



Planning Aid **Wales**  
Cymorth Cynllunio **Cymru**

# Annual Report 2020/21

Supporting community  
engagement and involvement in  
the planning system in Wales

[www.planningaidwales.org.uk](http://www.planningaidwales.org.uk)

Charity Number 1000115

Company Number 2526875 (Wales)



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## About Planning Aid Wales

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Planning Aid Wales promotes and facilitates meaningful community engagement in the planning process in Wales.

Meaningful community engagement can:

Give people a voice and build their skills, confidence, and capacity to influence decisions affecting their local area.

- Improve the quality, appropriateness, and relevance of new development.
- Increase pride in and sense of ownership of the built environment.
- Foster collaboration between developers, planners, and communities, resulting in better schemes.
- Improve the quality and relevance of planning policy by taking local knowledge into account.
- Reduce conflict, speed up and reduce costs in the development management process.

As the community engagement organisation in planning, our role is to build understanding of the planning system, support better engagement in local planning and encourage collaboration between communities, planning authorities and developers.

By giving people a voice in the planning system, we help create a more equal Wales with more cohesive communities.

More information about our Strategy can be found in our current Business Plan 2020-2023:

[www.planningaidwales.org.uk/about-us/key-documents-and-policies/business-plans/](http://www.planningaidwales.org.uk/about-us/key-documents-and-policies/business-plans/)



Ariennir gan  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
Funded by  
**Welsh Government**

# Our Services

Our core-funded services include delivering planning training to a range of audiences, developing easy read planning guidance and a free planning advice Helpline.

We also undertake projects and commissions on behalf of Welsh Government, Local Planning Authorities and Community and Town Councils.

## Training

Planning Aid Wales can deliver informative and engaging training courses for elected members, community and town councils, community groups and organisations across Wales. Topics include *An introduction to the planning system*, *Responding to planning applications & pre-application consultations* and *An introduction to Place Plans*.

During 2019, Planning Aid Wales began developing a new online training platform to deliver video training to a wider audience. The platform launched in spring 2020.

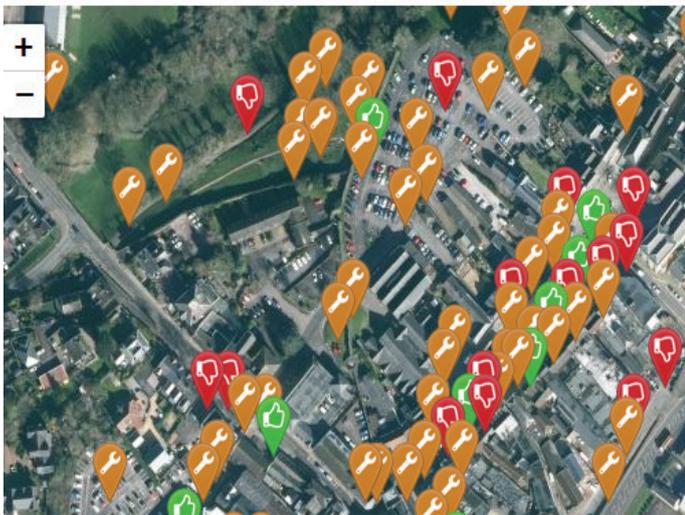


Planning Aid Wales  
**Online Training**

## Community Engagement Services

As an independent third party organisation, we have found time and again that communities are willing to engage with us, even where Local Planning Authorities have encountered barriers to engagement in the past. As part of our process, we encourage active collaboration between local planning authority staff and community groups, thereby building better relationships for future engagement. Our community engagement services include community engagement strategy development, consensus building training workshops, seldom- heard groups engagement and Place Plan support, including training and Place Plan development.

## Placecheck



## Guidance Development

Planning Aid Wales has developed a number of 'easy-read' planning guidance documents on behalf of Welsh Government and Local Planning Authorities. Examples include [placeplans.org.uk](http://placeplans.org.uk) and *Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites* (see [planningaidwales.org.uk/gtguide](http://planningaidwales.org.uk/gtguide))



# Value for Money

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Planning Aid Wales offers exceptional value for money in delivering our activities and services. In 2020/21 we delivered:

## Training & Network Events

- 6 training courses to 165 delegates, which represented 96 Community & Town Councils in Wales
- 1 network event on pre-determination with 57 delegates
- 1 bespoke Place Plan events with 14 delegates
- 379 subscribers to the new Online Training Portal
- 1 planning workshop for 5 Wales Cooperative Centre staff.

## Helpline:

- Number of enquiries: 329 (+88 on previous year)
- Number helped by volunteers: 90
- Hours given by volunteers: 72+
- CTCs helped: 31

## Projects

- Welsh Government funded research into the 'Value of Engagement in the Planning System in Wales'; 95 survey responses, 21 focus group participants and 6+ new case studies identified. Report to be published summer 2021.
- Chepstow Place Plan - 1,319 visitors to 'Future Chepstow' website, 59 responses to survey (by end March 2021).
- Welsh Local Government Association planning guide – 'Caravan Sites', sent to 25 LPA's, Visit Wales and Caravan Association members.
- Wales Cooperative Centre – Guidance on 'Planning System & Community Led Housing published'.
- 'Newtown & Llanllwchaiarn Place Plan' sent to Powys Council for adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

## Online guidance - 8,615 users

- Users to the Place Plans website: 1,552
- Unique users to the Planning advice pages: 5,992
- 1,071 subscribers received 6 newsletters over the year.

## Raising our profile

- Participation in Placemaking Wales and early signatories of the Placemaking Charter: <http://dcfw.org/placemaking/>
- Play Wales – Presentation at Green space & Play conference.
- Wales Coop Community-Led Housing Network Meeting – Presentation to members
- Cardiff Civic Society – Presentation/Discussion at meeting
- Article and Interview in The Planner re Co-Design
- Community Housing Groups - Presentations to 6 different Community Housing Organisations.
- Liaison established for future events and projects with Iaith Cymru, TPAS Cymru and Older People's Commissioner Wales

We helped  
**10,999 people**

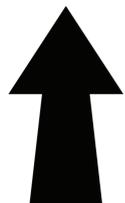
to engage with planning matters during 2020/21.



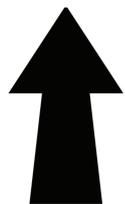
**616 Trainees**



**329 Helpline Callers**



**1,439 Project Participants**



**8,615 Online Guidance Users**

# Some highlights from the past year

## Newtown Place Plan: Communities engaging in successful place planning



With their Community Plan soon to be out-of-date and with significant development taking place in Newtown including a new by-pass and health campus, Newtown & Llanllwchaiarn Town Council aspired to engage the community and influence future planning decisions with a Place Plan.

The Town Council worked in partnership with consultants Planning Aid Wales and Place Studio to develop a plan that will give local "Newtown" detail to the Powys Local Development Plan (2011-2026).

From day one, the Town Council aimed to work closely with the local community to get their views on land use and other well-being issues that were important to them and to use this evidence to support the plan.

Innovative engagement techniques were adopted to start a "conversation" with all those with an interest in Newtown's future. Powys County Councils planning policy team were involved early in the process and actively encouraged the Place Plan with funding from the Councils Regeneration Team aiding implementation.

Between January 2019 and January 2021 - 321 people attended events, 106 people responded to an online survey, 58 local organisations were active in the project and 7000 comments were provided. 11 events were held with 10 stakeholder meetings taking place. The successful engagement phase informed the drafting of the Place Plan policies during 2019/20 with the Town

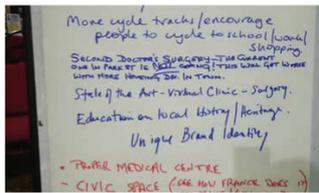




**321** event attendances  
**106** survey responses



**48** local organisations involved



**7,000** comments received (est.)



Council adopting the Plan in Autumn 2020. Powys Council is currently consulting ready for adoption and publication of the Place Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance in Spring 2021.

gathered for the Place Plan has been used in 4 funding applications to date. 2 of those have been successful. The Place Plan evidence undoubtedly strengthened these applications”.

The Town Council’s vision to empower the community has been a success and the desire for Newtown inspired policies becoming “material considerations” within SPG has come to fruition. The Place Plan “Our Town, Our Plan” sets out a vision for the place that Newtown aims to be by 2036 and covers three main themes:

The Newtown Place Plan is the first official plan in the Powys Local Planning Authority area to be considered for adoption as SPG and is the result of successful engagement and partnership working at all levels. It represents a local sustainable Placemaking approach as prescribed by Welsh Government. The Place Plan brings a local level of detail to the County Councils LDP and will be considered when the LDP is reviewed from 2022. This will help inform and shape how the replacement LDP applies to the Newtown area.

- Newtown – a great place to live, learn and work
- Green Newtown
- Destination Newtown

The Plan clearly explains that “every policy and project in the plan is based on suggestions from the community.”

**For more information:**

<https://newtown.org.uk/consultations/placeplan.html>

The Place Plan process has had many benefits including a sense of gained planning knowledge locally and enhanced working relationships between the Town Council and County Council. The Plan being the first in Powys has raised the profile of the town and as Sorelle White, Project Officer at the Town Council explains, Newtown is now seen as “a place to do business”. The Place Plan outlines a clear steer for future work and can be used as evidence to attract external funding.



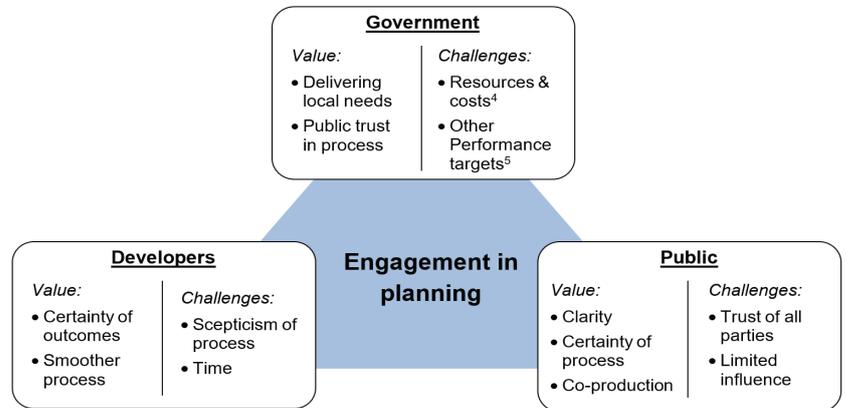
Sorelle White explained, “Providing evidence of community need is often at the heart of bids for public money – with good reason! The evidence

# Our Work

## The Value of Engagement in Planning in Wales

In April 2020, Planning Aid Wales embarked on a new form of work; delivering a research review that sought to understand The Value of Community Engagement in Planning in Wales.

With funding support from Welsh Government and with the support of Dr. Francesca Sartorio of Cardiff University and Jeff Bishop of Place Studio, an extensive literature review was undertaken to accompany online stakeholder engagement work to explore how the value of community engagement in planning can be measured and celebrated across Wales.



The research attracted over one hundred participants from a balanced range of planning and community backgrounds. More than six case studies of good practice were generated and a wide range of recommendations will be submitted to Welsh Government for consideration.

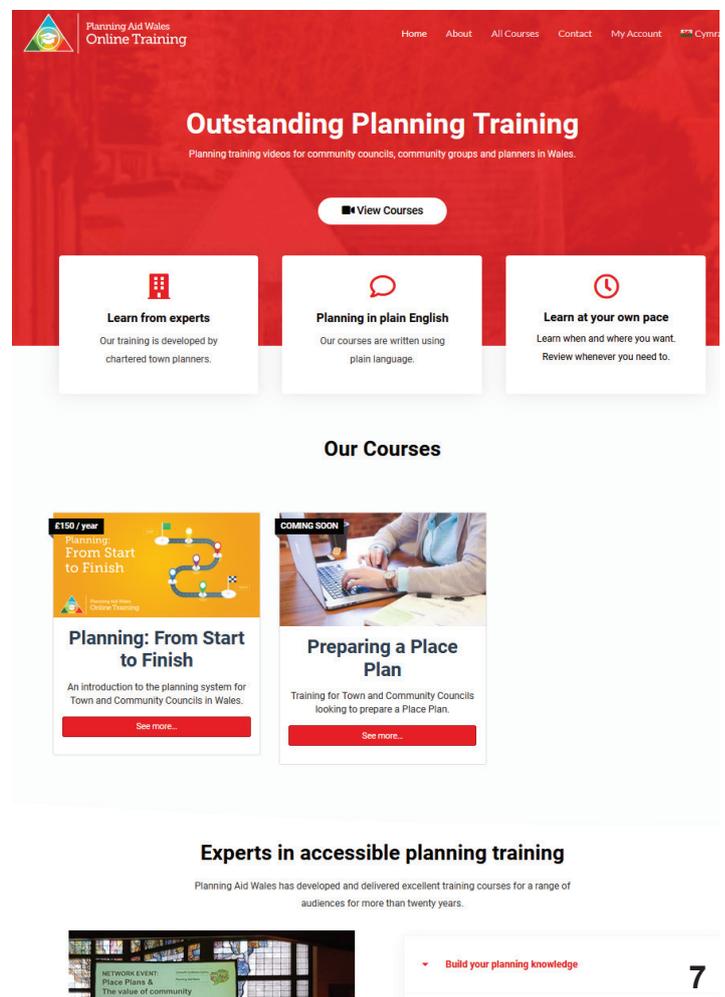
The report and an accompanying summary report will be published in the summer of 2021.

## Online Training Platform

Planning Aid Wales had been working on developing an online training platform that was ready to launch shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Launched in April 2020, the platform is designed for community and town councillors who wish to undertake training in their own time.

Operating as a subscription service, trainees can log in and complete courses at their leisure. The flagship course 'Planning from Start to Finish' has proven popular, with 379 councillors representing 33 Community and Town Councils signing up in the first year.



# Volunteers

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We rely on our network of around 30 volunteers. Volunteers help out with a wide range of activities, including providing advice to members of the public, delivering training and developing accessible guidance. More information on volunteering is here: [www.planningaidwales.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.planningaidwales.org.uk/volunteer)

# Management Board

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For more information about the Management Board, visit our webpage here: [www.planningaidwales.org.uk/our-people/management-board/](http://www.planningaidwales.org.uk/our-people/management-board/)

# Financial information

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Planning Aid Wales is core funded by Welsh Government. We also generate additional income through commissioned project activities.

Each year the Management Board reviews the financial position and sets an annual budget against its Medium Term Financial Strategy. Through this process, the Board aims in general to balance the books or, where necessary, to seek to achieve a small surplus to build up the charity's reserves for future investment and for mitigating against financial risk. Risk management and reserves policies are set out in the Director's Report which accompanies the final Accounts 2019/20:

[www.planningaidwales.org.uk/about-us/key-documents-and-policies/](http://www.planningaidwales.org.uk/about-us/key-documents-and-policies/)

# Contact information

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E-mail: [info@planningaidwales.org.uk](mailto:info@planningaidwales.org.uk)

Tel: 02920 625009

Address: 174 Whitchurch Road, Heath, Cardiff, CF14 3NB



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# Online Training Platform



## Learn from experts

Our training is developed by chartered town planners.



## Planning in plain English

Our courses are written using plain language.



## Learn at your own pace

Learn when and where you want.  
Review whenever you need to.

## Online Course: *Planning: From Start to Finish*

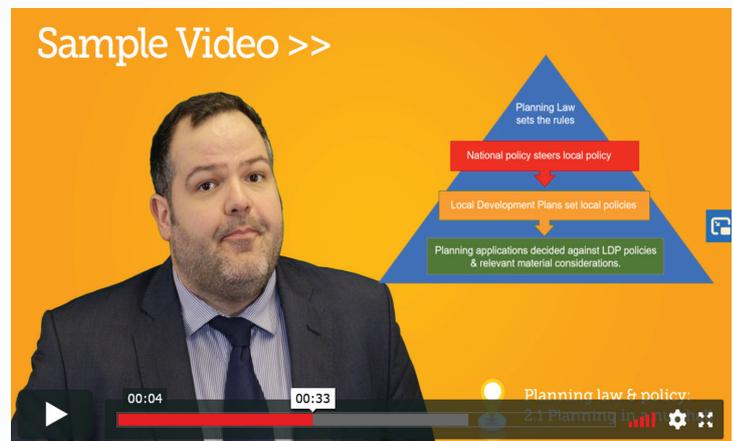
Our new flagship online course 'Planning: From Start to Finish' has been produced specifically for Town and Community Councils in Wales.

This course is a perfect introduction to or refresher on all aspects of the planning system in Wales.

The course will take around 2 hours to complete in one sitting or can be viewed in parts (the course is broken into 20+ short video sections).

This course provides an introduction to the following topics:

- Overview – how planning works & who's who in planning in Wales.
- Planning Policy – national policy, Local Development Plans and Place Plans
- Planning Applications – how planning applications are processed, how decisions are made and how to respond to planning applications.
- The role of Community and Town Councils in all of the above.



[To learn more, click here >>](#)



Planning Aid Wales  
**Online Training**