and three children | 2                      |
| Two adults and four children  | 1                      |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>39</b>              |

Figure 4.1 OPD occupation according to OPD applicants responding to a One Planet Council survey (2022)<sup>465</sup>



Source: One Planet Council. *Review of One Planet Development in Wales 2010-2022* (Carmarthen: OPC, forthcoming)

<sup>464</sup> This data was compiled by the author from the publicly available OPD management plans. Though there were 39 successful OPD applications in the period of this study, one project, Rhiw Las is a group project of 4 separate smallholdings. As a result, this table shows the data from 39 OPD smallholdings, out of a total of 43.

<sup>465</sup> The image was shared by Erica Vernon, the Chair of the One Planet Council. The questionnaire is part of the upcoming review of OPD by the OPC and Welsh Government.

For further information, see: One Planet Council. *Review of One Planet Development in Wales 2010-2022* (Carmarthen: OPC, forthcoming)

The rest of the chapter is more critical of OPD, but this should not detract from the evidence of this initial section. There are now 42 LID smallholdings in Wales that OPD has facilitated.<sup>466</sup> The Welsh Government has, then, developed a policy pathway not found elsewhere in the British land use system. Yet, 39 successful applications may be regarded as a limited success considering, for example, Jane Davidson's estimation, outlined in the last chapter, that there could have been 100 successful applications in the first decade of the policy's existence. As will be seen in the next sections, this can, in part, be explained by the shape of the policy which, as it stands, is overly complex and too tightly regulated to allow for a broader uptake.

### **The application process as limiting factor to the appeal of OPD**

Now that the importance of OPD's opening of a legal space has been assessed for this stakeholder group, the rest of this chapter is divided into three sections; OPD's application process, the lived experience of it targets and monitoring, and the lifestyle auditing required to conform to the policy's strict regulation. This section will explore the application process, including the production of the management plan, and demonstrate that it is a complex, lengthy, and bureaucratic exercise. The impact of this is that the appeal of the OPD policy is likely to be limited.

As was shown in the previous chapter, the Welsh Government's OPD policy has demanding benchmarks and targets for applicants meet. This is also reflected in the burden of proof required of OPD applicants to justify their proposed new development in the open countryside. This emphasises that the shape of OPD was conditioned by a need to make its departure from standard land use norms palatable to policy makers and the planners who would be charged with adjudicating it.<sup>467</sup> What Pete Linnell, and OPD expert, described as the

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<sup>466</sup> To reiterate, there were 39 successful applications in the period of 2010-2021 which, when the 'group' OPD at Rhiw Las is accounted, for represents 42 OPD smallholdings in Wales.

<sup>467</sup> Peter Linnell, personal interview, Facebook, 14 July, 2021.



“unintended consequences” of this, is that OPD is both complex and bureaucratic and both applicants and the decision makers in Local Planning Authorities face significant challenges.<sup>468</sup>

Of particular note is that OPD applicants, in search of legal permission to live off the land, must produce large volumes of information to submit to their respective Local Planning Authority (LPA), while the planning professionals who adjudicate this paperwork are not typically trained in the various aspects of OPD applications, including layered micro-businesses and a farming approach typically based on permaculture principles (to be addressed in the next chapter). The implications of this were pointed out by Moyse, who stated that

The policy is unfortunately very complicated both for applicant and [planning] officer due to the many requirements and stipulations. The whole policy would hugely benefit from reform to simplify it. The difficulties arise from land-based people having to do a huge amount of paperwork they are not used to or qualified for and the planning office having to trawl through lots of land-based data both environmental and economic which they do not have any experience in, and their only source of advice are from their authorities estates department who take a very conventional view on land-based activity (that of huge farms are the only profitable enterprise).<sup>469</sup>

Whilst the implementation of OPD in the decision-making apparatus will be examined in the next chapter, it is evident that that the primary challenge to this study’s first group of OPD’s stakeholders – its applicants – is the amount of material that must be produced and submitted to the Local Authority for review. Joshua Wood, a low impact architect, opined that a key challenge of OPD to applicants was simply “the bureaucracy”, while Erica Vernon, climate scientist and Chair of the One Planet Council (OPC), commented on a BBC Radio broadcast,

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The same point was made by David Thorpe in a personal interview, Zoom, 21 July, 2021.

Tony Wrench is a pioneer of LID in Wales having fought for his roundhouse at Brithdir Mawr. For further information, see <https://thatroundhouse.info/>

<sup>468</sup> Peter Linnell, personal interview, Facebook, 14 July, 2021.

<sup>469</sup> Neil Moyse, personal email correspondence, 6 October, 2020.

that OPD “is certainly a very difficult ask in terms of the paperwork and the bureaucracy required”.<sup>470</sup>

The application process for OPD is a lengthy and demanding exercise. It has been estimated by David Thorpe, an OPD expert, that applicants spend “300 hours during two years on their applications”.<sup>471</sup> In addition, and as will be developed in more detail in the next chapter, the time it takes for Local Authorities to determine OPD applications goes well beyond the Welsh Government’s 8-week target. Therefore, OPD applications take a considerable investment in time in order to produce the documentation required, followed by an extended period of uncertainty while the Local Authority makes its decision. Mel Robinson, part of the low impact Cornerwood project in Cardigan, described the OPD application process as “paperwork, collating numbers, measuring, quantifying, qualifying completely, putting it all on paper and then submitting it to the authorities and then they can say whether or not you’ve achieved it”.<sup>472</sup>

The final qualification to Robinson’s analysis is key to understanding an OPD application. The prospective nature of the application process, the investment of time and capital, and the extended waiting time for a decision to be reached, is a significant risk, as applicants have “likely invested a significant proportion of their personal treasure in the land, and months or even years of effort and non-trivial costs in preparing the application”.<sup>473</sup> Though all planning applications carry risk, OPD’s risk is unique as the upfront commitments are many. With the burden of proof set high, and with the time it takes for this to be produced and considered

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<sup>470</sup> Joshua Wood, personal interview, Bristol, England, 13 September, 2018.; "Climate Change," last modified 30 June, 2020, accessed 18 July, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00067rr>. See also, "Climate Change: '10,000 Families could Live Off-Grid'," last modified 26 June, 2019, accessed 26 June, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-48769569>.

<sup>471</sup> "Welsh Government’s Environment & Sustainability Committee: Sustainable Land Management Consultation," last modified 1 February, 2014, accessed 18 June, 2021, <http://www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Inquiry-on-sustainable-land-management-Submitted-by-David-Thorpe.pdf>.

<sup>472</sup> Mel Robinson, personal telephone interview, 12 November, 2019.

<sup>473</sup> Peter Linnell, *Narratives of Obstruction: An Exploration of how Antagonistic Narratives can Result in Delay and Constraint on Roll Out of Welsh Government OPD Policy Objectives* (Wales: Peter Linnell, 2020), p. 2.

by the Local Authority, OPD may only be attainable and appealing to a limited demographic, especially when the academic nature of the application stage is considered.

Unlike other rural development policies, such as the 'Rural Enterprise Dwelling' policy provision described in the last chapter, OPD's application process is prospective. As a result, it is entirely academic and does not require any evidence of previous success in developing land-based enterprises or the demonstration of the practical skills required to develop them. The impact of this, is that a forensic detailing of the proposed project is required to satisfy the reversal of planning orthodoxy. The *OPD Practice Guidance*, in fact, states that "Planning applications for land based One Planet Developments located in the open countryside need to be supported by robust evidence".<sup>474</sup> The management plan is the key document in which applicants must provide this 'robust evidence' and is the basis of the ongoing monitoring.<sup>475</sup> It represents the legal contract between the OPD and the Local Planning Authority and a failure to continue to meet its terms can result in the invoking of the exit strategy outlined in Chapter Three.<sup>476</sup> The importance of the management plan is demonstrated by the fact that in each of the failed applications that have been refused by delegated decision or at appeal by the Planning Inspectorate, in the period of 2010-2021, the shortcomings of the management plan have been identified by planning professionals.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 25.

<sup>475</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 27.

<sup>476</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 10.

<sup>477</sup> For more information on failed applications due to shortcomings on the management plans, see: Rachel Elliot, "Delegated Decision Report " Pembrokeshire County Council Planning Portal - 19/0424/PA (Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire, 2020).

<http://planning.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/swiftlg/apas/run/wphappcriteria.display>; Rachel Elliot, "Delegated Decision Report" Pembrokeshire County Council Planning Portal - 13/0745/PA (Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire, 2016). <http://planning.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/swiftlg/apas/run/wphappcriteria.display>; Rachel Elliot, "Delegated Decision Report" Pembrokeshire County Council Planning Portal - 19/0190/PA

(Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire, 2019).

<http://planning.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/swiftlg/apas/run/wphappcriteria.display>; A L McCooley, "Appeal Decision " Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/L9503/A/18/3217440 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2018). <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>; Ian Poulter, "Appeal Decision " Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/D6820/A/12/2179373 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2012); Vicki Hirst, "Appeal Decision - Appeal A " Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/D6820/A/14/2226200 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2015). <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>; Richard Jenkins, "Appeal Decision "

As was shown in the last chapter, in the compiling of a management plan, OPD applicants must deliver a five-year plan to build a land-based enterprise, construct a zero-carbon dwelling, produce energy, water, and waste management systems, in addition to mitigating their potential traffic and community impacts.<sup>478</sup> It is a significant undertaking. Calculating the length of this document from successful OPD applications do date (2010-2021), the average length of a management plan is 90 pages (see Appendix One).<sup>479</sup> The management plan was described by Cartwright as a “tomb of information” and by Simpson, a fellow OPD practitioners, as an “epic task to write this big document”.<sup>480</sup> Moreover, Clive Wychwood, who gained OPD planning permission in 2018, stated that the “application itself was the biggest challenge” and that the management plan was “like writing a dissertation basically and it was a grind”.<sup>481</sup> The idea of a dissertation is enlightening because it conjures up a relationship with academic study. Indeed, the management plan requires a significant range of academic skills.

For example, potential applicants must command the digital literacy skills of producing a neatly presented written document that includes a digitised representation of the plot of land, showing the oft-used zonal layout used in permaculture design. In addition, many management plans include detailed architectural drawings of the buildings, including the dwelling, proposed for the site. Alongside this, applicants must, in granular detail, provide a five-year business plan that includes their land-based enterprise. This has to demonstrate the monetary value of crops to be grown or the livestock reared in each year, in addition to the costs associated to the applicants’ ‘basic income needs’, including how many miles they may drive, the amount that will be spent on clothes, IT services, mobile phone use, and food items not grown on site. These must also be fed through an excel spreadsheet that calculates (and justifies) the Ecological Footprint Analysis (EFA). Moreover, these images, statistics, and descriptions of the site’s land use, as well as the community and traffic impacts, must be

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Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/G6935/A/18/3198894 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2018). <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>

<sup>478</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 8.

<sup>479</sup> For examples of OPD management plans, see: "Approved Applications," last modified 21 December, 2021, accessed 29 June, 2022, <http://www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk/approved-applications/>.

<sup>480</sup> Stefan Cartwright, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 21 September, 2018.

<sup>481</sup> Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.

The same point was made by Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.

presented in a particular structure as outlined in the *OPD Practice Guidance* (2012), and articulated in a way that commands a high level of written communication skill.<sup>482</sup> The skills are clearly aligned to those developed in Higher Education.

In requiring such technical knowledge and an academic skill set as part of the application process, OPD is potentially exclusionary to those without the educational background required to navigate the application process, but who have the skills required to succeed at the land-based enterprise. This was recognised by OPD applicant, Chris Vernon, who remarked that "The planning process is definitely excluding some people who are unable to navigate the bureaucratic nature of it [OPD], if they are unable to write these 100-page documents and corral all of the various bits of evidence and engage in all of these different stakeholders. There are definitely people that could absolutely excel at the practical nature on the ground but feel unable to tackle the bureaucratic planning process".<sup>483</sup> This highlights the tension between the complex, bureaucratic, and academic nature of the application process and the lived experience of OPD which is rooted in practical and land-based skill. It is clear, then, that OPD's modelling is only likely to be relevant to those with academic skills to navigate the application stage combined with the practical skills to develop a land-based enterprise.

This is exacerbated by the prescription of *TAN 6* that the management plan must, in fact, be submitted by a "competent person(s)".<sup>484</sup> This is an ambiguous prescription but, as the documentary evidence shows, infers the need for paid consultants to corroborate the figures of the management plan to satisfy the decision makers. In addition to the academic and practical skill set, applicants must also, then, have the financial resources to employ relevant

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<sup>482</sup> The exact requirements of the management plan and application process are outlined in Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012).

<sup>483</sup> Chris Vernon, personal interview, Zoom, 25 May, 2021.

The same argument was made by Neil Moyse, personal email correspondence, 6 October, 2020.; Phil Moore, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.; Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.; Prospective OPD applicant #1 from Monmouthshire, personal telephone interview, 2 September, 2019.

<sup>484</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 2.

third-party expertise. It is clear from the archival research of this study that earlier OPD applications faltered because those determining the applications have considered the figures submitted by the applicant not to have been corroborated by a 'competent person(s)'. As will be shown in the next chapter, the decision makers were not adequately prepared for adjudicate OPD applications which meant that, initially at least, decision makers were reluctant to take applicants' evidence at face value and sought third-party expertise to defer to. This goes some way to explaining why there were only five successful OPD applications before 2016 (see Appendix One).<sup>485</sup>

For example, at the dismissed appeal for Tom O'Kane's application for OPD in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, in 2013, the Inspector, Clive Nield, wrote that

The first matter to address is the reliability of the Management Plan itself as the recent national guidance says it should be "produced by a competent person(s)". In other contexts that phrase is generally taken to mean someone who is professionally qualified and suitably experienced. In this case, Mr O'Kane wrote the Management Plan himself, albeit with assistance on certain specialist matters. He has prepared it with painstaking attention to detail and commendable determination and enthusiasm. On many matters he is probably as well placed as anyone to contribute his knowledge and expertise. However, the lack of impartial professional input raises doubts about possible over-optimism, particularly in the absence of supporting evidence.<sup>486</sup>

Furthermore, Planning Inspector, Vicky Hirst, in determining the third appeal of Cornerwood's OPD application, in 2015, wrote that

Whilst the appellants have submitted a biodiversity and landscape assessment, it was confirmed at the hearing that this had been based on observation and knowledge of how the woodland works with responses being developed to

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<sup>485</sup> This calculation excludes applications allowed on appeal.

<sup>486</sup> Clive Nield, "Appeal Decision" Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/L9503/A/12/2184276 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2013), p. 5. <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>

noticeable species. Whilst I do not doubt that the appellants have a thorough knowledge of the woodland and its contents, in the absence of a more detailed and focussed analysis of the habitats and species and their interaction with the nearby Sites of Special Scientific Interest carried out by a competent person on behalf of the appellants it is not possible to assess the extent to which these would be conserved and enhanced through the proposals.<sup>487</sup>

In dismissing the Cornerwood appeal, she concluded that “Whilst I acknowledge that OPD by its nature does not provide a large income and the cost of professional surveys are expensive, I consider that some aspects of the Management Plan require input from competent persons such as ecologists and transport experts to provide the robust data that is required”.<sup>488</sup>

By contrast, the report of the allowed appeal for the Rhiw Las OPD in Carmarthenshire, is revealing in this respect whereby the Planning Inspector, Alwyn B Nixon, commented on the validity of the application and the reliability of the details provided because “The management plan and development models for each plot draw on experience and expertise developed elsewhere, including the Lamma ODP in Pembrokeshire, and are supported by an independent professional appraisal”.<sup>489</sup> Moreover, in the allowed appeal for Cobbler’s Field, also in Carmarthenshire, the Inspector wrote that “I note that the Management Plan has been the subject of an independent review by experts in OPD. The review concluded that all the essential criteria were satisfied”.<sup>490</sup> It is evident, therefore, that the input of professional advice has weighed heavily in favour of successful applications, especially given the niche nature of the policy and approach to farming.

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<sup>487</sup> Vicki Hirst, "Appeal Decision - Appeal A " Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/D6820/A/14/2226200 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2015), p. 4. <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>

<sup>488</sup> Vicki Hirst, "Appeal Decision - Appeal A " Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/D6820/A/14/2226200 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2015), p. 4. <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>

<sup>489</sup> Alwyn B Nixon, "Appeal Decision" Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/M6825/A/15/3139036 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2016a), p. 3. <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>

<sup>490</sup> A L McCooey, "Appeal Decision " Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/L9503/A/18/3217440 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2018). <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>

However, it is important to point out that whilst a number of OPD applications have been unsuccessful in the period after 2016, these have not, in the published documents, been based on a failure to be produced by a 'competent person(s)'. This can be attributed to the publication of the additional technical guidance provided by the Welsh Government's *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities*, published in 2012 (assessed in more detail in the next chapter), and, more importantly, to the emergence of the One Planet Council (OPC). The OPC, an independent grassroots body, have developed training for planning professionals as well as a platform for OPD applicants which has provided access to expertise and a community of shared practice.

The OPC was launched in 2014 and now acts as a platform for the various stakeholders of low impact development in Wales. Its website states that

The One Planet Council is an independent voluntary body supporting One Planet Development in Wales and beyond. We provide a bridge between applicants and local planning authorities, with guidance and tools to support anyone making the transition to this more sustainable way of life. We also work with those who have already made that leap, with policymakers, academics and landowners.<sup>491</sup>

The OPC's patrons include Jane Davidson, the (former) Minister that helped to introduce the OPD policy, James Shorten, the lead author of the policy's *Practice Guidance*, and is populated by many successful OPD applicants in Wales, as well a broader network of expertise relating to land use, permaculture, planning, energy and water systems, and architects.<sup>492</sup> The OPC draws upon the initial failure of the policy to result in successful applications before 2014 and has made two key contributions to facilitating LID in Wales. First, it has provided training to the decision makers (to be addressed in the next chapter). Second, the OPC has provided coordination to the stakeholders of OPD, whereby, for example, the challenges of the application stage have been partially mitigated by connecting applicants with those deemed

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<sup>491</sup> "Home," last modified 18 December, 2021b, accessed 30 June, 2022, <http://www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk/>. One Planet Council (2019) <http://www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk/about/>

<sup>492</sup> "Support Services for Applicants | One Planet Council," last modified 9 October, 2018, accessed Mar 18, 2022, <http://www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk/support-services/>.



to be a 'competent person(s)' by planning professionals. This was identified by Wimbush, pioneer of Lammas, who stated that "there is coordination within the movement – One Planet Council – which gives a means for those challenges to be navigated".<sup>493</sup>

This coordination of the policy is facilitated by the OPC's Facebook Group. It currently has 7500 members, including many of the successful applicants who respond to questions from those interested in pursuing the policy agenda.<sup>494</sup> This has affected greater familiarity with the application stage of OPD as well as a forum of shared practice. Senior Planner at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Caroline Bowen, recognised the impact of this by stating that OPD's application process is "a really daunting process and a planner really can't explain it the way someone that lives it can. A planner can only say that this what the policy requires you to do".<sup>495</sup> In addition to connecting applicants with professional expertise, the OPC's website has also served to improve the implementation of OPD in Wales by making successful management plans publicly available, fostering a set of templates for others to use.<sup>496</sup> As one OPD applicant put it, there are now

thirty-plus people in Wales that have treaded the boards already, so there's a lot of plans out there that you can have a look and see how they were written and adopt the format that already been accepted by the local councils so, therefore, you've got a head start. It's obviously going to be easier now than it was for people nine years ago who didn't have a clue because they're the ones who had to cut the path.<sup>497</sup>

The ability for prospective OPD applicants to engage with both experts and those already having successfully navigated the policy's application process, in addition to having access to approved applications' management plans, has been essential to the policy's more successful

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<sup>493</sup> Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.

<sup>494</sup> The number of members of the OPC Facebook Group was correct as of 1 July 2022.

<sup>495</sup> Caroline Bowen, personal interview, Pembroke, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

<sup>496</sup> A selection of these are available on the One Planet Council website as well as on the local authority planning portals.

<sup>497</sup> Stephen De Waine, personal telephone interview, 19 August, 2019.

implementation in the period after 2014. It is, in fact, noteworthy that of the 39 successful OPD applications in the period of this study, 2010-2021, 34 (87%) have been since the emergence of the OPC and the training it has offered to the decision makers from 2015.<sup>498</sup> In sum, while the Welsh Government enacted OPD, the OPC has provided the impetus for the policy's recent more successful implementation.

However, notwithstanding the impact of the OPC, the technical nature of the application process has resulted in those wishing to apply for OPD having to be academically minded, often university educated, or having to seek assistance from the small economy of consultancy work, education, training, and advocacy that has emerged.<sup>499</sup> An analysis of the support available for OPD applicants suggests an average of £15 per hour by those with the skills and knowledge to support the completion of the management plan. Whilst this is not an unreasonable hourly fee, the capital investment in the application stage may be out of reach, especially once the planning application fees and surveys are accounted for.<sup>500</sup>

Commenting on the cost of the application stage, Chris Vernon stated that it "can run into several thousand pounds of legal fees and professional consultation fees which is a lot to stake if you are then aiming to live a relatively low impact and income lifestyle. It can be a big chunk of money and it's all prospective and it might not work. So, it's a big risk".<sup>501</sup> The risk of OPD's application process must also be considered alongside those identified above about the length of time OPD applications take to complete and be determined, as well as those outlined in the previous chapter of the residential planning consent being based on the continued capacity to meet targets, whereby the dwelling, the foundation of a person's

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<sup>498</sup> This calculation was based on when the OPD applications were submitted rather than when they were determined by the Local Planning Authority.

<sup>499</sup> Elaine Forde, *Living Off-Grid in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020), p. 71.

For a further discussion on this see Zoe Wangler and Rebecca Laughton, *Planning Barriers Faced by New Organic Horticultural Businesses in England* (Bristol: The Landworkers' Alliance and Ecological Land Co-operative, 2019), p. 4.

<sup>500</sup> Beyond the professional expertise available, a specific OPD online course is offered by David Thorpe for £80p/p or £45p/couple, while the Lammas Earth Centre offers a broader 2-day residential course relating to One Planet Living, including OPD guidance, for £475p/p. For more information, see:

<https://theoneplanetlife.com/courses/workshops-in-one-planet-development/>

<https://lammasearthcentre.co.uk/one-planet-living/>

<sup>501</sup> Chris Vernon, personal interview, Zoom, 25 May, 2021.

security, and likely their most valuable asset, may have to be dismantled and removed from the site if an OPD project is deemed to have failed.

This raises questions of the application process's impact on the policy's appeal and the personal profile of those to which it may be attainable. This was pointed out by Linnell, an OPD planning expert, who stated that "The tests are rigorous at the application stage, and they are demanding of the skills and knowledge of the applicants, or the applicant's capacity to pay somebody with the skills and knowledge to do it for them and that creates a whole other range of issues about who has access to resources".<sup>502</sup> In fact, according to David Wellan, a recent OPD applicant in Pembrokeshire, "We've paid to get help, but if you are on a lower budget and couldn't necessarily afford it, it's going to be very difficult".<sup>503</sup> Like the financial restrictions noted in the previous chapter, requirement for both academic and practical skills, in addition to the financial muscle to pay for the consultants is restrictive and likely only available to a limited demographic. The consequences of this are, according to Mel Robinson of the Cornerwood project, that "The people that are doing OPD now are all university educated, white – and I'm not knocking their background because I got an inheritance – but there isn't that easy access for everyone to get to OPD. You've got to have your middle-class white background and income and I think that's too restrictive".<sup>504</sup>

The limited uptake of OPD can therefore be partially explained by the challenges of the application process which is too onerous in its current form to attract a significant policy uptake. While OPD is, as the policy description in *TAN 6* suggests, aimed at 'exemplars' of sustainability, the requirements of the application process for OPD is only likely to appeal to a limited number of pioneer projects. For a broader uptake, the policy would benefit from being simplified at the application stage, while its core features remaining in place. The

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<sup>502</sup> Peter Linnell, personal interview, Facebook, 14 July, 2021.

<sup>503</sup> David Wellan, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

<sup>504</sup> Mel Robinson, personal telephone interview, 12 November, 2019.

The same point about the middle-class bias of OPD was made by Neil Moyse, personal email correspondence, 6 October, 2020.; David Thorpe, personal interview, Zoom, 21 July, 2021.; Peter Linnell, personal interview, Facebook, 14 July, 2021.

limitations of the application stage was recognised by Chris Vernon, of the One Planet Council (OPC), who stated that

the one thing that needs to improve is for the policy to be streamlined and the evaluation of applications needs to be simplified, but without watering it down. I don't think there is any justification to row back on any of the commitments. The buildings still need to be zero carbon in construction and use, there still needs to be a one planet ecological footprint, there still needs to be an enterprise element to it. I don't think you need to take any of the commitments away, it just needs to be a lowering of the burden of proof.<sup>505</sup>

### **OPD's limited appeal due to a short establishment period**

This section will assess the feasibility of the OPD policy benchmarks outlined in the previous chapter. As it will be shown, the focus on subsistence means that the land-based targets are achievable, demonstrated by the fact that the policy has led to no failed projects to date. However, it will be contended that the five-year establishment period is too rigid which limits the capacity for experimentation and, therefore, may limit the applicability of OPD to those with existing land-based enterprises. As a result of this, OPD, in its current form, may only be a viable option to a relatively small number of potential LID practitioners.

Given that OPD is aimed at developing a subsistence lifestyle, the *OPD Practice Guidance* notes that the site “must meet the minimum needs of residents in terms of food, income, energy and waste assimilation from the site”.<sup>506</sup> As a result, the financial targets are modest and applicants must be able to produce enough income from the land to cover the costs of

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<sup>505</sup> Chris Vernon, personal interview, Zoom, 25 May, 2021.

<sup>506</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 3.

any food not grown on site, in addition to clothes, travel, internet and communications, and Council Tax.<sup>507</sup> In contrast to the challenges of the application process, the targets of meeting ‘basic income needs’ are, according to many current and soon-to-be OPD applicants, “doable”, “not that challenging”, “not impossible”, “very realistic if you are capable”, and “perfectly achievable”.<sup>508</sup> Moreover, none of the interviewees suggested that they were averse to the need for targets and, rather, embrace the challenge to live a low carbon life. Simpson, whose Parc y Dderwen OPD was granted planning permission in 2019, noted that “OPD is forcing us to put our money where our mouth is. All of this, really, is an elaborate way of us encapsulating the life that we think is possible and proving it is possible to other people by having a comfortable, joyful, abundant lifestyle without fucking over the planet, basically. And it drives me to prove that that is possible. So, it is challenging but in a way that I want it to be”.<sup>509</sup>

In addition, though applicants must demonstrate that they have a plan to meet the policy’s criteria outlined in the previous chapter, these are self-imposed in the legally binding management plan addressed above. Achieving the targets, then, rests on writing an attainable management plan. As a current OPD applicant from Carmarthenshire, Neil Moyse, pointed out

The targets are set by the applicant, so long as they adhere to the criteria set out in the planning guidance. So, in principle, it is as easy or as hard as you want to set the bar. For us it is highly realistically achievable because we already have a business, with wholesale customers and many more people wanting our product, the criteria for meeting the basic human requirement, for someone who has a lot of practical experience is relatively easy, much, much easier than what is asked for a conventional planning application in the open countryside. However, for

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<sup>507</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 3.

<sup>508</sup> Prospective OPD applicant #1 from Monmouthshire, personal telephone interview, 2 September, 2019.; Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.; David Wellan, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.; OPD applicant from Pembrokeshire, personal email correspondence, 13 September, 2019.

<sup>509</sup> Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

The same point was made by Joshua Wood, personal interview, Bristol, England, 13 September, 2018.

most (ordinary?!) folk I think the hardest thing to realize is: starting a land-based business whilst building a house whilst not particularly knowing much about how to do either. The five-year plan can be a bit of a trap for dreamers.<sup>510</sup>

The primary pressure on applicants, therefore, is not the targets set in the management plan but the time in which they have to achieve these. As Wychwood, a successful OPD applicant from Ceredigion, commented, this five-year deadline is “unnecessarily demanding”.<sup>511</sup> It is perceived as being ‘unnecessarily demanding’ because OPD typically required the turning of a bare field or woodland site into a functioning sustainable land-based enterprise which generates enough income to meet basic needs in addition to a zero-carbon dwelling that produces its own power and services its own waste. Wimbush recognised its challenges noting that

It’s ambitious. To have five years to reconfigure the landscape and create for yourself a dwelling, a livelihood, and a lifestyle that is largely land based in the context of an unsustainable socio-economic system is incredibly ambitious. And new applicants or people considering it or people doing it feel that and know that. It’s no small task, to take a piece of unmanaged woodland or over-grazed pasture and turn it into a permaculture ecosystem that includes electricity, water, food, energy, income is massively ambitious. I’d like to think in the future that would be acknowledged more.<sup>512</sup>

OPD is a significant undertaking within a relatively short period of time, especially when natural resources such as firewood and fruit trees, for example, take time to grow and establish. As Bowen, commented, “I think the ones that come to a blank site, and all credit to them if they do it, you know if some are determined enough, but a field to a home in five

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<sup>510</sup> Neil Moyse, personal email correspondence, 6 October, 2020.

The same point was made by Stephen De Waine, personal telephone interview, 19 August, 2019.

<sup>511</sup> Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.

<sup>512</sup> Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.

The same point was made by Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.; Jasmine and Simon Dale, personal email correspondence, 27 November, 2018.

years is a big ask because things like biomass take a long time to establish”.<sup>513</sup> In fact, the issue of biomass and the broader capacity of an OPD’s ecological based to support itself within a five-year period has been raised in failed applications. The key issue leading to the rejection of Castle Hill’s application was that willow takes time to grow and become established. In dismissing the appeal, the Inspector, A L McCooey, stated that “The plan shows that the Willow would take some years to mature sufficiently to be used. Two varieties are proposed – one for biomass energy and one for craft products. The basketry Willow may be available by year 4 or 5. This is late in the process and casts doubt on whether sufficient income can be generated by year 5 as required by TAN6”, in addition to noting that “I have some doubt that heating needs can be met within the requisite 5-year period”.<sup>514</sup>

Moreover, in 4 (67%) of the 6 OPD applications refused under delegated powers in Pembrokeshire County Council, has the five-year establishment period been identified by the presiding planning officer as one of the reasons to refuse OPD planning consent.<sup>515</sup> This has related to the capacity to reach income thresholds within the five-year period, or the capability of specific types of land-based enterprises, especially those that involve trees, to be established with this time frame. For example, in both unsuccessful applications for Wern Isaf, the length of time for fruit trees (first application) and Christmas trees (second application) to be productive was identified as contributing to the reasons for refusing the application.<sup>516</sup> Therefore, the five-year establishment period may serve to limit the land-based enterprises to ones that rely on faster growing crops or to sites with an established and appropriate ecological base, with a broader impact of limiting the delivery of LID in Wales.

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<sup>513</sup> Caroline Bowen, personal interview, Pembroke, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

<sup>514</sup> A L McCooey, "Appeal Decision " Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/L9503/A/18/3217440 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2018), p. 3-4. <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>

<sup>515</sup> For further information, see the Delegated Decision Reports for application numbers 20/0442/PA, 19/0424/PA, 18/0978/PA, and 19/0190/PA submitted to Pembrokeshire County Council available from <http://planning.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/swiftlg/apas/run/wphappcriteria.display>

It is worth pointing out this section is based on Pembrokeshire County Council as others, notably Carmarthenshire County Council, has stopped writing reports for delegated decisions as they now outsource OPD applications.

<sup>516</sup> For further information, see the delegated decision reports for application numbers 18/0978/PA and 19/0190/PA, available from <http://planning.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/swiftlg/apas/run/wphappcriteria.display>

Furthermore, the modelling of a five-year establishment period is to the detriment of experimentation and those seeking to be pioneers of sustainability in the open countryside. The policy, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, is aimed at ‘exemplars’ and ‘pioneers’ which implies the use and trialling of new methods and approaches to farming which may not be immediately successful. However, the strict regulation and enforcement mechanisms of OPD means that the capacity for experimentation is limited, particularly for new entrants to land-based enterprise. This was pointed out by Linnell who stated that “There is no opportunity for a 20-year-old who is willing to learn. Suppose granny died and left them enough money to buy a field, there is no opportunity for that young person to learn how to live on that land by trial and error by learning from courses, by guest volunteers and helpers. It cuts off all of the culture that began the LID movement back in the 90s in Somerset”.<sup>517</sup>

This can be seen to have affected the implementation of OPD as is further shown in the dismissed appeal Castle Hill’s application whereby the Inspector wrote that “There is an over-reliance on trial and error in terms of if one enterprise fails then another can always be started to replace it. This does not reassure me on the basic soundness of the Management Plan, which is supposed to be evidence-based and demonstrate that the proposal will meet the essential criteria of OPD”.<sup>518</sup> OPD’s modelling has a degree of rigidity which constrains the likelihood of the policy attracting a significant number of applications as the application process, targets, and limited establishment period to demonstrate success, is too onerous and fraught with risk to allow for those without existing farming experience to develop the prerequisite skills.

This is particularly acute given that most of the farming skills developed over centuries without a reliance on fossil fuels have been lost since 1940.<sup>519</sup> As was identified in the Literature Review, the number land workers has diminished in the post-war period as

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<sup>517</sup> Peter Linnell, personal interview, Facebook, 14 July, 2021.

<sup>518</sup> A L McCooey, "Appeal Decision " Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/L9503/A/18/3217440 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2018), p. 7. <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>

<sup>519</sup> Rebecca Laughton, *Surviving and Thriving on the Land: How to use Your Time and Energy to Run a Successful Smallholding* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2008), p. 292.



agricultural systems in the UK have become increasingly intensified with the use of mechanised production methods and artificial fertilisers. In addition, farms have become larger, further reducing those employed in farming. A reversal of that trend and the (re)development of those skills and knowledge is a longer term ideal and challenging in the context of a rigid planning policy, particularly for new entrants to farming. There is then a limited alignment in the current modelling of OPD and the Welsh Government's more recent decarbonisation strategy identified in the previous chapter. In seeking to become more sustainable and to develop new approaches to farming, the strategy notes a focus on 'upskilling' and 'reskilling' the Welsh population. However, the limited capacity for experimentation and the learning of new skills given OPD's strict modelling limits the opportunities to realise the national decarbonisation plan in the context of Wales's LID policy.

In fact, Paul Jennings, permaculture teacher and part of the Rhiw Las OPD in Carmarthenshire, identified that the "reskilling has to be seen as a generational process, there is no way that someone raised in the post-industrial middle class of middle England, to be an academic, is ever going to achieve, however hard I try, is ever going to achieve the level of understanding of the landscape, the level of craftsmanship with my hands, that someone pre-1750 would have taken for granted".<sup>520</sup> Moreover, as Phil Moore of the Parc Y Dderwen OPD noted, "It's challenging, it's not in my bones, I don't have that bodily knowledge".<sup>521</sup> He continued to say that the "idea of skilling or skilling up, being autonomous and owning your own impact, the onus is I think you have to be a bit of a *bricoleur*".<sup>522</sup> The lived experience of OPD requires experimentation and the (re)development of land-based skills to foster successful 'exemplars' of sustainability. However, while OPD is demanding of the skills required – academic and practical – it is not generous in its time constraints for these to be achieved.

The targets, while commensurate with developing sufficient income to cover the inhabitants' minimum needs, have not been criticised by the participants for this study. However, the time

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<sup>520</sup> Paul Jennings, personal interview, Skype, 2 June, 2021.

<sup>521</sup> Phil Moore, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

<sup>522</sup> Phil Moore, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

*Bricoleur* is the French word for 'handyman'.

allowance has been identified as an area for greater leniency, with Simpson, Cartwright and Wimbush suggesting a period of seven to ten years, which “would be much better”, “much more do-able and much more attractive” and “more reasonable”.<sup>523</sup> This must be considered in the context of the risks of OPD of being continuously monitored to ensure these targets are met and the potential of the loss of the residential permission and the requirement to dismantle and remove the dwelling from the land. As has been shown, current and prospective applicants are confident in their capacity to meet these targets and, further, none of the successful OPD applications have failed and forced to invoke the exit strategy outlined in their application and management plan.<sup>524</sup> In that sense, the policy has been an absolute success with zero OPDs having to invoke their exit strategy and lose their planning consent. However, with 87% of successful applications having been approved since 2016, the ‘first wave’ OPDs are therefore approaching a point where they must demonstrate their achievement of One Planet Living.<sup>525</sup> A further study in the next five years will shed significant light on the success of this ‘first wave’ of to meet their targets within a five-year period. However, at present, it is clear that OPD’s modelling is only likely to be appealing to those with existing land-based skills and, potentially, an existing land-based business, and less so to new entrants seeking to develop low carbon lives. This adds a further layer of understanding to the limited number of applications in the period of this study.

### **OPD’s monitoring regime: an additional limitation on the policy’s appeal?**

The final section on this chapter will focus on the compliance regime that all OPD applicants have to abide with to maintain their exceptional planning permission. It will be shown how its demands present additional disincentives for those wishing to commit to a LID lifestyle. As

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<sup>523</sup> Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.; Stefan Cartwright, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 21 September, 2018.; Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

<sup>524</sup> The exit strategy is an essential part of the management plan and requires applicants to demonstrate how they would return the site to its pre-developed state in the event of the OPD’s failure and the loss of planning consent.

<sup>525</sup> Neil Harris and Allan Archer, "One Planet Development: The Opportunities and Challenges of a Living Countryside" *The Journal of Royal Town Planning Institute Cymru* (Spring, 2020), p. 11.

identified in the previous chapter, the Welsh Government's OPD *Practice Guidance* makes clear that the purpose of the ongoing compliance monitoring is "control".<sup>526</sup> OPD's unique approach to sustainability, by being based on ecological footprinting has resulted in a bureaucratic and, to some, invasive process of reporting. It will also be shown that the commitment to stay within the prescribed measure of sustainability - 1.88 global hectares - within five years, represents a radical departure from a normal western lifestyle and these demands, when combined, will limit the appeal of OPD to those sufficiently committed to sustainability and willing to take on the risks discussed already in order to gain access to more affordable land.

As was highlighted in the previous chapter, the sustainable development scheme from which OPD emerged, *One Wales: One Planet* (2010), represented a break from the approach taken to sustainability in England, which is rooted in offsetting carbon emissions. In jettisoning the offsetting model, OPD is a novel and holistic sustainability policy by accounting for a household's total ecological footprint. This necessitates significant documentation. This idea was developed by David Thorpe, an OPD advocate, who stated that

When you look at the big picture and realise that for 50 years we've been in ecological deficit, and despite all of the things we have been trying to do, it hasn't made a slightest bit of difference. The reason for that is that we are like somebody in a sinking ship trying to bail the water out with a colander and the holes in the colander are all of the things that we've missed. We concentrate on some things, like renewable energy for instance, thinking that will get us out this mess and it's not, there's all of the other holes. The thing about OPD is it accounts for all of those holes and that's so important and why it should apply to everybody, and not just people doing OPD. It accounts for everything and that is why it is so much hard work on the recording side and on the planning side.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>526</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 12.

<sup>527</sup> David Thorpe, personal interview, Zoom, 21 July, 2021.

The novelty of this approach means, then, that the policy ties OPD practitioners to exacting management and reporting standards.<sup>528</sup> Whilst OPD represents a step forward for the possibilities of LID in Wales, its codification is rigorous, and applicants subject their entire lifestyle to be measured in the pursuit of a 'one planet' life. In fact, as one respondent reflected, the monitoring is analogous to "an ecological audit, a lifestyle audit".<sup>529</sup> In none of the interviews conducted for this study did respondents bemoan being monitored. De Waive, reflecting on being monitored in perpetuity, stated that "I'm quite happy with that. I think because OPD is based on the fact that you're reducing your global footprint, your global hectares, down to 1.88 I think it is, I think you've got to be monitored. Because you can't allow people to just slip away and then have ten cars and have diesel generators running 24/7".<sup>530</sup> This was indeed the fundamental basis of the monitoring; the opportunity to live in the open countryside as an OPD represented a social contract which allows for an exceptional planning consent in the open countryside which would be monitored. It is regarded as an "an integral part of OPD proving itself to the world".<sup>531</sup> There are, however, two tensions that undermine the mainstream appeal and uptake of OPD in terms of the monitoring; that it is those sacrificing a typical western lifestyle that are being monitored, and the depth of detail required to be submitted to their respective Local Authority.

Despite accepting that their planning consent is an exception to standard land use norms, a key tension in OPD's ongoing monitoring is that it is those seeking to live sustainably that are the ones being monitored for attempting to act positively in the face of climate breakdown – those living unsustainable lives or those involved in unsustainable agricultural practices are not. This was pointed out by Jennings, who stated that

We find ourselves justifying our lifestyles to a system which is, in my opinion, from both an ecological and social perspective, entirely broken. So, I am judged on how

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<sup>528</sup> "One Planet Development Arrested: My Attempts to Build a Home on a Smallholding in Wales," last modified 8 October, 2015, accessed 10 June, 2021, <https://www.lowimpact.org/one-planet-development-arrested-my-attempts-to-build-a-home-on-a-smallholding-in-wales/>.

<sup>529</sup> Phil Moore, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

<sup>530</sup> Stephen De Waive, personal telephone interview, 19 August, 2019.

<sup>531</sup> Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

The same point was made by Prospective OPD applicant #1 from Monmouthshire, personal telephone interview, 2 September, 2019.

much food I grow, even though I grow more than the vast, vast majority of people in this country. I am judged on my carbon footprint even though I live, by our latest ecological footprint, as if there were one planet, even though so few people in the UK do, and yet I am under surveillance. I chose to live with composting loos, I chose to grow my own food, I chose to devote myself to planting trees, and yet I am justifying myself to an entirely broken state in the service of corporate capitalism and I have to justify the way I live every year to this planetary catastrophe, this not too slow-motion train wreck, which is unfolding, and I find that kind of offensive.<sup>532</sup>

In addition, and in order to justify their ongoing OPD planning consent, the lived experience of OPD necessitates a significant change and adaptation to the lifestyles of those applying to OPD given its radical anti-consumerist bias.<sup>533</sup> As one respondent put it, “It is such a big cultural shift which does block other opportunities. So, deciding essentially not to fly again is a fairly big commitment”.<sup>534</sup> The commitment stretches beyond the individual applicants because, for example, their children may not be able to join in on school trips which involve flying.<sup>535</sup> Sophie Wellan, a recent OPD applicant, while committed to reducing consumption, suggested that she would miss the leisure activity of shopping.<sup>536</sup> While offering a unique policy provision and being commensurate with the scientific consensus on climate change, the governing of OPD via strict targets, documentation, and monitoring is an onerous ongoing commitment. Indeed, the policy’s provision for travel, in particular, might be developed to include concessions for unexpected events, such as family emergencies. For example, as it is, an applicant might fail to reach their monitoring obligation for their EFA by having to fly to visit a sick relative, a factor that may limit the appeal of the policy given the potential of losing the residential planning consent by failing to meet their ecological footprint target.

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<sup>532</sup> Paul Jennings, personal interview, Skype, 2 June, 2021.

The same argument was made by David Wellan, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.; Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.; Faith Wrench, personal interview, Newport, Wales, 27 August, 2018.

<sup>533</sup> Elaine Forde, *Living Off-Grid in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020), p. 43.

<sup>534</sup> Prospective OPD applicant #2 from Monmouthshire, personal telephone interview, 2 September, 2019.

<sup>535</sup> Prospective OPD applicant #2 from Monmouthshire, personal telephone interview, 2 September, 2019.

<sup>536</sup> Sophie Wellan, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

This is exacerbated by the extent of the detail required. As was shown in the last chapter, the monitoring requires OPDs to submit annual reports, including a commentary on any deviation from the management plan if they are likely to affect the Ecological Footprint Analysis (EFA), in addition to outlining the occupation of the household, its income, energy use, food produced and consumed, housing costs, such as mortgage, rent and repairs, travel, purchase of clothes, furniture, and electrical goods, and the costs of professional services, communication subscriptions, and fuel.<sup>537</sup> For example, to satisfy the Ecological Footprint Calculator, applicants must document their day-to-day lives according to nine criteria; ‘general information’, ‘energy use, housing and infrastructure’, ‘travel and transportation’, ‘food purchased’, ‘food produced on site for home use’, ‘consumable goods’, ‘services’, and ‘all other transactions’.<sup>538</sup>

To illustrate the depth of detail that must be submitted to the Local Authority, OPD applicants must identify the number of people in the household. In addition to this, the amount of energy used must be declared, either by detailing energy consumed (if connected to mains power); the amount of gas, wood, or coal used; or the amount generated using solar or wind. The cost of any mortgage must also be submitted, as well as any expenditure on, for example, energy systems, repairs, the cost of building the dwelling, or the cost of cleaning equipment and services. Moreover, the amount of travel has to be declared, including the cost of purchasing vehicles, their upkeep, the number of miles driven, and the type of fuel used, in addition to the costs of additional transport via rail, ferry, bus, and air. It also requires the amount of fuel used to power any domestic use, such as in lawn mowers. In terms of the food consumed, the recording is broken down into food groups, such as meat, dairy, and vegetables, as well as any alcohol purchased. It also includes take-aways purchased and food purchased in restaurants. Applicants must also break down the costs of the food grown or reared on site, including the amount they have spent on compost, fertilisers, and seeds. In addition, the costs of purchasing consumables, like furniture, technology, or tobacco are

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<sup>537</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 59.

<sup>538</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance using the One Planet Development Ecological Footprint Calculator* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012b), p. 3.

required, as well as that spent on services, such as postage stamps. Finally, applicants must reveal 'all additional transactions, which includes their annual savings.'<sup>539</sup>

The extent of this reporting is, according to one prospective applicant, "bizarre and does feel very big brother to have a Local Authority to look closely into every aspect of your life".<sup>540</sup> In addition to having to prove their sustainability credentials to an unsustainable system, the depth of data required is potentially invasive as an applicant's whole lifestyles are put under the microscope and, in being submitted to the Local Authority, there are issues of data protection. This was developed further by an OPD applicant from Pembrokeshire, who argued that

We strongly believe that having to break down how many specific food groups we grow/eat/buy and the quantity and monetary value of each is highly intrusive and unnecessary. This also applies to having to declare exact incomes/expenditures and other breakdowns required. Our belief is that the important thing is that EFA calculation is good, minimum needs met and food production happening. This should just be simple statements of fact/percentages, that we are achieving our aims. Complete breakdown is intrusive and infringing on personal data and human rights to privacy. Where is this information about our eating habits/shopping bills etc. stored? Who has access to them? Why do they need this extent?<sup>541</sup>

Again, as with the targets, none of the interviewees for this study opposed the need for a continuing engagement with the Local Authority to demonstrate their continued commitment to living sustainably. However, the extent of the documentation, and the lifestyle change from a normal western lifestyle required, is likely too onerous to make OPD an appealing proposition beyond a limited demographic. In addition, and as will be seen in the next chapter, the depth of detail required and the interpretation of the 'monitoring' to include an obligation of Local Authorities to audit and, in effect, maintain an active

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<sup>539</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance using the One Planet Development Ecological Footprint Calculator* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 5-8.

<sup>540</sup> Prospective OPD applicant #2 from Monmouthshire, personal telephone interview, 2 September, 2019.

<sup>541</sup> OPD applicant from Pembrokeshire, personal email correspondence, 13 September, 2019.

surveillance regime on successful OPD has affected concerns over the resourcing required to implement OPD. In this view, a narrative change towards 'reporting' might alleviate some of the resourcing issues associated with OPD and enhance its implementation at local level. It may also make the policy more appealing to potential applicants.

It is evident, then, that OPD, in its current form, requires a unique personal profile. Thorpe has emphasised the uniqueness of the personal attributes required for OPD requires, writing to a Welsh Government Committee that

Such exceptional individuals and groups will inevitably be identified as culturally different from the mainstream. It is therefore a self-selecting process of exclusion. Because of the degree of familiarity required with the planning system, they may (though not always) be highly literate and intelligent, as well as highly practical and multi-skilled in terms of building, crafts and horticulture. They will also need to have sufficient capital to invest in both the land and materials for infrastructure. This is an unusual combination.<sup>542</sup>

Indeed, it is an unusual combination, especially when a further category 'risk taking' is introduced. Whilst OPD applicants must have the characteristics Thorpe describes, they must also be accepting of the risks associated of losing their residential permission, if they fail to meet their ongoing targets, an issue exacerbated by the incomplete policy provision developed in the last chapter.

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<sup>542</sup> "Welsh Government's Environment & Sustainability Committee: Sustainable Land Management Consultation," last modified 1 February, 2014, accessed 18 June, 2021, <http://www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Inquiry-on-sustainable-land-management-Submitted-by-David-Thorpe.pdf>.



## Conclusion

OPD has legitimised LID as a form of development and provided legal security to those seeking to develop new low carbon lives in Wales. It has provided a secure route to settle on more affordable land. As has been shown, this has facilitated LID in Wales for this stakeholder group and the demographic of those adopting OPD has moved beyond those willing to take on the significant challenge, identified in the Literature Review, of having to battle the Local Authority for the legal right to reside on site. The impact of the security offered by OPD was also demonstrated by the pattern of settlement, which is now prospective and via the planning system, rather than retrospective as has been the norm in England without a policy provision.

However, though OPD is only aimed at those deemed 'pioneers' and 'exemplars' of sustainable living, 39 successful applications in an 11-year period represents a limited success in the policy's implementation, especially in view of the policy being positioned to affect Wales's strategy of becoming a 'one planet' nation within a generation. Therefore, whilst the policy's existence should be viewed as a legitimisation and advancement of LID in Wales, its modelling in reversing the presumption against the development of the open countryside is seemingly too strict. In this view, the OPD policy's formulation has marginalised itself and made it applicable to a relatively small number of potential applicants.

The question, then, is not whether the policy's modelling is achievable but what the scale of the policy uptake might be. Whilst this is partly by design, with the policy aimed at 'pioneers' and as an 'exemplar' of sustainable living, the number of people taking advantage of this opportunity will remain very small, despite Erica Vernon, Chair of the OPC, arguing that up to 10,000 OPD smallholdings could exist in Wales. Addressing this gulf between the potential and reality, she continued to state that, "the question for the government would be, if they want to support this as it does tick many of the boxes in the Future Generations Act, for instance, all of these aspirations for Wales to be more sustainable in ways including the

environmental, but other ways as well, then maybe the government should be reducing those barriers and making it easier for people to do this".<sup>543</sup> The issue is not with the demand of being sustainable, but with the rigour and bureaucratic nature of the application process, the rigidity of its five-year establishment period, and the demands of its continued assessment.

The broader consequence of this is, as Cartwright suggested, that the policy "will stay small as long as the policy stays as is. So, for anyone with fears of a mass invasion people doing OPD, don't worry [laughs], because the challenges are too high to do. You have to be really prepared and really want to do this".<sup>544</sup> In fact, there is a bind with OPD, a more affordable opportunity to live in the open countryside whilst conforming to the strict governing of an off-grid space. Wychwood noted that "It's the ultimate irony with regard to this. If we had more money, we certainly wouldn't be doing OPD. We would just go and buy ourselves a farm and do it that way", an idea also expressed by a pioneer of the Welsh movement, Wimbush, who stated that "If One Planet practitioners could have afforded it, they would have just bought smallholdings".<sup>545</sup> It is indeed indicative that OPD has seemingly not appealed to those from traditional farming backgrounds who may have access to land on existing farms and who may, as suggested in the last chapter, be using the relaxed Rural Enterprise Dwellings provision to continue or build commercial farming enterprises. OPD has, instead, found an audience in a small section of society that is willing to take on the rigour of OPD in return for accessing land at more affordable rates to develop a subsistence lifestyle, often based on permaculture principles.

OPD therefore provides a unique policy provision for LID in the UK, it overcomes the historic challenges of limiting access to affordable land. However, in doing so, its rigour, though successful in leading to zero failed OPDs, has kept the number of successful applications low

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<sup>543</sup> "Climate Change: '10,000 Families could Live Off-Grid'," last modified 26 June, 2019, accessed 26 June, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-48769569>.

<sup>544</sup> Stefan Cartwright, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 21 September, 2018.

<sup>545</sup> Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.; Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.

The same point was made by Prospective OPD applicant #1 from Monmouthshire, personal telephone interview, 2 September, 2019.

attributable to the unique personal profile that the broader lived experience of the policy demands. As Linnell concluded, “The policy has shown to be effective in small number, less than 50, special cases. These are mostly, but not exclusively, people equipped and resourced to deal with the complications demanded by the detail in the legislation and especially the guidance document”.<sup>546</sup> As a result, OPD’s capacity to meaningfully contribute to reducing Wales’s ecological footprint is limited, in its current form, beyond a handful of exemplar projects. However, having shown itself to be functioning and not leading to unjustified and sporadic development in the open countryside, there is evidently scope to review the policy’s demands of its applicants to move OPD beyond the ‘exemplar’ or ‘pioneer’ stage towards a more appealing and streamlined offering to escalate its capacity to contribute to rural regeneration in Wales.

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<sup>546</sup> Peter Linnell, personal interview, Facebook, 14 July, 2021.

## Chapter Five

### The Implementation of OPD and Stakeholder Group Two: The Decision Makers

This chapter will assess the implementation of OPD in the second group of the policy's stakeholders identified for this study, the decision makers. It will explore the two sides of the decision-making coin: planners and elected members of planning committees. Indeed, and as will be shown, OPD applications, like all planning applications in Wales, are determined in two ways, either via a Delegated Decision, whereby the determination is made by a professional planner in the Local Authority, or by Planning Committee in which a recommendation is provided by a planning officer, but the ultimate decision is made by a vote of elected officials. This chapter is, therefore, interested in examining how each of the groups determining OPD applications have engaged the policy. It will evaluate their effectiveness in implementing the OPD policy, in addition to their potential impact on the limited policy uptake identified in Chapter Three. It is clear that, whilst OPD is a Welsh Government policy, the successful facilitation of LID in Wales rests upon a successful implementation of OPD by Local Authorities.

This chapter will argue that OPD's implementation has been more successful amongst professional planners than in elected planning committees, particularly in the period after 2016. It will show that OPD was initially affected by an expertise gap in planning departments, as planners were confronted with a new policy that challenged planning orthodoxy, with often unfamiliar concepts, like 'permaculture principles', as well as new subjective criteria to assess. In addition, OPD's emergence dovetailed austerity measures introduced after 2010 which cut the resources of Local Authorities at the same time that this novel and complex policy was introduced. As a result, it has taken planners time to acclimate to OPD, but, with increasing numbers of applications and training provided the grassroots organisation, the One Planet Council (OPC), planners have, since 2016, largely implemented OPD successfully. However, whilst the OPC has partially filled this resource gap, the broader impact of austerity and the complexity and rigour of the policy, has meant that OPD applications take

considerably longer than the expected time allowance for planning applications to be determined, which has affected the implementation and appeal of the policy.

This chapter will further argue that it is elected councillors, particularly members of planning committees, who remain as obstacles to the facilitation of LID in Wales. Unlike planners who have developed an improved knowledge of OPD, encouraged by the training provided by the OPC, councillors have not benefited from this and have, as a result, engaged OPD applications from the perspective of their existing land use values and farming knowledge. This has led to substandard decision making demonstrated by the number of refusals overturned on appeal. In addition, councillors have come to raise political objections to the policy, with the discourse at planning committees often being about perceived flaws in the policy, rather than the OPD application under review.

The key argument to be made with regard to councillors' impact on the implementation of OPD in Wales is directly related to OPD's lack of resourcing, which has led to political tensions whereby OPD is often considered to be a Welsh Government policy imposed on underfunded Local Authorities and, in addition, a policy that works in favour of incomers and to the detriment of local communities. Overall, this chapter will build on the argument made in the previous chapter the Welsh Government's OPD policy has facilitated LID in Wales by opening up a legal space for the development of new low impact smallholdings in the open countryside. However, like the challenges faced by OPD applicants, the decision makers have also been affected by the policy's complexity, rigour, and bureaucratic nature which has affected its implementation, represented by long determination times and the potential jeopardy of councillors' deficient decision making.

To demonstrate these findings, this chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part will outline the patterns of how OPD applications have been determined in Wales, in the period 2010-2021. It will draw attention to the way in which the determination of OPD applications has diverged from the typical pattern of planning decisions in Wales. The second part of this

chapter assesses the implementation of OPD by professional planners. Its first subsection examines the way in which OPD, with a novel approach to land use, in addition to new terms of measurable components, represented a tension with planning orthodoxy. It will also draw attention to the limited detail and resourcing available to planners which affected their ability to implement the policy before 2016. The second subsection will show how these same issues affected the Planning Inspectorate, those determining appeals against Local Authority decisions. The third subsection will develop the significance of the economic environment into which OPD was born. The fourth subsection will show how the initial resourcing issues were partially alleviated by the publication of the Welsh Government's *OPD Practice Guidance* (2012) and, especially, the OPC's training intervention after 2015. The final subsection will highlight the impact of the austerity-induced resourcing issues on the determination period of OPD applications.

The third part of this chapter assesses the implementation of OPD by planning committees. It will first draw attention to the statistics pertaining to councillor decision making, highlighting their negative impact on the implementation of OPD. The second subsection will identify how OPD's tension with local land use plans has caused friction with locally elected officials. The third subsection will serve to demonstrate that councillors have a limited knowledge of OPD which has resulted in deficient decision making. It will also draw attention to the themes of their political objections to OPD raised by councillors. The final subsection will examine the ways in which councillors have represented the policy, affecting the social integration of OPDs, explored in more detail in the final chapter.

### **The determination of OPD applications, 2010-2021**

This section will identify the ways in which planning applications are determined in Wales and demonstrate that OPD applications have bucked the national trend in the means of their determination. It will also highlight the statistical data showing the success rates for OPD

applications across the decision-making apparatus. Indeed, across Wales, the total success rate of 55 determined OPD applications, in the period of 2010-2021, was 60%, a figure that increases to 71% when appeals are accounted for (see Table 5.1).<sup>547</sup> This suggests that OPD's implementation in this stakeholder group has not been fully realised. It is important, then, to establish the means by which planning decisions are determined in Wales in order to assess the implementation of OPD in decision-making apparatus. There are, in fact, two means by which OPD applications are decided. The first pathway is via Delegated Decision, where the decision is made by a professional planner in the Local Authority. The second is by means of a Local Authority Planning Committee, whereby a recommendation is provided by a planning officer, but the final decision is made by a vote of the committee's elected officials, having heard supporting and objecting evidence from invited speakers.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> As outlined in the Methodology Chapter, whilst there were a total of 63 OPD applications in the period of 2010-2012, only 55 of these were actually determined. Eight were either cancelled, withdrawn, or invalid.

<sup>548</sup> Planning Committees are referred to as Development Control Meetings at Powys.

Figure 5.1 The 'decision-making matrix' for planning applications in Wales

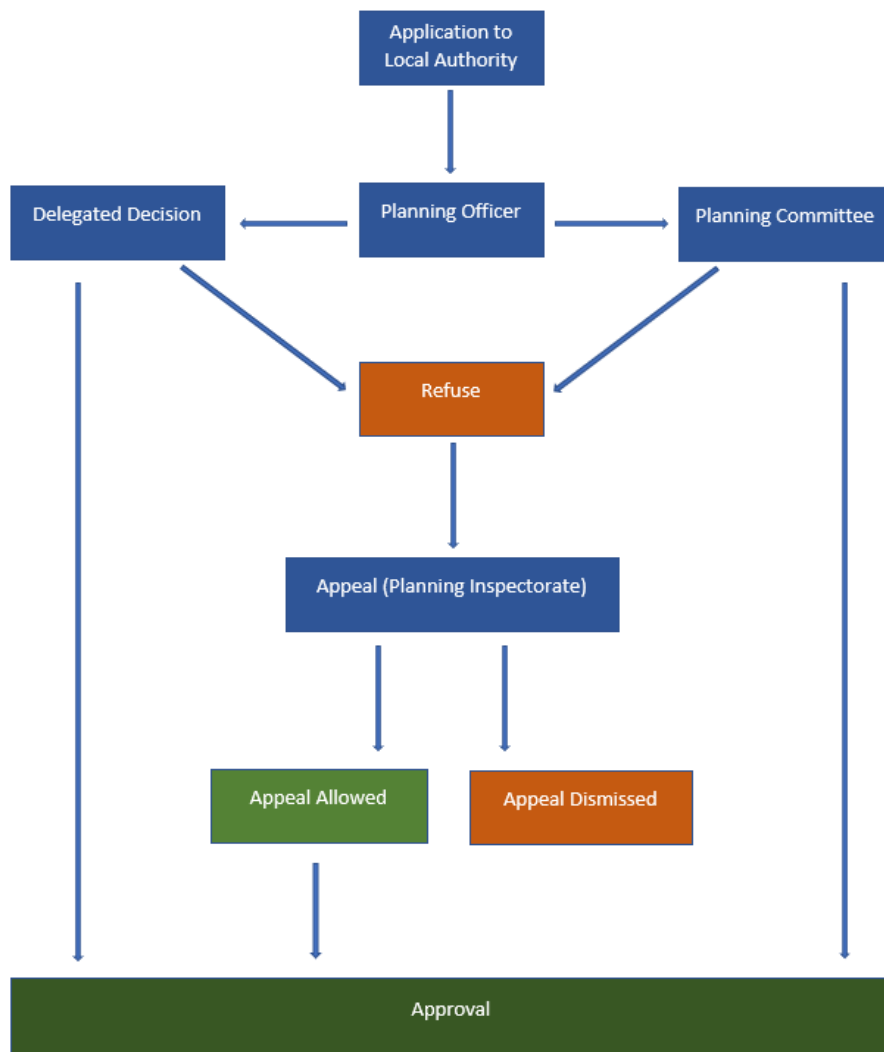




Table 5.1 Outcome of OPD applications, 2010-2021 (by Local Authority)<sup>549</sup>

| Local Authority                             | OPDs      | Approved  | Refused   | Approved on appeal | Withdrawn/Cancelled |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Pembrokeshire County Council                | 19        | 9         | 8         | 3                  | 2                   |
| Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority | 11        | 5         | 5         | 1                  | 1                   |
| Carmarthenshire County Council              | 14        | 8         | 4         | 2                  | 2                   |
| Ceredigion County Council                   | 8         | 6         | 2         | 0                  | 0                   |
| Powys County Council                        | 4         | 2         | 1         | 0                  | 1                   |
| Brecon Beacons National Park Authority      | 1         | 1         | 0         | 0                  | 0                   |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council           | 1         | 1         | 0         | 0                  | 0                   |
| Denbighshire County Council                 | 1         | 1         | 0         | 0                  | 0                   |
| Monmouthshire County Council                | 1         | 0         | 1         | 0                  | 0                   |
| Bridgend County Council                     | 1         | 0         | 0         | 0                  | 1                   |
| Newport City Council                        | 2         | 0         | 1         | 0                  | 1                   |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>63</b> | <b>33</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>6</b>           | <b>8</b>            |

In total, of the 55 OPD applications determined in Wales in the period of 2010-2021, 29 (53%) were decided by elected members of planning committees, whilst 26 (47%) were determined by a professional planners' delegated decision (see Table 5.2 below). This is a significant indicator as the average percentage of decisions made under delegated powers in Wales between October 2018 to September 2019 was 94.4%.<sup>550</sup> Though there is no direct comparison between the decision-making pathways of OPD in the 11-year period of this study and the patterns of all planning applications across Wales in a single year, OPD applications have evidently experienced a deviation from the normative decision-making patterns for planning applications in Wales. Many more OPD applications have been referred to planning committees compared to the national average for all planning applications.

<sup>549</sup> The data in this table has been compiled by searching for OPD applications on individual Welsh Local Authority planning portals. Having established the number of applications, their respective application numbers, the details of the decision-making pathway was identified, in addition to the results of that process.

<sup>550</sup> "Planning Performance Framework Table - October 2018 to September 2019," last modified 10 December, 2019a, accessed 1 September, 2021, <https://gov.wales/planning-performance-framework-table-october-2018-september-2019>.

Table 5.2 OPD applications decision making body, 2010-2021 (by Local Authority)<sup>551</sup>

| Local Authority                             | OPDs      | Planning Committee | Delegated Decision |
|---|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Pembrokeshire County Council                | 17        | 10                 | 7                  |
| Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority | 10        | 7                  | 3                  |
| Carmarthenshire County Council              | 12        | 6                  | 6                  |
| Ceredigion County Council                   | 8         | 3                  | 5                  |
| Powys County Council                        | 3         | 0                  | 3                  |
| Brecon Beacons National Park Authority      | 1         | 1                  | 0                  |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council           | 1         | 1                  | 0                  |
| Denbighshire County Council                 | 1         | 1                  | 0                  |
| Monmouthshire County Council                | 1         | 0                  | 1                  |
| Newport City Council                        | 1         | 0                  | 1                  |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>55</b> | <b>29 (53%)</b>    | <b>26 (47%)</b>    |

However, the means by which a planning application will be determined varies across Local Authorities. Each have individual processes which inform an application's passage through what Pete Linnell, an OPD planning expert, has called the 'decision making matrix'.<sup>552</sup> For example, in Pembrokeshire County Council, all OPD applications recommended for approval by the presiding planning officer are referred to their Planning Committee.<sup>553</sup> In comparison, Carmarthenshire County Council only passes OPD applications recommended for approval, but that have generated two or more letters of objection in the consultation stage, to the Planning Committees.<sup>554</sup> The decision making pathway is therefore not uniform across Wales.

Despite this, one significant indication that points towards a more effective implementation of OPD amongst professional planners, compared to planning committees, is in the percentage of successful appeals, with only 20% of those refused by delegated decision being

<sup>551</sup> Data compiled from OPD planning applications and their associated planning documentation, accessed through their respective online Planning Portals of each Welsh Local Authority. See Appendix One.

<sup>552</sup> Peter Linnell, *Narratives of Obstruction: An Exploration of how Antagonistic Narratives can Result in Delay and Constraint on Roll Out of Welsh Government OPD Policy Objectives* (Wales: Peter Linnell, 2020), p. 3.

<sup>553</sup> Peter Linnell, *Narratives of Obstruction: An Exploration of how Antagonistic Narratives can Result in Delay and Constraint on Roll Out of Welsh Government OPD Policy Objectives* (Wales: Peter Linnell, 2020), p. 4.

<sup>554</sup> Carmarthenshire County Council planning officer, personal email correspondence, 14 September, 2021.

overturned at appeal, compared to 50% amongst those refused at planning committees (see Tables 5.4 and 5.5). As will be shown later in this chapter, the Planning Inspectorate has come to represent a back stop to councillors' deficient decision making, unencumbered by local prejudices against OPD. Indeed, it should be pointed out that, whilst at face value, the statistical data about the implementation of the policy by planners in Local Authorities paints a negative picture, with an approval rate of just 42% via delegated decisions, this can be explained by the process through which OPD applications are determined as outlined above. A more appropriate statistic is that 93% of OPD applications passed to planning committees have been recommended for approval (see Tables 5.3 and 5.6). This adds further weight to the view that OPD has encountered friction in the second branch of the decision-making apparatus, planning committees. To assess this further, each branch of the decision-making apparatus will now, in turn, be assessed to examine, in detail, OPD's implementation in this chapter's stakeholder group.

Table 5.3 Outcome of OPD applications determined by Delegated Decision, 2010-2021 (by Local Authority)<sup>555</sup>

| Local Authority                             | OPDs      | Approved        | Refused         | Allowed on appeal | Outstanding appeals |
|---|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Pembrokeshire County Council                | 7         | 1               | 6               | 1                 | 1                   |
| Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority | 3         | 1               | 2               | 1                 | 0                   |
| Carmarthenshire County Council              | 6         | 4               | 2               | 1                 | 0                   |
| Ceredigion County Council                   | 5         | 3               | 2               | 0                 | 0                   |
| Powys County Council                        | 3         | 2               | 1               | 0                 | 0                   |
| Monmouthshire County Council                | 1         | 0               | 1               | 0                 | 0                   |
| Newport City Council                        | 1         | 0               | 1               | 0                 | 0                   |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>26</b> | <b>11 (42%)</b> | <b>15 (58%)</b> | <b>3 (20%)</b>    | <b>1</b>            |

<sup>555</sup> Data compiled from OPD planning applications and their associated planning documentation, accessed through their respective online Planning Portals of each Welsh Local Authority. See Appendix One.

## The implementation of OPD amongst Planners

### *Local Authority planners*

This section will assess the implementation of OPD amongst professional planners, drawing particular attention to OPD's tension with planning orthodoxy and the limited initial priming for the policy. As was developed in Chapter Three, OPD reverses the presumption against the development in the open countryside, the foundational principle of the British land use system held since 1947. There is a tension, therefore, between the prescription of the policy and the land use orthodoxy of the planning profession. Caroline Bowen, Senior Planner at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA), identified this tension with planners' training, stating that "you are trained to think 'you are not supposed to have development in the open countryside. It must be near the settlements because that is where the facilities are'".<sup>556</sup> In addition to reversing the trained orthodoxy of planning profession, OPD compels planners to be able to understand concepts like permaculture, but also the technical requirements of solar generation systems, reed bed systems for grey water, and the various micro-enterprises submitted in the applicant's management plan outlined in the previous chapters. As Bowen further pointed out, a key challenge of OPD for planners is "understanding terms, some of that is very new to planning".<sup>557</sup>

Alongside the introduction of new terminology, OPD applications demand that planners consider subjective variables, such as the lifestyle and 'basic income needs' of the applicant and their social impact assessed in the policy's Community Impact Assessment (to be addressed in the next chapter). Planners must adjudicate the reality of, for example, the amount of food a household can survive off annually or the amount of clothes that might be purchased. Helen Lucocq, Principal Planning Officer at Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, referred to this at the Planning, Access and Rights of Way Committee in the

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<sup>556</sup> Caroline Bowen, personal interview, Pembroke, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

<sup>557</sup> Caroline Bowen, personal interview, Pembroke, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

determination of Coed Talylan's OPD application, stating that OPDs "are unique and interesting and it's not just about development, it is also about lifestyle, and we are not used to assessing lifestyle so we must be able to understand it".<sup>558</sup> This is a departure from planning norms that are usually based on assessments of objective benchmarks, such as the 'functionality' and 'financial' tests for Rural Enterprise Dwellings mentioned in Chapter Three, which rely on quantitative data from an applicant's financial records. The introduction of OPD therefore added new elements to a planner's craft, by the inclusion of new concepts and measurable components, which required a departure from normative planning practices and its inherent language.<sup>559</sup>

However, OPD was introduced in 2010 with just three pages in the Welsh Government's *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities*, leaving those charged with implementing a policy that went against their professional training without the knowledge or means to properly assess an OPD application.<sup>560</sup> Lucocq, talking about her initial thoughts on OPD, observed that,

There wasn't enough detail for us to have first impressions, it was kind of 'what is this?' 'How are we going to control it?' Planners, in general, and I'm going to generalise here, are a very sceptical bunch and, we were all just like, 'this is just a way of people getting houses in the countryside which we have spent such a long time rallying against, and this is coming in and will be open to all sorts of abuse', and, I think, concern about how the policy was going to play out in practice and what it would actually mean.<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> "Webcast of Planning, Access and Rights of Way Committee, 10 December 2019," Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, last modified 10 December, 2019, accessed 1 September, 2021, [https://breconbeacons.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/459855](https://breconbeacons.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/459855).

This point was remade in a further personal interview, Zoom, 25 September, 2020.

<sup>559</sup> Mark Waghorn, "One Planet Development: Opportunities and Barriers" *Archidoc* 3, no. 2 (2016), 20-33.; Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), 11-36.

<sup>560</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 24-27.

<sup>561</sup> Helen Lucocq, personal interview, Zoom, 25 September, 2020.

Alongside the expertise gap, planners have also been affected by the rigour and complexity of OPD, an outcome of the policy's novelty outlined in Chapters Three and Four. Bowen identified that a key challenge of OPD was "the length of the policy. We're used to rigorous policy but that really is rigorous".<sup>562</sup> This is particularly true when the statutory duty to monitor OPDs in perpetuity is considered. The difficulties faced by applicants developed in the previous chapter are, therefore, also faced by those adjudicating them as OPD's bureaucratic modelling results in planners having to review extensive documentation, often about unfamiliar subjects. The combined challenges of OPD's break from planning norms, the addition of the subjective criteria, and the policy's rigour, was identified by Lucocq, who stated that an OPD application

is still something that, if it lands on your desk, is different and is going to be problematic. Not just because we are dealing with an exception to the development of the open countryside, where there are tensions, but it is going to be problematic because you aren't dealing with something that is run of the mill. You are going to have think differently, you are going to have to scrutinise a lot of documents, and you are going to have to try and understand what those documents mean when you haven't necessarily got the knowledge base to be able to understand them.<sup>563</sup>

In addition, the advice available to support planners with OPD applications has also been lacking as planners have to rely on advice from those from traditional farming backgrounds. Bowen identified this, drawing comparisons with other rural exceptions, noting that "It's easier with Rural Enterprise [Dwellings] because most authorities have a rural and agricultural advisor".<sup>564</sup> However, these are not experts in permaculture-style, low-acreage, developments and are, therefore, often ill-equipped to provide the type of advice required to promote sound decision making. This was raised by David Wellan, a successful OPD applicant in Pembrokeshire, who, reflecting on the experience of applying for OPD, stated that the agricultural expert they dealt with was "baffled that we would even try and live on two acres

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<sup>562</sup> Caroline Bowen, personal interview, Pembroke, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

<sup>563</sup> Helen Lucocq, personal interview, Zoom, 25 September, 2020.

<sup>564</sup> Caroline Bowen, personal interview, Pembroke, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

[0.8 hectares] and that it was completely impossible".<sup>565</sup> Though not 'baffled' by OPD, the agricultural advisor, Stephen Dawson, at Carmarthenshire County Council accepted his limited expertise for OPD, admitting that

I'm not a One Planet expert, I comment on agricultural applications for the authority based on my own experiences as a smallholder. I've kept bees, I've kept sheep, and I look at these from a practical perspective, looking at them from an agricultural perspective rather than a One Planet standpoint and they can seem quite unusual to somebody who hasn't dealt with them before and, perhaps, isn't familiar with some of the techniques. I think that's where an element of judgement and giving people an opportunity to prove it comes in with these because, I think, if you looked at them in a conventional sense, you'd find it quite difficult to contemplate.<sup>566</sup>

OPD was therefore made available in 2010 without significant policy detail, training, or relevant farming advice for Local Authorities which limited the initial implementation of the policy.

### *Planning Inspectorate*

The impact of this is also reflected in the implementation of the policy in the Planning Inspectorate who, with equally limited detail and knowledge, came to initially implement the policy inconsistently as demonstrated in Cornerwood OPD's experience. Cornerwood was refused planning permission under OPD regulations in 2011 and 2012, in addition to having three appeals dismissed, in 2012, 2013, and 2015. An analysis of the Appeal Decision notices of 2012, 2013, and 2015 shows that there were shifting reasons for their dismissed appeals.

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<sup>565</sup> Caroline Bowen, personal interview, Pembroke, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

<sup>566</sup> "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Full Council Meeting, 22 October 2020," last modified 22 October, 2020a, accessed 22 October, 2020, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

In fact, in the first dismissed appeal, the grounds were that the residential accommodation was not of a suitable standard; that there were doubts over the capacity of the applicants to grow sufficient food to meet the policy criteria; that the business plan lacked sufficient depth and that the applicants were overly dependent on sales at county fairs.<sup>567</sup> In the second dismissed appeal, the Inspector's reasoning was based on a perceived limited robustness of the business plan, insufficient consideration of the ecological footprints of others, the inability of the woodland to sequester the carbon footprint of the applicants, and that the details of their transport assessment plan lacked professional rigour.<sup>568</sup> The Inspector in dismissing the second appeal therefore seemingly accepted the revisions from the first application, but found new reasons to dismiss the application.

This was pointed out in a letter written by Tao Wimbush, co-founder of the Lammas Ecovillage, in 2013, to Carwyn Jones, the then First Minister of Wales, Rosemary Thomas, the Chief Planner for the Welsh Assembly, and the Planning Inspectorate of Wales, about Cornerwood. He argued that there was an evident issue with consistency in which OPD applications were being assessed. Writing in reference to the second refusal of the Cornerwood application, in 2013, he wrote that, "The main point though is that none of the new five reasons for refusal were cited in the original appeal decision", observing the initial reasons for rejecting the Cornerwood project in Ceredigion were satisfied, and new problems were raised by the Inspectorate in the resubmission that followed.<sup>569</sup> The same pattern emerged in the subsequent appeals. Mel Robinson, one of the applicants at Cornerwood, in fact, elaborated on this, stating that

Every time we adjusted what the Planning Inspector had failed us on, they then moved the goal posts. On the final appeal the only thing that the Inspector could fail us on was a static caravan – the visual impact of the static [caravan] – but the

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<sup>567</sup> Ian Poulter, "Appeal Decision: APP/D6820/A/12/2179373," (Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2012).

<sup>568</sup> Emyr Jones, "Appeal Ref: APP/D6820/A/13/2197634" (Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2013).

<sup>569</sup> Paul Wimbush, "Letter to Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales, Rosemary Thomas, Chief Planner for the Welsh Assembly, and the Planning Inspectorate of Wales: One Planet Development" Lammas Research (Lammas, Pembrokeshire, 2013). <https://lammas.org.uk/en/research/>

In personal interviews with Mel Robinson and Tracy Styles, the applicants of Cornerwood, both agreed with Wimbush that the goal posts had been moved across their OPD applications.



council had told us to put the static [caravan] there to live in the meantime and we could have removed it within the week.<sup>570</sup>

This is largely corroborated in the documentation. In fact, the third and fourth Appeal Decisions (determined at the same time) note a concern about the detail submitted with regard to the amount of wood that would be cut or imported into the site; the capacity of the applicants to meet basic income needs given the limited success of the mushroom enterprise; that the biodiversity assessment had not been produced by a competent person(s); that the caravan on site represented an unacceptable visual intrusion; and, perceived holes in the transport assessment.<sup>571</sup> The lived experience of OPD at Cornerwood demonstrates, therefore, that there were changing reasons provided for the rejection of Cornerwood's applications and that the implementation of the policy was failing. In fact, this was further pointed out by Wimbush's letter in which he wrote that no OPD application across Wales was experiencing a balanced and fair planning process, observing that there had been 4 consecutive refusals.<sup>572</sup> A policy pathway for LID existed in Wales from 2010, but its implementation was, however, hamstrung by the absence of sufficient supporting guidance and a directly related inconsistent application by the planning system, both in Local Authorities and in the Planning Inspectorate.

### *OPD and austerity*

However, these issues of resourcing must be seen in a broader context. The implementation of OPD has been affected by a changing economic environment from its incubation period to its birth in 2010. As highlighted in the Literature Review, OPD was conceived in the period

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<sup>570</sup> Mel Robinson, personal telephone interview, 12 November, 2019.

<sup>571</sup> Vicki Hirst, "Appeal A: APP/D6820/A/14/2226200" Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2015a), Vicki Hirst, "Appeal B: APP/D6820/A/14/2226208" (Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2015b).

<sup>572</sup> Paul Wimbush, "Letter to Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales, Rosemary Thomas, Chief Planner for the Welsh Assembly, and the Planning Inspectorate of Wales: One Planet Development" Lammas Research (Lammas, Pembrokeshire, 2013). <https://lammas.org.uk/en/research/>

after the disputes at That Roundhouse in Pembrokeshire, after 1998, leading to the introduction of Pembrokeshire's Policy 52 in 2006. OPD was, in contrast, introduced in 2010 following the financial crash of 2008 and the subsequent years of austerity measures. The UK Government enacted, with George Osborne as Chancellor for the Exchequer, significant cuts to public spending.

Between 2010 and 2020 councils in England and Wales lost almost 60p in every £1 previously received from the Westminster Government.<sup>573</sup> In a 2016 report, The Office for Fiscal Studies calculated that Wales has experienced a real terms reduction in grants from the UK Treasury since 2009-10 and that spending plans ensured further cuts in each year until 2019-2020.<sup>574</sup> As a result, the report continues, Wales is "looking at an extraordinary eleven or more years of retrenchment in public service spending, in stark contrast to the first ten years of devolution, when the Welsh Government enjoyed substantial year-on-year real-terms spending increases".<sup>575</sup> OPD therefore arrived at a time when additional financial support was unavailable and Local Authorities have, as a result, engaged the policy with limited capacity to implement it successfully. In fact, Dave and Irene Triffitt, who gained OPD planning permission in 2018, observed that OPD "has been thrust upon the County Councils with no extra finances to implement it, and no or very little training for the Planning department staff who are supposed to oversee it".<sup>576</sup>

When considering the impact of austerity on relevant departments for this study, those for planning, economic and community development were cut by 26%, between 2010-11 to 2013-14.<sup>577</sup> Writing in the 2018 Planning Performance Report, Leslie Griffiths AM, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, stated that "the Welsh Local Government

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<sup>573</sup> "News: Open Week is Chance to See One Planet Development in Action," last modified 30 May, 2019a, accessed 1 September, 2021, <https://westwalesnewsreview.wordpress.com/2019/05/30/news-open-week-is-chance-to-see-one-planet-development-in-action/>.

<sup>574</sup> David Phillips and Polly Simpson, *Welsh Budgetary Trade-offs to 2019–20* (London: Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2016), p. 3.

<sup>575</sup> David Phillips and Polly Simpson, *Welsh Budgetary Trade-offs to 2019–20* (London: Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2016), p. 4.

<sup>576</sup> Dave and Irene Triffitt, personal email correspondence, 3 July, 2020.

<sup>577</sup> Benjamin Deaner and David Phillips, *Scenarios for the Welsh Government Budget to 2025–26* (London: Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2013), p. 93.

Association's evidence to the National Assembly Finance Committee on the 2017-18 Welsh Government's draft budget stated planning services had received a 53% budget reduction" since 2012.<sup>578</sup> The facilitation of LID in Wales has therefore been affected by a resourcing gap which has limited planners' expertise of the policy and, as the following sections will show, impacted the implementation of the policy by resulting in extended determination periods well beyond the targets of the Welsh Government, in addition to affecting the attitudes of elected councillors towards OPD. Though the emergence of OPD represented a key advance for the facilitation of LID in Wales, economic conditions have guided its implementation and resulted in its initial stagnation in the period before the first successful application in 2014 and the more successful policy uptake after 2016.

*The impact of the Welsh Government's technical guidance, and the emergence of the One Planet Council, on OPD planning application outcomes.*

Having demonstrated the challenges of planning professionals to adapt to the novelty of OPD and the impact of austerity measures, this section will highlight how the publication of the Welsh Government's *Practice Guidance: One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* in 2012 and the emergence of the One Planet Council have positively affected the implementation of OPD, particularly amongst planners. It will demonstrate that the Welsh Government's *OPD Practice Guidance* (2012) initiated some momentum to OPD, while the OPC's specific training affected a significant rise in the policy's uptake after 2016. It will also reveal the limitations of the resource gap being filled by a self-funded grassroots organisation. This will be achieved by highlighting the contrast between the Welsh Government's targets for the times taken for planning applications to be determined and the experience of OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021.

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<sup>578</sup> Welsh Government, *All Wales Planning Annual Performance Report 2017-18* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2018a), p. 2.

See also, National Audit Office, *Financial Sustainability of Local authorities 2018* (London: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2018).; George Monbiot, Robin Grey, Tom Kenny, Laurie Macfarlane, Anna Powell-Smith, Guy Shrubsole, Beth Stratford., *LAND FOR THE MANY: Changing the Way our Fundamental Asset is used, Owned and Governed* (London: Labour Party, 2020), p. 50.

As was identified in the previous section, OPD was legislated for with only three pages of detail in the Welsh Government's *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* which affected the initial implementation of the policy.<sup>579</sup> The limited detail was, however, partially alleviated with the Welsh Government publishing its *Practice Guidance: One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* in October 2012. At over seventy pages, it provides detailed technical help to support both applicants and decision makers with the policy's key benchmarks and the requirements of, in particular, the management plan.<sup>580</sup> Its publication marked a key progression for the implementation of OPD given that the policy's core criteria were now clearly defined, and the application stage was now more easily understood by its key stakeholders. As Mark Waghorn, architect and member of the One Planet Council, pointed out, "Initially, very few applications were approved under this policy, partly because there was no technical help on how an applicant should go about compiling an application, or how a planning officer should assess one. In 2012, the release of the OPD *Practice Guidance* addressed this weakness".<sup>581</sup>

Despite this, however, there were still no successful applications before 2014 and the policy did not experience any significant uptake until after 2016. While the OPD *Practice Guidance* provided technical help, OPD's complexity, rigour, and tension with planning orthodoxy meant that it was not until specific training was delivered that its implementation was positively improved. There was not, however, any specific training to bridge this resource gap until the emergence of the One Planet Council in 2014 which, as developed in the previous chapter, connected applicants to those deemed as 'competent persons(s)', which alleviated

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<sup>579</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 24-27.

<sup>580</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 17.

The OPD Practice Guidance is available at <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/planning-permission-one-planet-developments-in-open-countryside.pdf>

<sup>581</sup> Mark Waghorn, "MA Thesis: An Investigation into the Process of Making do in Ad Hoc Self-Builds in Rural Wales" ORCA Online Research @ Cardiff (Cardiff University, Cardiff, 2016a), p. 50.

<https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/96626/>

The same point was made by Chris Vernon in "One Planet Development - Chris Vernon - Building Sustainably Podcast," last modified 4 September, 2019, accessed 1 September, 2021, <https://play.acast.com/s/buildingsustainability/Buzzsprout-1032586>.

some of the pressure of planners' limited knowledge of OPD's core concepts, like permaculture and layered micro-enterprises.

In addition, the OPC has, from 2015, offered specific training to planning professionals and represents a third-party provider closing the resource and knowledge gap. It was designed to specifically address the gap between the existence of the OPD *Practice Guidance* and its implementation by planners. In the words of one of the OPC's founding members, it was

realised that planners needed to better understand OPD, they needed to experience it, needed to understand terminology like 'permaculture' which isn't intrinsic – you don't have to use the term – but a lot of people do, but planning officers don't necessarily know what permaculture is, so definitions can be problematic. So, we were aware of all of these things, so we set up a training for planners and applicants.<sup>582</sup>

The OPC training is delivered as a CPD course, *Open Countryside One Planet Development One Day Training Course* and costs £75 per delegate. The training is advertised as being delivered by James Shorten, the lead author of the OPD *Practice Guidance*, in addition to Erica Vernon, the Chair of the OPC and climate scientist.<sup>583</sup> It introduces the policy's unique approach to land use, while allocating the majority of the training to the key sections of the management plan outlined in Chapter Three, such as the 'land-based activity, 'community impact', and 'ecological footprinting'.<sup>584</sup> The training therefore connects planning officers with the specific expertise required to determine OPD applications by opening up a dialogue between those that wrote the policy's technical guidance and professional planners, in addition to its lived experience. This training has resulted in pockets of expertise in Local Authorities.

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<sup>582</sup> Stefan Cartwright, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 21 September, 2018.

<sup>583</sup> One Planet Council, *OPD Training for Professionals | One Planet Council* (Carmarthenshire: One Planet Council, 2020).

<sup>584</sup> One Planet Council, *OPD Training for Professionals | One Planet Council* (Carmarthenshire: One Planet Council, 2020), p. 3.

The combined impact of the OPD *Practice Guidance* and the OPC training would seem to have led to a significant policy uptake by closing the knowledge-resource gap. Since 2016, OPD has become much more successful in navigating the planning system in Wales, with 34 of the 39 OPD applications having been approved since 2016 (87%). This is also borne out in the lived experience since 2016. In interviews conducted for this study, none felt that planners were now resistant to the policy. For example, Matthew Watkinson's experience of being adjudicated by Caroline Bowen at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, was that "We expected more resistance from the planning authority than we got actually. Our planning officer had actually undertaken specific training in OPD policy [by the OPC] and was not biased against it at all. She recommended approval".<sup>585</sup> The initial tensions of the policy's implementation amongst planners can thus seemingly be explained by a lack of resourcing to overcome the policy's departure from planning norms, in addition to its complexity, length, and rigour, rather than simply a conceptual resistance to it.

However, there are limitations in the capacity of a self-funded grassroots organisation to plug a resource gap. This can be shown by the limited budgets available to Local Authorities to engage in specific training with third-party providers. Lucocq, having praised the training of the OPC, stated that the OPC had sought to renew the training with Brecon Beacons National Park Authority at "£75 per delegate, but the authority does not have a training budget that would cover it, so we are in negotiations about that. It should be free, that's my view, because they should have planners who are conversant in this policy and know exactly what will happen and it is in their benefit to provide this training for free".<sup>586</sup> This is significant as despite the best efforts of a grassroots organisation to provide training, the limited resources available to Local Authorities precludes the development of the policy's understanding, limiting the implementation of OPD in Wales.

Though some planners have now developed the prerequisite knowledge of OPD, the combined impact of the complexity of the application process and the impact of austerity can

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<sup>585</sup> Matthew Watkinson, personal email correspondence, 1 August, 2019.

The same argument was made by Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.

<sup>586</sup> Helen Lucocq, personal interview, Zoom, 25 September, 2020.

be seen in the time taken to decide OPD applications. The Welsh Government's advice is that planning applications should "not be left to drift for long periods of time with little or no progress being made towards issuing a decision".<sup>587</sup> The expectation is that they should usually be decided within eight weeks, though it must be understood that Local Authorities are entitled to apply for extensions to allow further time for the consideration of planning applications.<sup>588</sup> If an application is deemed to be a 'major' application, the time period is extended to "16-weeks for an application subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, due to the technical complexity of the supporting information".<sup>589</sup> Regardless of either time allocation, these targets have, however, proved elusive. Harriet Lavender, Development Manager at Pembrokeshire County Council, identified, at Pembrokeshire County Council's Planning Committee, during the deliberation of Meadow Woods' OPD application on 10 March 2020, that, "The average time for other Welsh planning authorities, in terms of the time taken to deal with One Planet applications, is between 12 and 18 months".<sup>590</sup> This is clearly well beyond either an 8 or 16-week target for planning applications in Wales.

In fact, the average of all determined OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021 is 68 weeks, a figure which corroborates Lavender's statement (see Appendix One).<sup>591</sup> The average in the four Local Authorities with the highest concentration of OPD applications is 40 weeks (see table 5.4 below). Even with a 40-week average, it is evident that OPD applications are not being determined in the 8 or 16-week target period. Moreover, these extended time frames also stand in stark contrast to the determination of all other planning applications made in Wales which have not been affected in the same way as OPD applications. Across Wales in the period of 2014-2019, the average time taken to determine all planning applications was

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<sup>587</sup> Welsh Government, *Development Management Manual* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2017), p. 52.

<sup>588</sup> "The Decision Making Process," , 2021, accessed 1 September, 2021, [https://www.planningportal.co.uk/wales/en/info/5/applications/57/the\\_decision\\_making\\_process/5](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/wales/en/info/5/applications/57/the_decision_making_process/5).

<sup>589</sup> Welsh Government, *All Wales Planning Annual Performance Report 2017-18* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2018), p. 34.

<sup>590</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 10 March 2020," last modified 10 March, 2020b, accessed 1 September, 2021, [https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/477596?force\\_language\\_code=en\\_GB](https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/477596?force_language_code=en_GB).

<sup>591</sup> It should be noted, however, that these figures are somewhat distorted by two key factors: earlier applications which typically took longer to determine (see Appendix One), in addition to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic which, it would seem reasonable to assume, affected the workflow of planning applications.

11 weeks, whilst 82.5% of applications were determined within their allotted time period.<sup>592</sup> While the planning system has been affected by austerity measures, OPD applications have clearly been disproportionately affected with longer determination times. This can only be explained by its novelty, complexity, length, and limited specific knowledge, expertise, and training available to planning officers in Local Authorities.

Table 5.4 Average time period taken to determine OPD applications, 2021-2021 (by Local Authority)<sup>593</sup>

| Local Authority                             | OPDs      | Average determination time (weeks) |
|---|-----------|------------------------------------|
| Pembrokeshire County Council                | 17        | 39                                 |
| Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority | 10        | 31                                 |
| Carmarthenshire County Council              | 12        | 48                                 |
| Ceredigion County Council                   | 8         | 41                                 |
| Powys County Council                        | 3         | 93                                 |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council           | 1         | 56                                 |
| Brecon Beacons National Park Authority      | 1         | 21                                 |
| Denbigshire County Council                  | 1         | 107                                |
| Monmouthshire County Council                | 1         | 181                                |
| Newport City Council                        | 1         | 65                                 |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>55</b> | <b>68</b>                          |

This can be further demonstrated by an exchange at the same planning committee hearing at which Lavender estimated a 12-18-month determination period, as a councillor suggested introducing a specific time allocation for OPD applications. Councillor Myles Pepper (Independent Group) suggested that the Welsh Government look at the amount of time it allows for the consideration of OPD applications, given, he argued, that the length of time taken to deal with these applications would negatively impact the statistics of the planning

<sup>592</sup> Welsh Government, *All Wales Planning Annual Performance Report 2017-18* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2018), p. 18.

<sup>593</sup> Data compiled from OPD planning applications and their associated planning documentation, accessed through their respective online Planning Portals of each Welsh Local Authority. See Appendix One.



authorities.<sup>594</sup> The interim Head of Planning at Pembrokeshire County Council, David Popplewell, responded to this, noting that it “need not negatively affect statistics” as they could request an extension of time from the applicant, but accepted that,

There has been a bit of an issue with One Planet Developments, in the sense that we have a number of officers that have dealt with a number of those applications, but, to ensure that there isn't too much of a burden on particular officers, we do need, from time to time, to give these applications to another officer, and then there is a whole learning experience of assessing the application and checking there is sufficient information. In some cases, requesting further information, waiting for that to come back, checking that, and then potentially having to go back. So, whilst twelve months does sound like a long period, some applications do take that length of time because of the complexity of the process.<sup>595</sup>

This adds further weight to the conclusions reached in the previous chapter that the implementation of OPD, and the facilitation of LID in Wales, would be improved by a streamlining of the application process and, in particular, the burden of proof required from applicants. It would alleviate the pressure on the first two stakeholder groups for this study, applicants and decision makers, whilst potentially making the policy more appealing.

The impact of this and the length of time it takes to consider OPD applications has a significant impact on applicants, especially as the right to reside on the land is only allowed when OPD planning permission is granted. This was a factor recognised by the applicants of Swn Yr Adar

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<sup>594</sup> Pembrokeshire County Council, "Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Committee, 10 March 2020 " Planning Committee Agendas and Minutes (Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire, 2020a), p. 8. <https://mgenglish.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/documents/g4599/Printed%20minutes%2010th-Mar-2020%2010.00%20Planning%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

<sup>595</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 10 March 2020," last modified 10 March, 2020, accessed 1 September, 2021, [https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/477596?force\\_language\\_code=en\\_GB](https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/477596?force_language_code=en_GB).

who, in trying to speed up the process, declined the pre-application service.<sup>596</sup> In writing to Carmarthenshire's planning department, they asserted that

We have decided to decline a pre-app meeting to avoid the additional delays this could create. We are aware that it can take LPAs longer than the standard 8-week period to respond to OPD applications and adding a pre-app stage could compound this. We understand that Open Countryside One Planet Development (OCOPD) applications are fairly new and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) receive very few of them and that it can take some time to review what amounts to quite a large amount of information.<sup>597</sup>

Despite this, the application process for Swyn Yr Adar was still over five months.

As identified in the previous chapter, the extended period that it is taking to determine OPD applications has added a layer of risk and anxiety as applicants must wait for a considerable amount of time, longer than the Local Authority target time, to learn their fate. Anne Hooper, reflecting on her OPD application in Powys, stated that for "6 months I heard nothing, not even an acknowledgement of the revised management plan that we'd sent in vis-a-vis what they'd asked for which was more information. This was in 2018 and I was getting quite desperate and quite frantic. I wanted to live here, and I was still paying rent somewhere else, which meant that I had to work somewhere as well".<sup>598</sup> OPD was designed as an affordable means to develop a low impact smallholding in the open countryside. However, the significant financial investment in land, combined with the risk of refusal and the need to live, often in

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<sup>596</sup> The preapplication service is aimed at ensuring a more effective passage through the planning system by an active engagement between the Local Authority and the proposing developer. For full guidance on the pre-application discussions in Wales, see: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/pre-application-discussions.pdf>

<sup>597</sup> James and Clare Adamson, "Cover Letter" Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Archive – Application W/36252 (Carmarthenshire County Council, Carmarthenshire, 2017). [https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess\\_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO\\_LDER1\\_REF=W/36252](https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO_LDER1_REF=W/36252)

<sup>598</sup> Anne Hooper, personal telephone interview, 24 June, 2020.

rented accommodation whilst the Local Authority determines the application, may have affected the appeal and implementation of OPD.

Whilst OPD applications are, as the Anderson's letter points out, few in number, the broader issue is that Local Authorities have struggled to resource a policy that requires a novel planning outlook, scrutiny of extensive documentation, in addition to continuous monitoring. Commenting on the link between the lack of resources and the time taken to decide applications, Paul Jennings, part of the Rhiw Las project in Carmarthenshire, has stated "we waited more than 9 months beyond the normal decision time with no idea of what was happening or why we were facing delays. OPD is a Welsh Government policy which has been abandoned, orphaned. Virtually no-one in Wales knows anything about it. That in itself is a huge failure".<sup>599</sup> While the initial challenges of OPD's implementation can be ascribed to a limited priming for the policy, the remaining issue for planners is not a conceptual resistance to LID and its tensions with planning orthodoxy, but the pragmatic consequences of a decade of austerity clashing with the policy's rigorous design. As Chris Vernon, of the Rhiw Las OPD project, stated,

Planning officers in the whole have discharged applications successfully, and the Planning Inspectors even more so. I think the delays that have often been present in applications have been due to planning officers being over worked, desperately so. Cuts to Local Authority funding, especially in planning departments, individual planning officers with one hundred applications on their desk, of which the OPD takes five times as much work as the other ones, so you can imagine which one goes to the bottom of the pile, so there are just bog-standard genuine resource issues which haven't been met from central government and the planning officers are extremely overworked.

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<sup>599</sup> "One Planet Development Arrested: My Attempts to Build a Home on a Smallholding in Wales," last modified 8 October, 2015, accessed 10 June, 2021, <https://www.lowimpact.org/one-planet-development-arrested-my-attempts-to-build-a-home-on-a-smallholding-in-wales/>.

## The implementation of OPD amongst elected councillors in Local Authorities

The second part of this chapter will assess the other side of the decision-making coin, elected members of planning committees. While 47% of OPD applications have been determined under delegated powers, the remaining 53% have been determined by planning committees whereby a recommendation is provided by a professional planner having reviewed the application, but the ultimate decision is made by a vote of elected members of the planning committee.<sup>600</sup> As was identified in the Methodology Chapter, councillors from Pembrokeshire County Council and Carmarthenshire County Council will feature heavily in this part of the chapter given that these Local Authorities record their planning committees and make them available to the public as 'webcasts'.

It will be demonstrated that councillor's attitudes towards OPD have been affected by their limited knowledge of the policy. Like planners discussed in the previous sections, councillors, too, have faced the same resourcing issues that has affected their familiarity with OPD's core principles. However, unlike planners, councillors have, in general, not developed sufficient knowledge of OPD, which can be largely attributed to a limited priming for the policy and a lack of training to facilitate its implementation in this branch of the decision-making apparatus. There have been two broader consequences of this for the implementation of OPD in Wales. These are, substandard decision making, alongside the sowing of divisive narratives that have come to affect the relationship of OPD with this study's third group of stakeholders, namely local communities, that will be assessed in the next chapter.

In terms of councillor's deficient decision making, this can be demonstrated by an assessment of its efficacy. The archival record shows that councillors have refused seven (24%) OPD applications determined at planning committees. It is important to point out that four (57%) of these decisions went against the recommendation of the planning officer (see Table 5.5 below), which indicates deficiencies in their decision making. This is corroborated by a

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<sup>600</sup> Caroline Bowen, personal interview, Pembroke, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

comparison of the results of appeals lodged against the decisions of planning committees. The average percentage of appeals dismissed for all planning applications in Wales, 2014-2019, was 64.66%.<sup>601</sup> In contrast, in the context of OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021, the figure is 50%. This falls to 33% where councillors voted against the recommendation, if the outstanding appeals are discounted (see Table 5.5 below). Councillors have therefore refused a disproportionate number of OPD applications, many of which have been overturned by the Planning Inspectorate. It is also worth pointing out, as was shown in the first part of this chapter, that only 20% of OPD applications refused by delegated decisions have been allowed at appeal (see Table 5.3). It is statistically clear, then, that elected councillors serving on planning committees have been a key barrier to the successful implementation of OPD, and to the facilitation of LID in Wales.

In addition, and perhaps the most evident sign that councillors represent a challenge to the successful implementation of OPD, and the facilitation of LID in Wales, is the moratorium of OPD proposed by Councillor Alun Lenny (Plaid Cymru), Chair of Carmarthenshire County Council's Planning Committee, at a full council meeting, in October 2020. The moratorium, which was approved, was based on three key issues, that OPD represented an additional resource burden on Local Authorities, particularly with regard to the ongoing compliance monitoring, while it had, from Lenny's point of view, also not met the needs of any stakeholder group, suggesting that it was too rigid for applicants, whilst offering an unfair advantage to 'newcomers' to develop homes in the open countryside.<sup>602</sup> While the moratorium is not legally binding and OPD remains in place in Carmarthenshire, it is evident, as the remainder of this chapter will show, that a significant proportion of the planning committee have resisted OPD and affected its implementation. It is worth pointing out, however, that their concerns are often rooted in legitimate concerns over local issues, such as the pressures on rural housing.

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<sup>601</sup> Welsh Government, *All Wales Planning Annual Performance Report, 2017-18* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2018b), p. 18.

<sup>602</sup> "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Full Council Meeting, 22 October 2020," last modified 22 October, 2020, accessed 22 October, 2020, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

Table 5.5 Outcomes, planning officer recommendations, and subsequent appeal decisions of OPD applications determined by planning committees, 2010-2021 (by Local Authority)<sup>603</sup>

| Local Authority                   | OPDs      | Approved        | Refused        | Refused against recommendation | Allowed on appeal | Outstanding appeals |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Pembrokeshire County Council      | 10        | 8               | 2              | 1                              | 2                 | 0                   |
| Pembrokeshire Coast National Park | 7         | 4               | 3              | 1                              | 0                 | 0                   |
| Carmarthenshire County Council    | 6         | 4               | 2              | 2                              | 1                 | 1                   |
| Ceredigion County Council         | 3         | 3               | 0              | 0                              | 0                 | 0                   |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council | 1         | 1               | 0              | 0                              | 0                 | 0                   |
| Brecon Beacons National Park      | 1         | 1               | 0              | 0                              | 0                 | 0                   |
| Denbighshire County Council       | 1         | 1               | 0              | 0                              | 0                 | 0                   |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>29</b> | <b>22 (76%)</b> | <b>7 (24%)</b> | <b>4 (57%)</b>                 | <b>3 (43%)</b>    | <b>1</b>            |

There are, then, groupings of councillors who have affected the outcomes of OPD applications and the policy's broader implementation. This is particularly true in Carmarthenshire County Council where it is clear that the Plaid Cymru members of the planning committee, many of whom are current or former farmers, are most vocal in their criticism of the policy.<sup>604</sup> A key finding of this research is that councillor discussions and reasons for refusing OPD applications are based on political objections pertaining to perceived flaws in the policy, not with the specific applications under review. The upshot of this pattern is that councillors have based their misgivings not on material planning matters, but to broader issues pertaining to perceived injustices to local communities, the location of the application site, whether the applicants need to live on site, or a perception that the site is too small to support the applicants. The need to avoid this was, in fact, emphasised to Carmarthenshire's Planning Committee, whereby its Chair, Councillor Lenny, who, having previously sought to facilitate a moratorium on the policy, reminded its members that "We have to leave our opinion of OPD

<sup>603</sup> Data compiled from OPD planning applications and their associated planning documentation, accessed through their respective online Planning Portals of each Welsh Local Authority. See Appendix One.

<sup>604</sup> "Holiday Gets in Way of Evidence to Refuse One Planet Development Application Saving the Earth," last modified 15 October, 2021, accessed 3 May, 2022, <https://walesnewsonline.com/holiday-gets-in-way-of-evidence-to-refuse-one-planet-development-application-saving-the-earth/>.

to one side and decide [the application] based on planning matters as I always remind members. We've burnt our fingers once before".<sup>605</sup>

One such occasion when Carmarthenshire's councillors had 'burnt their fingers', was in the application for Rhiw Las. Whilst the application, the first OPD application in Carmarthenshire, in 2016, was recommended for approval by the planning officer, it was the elected members of Carmarthenshire County Council's Planning Committee who refused it. Members of the planning committee were unable to understand why the planning officer had recommended the application for approval despite it being counter to the Local Development Plan which, they felt, had precedence over OPD.<sup>606</sup>

However, beyond this tension, the discourse at the hearing also demonstrated that councillors' reasons for seeking to refuse the application were not rooted in relevant policy terms. The application's ultimate rejection was, according to Waghorn, "a good example of seeing first-hand how committee members are seeming to arrive at a decision and looking for justification after they've arrived at the decision".<sup>607</sup> This is reflected in the media coverage which reported that councillors refused the application based on

their personal opinions that occupants would fail to make a sufficient living, that they could live elsewhere and work on the land during the day, that it would encourage similar applications, and that it was too far from a village. Committee members then asked the planning department to come up with valid reasons for rejecting the plan. In the end, planning officers extracted three policies from the 2014 Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan and applied them to the One

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<sup>605</sup> "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Committee, 9 December 2021," Carmarthenshire County Council, last modified 9 December, 2021a, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

<sup>606</sup> Pat Dodd Racher, *Affordable Homes and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Wales* (Wales: Calon Cymru Network, 2017), p. 36.

<sup>607</sup> Personal telephone interview with Mark Waghorn, 22 July 2020

Planet policy in such a way as to make it very unlikely that any One Planet application for a rural location could ever be approved in the county.<sup>608</sup>

Whilst councillors refused the application, it was overturned at appeal by the Planning Inspectorate and the Local Authority was forced to pay the applicants' costs to compensate for councillors' conduct.<sup>609</sup> This example demonstrates that the implementation of the policy faltered at the planning committee stage; the applicants had provided the prerequisite documentation that had been deemed acceptable by the planning officer, but the elected members of the committee reached a decision that was subsequently overturned. It is evident, in this brief case study, that councillors' attitudes towards OPD had been affected by a negative perception of the policy which, as it will be shown, is rooted in a limited understanding of its approach to land use and farming. In addition, OPD is represented as an unaffordable mandate of the national government.<sup>610</sup> These themes will now be developed.

### *A national policy forced on underfunded Local Authorities?*

This section will assess the ways in which councillors have, partially as a result of warranted financial concerns, come to view OPD as an unwelcome mandate of the Welsh Government. This is, as will be shown, a consequence of OPD, as a national policy, being seen as circumventing local policies, one that represents an additional resource burden that has not, from many councillors' points of view, been appropriately funded. The implementation of

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<sup>608</sup> "Inspector Contradicts Councillors Over 'One Planet' Eco Hamlet," last modified 4 July, 2016, accessed May 3, 2022, <https://westwalesnewsreview.wordpress.com/2016/07/04/inspector-contradicts-councillors-over-one-planet-eco-hamlet/>.

<sup>609</sup> Alwyn B Nixon, "Costs Decision" Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/M6825/A/15/3139036 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2016b). <https://gov.wales/appeal-or-search-planning-decision-or-notice>

<sup>610</sup> The conduct of Plaid Cymru councillors has, in fact, been identified as representing a challenge to the efficacy of the planning department in Carmarthenshire, with a recent report criticising their conduct for going against the recommendation of the professional advice, in addition to being open to corruption. In view of this, it has, in fact, been suggested that councillors who propose and second decisions against the advice of the planning officer should personally attend any appeal lodged to defend their decision – see: <https://walesnewsonline.com/councillors-need-training-to-avert-risk-of-allegations-of-bribery-and-corruption-in-planning-decision-making/>



OPD in this branch of the decision-making apparatus has thus been affected by councillors' perception that OPD is an instrument of the Welsh Government that has been imposed on Local Authorities, both in terms of superseding local policies and as a drain on limited resources. As a result, OPD has come to embody the intersection of tensions between national and local politics.

Local Authorities produce their own Local Development Plan (LDP) - a statutory document - which is prepared by democratically elected officials and sets out the land use plans for a period of 10-15 years.<sup>611</sup> The LDP will usually determine whether a proposed development is likely to gain planning permission, unless there are "overriding reasons for deciding otherwise".<sup>612</sup> However, as was shown in Chapter Three, OPD is a national policy of the Welsh Government, one that emerged from the *One Wales: One Planet* sustainable development strategy in 2010. In view of this, OPD applications are considered, at local level, via the national policy framework and not under the policies of the LDP. The consequence of this, and as will be shown in the remainder of this chapter, is that councillors have come to feel disempowered by a policy which conflicts with, and overrides, their land values and local policies. For example, Councillor David Howlett, of the Conservative group, and member of the Pembrokeshire County Council Planning Committee, made a typical argument to this effect, at the hearing of Parc y Dderwen's OPD application, on 21 May 2019, asserting that, "I am concerned that the policy – which is not in our gift – but the policy is being used just to plonk properties in a rural area which if it wasn't for One Planet [Development] would not have a hope of getting planning permission".<sup>613</sup>

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<sup>611</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 14.

<sup>612</sup> Simon Fairlie, *Rural Planning Handbook for Low Impact Developers* (Glastonbury: Red Brick Books, 2018), p. 1.2.

<sup>613</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 21 May 2019," last modified 21 May, 2019, accessed 10 June, 2021, [https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/421802](https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/421802).

At the same planning committee, this argument was also made by Councillor Michael Williams, leader of the Plaid Cymru Group, stated that "I think that this is a fundamentally flawed policy and is being used in some instances as a way of getting around planning policy. We would not allow this in the open countryside were it not for the OPD policy".

See also: "News: Open Week is Chance to See One Planet Development in Action," last modified 30 May, 2019b, accessed May 3, 2022, <https://westwalesnewsreview.wordpress.com/2019/05/30/news-open-week-is-chance-to-see-one-planet-development-in-action/>.

In addition, councillors have developed political opposition to OPD based on the perceived financial implications of OPD being a policy imposed on Local Authorities by the Welsh Government. As developed earlier in this chapter, OPD was made available in 2010, the same year as austerity measures were introduced by the UK Government. Although the monitoring is an essential part of the policy, ensuring the continuing compliance of successful applicants to its targets, it does represent an additional statutory duty to Local Authorities in the age of austerity.<sup>614</sup> In fact, the current monitoring approach, outlined in the previous chapter, is a significant undertaking, with the performance of various micro-enterprises to examine, in addition to the lifestyles of the applicants measured via the Ecological Footprint Analysis (EFA). As a result, councillors have come to challenge OPD, with legitimate financial implications for Local Authorities, as an unaffordable mandate of the Welsh Government with one Pembrokeshire councillor, Huw George (Independent Group), stating that “OPD, it is not fit for purpose...if we are forced by Welsh Government to use an OPD, why are we, then, having to carefully monitor, review and control them, because we don’t have the resources?”<sup>615</sup>

As a direct outcome of this, councillors have been reticent to approve OPD applications based on their misgivings over the capacity of Local Authorities to monitor them. Carys Jones (Plaid Cymru) has raised this at multiple committee hearings in Carmarthenshire, on one occasion asking “does the council have the money or the expertise to do this monitoring and come to a definite decision in five years? There is no evidence that this has happened for any other OPD throughout Wales from what I can see”.<sup>616</sup> Despite the legal advisor rejecting this

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<sup>614</sup> Pat Dodd Racher, "News: Open Week is Chance to See One Planet Development in Action," West Wales News Review, 30 May, 2019.

<https://westwalesnewsreview.wordpress.com/2019/05/30/news-open-week-is-chance-to-see-one-planet-development-in-action/>.

<sup>615</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 2 October 2018," last modified 2 October, 2018, accessed 1 September, 2021, [https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/374876?fbclid=IwAR1sGw1BHEdan8mT4U9KMYdpVmUWbbsGKkqaZsp0ENCIII-T3Ad9GTt5OBk](https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/374876?fbclid=IwAR1sGw1BHEdan8mT4U9KMYdpVmUWbbsGKkqaZsp0ENCIII-T3Ad9GTt5OBk).

See also: "Call to Halt Eco-Homes Building Scheme," last modified 29 April, 2019, accessed Aug 29, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-48084556>.

<sup>616</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 14 October 2021," Carmarthenshire County Council, last modified 14 October, 2021b, accessed 07 February, 2022, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

Jones made the same argument at "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Full Council Meeting, 22 October 2020," last modified 22 October, 2020, accessed 22 October, 2020, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

argument, stating that councillors were duty bound only to discuss the application under review and not wider economic conditions, it is evident that the implementation of OPD is being affected by political tensions between national and local politics. By virtue of OPD circumventing local policies and the impact of austerity measures, councillors have showed concern for the capacity of Local Authorities to monitor OPDs that go against their land use values by allowing for new development in the open countryside. This has been exacerbated by their limited knowledge of LID and its approach to farming, largely owing to the limited training afforded to them as part of the policy's roll out since 2010.

*Resourcing, an ongoing expertise gap, and the implementation of OPD*

Building on the argument made in the first half of this chapter that there are limitations of training for OPD being provided by a third-party group, the OPC, it is clear that councillors who have not benefited from this training and are still affected by a limited knowledge of OPD. This emerges in the archival record of the local councils' considerations of OPD applications. While community councils are only consulted in the application process and whose input is only advisory, it is clear that they have pushed back against OPD by objecting to 51% of applications in the period of 2010-2021. This rises to 74% if only the applications where responses were received are accounted for (see Table 5.6 below and Appendix One).

Table 5.6 Community Council responses to OPD applications, 2010-2021 (by Local Authority)<sup>617</sup>

| Local Authority                             | OPDs      | Support        | Object          | Raised concerns | Did not respond |
|---|-----------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Pembrokeshire County Council                | 17        | 2              | 6               | 3               | 6               |
| Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority | 10        | 0              | 9               | 0               | 1               |
| Carmarthenshire County Council              | 12        | 0              | 8               | 0               | 4               |
| Ceredigion County Council                   | 8         | 1              | 4               | 0               | 3               |
| Powys County Council                        | 3         | 2              | 1               | 0               | 0               |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council           | 1         | 0              | 0               | 0               | 1               |
| Brecon Beacons National Park Authority      | 1         | 0              | 0               | 0               | 1               |
| Denbigshire County Council                  | 1         | 0              | 0               | 1               | 0               |
| Monmouthshire County Council                | 1         | 1              | 0               | 0               | 0               |
| Newport City Council                        | 1         | 0              | 0               | 0               | 1               |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>55</b> | <b>6 (11%)</b> | <b>28 (51%)</b> | <b>4 (7%)</b>   | <b>17 (31%)</b> |

However, it is clear that community councils' responses are rooted in a limited understanding and, in some cases, do not feel that they have the required expertise to make an informed decision on OPD applications. Newport Town Councillor, John Griffiths, stated that, "I was on the council when the Beeview Farm [OPD] application was heard and I think the majority of the councillors did make a real effort to get to grips with the OPD guidelines and we downloaded the paperwork".<sup>618</sup> Yet, despite his efforts to understand the policy documents, Griffiths continued to note that,

I have personally found difficulty not having the expertise to consider, for example, the management plans. I don't have the expertise to go through a management plan and decide whether it is reasonable, realistic, or complied with or whether it's appropriate. They are very technical and prepared by people who

<sup>617</sup> Data compiled from OPD planning applications and their associated planning documentation, accessed through their respective online Planning Portals of each Welsh Local Authority. See Appendix One.

<sup>618</sup> John Griffiths, personal interview, Newport, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

are experts in their field, so I think for a local community or town councillors it is very hard to decide, to make a judgement about the management plan.<sup>619</sup>

As a result, and as shown in the minutes of Newport Town Council's consideration of Beeview Farm's application, councillors felt unable to make an informed decision. Newport Town Councillor Phillips, in fact, suggested that the "the technical details be left to Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority".<sup>620</sup> Likewise, in the case of the OPD application for Cae Cwm Deri in Carmarthenshire, Llandybie Community Council concluded that they did "not have the local expertise or knowledge to comment on this application".<sup>621</sup> This demonstrates an expectation that the Local Authority is better equipped and informed. This is represented in the Manorbier Community Council discussion about Willow Farm's OPD application whereby Community Councillor, Ray Hughes, stated that he "felt that the Development Management Committee were much better informed and knowledgeable than Manorbier Community Council on this type of application".<sup>622</sup> This was supported by Councillor Hannon, who "thought Manorbier Community Council would need to defer further consideration of this application or it asks Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority to make the final decision as they had the relevant experts".<sup>623</sup>

The hope and expectations of community councils that the decision makers in Local Authorities are better equipped to deal with the complexity of OPD applications has, however, only been partially realised. The indication is that councillor decision making is limited by an expertise gap that has affected their ability to make informed decisions on a

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<sup>619</sup> John Griffiths, personal interview, Newport, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

<sup>620</sup> Newport Town Council, "MINUTES OF MEETING HELD at 7.00pm on 7th March 2016." Newport Town Council Documents (Newport Town Council, Newport, 2016), p. 3. <https://newport-pembs.co.uk/documents/>

<sup>621</sup> Llandybie Community Council, "MINUTES FROM THE CONSIDERATION AT THE COUNCIL'S PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28th MARCH 2018" Minutes of Planning Committees (Llandybie Community Council, Llandybie, 2018). [http://www.llandybie.org.uk/Planning\\_31287.aspx](http://www.llandybie.org.uk/Planning_31287.aspx)

<sup>622</sup> Manorbier Community Council, "Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council Held at Jameston Village Hall, Jameston, Monday 4 September 2017 – 7.00pm" Manorbier Community Council Documents (Manorbier Community Council, MANORBIER, 2017), p. 5. <https://www.pembstcc.co.uk/documents.asp?id=28>

<sup>623</sup> Manorbier Community Council, "Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council Held at Jameston Village Hall, Jameston, Monday 4 September 2017 – 7.00pm" Manorbier Community Council Documents (Manorbier Community Council, MANORBIER, 2017), p. 5. <https://www.pembstcc.co.uk/documents.asp?id=28>

policy that represents a departure from land use and conventional farming norms, in addition to the assessment of voluminous and complex documentation. Whilst planners have, as shown earlier in the chapter, come to successfully implement OPD, albeit in extended time periods, this is not the case for members of planning committees.

This was highlighted by Councillor Cundy (Labour) of Carmarthenshire County Council who, whilst arguing against the proposed moratorium of OPD, asserted that, "the majority of councillors here today, like myself, have limited or no detailed understanding of the planning laws surrounding One Planet Development".<sup>624</sup> This has affected the policy's implementation as decisions are being made by those with an expertise gap, which has led to flawed decision making, and hampered the facilitation of LID in Wales. For example, in arguing to refuse the OPD application for Maes Digonedd in Carmarthenshire, Councillor Ken Howell (Plaid Cymru), had, without proper training, clearly not understood ecological footprinting, a central component of OPD. He asserted that "What is global hectares? Because the size of the field is one hectare and it seems like 1.8 is needed per person and there are two people and a half people here, really, and that shows that the field isn't big enough".<sup>625</sup> A key plank of his reasons to wishing to refuse the application was therefore rooted in an unsound understanding of the policy's measure of sustainability.

As a direct consequence of councillors' limited understanding of OPD's novel approach to land use, councillors have based their impression of OPD on their existing knowledge. As Harris has pointed out, "the traditional conception of the countryside that has dominated planning ideas for the past seventy years still shows itself as embedded in the views of some elected members and local communities".<sup>626</sup> This 'traditional conception of the countryside' relates both to their understanding of the planning system, as well as to farming methods. As was

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<sup>624</sup> "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Full Council Meeting, 22 October 2020," last modified 22 October, 2020, accessed 22 October, 2020, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

<sup>625</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 14 October 2021," Carmarthenshire County Council, last modified 14 October, 2021, accessed 07 February, 2022, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

<sup>626</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 32.

shown in Chapters Three and Four, OPD is rooted in the pursuit of a subsistence lifestyle on relatively small pieces of land, often based on permaculture principles, developed outside of existing development envelopes. Whilst the tension with councillors' land use values was addressed in the previous section, with their dissatisfaction of OPD superseding their LDP, councillors have, perhaps understandably, by judging OPD applications through a traditional farming lens, also come to doubt the viability of permaculture-based projects. This is articulated as the applicant sites being too small to provide for the applicants' 'basic income needs' and, in the process, councillors have initiated a process of othering which brands OPD as a policy adopted by incoming alternative cultures. The impacts of this on local communities will be addressed in detail in the next chapter.

This perceived tension between permaculture projects and the land use requirement of existing commercial farms was, in fact, key to the argument proposed by Councillor Ken Howell (Plaid Cymru), who in support of the proposed moratorium on OPD in Carmarthenshire, stated that

A family of 6 were expected to live off 8 acres [3.23 hectares] without mains water or mains electricity and that, in my view, is a potential health hazard. It is so frustrating, as a farmer, to read some of the applications because I know that they don't stack up and will never succeed. And they will never succeed because I go back to the seventies, when we had an influx of what was known at the time as the 'good lifers', also known as 'hippies', who descended on this part of the world and bought up dilapidated cottages and smallholdings and thought that they could live off the land and lead what they called at the time, a 'peaceful life'. None of them are still here, after about five years they had all gone back, having found out at their cost that this area is not suited to grow the crops which they require to live off. Carmarthenshire is famous for growing grass, because the climate is suitable, and the soil is suitable. It is not suitable to grow, or to live off, market gardening on just eight acres [3.23 hectares]. You need much larger acreage, because you need to rotate your crops in order to keep a healthy soil without the pests and the diseases that come our way. The simple answer is that local people know that they will not succeed under the OPD plan. It is not possible to succeed

because they need at least forty acres [16.19]. Eight acres [3.23 hectares] is just ridiculous.<sup>627</sup>

It is noteworthy, in this context, that a recent questionnaire conducted by the One Planet Council of the successful OPDs in Wales showed that plot sizes varied between 0.8 hectares and 6.47 hectares, with an average of 4.05 hectares.<sup>628</sup> This clearly represents the void between Howell (and other councillors') understanding of how much land is required to support a family from and that of the permaculture approaches employed by OPDs. It also serves to demonstrate a key driver of the emerging othering of LID practitioners as being part of alternative cultures, such as the 'hippies' of the 1970s that, as will be seen in the next chapter, are deemed to be a threat to the cultural heritage and identities of local Welsh farming communities.

Despite these assertions, councillors are duty bound to consider the evidence presented to them, including the professional advice and recommendation provided by the presiding planning officer, and base their vote on these factors alone, not on personal opinions. The process for this, and the consequences of failing to abide by it, was outlined by the legal advisor to Carmarthenshire County Council, Steve Murphy, who, in the debate over Maes Digionedd's OPD application (subsequently refused by councillors), informed the planning committee that

You have to look at the advice that you have from professional officers and whether you should accept that advice or not. The code says that you should, unless you've got very good reasons not to accept that advice. I think that we've got here a situation where we've had independent advice that this [application] will comply with all of the policies and myself. In the event that we refuse the

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<sup>627</sup> "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Full Council Meeting, 22 October 2020," last modified 22 October, 2020, accessed 22 October, 2020, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>. See also, "Hippies Who Came to Wales in 1970s Left because they Couldn't Grow Food," last modified 27 October, 2020, accessed Jul 13, 2021, <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/carmarthenshire-news-farming-one-planet-19169486>.

<sup>628</sup> Data provided by the One Planet Council ([info@oneplanetcouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@oneplanetcouncil.org.uk)), from a survey conducted in November 2021.



application, if we do, I'm not prejudging anything at this moment, but if we do, inevitably there will be an appeal and at the appeal, all of the information that we've obtained now, which is the advice that we've had, however much you disagree with it, is advice from an independent source, will be trotted out against us in the appeal. So, I wouldn't reckon that we would have a great chance of defending that position and we have to be cognisant of that, really.<sup>629</sup>

Councillors have, however, questioned the basis for the recommendation for approval from the professional planners and independent advice based on their own farming knowledge. For example, Joseph Davis (Independent) informed the planning committee for Maes Digonedd, in Carmarthenshire, that "knowing the area and working the land all of my life, perhaps I am as qualified in that respect, if not better, than what they are".<sup>630</sup> In view of this, he concluded that the land was too wet, the soil was not appropriate, and that the plot was too small to provide a subsistence lifestyle.<sup>631</sup> Moreover, and particularly in Carmarthenshire where, given the limited resources and expertise of their planning officers to determine OPD applications, these have been outsourced to Terra Perma Geo, a rural planning consultancy firm, and councillors have pushed back against the advice of this organisation given it is produced by James Shorten, lead-author of the OPD *Practice Guidance* and patron of the OPC.

Based on their own farming backgrounds and a view that the advice of Terra Perma Geo is not, based on its association with the OPC, independent, councillors have questioned the validity of the recommendation for approval, with one councillor, Ken Howell (Plaid Cymru), claiming that "This is like giving the key to the hen shed to the fox, so it can't really be

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<sup>629</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 14 October 2021," Carmarthenshire County Council, last modified 14 October, 2021, accessed 07 February, 2022, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

<sup>630</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 14 October 2021," Carmarthenshire County Council, last modified 14 October, 2021, accessed 07 February, 2022, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>. Davis flippantly stated that he had "wasted his life" by pursuing a life in agriculture having read the management plan of an OPD application, see "Webcast of Planning Committee, 17 October 2019," last modified 17 October, 2019, accessed 18 June, 2021, <http://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MIId=2057&Ver=4>.

<sup>631</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 14 October 2021," Carmarthenshire County Council, last modified 14 October, 2021, accessed 07 February, 2022, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

independent".<sup>632</sup> As a result of OPD being a national policy, one that supersedes LDPs, and one based on different farming approaches, councillors have felt emasculated by the policy, especially when the recommendation to the committee from the professional planner is for approval.

It is evident that the combined impact of OPD being a national policy, and one that is rooted in concepts unfamiliar to councillors on planning committees, has affected the implementation of the policy as councillors, with no training or guidance on OPD beyond the policy documentation, have come to base their decisions on personal opinions, often informed by legitimate existing local issues, such as pressures on rural housing, pressures exacerbated by the rising levels of second and holiday home ownership in rural Wales. As a result, while not necessarily refusing applications, councillors have erred on the side of caution, despite their own reservations, and concern over the financial implications of losing an appeal. This was the tone of Councillor Brian Hall's comments who, as a member of the Pembrokeshire County Council's Planning Committee, on 17 January 2017, noted the potential financial impact refusing an OPD application, if it was successfully appealed. Addressing a claimed £12.4 million deficit in the Council budget, he suggested that "When we get a recommendation for approval – all be it deep down I don't think it's achievable – but if we don't go and follow that *TAN 6* policy line, what is this going to cost the planning section?"<sup>633</sup> Though this has not directly affected the passage of OPD application through the planning system, the evident political tensions have led to wider social issues.

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<sup>632</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 14 October 2021," Carmarthenshire County Council, last modified 14 October, 2021, accessed 07 February, 2022, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>. See also, "Holiday Gets in Way of Evidence to Refuse One Planet Development Application Saving the Earth," last modified 15 October, 2021, accessed 3 May, 2022, <https://walesnewsonline.com/holiday-gets-in-way-of-evidence-to-refuse-one-planet-development-application-saving-the-earth/>.

<sup>633</sup> "Webcast of Planning & Rights of Way Committee, 17 January 2017," last modified 17 January, 2017, accessed 1 September, 2021, [https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/263293](https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/263293). Councillors, nonetheless, voted 10-3 in favour of refusing the application. It was allowed on appeal. See Newsroom, "Bid to Build Low Impact Smallholding is Granted on Appeal," Pembrokeshire County Council, last modified 4 January, accessed 1 September, 2021, <https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/newsroom/bid-to-build-low-impact-smallholding-is-granted-on-appeal>.

The same argument has been made by:

Councillor Brian Hall at "Webcast of Planning Committee, 2 October 2018," last modified 2 October, 2018, accessed 1 September, 2021, <https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

*The sowing of divisive narratives*

Whilst planners have seemingly come to accept OPD, having been trained by the OPC, councillors have impaired the implementation of the policy, by suggesting that the policy allows a deviation from existing rural development policies to the determinant of the local community. For example, in his capacity as the Chair of Carmarthenshire County Council's Planning Committee, Councillor Lenny (Plaid Cymru) legitimised a narrative of unfairness in proposing a moratorium on OPD by arguing that

While many local people find it difficult, if not impossible, to get planning permission to build a home in a community where their family may have lived for many generations, they see newcomers getting permission to build a home on the projection that they can live sustainably on a few acres of land five years hence. It is creating considerable resentment and friction, many view OPD as an alien imposition on their communities.<sup>634</sup>

Directly related to their limited knowledge of OPD, the tensions between national and local politics, and the issue raised in the previous chapter, that OPD has only appealed to a limited demographic who have been willing to accept its stringent terms in order to develop more affordable land in the open countryside, councillors have accelerated a further social tension which pitches OPD as offering unfair advantages to those from outside of local farming communities.

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[i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/374876?fbclid=IwAR1sGw1BHEdan8mT4U9KMYdpVmUWbpsGKkqaZsp0ENCIII-T3Ad9GTt5OBk](https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/374876?fbclid=IwAR1sGw1BHEdan8mT4U9KMYdpVmUWbpsGKkqaZsp0ENCIII-T3Ad9GTt5OBk).

Councillor David Howlett (Conservative Group) at "Webcast of Planning Committee, 21 May 2019," last modified 21 May, 2019, accessed 10 June, 2021, [https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/421802](https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/421802).

Councillor Alun Lenny (Plaid Cymru) at "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Full Council Meeting, 22 October 2020," last modified 22 October, 2020, accessed 22 October, 2020, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

<sup>634</sup> "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Full Council Meeting, 22 October 2020," last modified 22 October, 2020, accessed 22 October, 2020, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

The same argument was made by Councillor Dorion Phillips (Plaid Cymru) at "Webcast of Planning Committee, 17 October 2019," last modified 17 October, 2019, accessed 18 June, 2021, <http://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=154&Mid=2057&Ver=4>.

This can be further demonstrated by the articulation of false equivalences with other rural exceptions. During the Planning Committee for Penedni Councillor, R.M Lewis (Independent Plus), argued that Crymych Community Council was more generous to OPD than to rural worker applications, stating that, “it is now easier to get a One Plant Development application approved than it is to get a *TAN 6* Rural Workers [Dwelling] application and there have been examples of sons of farmers who have farms in excess of 200 acres [80.93 hectares] turned down and that, again, has a bearing on sustainable communities”.<sup>635</sup> These are, however, unjustified comparisons given that OPD is a national policy and universally available and these assertions are rooted in generalisation and stereotypes of OPD and its applicants. This is further evidence of how OPD’s implementation has been affected by councillors’ personal opinions which has led to flawed decision making, as well as OPD being associated OPD as an ‘alien imposition’ on their local communities which has, furthermore, provided advantages for those branded as incomers. While understandably rooted in local issues in their constituencies, this has nevertheless negatively impacted the social integration of OPDs, despite the policy’s Community Impact Assessment, which will be assessed in detail in the final chapter.

## Conclusion

The arrival of OPD in 2010 represented a unique challenge to this study’s second group of stakeholders, the decision makers. The policy, as a new rural exception, with a novel approach to land use and farming, was made available without an appropriate level of detail in the Welsh Government’s *TAN 6*. As a result, professional planners and members of elected planning committees were under prepared to adjudicate these new and challenging

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<sup>635</sup> Pembrokeshire County Council, *MINUTES of a MEETING of the PLANNING & RIGHTS OF WAY COMMITTEE Held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, HAVERFORDWEST on TUESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2016* (Pembrokeshire: Pembrokeshire County Council, 2016a), p. 7.

The same argument was made by Councillor Alun Lenny (Plaid Cymru) at "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Full Council Meeting, 22 October 2020," last modified 22 October, 2020, accessed 22 October, 2020, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

applications. This was exacerbated by the changing economic environment which meant that, exactly when a new, complex, and lengthy policy was released, a sustained and deep period of austerity was introduced by the incumbent coalition Government in 2010. This affected Local Authorities' capacity to develop the expertise to implement the policy successfully as demonstrated by the lack of successful applications before 2014.

OPD applications have, however, seen a significant uptake since 2016, attributed to the publishing to the Welsh Government's *OPD Practice Guidance* (2012) and the bespoke OPD training provided to planners by the OPC after 2015. This partially plugged the resourcing and expertise gap and has resulted in pockets of expertise and the OPC has become a key actor in the implementation of OPD in Wales. It is clear, then, that additional resourcing for OPD from the Welsh Government would improve its implementation at local level.

The significance of training for the successful realisation of OPD is demonstrated by the contrast with elected councillors who, without access to bespoke training, have not developed the prerequisite knowledge which has resulted in deficient decision making. A key finding of this chapter is that where councillors have decided against the recommendation of the presiding planning officer, their decisions have largely been overturned at appeal.<sup>636</sup> It is evident that councillor's influence on OPD applications must be addressed to improve the policy's real-world application. This is particularly true given that they have also fostered social tensions owing to their judgment of OPD through traditional conceptions of the countryside that are not applicable to OPD. The broader picture is not necessarily of an ideological resistance to OPD, but a resourcing gap that has affected a continuing knowledge disparity amongst councillors, in addition to political tensions between national and local politics, as well as concerns over local housing issues (to be addressed in the next chapter).

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<sup>636</sup> While councillors have refused five OPD applications against the advice of the planning officer, with four being over-turned at appeal, the fifth appeal has yet to be determined by the Planning Inspectorate. The calculation made here is that four of four have so far been over-turned, thus the claim of 'all'.

In addition, the complexity and rigour of an OPD application has meant that the ongoing resourcing issues in Local Authorities, owing to the impact of austerity, has meant that the time it has taken to determine OPD applications has affected the appeal and implementation of the policy. Indeed, OPD applications have been disproportionately affected by austerity, taking significantly longer than the national average for planning applications to be determined. As was identified in the previous chapter, the policy's implementation would therefore be improved by streamlining the amount of paperwork required, both in the application process and the ongoing compliance monitoring, which would reduce the resource burden on Local Authorities, alleviating the pressures on planners' workloads, improving the time frames in which OPD applications are determined, in addition to positively affecting councillor's attitudes to the policy as an underfunded mandate of the Welsh Government. As it is, the process of determining an OPD application is a lengthy exercise which introduces significant jeopardy to applicants. This will continue to limit the appeal of OPD to a limited demographic and the limited number of applications.

## Chapter Six

### The Implementation of OPD and Stakeholder Group Three: The Local Community

This chapter will assess the implementation of the Welsh Government's One Planet Development policy with respect to the third identified stakeholder group: local communities. The emergence of OPD in Wales in 2010 has, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four, facilitated a legal space for LID in Wales, albeit with strict conditions. However, beyond the legal provision lies the social challenge of integrating those seeking to develop 'exemplars' of sustainable living in rural spaces. Given that OPD allows for access to land previously not earmarked for residential development and is often rooted in different approaches to farming in more traditional farming communities, it is important that local communities are cogent of the policy, and its conditions, and are included in an OPD's establishment process. As the *OPD Practice Guidance* states, "Where an OPD is adjacent to an existing settlement, and will effectively become part of it, the existing community should be fully involved in the formulation of the proposals".<sup>637</sup> Therefore, if OPD is to deliver the successful implementation of LID in Wales, and support the development of sustainable rural communities, OPD applicants must be accepted in their local communities, becoming socially and economically integrated.

The community acceptance of LIDs has typically been fostered following the granting of planning permission and that tensions dissipate as the worst-case fears are not realised. Tao Wimbush, one of OPD's pioneers, has, in fact, noted that local resistance to the Lammas Ecovillage between 2006 and 2009 had since "totally subsided. And I would describe our relationship, by and large, as mutually respectful, we are accepted as part of the local colour".<sup>638</sup> The key point of tension identified, then, is the establishment process of LIDs,

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<sup>637</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 48.

<sup>638</sup> Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.

For details on the Lammas Ecovillage, see Tao Paul Wimbush, *The Lammas Ecovillage: Deep Roots and Stormy Skies* (Wales: FeedARead Publishing, 2021).; "Self-Reliant Residents Live the Good Life in Eco-Village of Lammas,"

played out in the planning system which represents the locus for the management of opposing and often irreconcilable differences.<sup>639</sup> In view of this, the OPD policy framework, including the Community Impact Assessment, has specifically codified that, during the application process, applicants must identify their community impacts, both negative and positive, and demonstrate how their negative impacts will be mitigated.<sup>640</sup>

As a result, an analysis of this initial interaction with the local community is a helpful indicator in this thesis' central goal of assessing the success of the policy's implementation. This will be measured by a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the third-party representations received by Local Authorities, during the consultation period of OPD applications between 2010-2021, in addition to contributions at planning committees by members of the local community and their elected representatives.<sup>641</sup> As part of the planning application process, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) has a statutory duty to facilitate a consultation period of 21 days during which the public can comment on planning applications.<sup>642</sup> While this approach limits the measurement of the policy's attempts to facilitate social integration to the application process, it is the only measurable data of the engagement of the policy's implementation with this chapter's stakeholder group, though the issue of community

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last modified 19 April, 2013, accessed 10 June, 2021, <https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/local-news/self-reliant-residents-live-good-life-2691033>.

<sup>639</sup> Susan Owens and Richard Cowell, *Land and Limits Interpreting Sustainability in the Planning Process* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 22.

<sup>640</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 48.

<sup>641</sup> There have also been petitions in the applications for Beeview Farm (NP/15/0693/FUL) and the second Castle Hill (NP/18/0134/FUL) OPD applications in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, and some media coverage.

<sup>642</sup> Terry Marsden, Philip Lowe and Jonathan Murdoch, *Constructing the Countryside* (London: UCL Press, 1993), p. 127.

Following the LPA having registered and validated an application, it will publicise the application, with specific information about the application on their website, including the address of the proposed development site and the process for making representations. In the specific case of OPD applications, LPAs also make the Management Plan and supporting documentation available. It will also notify neighbours or put up a site notice near to the applicant site. In addition, the parish, town, or community council will usually be notified, in addition to other bodies, such as the Highways Agency and Natural Resources Wales. It should be noted that the process noted above is for applications considered as 'minor' applications; some OPD applications have been determined as 'major' applications given the size of the site which affects a deeper consultation process, see <https://www.planningaidwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/PAW-Pre-applications-consultations-A-guide-for-communities2.pdf>

For an overview of the planning application process, see:

[https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200232/planning\\_applications/58/the\\_decision-making\\_process/4](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200232/planning_applications/58/the_decision-making_process/4)



relationships was also part of the interview data collected for this study.<sup>643</sup> This approach also acknowledges that OPD is a relatively recent policy provision and longer-term patterns of community integration are yet to be seen, in particular as the majority of successful OPD applications have been since 2016 and, therefore, these have not yet reached their first five-year establishment period.

This chapter will argue that OPD's prescription for social integration via the Community Impact Assessment (CIA) has facilitated community engagement and the development of social capital, including the building of trust. Indeed, the archival record of OPD applications shows that in only 24% of OPD applications have there been a greater number of objections than expressions of support (see Appendix One). However, where the aims of the CIA have not been realised, or perceived not to have been realised, the capacity to build social capital is lost and OPD applicants' community acceptance is negatively affected. For example, where social capital has not been built, 20% of objecting representations identified a mistrust in the applicants, while a further 27% raised concern over the OPD policy itself. This chapter will further show that there is a fault line in the CIA surrounding the notion of 'community'. In fact, this chapter will argue that OPD has found support amongst a broader community of those motivated by environmental issues but has struggled to win over those with an immediate spatial connection to the applicant sites which are deemed to have an adverse impact on local resources and a negative influence on local identities.

Moreover, whilst the CIA and the policy framework has sought to prescribe for successful social integration, this chapter will ultimately demonstrate that the key issues raised by local objectors to OPD applications are a mirror of those made by elected councillors at planning committees developed in the previous chapter. Therefore, a limited knowledge of the policy and its broader permaculture-based ethos has affected OPD's implementation of Wales's LID policy at the local level. This has resulted in objections articulated in narratives of unfairness

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<sup>643</sup> An opinion poll of local community views towards OPD was not possible for this study given, as was identified in Chapter Two, the personal details of respondents to OPD applications are redacted by most Local Authorities in Wales. It was also impaired by resourcing constraints and the travel restrictions imposed by Covid-19 measures.

and 'not in my back yard' (NIMBY) attitudes which, to some degree, are rooted in legitimate existing local issues, such as the pressures on rural housing and the challenges faced by those seeking to build on their own land.<sup>644</sup> As a result, the policy implementation of OPD has been limited at the (very) local level as a consequence of its limited uptake, particularly amongst Welsh farming communities, and an evident lack of knowledge about the policy's benchmarks and rigour to protect the open countryside from sporadic development.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section will scrutinise the OPD policy's prescription to foster community acceptance. It will draw particular attention to the Community Impact Assessment and its capacity to build social capital. It will also place this aim within the broader political environment in Wales of seeking to develop sustainable rural communities. The second section will assess the success of the CIA by examining the third-party representations to OPD applications. It will explore the statistical data derived from a manifest content analysis of these representations and draw out the key themes that run through the support and objections to the OPD applications in Wales from 2010-2021. The third section will analyse the cultural assumptions that surround the OPD policy in spite of the CIA, with particular emphasis on its association with alternative cultures and the illegal use of the countryside. The fourth section will show how OPD, as a policy that allows for the development of the open countryside, has been attributed to offering an unfair advantage to those considered to be incomers into local farming communities. The final section will assess the related issue that these incomers are deemed to be affecting the cultural heritage of these communities and the sustainability of the Welsh language.

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<sup>644</sup> "One Planet Smallholding Plan Divides Local Opinion," last modified 8 November, 2019c, accessed May 23, 2022, <https://westwalesnewsreview.wordpress.com/category/sustainability/>.

## The Community Impact Assessment (CIA): developing social capital

Social integration has been identified as a significant challenge for those seeking to develop new ways of living in rural spaces. In fact, Rebecca Laughton, market gardener and writer, has argued that

I think public opinion is a big obstacle to low impact development. Local people formally objecting about an application to the planning authorities will influence planning decisions, but also the vitriol that local people can have towards people trying to set up a low impact development can be really, really, poisonous.<sup>645</sup>

This can be attributed to the ways in which LIDs, and new entrants to farming, are often from outside of existing farming communities.<sup>646</sup> In addition, LIDs are also often based on permaculture principles, a different approach to land use, whilst also occupying land usually precluded from development. This section will, then, draw particular attention to the Community Impact Assessment (CIA), the OPD policy's attempt to foster community acceptance. It will be shown that the CIA has improved the likelihood of successful social integration by baking in a mechanism to develop social capital, while also complementing the broader national strategy of cultivating sustainable rural communities.

As part of the management plan discussed in the Chapter Four, OPD applicants are required to submit a Community Impact Assessment which must “identify potential impacts on the host community (both positive and negative) and provide a basis to identify and implement any mitigation measures that may be necessary”.<sup>647</sup> This is also an ‘essential criteria’ of the ongoing compliance monitoring discussed in Chapters Four and Five.<sup>648</sup> The CIA, and its

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<sup>645</sup> Rebecca Laughton, personal telephone interview, 17 February, 2020.

<sup>646</sup> Zoe Wangler and Rebecca Laughton, *Planning Barriers Faced by New Organic Horticultural Businesses in England* (Bristol: The Landworkers' Alliance and Ecological Land Co-operative, 2019), p. 6.

<sup>647</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 25.

<sup>648</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 49.

obligation for applicants to socially and economically integrate, and the broader requirement for the existing community to be involved in OPD proposals, facilitates the building of social capital which include trust, rules and sanctions, reciprocity, and connectedness.<sup>649</sup> In order to develop a sense of connectedness, the CIA's 'contributory criteria' notes that OPD applicants should send their children to local schools, support local groups, and be accessible by offering open days, while supporting the local economy by shopping locally and selling their own produce in local markets.<sup>650</sup> The policy's focus on the land-based enterprise to meet the minimum income needs of the applicant site, assessed in Chapter Three, facilitates the building of trust and reciprocity as part of the transactional relationships built. As Chris Vernon of the Rhiw Las OPD site stated,

The enterprise is a way of giving something back. By definition, you are producing something of value and putting it back into the community. You haven't just ring fenced it and taken it out of the community. Each one of those engagements builds community. It's not just the money, it's also the half an hour conversation that tops and tails that financial transaction. And, because it is a transaction, it builds trust as the product has to be good.<sup>651</sup>

The provision of OPD in Wales therefore places the need to engage the local community as part of the application process, aiming to alleviate the historic point of friction, whilst easing the cultural tensions associated with new ways of living in the open countryside. In fact, David Thorpe, an OPD policy expert, has noted the significance of OPD's CIA, stating that it "absolutely needs to be there for the applicant and for the community and for the wider perception of OPD. There is negative press, it is seen as English people coming in and not mixing, and that community appraisal is vital to overcome that prejudice".<sup>652</sup> This underscores

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<sup>649</sup> Jules Pretty, *The Living Land* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 1998), p. 8.

See also, Jules Pretty, *Agri-Culture Reconnecting People, Land and Nature* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2009), p. 152.; Rebecca Laughton, *Surviving and Thriving on the Land: How to use Your Time and Energy to Run a Successful Smallholding* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2008), p. 205.

<sup>650</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 49.

<sup>651</sup> Chris Vernon, personal interview, Zoom, 25 May, 2021.

The same argument was made by Paul Jennings, personal interview, Skype, 2 June, 2021.; Anne Hooper, personal telephone interview, 24 June, 2020.

<sup>652</sup> David Thorpe, personal interview, Zoom, 21 July, 2021.

the importance of a policy framework and guidelines to facilitate low impact developments and to provide for a social contract to ease community acceptance.

While OPD legitimised LID, its emphasis on social integration positions it as distinct from historic rural migrants which have been associated subcultural groups often aiming to drop out of mainstream society.<sup>653</sup> Stefan Cartwright, whose OPD was approved in Ceredigion, in 2018, argued that OPD's policy demands mean that OPD is "moving in, rather than dropping out. I think that's significant".<sup>654</sup> The significance, clearly, is that contemporary LIDs in Wales are expected to be part of their surroundings, socially and economically integrated, as part of their planning consent. The policy framework therefore aims to facilitate 'exemplars' of sustainable living, whilst also ensuring that they are play a part in forming sustainable rural communities. In doing so, it correlates with Pooran Desai's ten principles of One Planet Living (the nomenclature from which the OPD policy was derived) which includes "Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities and promoting a culture of sustainable living".<sup>655</sup> This should also be understood in the context of sustainable development being the 'central organising principle' of the Welsh Government.

As was developed in Chapter Three, Wales has, since the Government of Wales Act (1998), embedded sustainability into its political culture and further developed this in the in Wellbeing of Future Generations Act's (2015) seven goals whereby two relate to communities, equating sustainability in Wales with "cohesive communities" with a "vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language".<sup>656</sup> Therefore, building on the argument developed in

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<sup>653</sup> Keith Halfacree, "From Dropping Out to Leading on? British Counter-Cultural Back-to-the-Land in a Changing Rurality" *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 3 (2006), 309-336.

<sup>654</sup> Stefan Cartwright, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 21 September, 2018.

<sup>655</sup> "One Planet Living Principles," last modified 22 November, 2017, accessed 10 June, 2021, [https://storage.googleapis.com/www.bioregional.com/downloads/One-Planet-Living-principles\\_Bioregional\\_2017.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/www.bioregional.com/downloads/One-Planet-Living-principles_Bioregional_2017.pdf).

The ten principles of One Planet Living are Health and happiness; Equity and local economy; Culture and community; Land and nature; Sustainable water; Local and sustainable food; Travel and transport; Materials and products; Zero waste; Zero carbon energy.

<sup>656</sup> Welsh Government, *A Guide to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2016), p. 6.

Chapter Three, that OPD represents a successful policy realisation of LID in Wales as it was part of a broader sustainability agenda, this has also included a focus on building sustainable rural communities. It is, moreover, also translated into the planning system, whereby a key objective is “to support living and working rural communities in order that they are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable”.<sup>657</sup> Community building is then not simply an aspect of Wales’s specific LID policy, but part of the broader political environment and planning system. The political environment fostered in Wales after devolution and the policy contribution of the OPD policy’s CIAs have created the necessary political and legislative conditions to help facilitate LID in Wales, the mechanisms to nurture the social integration of OPD applicants into their local communities, and to achieve the broader objective of producing sustainable rural communities.

### **Third-party representations to OPD planning applications**

This section will analyse the third-party representations received to OPD planning applications in the period 2010-2021 in order to examine the success of the CIA to build social capital and facilitate the social integration of OPD sites. It will be shown that the CIA has contributed to community acceptance with only limited local opposition to OPD applications identified in this study. However, despite the policy requiring a Community Impact Assessment, local resistance and objection remains as a social challenge to OPD applicants, particularly when OPD and the proposed projects have not been fully understood. Indeed, according to Matthew Watkinson of Beeview Farm, an OPD in Pembrokeshire,

Local resistance was the major challenge for us. Local objectors were very motivated and basically prepared to say anything to undermine our application.

There was a petition against us claiming we were setting up an egg factory with

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The seven Wellbeing Goals are a globally responsible Wales; a prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a healthier Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

<sup>657</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010), p. 8.

60 cockerels, there was a smear campaign claiming I'd been struck off the veterinary register for negligence and sent abusive text messages. Objectors predicted ecological collapse around us and "desecration" of the landscape, via noise, smell and visual impact. It was a brutal experience.<sup>658</sup>

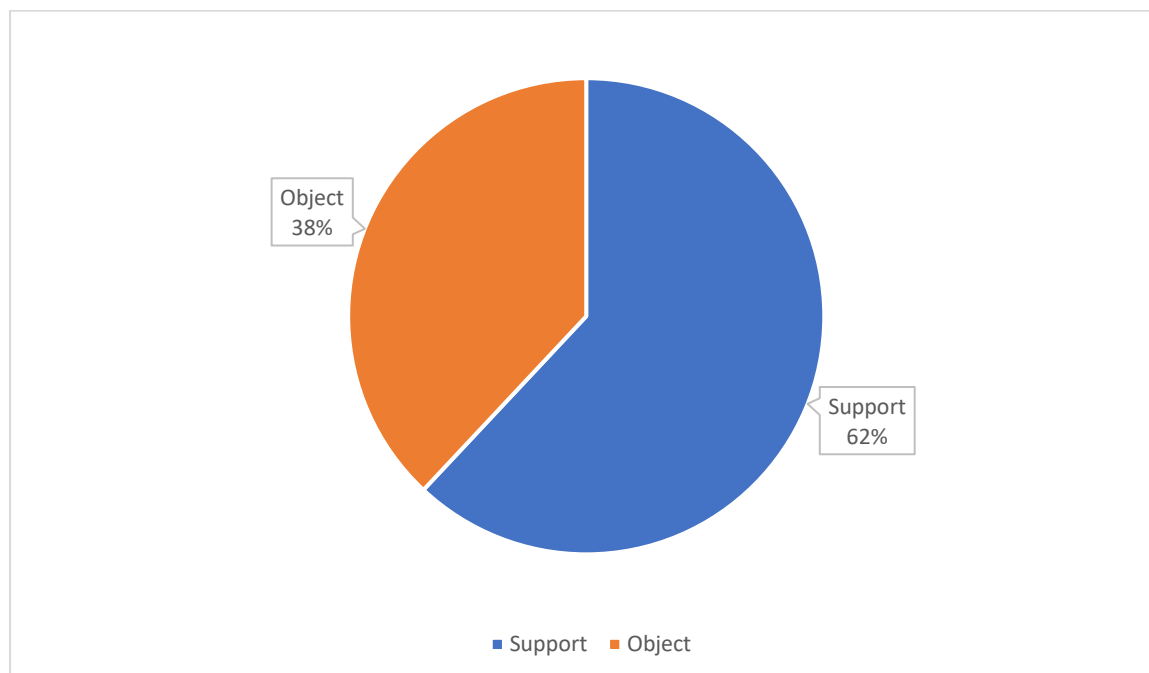
It should, however, be understood that local resistance is usually based on a vocal minority who object to OPD planning applications. As was outlined in the Methodology Chapter, across the 51 OPD applications where the data was available, 513 third-party representations were submitted to Local Authorities in the period of 2010-2021. Of these, and as represented in Figure 6.1 below, 318 (62%) were in support of applications, while 195 (38%) objected. Moreover, in only 24% of OPD applications considered during the period of 2010-2021 did the number of objections supplant the number of supporting representations received.<sup>659</sup> Similarly, in 26 (51%) of 51 OPD applications, in the same period, no objecting representations were made at all (see Appendix One). Therefore, OPD applications have not, in most cases, raised community tensions. Thus, the Welsh Government's facilitation of LID and OPD's CIA, with the requirement for applicant sites to be integrated, both socially and economically, can be seen to have supported community acceptance and the development of social capital.

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<sup>658</sup> Matthew Watkinson, personal email correspondence, 1 August, 2019.

<sup>659</sup> This is a calculation based on the available data – the data set is complete for 51 of the 55 OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021 (see Appendix One). In 12 of the 51 OPD applications where the complete data is available, did objections outnumber supporting representations.

Figure 6.1 Balance of supporting and objecting third-party representations submitted to OPD planning applications in Wales, 2010-2021.<sup>660</sup>



The strength of the OPD policy, in requiring applicants to submit a CIA as part of their planning application, is further demonstrated by the reaction of members of communities where consultation was perceived not to have taken place. In fact, in 23% of applications with objections, complaints about not having been contacted are evident.<sup>661</sup> Thus, where communication is perceived to be lacking, resistance arises as the potential social capital built by the CIA has not been fostered. For example, in the case of Parc Y Dderwen, Matthew Ritchie, speaking on behalf of the objectors at the planning committee meeting of Pembrokeshire County Council, claimed that the applicants did not want to negotiate or engage the local community.<sup>662</sup> This perceived lack of communication resulted in a lack of trust and reciprocity whereby the applicants were accused of acting illegally, offering

<sup>660</sup> The data in this chart was derived from two sources – downloading the third-party representations from Local Authority websites and by making requests to those that did not make them available to the public record.

<sup>661</sup> It must be borne in mind that applicants in the period of 2019-2021 have had to contend with the Community Impact Assessment in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and will, therefore, have faced additional challenges in engaging their neighbours. The failure to communicate can sometimes also be due a perceived or real failure of the Local Authority to contact neighbours to initiate the public consultation.

<sup>662</sup> It should be noted that this is the perception of those objecting and not a judgement on whether the applicants did engage their neighbours.



unwanted services and products and were, therefore, not of benefit to the local community.<sup>663</sup> The lived experience of the policy's application shows that where the prescribed community involvement has not been realised, and where social capital has not been built, that flawed understandings of the policy can emerge, including narratives of unfairness which may hinder the social integration of OPDs into their local communities. A successful application of the CIA is, then, key for the implementation of OPD in Wales. The narrative of unfairness will be addressed in a later section.

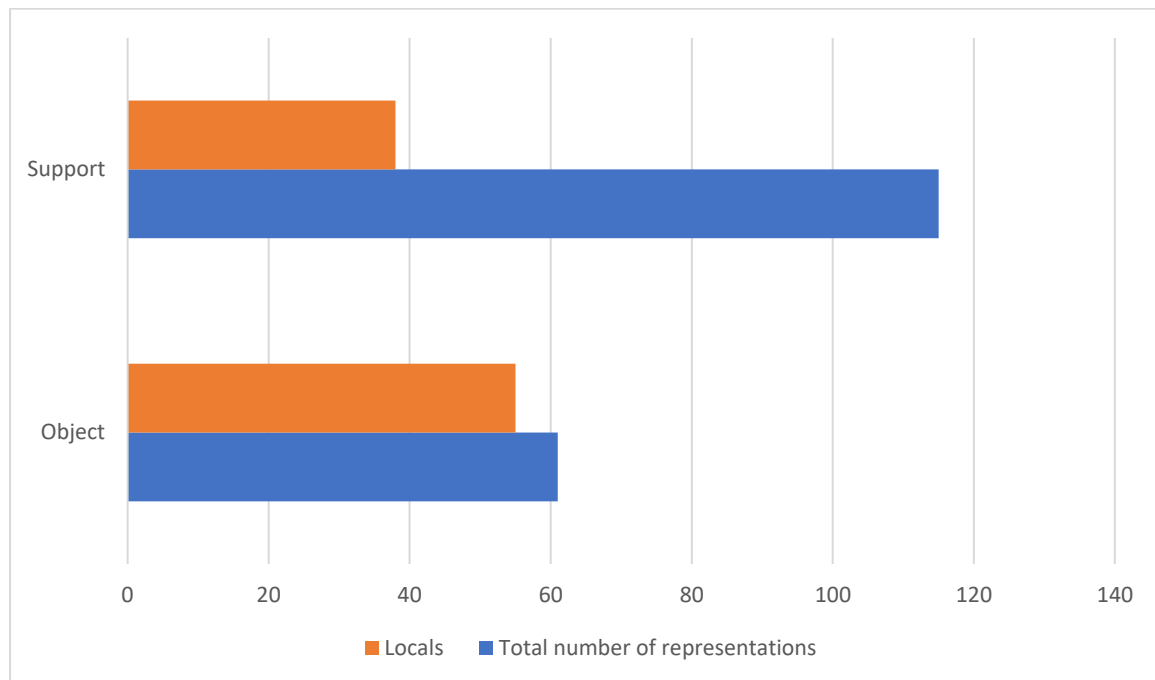
However, while there exists a pattern towards greater levels of support than objections to OPD applications, a significant distinction emerges between two sub-groups within those supplying third party representations. These groups can be identified as the 'local community' and a 'non-local community'. As identified in the Methodology Chapter, Carmarthenshire County Council is the only Local Authority that publishes the personal details of those that engage in the public consultation. As a result, this Local Authority has been used to measure the proportion respondents being from the local area, defined, for the purposes of this study, as living within three miles of the OPD site being considered. Based on an analysis of 93 representations derived from nine OPD applications in Carmarthenshire where the addresses of the respondents were available, 90% of the objecting representations were from those who lived within a three-mile area, while only 33% of supporting representations came from this demographic (see Figures 6.2 and 6.3 below). Moreover, the average proximity to the applicant site was 0.99 miles in the objecting representations, compared to 27.8 miles in those supporting the application.<sup>664</sup>

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<sup>663</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 21 May 2019," last modified 21 May, 2019, accessed 10 June, 2021, [https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/421802](https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/421802).

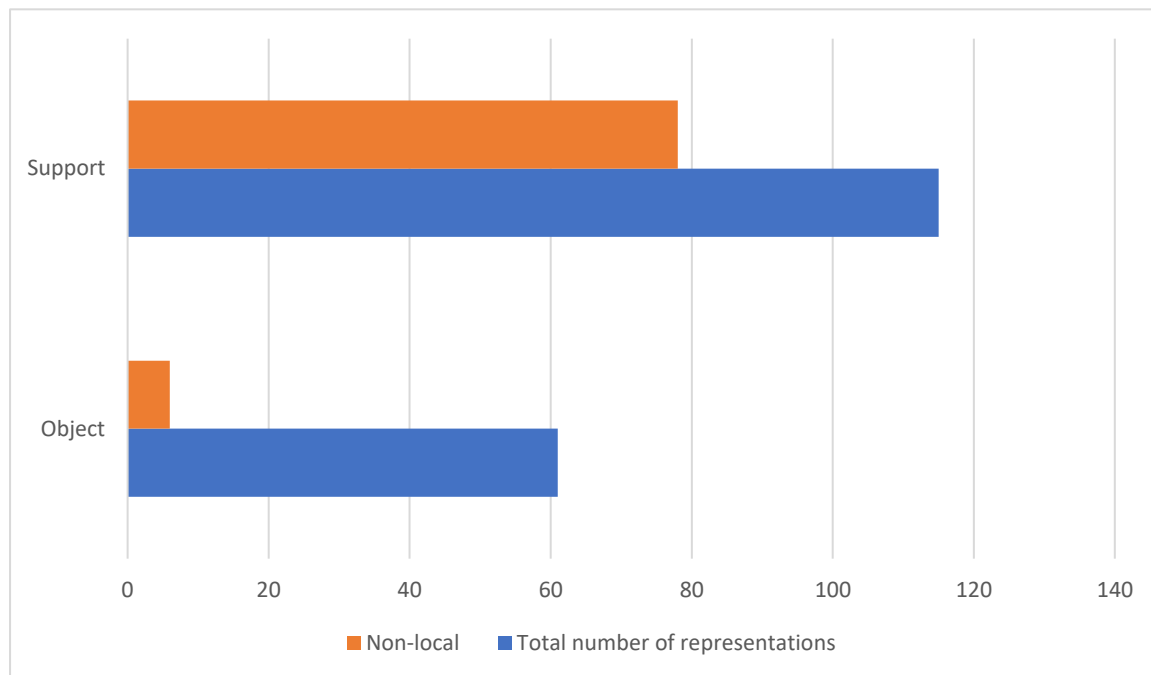
<sup>664</sup> These distances were calculated using either addresses or postcodes derived from the Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Portal on the relevant OPD applications. The distance, in miles, was calculated using Google Maps' 'Measure Distance' facility to establish the straight-line distance between the two locations, rather than the distance via a road route.

Figure 6.2 'Local community' support and objections, as a proportion of the total number of third-party representations to 9 OPD planning applications in Carmarthenshire, 2010-2021.<sup>665</sup>



<sup>665</sup> The data in this chart was derived from two sources – downloading the third-party representations from Local Authority websites and by making requests to those that did not make them available to the public record. These were then subjected to a manifest content analysis and the results displayed in percentages.

Figure 6.3 'Non-local community' support and objections, as a proportion of the total third-party representations to 9 OPD planning applications in Carmarthenshire, 2010-2021.<sup>666</sup>



This can be further demonstrated with a practical example. In the planning committee hearing for the Ty Dderwen OPD application in Carmarthenshire, a local objector, Gareth Parsons, noted that all neighbours with a shared boundary had objected and, "importantly, 23 of the 28 objections are locals...in support 9 out of the 26 are local, the remainder being as far away as Lancashire and Worcestershire".<sup>667</sup> This is representative of the broader tension with the idea of the 'community impact', which is itself not defined in the *OPD Practice Guidance*. Whilst the CIA makes specific reference to local trade and social engagement with children attending local schools and social events, the notion of OPDs having a broader national or global 'community impact' represents a fault line within the third-party representations and the definition of 'community'. In fact, in responding to the objector, the applicant stated that

<sup>666</sup> The data in this chart was derived from two sources – downloading the third-party representations from Local Authority websites and by making requests to those that did not make them available to the public record. These were then subjected to a manifest content analysis and the results displayed in percentages.

<sup>667</sup> "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Committee, 22 September 2020," Carmarthenshire County Council, last modified 22 September, 2020b, accessed 1 September, 2021, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>. This is corroborated in this study's analysis of the representations submitted to Carmarthenshire County Council.

The support isn't all local, we want our objectives on site to be far reaching, it's not just about our local community, although that is at our heart, wanting to be part of the local community, but we want to have a widespread impact and we want to show how you can live sustainably with a reduced carbon and ecological footprint.<sup>668</sup>

A key finding of this research, and especially as part of the content analysis of the third-party representations, is that whilst the broader 'non-local community' support for OPD applications is often based on mitigating global environmental issues such as climate change, local resistance is based on perceived negative impacts on local resources and infrastructure (see Figure 6.4 below). For example, 59% of opposing representations were concerned over the impact of the proposed OPD's impact on transport issues, such as local traffic, while a further 51% of objecting representations claimed that the applicant site was unsuitable for OPD owing to factors such as limited access, the size of the site, or the quality of the soil to support a permaculture-style project. This is a reflection of the concerns raised by members of planning committees addressed in the previous chapter.

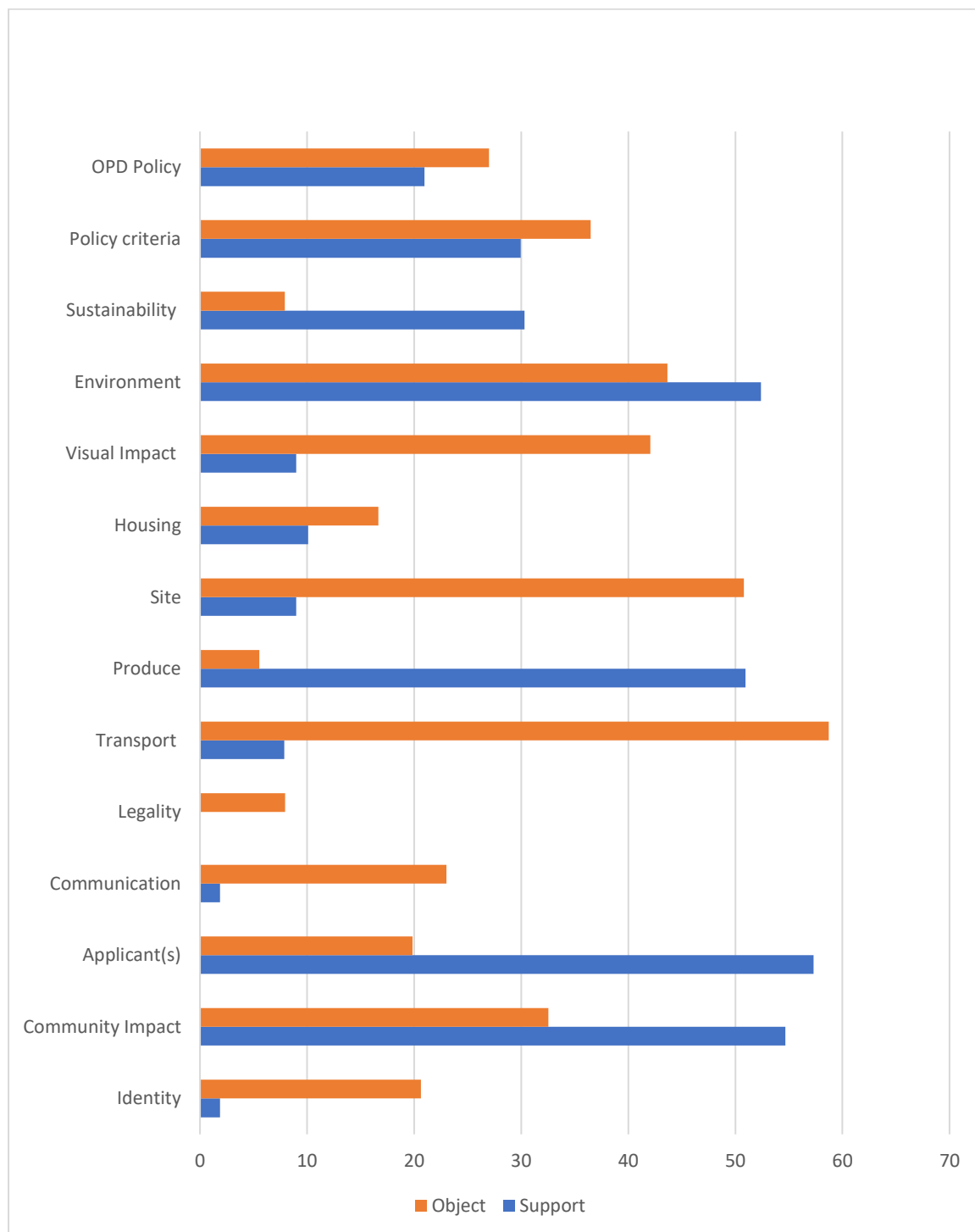
By contrast, the supporting representations are based on broader social and environmental issues, with 30% of supporting representations referring to the applicant site's contribution to Wales's sustainability agenda and 50% claiming that they would be making a positive environmental contribution. In addition, in the responses directly related to the OPD's community impact, 55% of the supporting representations expressed that the applicants would make a positive community impact, in particular with the provision of their produce which 51% respondents noted would add to local resilience to the rural economy. In addition, supporting representations acted as guarantors for the character of the applicants. In fact, in 44% of supporting representations do the authors note an existing relationship with the applicants, with 57% of these vouching for the applicant's personal attributes, such as knowledge, work ethic, and dedication to finding new ways living sustainably in the open

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<sup>668</sup> "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Committee, 22 September 2020," Carmarthenshire County Council, last modified 22 September, 2020, accessed 1 September, 2021, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

countryside. Therefore, OPD has found a receptive audience in a broader environmentally conscious audience, but has often struggled, even with a specific Community Impact Assessment, to convince immediate neighbours of its benefits.

Figure 6.4 Supporting and objecting third-party representations to 44 OPD planning applications in Wales, by topics raised, 2010-2021 (% of total number of representations).<sup>669</sup>



<sup>669</sup> The data for these statistics and for Figure 6.4 was collated, as described in Chapter Two, by accessing the archival record of OPD planning applications on Local Authority planning portals. Having identified the OPD applications, the representations submitted to the respective Local Authorities during the public consultation period of OPD applications were either downloaded or requested. These were subsequently coded for a manifest content analysis and the numerical data represented in graphs and percentages.

| Categories              | Codes   |
|-------------------------|---|
|                         |   |
| <b>OPD policy</b>       | Good policy; bad policy; support LID; against local policies; danger of precedent; needed policy; loophole; incomers.   |
| <b>Policy criteria</b>  | Policy met; policy not met; good/bad management plan; good/bad financial targets; viable project; financial targets.  |
| <b>Sustainability</b>   | Sustainable; unsustainable; future generations; well-being of future generations; sustainable practices.  |
| <b>Environment</b>      | Climate change; climate crisis; biodiversity; wildlife; damage; sewerage; ecological footprint; use of fossil fuels; improve; enhance; enrich; native species; animal welfare; EFA.   |
| <b>Visual impact</b>    | Ugly; negative impact; negative/positive impact on landscape; eyesore; untidy; impact on countryside.   |
| <b>Housing</b>          | Rural housing; affordable housing; not modest; luxury; no need to live on site; not first-time buyer; property value; need to live on site; poor quality housing; uninhabitable; second homes; holiday homes; homes for locals; affordable houses.  |
| <b>Site</b>             | Suitable/unsuitable; too small; wrong soil; access; no water; location unsuitable; flood risk.  |
| <b>Produce</b>          | Good produce; local produce; saturated market; unwanted competition; supply local businesses; lack of market; food security; rural economy.   |
| <b>Transport</b>        | Negative/positive traffic impacts; reliance on cars; no cycle routes; cycling; car use; road safety; narrow track; damaged track; too many miles driven.  |
| <b>Legality</b>         | Settled on land illegally; unpaid council tax; raves; partying; noise; illegal access route.  |
| <b>Communication</b>    | Applicants have/have not communicated with neighbours.  |
| <b>Applicant(s)</b>     | Work ethic; knowledge; hard working people; hippies; valued member of community; isolated; no attempt to integrate; not specialists in building; rude.  |
| <b>Community impact</b> | Positive/negative community impact; wanted/unwanted services; unfairness; incomers; education; workshops; volunteering opportunities; skill sharing; events; open days; young people to the area; exchange labour; vibrancy of area; viability of area; local facilities; community resilience; benefits local area'; asset to local community. |
| <b>Identity</b>         | Welshness; character of area; Welsh language; cultural heritage; historic environment.  |

## The perception of OPD applicants: ‘hippies’ and law breakers?

Having identified that there exists a pattern of spatial separation between those supporting and objecting to OPD applications, the limitations of the CIA to facilitate the social integration of OPD applicants during the application process must be addressed. Though the statistical data shows a balance in favour of supporting representations in the application stage of OPD applications, it obscures the deeper analysis of the CIA’s relative success. Whilst the emergence of a national policy in Wales from 2010 facilitated LID from a planning and legal perspective in Wales, the perception of the OPD policy has affected the policy’s implementation at the local level.

Building on the idea developed in Chapter Four that the benchmarks of the policy would keep the number of applications low, derived from a narrow demographic, and that the policy would, in its current form, remain a vehicle for only a limited number of ‘exemplar’ projects, this limited uptake has also affected the broader understanding of the policy, regardless of any attempt to facilitate social capital via a Community Impact Assessment. A key consequence of this has been to associate applicants with alternative lifestyles and with incomers to rural Welsh communities, particularly given the negligible uptake by farmers and their descendants from rural Welsh farming communities identified in Chapters Three and Four. In fact, according to a low impact buildings architect, the primary obstacle to local acceptance was “Its image”.<sup>670</sup> Indeed, one respondent clearly associated OPD with previous waves of counter cultural rural migration by stating that “As a resident of Penybanc for 40 years I strongly disagree with this planning application. I remember the disruption caused by the TeePee [sic] Valley in Cwmdru, we do not want that disruption again”.<sup>671</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> Joshua Wood, personal interview, Bristol, England, 13 September, 2018.

<sup>671</sup> Phil Richards, "Letter to Carmarthenshire Planning Authority " Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Archive - Application E/39554 (Carmarthenshire County Council, Carmarthenshire, 2020). [https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess\\_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO\\_LDER1\\_REF=W/31160](https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO_LDER1_REF=W/31160)



In this context, the nomenclature and public facing imagery of the policy must be addressed. Whilst the naming of the policy ties in neatly with the title of Wales's national sustainability strategy and takes into account LID as a concept in its definition, as identified in Chapter Three, the two key terms – 'one planet' and 'development' are a source of tension. One Planet Development – is a composite derived from *One Wales: One Planet* (2010), Wales's strategy of becoming a sustainable nation, and Low Impact Development (LID). Though in line with the Welsh Government's sustainable development strategy and the planning concept from which it borrows, they have loaded cultural assumptions which has affected the perception of the policy and its implementation in local communities. According to a prospective OPD applicant "‘one planet’ kind of has this connotation of hippies and ‘development’ has this connotation of destruction so it does definitely sound like the destruction of our countryside by hippies, and I think that's going to scare people off".<sup>672</sup>

Rather than emphasising the beneficial attributes of the policy – regenerative agriculture, locally produced food, innovation and sustainability – the policy's name is somewhat esoteric to a mainstream audience. This is exacerbated by its public facing imagery which uses the dwelling from That Roundhouse. In fact, Thorpe stated that this imagery "says hippy all over" and that "the first thing they [Welsh Government] could do about that [image problem] is take away that turf roof covered hobbit house from the cover of the *Practice Guidance*. That's the biggest thing they could do to change that".<sup>673</sup> Though its use was a product of it being the first LID to gain popular attention in the late 1990s, in Wales, its aesthetic and association with Brithdir Mawr, an intentional community, has resulted in cultural assumptions.

The Literature Review identified that the early adopters of LID in Wales, including the roundhouse at Brithdir Mawr and the Lammas Ecovillage, were affected by being associated with alternative lifestyles. This must be considered in the historical context of low impact development's evolution. The academic, Keith Halfacree, argues that unlike the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, what he calls the 'new counterculture' of the 1990s

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<sup>672</sup> Prospective OPD applicant #1 from Monmouthshire, personal telephone interview, 2 September, 2019.

<sup>673</sup> David Thorpe, personal interview, Zoom, 21 July, 2021.

and 2000s had a direct connection with rurality and was central to three identified elements; rave culture, New Age Travellers and direct action environmentalism, including road strikes.<sup>674</sup> LID was born into a cultural context where those seeking to live more simply off the land – often in temporary structures like caravans, tepees, yurts, and benders – were branded as being part of subversive alternative cultures which were both unknown and associated with criminality. Indeed, in the application for Bryn Y Blodau in Pembrokeshire the applicants were described by one objector as “New Age folk. They have no planning (as far we know). They have no toilets or water. They live in unsightly portacabins, caravans, long bodys [sic] etc”.<sup>675</sup>

Whilst rave culture revived the cultural memory of the ‘hippy’, it also bound it to anti-social behaviour and the illegal use of the countryside as the venue for this subculture’s expression: the rave. In fact, Tracy Styles, from the Cornerwood project in Cardigan, stated that their objectors had questioned their motives and “judged us as people who would maybe have a party every weekend and not as woodland workers”.<sup>676</sup> The connotations based on a cultural myth of the ‘hippy’ are also inextricably linked to perceptions of illegality, a key obstacle to the building of trust. In addition to the association with the cultural myth of the ‘hippy’ and rave culture, there is also an inherent link with key historic obstacle to LID identified in the Literature Review; that there has not been a legal means to settle on agricultural land.

This has meant, as was further developed in the Literature Review, that the only strategies available to those seeking a low impact life has been to accrue the capital to purchase an existing smallholding or to settle on land without planning consent which has resulted in a somewhat tarnished reputation for those applying for OPD. In fact, as one prospective OPD applicant put it

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<sup>674</sup> Keith Halfacree, "From Dropping Out to Leading on? British Counter-Cultural Back-to-the-Land in a Changing Rurality" *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 3 (2006), p. 322.

<sup>675</sup> Redacted letter, 26 December 2013. Third party representation for planning application 13/0679/PA, to Pembrokeshire County Council (the letter was supplied by Pembrokeshire County Council on application).

<sup>676</sup> Tracy Styles, personal telephone interview, 15 January, 2020.

There hasn't been a legal basis for people to live on the land in a low impact way before and so it has been marginalised and people have lived on the land in illegal ways in order to live out what they feel is important and their world view and how they want to live their life and I guess that it is seen as not following authority or current policy and people might fear for what else you might do that is not within the law.<sup>677</sup>

While OPD only allows for residential permission on the land once planning permission is granted, a perception of the breach of this by applicants has affected a continuation of the view that LID is the preserve of a law-breaking demographic, as shown in a response to the Parc-y-Rhwyd OPD in Pembrokeshire, where one objector wrote that

These people move into the village and assume they can build on agricultural land with no planning permission whatsoever. Over the summer months, police turned up on site due to a large gathering of people. Foul language was used at this time which could be heard from several properties in the village. This went on from early evening to the early hours of the morning. This is not acceptable in a built-up area with children living nearby.<sup>678</sup>

In fact, in 8% of the objections third-party representations have applicants been accused of behaving illegally by living on site prior to being granted planning consent and negatively affecting the local environment. Moreover, complainants bemoan that, by having settled on the land without state approval, that the prospective OPD applicants have not paid council tax while drawing on local resources. For example, in the public consultation for Twiscob Top in Powys, one respondent, Phil Marron, wrote that

Once again, a beautiful, unspoilt area, teeming with raptors, bats, owls and harriers, is being threatened by the self-interest of people who put their own want (not need) above the well-being of their environment and the people legitimately

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<sup>677</sup> Prospective OPD applicant #2 from Monmouthshire, personal telephone interview, 2 September, 2019.

<sup>678</sup> Redacted letter, 27 October 2019. Third party representation for planning application 19/0424/PA, to Pembrokeshire County Council (the letter was supplied by Pembrokeshire County Council on application).

living there. What is even more peculiar, and galling, is that these people are non-council tax paying, illegal occupants of the land they intend to despoil further.<sup>679</sup>

However, this must also be considered in the context of OPD applications taking considerably longer to determine than the 8-week period assessed in the previous chapter, with applicants having invested their savings into a piece of land and left in a state of limbo by the overstretched planning system. Nevertheless, where applicants are deemed to be in breach of the land use system, the opportunity to develop trust, rules and sanctions, reciprocity, and connectedness is not developed, especially as OPD has enjoyed only a negligible uptake by those from Welsh farming communities.

This reinforces the significance of the need to build social capital to overcome these cultural assumptions of OPD and the broader knowledge gap. Stephen De Waine, an OPD applicant in Pembrokeshire, identified the importance of the CIA and an educational programme to overcome these assumptions, stating that

I think before you submit your application you have to engage with people who are going to be local to where you are: your local councils, your local planning officers, your local community councillors. You've got to engage with all of the residents that are going to be local to you. You've got to have a very good educational programme, so you explain everything to them so that they understand exactly what's happening. You don't want them to get into their heads that they are going to wake up one day and there's going to be twenty tepees in a field, you know?<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>679</sup> Phil Marron, "Letter to Powys Planning Authority" Powys Planning Portal - Application P/2016/0984 (Powys County Council, Powys, 2017). <https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/?lang=EN>  
See also, "Don't Tear Down My Eco-Home," last modified 3 May, 2018, accessed Nov 24, 2021, <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/f/dont-tear-down-my-eco-home>. and Tess Delaney, *NOPD: How to Fail Epicly at One Planet Development* (UK: Blue Mountain Press, 2020).

<sup>680</sup> Stephen De Waine, personal telephone interview, 19 August, 2019.

The same argument was made by Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.

This shows that the policy's deeper and fundamental problem is one of communication. Clive Wychwood, a successful OPD applicant from Ceredigion, concluded that "there's a complete lack of understanding of what an OPD is. People are, again no generalisations, but I think there is a feeling that it's a bunch of hippies who don't really know what they're doing, mucking the land up and using a vague bit of planning law to get themselves some sort of bender on the land".<sup>681</sup> This is a reflection of the policy's novelty, limited uptake, in addition to its limited focus on 'exemplars' of sustainable living discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

In fact, the experience of OPD applicants is that local opposition has been due to a "fear of the unknown", "resisting change, things that are new", and that the "biggest obstacle is that people just don't understand what it is".<sup>682</sup> OPD's primary social challenge, then, has been the communication to its immediate neighbours to build social capital. Paul Jennings, permaculture teacher and successful OPD applicant, has, in fact, stated that the policy has not been communicated well and that most people's knowledge of it is "shallow".<sup>683</sup> As a result, despite the CIA, a limited public knowledge of OPD, its novel approach to planning, and modest uptake since 2010, local opposition is rooted a concern of community equity, cohesion, and identity. This is exacerbated by OPD facilitating the development of housing in spaces that are counter to the Local Authority's own Local Development Plans (LDPs) as seen with councillor reactions to OPD applications at planning committees developed in the previous chapter and the view that OPD represents an unfair advantage to incoming communities.

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<sup>681</sup> Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.

The same argument was made by Clare Adamson at the planning committee hearing of Ty Derwen in Carmarthenshire where she stated that "that some of the locals that we haven't been able to fully communicate with, not through want of trying, perhaps don't know the full extent of what OPD is. They fear a commune of some sort coming to the area which couldn't be further from the truth". See, "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Committee, 22 September 2020," Carmarthenshire County Council, last modified 22 September, 2020, accessed 1 September, 2021, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

<sup>682</sup> Prospective OPD applicant #1 from Monmouthshire, personal telephone interview, 2 September, 2019.; Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.; Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.; David Wellan, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

<sup>683</sup> Paul Jennings, personal interview, Skype, 2 June, 2021.

## Incomer advantage and Welshness

Now that OPD's association with alternative lifestyles and the perceived (mis)use of the countryside has been established, this section will develop how local communities, as the third group of stakeholders for this study, have often understood the policy to be the preserve of incomers. Whilst the OPD policy meets the priorities of the Welsh Government which has successfully legislated for LID in Wales, it has not succeeded in translating the benefits of this branch of the national sustainability agenda to those with an immediate connection to the applicant sites. Indeed, the policy implementation, despite the CIA, has only partially succeeded at the (very) local level, as demonstrated by the contributions of elected councillors at planning committees addressed in the previous chapter and by the majority of objecting third party representations who, as it has been shown, are more likely to derived from the 'local community'.

The view that OPD represents a planning loophole that offers an incomer advantage is a criticism repeated across the spectrum of the policy's detractors. For example, an online critic, Jac o' the North, suggested "I am opposed to One Planet Developments because in Wales they have proved to be a way for people to thwart planning regulations. People with no local connections pretending their lifestyle is 'sustainable' when most of them - from middle class English backgrounds - are sustained by family money and/or benefits".<sup>684</sup> This idea has also been developed by Pembrokeshire County Councillor, Huw George, one of OPD's most outspoken critics, who argued that "OPD could be used as a trojan horse, it could be used for lifestyle choices".<sup>685</sup> Much like Jac o' the North, the basis of this critique is a belief that the policy represents an instrument for the colonisation of the Welsh countryside by those deemed as 'incomers'.

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<sup>684</sup> Jac o' the North, personal email correspondence, 10 September, 2019.

<sup>685</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 2 October 2018," last modified 2 October, 2018, accessed 1 September, 2021, [https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/374876?fbclid=IwAR1sGw1BHEdan8mT4U9KMYdpVmUWbpsGKkqaZsp0ENCIII-T3Ad9GTt5OBk](https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/374876?fbclid=IwAR1sGw1BHEdan8mT4U9KMYdpVmUWbpsGKkqaZsp0ENCIII-T3Ad9GTt5OBk).

In fact, in a BBC interview, George further argued that the policy must be reconsidered to preserve balance and fairness. He suggested that "Something has to be done to tighten this policy, to make sure there's a level playing field for those who live and work in this area. There has to be a moratorium on this policy now, to enable us to look, with Welsh Government to see if it's working".<sup>686</sup> The inference, though, is that local people are at a disadvantage; that they are not benefitting from something that incomers are. This must be considered in the context of the limited policy uptake in farming communities developed in Chapters Three and Four, as well as the perception amongst councillors that successful applications are not being properly monitored identified in Chapter Five. The view that OPDs represents an unfair cheap house in the country is rooted in two key aspects of the policy; the difference in farming practice and its provision to develop a residential smallholding in the open countryside. Both are further evidence that the policy's implementation has been stifled by a limited priming of local communities, elected representatives and residents, about a Welsh Government policy.

OPDs are typically based on permaculture principles, a system of farming which uses much smaller acreage with a financial target of meeting basic needs rather than a commercial profit.<sup>687</sup> This is, of course, the key distinction between an OPD application and a Rural Enterprise Dwelling exception for development in the open countryside as discussed in Chapter Three. In addition to the way in which OPDs are often judged by agricultural experts assessed in the previous chapter, local farming communities also doubt that incoming OPD applicants can sustain themselves on relatively small parcels of land. This is premised on the differing philosophical and financial aims of LID in contrast to traditional agricultural methods, practices, standards, and aims. In fact, according to Caroline Bowen, Development Manager at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, "if you look at the objections you get to OPD now they are normally are that they won't be able to sustain themselves on the land, 'I know

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<sup>686</sup> "Put a Stop to Eco-Homes being Built, Says Councillor," last modified 29 April, 2019, accessed 18 June, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-48084556>.

It should also be noted that a motion for a Moratorium of OPD was passed at a Council meeting in Carmarthenshire in 2020, see: "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Full Council Meeting, 22 October 2020," last modified 22 October, 2020, accessed 22 October, 2020, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

<sup>687</sup>For further information on permaculture, see the Permaculture Association's website: <https://www.permaculture.org.uk/>

the land and it's not capable of sustaining a family".<sup>688</sup> Indeed, in 51% of objecting representations is the appropriateness of the site identified, while 37% of objectors questioned the capacity of the applicants to meet the policy criteria.

For example, during the consultation period for the Rhiw Las application in Carmarthenshire in 2016, objectors raised the issue of insufficient land with one stating that, "Apparently the Occupants will be totally self-sufficient on five acres [2.02 hectares] of land – This is difficult to believe and near impossible to achieve as many a farmer will tell you they require many more acres to make it viable".<sup>689</sup> This is representative of both a flawed understanding of the policy as OPDs are not required to be 'totally' self-sufficient, but also of the broader differences in land use. This was recognised (and dismissed) by the Inspector, Alwyn B Nixon, who allowed the appeal of Rhiw Las's refused OPD application in Carmarthenshire. He wrote that

Some parties have questioned the ability of a land area of around 21.5 acres [8.7 hectares] to support and meet the essential needs of four households and the associated land-based activities from which income would be derived. However, land-based OPD is very different to a typical modern lifestyle or standard agricultural practice. I am satisfied that the initial five-year management plan satisfies the requirements of land based OPD in the countryside and is supported by robust financial appraisals of projected income and expenditure. Whilst there will always be an element of uncertainty inherent in such forecasts, especially where new ways of doing things are being explored, the management plan

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<sup>688</sup> Caroline Bowen, personal interview, Pembroke, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

<sup>689</sup> Rodney Williams, "Letter to Carmarthenshire Planning Authority" Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Archive – Application W/31160 (Carmarthenshire County Council, Carmarthenshire, 2015). [https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess\\_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO LDER1\\_REF=W/31160](https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO LDER1_REF=W/31160)

The same argument was made by Dorion Philips, "Letter to Carmarthenshire Planning Authority" Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Archive - Application W/31160 (Carmarthenshire County Council, Carmarthenshire, 2015). [https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess\\_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO LDER1\\_REF=W/31160](https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO LDER1_REF=W/31160)

See also: "Neighbours' Antagonism Holds Up Carmarthenshire's First 'One Planet' Development," last modified 22 September, 2015, accessed Nov 24, 2021, <https://westwalesnewsreview.wordpress.com/2015/09/22/neighbours-antagonism-holds-up-carmarthenshires-first-one-planet-development/>.



includes close monitoring requirements and includes exit provisions after five years should the ecological footprint objectives of OPD not be realised.<sup>690</sup>

While the CIA aims to build trust, the limited knowledge of OPD, its focus on 'basic income needs' and not a commercial profit, and its different approach to land use, it has not been able to shape a narrative of facilitating the development of sustainable rural communities, an issue compounded by OPD's exceptional prescription to allow development in the open countryside, outside of existing development zones.

Alongside a mistrust about the capacity of OPD sites to meet their 'basic income needs' on relatively small sites, its provision to develop new residential smallholdings in the open countryside has also added to the narrative of unfairness. Often viewed as national policy imposed upon local communities, OPD has hit resistance from locally elected figures, in addition to those with a close proximity to the site, especially when OPD is seen as allowing development in previously precluded spaces. This is identified in the third-party representations whereby 27% of those objecting noted the policy as providing an incomer advantage, being incompatible with their Local Authority's Local Development Plan, and setting a precedent.

Moreover, and again focussing on the Rhiw Las application in Carmarthenshire County Council, in 2016, both locally elected councillors and opposing letters referred to this perceived incomer advantage. Hywel Thomas, a local objector, wrote that

My family have lived in Llanboidy for over three generations, and about twenty years ago, we bought a plot on the immediate boundary of the village hoping to build a home for our son who is a school teacher in Bristol who would dearly like

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<sup>690</sup> Alwyn B Nixon, "Appeal Decision" Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/M6825/A/15/3139036 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2016), p. 3. <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>  
See also, "Inspector Contradicts Councillors Over 'One Planet' Eco Hamlet," last modified 4 July, 2016, accessed May 3, 2022, <https://westwalesnewsreview.wordpress.com/2016/07/04/inspector-contradicts-councillors-over-one-planet-eco-hamlet/>.

to come back to his roots with his family. Despite several attempts at planning, and to the Local Planning Department, the applications have been turned down. The village of Llanboidy is dying on its feet. We need affordable houses there to keep the local community going, unfortunately local youngsters cannot afford to buy. We need young families in the School, Church, Chapel, Shop and Post Office and the Village Hall. If I'm not mistaken the residents of this 'Community' will not contribute to any of the aforementioned.<sup>691</sup>

This letter reveals a number of related local concerns. First, the existing resident applied for planning permission beyond, but close to, where it might usually be considered – at the boundary of the village. By contrast, however, OPD planning permission can be allowed in the open countryside as an exception to normative planning rules. The exceptional nature of OPD has therefore not been fully understood, a symptom of a knowledge gap, while the appeal of the policy to those considered to be from the local community has clearly been limited as their right to take advantage of the same policy provision is not part of Thomas's letter.

The issue of community equity is also affected by the limitations of the planning system as the locus for the articulation of opposing views. While local opinion may be communicated in terms of disempowerment and unfairness, these concerns are not able to influence the planning application under review. This perception of unfairness is, in the current consultation phase process, not an appropriate basis for an objection or a legitimate reason for refusing an OPD application. This was also recognised in the appeal decision for Rhiw Las where the Inspector further wrote that

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<sup>691</sup> Hywel Thomas, "Letter to Carmarthenshire Planning Authority" Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Archive - Application W31160 (Carmarthenshire County Council, Carmarthenshire, 2015). [https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess\\_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO\\_LDER1\\_REF=W/31160](https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO_LDER1_REF=W/31160)

The same argument was made by Lyn Davies, "Letter to Carmarthenshire Planning Authority" Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Archive – Application W/31160 (Carmarthenshire County Council, Carmarthenshire, 2015). [https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess\\_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO\\_LDER1\\_REF=W/31160](https://planning-carmarthenshire.msapproxy.net/PublicAccess_LIVE/SearchResult/RunThirdPartySearch?FileSystemId=PS&FO_LDER1_REF=W/31160)

In objecting to the application, Davies also noted a perceived incomer advantage by arguing that "so many local people, born and bred in the area have been denied planning for retirement dwellings on their own land".

I am aware that some opponents of the proposal feel it unfair that development of this kind can be permitted in the countryside, whilst strict controls apply to the location of other housing. Ultimately, however, determination of the acceptability of this proposal rests on an objective consideration of its own planning merits, assessed in the context of the One Planet development policy forming part of the established planning policy framework in Wales together with any relevant local development plan policies.<sup>692</sup>

In this context, outside of the OPD policy, some relaxation of existing planning policy to allow for some development beyond that currently accepted could facilitate rural regeneration and longer-term sustainability. This may also alleviate some of the wider local concerns of community equity in OPD applications. Indeed, as it stands, the existing sense of unfairness is exacerbated by the second significant issue raised by Hywel Thomas's letter, that OPD disadvantages those trying to reconnect with their 'roots'. It was perceived that multiple non-OPD planning applications from members of the 'local community' had previously been refused. It therefore grated that new (OPD) 'incomers', who were seen to be diluting the community's identity, were being granted planning permission to build in the locale.

OPD's social impact must, indeed, be considered in the broader rural housing context and, in particular, the effect of rising holiday and second home ownership inspired, in part, by the increasing number of people working from home since the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, in Pembrokeshire 6.45% of the housing stock is now registered as second homes.<sup>693</sup> This has affected the capacity of local people being able to afford housing and stay in their local communities. In Carmarthenshire, for example, house prices have risen by 19.9% in 2021, leaving home ownership unobtainable for many of its existing residents.<sup>694</sup> The impact of this

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<sup>692</sup> Alwyn B Nixon, "Appeal Decision" Welsh Planning Inspectorate Portal - APP/M6825/A/15/3139036 (Welsh Planning Inspectorate, Cardiff, 2016), p. 7. <https://planningcasework.service.gov.wales/>

<sup>693</sup> "The Second Homes Crisis in the Part of Wales Worst Hit," last modified 15 November, 2021a, accessed 25 May, 2022, <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/second-homes-gwynedd-housing-property-22133409>.

<sup>694</sup> "Wales House Price Index," last modified 20 April, 2022, accessed 5 July, 2022, <https://www.principality.co.uk/mortgages/house-price-index>.

has been labelled as ‘cultural genocide’ as the local identity of rural farming communities is perceived to be changing due to the economic environment of the housing market.<sup>695</sup> The concerns raised in OPD applications by local communities, both individually and by their elected representatives, about equity in development rights must therefore be considered as part of a much wider social context. This has witnessed rising house prices in rural areas, and some may struggle to remain in their local community. Therefore, some amendments to existing planning policy may ease these tensions, while simultaneously alleviating some of the local opposition to OPD applications.

Nevertheless, as it stands, the pressure on local housing, in addition to OPD’s provision for development in previously excluded spaces and its association with incomers, has contributed to some tensions between the local community identified in the Hywel Thomas’ letter and a subsequent one labelled as another ‘Community’. This has affected a minor moral panic as the identity of the local community is deemed to be under threat and is a reflection of a limited policy implementation at a local community level.<sup>696</sup> This is, indeed, reflected in an objection to a refused OPD application in Pembrokeshire, in which the author states that “Many of the local residents are angry of the lack of support within planning to help locals from the area build homes on their family on agricultural land, yet these candidates from outside the area are clearly supported. These applications are dividing a close community rather than bringing it closer together”.<sup>697</sup> The perceived threat to local identities will be assessed in the final section of this chapter.

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See also, "The Areas in Wales Where House Prices have Grown the Most," last modified 16 August, 2021, accessed 23 May, 2022, <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/welsh-homes/areas-wales-house-prices-growing-21319969>.

<sup>695</sup> "‘It’s Cultural Genocide by Bank Transfer’: The Welsh Speakers Campaigning Against Second Homes," last modified Wednesday 17 November, 2021, accessed 07 February, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/nov/17/its-cultural-genocide-by-bank-transfer-the-welsh-speakers-campaigning-against-second-homes>.

See also, "The Second Homes Crisis in the Part of Wales Worst Hit," last modified 15 November, 2021b, accessed May 23, 2022, <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/second-homes-gwynedd-housing-property-22133409>.

<sup>696</sup> "‘Rural Resentment’ Over One Planet Policy in West Wales," last modified 26 October, 2020, accessed 13 July, 2021, <https://www.walesfarmer.co.uk/news/18823524.rural-resentment-one-planet-policy-west-wales/>.

<sup>697</sup> Redacted letter, 27 October 2019. Third party representation for planning application 19/0424/PA, to Pembrokeshire County Council (the letter was supplied by Pembrokeshire County Council on application).

In addition, OPD applications have also elicited objections from previous waves of incomers. In fact, Laughton has stated that “it is often the people that have moved in more recently to an area who are the louder voices of objection than the traditional farming community”.<sup>698</sup> Incomers are less likely to understand farming and its contribution to the landscape and natural capital, while also being more likely to object to new developments meant to provide housing or jobs. As a result, they display both NIMBY attitudes, but also No Development After Mine (NODAM) attitudes.<sup>699</sup> This has, in Wales, been from previous waves of English incomers. According to Wychwood, “It seems to be the English that move in here are, for the most part, wealthied English who are bringing with them lots of their attitudes that they’re used to, and they don’t want these things [OPDs]. They want to take their money from London or Oxford or wherever they’ve come from, go and buy a nice chunk of Wales and live, in green splendour in the way that they picture things to be”.<sup>700</sup> OPD has therefore been affected by an association with English incomers whilst being simultaneously rejected by existing English incomers, especially second home-owners.<sup>701</sup> This is, of course, related to a belief that incoming OPDs in Wales gain an unfair advantage to live in the countryside relative to their existing neighbours or community, particularly the view that OPD offers a cheap house in the countryside, as well as their different approach to land use.

These objections reject OPDs due to a perceived impact on the value of property and the views from neighbouring properties. It should be understood, however, that NIMBYism disguised or not, does not represent a material consideration for refusing planning permission. The UK government’s planning advice notes that “planning is concerned with land use in the public interest, so that the protection of purely private interests such as the impact of a development on the value of a neighbouring property or loss of private rights to light

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<sup>698</sup> Rebecca Laughton, personal telephone interview, 17 February, 2020.

<sup>699</sup> Jules Pretty, *The Living Land* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 1998), p. 215.

<sup>700</sup> Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.

The same argument was made Mel Robinson, personal telephone interview, 12 November, 2019.; Tracy Styles, personal telephone interview, 15 January, 2020.

<sup>701</sup> Matthew Watkinson, personal email correspondence, 1 August, 2019.

The same point was made by Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019. who stated that 4 out of their 5 objectors were English incomers.

For details of conflict between an OPD applicant and holiday home objectors, see, Tess Delaney, *NOPD: How to Fail Epicly at One Planet Development* (UK: Blue Mountain Press, 2020)..

could not be material considerations.<sup>702</sup> The NIMBY or NODAM objections emerge regardless of any attempt to build social capital by developing reciprocity as outlined in the CIA's prescription that OPDs should be open to the local community and host events on-site.<sup>703</sup>

For example, in the Pembrokeshire County Council Planning Committee for Parc y Dderwen, Michael Ritchie, representing the objectors, said that "The development would have a disproportionate and adverse effect on the local community with no compensating benefit. It might meet the theoretical carrying capacity of the planet – to use some of the jargon in the policy documents – it does not meet the carrying capacity of the village".<sup>704</sup> He concluded that "Whatever merits you may see in the proposal itself, it is in the wrong place".<sup>705</sup> In other words, regardless of the merits of the application or the policy, his group of objectors simply did not want an OPD in their locality. While the OPD policy and the CIA can be seen to have had modest success, it is clear that some objections would not have been overcome by any policy provision or effort from the applicant.

### **OPD and local identities: diluting Welshness?**

Having assessed the perception of OPD advantaging incomers, this section will build upon this to show that it has also led to concerns that OPD applicants will dilute the character of local communities. In fact, in 21% of the objecting third-party representations is the identity of the area raised. By 'identity' the objections revolve around a fear of a changing demographic away from land being occupied by Welsh farmers, in addition to threatening the sustainability of the Welsh language. The intersection of community acceptance and OPD is, then, rooted in rural

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<sup>702</sup> "Determining a Planning Application," last modified 15 March, 2019, accessed 24 May, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/determining-a-planning-application>.

<sup>703</sup> Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012), p. 49.

<sup>704</sup> Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

<sup>705</sup> "Webcast of Planning Committee, 21 May 2019," last modified 21 May, 2019, accessed 10 June, 2021, [https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/421802](https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/421802).

identities, especially Welshness. As will be shown, the OPD policy provision, including the CIA and OPD *Practice Guidance*, could be improved by including specific references to ‘Welshness’ to enhance social integration.

In addition to the way in which OPD challenges planning orthodoxy developed in Chapter Five, OPD has also inspired debate over the cultural meaning of land.<sup>706</sup> This manifestation of the competing claims over land use is articulated in the physical appearance of the landscapes whereby critical voices express their concerns over the visual impact of OPD, with 42% of objecting representations noting this issue. This is partly due to the way in which the planning system has focused on the physical impact on local communities which has served to preserve the visual and physical aspects of the British countryside but has been less successful of dealing with the undercurrents of social and cultural change.<sup>707</sup> Whilst OPD applicants view themselves as stewards and protectors of the land by encouraging sustainable land management and the enhancing of biodiversity, its detractors view it as an unwanted and unnecessary development of the open countryside.<sup>708</sup> This is a central aspect of the tension between local communities and OPD applications: competing claims over land leading to an “active resistance to development of open countryside”.<sup>709</sup> In view of this, the land use system – and OPD policy – has not been successful at facilitating the social acceptance of ‘exemplars’ of sustainable living which represents a move away from industrial agriculture to support new ways of living in the open countryside.

Moreover, these antagonistic land values are also directly linked to local farming traditions and OPDs are seen to be affecting the cultural heritage of local farming communities. The application for Annie’s Land was particularly sensitive in this respect, and again highlights the

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<sup>706</sup> Susan Owens and Richard Cowell, *Land and Limits Interpreting Sustainability in the Planning Process* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 22.

<sup>707</sup> Phil Macnaghten, "Contested Countrysides and Planning Futures" *Planning Theory & Practice* 4, no. 1 (2003), p. 98.

<sup>708</sup> Andrew Dobson, "Environmental Citizenship: Towards Sustainable Development" *Sustainable Development* 15, no. 5 (2007), 276-285.; Tony Wrench, *Building a Low Impact Roundhouse*, Repr. ed. (Hampshire: Permanent Publications, 2001), p. 3.

<sup>709</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), p. 18.

continuity of thought between objectors and locally elected officials. Indeed, the local community council objected to the application as “Members feel that the proposed development is not in keeping with the character of the local environment and rural setting of this location”.<sup>710</sup> Moreover, each of the objecting representations drew a distinction between the applicant and those that had tended the land before, see Table 6.1 below.

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<sup>710</sup> Rab Jones, "Letter to Powys Planning Authority" Powys County Council Planning Archive – Application P/2017/0792 (Powys County Council, Powys, 2017). <https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=ZZZZUXMPRW098>



**Table 6.1 Sample of the third-party representations submitted to Powys County Council objecting to the Tir Heddwch OPD application, 2017.<sup>711</sup>**

**Objection letter from Glenys Jones 27/9/2017:**

“Any developments on this site is totally out of keeping with the character of this area. An area which is a settlement of farms farmed by generations of Welsh farmers”.<sup>712</sup>

**Objection letter from Dylan Jones 27/9/2017:** “The surrounding area comprises of farms being farmed by Welsh farmers whose family have owned the farms for generations”.<sup>713</sup>

**Objection letter 26/9/2017 (redacted):**

“I farm the neighbouring farm, which my late father farmed before me. It has been farmed by generations of Welsh farmers”.<sup>714</sup>

**Objection letter from Aled Jones 25/9/2017:**

“I have lived for over 70yrs in this area. It is a community of Welsh farming families and the land at Tir Heddwch had been farmed by generations of Welsh farmers as part of a local farm at Allteinion”.<sup>715</sup>

The significance, however, is that despite the CIA, and the applicant’s Welsh heritage, the policy, and the applicant, was associated with English incomers and perceived to be having a negative impact in the local social fabric.

<sup>711</sup> Data compiled from OPD planning applications to Powys County Council, accessed through their online Planning Portal. See Appendix One.

The data from this table was located by searching for the documents associated to this OPD application on Powys County Councils planning portal.

<sup>712</sup> Glenys Jones, "Letter to Powys Planning Authority" Powys County Council Planning Archive – Application P/2017/0792 (Powys County Council, Powys, 2017). <https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/?lang=EN>

<sup>713</sup> Dylan Jones, "Letter to Powys Planning Authority" Powys County Council Planning Archive – Application P/2017/0792 (Powys County Council, Powys, 2017). <https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/?lang=EN>

<sup>714</sup> Redacted, "Letter to Powys Planning Authority" Powys County Council Planning Archive – Application P/2017/0792 (Powys County Council, Powys, 2017). <https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/?lang=EN>

<sup>715</sup> Aled Jones, "Letter to Powys Planning Authority" Powys County Council Planning Archive – Application P/2017/0792 (Powys County Council, Powys, 2017). <https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/?lang=EN>

In addition to OPDs being seen as a threat to local farming heritage, OPD's detractors also often view the policy and its applicants as a threat to local Welsh speaking communities, perhaps understandably given the demographic of OPD applicants discussed in Chapter Four. In fact, a Pembrokeshire County Council's cabinet member for planning has suggested that "I totally understand concerns from communities, particularly in the more Welsh speaking parts of the county".<sup>716</sup> The inference, clearly, is that OPD is not a policy being used by Welsh people. Indeed, the online OPD critic, Jac o' the North, stated that "I'm not aware of any 'Welsh couples' wanting to embrace the OPD lifestyle".<sup>717</sup> The view that OPD is a threat to these local identities is, however, in contrast to a consultation study which contributed to the emergence of Pembrokeshire's Policy 52, which concluded that "Although incomers are a feature of LID, so are Welsh people, sometimes with local origins, while the proportion of LID residents speaking Welsh exceeds the national average, and there are many links to Welsh culture".<sup>718</sup>

Whilst it worth noting that this study was published prior to the nationwide OPD policy in 2010, it is clear that local objections have not accepted that OPD has a positive impact on maintaining the integrity of traditional Welsh speaking farming communities. In addition, of the 33 available management plans from the 39 successful OPD applications across Wales 2010-2021, 10 note that they are Welsh, while a further 10 note their Welsh speaking abilities or intention to learn the language (see Appendix One). This is replicated in successful OPD applicants' responses to a One Planet Council survey conducted in 2022 – see Figure 6.5 below

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<sup>716</sup> "Put a Stop to Eco-Homes being Built, Says Councillor," last modified 29 April, 2019, accessed 18 June, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-48084556>.

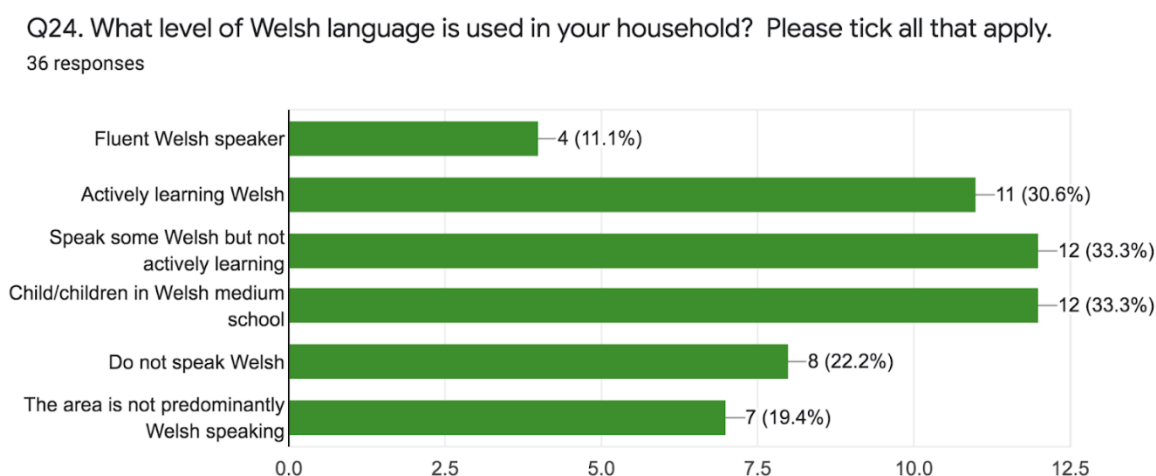
[The same argument was made by Councillor Keith Lewis at the planning committee for Pencedni, see Pembrokeshire County Council, "Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning & Rights of Way Committee, 13 June 2016" Pembrokeshire Planning Committee Agendas and Minutes \(Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire, 2016b\), p. 9. <https://mgenglish.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=568>](#) Councillors also asked whether the applicants at Baradwys in Pembrokeshire were learning Welsh, whilst at the planning committee hearing for Cwm Bach in Carmarthenshire, Councillor Charles Mansel asked for a provision for the business communication to be bi-lingual, see, "Webcast of Planning Committee, 21 may 2019," last modified 21 May, 2019, accessed 10 June, 2021, [https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/421802](https://pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/421802); "Webcast of Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Committee, 9 December 2021," Carmarthenshire County Council, last modified 9 December, 2021, <https://carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>.

<sup>717</sup> Jac o' the North, personal email correspondence, 10 September, 2019.

<sup>718</sup> University of West England and Land Use Consultants, *Low Impact Development - Planning Policy and Practice Final Report* (Bristol: University of West England and Land Use Consultants, 2002), p. v.

– which shows the ways in which they have engaged questions of Welshness. This contradicts the perceived understanding of the policy’s demographic and applicants’ willingness to engage the Welsh language. It is, moreover, representative of the broader failure of the policy’s communication to host communities.

Figure 6.5 Welsh language skills amongst successful OPD applicants responding to a One Planet Council survey (2022) <sup>719</sup>



Source: One Planet Council. *Review of One Planet Development in Wales 2010-2022* (Carmarthen: OPC, forthcoming)

Whilst there is no specific mention of the Welsh language in the OPD *Practice Guidance* or the CIA, Welsh planning policy notes that the Welsh language part of “placemaking”.<sup>720</sup> The policy’s provision to develop social integration would therefore be improved by adding notions of ‘Welshness’ to foster greater community cohesion. This is significant given the areas that have attracted the highest concentration of OPD applications. According to the

<sup>719</sup> The image was shared by Erica Vernon, the Chair of the One Planet Council. The questionnaire is part of the upcoming review of OPD by the OPC and Welsh Government.

<sup>720</sup> Welsh Government, *Planning Policy Wales* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2018c), p. 42.

See also: “Welsh Government to Review Plans to Reach a Million Welsh Speakers,” last modified 13 July, 2021, accessed 23 May, 2022, <https://businessnewswales.com/welsh-government-to-review-plans-to-reach-a-million-welsh-speakers/>.

most recent census data, across Wales 29.2% of people say they can speak Welsh. Significantly, however, in the three areas with the highest number of OPDs those that identify as being able to speak Welsh are above the national average with, according to a Welsh Government commissioned survey, 32.1% in Pembrokeshire, 52.6% in Carmarthenshire, and 60.9% in Ceredigion.<sup>721</sup> In addition, while only 15.4% of this national survey's respondents claimed to use Welsh daily, in Ceredigion this was 43.8%, 16.2% in Pembrokeshire, and 35.4% in Carmarthenshire, while no one in these areas said they never used it, compared to national average of 1.7%.<sup>722</sup> OPD applicants have therefore sought to integrate into traditional farming communities that are Welsh-speaking areas.

Despite the Community Impact Assessment, therefore, it is clear that there is often a lack of mutual understanding between the host community and incoming OPD applicants.<sup>723</sup> This is demonstrated by the distinction between the perception of OPD as being the preserve of English incomers that do engage the Welsh language and the evidence derived from the successful management plans. These show that OPD has attracted applicants from Wales, though perhaps not from traditional farming communities, whilst others have stated their intention to learn the language. In fact, as Jano Williams, Chair of Newport Town Council, suggested that "I think there is quite a miscommunication between One Planet Development and the community and the people that are doing the development".<sup>724</sup> Though OPD applications include a CIA, there remain question marks over how well a new and novel policy is able to engage local communities, especially where the practice of low impact development

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<sup>721</sup> "Annual Population Survey - Ability to Speak Welsh by Local Authority and Year," last modified 31 March, 2022, accessed 25 May, 2022, <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/Annual-Population-Survey-Welsh-Language/annualpopulationsurveyestimatesofpersonsaged3andoverwhosaytheycanspeakwelsh-by-localauthority-measure>.

<sup>722</sup> "Annual Population Survey - Ability to Speak Welsh by Local Authority and Year," last modified 31 March, 2022, accessed 25 May, 2022, <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/Annual-Population-Survey-Welsh-Language/annualpopulationsurveyestimatesofpersonsaged3andoverwhosaytheycanspeakwelsh-by-localauthority-measure>.

<sup>723</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019) p. 18.; Jenny Pickerill, *Eco-Homes* (London: Zed Books, 2016), p. 117.; Alister Scott, "Contesting Sustainable Development: Low-Impact Development in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park" *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 3, no. 4 (2001), p. 282.

<sup>724</sup> Jano Williams, personal interview, Newport, Wales, 22 July, 2019.

appears to be antagonistic to the culture of traditional farming communities and its applicants have been drawn from a narrow demographic identified in Chapter Four.

That said, the pattern identified by Wimbush earlier in this chapter, that any social tensions dissipate in the period after planning permission has been granted, seems to be corroborated by the experience of successful OPD applicants in the period of this research. In none of the interviews conducted for this study (typically conducted one or two years after their application) were community relations worse than in the establishment process and, rather, any tensions had been largely overcome by the prescriptions of the CIA, notably in transactional relationships developed, educational contributions to the local community, or by enrolling children in local schools.<sup>725</sup> For example, Paul Jennings, of the Rhiw Las OPD site in Carmarthenshire, stated that "There are a number of people we know around here who are pragmatic enough that, when you start trading with them and having a positive economic impact locally, you are forgiven most things, even being an OPDer, even being English and that's our experience".<sup>726</sup> Moreover, in the context of skills sharing, Dave and Irene Triffitt, who gained their OPD planning consent in 2018, in Pembrokeshire, noted that "We get regular requests for information on how to do something re: gardening as well as invites to their gardens to advise on what to plant where and whether we can grow them for them to buy from us".<sup>727</sup>

It must be acknowledged, however, that the only systematically collected and currently available data addressing community relations between OPD applicant sites and their local communities is the third-party representations analysed above. Subsequent relationships are not documented. There is no platform within, or outside, the planning system, nor any current academic work, assessing these interactions to form part of longitudinal studies. However,

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<sup>725</sup> The significance of social integration as a result of enrolling children in local schools was identified in three interviews for this study; Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.; Chris Vernon, personal interview, Zoom, 25 May, 2021.; Stefan Cartwright, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 21 September, 2018.

<sup>726</sup> Paul Jennings, personal interview, Skype, 2 June, 2021.

The same point was made by Chris Vernon, personal interview, Zoom, 25 May, 2021.

<sup>727</sup> Dave and Irene Triffitt, personal email correspondence, 3 July, 2020.

the limited data collected by this thesis suggests that that the psychological transition within communities is one of a slow building of social capital, trust in particular, in addition to the sharing of new sustainable land management practices that may come to be incorporated into individual or commercial enterprises in the local area. These seem to collectively contribute to greater community integration in the longer term as social and economic ties are developed. This idea was developed by Mel Robinson of the Cornerwood project, who stated that

“In the beginning, the first application in 2008/9 we had a petition in the village, people in the village signing people up to oppose our planning application. That was horrible and we’ve worked really hard at engaging the community, doing all of the village shows, putting open days on here and asking people to come in and see what we are doing and always offering to help from if anyone needed help starting their car or with their garden, anyone in the community we would just offer to help and gradually we have proved our worthiness. It takes a long time in Wales to get into the community for an incomer and none of us had got parents here. We had to work really hard learning the language. It changed. By the time of our second or third application for OPD, we had loads of letter of support”.<sup>728</sup>

## Conclusion

The social integration and community acceptance of OPDs has been of moderate success in the period of 2010-2021 as seen in the limited objections during the consultation process. This can be attributed with the Welsh Government legislating for LID which has legitimised the activities of those seeking to develop new ways of living in the open countryside. In addition, by codifying that OPD applicants must complete a Community Impact Assessment, the Welsh Government’s implementation of a LID policy recognises that new entrants to rural spaces, especially those with a different approach to managing the land, need to build social

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<sup>728</sup> Mel Robinson, personal telephone interview, 12 November, 2019.

capital to integrate into local communities. The CIA engenders this by compelling OPD applicants to show, during the application process and in the ongoing compliance monitoring, that they have identified both the positive and negative community impacts, and acted upon these by being open, attending local events, and by trading with the local community.

However, despite the CIA there is an evident lack of knowledge about OPD in local communities, both from the neighbours of OPD application sites and their elected representatives. As a result, OPD is often deemed to provide those labelled as ‘incomers’ with an unfair advantage, especially when local community members doubt the capacity of applicants to meet their basic income needs from small areas of land compared to traditional farms. This is exacerbated by OPD being a policy of the Welsh Government and an exception to planning norms. It therefore does not align with Local Development Plans and appears, superficially, to allow development in spaces that are, under normal circumstances, not available to those with an existing connection to the area. This is also directly related with OPD’s limited uptake within traditional farming communities who have not opted to pursue the policy on their existing land. This has affected the policy implementation of LID in Wales as locals feel excluded from developing land in their own areas.

The key issue hampering the implementation of LID in Wales, and to the building of sustainable rural communities, is the resulting local perception that OPDs may dilute these identities. Though OPD’s reception in local communities must be considered within the wider social pressure on rural housing – especially with the increasing trends of second and holiday home ownership in these communities – a fundamental issue to the implementation of OPDs has been the limited capacity of the CIA to build social capital for LID. At root, objections to OPD are framed as disrupting the traditions of the Welsh countryside, either by using small acreages more intensively, moving away from traditional farming methods, and changing the aesthetic and cultural meaning of land. This has driven both concerns over the identity of local farming communities, as well as the NIMBY objections that are motivated by a perceived visual or financial impact on their neighbouring properties.

OPD, by having only appealed to a limited demographic, is part of a social context whereby rural spaces are seen as the bastion of Welshness and the preservation of the Welsh language and OPDs are perceived as a threat to these identities. This concern is, however, of limited credibility when the management plans of OPDs are assessed which show that a good proportion of OPD applicants are either Welsh or engaging the Welsh language. This represents a key fault line in the social integration of OPDs, and the implementation of LID in rural spaces in Wales, which could be strengthened by an inclusion of conditions relating to Welsh rural identities in the CIA from which it is currently absent, beyond applicant's children attending Welsh medium schools. In sum, then, OPD has been relatively successful in providing for LIDs in Wales, though it has been affected by the economic conditions in which the policy has been implemented, as well the changing socio-economic dynamics of rural communities which the CIA has not been able to fully address.



## Conclusion

This thesis has contributed to the literature on Low Impact Development by assessing the Welsh Government's One Planet Development policy. In doing so, it has built upon the existing nascent scholarship on OPD, particularly Harris' work which, up until now, has been the most comprehensive examination of the policy, though this was based on a more theoretical framework, applying Foucault's concept of 'governability'.<sup>729</sup> This research has compiled new data permitting an assessment to be made, addressing the extent to which OPD has facilitated LID in Wales and the effectiveness of the policy's implementation. This is particularly true in terms this study's second and third stakeholder groups, decision makers and local communities. Indeed, while there is some coverage of applicants' experience in Harris' work, there is no research, to date, which has studied the capability of the decision makers to adjudicate OPD applications, or the reception of OPDs in local communities. By systematically assessing the OPD policy's implementation, based on 52 interviews and the archival record of all 55 OPD applications determined in the period of 2010-2021, this unique data set and research findings represent a new understanding of OPD in the real-world context.

The emergence of the Welsh Government's One Planet Development policy, in 2010, has, on paper, facilitated LIDs in the open countryside. This was made possible by Welsh devolution after 1998, which allowed the Welsh Government to diverge from the UK Government's approach to implementing sustainable development and land use. The devolutionary process fostered an initial statutory duty to 'promote' sustainable development under the Government of Wales Act (1998), followed by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) which upgraded this statutory duty to 'deliver' sustainability. Moreover, a fundamental aspect of LID's facilitation in Wales has been its situation as part of the Welsh

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<sup>729</sup> Neil Harris, "Exceptional Spaces for Sustainable Living: The Regulation of One Planet Developments in the Open Countryside" *Planning Theory & Practice* 20, no. 1 (2019), 11-36.

Government's sustainable development strategy, *One Wales: One Planet* (2010).<sup>730</sup> This provided both the nomenclature for 'One Planet Development' and, more importantly, the impetus to include LID as part of Wales's land use system. Devolution therefore provided the political environment which has proved more fertile for grassroots sustainability efforts, such as LID.

In addition, the political will provided by Jane Davidson, the Welsh Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, 2007–2011, to deliver a LID policy, based on small-scale farming, cannot be underestimated. With a personal interest in smallholding and 'living lightly on the land', she provided the driving force which allowed for an existing grassroots movement to have a mouthpiece in the corridors of power. This, in turn, led to LID, under the rubric of One Planet Development, being recognised as having a role to play in the Welsh Government's broader aim of becoming a 'one planet' nation within a generation. As was shown by an analysis of the Welsh Government's OPD policy documents in Chapter Three, the definition of LID developed by Simon Fairlie (outlined in the Literature Review) was used to describe OPD in *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (TAN 6). OPD is, therefore, a policy realisation of Fairlie's concept, born in 1996, and enshrined in Wales's planning system. It is, as Fairlie's updated definition of 2009 suggests, also rooted in a social contract that allows for the development of new residential smallholdings in the open countryside, in return for providing environmental benefits.

As was identified in the Literature Review, the key obstacle to LID in England and Wales without specific LID policies has been access to affordable land. Chapter Three developed that OPD has moved beyond this status quo by allowing for the development on land usually excluded from residential development. OPD, in theory, makes any land in Wales available to LID, though most significantly for this study, it has facilitated LIDs in the open countryside. In Wales, therefore, the primary hurdle for those seeking to develop a subsistence-based livelihood in what had previously an exclusionary space has now been removed as agricultural

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<sup>730</sup> Dartmoor National Park Authority released a LID policy in December 2021 which borrows from OPD, though its only in their Local Development Plan and has yet to be tested. In addition, Cornwall has stated that it is considering a LID policy based on the Welsh model.

land can now be legally developed for residential purposes, while being more affordable. As a result, potential LID practitioners are no longer bound to the existing market of smallholdings, the cost of which is likely to preclude a subsistence style of living.

In addition to opening up a legal space to access more affordable land, the Welsh Government's legislating for LID has provided policy benchmarks and, thus, a legitimised process for potential applicants to follow. This legal space has been key, as shown in the interview data, assessed in Chapter Four, which clearly identified the importance of a legal route to establish LIDs. For example, Lauren Simpson, a successful OPD applicant from Pembrokeshire, stated that "we wanted to know how we could do this legally".<sup>731</sup> The impact of this was further demonstrated by the pattern of settlement in Wales since 2010. As was shown, since the arrival of OPD, the dominant pattern of settling on land (in the context of LID) has been once planning permission has been granted, rather than retrospectively as was seen in the Literature Review's analysis of previous LID projects in England and Wales where specific LID policies were lacking. This change in pattern is demonstrative of the policy's relatively successful implementation as 39 OPD applications have navigated the planning system successfully across eight Local Authorities in Wales.

Moreover, as was shown in Chapter Three, a fundamental aspect of the Welsh Government's OPD policy has been its formulation as a rural exception, thereby allowing for LIDs in rural spaces, but without undermining the central value of the planning system held since 1947, urban containment. It also represents a break from other rural exceptions, especially Rural Enterprise Dwellings, by being based on a subsistence lifestyle, not the pursuit of a commercial profit. Beyond the definition of OPD, then, the main thrust of Fairlie's seminal work, in addition to *The Land Is Ours'* 15-criteria for sustainable developments in the countryside, form the basis of the Welsh Government's OPD's policy provision.

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<sup>731</sup> Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.

However, whilst OPD has, on paper, facilitated LID in Wales and has codified the benchmarks that its applicants must reach, the policy provision is incomplete, as was identified in Chapter Three. There is a clear gap in the documentation, including in *TAN 6* (2010) and the *OPD Practice Guidance* (2012), of the consequences of failing to meet the policy's targets as part of the continuing compliance monitoring as a consequence of old age, illness, disability, or unexpected environmental conditions outside of the applicants' control. Although the planning permission of OPD is, as discussed in Chapter Three, permanent, it is always dependent on the capacity of successful applicants to meet their legally binding targets submitted in the management plan.

Therefore, by not having a recognised provision to establish the process of dealing with unexpected circumstances that may lead to a failure to meet these legally binding targets, a potentially problematic scenario for both applicants and those charged with implementing, monitoring, and enforcing the policy's exit strategy is evident. This missing provision introduces an element of jeopardy which limits the success of OPD's implementation and its broader appeal. In addition, given the policy is aimed at contributing to Wales's sustainability agenda of being a 'one planet' nation within a generation, OPD's incomplete provision simultaneously fails to accommodate for climate change induced natural events which could undermine an applicant's ability to meet their targets. This must also be considered in the context of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic which serves to show that unexpected environmental events can drastically affect day-to-day life which, in context of OPD, may disrupt the functioning of the land-based enterprise. Though there is flexibility in the amendment of the management plan – as the legally binding document – the policy's inherent risks assessed in Chapters Three and Four are unnecessarily amplified by an incomplete policy delivery. It would be reasonable to assume that the Welsh Government could close this loop and remove this uncertainty.

In addition, though OPD represents a progression from the status quo in England, the policy's emphasis has been on 'exemplars' of sustainable development.<sup>732</sup> As a consequence of this, the policy's benchmarks discussed in Chapter Three and Four are stringent. Chapter Four showed that the requirement to develop, in a five-year window, what are often bare-field sites into ones that produce a land-based enterprise capable of providing the applicants' 'basic income needs', energy, water, and waste management systems, in addition to a zero-carbon dwelling, is an onerous task. This is particularly challenging as OPDs operate in an asymmetrical economic system in which, as small farms, they are not eligible for farming subsidies. As a result, OPDs are seeking to generate income from land-based enterprises in an economic environment that keeps food prices artificially low, whilst being produced using high energy, mechanised inputs and inorganic fertilisers.

Though no OPDs have failed as a result of not meeting their five-year target, this is not a helpful indicator of the policy's achievability, given that most OPDs have been granted planning permission since 2016 and, therefore, have not reached the fifth year point in their life cycle. That said, it was shown in Chapter Four that OPDs have been refused planning permission over concerns that their ecological base would not have developed sufficiently in that time period. This would imply that OPD may only be a viable option for land-based enterprises that rely on faster growing crops and trees.

In addition, the five-year target necessitates that the skills required to develop the land-based enterprise(s) are required at the onset of the project. The relatively short period of time to build the business and dwelling negates the capacity of potential applicants to experiment with crops and develop the requisite skills, as a failure to meet the stringent targets can lead to the invoking of the exit strategy and the loss of the residential permission. This represents a tension with the policy's emphasis on 'exemplars' which would suggest an encouragement of new ways of living sustainably which are not yet proven to be successful. Moreover, given that policy was in part, as Jane Davidson noted in her memoir of her time in office, aimed

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<sup>732</sup> Welsh Government, *Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2010). p. 24 and Welsh Government, *Practice Guidance One Planet Development Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2012). p. 46

towards young people, these are less likely to have farming skills which may limit those to which the policy is applicable.<sup>733</sup> This also conflicts with the objectives of upskilling and reskilling the Welsh population as part of its decarbonisation strategy identified in Chapter Three. In view of this, a number of successful applicants suggested an extension of the five-year establishment period to a 7-year allowance which, they argued, would be more achievable and, potentially, allow for greater experimentation.<sup>734</sup>

Moreover, OPD applicants must, as further addressed in Chapter Four, document their household's production and consumption in an ongoing holistic lifestyle audit via the Ecological Footprint Analysis (EFA). This has had two unintended consequences which limits OPDs appeal. First, OPD is a bureaucratic exercise as applicants' production and consumption have to be documented and submitted to the Local Authority for the ongoing compliance monitoring, which carries the previously identified risks, whilst the monitoring itself has been seen as invasive as applicants' lifestyle data is submitted to the Local Authority for scrutiny, with concerns over data protection and rights to privacy. Second, OPD represents a radical transition away from a normal western lifestyle which, although sustainable, has been too demanding to result in a more significant uptake. This can be demonstrated by the number of applications, with only 55 determined applications in total, and 39 successful applications since 2010. This indicates that the policy's key benchmarks, and the risks associated to the ongoing compliance monitoring, has limited the appeal of the policy. This is particularly true in existing Welsh farming communities in which uptake has been negligible.

This is exacerbated by a further and evident tension between OPD's academic application process, and the practical day-to-day lived experience. As was shown in Chapter Four, the average length of an OPD management plan is 90-pages and includes a depth of data, including financial forecasting, ecological footprint calculations, and imagery, as well as qualitative information, such as the Community Impact Assessment. OPD is, therefore, in its

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<sup>733</sup> Jane Davidson, *#futuregen Lessons from a Small Country* (London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2020), p. 115.

<sup>734</sup> Tao Wimbush, personal interview, Glandwr, Wales, 25 July, 2018.; Stefan Cartwright, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 21 September, 2018.; Lauren Simpson, personal telephone interview, 4 September, 2019.; Clive Wychwood, personal interview, Cardigan, Wales, 23 July, 2019.

current form, only likely to appeal to a narrow demographic, defined by those motivated by issues of sustainability, wishing to live a subsistence lifestyle, with the academic skills to navigate the application process, including the writing of the management plan, land-based skill, a willingness to accept the risks associated with compliance monitoring, as well having the financial capital to invest in the land and the often required professional consultants in the application process. As a result of this, OPD has attracted a limited demographic, with a bias towards English middle-class incomers, a reality highlighted in Chapters Four and Six, which has affected its social integration.

Alongside the incomplete policy provision, and the challenges to applicants which has limited its appeal, another key finding of this study is the limited resourcing of OPD. Though the Welsh Government has facilitated LID in Wales and has legislated for a unique LID policy in Britain, it has not resourced the policy sufficiently. OPD emerged just as the axe of austerity was being wielded by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, in 2010, with subsequent cuts to Local Authorities. As was shown in Chapter Five, Local Planning Authorities in Wales have been subject to significant budgetary cuts which has limited their capacity to implement a new resource heavy policy, especially one that represents a novel approach to land use, whilst requiring a significant depth of knowledge in those adjudicating OPD applications.

As result, then, OPD emerged at a time when resources in Local Authorities were already diminishing, with no additional support to facilitate the implementation of the policy. This has meant that the realisation of the policy has been affected as the second group of stakeholders assessed in this study – the decision makers – who have struggled with its demands. A clear indicator of this, as shown in Chapter Five, is the time it has taken to determine OPD applications. In the first 11-years of OPD's existence and over the course of 55 applications in determined across Wales, the average time taken is 68 weeks, many times more than the 8-week period identified in the Welsh Government's targets. This is attributed to the burden of proof required from applicants identified in Chapter Four, in addition to the novel approach to planning developed in Chapters Three and Five which has created a tension with the conventional wisdom of the planning profession.

Given, as was developed in Chapters Three and Five, that OPD reverses the presumption against the development of the open countryside and is, therefore, contrary to the planning orthodoxy of the planning profession and to councillor's land use values, having no detailed guidance for the first two years of the policy before the *OPD Practice Guidance* was published in 2012 represents a key failure to implement the policy. As was developed in Chapter Five, OPD was initially made available with only three pages of detail in *TAN 6* and with no additional funding for Local Authorities. With only four applications, all unsuccessful, before 2014, the policy existed in spirit but not in reality.

Though the *OPD Practice Guidance* has since offered significant detail, particularly in terms of the application process and the policy benchmarks, the layering of multiple micro-businesses, focus on subsistence, and the technical details of solar, sewerage, and zero carbon building systems are not part of the decision makers' common parlance. Moreover, OPD also introduced a subjective aspect to a planner's decision making, as, alongside the objective benchmarks, such as financial forecasts, planners have to judge the reality of applicants' 'basic income needs' which, as it was shown, represents a need for decision makers to cast judgement on an applicant's lifestyle.

The absence of bespoke training and support for the decision makers – the second group of stakeholders – has affected the passage of OPD applications through the planning system. Chapter Five showed that the success rate for OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021 was 60%, rising to 71% once successful appeals are accounted for. Whilst this can be attributed to the novel nature of OPD's approach, its formulation as an exception to land use norms, and its emphasis on 'exemplars' of sustainable development, the implementation of OPD has not been smooth. Though planners have, especially in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, come to successfully administer OPD, this has been largely achieved by a process of 'learning by doing' and the provision of training by civil society in the form of the self-funded and independent One Planet Council (OPC) which emerged in 2014 and began to offer training to Local Authority planners in 2015. This is the only form of training available



and whilst the Welsh Government enacted OPD in 2010, the OPC has facilitated its implementation and kept the policy alive.

However, beyond professional planners, the policy's implementation has been less successful in the second branch of the decision-making apparatus, planning committees. This is of particular importance given that 53% of OPD applications have been decided by elected officials serving on planning committees. Indeed, elected councillor's decision-making has been deficient, evidenced by two key indicators outlined in Chapter Five. While the average of member decisions against the professional advice given for all planning decisions in Wales, in the period of 2014-2019, was 9.56%, this figure was 17.24% for OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021.<sup>735</sup> Councillors have, then, gone against the recommended decision at a rate of almost double the average in Wales which indicates deficiencies in their decision making.

This is corroborated by a comparison of the results of appeals lodged against the decisions of planning committees. The average percentage of appeals dismissed in Wales, 2014-2019, is 64.66%. In contrast, in the context of OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021, the figure is 50%. This falls to 33% where councillors voted against the recommendation provided by the presiding planning officer. It is statistically clear, therefore, that councillors have had an adverse impact on the implementation of OPD in Wales. The reality is that at least half of OPD applications refused by councillors are later deemed by the Planning Inspectorate to be objections not compatible with OPD guidance, and thus not based in legitimate policy concern.

This can, however, also be attributed to the limited resourcing of the policy, in addition to cultural assumption. As was developed in Chapter Five, councillors, by virtue of an evident limited knowledge and engagement of the policy, have clearly not internalised its core values

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<sup>735</sup> Welsh Government, *All Wales Planning Annual Performance Report 2017-18* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2018), p. 18.

of a subsistence lifestyle, on small acreage plots, and the way in which LID represents a way to develop new ways of living sustainably in rural spaces. In addition, and as was shown in the final section of Chapter Five, councillor objections are largely rooted not in OPD planning terms. Rather, they are framed in broader and often legitimate issues, such as the Local Authority's capacity to engage the compliance monitoring effectively, the (small) size of the plot when compared to traditional agriculture, the impact on local communities, and OPD as an instrument of Welsh Government.

This is demonstrative, therefore, not of OPD applications being considered on relevant material planning matters, but on an altogether different and inappropriate set of values. This is rooted in flawed knowledge – linked to their limited priming for the policy – in addition to the policy facilitating new ways of living in the open countryside which often employ different farming methods in traditional rural communities. This is, as was also shown in Chapter Five, both a resourcing issue as councillors do not receive any specific training, as well being a consequence of the policy's limited uptake in a narrow demographic which has reduced the exposure of councillors to OPD as well as tarnishing its reputation as being the preserve of middle-class English incomers. This has served to affect applicants' community acceptance.

Nevertheless, in order to facilitate the social integration of LIDs in Wales, OPD applications require a Community Impact Assessment (CIA). Chapter Six demonstrated that this has been relatively successful in facilitating the social integration of OPDs into their local communities by building social capital. With an emphasis on social and economic integration, and the prescription to involve local communities in the formulation of the plans, only 24% of OPD applications have attracted a greater number of objections than support. Therefore, the CIA's demand that applicants communicate with their neighbours can be seen to have been successful by building trust, emphasised by the archival record which showed that in OPD applications where there were objectors, 23% were from neighbours who felt disempowered when this communication to build social capital had not been realised. This is demonstrative of the need to appease concern in local communities by building social capital.

However, the statistical data showing that, in total, there has been more support than objections to OPD applications does obscure a fault line in the third-party representations received during the consultation period of OPD applications in the period of 2010-2021. This is the distinction between what might be termed as a 'non-local community' and 'local community'. This study has shown that OPD applications have found a more receptive audience from outside of the local community, and whose support rested on wider issues pertaining to mitigating the climate crisis. However, despite the CIA and the attempt to build social capital, the 'local' community, defined as living within three miles of the applicant site, have not been easily convinced of OPD's benefits to the local community, who have raised concerns over the OPD applicant site's impact on local resources, such as roads and water, as well the suitability of the site for a permaculture project.

Moreover, it was shown that, like councillors, local communities have a limited familiarity with OPD, and the policy has not cut through at a local level. In addition, the limited familiarity of the policy has also affected local community attitudes towards its applicants. In particular, the ability to develop low impact smallholdings in the open countryside, in places previously precluded from residential development, has led to narratives of unfairness, especially in the context of pressures on rural housing. OPD is, as a result, often viewed as being to the advantage incomers who are perceived to be taking advantage of a planning loophole to develop residential properties in the open countryside.

As a result of only a small number of applications since 2010, owing to the stringent nature of the policy benchmarks and the limited demographic of the policy take up, Chapter Six showed that OPD has been unable to move beyond a reputation of being associated with alternative lifestyles. The combination of the policy's name, its public facing imagery, and its inherent focus on developing new ways of living in rural spaces, has served to associate it with incomers and the disruption of rural Welsh identities, in particular the cultural meaning of land and farming methods, and the perceived dilution of Welsh-speaking communities.

This represents a further limitation of the implementation of LID in Wales given the assessment of OPD management plans submitted to Local Authorities, 2010-2021, which highlighted that OPD applicants, contrary to OPD's detractors' assertions, can be seen to be learning Welsh, are from Welsh-speaking families, or have committed to send their children to attend Welsh medium schools. It is evident, then, that an inclusion of Welshness in the policy's CIA might enhance its capacity to build social capital and facilitate greater community acceptance. The critical point, however, is that the perceptions articulated by councillors and in the objecting third-party representations of OPDs threatening local identities is somewhat flawed and oversimplified.

In the final analysis, the provision for OPD has facilitated LID in Wales. However, it has only done so for a small number of applicants. The number of applications, in total and those successful, has fallen short of the expectations of the policy's architect, Jane Davidson. As was mentioned in Chapter Three, Davidson suggested a figure of 100 successful applications within the policy's first 10 years, whilst Erica Vernon, chair of the One Planet Council estimated that Wales could accommodate 10,000.<sup>736</sup> With 55 determined applications since 2010, 39 of which have been successful, the implementation of OPD has been shown to have had only limited success. It has worked for a limited number of motivated applicants and has been proven to be capable of navigating through the planning system, despite being an exception to land use norms held since 1947 and, therefore, against the trained thinking of planners and the values of elected members of planning committees.

The question, then, is not only whether the policy has successfully facilitated LID in Wales, but its scalability. It is evident that the policy, in its current form, is unlikely to generate a significant number of applications, evidenced in the data from Chapter Four which shows that the policy has, on average, only attracted five applications per year since 2010, though this rises to eight per year in the period after 2016 which saw an increasing policy uptake as the impact of the OPC training and support to applicants was felt. Now that the policy has proven

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<sup>736</sup> "Climate Change: '10,000 Families could Live Off-Grid'," last modified 26 June, 2019, accessed 26 June, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-48769569>.

itself as functioning and has not led to unjustified and sporadic development in the open countryside, there is, seemingly, scope for the Welsh Government to review the rigour of the policy. An evolution of the OPD policy, moving away from this initial experimental phase, could reduce the burden of proof placed on applicants during the application stage and limit the extent of the ongoing reporting to make the policy more appealing and capable of more meaningfully contributing to the national sustainability targets.

While the policy's emphasis on 'exemplars' does legitimise the low uptake to an extent, an easing of the burden of proof, in particular with the depth of detail and expertise required in the compiling of the management plan, would make the policy more appealing to those with the practical skills to live a low impact life, without having to possess the significant academic skills to write a management plan or the funds to pay a consultant to assist in its collation. A reduction of the documentation and administrative effort, though not diluting the commitment to live a 'one planet' life, would also limit the pressure on the second group of stakeholders - the decision-makers - who have struggled to manage the policy's extensive documentation and technical data. In other words, streamlining the burden of proof of the application process would ease the workload of planning officers in the context of ongoing financial austerity.

In addition, the resourcing issue would also be eased by a change in narrative about the role of the ongoing compliance monitoring. Rather than being viewed as an enforcement mechanism which invites objectors to constantly scrutinise OPDs while also representing a resource drain on Local Authorities in having to assess the reports, the monitoring should be reframed as a reporting exercise which compels OPD applicants to demonstrate their sustainability via the EFA, whilst submitting the financial records of their land-based enterprises for auditing, if required. This would involve a less active role for Local Authorities and move away from a system which currently implies surveillance.

In conclusion, this study has added to the literature on LID by assessing the relative success of the Welsh Government's facilitation of LID in the open countryside. It has shown that having a policy pathway to facilitate LID is the primary vehicle for those seeking to develop new ways of living in the open countryside. It has also shown that OPD in Wales has been driven by being part of the Welsh Government's sustainability agenda. This research has concluded that despite the successful facilitation of LID, that the implementation of the policy has been affected by the policy's rigour. As a result, the policy, though operational and functioning, has only resulted in a low number of successful applications and will, in its current form, only contribute to Wales's sustainability agenda in a limited way, even if the emphasis on 'exemplars' is taken into account.

It has also demonstrated, for the wider eco-cultures literature, that sustainable smallholdings in the open countryside can have a role to play in national sustainability agendas. This study has made clear that, with a legitimate process to follow, people are interested in pursuing low carbon lives based on self-reliance. With increasing concern over the impacts of industrial agriculture on biodiversity and the resilience of globalised food systems, particularly in the context of looming climate change and the war in Ukraine, providing opportunities for the production of local foods, using more environmentally conscious methods, should form part future rural sustainability thinking and research. Though this approach is only likely to appeal to a limited number of people, it does represent an additional avenue for scholars to explore; in research on grassroots responses to climate change in Britain, subsistence farming has not often featured. As has been shown, Wales's OPD policy has been able to meet the three foundations of sustainability by providing more affordable small acreage smallholdings, that have improved environmental quality, while facilitating the development of social capital in local communities. In this view, LID can be seen to provide one potential pathway to rural regeneration and is, then, worthy of further attention from scholars.

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## Appendix One: Data set for all OPD planning applications in Wales, 2010-2021.<sup>739</sup>

| OPD                            | Local Authority | Application    | Determined by | Decision  | Decision time (weeks) | Appeal  | Community Council response | Management plan length (pages) | 3rd party objections | 3rd party support | Dwelling type | Welsh national | Welsh language |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------------|---------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Pwl Brogba                     | PCC             | 12/1070/PA     | PC            | Refused*  | 76                    | Allowed | None                       | 81                             | 0                    | 2                 | House         | Yes            | -              |
| Pelen Gwellt                   | PCC             | 13/0745/PA     | DD            | Refused   | 96                    | -       | None                       | -                              | -                    | -                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Bryn Y Blodau                  | PCC             | 13/0679/PA     | DD            | Refused*  | 87                    | Allowed | None                       | 61                             | 3                    | 0                 | House         | -              | -              |
| Parc Y Dwr                     | PCC             | 13/0949/PA     | PC            | Approved  | 53                    | -       | Object                     | 280                            | 1                    | 0                 | House         | -              | -              |
| Pencedni                       | PCC             | 14/0319/PA     | PC            | Approved  | 46                    | -       | Object                     | 80                             | 0                    | 4                 | House         | Yes            | Yes            |
| Hafan y Coed                   | PCC             | 16/0160/PA     | PC            | Approved  | 23                    | -       | Support                    | 81                             | 0                    | 0                 | House         | -              | Yes            |
| Cae Calon                      | PCC             | 16/0549/PA     | PC            | Refused*  | 17                    | Allowed | Object                     | 58                             | 0                    | 0                 | House         | -              | -              |
| Gelli Y Gafel                  | PCC             | 16/0737/PA     | PC            | Approved  | 16                    | -       | None                       | 112                            | 0                    | 3                 | House         | -              | -              |
| Gardd Darna                    | PCC             | 18/0382/PA     | PC            | Approved  | 14                    | -       | Support                    | 59                             | 1                    | 1                 | Caravan       | -              | -              |
| Parc Y Dderwen                 | PCC             | 18/0934/PA     | PC            | Approved  | 27                    | -       | Object                     | 57                             | 6                    | 9                 | Caravan       | -              | Yes            |
| Wern Isaf                      | PCC             | 18/0978/PA     | DD            | Refused   | 12                    | -       | Object                     | -                              | 6                    | 3                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Wern Isaf                      | PCC             | 19/0190/PA     | DD            | Refused   | 24                    | -       | Object                     | -                              | 8                    | 6                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Meadow Woods                   | PCC             | 18/1115/PA     | PC            | Approved  | 53                    | -       | Support                    | 58                             | 0                    | 1                 | House         | Yes            | -              |
| Baradwys                       | PCC             | 18/1126/PA     | PC            | Approved  | 23                    | -       | Object                     | 64                             | 0                    | 0                 | Caravan       | -              | Yes            |
| Onnen Fach                     | PCC             | 19/0101/PA     | -             | Withdrawn | -                     | -       | -                          | -                              | -                    | -                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Parc-y-Rhwyd                   | PCC             | 19/0424/PA     | DD            | Refused   | 25                    | -       | Object                     | -                              | 5                    | 0                 | -             | -              | -              |
| 3 Fields                       | PCC             | 19/1032/PA     | -             | Withdrawn | -                     | -       | -                          | -                              | -                    | -                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Land at Rhosfach               | PCC             | 20/0442/PA     | DD            | Refused   | 44                    | -       | None                       | -                              | 0                    | 0                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Clynfyw                        | PCC             | 20/0022/PA     | DD            | Approved  | 33                    | -       | None                       | -                              | 0                    | 15                | -             | -              | -              |
| Land adjacent to Binchurn Farm | PCNPA           | NP/12/0230     | PC            | Refused   | 13                    | -       | Object                     | -                              | -                    | -                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Beeview Farm                   | PCNPA           | NP/15/0693/FUL | PC            | Approved  | 30                    | -       | Object                     | 97                             | 29                   | 25                | Caravan       | -              | -              |
| Castle Hill                    | PCNPA           | NP/15/0310/FUL | PC            | Refused   | 39                    | -       | Object                     | -                              | 13                   | 0                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Castle Hill                    | PCNPA           | NP/18/0134/FUL | PC            | Refused   | 19                    | Refused | Object                     | -                              | 21                   | 0                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Land east of New Park Campsite | PCNPA           | NP/16/0539/OBS | PC            | Cancelled | -                     | -       | -                          | -                              | -                    | -                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Willow Farm                    | PCNPA           | NP/17/0127/FUL | PC            | Approved  | 28                    | -       | Object                     | -                              | 0                    | 0                 | Caravan       | Yes            | -              |
| Parc Y Delyn                   | PCNPA           | NP/18/0545/FUL | DD            | Approved  | 11                    | -       | None                       | 78                             | 0                    | 0                 | Caravan       | -              | Yes            |
| Lily Pond Farm                 | PCNPA           | NP/19/0309/FUL | DD            | Approved  | 58                    | -       | Object                     | 84                             | 0                    | 0                 | Caravan       | -              | -              |
| Maes Gwenyn                    | PCNPA           | NP/19/0537/FUL | DD            | Refused   | 18                    | -       | Object                     | -                              | 0                    | 7                 | Caravan       | Yes            | Yes            |

<sup>739</sup> The data in this table has been produced by searching for OPD applications on all of Wales's Local Authority Planning Portals.



| OPD                | Local Authority | Application        | Determined by | Decision  | Decision time (weeks) | Appeal      | Community Council response | Management plan length (pages) | 3rd party objections | 3rd party support | Dwelling type | Welsh national | Welsh language |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Maes Gwenyn        | PCNPA           | NP/20/0230/FU<br>L | PC            | Refused*  | 20                    | Allowed     | Object                     | 80                             | 0                    | 23                | Caravan       | Yes            | -              |
| Land at Jason Road | PCNPA           | NP/20/0026/FU<br>L |               | Approved  | 72 -                  | -           | Object                     | 63                             | 2                    | 2                 | House         | -              | -              |
| Rhiw Las           | CCC             | W/31160            | PC            | Refused*  | 47                    | Allowed     | Object                     | 73                             | 7                    | 9                 | House         | -              | -              |
| Hebron Farm        | CCC             | W/32825            | DD            | Approved  | 11                    | -           | None                       | 60                             | 0                    | 3                 | Caravan       | -              | -              |
| Cobbler's Field    | CCC             | E/34934            | DD            | Refused*  | 65                    | Allowed     | Object                     | 81                             | 1                    | 0                 | Caravan       | -              | -              |
| Parc Y Llain       | CCC             | W/35311            | DD            | Approved  | 26                    | -           | None                       | -                              | 0                    | 1                 | House         | -              | Yes            |
| Swiss Valley Farm  | CCC             | S/36749            | -             | Withdrawn | -                     | -           | -                          | -                              | -                    | -                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Swn Yr Adar        | CCC             | W/36252            | DD            | Approved  | 17                    | -           | None                       | 77                             | 0                    | 3                 | Caravan       | -              | -              |
| Cae Cwm Deri       | CCC             | E/36863            | -             | Withdrawn | -                     | -           | -                          | -                              | -                    | -                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Parc Y Oden        | CCC             | W/38893            | PC            | Approved  | 20                    | -           | Object                     | -                              | 3                    | 24                | House         | -              | -              |
| Ty Dderwen         | CCC             | E/39554            | PC            | Approved  | 50                    | -           | Object                     | 123                            | 28                   | 25                | House         | Yes            | -              |
| Flatwood           | CCC             | W/39346            | PC            | Approved  | 60                    | -           | Object                     | 91                             | 4                    | 4                 | House         | -              | Yes            |
| Ty Newydd          | CCC             | S/39765            | DD            | Approved  | 110                   | -           | Object                     | 48                             | 1                    | 0                 | Caravan       | -              | -              |
| Llyn Adain Gwydd   | CCC             | W/39846            | DD            | Refused   | 64                    | -           | Object                     | -                              | 16                   | 27                | -             | -              | Yes            |
| Maes Digonedd      | CCC             | PL/00489           | PC            | Refused   | 50                    | Outstanding | Object                     | -                              | 10                   | 44                | -             | -              | -              |
| Cwm Bach           | CCC             | PL/00799           | PC            | Approved  | 51                    | -           | None                       | 64                             | 3                    | 3                 | House         | -              | -              |
| Tir Sisial         | CeCC            | A110935            | PC            | Approved  | -                     | -           | None                       | 84                             | -                    | -                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Cornerwood         | CeCC            | A120169            | DD            | Refused   | 7                     | Refused     | Object                     | -                              | -                    | -                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Cornerwood         | CeCC            | A130164            | DD            | Refused   | 39                    | Refused     | Object                     | -                              | -                    | -                 | -             | -              | -              |
| Allt Cefn Ffynnon  | CeCC            | A171099            | PC            | Approved  | 58                    | -           | Support                    | 40                             | 0                    | 4                 | Caravan       | -              | -              |
| Pencoed            | CeCC            | A170439            | DD            | Approved  | 42                    | -           | Object                     | 70                             | 5                    | 5                 | House         | -              | -              |
| Coed Alltgoch      | CeCC            | A171036            | PC            | Approved  | 44                    | -           | None                       | 67                             | 0                    | 1                 | House         | -              | -              |
| Crynfryn Farm      | CeCC            | A180649            | DD            | Approved  | 31                    | -           | None                       | 115                            | 0                    | 11                | House         | Yes            | Yes            |
| Permawise          | CeCC            | A180212            | DD            | Approved  | 66                    | -           | Object                     | 188                            | 0                    | 3                 | House         | -              | Yes            |



**Key:**

PC – Planning Committee

PCC – Pembrokeshire County Council

CCC – Carmarthenshire County Council

PoCC – Powys County Council

DCC – Denbigshire County Council

MCC – Monmouthshire County Council

NCC – Newport Coty Council

DD – Delegated Decision

PCNPA – Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

CeCC – Ceredigion County Council

BBNPA – Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

BCBC – Bridgend County Borough Council

CaCC – Caerphilly County Council

The dash (-) refers to 'no data' being available.

## Appendix Two

### Participant Information Sheet

### Participant Information Sheet

#### **Towards an Ecotopia? An assessment of Wales's One Planet Development policy as a facilitator of open countryside low impact developments.**

You have been invited to take part in a research project as part of a doctoral study by a researcher based in the School of Humanities at Coventry University. Before opting to participate in this study, please read this Participant Information Sheet; it provides the aims, objectives, and scope of the project. It also outlines what your participation in the study will involve, including the risks, use of data, and procedure for withdrawal.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The study aims to explore the major obstacles faced by individuals, groups, and communities to establishing environmentally sustainable low impact developments in the open countryside, inclusive of land-based enterprises. In addition, it aims to understand whether these major obstacles have been overcome by Wales' One Planet Development (OPD) policy. It is also interested in preserving the memories and experiences of people involved in low impact living by creating an oral history, an archive of recorded interviews.

#### **Why have you been chosen?**

You have been selected to take part in this study because you are:

- Part of a low impact project which either already exists or are in the process of bringing one in to being
- An activist campaigning for greater accessibility to low impact development
- An academic working on low impact development
- An architect or designer of low impact developments
- A planner or policy maker responsible for low impact development

### **What will participation involve?**

Participation in this study will involve being interviewed by Brett Sanders, a researcher at Coventry University. The interview will be in person, and aims to be approximately 60 minutes in duration, but the interview duration can be altered to meet your timescale. During this interview, the researcher will ask you to express your experience of low impact developments. The interview will be recorded, should you permit this. Your permission to record the interview will be asked before the interview is started.

Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used.

### **You should know that:**

- The interview will take place at an agreed location that ensures the safety of both interviewee and interviewer.
- The interview will be recorded, with your consent.
- Initially, access to the interview recording will be limited to Brett Sanders and academic colleagues and researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process. However, with your explicit agreement, the recording will be deposited with the British Library, enabling other scholars to access our conversation.
- Both summaries of, and direct quotations taken from, our conversation, attributed to yourself by name, will be used in a PhD thesis and academic publications unless you wish these comments to be anonymised. If you wish parts of the interview to be regarded as 'off the record', then please indicate that this is the case.
- The actual recording will be stored on a password encrypted hard drive, and, pending your agreement, transferred to the British Library for archiving (part of this study is to develop an oral history).

**Do I have to take part?**

Participation in this interview is voluntary. It is up to you if you decide whether or not to take part. You may withdraw from this research process at any time.

**What will happen to the results of the study?**

The results of the study will be used as the basis for the doctoral study by Brett Sanders at Coventry University. Following the completion of the PhD, the results may also be used in later research published in academic journals, books, or presented at conferences.

**Who should you contact for further information?**

If you wish to seek further information or have a complaint about the researcher, please contact:

**Researcher:****Brett Sanders**

Lecturer in History

Coventry University

George Eliot Building (Office 414)

Priory Street

Coventry

CV1 5FB

**Email:** [B.Sanders@Coventry.ac.uk](mailto:B.Sanders@Coventry.ac.uk)

**Telephone:** 02477658692

**Director of Studies:****Alex Thomson**

Principal Lecturer in Politics

Coventry University

George Eliot Building (Office 414)

Priory Street

Coventry

CV1 5FB

**Email:** [A.Thomson@Coventry.ac.uk](mailto:A.Thomson@Coventry.ac.uk)

**Telephone:** 02477654515

## Appendix Three

### Informed Consent Form

### Informed Consent Form

#### **Towards an Ecotopia? An assessment of Wales's One Planet Development policy as a facilitator of open countryside low impact developments.**

The study aims to explore the major obstacles faced by individuals, groups, and communities to establishing environmentally sustainable low impact developments in the open countryside, inclusive of land-based enterprises. In addition, it aims to understand whether these major obstacles have been overcome by Wales's One Planet Development (OPD) policy. It is also interested in preserving the memories and experiences of people involved in low impact living by creating an oral history, an archive of recorded interviews.

Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to **read the accompanying Participant Information Sheet**

If you have any questions or queries about the interview, please contact the researcher using the details listed below:

#### **Brett Sanders**

Lecturer in History  
School of Humanities  
Faculty of Arts & Humanities  
George Eliot Building (GE 414)  
Coventry University  
Priory Street  
Coventry  
CV1 5FB

Tel: 02477 658 692

Email: [B.Sanders@Coventry.ac.uk](mailto:B.Sanders@Coventry.ac.uk)

**By signing this form, I agree that;**

**Please initial**

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

3. I agree that this interview may be recorded and stored electronically.

4. I understand that, unless I indicate otherwise, the interviewer may reproduce material gathered from this interview as attributed quotations in a doctoral thesis, and subsequent academic publications.

5. I understand that if I wish any part of this interview to remain in confidence, this is possible, and I should indicate to the interviewer which passages should be treated as 'off the record'.

6. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation.

7. I give permission for an electronic transcript and recording of this interview to be deposited with the British Library.

8. I agree to take part in the research project.



**Participant(s) Details:**

Name of participant(s): .....

Signature(s) of participant(s): .....

Date: .....

**Name of Researcher:**

Brett Sanders

**Address:**

School of Humanities

George Eliot Building (Office 414)

Coventry University

Priory Street

Coventry

CV1 5FB

United Kingdom

**Email:** [B.Sanders@Coventry.ac.uk](mailto:B.Sanders@Coventry.ac.uk)

**Telephone:** 02477658692

Signature of researcher: .....

Date:.....

## Appendix Four

### Measures of sustainable development

| Metric                        | Description  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Ecological Footprinting       | "Measures the impact each of us makes on the planet. It works out how much land and sea is needed to feed us and provide all the energy, water and materials we use in our everyday lives. It also calculates the emissions generate from the oil, coal and gas we burn at every-increasing rates, and it estimates how much land is needed to absorb all the waste we create". <sup>740</sup> |
| Carbon Footprinting           | "The total amount of CO2 emissions that is directly and indirectly released by an activity or is accumulated over the life stages of a product". <sup>741</sup>  |
| Biomass Consumption           | Relates to the proportion of global production or of biomass extracted to satisfy the demand of a particular country. <sup>742</sup>   |
| Material Consumption          | Relates to the proportion of material globally extracted for the domestic use of a particular country. <sup>743</sup>  |
| Human Development Index       | Allows for states to be ranked in terms of human development indices, such as life expectancy, educational standards and attainment. It moves beyond state 'progress' being measured by economic indicators. <sup>744</sup>  |
| Sustainable Development Index | Moves beyond the Human Development Index by considering the ecological implications of the policy choices taken by states to deliver their human development objectives. <sup>745</sup>  |

<sup>740</sup> Pooran Desai and Paul King, *One Planet Living* (Bristol: Alistair Sawday Publishing Co Ltd, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>741</sup> T.V. Ramachandra and Durga Madhab Mahapatra, "The Science of Carbon Footprint Assessment," in *The Carbon Footprint Handbook*, ed. Subramanian Senthilkannan Muthu (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 4.

<sup>742</sup> World Wildlife Fund, *Thriving within our Planetary Means* (London: WWF, 2019), p. 16.

<sup>743</sup> World Wildlife Fund, *Thriving within our Planetary Means* (London: WWF, 2019), p. 16.

<sup>744</sup> "Human Development Index (HDI)" Human Development Reports, accessed 18 November, 2022, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI>.

<sup>745</sup> "About" SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INDEX, accessed 18 November, 2022, <https://www.sustainabledevelopmentindex.org/about>.

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Air Pollution      | Refers to the emissions of pollutants, such as greenhouse gases. <sup>746</sup>   |
| Water Pollution    | Refers to the pollution to water by effluents and chemicals, such as phosphates and nitrates which may affect water quality. <sup>747</sup> |
| Chemical Pollution | Refers to the release of toxic chemicals into the environment. <sup>748</sup>   |

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<sup>746</sup> World Wildlife Fund, *Thriving within our Planetary Means* (London: WWF, 2019), p. 16.

<sup>747</sup> World Wildlife Fund, *Thriving within our Planetary Means* (London: WWF, 2019), p. 16.

<sup>748</sup> World Wildlife Fund, *Thriving within our Planetary Means* (London: WWF, 2019), p. 16.