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We're on the Web!

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Season's Greetings

Welcome to the Christmas edition of the PAW volunteer bulletin. As it is the season, we have tried to keep this edition as fun and as short as possible so it won't interfere with your last minute Christmas shopping!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all PAW volunteers for their efforts over the past year. Your continuing support and commitment is helping to create a fairer planning system for Wales, so we wish you all a festive Nadolig Llawen / Merry Christmas! And anyone interested in contributing to future editions

Latest News

TAN 17 consultation response

PAW submitted a comprehensive response to WAG on the draft TAN 17, thanks to a huge collective effort put in by staff, directors and volunteers. It was a great opportunity for PAW to build its capacity as a key policy player, something we are keen to do more of in the future. If you would like to see a full copy of the response, please contact us.

of the bulletin, please do come forward.

It has again been a busy couple of months for the PAW team, what with quizzes, preparation of weighty consultation responses to TAN 17 and website development meetings. This month's bulletin contains a general update on these and other PAW activities, as well as the results of the 2007 volunteer audit and plans for volunteer training in 2008. On that note, can I remind you of a training event at Eversheds which is scheduled for Thursday, January 24th 2008 (see below for more details).

Planning Law and Policy Update

Following a highly successful event last year, Eversheds has kindly agreed to hold another planning law and policy update training session for PAW volunteers. The session will take place at 4pm, 24th January 2008 at Eversheds' offices in Cardiff. All volunteers are welcome, and more details will be circulated by email in early January.

Training will be the theme for PAW in the new year, as we will be rolling out the next stage of our Community and Town Council training programme, providing training courses for the general public on planning issues as well as arranging a series of volunteer training events.

Again, many thanks for all your efforts in 2007, and a merry Christmas and happy new year from all PAW staff and directors.

James Davies
Planner

Administrator recruitment

Following the departure of Sandra Watson in September, we have run a successful online recruitment campaign, resulting in the appointment of Susan Saunders to the post of PAW Administrator. Susan will be starting work in the Cardiff office in January, initially working Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays

Planning	Cymorth
Aid	Cynllunio
Wales	Cymru



Calling all volunteers!

We are at present receiving numbers of enquiries relating to Section 106 agreements and compulsory purchase orders. Could anyone with good experience in either of these areas please contact us.

Volunteer Update

Casework update

PAW has recently become involved in a sensitive Gypsy and Traveller case (the traveller family's plight was the subject of a BBC documentary earlier in the year). In essence, a Brecon farmer has provided the client family with a site in Brecon and the family are seeking temporary consent for twelve caravans whilst Powys LPA prepares a full planning application. James Davies is acting as co-ordinator between the Black Voluntary Sector Network which referred the case to PAW, the farmer, the client family and volunteer Max

Smith, who is working with the LPA to reach a fair solution.

Retiring volunteers

Hannah Budnitz, Phil Davey, and Katherine Knowles have stood down as active volunteers for PAW. We would like to thank them for their contributions to the organisation over the years, and to wish them the very best of luck in the future.

Office volunteers

Following presentations about PAW activities to students at Cardiff University, a number of

students have requested work placements in PAW's Cardiff Bay office. Students who have already worked on placements have proved to be an invaluable resource, assisting staff in everything from writing reports and drafting publications to providing general administrative support whilst the administrator post has been vacant. James Davies would like to say a special thanks to Emily Dawson, Matthew Lord and Zoe Green for giving up their time to support PAW. Further placements have been arranged for the new year.

Volunteer Audit Results

Many thanks to the volunteers who completed the 2007 volunteer audit questionnaire. The results are helping PAW to develop better procedures for handling casework, as well as identifying the need for a recruitment drive in 2008. The questionnaire is still open to the remaining volunteers to complete – please contact James Davies if you need more information.

Overview of audit as of November 2007 (29 responses received)

Language skills - 10% of responding volunteers have fluent Welsh written skills, 14% are fluent speakers and 21% are active learners. We also have two fluent German speakers, one fluent French speaker and one Chinese speaker.

Employment status - 79% of responding volunteers are in full time employment, 14% work part time, 3% are retired and 3% are students. 60% work in local government, 17% in the private sector and 7% in other public sector jobs relating to planning.

RTPI membership - 72% are chartered members, whilst 10% are licentiates. Of the remaining volunteers, 10% are not affiliated to the RTPI and 3% are students.

Casework preferences - 52% of respondents are happy to continue receiving some cases, but 28% said they do not want to take on casework until further notice. 21% said they would like to get more involved with other PAW

activities such as community projects and delivering training.

Best response received –

We received some colourful results to the open-ended questions in the audit. By far our favourite was from Max Smith, who, when asked to detail the types of casework he wanted to receive, replied:

“Yes to: Hippies, Gypsies, Tree Huggers, eccentrics in solar powered tipis, cyclists, immigrants, reformed (or reforming) drug addicts, the deserving poor, the undeserving poor, itinerant folk musicians, Polish Plumbers, Estonian Electricians, Bolivian Bricklayers and people who organise illegal raves.”

Many thanks for that Max, its good to be clear!

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Recent Events

PAW / RTPI Young Planners' Quiz Night – report by Anna Prescott, NLP

The above story, published in this month's RTPI Cymru magazine, pays astounding tribute to the ability of planners to let their hair down and have a good bevy, and special thanks go to Anna for writing such a glowing report. The event raised £203 for Planning Aid Wales, so heartfelt thanks also to all those who attended and contributed to a great evening. Whilst there were few PAW volunteers at the event, it was great to see

such a turnout from both the public and private sector, namely Newport, RCT, NLP, DLP and RPS. Apologies to those we had to turn away – we will get a bigger capacity venue next time, promise! Thanks to O'Neil's for hosting the event (and for letting us rack up such large bar tabs...).

Thanks are also due to Judd Farris for sponsoring the event (i.e. buying the booze) and Cardiff Fitness & Wellbeing, Roisin Willmott and Neil Harris for donating such great prizes. It was with great relief and glee that I got to award the booby prize

(several bottles of potpourri) back to PAW's Ian Horsburgh, the generous benefactor who donated them in the first place – Thank you Ian, that made my night!

Finally, extra special thanks to PAW volunteer Lucie Taylor for arranging the venue and organising the guests – it was really appreciated. There will definitely be plans for another quiz night before next summer, and I hope to see more of you there – if anyone has any suggestions on how to improve the event, please do get in touch.



Above: Quiz night raised £200 for PAW

Recent Activities

Community and town council training

Work on the training programme for CTCs is progressing, with eight taster sessions held between June and September. Information and feedback gained from the taster sessions is being used to prepare for a series of pilot seminars in early 2008, to be delivered jointly by a professional trainer and a PAW volunteer. Three training providers have been recruited to deliver the sessions.

Outreach referral plan

An outreach referral plan has been put in place to increase the uptake of PAW services by marginalised groups and communities. We will be working with a wide range of referral organisations, groups and key individuals to raise and maintain awareness of PAW amongst the people with whom they already have regular contact. If you would like more information about the plan, please contact Marika Fusser.

Non-PAW Events Diary

If you would like any more information on these events, please contact James Davies.

15th January 2008 (London)

RTPI: *"Planning Education to Planning Practice" Workshop*

15th-17th February 2008 (Cardiff Bay)

TPAS: *Hopes & Realities 3 Devolution: Taking Stock and The Next Stage?*

6th March 2008 (London)

SDUK08: *Action Today, Protecting Tomorrow.* Conference



We are keen to hear your opinion, whether it be on Planning Aid Wales-specific issues, wider planning or voluntary sector issues.

Upcoming Activities

Brecon Beacons National Park training

PAW is working with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority to provide training for all fifty community councils in the national park area, commencing early 2008. The training programme will aim to encourage effective community input to the early stages of Local Development Plan preparation by: raising awareness of the LDP preparation process and the expected role of local councils; achieving buy-in to a common approach whereby local councils will work with their communities to generate a meaningful response to strategic options, and; building the

capacity of community and town councillors to engage with their constituents and maximise community input into the forward planning process. If there are any volunteers who would like to be involved in preparing for or helping deliver these events, please get in touch.

Cwmni Communities First training

PAW has also been commissioned to run five training sessions for the public in Rhondda Cynon Taff by the Cwmni Communities First initiative. If any volunteers are interested in helping run the workshops, please contact us.

Planning Aid Wales publications

PAW is preparing three leaflets aimed at the general public for printing early in the New Year. Draft versions of the following leaflets will be available shortly for peer review: *'What to do when faced with a planning application'*; *'A guide to enforcement'*; and *'Seeing the light - Planning and your rights to light explained'*. If any volunteers are interested in contributing to these guidance leaflets, please contact James Davies.

Volunteer Induction and Training

Volunteer induction

Work has begun on drawing together and reviewing a suite of easily updatable volunteer induction materials for the new year. A number of individual insert sheets are being prepared on a range of issues relevant to PAW volunteering (eg: 'What is Planning Aid Wales'; 'Who we try to help, and how'; 'The role of the office volunteer'; 'Casework protocols'; 'How to contact / find us', etc). The new induction pack will be launched in a volunteer induction / refresher training event, which will be held in spring 2008.

Volunteer training

A programme of volunteer training is under preparation, with a list of possible topics and proposed dates for training sessions to be delivered from January 2008 onwards. Whilst the volunteer audit requested training preferences from our volunteers, suggestions were low on the ground – if anyone has ideas or preferred topics for training in the new year, please contact James Davies asap. The training programme will include the Planning Law and Policy update on January 24th, as well as an in-house PAW induction / refresher event.

We are also exploring an all-Wales training initiative aimed at delivering participation and engagement training to planners working in local authorities. This would aim to provide five training sessions of two days each in a number of easily accessible locations across Wales. Each LPA would be offered three places for key staff members, with sessions hosted by a local planning authority. A reasonable charge to help cover costs will need to be charged to LPA planners, but PAW volunteers and host LPA staff will attend for free – again, thoughts and comments appreciated.

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Fun!

The Ark

In the year 2007 the Lord came unto Noah, (who was now living in Pontllanfraith) and said:

"Once again, the earth has become wicked and over-populated, and I see the end of all flesh before me. Build another Ark and save two of every living thing along with a few good humans."

He gave Noah the design drawings, saying, "You have six months to build the Ark before I start the deluge of rain lasting forty days and forty nights."

Six months later, the Lord looked down and saw Noah weeping in his yard, but no Ark. He roared, "Noah, I'm about to start the rain, where is the Ark?"

"Forgive me, Lord," begged Noah, "but things have changed. I needed Building Regulations approval and I've been arguing with the fire brigade about the need for a sprinkler system. My neighbours claim that I need planning permission for building the Ark in my garden, even though it's a temporary structure. We then had to go to appeal to the Secretary of State for a decision."

"Then the Department of Transport demanded a contribution to the future costs of moving power lines and other overhead obstructions to clear the passage for the Ark's move to the sea. I told them that the sea would be coming to us, but they would hear nothing of it."

"Getting the wood was another problem - all the decent trees have Tree Preservation Orders on them and we live in a Site of Special Scientific Interest set up to protect the spotted owl. I tried to convince the environmentalists that I needed the wood to save the owls but no go! When I started gathering the animals, the RSPCA sued me on the grounds that I was confining wild animals against their will. They argued the accommodation was too restrictive, and it was cruel to put so many animals in a confined space."

"Then the County Council, the Environment Agency and the Rivers Authority ruled that I couldn't build the Ark until they'd conducted an environmental impact study on your proposed flood."

"I'm still trying to resolve a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission on how many disabled carpenter's I'm supposed to hire for my building team. The trades unions say I can't use my sons, insisting I hire only accredited workers with Ark-building experience."

"To make matters worse, Customs and Excise seized all my assets, claiming I'm trying to leave the country illegally with endangered species. So, forgive me, Lord, but it would take at least ten years for me to finish this Ark."

Suddenly the skies cleared, the sun began to shine and a rainbow stretched across the sky. Noah looked up in wonder and asked, "You mean you're not going to destroy the world?"

"No," said the Lord. "The UK government beat me to it."



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Media

Website revamp update

Following submission of bids to re-design and maintain the new PAW website, we have shortlisted and interviewed three companies. We aim to select our favoured contractor in late January, with the new website being launched by March 2008.

Moving online

As reported in the last bulletin, the volunteer audit has suggested ways in which PAW might improve the delivery of our services. As we build our online presence via the revamped website, we are considering the possible benefits of moving more of

our case management and volunteer liaison activities online. Again, if anyone does have any thoughts, comments, or suggestions on this, they will be gratefully received.

In the Next Issue...

Thanks to Anna Prescott and Ian Horsburgh for contributions to this issue.

It's your bulletin, so if any volunteers are interested in

submitting items for the next issue, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The next edition of the volunteer bulletin will be

circulated in February 2008, and will contain more details on PAW training events, new induction materials and will outline new recruitment and fundraising strategies for 2008.