

Invitation

Planning Aid Wales AGM and Quiz Night

Planning Aid Wales cordially invites you to its Annual General Meeting, which will be held on Monday 13th July at 4.30pm. The location will be the Basement Bar in Bangor University Students Union building.

The AGM will be followed by a buffet and Quiz Night for Planning Aid Wales volunteers and guests.

The schedule for the day is as follows:

- 4.30pm to 5.15pm Annual General Meeting
- 5.30pm to 6.00pm Buffet
- 6.30pm to 8.30pm Quiz Night

All are welcome to attend, but please do register with us beforehand by completing the enclosed form and returning it to us by 3rd July.

The cost of the quiz will be £1 per entrant (payable on the night) with all proceeds going to Planning Aid Wales. No specialist planning knowledge is required!








We welcome team or individual entries to the quiz. We are looking for teams of no more than five to enter. It's fine if you want to enter individually as we will allocate you to a team on the night.

For further details about this event, please contact Kay Sharman at Planning Aid Wales:

Email: info@planningaidwales.org.uk

Tel: 02920 464 225

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Stakeholder engagement in Carmarthenshire

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Planning Aid Wales has been working with Carmarthenshire County Council to help with stakeholder engagement during the early stages of preparing a Local Development Plan for the county. The work (now complete) involved preparing a detailed engagement programme for the period up until public consultation on the Preferred Strategy, and working with the council's forward planning team to deliver two key stakeholder engagement workshops, the first held in October 2008 and the second in February 2009. We also facilitated a parallel workshop in February to which all the community and town councils in the county were invited.

The Carmarthenshire LDP engagement project had two main aims. First, to give the wide range of stakeholder organisations the information needed to allow them to understand the early, strategy setting stages of the development plan-making process and their important role in it. Second, to generate discussion among stakeholders of the key strategic issues, leading to agreement of the key strategic objectives for the Plan, and then to developing spatial strategy options to achieve these agreed objectives.

Good practice in Access Statements

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So-called 'Access Statements' are now required with most non-householder planning applications. Their purpose is to show how easy or difficult it will be for people, including the disabled, to use the proposed building. The idea is that developers should start to think about access issues early on in the process of planning a building or a site. Unfortunately this isn't always the case, and many of the Access Statements that have been submitted so far have not been very helpful from the perspective of the local Access Groups, who aim to ensure that every new development is accessible to all.

This is why Planning Aid Wales has been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government to produce a short, easy-to-read guidance booklet on how to go about preparing a good Access Statement. The main audience for the guidance booklet is developers and agents who are about to submit a planning application. It is also intended for planning officers who consider Access Statements with planning applications, as well as Access Groups who may wish to comment on them.

We will be working closely with Access Groups and other experts in drawing up this guidance and collect feedback from stakeholders at focus groups sessions. Publication of the booklet is scheduled for before Christmas, after which it will be available free of charge from Planning Aid Wales and to download from a range of websites.

If you are interested in contributing to the project, please contact Marika Fusser on 01286 882 834 or marika@planningaidwales.org.uk.

Streets Ahead - A campaign by Disability Wales

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Disability Wales's *Streets Ahead* campaign focuses on promoting inclusive access to high street shops and services. The campaign intends to highlight the true picture of accessibility to high streets across Wales. It was launched in November 2008 and will run throughout 2009. A campaign report aimed at influencing key decision makers will be published in September.

For further information about the *Streets Ahead* campaign contact Rhyan Berrigan, Policy Officer (Access and Transport), on rhyan.berrigan@disabilitywales.org.

E-mail alerts about planning applications

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If you want to make sure you get to know about every planning application that is submitted in your area, you can check your local planning authority's weekly list of applications - or you can have an e-mail alert sent to you. You can subscribe to the latter service for free on www.planningalerts.com.

The volunteers who run this website collate information on planning applications from (currently) 325 UK local planning authority websites and use postcodes to work out which of their subscribers live near an application site. These people are then sent an e-mail with a link to the application details on the local planning authority's website.

If your local planning authority is listed on www.planningalerts.com/about.php (currently ten out of the twenty five Welsh planning authorities are), then you will be able to receive alerts straight away. If your authority isn't on the list yet, don't lose heart as you can register anyway. The database is growing steadily, and once your authority has been added, you'll start to receive your alerts.

Case studies

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'Making effective comments on planning applications'

Planning Aid Wales recently held the first of a series of training sessions for community and town councils, entitled *'Making effective comments on planning applications'*, with Melindwr Community Council.

The session was a trial run to help preparation of a comprehensive suite of planning training materials for community and town councils, with grant-funding by the Welsh Assembly Government.

This session was very interactive, using group work and case studies. These helped delegates to work out jointly which were the most relevant issues to comment on and how their comments could best be presented to the local planning authority. It also made delegates aware of the pivotal role of planning policy and the importance of getting involved in the preparation of their Local Development Plan and other policy documents.

The session lasted just over two hours and was run through the medium of Welsh with bilingual materials. Dafydd Fryer of Melindwr Community Council said:

"We had an extremely valuable workshop with Marika Fusser of Planning Aid Wales. The training focused on what one should be concentrating on when commenting on a planning application, and how to draft a letter that was likely to have an impact. The unanimous reaction of the council members, who are a mixture of a settled crew and completely new people, was that the evening had been extremely interesting and useful. It will definitely be of benefit for the council to have further occasional training of this kind in the future."

'Improving communication with your local planning authority'

We also held a training session with Overton Community Council on the subject of *'Improving communication with your local planning authority'*. This again was a trial run for the project mentioned above.

During the workshop delegates started off exploring where currently there were problems and frustrations in the communication between themselves and their local planning authority, and also what might be the reasons and limitations behind this. They then gradually moved on to think about what they could do to improve the situation, and considered a real life example of a planning charter agreed between a town council and its local planning authority.

The session ended with an action plan for the first steps the council would take following the training, which included working with other community and town councils in their area and their local planning authority to explore better ways of working together and possibly formalising this in a charter.

Jacky Maskall of Overton Community Council said about the training:

"Those of us who attended the session on improving communication with your planning authority given by Planning Aid Wales consider ourselves very fortunate to have attended this training session. We are unanimous in saying that it was the most useful session any of us have attended, we all had our eyes opened by this training in respect of being proactive to alter the situations we were not happy with, rather than just sitting and moaning. We have already taken the first step and are meeting with the Chair of our local authority's planning committee later this month. I personally recommend that everyone (especially those with an interest in planning) who has the opportunity should attend this training session."

If you would like to know more about training for community and town councils, please contact Marika Fusser on 01286 882 834 or by email to: marika@planningaidwales.org.uk.

Events

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If you would like to know more about any of the listed events, please contact us (see below).

17th to 23rd June (various locations across Wales)

Community engagement training for planners by Planning Aid Wales.

24th June, Cardiff

Planning Aid Wales and RTPI Cymru reception for Assembly Members in the Senedd.

13th July, Bangor

Planning Aid Wales Annual General Meeting and Quiz Night. For details please see the first item of this newsletter.

8th September, Llandrindod

Focus group meeting on Access Statement guidance booklet, facilitated by Planning Aid Wales.

Contacting Planning Aid Wales

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