

Volunteer Bulletin

Planning Aid Wales: Working towards a fairer planning system

March 2008 Bulletin No. 5

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Happy New Year!

Welcome to the first edition of the PAW volunteer bulletin for 2008.

Training has definitely been the main focus for PAW activity over the past couple of months; we have successfully delivered numerous Community and Town Council (CTC) training sessions across Wales, assisted Brecon Beacons NPA in engaging their CTCs in the early stages of LDP preparation, and rolled out additional public training in Rhondda Cynon Taff with CwmNi, the Communities First Partnership for Treherbert.

Many thanks to those volunteers who kindly gave their time to help facilitate some of these training events - as ever, any volunteers

Latest News

Eligibility Criteria 2008

We have reviewed and revised our eligibility criteria to make them simpler and easier to understand. The new criteria merge old Levels 3 and 4 into a new Level 3, and provide more explanation of the different levels of service we provide. The criteria will be officially launched to volunteers at the forthcoming volunteer induction / refresher event, but in the meantime, please contact James to see the new criteria.

interested in volunteering to assist with training or other non-casework PAW activities are urged to get in touch.

This bulletin contains an overview of what we've been up to as an organisation over the past few months, as well as updates on activities, events and plans for the coming months. On that note, I should draw your attention to the forthcoming national Planning Aid Conference in Cambridge on the **14th and 15th April, 2008 (see page 4)**. Planning Aid Wales is keen to support a volunteer presence at this important event, and we are willing to meet the expenses of the first two volunteers expressing a firm interest in attending. Before signing off, can I thank

all those volunteers who agreed to support my research dissertation by completing a questionnaire – your contributions not only helped me develop the project but will also contribute to the way PAW approaches volunteer recruitment – thanks again!

We are always keen to hear your perspectives on how we operate, either as contributions to this bulletin or as suggestions as to how we can improve our relationship with our volunteers, the professional planning community and the wider public.

James Davies
Planner / Case Manager

Gypsy and Traveller Guidance

PAW has been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government to prepare a user-friendly guidance booklet for travellers on the recent circular 30/2007 *Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan sites*. The project is due to commence in earnest in the next few weeks - anyone interested in getting involved should contact Marika or James.

Planning Law and Policy Update

Another successful planning law training event was held by Eversheds in Cardiff on 24th ???. Updates were provided on the Planning Bill, Gypsy and Traveller issues and village green law. The training materials from the event are available on request, and if anyone who attended would like to feedback on the event, please do contact us.

We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.planningaidwales.org.uk

Calling all volunteers!



Would you like to assist Y Dref Werdd community group, Blaenau Ffestiniog, to raise community awareness on planning issues and help them prepare a community vision for their LDP? (see point 3, right).

If so, please contact Marika on 01286 882 834 or email marikafusser@btconnect.com

Volunteer Update

Casework update

We've had some interesting cases this month:

1. Trallong Community Council asked PAW to provide a definition of an 'annex'.

Following research on DCP and input from a few volunteers, we were able to advise that an annex is a term describing a distinct addition to an existing building that is associated with the owner or occupier of that building. An annex may be physically separate from the existing dwelling, but must be within its residential curtilage.

2. We have an ongoing mining case in Maesteg. A group of local residents are deeply concerned about a large heap of slag material that has been tipped on an unauthorised site behind their properties. An application has been submitted by Bridgend

CBC to regularise the development, and the residents are looking for assistance to respond. Any volunteers interested in helping out on this case, please contact James.

3. PAW is supporting community group Y Dref Werdd (The Green Town) in Blaenau Ffestiniog in their efforts to facilitate the drawing up of a community vision, which can then be used to input into the LDP preparation process. They are planning a first round of awareness raising events during their Green Week, from the 14th to 22nd of June. PAW will be assisting with preparation, manning of stalls and other activities. If you'd like to get involved in the preparation or the activities themselves, please get in touch with Marika.

Volunteer perspective

By Agnes Law My

I offered to become an office volunteer for Planning Aid Wales as I wanted to know more about the reality of planning as well as gaining valuable work experience. I have been helping out in the Cardiff office since January 2008 and am really grateful for the experience. In that time, I have helped design activities for the CwmNi public training events, helped to draft public leaflets, and undertaken research to support newsletter articles etc. I have not only learned a great deal about the Welsh planning system and the practices involved, but also enhanced my knowledge of planning generally. I enjoy working with PAW staff and volunteering with the organisation has been a really good experience.

A new casework referral system?

Did you know that less than one in ten of all the Helpline cases we receive are referred on to a volunteer?

The issues arising from the majority of calls require only basic advice, can usually be resolved by a short telephone call lasting between 10 and 20 minutes, and are usually therefore dealt with by staff. But this means that only a small proportion of our Helpline casework is being referred on to volunteers, and it is usually the larger, more

complex cases which are offered!

One possible solution under consideration is to include volunteers into a helpline call-back system. This would allow active volunteers to take on smaller, single phone-call cases requiring a relatively short input of your valuable time. Volunteers would be contacted by the Case Manager with the contact details of a client who had left a message on the helpline answerphone, given brief

details of the case, and asked to call the client back within 48 hours.

What do you think? If you have any comments on this issue, or would like to become an active casework volunteer taking on more but smaller cases, please contact James on 02920 464 205 or email james.paw@btconnect.com

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Recent events and activities

Eversheds Planning Law and Policy Update, 24th January 2008

Eversheds LLP generously agreed to hold a second planning law training event for PAW volunteers and planners working across Wales. Topics covered included current and recent planning policy consultations in Wales, village green protection, EIA updates, news on the TAN 17 consultation, an overview of the English PPS on Climate Change, the implications of WAG Circular 30/2007 (Gypsies and Travellers), as well as the Planning Bill... and all that in

less than an hour - phew!

The event was very well attended, with over 30 local planners and 6 PAW volunteers present, making the event very worthwhile! PAW would like to convey its gratitude to Eversheds' partner Julian Boswall and all his team at Eversheds for preparing for and delivering the event. If anyone has any comments to make on the training or ideas for similar volunteer training events in the future, do let us know. We are currently looking to arrange a similar law update event for North Wales volunteers - any suggestions for a suitably located and

potentially willing planning law firm to James please.

Copies of all of the training materials provided for this event are available on request. We plan to run another law and policy update in Cardiff (and hopefully a location in North Wales!) towards the end of this year.

(right: planners and PAW volunteers at the Eversheds Planning Law and Policy update, 24th Jan 2008)



Community and Town Council training

CTC Update

PAW has been working on two strands of training for community and town councils in Wales. Working with One Voice Wales, we delivered an initial series of 'taster' training sessions over summer and autumn 2007, followed by a programme of six regional seminars in February of this year. Having learned a great deal about the training needs and learning preferences of local councillors from across Wales, we are now preparing a comprehensive range of distance learning resources which will be available to all Community and Town Councils. Resources will include an LDP participation toolkit, group learning

activities, and worksheets covering a range of relevant planning and public engagement issues.

Good practice - 'National Park hosts planning workshops'

(Excerpts from a BBNPA press release, March 2008)

'This month, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is taking the lead amongst Planning Authorities in Wales by offering community and town councils the chance to get involved in the future development of their communities. Working in partnership with Planning Aid Wales, the

National Park Authority has already invited local community and town councillors to a series of workshops designed to explain the new Local Development Plan (LDP) and how it can help meet the individual needs of local communities... It is hoped that the series of workshops will help engage local people and give communities a greater understanding of the planning framework for the area covered by the National Park.'

Chris Morgan, Head of Planning Services for Brecon Beacons National Park Authority said:

"These workshops have been funded using monies from the Planning Improvement Grant from the Welsh Assembly Government and are tailor-made to emphasise the importance of community council involvement from the early stages of the development plan process. Community councils have a key role in speaking up for the communities they represent and we would love them to contribute to our workshops at a local level and find out more about how the National Park Authority can help them."

Upcoming events and activities

National Planning Aid Conference 2008, Kings College, Cambridge

All the UK Planning Aid services will be represented at the upcoming National Planning Aid conference, entitled '*Regional Places, Local Spaces: homes, health and happiness*' on the 14th and 15th April. The event will focus on how communities can work with regional and local authorities and developers to 'bring decision-making back to a local level'. The conference will offer national, regional and local perspectives on the issues, including contributions from

Jim Claydon, past president of the RTPI, Sir Bob Kerslake, Chief Executive of the Homes and Communities Agency, and Rosemary Thomas, Head of Planning at the Welsh Assembly. PAW will participate in a panel discussion aiming to highlight good practice by giving a short presentation on our work to date with Community and Town Councils.

For Planning Aid staff and volunteers, admission fees of full delegate (residential) and day delegate are £96 and £35 respectively. For others, admission fees of full delegate

(residential) and day delegate are £195 and £105 respectively. PAW is keen to build links with other UK planning aid services and we are therefore offering to **pay in full expenses for two of our volunteers** to attend the event. Places are available on a first-come, first-served basis, so I would encourage any volunteer interested in attending to contact James as soon as possible.

More information on the event can be found on the planning aid website ([click here](#)).

Planning Aid Wales Publications

We have prepared final draft versions of three advice leaflets ('What to do when faced with a planning application', 'A guide to enforcement' and 'Seeing the light – Planning and your rights to light explained') for printing in early April.

If any volunteers are interested in peer reviewing or contributing to these, please contact James.

Other events

Realising Rural Assets conference, Builth Wells

Planning Aid Wales has been invited to have a display at a conference WCVA is holding on Thursday, 19 June 2008 in Builth Wells. The event, called Realising Rural Assets, will be a major conference for the rural third sector in Wales, launching the implementation of the recommendations from the Carnegie Commission's Charter for Rural Communities: the key foundation of which is community ownership and management of local assets. Obviously planning permission for buildings / use of land is key to community asset ownership and it will be well worth making the audience

aware of the service PAW offers. It sounds like an interesting conference too. If you'd like to attend and help man the PAW stall, please get in touch with Marika.

RTPI Young Planners event – Planning and climate change in Wales

This free event, aimed at young planners in South Wales, will be an evening of debate and networking which will explore some of the issues around the Welsh Assembly Government's 'Planning for Climate Change' consultation and the role that planning policy can play in helping to achieve reduced CO₂

emissions in Wales. ([Click here for more information](#))

The event will be held on 3rd April 2008, 4pm to 5pm, at Cardiff Blues Club 'top lounge' room and bar, Westgate Street, Cardiff. Places for this event are available on a first-come, first-served basis - to book a place please email Lucie Taylor by Thursday 27th March 2008 latest on lucie.taylor@newport.gov.uk

Non-PAW Events Diary

If you would like any more information on these events, please contact James on 02920 464205.

9th April 2008 (Cardiff)
10th April 2008 (Bangor)
RTPI and the Welsh Assembly Government: *Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update*

3rd / 4th July 2008 (Newport)
RTPI Cymru: *Wales Planning Convention*

9th-11th July 2008 (London)
The Planning Convention: *Changing Places, Changing World*

27th September 2007 (Newport)
Regeneration Skills Collective Wales Annual Conference: *Delivering Regeneration 4*



Fun!

Cartoon from 'Punch' Magazine, 1926

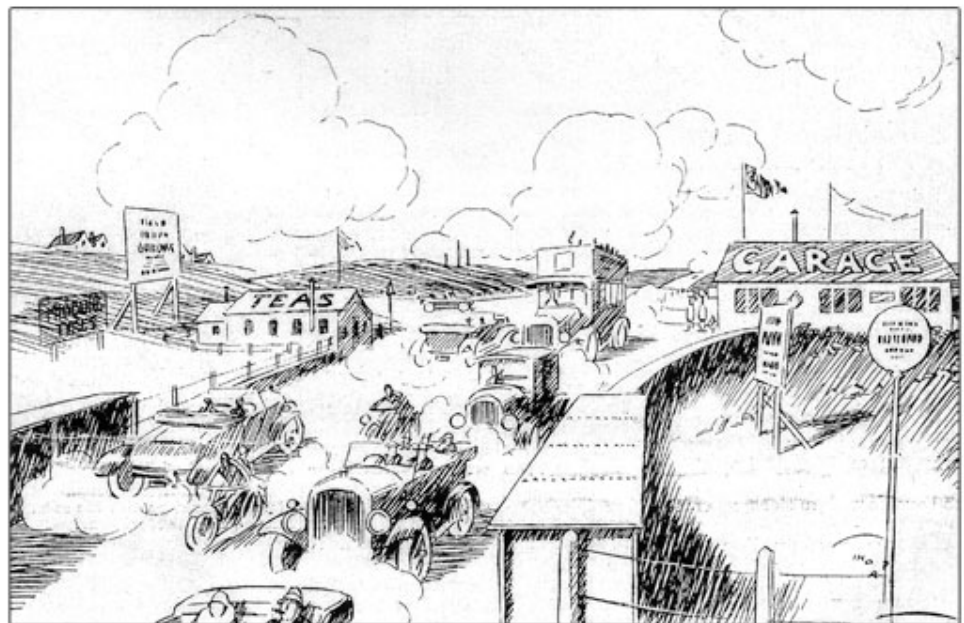
The following planning cartoon from 'Punch' dates back to March 3rd, 1926 – Thanks to Ian Horsburgh for 'drawing' it to our attention.

Has anyone got anything funny or interesting to put in this section of the bulletin? If so, please send in to James.

'PROGRESS'



BY THE WIDENING OF LANES AND THE REMOVAL OF SLOPES, AWKWARD CORNERS AND HEDGES -



MUCH IS BEING DONE TO IMPROVE THE AMENITIES OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

We're on the Web!

See us at:

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The PAW website will be relaunched at the PAW Annual General Meeting, which will be held in the Senedd on 14th July

Media

Website revamp update

Work to revamp the PAW website is well underway. We are working with web agency Sequence (sequence.co.uk) to produce a new, more informative and higher quality web portal for a variety of user groups (the public, volunteers, CTCs, local planning authorities etc). We are aiming to publicly launch the website at our AGM

on 14th July. Any volunteers interested in contributing to the preparation of content for the website please contact Marika.

Volunteer area

Would you use an online casework update system? Would you find a volunteer forum useful? Are there documents or information

relating to PAW and our activities which you wish were online for easier access? We are considering adding such dynamic features to the volunteer area of the website - your thoughts, comments and ideas would be invaluable to help us prepare this part of the site. Do let us know what you think.

PAW 2008 AGM / 30th Birthday!

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PAW's 2008 AGM will coincide with a number of activities this year, namely the launch of our new revamped website and celebration of our 30th Birthday. Did you know that the first South Wales Planning Aid service was started by

volunteers such as Sue Essex in 1978?

To celebrate this milestone anniversary the AGM is being held in the Senedd building in Cardiff on 14th July. Jane Davidson,

Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing has kindly agreed to attend and help us celebrate.

If anyone is interested in helping prepare for the AGM, please do contact us.

In the next issue...

The next edition of the volunteer bulletin will be circulated in May 2008, containing more details on upcoming PAW training events, new induction materials and an outline of

the forthcoming AGM / website launch / 30th birthday celebrations.

As always, if any volunteers are interested in submitting articles for the next or

subsequent issues, please don't hesitate to contact James.