

Another Welsh Government consultation called for views, evidence and projects to inform the Welsh National Development Framework. In its response, AR pointed out the importance of retail parks and warehouses to economic growth and prosperity, together accounting for some 30% of total retail spend and that during the 2008 and beyond recession, the retail parks and warehouse sector was the most resilient part of the retail industry. AR added that on a typical working day, across the UK, the sector directly employs some 725,000 people in the UK, rising to around 800,000 for Christmas. This is more than the Big Four banks (597,000 worldwide) and much more than the pure play retail sector (on-line and multi-channel) which employs only 61,000 people.

These jobs comprise a wide range of employment types at all skill levels and, unlike many other sectors such as financial services, are available throughout the UK. Importantly for social mobility, apprenticeships and training schemes are available in roles such as hospitality, management, engineering and joinery, allowing people unable to complete higher education to work towards professional qualifications.

Most importantly, AR said there is now a new retail landscape. Permanent structural change is taking place in retailing in response to competition from multi-channel retailing and for many retailers, town centre are now economically unviable locations. The result is a shift from secondary to primary centres and from small stores to larger stores.

It was pointed out that the Welsh economy operates in a competitive market place. Given this, achieving the Well-being Goals of prosperity and a more equal society will depend in part on the inclusion in the NDF of spatial policies which nurture and not restrict employment sectors which are economically successful and resilient and which offer employment opportunities to people from a wide social background. Retail parks and warehouses make a substantial contribution. One such sector was retail parks and warehouses and strategic retail policy in the NDF should recognise this and ensure that investment can flow to the stronger centres whether, town centre, out of town or high street. No longer is a 'one size fits all' approach appropriate in the new multi-channel retail world.

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