



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

# Annual Report 24/25

Supporting Community  
Engagement in Planning



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Cymorth Cynllunio **Cymru**

# Annual Report 2024/25

## 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

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

Meaningful community engagement can:

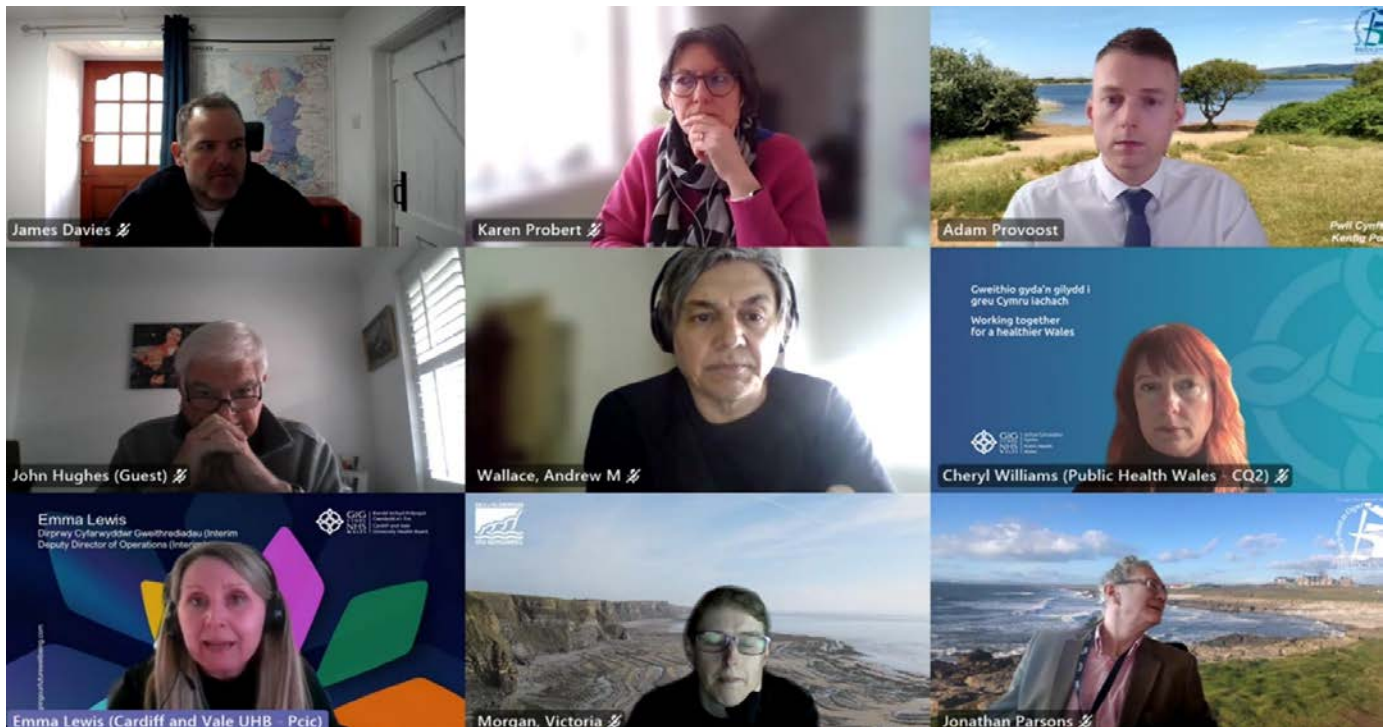
- Give people a voice and build their skills, confidence, and capacity to influence decisions affecting their local area.
- Improve the quality, appropriateness, and relevance of new development.
- Increase pride in and sense of ownership of the built environment.
- Foster collaboration between developers, 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 2024-2027:

[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)

# 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.

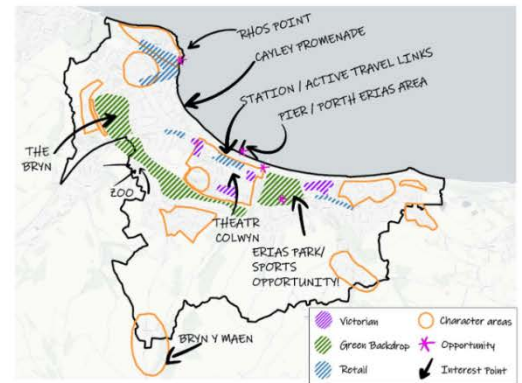
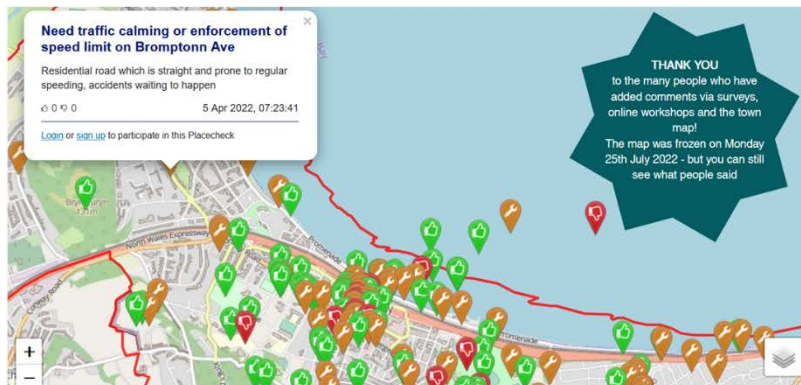
## Community Engagement Services

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.

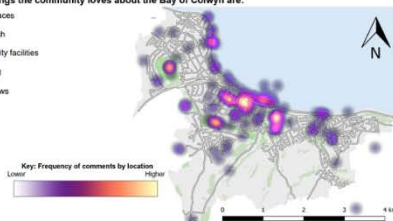
Planning Aid Wales has developed several 'easy read' planning guidance documents on behalf of Welsh Government and Local Planning Authorities. Examples include [placeplans.org.uk](http://placeplans.org.uk) and [Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites](http://Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan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

# Value for Money



The top 5 things the community loves about the Bay of Colwyn are:

1. Open spaces
2. The beach
3. Community facilities
4. Shopping
5. Local views



Potential Small Infill Sites

The Place Plan Steering Group have looked at the area in greater detail and have themselves identified some smaller infill sites that would accommodate less than 10 dwellings, and these are identified on the map below for future consideration.



Sample Challenges	Sample Opportunities
Limited employment opportunities, low-wage economy	Protecting green spaces e.g. The Bryn
Affordable housing and poor quality private rented housing	Extending the pier and improving the promenade
Negative perception of Colwyn Bay and low engagement	Raising profile to host more / bigger events
Empty properties in town centre, e.g., Imperial Hotel	More youth workers / facilities in the community

## Training & Network Events

- 8 training courses to 102 delegates, representing 49 Community & Town Councils in Wales
- 4 network events with 178 delegates attending overall.
- Tenant Participatory Advisory Service National Conference 12<sup>th</sup> September 2025 - sponsored by Planning Aid Wales
- 1 bespoke training courses to Aberdyfi Community Council 9 attended.
- 104 subscribers to the Online Training Portal

## Helpline:

- Total Enquiries: 391
- Helped by volunteers: 130
- Level 2 cases: 56
- Level 3 cases: 74
- Community and Town Councils helped: 4



## Projects

- Newtown Town Council Crib Sheets
- Conwy Place Plans Guidance / SPG
- Welsh Government SDP Guidance
- Cardiff Replacement LDP

Community Engagement in relation to Replacement LDP – 6 events plus report.  
No. of attendees: 106

- Caerphilly Replacement LDP

Community Engagement in relation to 2<sup>nd</sup> Replacement LDP – 6 events plus report.  
No. of attendees: 128

- Southeast Wales Spatial Development Plan Engagement Project  
No. of attendees: 32

## Online guidance – 11,150 users

- Users to the Place Plans website: 2,181
- Unique users to the Planning advice pages of PAW website: 15,410
- 6 Newsletters to 1191 subscribers

# Some highlights from the past year

## Town Council Planning Decisions Made Easy


Following extensive community engagement and the adoption of the Newtown Place Plan as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 2021, Newtown & Llanllwchaiarn Town Council (NLTC) have been successfully using the place plan policies to help inform planning decisions.


To assist further, Planning Aid Wales were commissioned to produce a bespoke **“Place Plan Crib Sheet”** - a quick reference summary guide which is used for discussion during monthly town council planning meetings. The 5-page guide helps ensure all decisions align with the place plan and community aspirations are fully considered.



### Place Plan Planning Applications Guide 2025

🔍 Does the application...? 👍 Support applications that... 🚫 Resist applications that...

Application Type(s)	Community Aspirations	Policy	Action	Place Plan Policy Principles	Page
 Within conservation area Affects Listed Buildings / Heritage / Culture  e.g. Change of / reuse use of a listed building.	Celebrate town's cultural heritage  Promote existing museums  Re-use Historic Buildings	CH-a	🔍	Contribute to character / local distinctiveness?	37
		CH-b	🔍	Preserve & enhance characteristics & special qualities of conservation area / listed buildings?	37
		CH-c	🔍	Retain historic assets, celebrate their setting and contribution?	37
		CH-d	👍	Re-use vacant / underused buildings associated with Newtown's heritage.	37
		CH-e	👍	Developments that protect & enhance historic environment to support business growth & tourism.	38
		CH-f	👍	Repair / restoration of the Montgomery Canal & suitable uses for historic buildings.	38

Application Type(s)	Community Aspirations	Policy	Action	Place Plan Policy Principles	Page
 New Housing  e.g. Extensions / New Houses / Larger Housing Schemes / Conversion of Homes.	Affordable Housing  Family Homes  Rented housing / Help to Buy  Community Involved  Use of empty properties	HF-a	👍	✓ Mix of Housing Types and Tenures ✓ Affordable Homes ✓ Play Areas / Cycle Paths / Allotments ✓ Links to existing footpaths & rights of way ✓ Regard to character and quality townscape ✓ Quality design / energy efficiency / sustainable construction	44
		HF-b	🔍	Do applications for Treowen have: ? Community Engagement ? Mix of houses / mixed uses ? Pedestrian, cycle and vehicle links ? Renewable energy considerations ? Community facilities	44

(extract from the NLTC Place Plan Planning Applications Guide 2025)

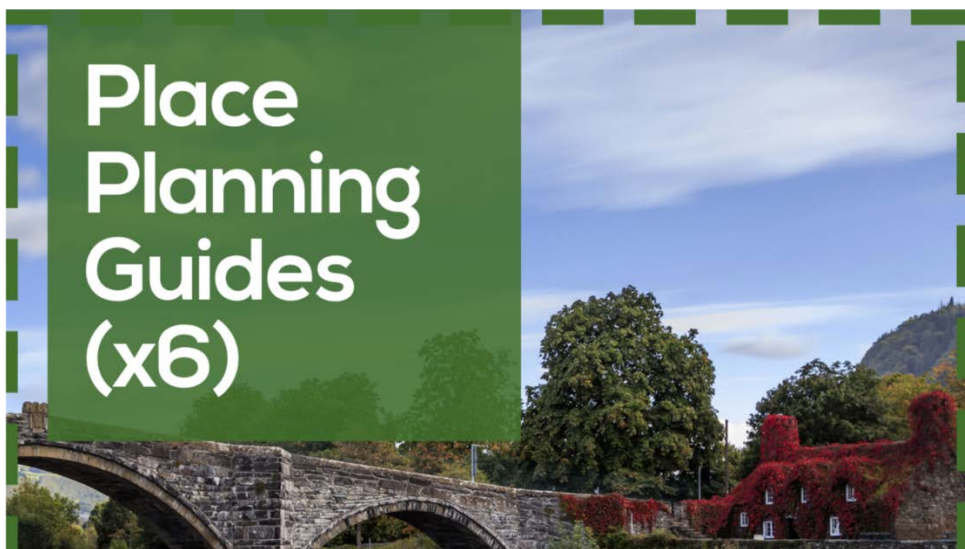
The Town Clerk at Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn Town Council, Ed Humphreys tells us: *“The crib sheet is now issued for all our meetings which deal with planning application consultations and helps councillors focus on making responses based on policies. Those policies are extracted directly from the Place Plan which was put together by the community for the community, so the crib sheet is an easy to use tool which condenses community driven policy into something which is manageable in a council meeting and helps maintain focus, ensure consistency, and gives weight to responses to the planning authority”.*

In addition to the Crib Sheet, Planning Aid Wales have provided online place plan training for NLTC councillors together with a monthly online planning advisory service to assist on general planning matters.

Should your Community or Town Council be interested in a similar service please [contact us here to discuss.](#)

**You can view the [Newtown Place plan here>>](#)**

## Place Planning Guides



Planning Aid Wales was commissioned by Conwy County Borough Council to help four Town Councils explore the development of community / Place Plans in the area. The project involved extensive community and stakeholder engagement in each of the four towns and resulted in the production of four ‘Place Plan Kickstarter’ plans that the communities can use as a foundation for further community plan development in future. The project also involved the creation of 6 guidance booklets to help the communities take their next steps.

[For more information click here>>](#)

# Engaging Communities in the Future of Caerphilly

## Background

Planning Aid Wales was commissioned by Caerphilly County Borough Council to support public engagement on its Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) Preferred Strategy. This key consultation stage aimed to shape long-term decisions on housing, employment, transport, and the environment.



Recognising challenges in reaching diverse audiences and building trust in the planning process, the Council sought an independent organisation to lead inclusive, accessible engagement. Planning Aid Wales, with decades of experience in demystifying planning for communities, was well placed to deliver.

## What We Did

We delivered six stakeholder events across the borough—both in-person and online—between January and February 2025. These sessions were open to a wide cross-section of groups, including residents, community councils, developers, and special interest organisations.

Our role was to explain the LDP process, present the Preferred Strategy in plain language, and facilitate open discussions. Crucially, our independence encouraged candid participation. Feedback was captured and reported directly to the Council's policy team. Key themes emerged: strong demand for affordable housing, concerns about infrastructure and transport capacity, scepticism around developer influence, and calls for more balanced development across the borough—especially in underserved northern areas.

## Where Was the Value?

Planning Aid Wales brought trust, clarity, and reach to the process. Our neutral presence enabled open discussion, while our accessible approach helped people understand how to influence the plan. We reached audiences who may otherwise have been excluded and provided the Council with detailed, actionable insights rooted in lived experience.

In short, we turned consultation into meaningful engagement—building understanding, gathering evidence, and strengthening the relationship between communities and planning.

# Volunteering & Governance



## Volunteers

We rely on our network of around 20 volunteers. Volunteers help 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

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

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 2024/25:

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