

PLANNING AID WALES NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2008

Competition: name our newsletter

Welcome to Planning Aid Wales' new e-newsletter for our partners, clients and friends. We intend to publish it every three to four months from now on to bring you the latest news about our work.

But the newsletter still needs a title, so we are running a little competition to find something suitable. The person who comes up with the best title will win a public handbook guide to the planning system in Wales, plus free entry for two people to our next quiz night, which will take place later this year in Cardiff.

Ideally we need either a Welsh and an English title, or a title that works in both languages. Please send your ideas to marika@planningaidwales.org.uk by 31st October 2008. Multiple entries are welcome.

New website provides planning information for the public

Planning Aid Wales has an exciting new website full of information about the land use planning system in Wales. The website explains the main features of the planning system in plain language and gives tips on how the public can get involved in planning issues.

A range of guidance leaflets and booklets can be downloaded for more detailed information about specific areas of planning. There are links to sources of further online information to help community activists find all the information they need for their campaign. An extensive glossary explains the meaning of specialist planning terms using clear language. And in case you still can't find what you need to know, contact details for Planning Aid Wales and other support organisations are at hand.

The new website, available at www.planningaidwales.org.uk, will keep growing over the coming months and years.

Have your say on the future of your community

Flintshire, Gwynedd, Neath Port Talbot, Powys and Swansea to start work on Local Development Plans

Need more affordable housing in your community? Worried about the future of your village shop? Dreaming of getting your community off the grid? Then you should get stuck into your Local Development Plan.

Local Development Plans are planning policy documents that set out how land will be used over the next fifteen years or so. Each local authority and national park authority has to prepare such a plan for its area, and some are already working on it.

The policies in the Local Development Plan can be vital for many every day objectives that you have for your community. For example they can make it easy or difficult to get planning permission to turn a village shop or local pub into a house. They can make it easy or difficult to install renewable energy devices. They make decisions about how many new houses should be built in an area, and can require new housing to be for local people only.

The good thing about these new Local Development Plans is that the planning authority has to involve the community in drawing them up - and 'involving' means more than just old-style consultation. This is your chance to get your ideas of what should happen in your area into the plan. The earlier your group gets involved, the better are your chances of having an influence.

The councils of **Flintshire, Gwynedd, Neath Port Talbot, Powys and Swansea** will be starting work on Local Development Plans within the next few months. **Carmarthenshire and Newport** are also still in the early stages of the process. Keep your eyes open, or better still contact the planning department and tell them you want to contribute. They will be glad to hear from you.

In all other local planning authorities the Local Development Plan is further advanced already, but it will still be worth getting involved.

If you want to know more about Local Development Plans, you can order a free booklet from the Welsh Assembly Government by phoning **029 20898688** or e-mailing assembly-publications@wales.gsi.gov.uk. You can also access this booklet and other information on www.planningaidwales.org.uk/aboutplanning/localpolicy.

For free advice on how to best get involved, contact Planning Aid Wales on **02920 485765** or info@planningaidwales.org.uk.

Taylor-made planning training and support for community groups

Planning Aid Wales aims to build the capacity of communities to participate effectively in the planning system. If you are a member of a community or voluntary group which wants to learn how to give your community a voice in decisions about your local area, we can help organise talks, seminars and other events for your group.

Your group can invite Planning Aid Wales to hold a training event which is designed to meet your specific needs. You can choose the subject you want to learn about, and the length and format of the session. Sessions can be as formal or informal as suits you. There is usually a charge made for this service, but discounts are available for groups with limited funds.

As your group gets more involved in local planning issues, we can advise and support you if you are finding it difficult to understand the process and how best to make sure that your voice is heard.

We can also give additional support to your group's activities. Examples include helping organise community visioning exercises, providing input from planning experts, or helping out with the planning of community events.

For further details visit www.planningaidwales.org.uk/how-paw-can-help/training or contact our Development Worker Marika Fusser on **01286 882 834**.

Become a community volunteer with Planning Aid Wales

As you probably know, Planning Aid Wales is a charity that does much of its work through volunteers. Until recently you had to have a recognised planning qualification to volunteer with us, but not any more! You are now invited to join us as a 'community volunteer'.

Community volunteers will be involved in the most interesting side of our work, i.e. working directly with community groups to build their capacity and to help them use the planning system to realise their aspirations for their community. If you have facilitation, teaching or mediation skills, this could be just the job for you.

You could also get involved in helping to produce our publications and learning materials, where we always need non-planners to help us get rid of jargon and make materials accessible. We are also grateful for any help with translation, proofreading and illustrations.

Volunteers can choose how much time they want to commit and on which subject areas they want to work. Some deliberately choose to broaden their horizons by working in areas they wouldn't normally come across in their day job. If you'd like to know more about volunteering with PLANNING AID WALES, please contact volunteer coordinator James Davies on **02920464225** or james@planningaidwales.org.uk or have a look at www.planningaidwales.org.uk/volunteering.

Case study

A practical introduction to the planning system

The CwmNi Communities First company in Treherbert asked Planning Aid Wales to deliver a series of evening workshops for community groups over autumn 2007 and spring 2008. CwmNi were regularly being contacted by local residents for help on a range of planning issues from Local Development Plans to individual planning applications, and decided to arrange the workshops to educate and inform local communities about the planning process.

We developed a series of short training workshops on planning procedures that were easy to understand and encouraged discussion of local issues. Having given a general overview of the planning system, each of the workshops then looked at a specific planning issue in the locality, e.g. a proposed housing development, and explored possible courses of action with the group. The workshops also included a planning quiz and a plan-making exercise which allowed residents to role-play as planners, developers and members of the public in the Local Development Plan process.

To quote from a letter of thanks from the CwmNi Partnership: *'The training sessions provided by Planning Aid Wales were both very informative and very interesting. There are a number of planned and proposed developments taking place within our immediate area and the residents of Treherbert felt that they needed to gain a fuller understanding of the planning process to actively inform the development of their local environment. Planning Aid Wales provided this in an excellent manner, breaking down the development process in such a way that any lay person could understand in a fun and accessible manner. All of those who participated in the training found it insightful and valuable to their current situations and have requested more training in the area for their friends to participate in. Thanks very much for all your help and we look forward to working with you again in the future.'*

Training content:

1. General outline of the land use planning system in Wales

2. Understanding the local development plan process
3. Understanding the planning application process
4. Specific local issue and possible courses of action
5. Where to go for more help

Events

2nd September 2008, Bridgend

Bespoke training on the planning process for Brackla Community Council

11th September 2008, Treherbert

Training session on planning procedures for strategic development sites for CwmNi

11th October 2008, Ponrhydfendigaid

One Voice Wales Annual Conference. Planning Aid Wales will have a stall with publications and other information. For details about the conference ring One Voice Wales on 01269 595400.

22nd October 2008, Cardiff University

Talk to postgraduate students on the voluntary sector in planning.

Contacting Planning Aid Wales

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Planning Aid Wales - Working towards a fairer planning system