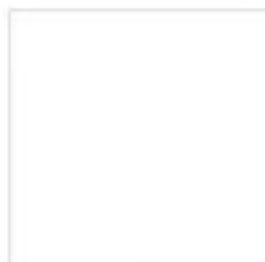
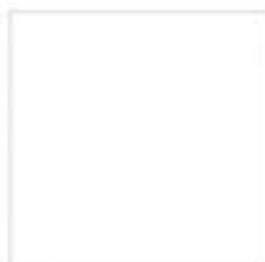


Annual Report

2006/07

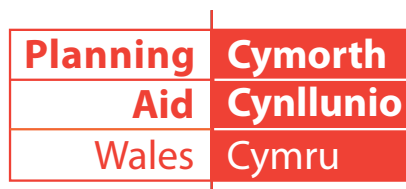
Planning	Cymorth
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Planning Aid Wales Annual Report 2006/07

Contents		Page
Chapter 1	Forward by the Acting Chair	2
Chapter 2	On the case	3
Chapter 3	Involving communities	5
Chapter 4	Building the organisation	7
Chapter 5	Working through partnerships	9
Chapter 6	Looking ahead	9
Appendix 1:	Eligibility criteria	10
Appendix 2:	Financial information 2006/07	12
Appendix 3:	PAW volunteers, directors and staff	14

Planning Aid Wales – Working towards a fairer, more inclusive planning system.



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Chapter 1

Foreword by the Acting Chair of Planning Aid Wales



Neil Harris
Acting Chair of Planning Aid Wales

Planning Aid Wales is an independent, not-for-profit organisation. We aim to help individuals and communities across Wales get more involved in planning issues by increasing their understanding of the way the planning system works.

Over the past year, from April 2006 to March 2007, we have continued to play a central part in improving the planning system in Wales, working with an increasing range of partner organisations to ensure a fair, transparent and responsive planning system in which the people of Wales can participate effectively.

Casework continues to feature as an important part of Planning Aid Wales' work. Eligibility criteria assist with directing our limited resources to those that experience real and significant barriers to engaging in the planning system, as well as helping to monitor the success of the organisation in targeting key groups.

Traditional casework services have been complemented with other activities on consultation, policy development and outreach work. These reflect the increased importance of helping to shape the planning system, as well as helping individuals and community groups work within it.

New members of staff have been recruited to ensure that the organisation can continue to deliver its services. A small and dedicated team of staff has been essential in maintaining levels of service delivery.

Volunteers continue to be at the heart of the organisation and Planning Aid Wales is working to provide more effective support for volunteers. Training and development opportunities have been provided for volunteers on issues of current planning interest.

A recruitment process has been established to widen membership of the Board of Directors, and plans set in place to ensure that the Board secures the skills and experience necessary for the effective governance of the organisation.

It requires commitment and dedication by staff, volunteers and directors to meet the challenges that Planning Aid Wales has identified. Thank you to all those people who support and help Planning Aid Wales deliver its services and achieve its aims.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Neil R. Harris".

Neil Harris, Acting Chair of Planning Aid Wales.

Chapter 2

On the case

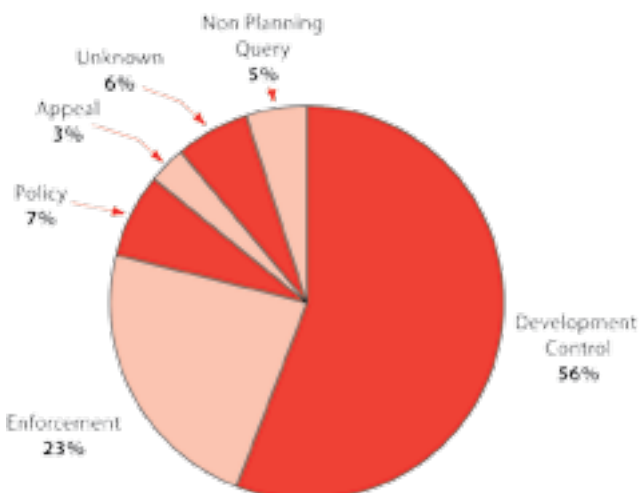


Allan Archer, Planning Aid Wales Volunteer, works with a group of community councillors in Ystradgynlais, 2007

Planning Aid Wales casework

We received over four hundred and twenty requests for information and advice over the past year. Around a fifth of these were from community or interest groups, representing members of the public, elderly and disabled people and small business consortiums.

The diagram below provides a breakdown of the types of enquiries received.



The majority of these cases were dealt with via our Helpline service, which was jointly staffed by our Case Manager, Planning Adviser and Administration Assistant. Those cases which needed more comprehensive attention or had a higher level of need were passed on to a Planning Aid Wales volunteer.

A wide range of people have been helped over the past year including:

- Gypsy and Traveller groups
- Disabled groups
- Community councils
- Voluntary sector groups
- Micro-businesses
- Older people
- Third parties wishing to object to a planning application
- People with learning and language barriers

Some of the more common queries have included:

- How do I object to a planning application?
- How can I make a successful planning appeal?
- How do I make a complaint if a planning decision hasn't been made fairly?
- What is the best way to make comments on a Local Development Plan?

A volunteer who helped cover the Helpline while the Case Manager was on leave commented: "I was taken aback by how busy the Helpline is with requests for assistance from all over Wales on a wide range of issues. So many people were grateful for the advice given."

Since the adoption of eligibility criteria in 2005, Planning Aid Wales has been able to offer different levels of service to clients according to their personal circumstances (see Appendix 1 for more information on eligibility). This means we can target our limited resources to those people who have the greatest need of our services.

Planning Aid Wales cannot help people who are likely to gain financially from a planning decision. Any such enquiries are referred on to a list of Chartered Town Planners compiled by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

Casework examples from the past year

'Elderly couple wins appeal against planning refusal'

Mr and Mrs A. have lived in a modern housing estate in Torfaen since it was built fifteen years ago. Now in their eighties, the couple became tired of youngsters on their estate riding their bicycles on their front lawn, so decided to build a small 50cm high wall to stop them. Mr A was told such a small wall did not need planning permission, even at the front of the house.

Several months later, a letter arrived from Torfaen council requesting a formal planning application for the wall. Planning permission was in fact required for the front wall because a condition on the original permission for the estate prevented front enclosures in order to preserve the open-plan design of the estate. Mortified, the couple swiftly submitted their application, only to have planning permission refused on the grounds that it compromised the open nature of the estate.

Distraught and with no money to employ a planning consultant, the couple turned to PAW for help. A PAW volunteer visited Mr and Mrs A and helped them to appeal on the grounds that the estate had matured beyond its original design. The planning inspector who considered the appeal agreed, and the refusal was overturned. Mr and Mrs A were tremendously relieved, and extremely grateful to Planning Aid Wales for all their help.

'Traveller group submits planning application'

Mr B. and his family are members of a travelling community which had recently inherited a piece of land near Aberdare. The land had a previous planning permission for the construction of a chalet and hard standing for a caravan, but the permission had lapsed. They therefore contacted the local planning department to see if they could renew the permission. Soon afterwards, they were visited by someone apparently representing the council who suggested that there was little chance of them gaining

planning permission due to a complaint from neighbours. Mr B was completely unaware of any neighbours to the site other than one elderly gentleman who they were on good terms with. Feeling let down by the planning system and council officers, the family contacted Communities First for help, who referred the planning issues on to Planning Aid Wales. A PAW volunteer made contact with the family and helped them to submit a full planning application for a number of chalets for the community on the site. The volunteer also mediated between the traveller community and the council. Mr B and his family were delighted by the level of service received from Planning Aid Wales, and are now eagerly awaiting a decision on their planning application.

'Vulnerable individual empowered to object'

Miss C. of Abertillery contacted Planning Aid Wales for help after noticing that builders were working on converting a community building near her garden to a bungalow. The building had previously been used as a meeting place for an OAP society, which had sold the building due to its poor state of repair. After a brief discussion with the builders, she discovered that planning permission had been granted for the conversion, which she was completely unaware of.

Miss C suffers from migraines and finds it difficult to concentrate for long periods of time. She regularly enjoyed the sunlight her garden received as therapy for her condition, and was upset to find that the roof of the newly adapted building resulted in a loss of sunlight reaching her garden. Planning Aid Wales was able to advise Miss C on the procedures for consulting on planning applications, and also how to form a structured complaint to the council detailing her concerns. We also advised her to contact a solicitor to discuss non-planning issues further.

"Planning Aid Wales were supportive, informative and provided me with accurate information which really made me feel empowered to tackle these issues head on, in spite of my illness" (Comments received from Miss C, 2007)

Chapter 3

Informing and involving communities

Planning Aid Wales aims to increase the involvement of communities in the planning system in Wales. We encourage communities to engage more effectively in the planning process by providing a programme of awareness-raising, training and education. The focus for much of our work is deprived, excluded, or 'seldom heard' groups which have traditionally played little or no part in the planning system.

PAW development workers and volunteers have been working with community groups to build their capacity to use the planning system for their benefit. Target groups have included small farmers, micro-businesses, black and ethnic minority interests, travellers, older people, disabled people, tenants and residents associations, Welsh language groups and development trusts. We have worked hard to increase knowledge of our services amongst these groups through targeted media coverage, developing our network of contacts, and attending relevant conferences, events and meetings to display exhibition material, distribute publications and answer questions.

Communities First

One group we particularly aim to support is communities that are part of the Communities First programme. In September 2006 we teamed up with the Communities First Support Network to organise a full day seminar for Communities First co-ordinators and board members in North Wales. Delegates learned how they could get involved in the preparation of Local Development Plans and how they could use this process to achieve some of the objectives contained in their action plans.

We also gave practical support to a Planning for Real™ exercise in the Talysarn and Nantlle Communities First ward, as part of a pilot scheme to adapt the Planning for Real™ methodology to the needs of rural communities.



Chester Planning Aid workshop, April 2006

Community and town councils

This year saw the beginning of an exciting partnership project between Planning Aid Wales and One Voice Wales (OVW), the umbrella organisation for community and town councils in Wales. Following publication of the National Training Strategy for Community and Town Councils, which identifies planning as a priority area for training, PAW and OVW teamed up to develop a tailor-made training programme. With funding from the Welsh Assembly Government, we trialled a variety of different training approaches and collected valuable information on the detailed training needs and learning preferences of different types of community council. We intend building on this pilot work to develop with OVW a more comprehensive training programme in 2008.

Disabled groups

During this year we have strengthened our links with groups who work for the rights of disabled people. We have supported the work of local access groups and are working closely with Disability Wales to develop training and information resources for disabled groups.

PAW volunteer Kay Powell organised and delivered a very successful training day for the Brecknock Access Group. The group's chair thanked Kay, saying: "A number of people who attended have contacted me to say how useful it was. Many thanks to you from us."

The access groups also identified a need to build the capacity of planners to deal with disability rights and accessibility issues. Planning Aid Wales and Disability Wales took forward an idea from access group members and organised a reciprocal training event for access groups and planners in April 2007. The core part of the event was workshops where delegates could share expertise and work together to find ways of ensuring access for all in planning. This included access to the process of decision making and also access to the physical products of planning. The event also provided timely information on Access Statements, which are now a legal requirement for most planning applications.

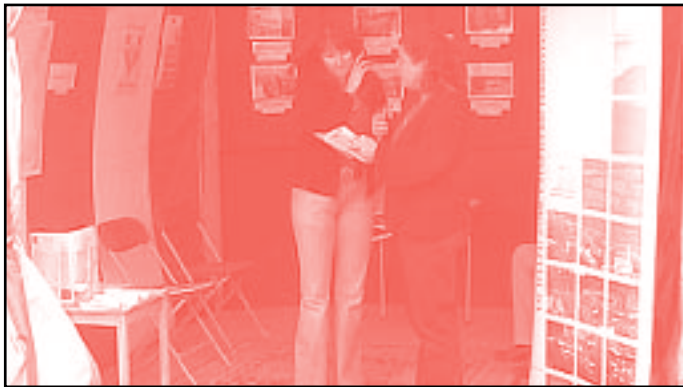
Feedback from the access group members showed they had gained a lot from the day. One delegate said: "I found it a pleasant, educational and informative day."

Gypsies and Travellers

In the spring of 2007, PAW assisted the Welsh Assembly Government with a consultation on the draft Circular Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites in Wales. PAW's role was to make the document and the consultation process accessible to the communication needs of Gypsies and Travellers, a traditionally marginalised group. Working in partnership with the Travellers Aid Trust, the Travellers School Charity and Save the Children, we raised awareness of the draft circular amongst Gypsies and Travellers and collected their views on it. Based on the responses received, we submitted a comprehensive report to WAG with recommendations as to how the circular could be amended to accommodate the needs and opinions expressed by the Gypsy and Traveller community.

Local Development Plans

PAW encourages community groups to take part in drawing up Local Development Plans for their areas and helps to build their capacity to do so effectively. In Anglesey we have also assisted the local planning authority in involving local stakeholder groups and organisations, with PAW staff and volunteers helping to facilitate public meetings and explain the process to the community.



Planning Aid Wales information stand, Eisteddfod 2006

Plain language Public Handbook

A landmark event in this year was PAW's publication of *A public guide to the land use planning system in Wales*, which was launched by Welsh Assembly minister Carwyn Jones in September 2006. The handbook 'sets out in admirably clear language the importance of planning and explains the national planning policies in Wales' (extract from a review in the Snowdonia Society's magazine). It gives advice on how community groups and individuals can best present their views and opinions to influence planning decisions. Contact details are given for organisations which can provide further information about the different aspects of the planning system. A glossary explains specialist planning terms in plain language.

Reference copies have been distributed to public libraries and advice centres throughout Wales, and copies are available for purchase from PAW. The handbook adds to PAW's growing range of publications, which are aimed at the general public and also specific target groups such as community councils. They seek to demystify planning issues and increase the ability of non-planners to get meaningfully involved in the planning system.

Welsh Language Scheme

During this year PAW developed a Welsh Language Scheme setting out how PAW intends to move over the next three years towards providing a fully bilingual service. We aim to provide an equally high quality service in both Welsh and English.

Chapter 4

Building the organisation

The PAW staff team

The Planning Aid Wales Board resolved in May 2006 to amend the staffing structure to create a Chief Executive position, replacing the previous position of Co-ordinator. The Chief Executive is responsible to the Board of Directors for sustaining and managing the organisation and its staff. The Chief Executive and other staff are supported by an Administrator.

A Planner / Case Manager is responsible for managing the Helpline caseload, including referrals to volunteers, as well as

developing the Wales-wide volunteer network.

A Development Worker helps extend the reach of PAW's outreach work programme with local communities and marginalised groups. To increase the profile and impact of PAW activities beyond South East Wales, where activity has tended to be focused in the past, the Development Worker is based in North Wales and is a fluent Welsh speaker.



The new format Volunteer Bulletin, 2007

Volunteers

Over the past year, Planning Aid Wales has welcomed four new volunteer planners (all qualified planners), two of whom were previously members of staff. A warm welcome to Lucie Taylor, Natasha Lade, Max Smith and Catherine Phillips.

Very many thanks and good luck to departing volunteer Chris O'Brien, and we are pleased to welcome PAW volunteers Elwyn Thomas and James Davies as full time staff. A full list of our volunteers, directors and staff is contained in Appendix 3.

Planning Aid Wales has re-launched its bi-monthly volunteer bulletin. It aims to keep volunteers up-to-date with progress on project work, casework, and training activities as well as providing notice of events. Volunteers are invited to write articles and contribute to its production.

In January 2007, Planning Aid Wales in conjunction with Eversheds, a UK-wide planning law firm, provided a training event on planning law for PAW volunteers and planners in Wales. The event highlighted topics such as changes to the development system in Wales, planning for climate change and reviews on new planning bills. The training was very well received and a similar event is planned for later in the year.

In April 2007, volunteers in North Wales were invited to an innovative one day seminar organised jointly by Planning Aid Wales and Disability Wales. Titled Disability, Equality and Access in Planning, the reciprocal training event brought together Planning Aid Wales volunteers and colleagues, and

local access group members. It was a timely opportunity for planners to learn more about disability rights and Access Statements, which now need to accompany most planning applications. A similar event is planned for South Wales later in 2007.

Two successful quiz nights were held in Cardiff, providing opportunities for volunteers, colleagues and friends to socialise.

Board of Directors

PAW Directors come from a range of backgrounds and show real commitment to the planning aid cause by freely contributing many hours of their time to helping build the organisation. The Board of Directors continues to meet six times per year, including an Away Day held in January 2007 when the Board revisited strategic priorities for the organisation and established key areas for future development. Directors also participate in a series of working groups, helping to develop core areas of PAW activity.

Membership of the Board has developed during the year, with new directors filling vacancies that have become available (see Appendix 3). The Board also commenced towards the end of the year a programme of wider recruitment and assessment of its membership.

Chapter 5

Working through partnerships

We recognise that we can achieve our strategic aims more effectively by working with other organisations and agencies. Over the past year we have worked with:

- **One Voice Wales** to prepare a programme of planning training for town and community councils, envisaged as playing a key in the reformed development planning system;
- the **planning aid services in England and Scotland** to better co-ordinate our activities and establish a common basis for delivering Planning Aid services across the UK;
- **Disability Wales** to build the capacity of their members to influence the planning process;
- the **Welsh Assembly Government** to assist with formulating planning policy aimed at providing sufficient sites to meet the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities;
- **RTPI Cymru** to raise the profile of the planning aid service in Wales and increase volunteering by members;
- the City and Regional Planning department of **Cardiff University**. For instance, this year a group of students led by PAW volunteer and university lecturer Huw Thomas conducted a feasibility study into a potential new community use on land at Caerphilly Miner's Hospital, due to close in 2009. The building is historically significant and popular with local people, and there is real concern that it may be demolished and the site used for new housing development. The students have prepared an impressive project feasibility report which will be used by local AM Jeff Cuthbert, the Abbeyfield Society and Caerphilly Citizen's Advice Bureau as a basis for further action.

Chapter 6

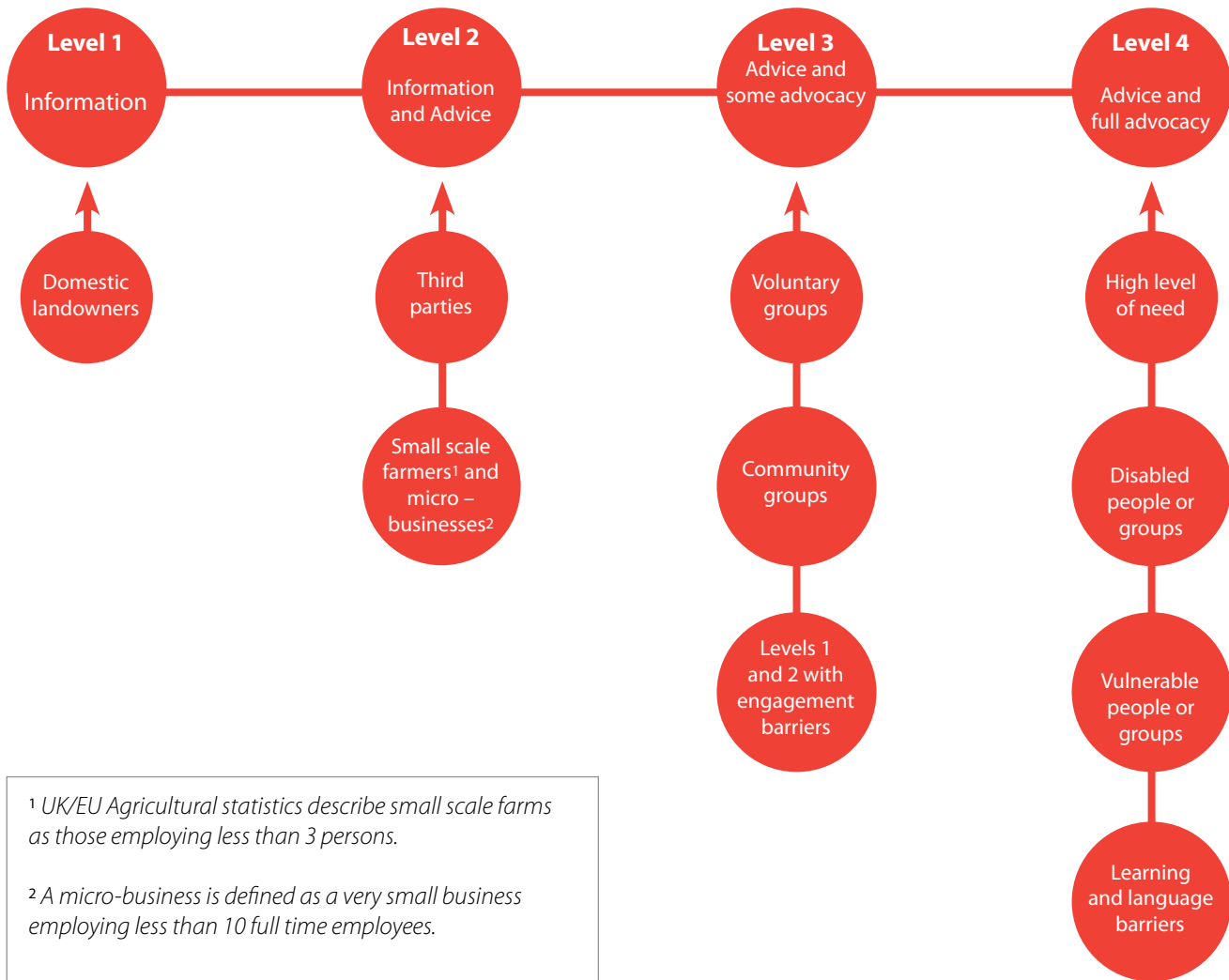
Looking ahead

We have reviewed the PAW Business Plan, and developed a strategic framework for developing our activities and influence up to 2010. An Action Plan for 2007-08 identifies the following key aims:

- To consolidate and improve delivery of our core casework, information and advice services.
- To develop a range of network support and training activities designed to build a thriving and stable volunteer network. Before actively recruiting new volunteers, we will undertake an audit of volunteer skills and seek to fill any skills gaps identified through a targeted recruitment drive.
- To continue to develop our outreach capabilities, aiming to engage with more of the marginalised communities and groups which traditionally have not been involved in planning issues.
- To capitalise on the programme to deliver training to community and town councils as a means of building our capacity to deliver focused and relevant planning training to other target groups.
- To focus on developing more effective partnerships with RTPI Cymru, local planning authorities, Wales Council for Voluntary Action and the other UK Planning Aid services.

Appendix 1

Eligibility criteria



¹ UK/EU Agricultural statistics describe small scale farms as those employing less than 3 persons.

² A micro-business is defined as a very small business employing less than 10 full time employees.

Eligibility explained

PAW provides different levels of service to clients dependent upon their circumstances. A complaints procedure is in place whereby the client can be referred to the PAW Chief Executive and / or the PAW board if they feel aggrieved by any eligibility decision made by the Case Manager.

Information

Signposting of clients to sources of information (literature/ internet) or referring them to a list planning consultants in Wales to obtain further guidance.

Advice

Forming strategies for clients and recommending courses of action in order to get the best results. Providing specific guidance on how to overcome barriers to engagement

Advocacy

Advising clients throughout the progress of their case, providing help and guidance on how to complete a particular task, or even acting as a representative in official proceedings in order to overcome barriers to engagement.

Eligibility Levels

Level 1 – Only basic information / signposting can be provided to domestic landowners or householders on their own applications.

Level 2 – Information and advice can be provided to third parties wishing to object to or support a planning application, small enterprise farmers and micro-businesses.

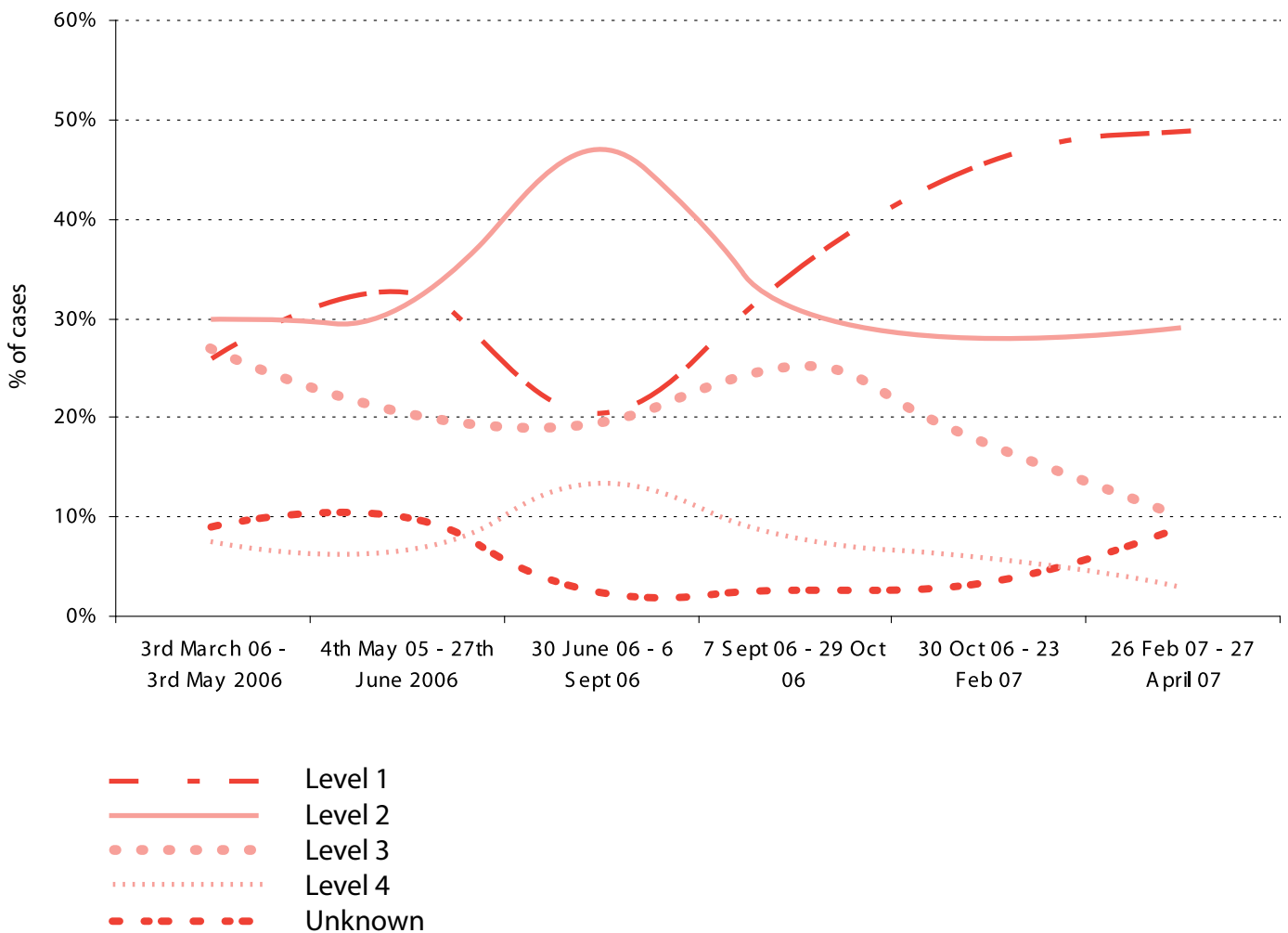
Level 3 – Information, advice and some advocacy can be provided to community and voluntary groups, or level 1 and 2 clients with extraordinary barriers to engagement

Level 4 – Information, advice and full advocacy can be provided to those with high levels of need, such as disabled or vulnerable individuals or groups, or anyone with learning and language barriers.

Who PAW can not help

- Planning consultants.
- Agents on planning applications, such as surveyors or architects.
- People who have funds, or who appear to have funds available to employ a planning consultant.
- People who are likely to gain financially from an application or appeal decision, unless they experience extraordinary barriers to engagement. If they do fall into this bracket, that group or individual will be subject to a maximum of four hours of assistance.
- People wanting an impartial opinion on the merits of a planning application or appeal decision that has already been made.
- People with non-planning enquiries.

Eligibility levels of cases received over the past year



Appendix 2

Financial information 2006/07

The company incurred a deficit of £5,067 on its income and expenditure account on a turnover of approximately £120,000. The company's reserves at the end of the year were £34,215. The accounts refer to restricted and unrestricted items. This distinguishes between funds which can only be

spent on specific items, normally associated with project funding, and those for which there is no constraint on their use.

The full accounts for the year 2006/07 are available from the Cardiff office.

Planning Aid Wales Balance Sheet as at March 2007

	2007	2006
	£	£
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	2,696	4,240
	-----	-----
Current assets		
Stocks	300	300
Debtors	2,661	3,123
Cash at bank	29,251	41,205
	-----	-----
	32,212	44,628
Creditors: Amounts falling due		
within one year	(693)	(9,586)
	-----	-----
Net current assets	31,519	35,042
	-----	-----
Total assets less current liabilities	34,215	39,282
	=====	=====
Funds		
Unrestricted	7,990	3,410
Restricted	26,225	35,872
	-----	-----
Members' funds	34,215	39,282
	=====	=====

Planning Aid Wales Detailed Income and Expenditure Account Year Ended 31st March 2007

	2007	2006
	£	£
Incoming resources		
(Unrestricted income)		
RTPI Grant	5,850	6,000
Donations and payments for advice	105	384
Sale of publications	2,797	3,430
Fundraising	136	52
Gross bank interest	253	335
Other training and presentations	610	-
	-----	-----
	9,751	10,201

(Restricted income)		
Community Council Training	8,225	-
Welsh Assembly Grant	100,000	122,709
One Voice Wales Grant	-	12,550
Other Grants	501	988
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	108,726	136,247
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Income	118,477	146,448
	=====	=====
Overheads		
(Unrestricted expenditure)		
Salaries	-	4,500
Legal and professional fees	-	705
Accountancy fees	693	650
Depreciation of computer equipment	1,544	1,544
Bank charges	-	17
Subscriptions and books	-	1,676
Sundry	-	25
Annual Report	2,934	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	5,171	9,117
(Restricted expenditure)		
Consultancy	-	15,365
Locum	2,550	-
Gypsy and Traveller Project	477	-
Salaries	70,448	83,366
Pension contributions	2,140	5,845
Insurance	1,354	1,025
Telephone and fax	3,147	1,725
Accommodation	6,347	6,181
Travel expenses	209	2,737
Stationery and office supplies	2,596	2,895
Postage and printing	385	12,465
Professional fees	472	663
Subscription and books	894	-
Marketing	2,528	1,182
Recruitment costs	1,886	770
Staff training	744	1,811
Staff expenses	5,401	3,156
Meeting expenses	1,222	2,649
North Wales office	2,207	-
Website / IT	628	-
Handbooks	12,738	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	118,373	141,835
	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	123,544	150,952
	=====	=====
LOSS ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES	(5,067)	(4,504)
	=====	=====

Appendix 3

PAW volunteers, directors and staff

Planning volunteers

Alan Groves
Allan Archer
Barry John Lomax
Catherine Phillips
Clare Taylor
Clive James
Clive Williams
Dave Lucas
Elwyn Thomas
Heather Williams
Huw Thomas
Ian Horsburgh
James Davies
Janice Tse
Jon Talbot
Jonathon Parsons
Karen Maddock Jones
Katherine Hughes
Kathleen Norton
Kay Powell
Lucie Taylor
Mark Dakeyne
Mark Jones
Max Smith
Michael Fowler
Michael Jones
Michael Lloyd
Mike Thorne
Natasha Lade
Neil Harris
Owain Wyn
Patrick Moss
Paul Carter
Pete Drew
Peter G Aubrey
Peter Kingsbury
Peter Taylor
Phil Bristow
Phil Davey
Rhian Brimble
Robert Green
Sarah Hensby
Siobhan Wiltshire
Ste James
Tony Humphreys
Tracey Brooks
Victoria Phillips

Student and unqualified volunteers

Adam Wilkinson
Anna Crooks
Catrin Haf Jones
Claire Fowler
Eva Herr
Ishita Sheth
Katherine Knowles
Miao Xu
Sandra Bushell
Peter Laxton

Directors

Katherine Hughes	(Chair)
Neil Harris	(Vice-Chair / Acting Chair)
Peter Kingsbury	(Treasurer)
Kathleen Norton	
Ian Horsburgh	
Allan Archer	
Tony Humphreys	
Sioned Hughes	
Owain Wyn	
John Lambert	
Karen Maddock-Jones	(resigned March 2007)
Steve Cranston	
Paul Williams	(resigned March 2007)
Mark Dakeyne	(appointed January 2007)

Staff

Elwyn Thomas	Chief Executive
James Davies	Planner / Case Manager
Marika Fusser	Development Worker
Sandra Watson	Administrator