

Scale of planning appeal backlog revealed by Welsh Government

The planning appeal backlog in Wales has been revealed as inspectors battle to catch up after a botched transfer of powers.

Last year the staff and functions of Planning Inspectorate Wales transferred from English to Welsh Governments. This saw a new division called Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) set up.

But it wasn't a smooth switch over with delays in the transfer of data which has led to a major backlog in the system.

They have been battling to reduce the number of cases going over the target deadline.

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Figures have now been released on the situation after a request to Welsh Government.

They reveal that there are currently 435 appeals in the system and of these 67 are over the government targets.

Targets vary depending on the type of appeal but for most commercial appeals it is 14 weeks for a written representations appeal, 21 weeks for a hearing led appeal and 29 weeks for a full inquiry.

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One North Wales firm hit by the backlog told Business Live: “These delays are unacceptable. They cost us money as all works are put on hold and costs increase every week with inflation. The government should be helping business not hindering it.”

Speaking last month, Jamie Bradshaw, director at chartered town planners Owen Devenport Ltd, said: “The recent delays in the registration and handling of appeals have been difficult for agents and appellants alike, as it has increased uncertainty for those seeking an appeal and made handling of the process more difficult for agents.

“While the current situation is of course difficult it is clear that it is vital that more resources are given to the Inspectorate to allow them to address the backlog, and also to ensuring the proper function of the planning system.”

Janet Finch-Saunders, Senedd member for Aberconwy, and Shadow Minister for Climate Change, has been pressing Welsh Government over the issue.

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Mrs Finch-Saunders said: “The Welsh Government handling of the transition to PEDW is symbolic of bad management that is costing economic growth and business investment in Wales.

“With an entrenched housing crisis across Wales, this farcical situation is completely unacceptable and unprofessional. The Minister must now apologise and arrange for extra resources to be given to empower PEDW to address the backlog and ensure the proper function of the planning system.”

Welsh Government said: “We have been working hard to reduce

the delays to starting new planning and enforcement appeals and issuing decisions on those cases, since our last update in January 2022.

- We are now issuing the majority of decisions within the ministerial target,
- All new appeals, submitted up until 1 March, have been registered

“Many appeals have been started since 1 October, but there remains a backlog of cases waiting to be started.

“We have put in place arrangements to reduce this backlog at a reasonable and consistent rate, not to adversely impact on resources in Local Planning Authorities and to reflect our current reduced resources.

“We would still ask you to please wait to contact us until the expiration of nine weeks after receiving an initial acknowledgement, if enquiring about an appeal.”

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