



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

# Annual Report 25/26

**Supporting Community  
Engagement in Planning**



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Cymorth Cynllunio **Cymru**

# Annual Report 2025/26

## 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)**

## 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'. Our online training platform continues to serve 95 subscribers.

## 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



Planning Aid Wales offers exceptional value for money in delivering our activities and services. In 2024/25 we delivered:

## Training & Network Events

- 8 training courses to 149 delegates, representing 62 Community & Town Councils in Wales
- 4 network events with 239 delegates attending overall.
- 3 National Infrastructure Events with 96 attendees
- 1 bespoke training courses to Natural Resources Wales 10 attended.
- 95 subscribers to the Online Training Portal

## Helpline:

- Total Enquiries: 221
- Helped by volunteers: 48
- Level 2 cases: 95
- Level 3 cases: 20
- Community and Town Councils helped: 17

## Projects

- Cardiff LDP Engagement
- Bron Afon Housing Association Engagement Project
- Bay of Colwyn Project – Plan to Action video & Community Places Northern Ireland Visit
- Bespoke training for Natural Resources Wales

## **Online guidance – 14,981 users**

- Users to the Place Plans website: 3,072
- Unique users to the Planning advice pages of PAW website: 16,110
- 6 Newsletters to 1,189 subscribers

## **Some highlights from the past year**

### **Community Engagement for Bron Afon Housing Association - Affordable Housing Development, Land at Hillgrove Avenue, Mardy, Abergavenny**



#### **Background**

Planning Aid Wales was instructed by Bron Afon to carry out community engagement events, with residents, in relation to an affordable housing development on land at Hillgrove Avenue, Mardy, Abergavenny. Bron Afon sought an independent organisation to lead inclusive, accessible engagement to provide participants with the opportunity to be able voice their opinions freely. Planning Aid Wales, with decades of experience in demystifying planning for communities, was well placed to deliver.

#### **What We Did**

We delivered two community events at the local primary school, which is situated adjacent to the proposed site in January and February 2026. These sessions were open to a wide cross-section of groups, including residents, community councils and special interest organisations.

Our role was to identify the likely resident areas affected by the proposed development and explain the proposed development and the planning process that would be followed.

The first event provided a structured discussion and facilitated dialogue. Feedback gathered at that event was recorded in a formal report which was provided to Bron Afon to consider as they progressed the development of the scheme. Key themes emerged: principle of affordable housing and flats, drainage issues, highways concerns, biodiversity matters and impact upon the school.

The second event was intended to be part of the formal PAC consultation but was adjusted to be another 'pre-PAC' drop-in session to take place in advance of any further formal PAC consultations to take place by Bron Afon later. This event provided a further opportunity for participation, enable residents who were unable to attend the first session to engage, gather written submissions through structured response forms. Feedback from the second event strongly reinforced the themes identified at the first event.

A report of both events was prepared and submitted to Bron Afon to feed into their consideration and progression of the final development.

#### **Where Was the Value?**

Our neutral presence enabled open discussion, while our accessible approach helped people put forward their opinions and how they could contribute going forward. We reached audiences who

may otherwise have been missed the opportunity to understand the development and provided meaningful engagement—building understanding, gathering evidence, and strengthening the relationship between communities and planning.



**Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru**  
**Natural Resources Wales**

## **Town Planning Training - NRW**

### **Background**

Planning Aid Wales were commissioned to provide planning training for NRW expert advisers. Our commission involved the provision of two training sessions on:

1. The planning system in Wales
2. NRW role in the planning consultations.

The aim of the first workshop was to introduce participants to the planning system in Wales, including an overview of planning law and policy and the basic structure of the system in Wales, Planning Policy and Development Management processes.

The aim of the second workshop was to explain the NRW internal process and categories for responding to planning consultations

### **What we did**

The two events were carried out online. This included a presentation of the relevant issues together with case studies and opportunities for participants to raise questions. In addition to the two events, we also produced two training videos covering both sessions which were provided to NRW to be included in their internal learning library for future use.

### **Where Was the Value?**

The online events were attended by around 50 people to each event. Planning Aid Wales were able to use our significant experience in relation to all aspects of the planning system to provide a session that explained to non-planning experts at NRW the processes and limitations of the planning system. The aim being to ensure their response to NRW planners was appropriate to requirements. The second event allowed us to explain the timescales and requirements of the NRW planning team. Finally, the videos allow continuing professional development of staff on planning matters.



# Community Places Northern Ireland visit Wales for Spring Learning Exchange



## Background

In Autumn 2025, planning aid organisations from across the UK signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work together to help communities effectively engage with the planning system.

The MoU brings together all five UK-based planning aid organisations: Community Places (Northern Ireland), Planning Aid England, Planning Aid for London, Planning Aid Scotland, Planning Aid Wales.

James Davies, PAW Chief Executive said: *“The Memorandum of Understanding reflects the strength of partnership across our organisations. By working together, we can better share learning, amplify community voices, and build a more inclusive planning system, wherever we work.”*

The MoU followed the formation in early 2025 of the Planning Aid National Network (PANN), established to foster closer working relationships between planning aid organisations; share learning and promote best practice in community engagement; and facilitate the delivery of cross-UK initiatives that support inclusive public participation in planning.

## What we did

As part of the newly established partnership, with support from the Northern Ireland Office's Connect Fund, Community Places visited Colwyn Bay in North Wales in March 2026 to undertake a two-day knowledge transfer visit.

The visit provided an excellent opportunity to showcase the collaborative work undertaken by PAW and the Bay of Colwyn Town Council in developing a high-impact Place Plan, while also creating space to share ideas, insights and practical approaches to community engagement. Discussions enabled both organisations to explore the similarities and distinct features of their respective devolved planning systems.

A key highlight of the visit was a meeting with the Planning Team at Conwy County Borough Council, where valuable discussions took place on community engagement and experiences arising from the recent Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) consultations. Conwy has adopted a forward-thinking, place-based approach and is gaining recognition across Wales as a leading authority, notably through its partnership with PAW.

Katie Clubb Head of Housing, Planning and Place, Conwy Council said:

*"We were delighted that Planning Aid Wales chose Conwy for this Learning Exchange visit, showcasing our successful collaboration with Bay of Colwyn Town Council in developing an impactful Place Plan. It was also a fantastic opportunity to share experiences and learning around practical approaches to community engagement. I would like to thank Planning Aid Wales and Community Places for such a successful visit and the opportunity for the team in Conwy to highlight the positive impact that collaborative planning can have on our communities".*

The group also met with officers from the Bay of Colwyn Town Council, alongside members of the Place Plan Steering Group. These sessions brought the Place Plan process to life through firsthand accounts, highlighting the positive changes already underway and new funding opportunities emerging since its adoption.

The visit concluded with a walking tour of Colwyn Bay, showcasing the seafront improvements and outlining ambitious regeneration plans aimed at revitalising the town centre.

Paul Roberts, Chief Executive of Community Places said,

*"The Conwy visit was a hugely valuable experience, deepening our shared commitment to community-led planning and strengthening vital civic partnerships. We extend our sincere thanks to Bay of Colwyn Town Council, Conwy County Council and Planning Aid Wales for hosting us so warmly. I'm delighted that Community Places is now expanding on this success by planning exchange visits with the other Planning Aid Services, all made possible through the continued support of the Northern Ireland Office's Connect Fund."*



## **Where was the value?**

The visit represented a highly valuable learning exchange, reinforcing a shared commitment to empowering communities through collaborative planning.

James Davies, PAW Chief Executive said:

*"I recognise the long and valued history of collaboration between the Planning Aid organisations across the UK. However, our recent learning exchange experience represents the most focused and impactful bridge-building effort I have encountered. It has strengthened our shared purpose, deepened mutual understanding and created a strong foundation for more meaningful and sustained collaboration in the future."*

The visit strengthened relationships, deepened understanding of different planning systems, and reinforced a shared commitment to community-led planning. It has also created a strong foundation for future collaboration and cross-UK learning in 2027 under a Connect 2 Project.



# Volunteering & Governance

## Volunteers

We rely on our network of around 21 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 2025/26:

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