

How does building  
policy in wales  
compare with policy  
in scotland in terms of  
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My interest in architecture has led me to study the topic of building policies, as they are the foundation of any modern building, in particular those policies set in Wales as these will show me how these laws and regulations can directly affect my environment. I will also conduct an interview with a Planning Officer from the local area who will have a direct insight into the effect of the building regulations of the country. This therefore, will simultaneously relate to the Welsh Baccalaureate. I will also look at the policies in place in Scotland, due to their similar size in population and relationship to the United Kingdom as devolved nations, I will like to see how two similar countries have decided to regulate building and how they address the subject of the sustainability of them in a world of growing concern about global warming and our effect on the Earth. My interest is also the foundation of my career choice: architecture, I decided to study Art, Physics, Maths and English Language at A level to support this decision as I have found that many universities offering the course require high A level grades in these subjects.

In this investigation I am going to first investigate the current planning policies in place in Wales in terms of sustainability and research the country's zero carbon aspirations and how they plan to achieve them. I will then research the same information for Scotland. I will compare the findings of my research and take note of the similarities and differences in planning policy in the two devolved nations. Next, I will conduct an interview with the Senior Planning Officer at Conwy Council Planning Department, James Harland, about the effects of the sustainability regulations on his work and projects.

Finally, I will analyse the results of my interview and compare them to the results of my own research so as to form a reliable conclusion about my topic. As a devolved nation, Wales has attempted to utilise its smaller population, in comparison to England, to achieve more ambitious sustainability targets. When Wales first gained control, in December 2011, of its own Building regulations, it aimed for a 55% improvement [1] on the National 2006 Building Regulations. Some research, by Savills the estate agent, has suggested that the recent changes to the sustainability regulations could hinder the re-growth of the Welsh property market after the market crash. The research stated that up to £8, 000 is added to the cost of each house to obtain Code 3 standards, however the report was concluded that the housing market remained on a steady road to recovery with ‘ predicted 5% growth over the next five years’ [2].

Moreover the Welsh government has been accused on several occasions of not supporting homebuyers, though a spokesman said it had developed ‘ a number of initiatives to improve home ownership’ [3] and gained feedback from the house building industry. All new homes in England and Wales are to be built to zero carbon standards by 2016[4], though the Welsh Assembly government aspire to 2011, with many zero carbon developments planned or begun. One such development is a Neath eco-hamlet, a collaboration between the Prince of Wales’ Foundation for Building Communities and Zed Factory [5] has planned for a small development that would drastically reduce fuel and energy usage, performing above code level 6. The Code for Sustainable Homes is a 6 level rating system that judges the sustainable performance of house on energy and CO2 emissions, water run off,

materials, waste, pollution, health and well being, management and ecology [6] that was launched in December 2006. The zero-carbon aspirations have provided opportunities to eco-housing companies like PassivHaus and CarbonLite [7] who are benefitting from the need for sustainable housing. In May 2011, Sustainability labelling was introduced [8] to Scottish Building standards, it being the Scottish version of England Wales' Code For Sustainable Homes.

The labelling is split into 6 categories again, named after precious metals, the highest level being platinum which is equal to Level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. These new standards have ended the use of non-governmental labelling in Scotland like the BREEAM scheme and the introduction of the labelling was also to show how companies must develop their building techniques and warn everyone of the future cost of zero carbon building. Previous changes to sustainability standards in 2012 caused outrage among the Scottish building industry as the improvements in energy efficiency would ' add a ' carbon premium' of up to £8, 000 to the cost of building a house,' [9] they would also reduce emissions by 30% compared to the 2007 standards. The further changes made the following year reduced carbon emissions from heating, hot water and lighting by 100%.

[10]One Scottish architectural practice has developed a Passive House design that performs at the Gold level of the Section 7 labelling [11]. The high levels of sustainability are achieved by extensive insulation, increased air tightness, triple glazing and renewable energy generation. These Passive houses are the most viable way achieving ' zero-carbon' status according to the architects. After thoroughly researching the planning policies and <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-building-policy-in-wales-compare-with-policy-in-scotland-in-terms-of-sustainability/>

regulations of both devolved nations I have noticed many similarities and differences.

Firstly, the categorising of energy efficiency is different, Wales the Code for Sustainable Homes is used, a 6 level rating system that takes into account carbon and energy emissions, water run-off, materials used in the build, waste, pollution, wellbeing, management and the effects on the ecology [12]. In Scotland, labelling is used of six levels from Bronze to Platinum, the label of every new build is judged on resource use (energy, water heating and emissions), adaptability and occupant well being (noise, natural light and security). The coding is very similar, however the Scottish ' adaptability' aspect addresses the issue of the lifespan of the home. In Wales all new homes must meet Level 3 of the CSH which is estimated to add between £2000 and £3000 [13] to the cost of building each home, depending on the size. Scottish homes must meet the 2010 standards, which is equal to the Bronze level of the labelling. When searching for examples of sustainable projects in Wales and Scotland, I found many builds were improving energy efficiency by building to Passive House principles, where the house is almost air tight by use of extensive insulation.

One example of this technique in Wales is the plans for an eco-hamlet in Neath, South Wales. A collaboration between the architects of BedZed in South London and the Prince's Foundation for Building Communities [14] has created plans for the UK's first and largest zero carbon housing development. In Scotland, architects Simon Winstanley offer a Passive House Design that requires 70 to 90% less energy [15] than a house built to Bronze standards. Unfortunately, those in the building industry have told the press <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-building-policy-in-wales-compare-with-policy-in-scotland-in-terms-of-sustainability/>

that the new stricter regulations in Wales threaten the recovery of the property market after the recession, this is similar to the reaction of the Scottish building industry to the 2011 labelling where industry group Homes For Scotland stated that the industry faced ‘ the worst crisis since World War 2’ [16].