

Gwynedd Council Local Planning Authority (LPA)

PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) 2016

PREFACE

It is my pleasure to introduce the second Annual Performance Report for Gwynedd Council's Planning Service. Good planning is at the heart of what we are about as a Council, making good, safe places for our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time in. The Planning Service can help in delivering these aims whilst generating growth in the economy and protecting our natural habitats, our communities and culture. Following the introduction of the first ever Planning Act for Wales in 2015 and the various consultations that have followed as part of its implementation, this Council has embraced the move towards positive planning to help contribute towards the social, economic and environmental needs of Gwynedd residents.

Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member (Planning and Regulatory)

CONTEXT

Overview

1. The Gwynedd Local Planning Authority area is a large rural area located in the North Western corner of Wales. It is approximately 1,699 square kilometres in size in geographical terms. The area shares a coastal boundary across the Menai Straits with the Isle of Anglesey County Council. There is a strong cross-boundary relationship with Anglesey in terms of function, economy and infrastructure as well as policy (see below). Gwynedd Council shares a terrestrial boundary with Conwy County Borough Council, Snowdonia National Park Authority, Denbighshire County Council, Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council. It is estimated that 100,516 people lived in the Gwynedd Local Planning Authority area in 2011. An estimated 42,478 households were recorded in the area. 65% of Gwynedd's (as the County) residents speak Welsh and it is also the Council's internal administrative language. The Council delivers all its services bilingually. Key statistics about the population and households of Gwynedd can be found at: <https://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/en/Council/Key-statistics-and-data/The-Census/2011-Census-Key-Statistics.aspx>
2. Adjoining the Snowdonia National Park, the Gwynedd Local Planning Authority area includes high value landscape and biodiversity assets that have been acknowledged and designated locally, nationally and internationally. For example, a large part of the Llŷn Peninsula was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1956, one of five in Wales. Human influence on the landscape can be traced back to prehistoric times and this can be seen in the large number of conspicuous features that have been designated because of their special value, e.g. World Heritage Site, Listed Buildings, Registered Ancient Monuments, Historic Parks, and Conservation Areas. As a consequence of all these acknowledged resources, the area attracts a large number of tourists / visitors which arrive by means of

the highways, railways, the port of Holyhead in Anglesey and various marinas. In 2015, approximately 6.88 million visitors came to Gwynedd, creating £963.93 million in revenue.

3. Agriculture is the main land use with villages and small towns found inland and most of the larger towns are along the coast. Generally, the largest employers and the largest range of services, transport and telecommunications are located within these larger towns. Bangor, which is recognised as a sub-regional centre, is home to Bangor University and Ysbyty Gwynedd which are important components of Gwynedd's international migration profile. However, these more urban communities very often display complete contrasts with very deprived areas located in close proximity to the most prosperous.
4. Outside the more developed coastal areas, the area is mainly rural with several remote areas, especially in Meirionnydd and Llŷn. The issues that need to be addressed in these areas are very different, with the striking and special natural environment concealing the deprivation and low wages and negative impact of their peripheral locations. In 2015, the median household income in Gwynedd (£22,240) was 9% below the figure for Wales (£24,271) and 29% lower than the figure for Britain (£28, 696). In 2014, the median price for a house sold in Gwynedd was £144,000 which is an increase of 9.1% compared with 2011.
5. Analysis of the most recent Welsh Government trend based population and household projections (2011 base), suggests that the population in the Gwynedd Local Planning Authority area, could increase by 6.2% over the Joint Local Development Plan period (2011 – 2026), with a 9.0% increase in households over the same period.
6. Its peripheral location means that the area is still experiencing the impact of the global recession with a resultant low demand for all types of properties and land. Many working age households move out of the area to look for work. However, there is a strong case for optimism linked to the expected substantial and unprecedented increased employment opportunities associated with the construction of Wylfa Newydd and other major infrastructure projects being promoted in Anglesey and the Snowdonia Enterprise Zone. It has been estimated that £2.5 billion will be added to the Anglesey and North Wales economy over the next 15 years.
7. Gwynedd and Anglesey have adopted a Single Integrated Plan, - "Strengthening communities in Gwynedd and Anglesey" (2014), which incorporates the vision and action plan for the Local Service Board for both counties. A series of priorities have been identified that are centred on planning for healthy, safe and prosperous communities. Gwynedd Council's vision, as set out in its Strategic Plan (2015 – 2017), is to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the people of Gwynedd despite the fact that the Council's resources are becoming scarcer. The emphasis will be on improving the Council's ability to ensure the best for the people of Gwynedd and it will be able to do that by transforming services, to become services that the Council can maintain for the future. The strategy seeks to bring about a number of priority fields: children and young people; care; poverty, deprivation, economy; housing; Welsh language; effective and efficient Council; financial planning.
8. The Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan (Gwynedd UDP), adopted in 2009, is the current 'development plan' for Gwynedd (excluding the area covered by Snowdonia National Park).

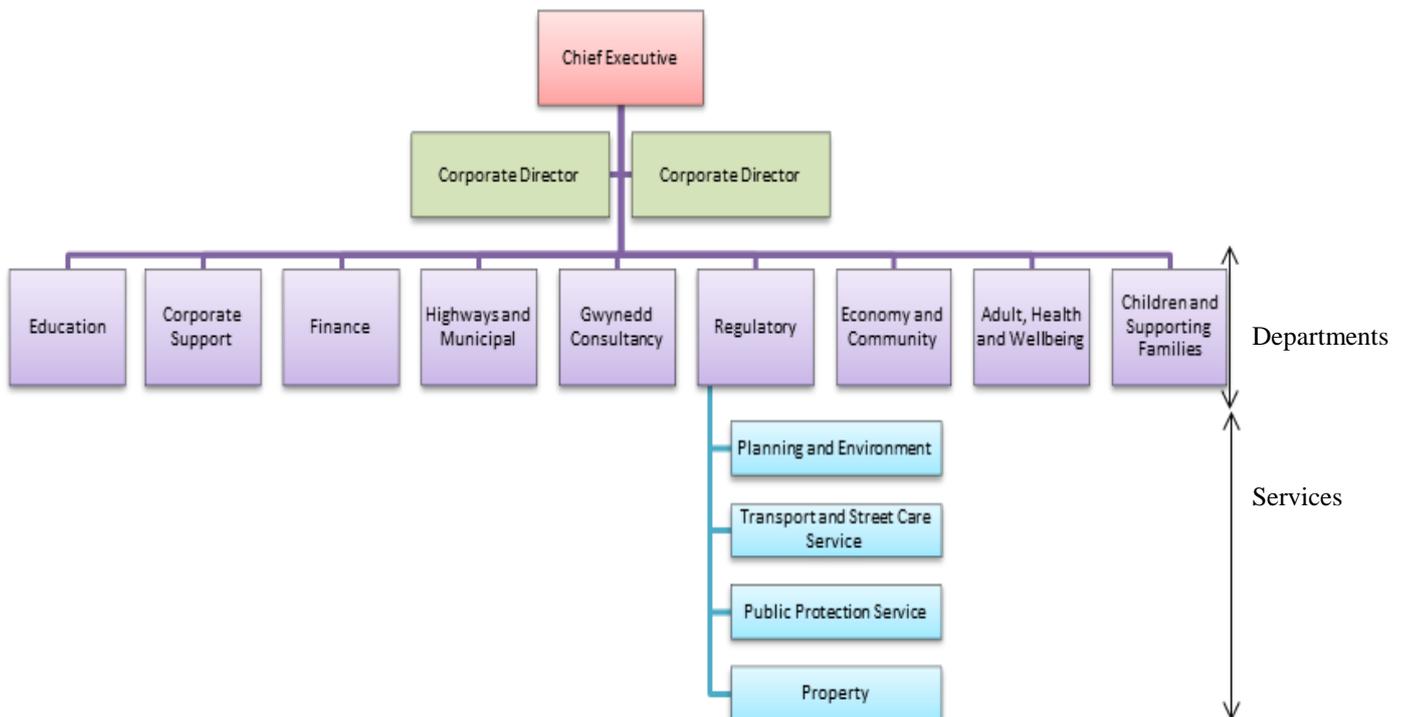
It replaced a series of Local Plans, which were adopted in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, as well as the Gwynedd Structure Plan (1993). The Gwynedd UDP and a series of adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) form the basis for decisions on planning applications until they are superseded by the Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan (Joint LDP) and a new set of SPGs. Having consulted on the Deposit Plan during February and March 2015, the Joint LDP is currently at the Examination stage and is programmed for adoption in Spring 2017.

- The Joint LDP, when adopted, will have a critical role in supporting and delivering the priorities that have spatial requirements in both the Single Integrated Plan and the Council's Strategic Plan. The emerging Joint LDP's strategy takes the main elements of its vision and objectives and sets out principal land uses that will deliver them. In line with the Single Integrated Plan and the Strategic Plan, the broad Strategy is to strengthen communities, building on a number of elements and cross cutting themes including: - sustainable communities, economic growth and regeneration, quality housing, natural and built environment, Welsh language and culture, climate change and sustainable development, creating quality places www.gwynedd.gov.uk/ldp

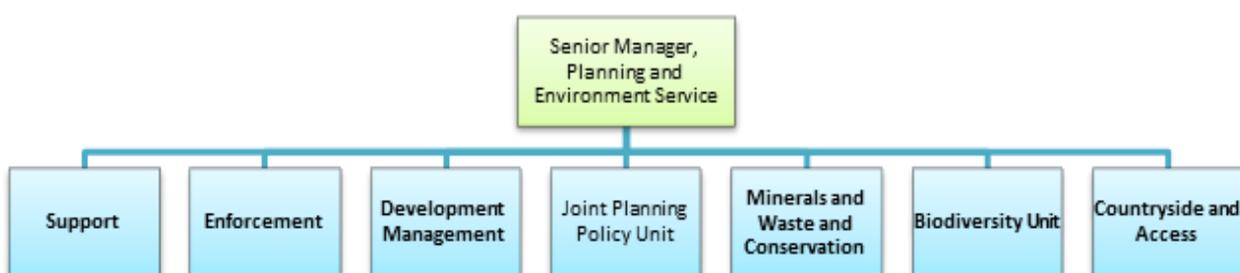
PLANNING SERVICE

Organisational Structure

- All of the Council's planning functions are located within the Planning and Environment Service, which is within the Regulatory Department. The Head of Regulatory Department reports directly to the Chief Executive. The Council's corporate structure is shown below:



11. The Planning and Environment Service is made up of 7 Units that report directly to the Senior Manager of the Service. There are 5 Units that are specific to planning which include Development Management Unit (which includes Unit Manager and 7 Case Officers), Enforcement Unit (which includes Unit Manager and 3 Case Officers), Support Unit (providing support mainly to Development Management and Enforcement – which includes Unit Manager and 5 support staff), the Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit (which includes Unit Manager and 11 planning staff). The Minerals and Waste Unit is made up of a Senior Conservation Officer and a Senior Planning Officer (Minerals and Waste).
12. The Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit (JPPU) was established through a Shared Service Agreement in 2011. The JPPU is funded 50/50 by Gwynedd and Anglesey and a Joint Planning Policy Committee consisting of 7 Members from each Authority, has been established to make decisions and key stages in the process of producing the Joint Local Development Plan. The JPPU provides a complete planning policy service to both Authorities and is administered by Gwynedd Council.
13. Gwynedd Council also has a Shared Service Agreement with the other Authorities in the North Wales Region, for the provision of a shared Minerals and Waste Planning Service. The North Wales Minerals and Waste Planning Service was established in April 2011, with Flintshire County Council as the Lead Authority. Gwynedd's contribution to the North Wales Service is the secondment of a Senior Planning Officer (Minerals and Waste).
14. Since September 2014 the Council's Land Charges Function has transferred to the Planning and Environment Service and is located within the Support Unit. The Service structure is shown below:



Following the retirement of the Council's Senior Manager, Public Protection Service early during 2015-16, the Public Protection Service merged with the Planning and Environment Service which resulted in the creation of the interim post of Senior Manager, Planning, Environment and Public Protection Services. The Public Protection Service has 4 Units which includes Support, Trading Standards, Environment and Well fare (Food Hygiene and Health and Safety).

Responding to financial constraints / challenges

Context

15. In 2010-11 the Planning Service, which at the time consisted of Development Management, Enforcement and Support, was subject to a full review in order to contribute towards the Department's efficiency savings programme. Running in parallel with this work was the review of the Planning Committee Structures. At the time, the Planning Service was administered in 3 area offices (Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd), with 3 Area Planning Committees held monthly (made up of all 75 Gwynedd Members), making decisions on planning applications.
16. The review of the Planning Service included a complete review of the work processes and restructuring of the Service. The vision for the Planning Service was to:

"Make the most effective and efficient use of resources in order to establish a strong Planning Service which will bring about improvements and offer good quality which focusses on the customer".
17. The review of the Planning Service resulted in the transformation of the Service, with the new service becoming operational in April 2011. The transformation of the service moved away from the area based administration of the service to central administration / support and base for the Service in Pwllheli, but with the provision of a county wide service with hot-desks provided for Case Officers in Caernarfon, Bangor and Dolgellau (as well their office base in Pwllheli). The transformation also redesigned work processes having regard to "lean" principles, improved self service options for customers and increased electronic communication. It also established formal pre-application advice procedures and offered a first point of contact for customers via the Council's Contact Centre ("Galw Gwynedd").
18. The transformation of the Service delivered efficiency savings of approximately £300,000 and the changes implemented in April 2011 form the basis of the current Planning Service in terms of Development Management, Enforcement and Support.
19. At the same time of the review and transformation of the Service the Full Council agreed to restructure the 3 area based Planning Committees, to create a single county Planning Committee held every 3 weeks, comprising of 15 Members which is in place at present.
20. In April 2012, the Planning Service and the Environment Service, merged to form the Planning and Environment Service as it is now bringing further efficiency savings at Senior Management level and as stated previously, the Public Protection Service also merged in early 2015/16, but on a temporary basis.
21. In March 2016, the Full Council agreed further cuts which were in addition to efficiency savings agreed in 2015, for the 3 year period 2015-18. The Council's Efficiency Savings Programme for the Regulatory Department, from a managed budget of £10,288,000 now includes the following targets:

Year	Target
2015/16	£560,390
2016/17	£589,480
2017/18	£798,363
2018/19	£16,670
Total	£3,363,713

22. The Department is currently on target to deliver the efficiency savings of £3,363,713 during 2015-18 which includes savings of £794,093 from the Planning, Environment and Public Protection Service (Interim Service arrangement), £159,513 of which is specific to the planning functions. For Planning, these savings will include rationalising the Development Management, Enforcement and Support Units resulting in the deletion of 3 posts. This will see the Development Management and Enforcement Units merge in 2017-18. 4 posts will be deleted from the JPPU with the Unit going from 12 staff to 8 staff and the saving split 50/50 with Anglesey, with this programmed for 2017/18, after the Joint LDP has been adopted.

Operating Budget

23. The income that Planning generates through planning fees has increased year on year over the last 3 years with the actual income received higher than the budgeted income. As a result, in recent years, the Service has not had to deal with a situation where the actual income received is lower than the budgeted income and the potential difficulties in trying to balance the overall budget as a result.

24. The planning fee income is not retained by the Planning Service and the budgeted income target is set with consideration given to the actual income generated in the previous year(s). The information relating to planning fees is included in the following table:

Planning Fees	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Budgeted Income	471,680.00	419,770.00	375,520.00	362,010.00
Actual Income	576,770.50	514,325.28	516,724.16	458,416.00
Difference	105,090.50	94,555.28	141,204.16	96,406.00

25. The net budget for Planning which includes Development Management, Enforcement, Support, JPPU, Minerals and Waste, and Conservation is as follows:

Net Budget of Planning	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Total	770,070	858,060	1,077,320	932,690

26. The Land Charges function of the Council which is located within the Support Unit of Planning since September 2014 has generated the following income:

Land Charges	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Budgeted Income	178,860.00	173,940.00	159,940.00	158,520.00
Actual Income	228,178	191,544.49	192,641.60	164,077.50
Difference	49,318.00	17,604.49	32,701.60	5,557.50

Staffing Matters

27. The Council has a Corporate Training Programme and corporate procedures for staff evaluation. The staff appraisal procedures help to identify the training needs of all the staff which includes the training provided within the Corporate Training Programme (which includes management courses such as ILM) and training that is more specific to Planning.
28. In addition to the above, the Regulatory Department has a budget for training and there has been a significant investment in the development of planning staff over the years by funding specialist planning training. This has resulted in 7 of the current staff having benefited or in the process of benefiting from MSc Planning and Environment qualifications. In addition to this, the Department has funded specialist training in the area of Conservation which has secured effective succession planning whereby a Development Management Officer has now progressed to be the Senior Conservation Officer for the Council. Over the years the Department has identified areas of the Service where there is a need to ensure succession and has been successful in delivering this within the Service, with a number of staff over the years benefitting through career development opportunities.
29. The Department's and Service's business planning process, identifies areas of risk where there is limited expertise and resilience and tries to put in place measures to control / mitigate such risks in order to ensure service delivery.
30. When the Planning Service was transformed in April 2011 all job descriptions were reviewed with some amended and some new job descriptions produced. This process was undertaken with consideration given to continued staff development, resilience and flexible use of the staff resource, to meet possible changes in demands and priorities for the Service. With this in mind, all the posts within Development Management which are at the same level (e.g. Development Management Officer and Planning Enforcement Officer) are interchangeable so that the staff resource, where possible, can be targeted towards the needs of the Service and its customers.
31. Minerals and waste planning has in recent years been an area of planning where there is limited expertise not only in Gwynedd but also in North Wales. The agreement across North Wales to establish the North Wales Minerals and Waste Service, with Gwynedd seconding an Officer to the Service, has provided a more resilient Service for Gwynedd and the North Wales Region. As the partner Authorities face challenging times financially, the current arrangement is an annual rolling contract which is also reviewed annually.

32. The establishment of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit has also provided career development opportunities for both Authorities and has helped to share and pool expertise within the Unit which has provided greater resilience for both Authorities.
33. There are currently no vacant posts within the Planning Service. At present for 2015-18, no further cuts are proposed for Development Management, Enforcement and Support. However, for Development Management and Enforcement to function efficiently and effectively, they are reliant on specialist advice from the JPPU, Biodiversity Unit, Transportation Service and Public Protection Service. There are cuts proposed in 2015-18 for all of these service areas which when implemented, is likely to have an adverse impact on the robustness and quality of decisions on planning applications and enforcement cases and the time taken to make those decisions.

OUR LOCAL STORY

Planning applications

34. The workload of the Planning Service in terms of planning applications registered has been steady over the last 3 years but the numbers have increased since 2011-12 when 1068 applications were registered, compared with 2014-15 when 1127 were registered and 2015-16 when 1304 were registered. The workload for the 7 Development Management Officers has therefore increased from 160 per annum in 2014-15 to approximately 186 planning applications per annum in 2015-16.
35. There have been some major applications in Gwynedd during the period between 2012 and 2016 which include:
- Redevelopment of Bangor University Campus at St Marys, Lon Bopty including student accommodation for around 600 students. Pre-application discussions regarding future projects and a development team approach to the proposed Science and Technology Quarter, with enabling development having already been implemented.
 - 245 housing development (including 86 affordable houses) in Penrhosgarnedd, Bangor, on a site allocated for housing in the Gwynedd UDP (At the time – this was one of the largest housing developments dealt with in recent years). Outline application for a housing proposal for 366 dwellings on an allocated site was refused by Planning Committee contrary to officer recommendation, due to concerns that the development (which would be that largest housing development ever in Gwynedd) would have an adverse impact on the Welsh Language. The hearing for the appeal is set for December 2016.
 - Approved scheme for 49 MW Pump storage facility at Glynrhonwy, Llanberis resubmitted in order to generate 99.9 MW as a Development Consent Order application. An inquiry in to the DCO closed September 2016.

- Redevelopment of the Sailing Academy (Plas Heli), Glan y Don, Pwllheli – this was a Council lead development to significantly improve existing facilities to enhance what is already a sailing destination that attracts international events / competitions.
 - Numerous applications for new schools within the County.
 - Substantial expansion of existing Bookpeople warehouse securing jobs in the Bangor area of the County
36. There has also been continued support for the various outdoor activity related applications including those for Zip World at Penrhyn Quarry, Bethesda and Llechwedd Quarry, Blaenau Ffestiniog which has also seen the development of Bounce Below. These have proved to be very successful and have had a positive contribution on the local economy, helping to establish Gwynedd and North East Wales as key destinations for outdoor activities.
37. Continued support has also been given to numerous tourist/economic schemes within the county enabling people to establish or expand other non ‘major’ but perhaps equally important ventures such as hotels and other forms of visitor accommodation, local bakery, brewery, specialist rural enterprises, re-development of retail sites, expanding existing attractions, farm diversification, large solar developments and small scale hydro schemes and so on – all of which contribute positively to the local economy.

Pre-application

38. Since the transformation of the Planning Service in 2011 all types of pre-application enquiries are now recorded in the back office system and there were 3214 enquiries received in 2011-12 compared to 2292 in 2014-15. During 2015-16 the number of enquiries dealt with by the Service has risen substantially to 2909. The drop in numbers in terms of the enquiries receive and dealt with directly by the Planning Service between 2011-12 and 2014-15, is down to an increase in the numbers of general enquiries being dealt with directly by the contact centre, on behalf of the Planning Service. The substantial increase in recent enquiries could be explained by the recent changes in planning legislation and the statutory formalisation of the pre-application service provided.
39. The Council has operated a charging scheme for pre-application advice since April 2015 and this became mandatory in April 2016. Where applicable, a development team approach is applied as part of the process of providing pre-application advice.
40. Current large scale projects benefiting from pre-application / input includes schemes such as the National Grid Connection from Wylfa to Pentir; the National Grid VIP project Penrhyndeudraeth and other associated National Grid projects; Caernarfon By-pass; the re-development of the Island site Caernarfon, large employer looking to re-site and so on.

Planning enforcement

41. The planning enforcement work includes reactive work and proactive work and the framework for how this is delivered is set out in the Enforcement Strategy (which is additional to the Enforcement Policy) which was agreed by the Cabinet in 2014-15. The purpose of the Enforcement Strategy was to try and strike a balance between the day to day reactive work and the proactive work that can provide added value, although how this works depends on the staff resources available.
42. The number of planning enforcement cases / complaints received (the reactive work) over the last few years has remained fairly steady at around 500 cases per annum which for the 3 case officers works out at about 165 per annum. In addition to dealing with enforcement cases, the Enforcement Unit also receives approximately 500 general inquiries relating to enforcement issues.
43. The proactive work as identified in the Enforcement Strategy includes the monitoring of a sample of caravan sites annually. In 2014-15, due to concerns by Members relating to planning permissions granted for a 12 month holiday season on some static caravan sites, the Unit has prioritised the monitoring of the static caravan sites with planning permission for 12 month holiday season. This proactive monitoring continued in 2015-16 during which time an update report was provided to the Dwyfor Area Forum, which is a Members Forum for the area of the County that has the highest density of caravan sites. The Enforcement Unit is also responsible for administering the register of Tree Preservation Orders and is currently (with the input of the Biodiversity Unit), reviewing and rationalising the register. The Enforcement Unit also monitors planning applications that have been subject to a section 106 agreement with the priority given to applications where there are commuted sums involved. The 245 house development in Penrhosgarnedd, Bangor (as referred to above) is an example of this, where there was a commuted sum of over £1 million for education and highway improvements.

Planning policy

44. The Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit, is currently the only example in Wales of Authorities collaborating to produce 1 Joint Local Development Plan for the local planning authority areas. There were planning reasons and cost avoidance reasons which contributed towards justifying a business case for establishing the JPPU to produce a Joint Local Development Plan. Evidence to date has demonstrated that costs have been avoided in the plan preparation process. Costs have been avoided in the works that have been commissioned, more work has been undertaken internally by the Unit / Councils and costs will be avoided with having only 1 public examination. The Joint LDP is progressing well with Plan at the Examination stage since March 2016. It is anticipated that Matters Arising Changes will be subject to public consultation during the 3 Quarter 2016/2017. If the current timetable is achieved, the Plan will be adopted in March / April 2017, which is within 12 months of the date in the original deliver agreement.

Current projects and local pressures

45. There are currently major infrastructure projects in North West Wales which will have an impact on Gwynedd Council and more specifically the significant demand for resources within the Planning Service. These projects include:
46. **The National Grid North Wales Connections Project** : This relates to increasing the capacity of the electricity network between Wylfa Newydd and Trawsfynydd, to transport the additional capacity generated from major energy schemes such as Wylfa Newydd. Gwynedd Council and Anglesey Council have a Joint Planning Performance Agreement in place with National Grid, which provides the framework for pre-application engagement in relation to the Development Consent Order (DCO) application. National Grid are consulting on possible route options for the connection through Gwynedd and Anglesey, with a view to a submitting the DCO in the summer 2017.
47. **Wylfa Newydd (Anglesey)** : The Joint Local Development Plan has been produced on the basis that the Wylfa Newydd project will happen towards the end of the Plan period. The pre-application consultation (PAC 1) was held in 2014/15 and the pre-application consultation (PAC) is due to be in 2016-17, with the DCO application to be submitted in 2017-18. There will be associated developments related to the Wylfa Newydd including worker's accommodation, logistics, park and ride which will require the input of the JPPU. There is also likely to be associated development in Gwynedd which will require the input of the JPPU and Development Management.
48. There are also projects that are more specific to Gwynedd only:
49. **National Grid – Visual Impact Provision:** In September 2015, National Grid made an announcement that the transmission line near Porthmadog is one of the 4 schemes to be taken forward to potential engineering work for mitigating the impact of overhead lines. Most of the transmission line is within the Gwynedd Local Planning Authority area with the remainder within the Snowdonia National Park Authority. Preliminary discussions between the Planning Service and National Grid in relation to scoping the proposed work have commenced and the project is gathering momentum with specific surveys and work currently being undertaken.
50. **99.9MW Pump Storage Scheme, Glynrhonwy, Llanberis:** Gwynedd Council has already granted planning permission for a 49MW scheme on this site, but the intention now is to increase the generation output which requires a DCO application. A Planning Performance Agreement is in place between Gwynedd and the Developer as a framework to facilitate pre-application input and advice by the Planning Service. The DCO application has been submitted; the inquiry has taken place over the summer of 2016 and has since been closed.

Collaboration projects

51. The North Wales Planning Officers Group (NWPOG) which is made up of Chief Planning Officers (or equivalent) has implemented numerous planning related collaboration projects in recent years, including:

- The North Wales Minerals and Waste Planning Service
- Community Infrastructure Levy Tool Kit
- North Wales Regional Employment Project

52. During 2015-16 NWPOG will be undertaking work to explore options for further collaboration projects for the delivery of planning services which include heritage and built conservation and the natural environment.

Operational and improvement plan for the Service

53. For 2015-16 the improvement plan tasks / improvements included:

- Review of work loads for Development Management and Enforcement

This is undertaken regularly on an annual basis or as and when required in order to balance work load and to vary the type of applications and cases dealt with by Officers.

- Rationalise the filing system for Development Management and Enforcement

The main part of this project was completed in 2014-15 as part of a 3 year plan which involved scanning historic hard copy files and files kept on Microfiche. Prior to this, planning files were stored in 3 separate office location (Caernarfon, Pwllheli and Dolgellau). The project has ensured more efficient use of staff time with all files now accessed electronically. Historic files have been destroyed, and the Service now retains only 5 years worth of the recent hard copy files which are stored in the administrative office in Pwllheli, with all information on hard copy also stored electronically in the back office system. The Service is now looking at taking this work one step further with the intention of further reducing the numbers of hard copy files that a stored.

- Reach relevant stage within the Local Joint Development Plan time-table which included submitting the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate public examination.

This was achieved with the Joint Planning Policy Committee supporting the recommendation to submit the Plan towards the end of 2015-16.

- Review and rationalise the Tree Preservation Order register

The main part of this project which was the review has been completed but the Service is awaiting an upgrade to the GIS facility in the back office system, before the up to date layer of TPOs can be displayed and accessed via the Council's website. It is hoped that this is completed during 2016-17.

- Review of work processes for Development Management, Enforcement and Support

This is an ongoing process of refining, improving and adapting to changes.

- Adoption of an Enforcement Strategy and its implementation

This was adopted by the Cabinet in 2014-15 and is now operational to try and strike a balance between the day to day reactive work and the proactive work. The Enforcement Strategy is now due for review

- Improve customer service

This is an on going project that includes improving self service options, reviewing customer contact arrangements with the contact centre and assessing customer satisfaction in relation to the service delivered. Customer satisfaction surveys in the context of the pre-application advice and planning application process are undertaken by telephone on a monthly basis and questionnaires are also sent out with decision notices.

Performance Framework

54. The Council is committed to the mind set of putting the people of Gwynedd central to everything we do, ensuring that services are delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible and empowering staff to make decisions at the appropriate level. With this in mind the intention is that all Services within the Council will be subject to full reviews over the coming years which will look in detail at the purpose of the service, performance measures, work processes and the views of customers.
55. The Planning Service has therefore looked at the performance indicators in the context of the above and for 2015/16 these are the issues that we are looking at:

What do our customers think of the Service now?

56. The Planning Service has sent customer satisfaction surveys with decision notices over a number of years, but in 2015-16 we took a more proactive approach to understanding assessing customer satisfaction and we will continue to do this for 2016-17. This will involve telephone call surveys undertaken monthly on the basis of a sample of 10% of the applications determined for the relevant month. The feedback for the surveys will continue to be recorded and distributed to case officers and actions taken to adapt service arrangements where required.

Planning application indicators 5 to 8 (speed of determination)

57. For 2016/17 we will continue to concentrate more on the percentage of applications that have taken more than 8 weeks to determine and the reasons behind this. All applications that have taken more than 8 weeks to determine, are analysed quarterly and adaptations made to the working arrangements where required. Furthermore, there is also an emphasis on the speed of decisions within 8 weeks with a focus on quick decisions which are closer to the 21 days rather than 56 days (8 weeks).

Enforcement indicators 15 to 18 (speed of investigation)

58. As with the planning applications, for 2016-17 the intention is to analyse the reasons behind the percentage of enforcement cases that have taken longer than 84 days to investigate and introduce changes if required.

Service Review

59. A full review off Development Management, Enforcement and Support was proposed for 2016/17 in line with the Council's objectives for service delivery, but it is likely that only the scoping element of the work will be undertaken in 2016/17.

WHAT SERVICE USERS THINK

60. In 2015-16 more regular and proactive customer satisfaction surveys commenced which included for the first time, random telephone calls to customers having received a planning application decision within that particular month. The telephone survey was limited to two simple questions asking whether the customer was satisfied or not and any other comments the customer had regarding the service received. Over the course of 2015-16, 89% of customers have stated that they were satisfied with the service.

61. In 2015-16 we also conducted a customer satisfaction survey aimed at assessing the views of people that had received a planning application decision during the year as part of a national survey undertaken by all the Local Planning Authorities in Wales. The survey was sent to 503 people, 25% of whom submitted a whole or partial response. The majority of responses (59%) were from members of the public. 13% of respondents had their most recent planning application refused.

62. We asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the planning service. They were given the following answer options:

- Strongly agree;
- Tend to agree;
- Neither agree nor disagree;
- Tend to disagree; and
- Strongly disagree.

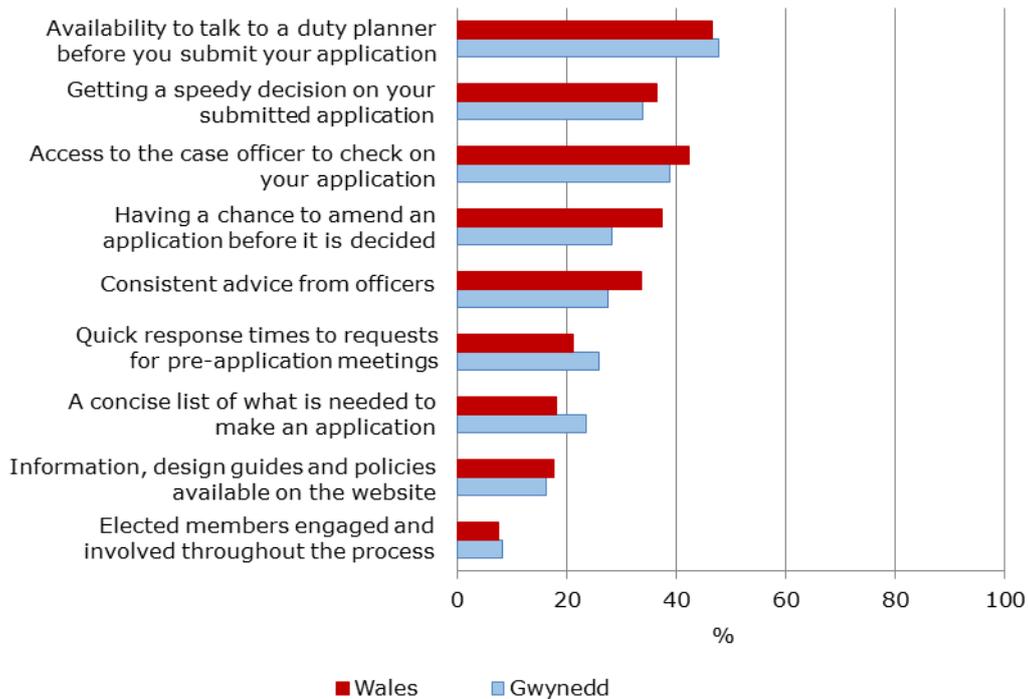
63. Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents that selected either 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree' for each statement for both our planning authority and Wales. It is noted that 66% of respondents in Gwynedd stated that they were satisfied overall with how the Authority had handled their application, which compares with the national average of 61%.

Table 1: Percentage of respondents who agreed with each statement, 2015-16

Percentage of respondents who agreed that:	%	
	Gwynedd LPA	Wales
The LPA enforces its planning rules fairly and consistently	41	47
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	56	58
The LPA gives help throughout, including with conditions	51	49
The LPA responded promptly when they had questions	56	58
They were listened to about their application	55	57
They were kept informed about their application	52	49
They were satisfied overall with how the LPA handled their application	66	61

64. We also asked respondents to select three planning service characteristics from a list that they thought would most help them achieve successful developments. Figure 1 shows how often each characteristic was selected as a percentage of the total number of selections. For us, 'the availability to talk to a duty planner before submitting an application' was the most popular choice.

Figure 1: Characteristics of a good planning service, Gwynedd LPA, 2015-16



Comments received include:

- Being able to talk to/email a Duty planner or Conservation officer before putting in an application (or formal request for pre-application advice) would be most helpful. (Even if this had to work on some kind of limited or quota basis).
- I found every member of staff that I dealt with to be most helpful and courteous.
- In my experience I have found the Gwynedd Planners to have imagination, vision and fairness.

OUR PERFORMANCE 2015-16

65. This section details our performance in 2015-16. It considers both the Planning Performance Framework indicators and other available data to help paint a comprehensive picture of performance. Where appropriate we make comparisons between our performance and the all Wales picture.

66. Performance is analysed across the five key aspects of planning service delivery as set out in the Planning Performance Framework:

- Plan making;
- Efficiency;
- Quality;
- Engagement; and
- Enforcement.

Plan making

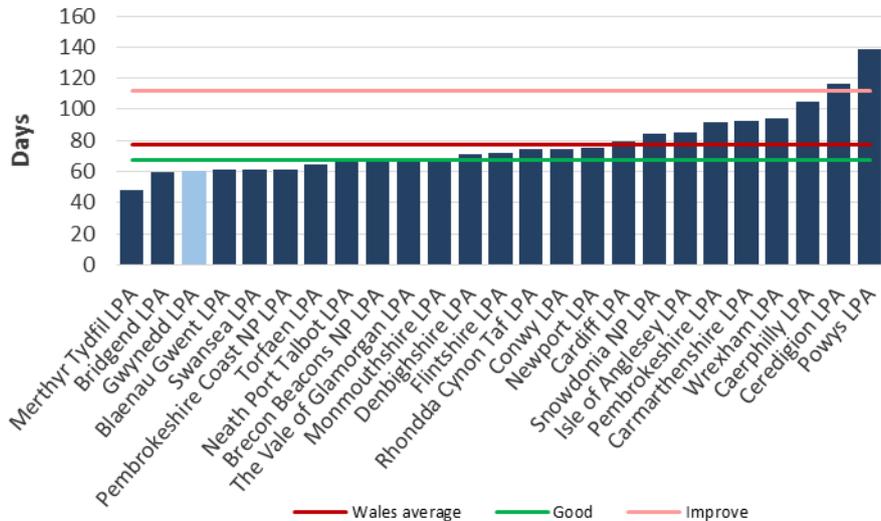
67. As at 31 March 2016, we were one of 22 LPAs that had a current development plan in place. We are currently working towards adopting our Joint Local Development Plan in spring 2017. So far, we are 16 months behind the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement but we are making good progress bearing in mind that this is a Joint Local Development Plan, which will be the first in Wales.

68. During the APR period we had 2.9 years of housing land supply identified calculated in accordance with TAN1, making us one of 17 Welsh LPAs without the required 5 years supply.

Efficiency

69. In 2015-16 we determined 1026 planning applications, each taking, on average, 60 days (9 weeks) to determine. This compares to an average of 77 days (11 weeks) across Wales. Figure 2 shows the average time taken by each LPA to determine an application during the year. This is an improvement on 2014-15 when the average was 84 days.

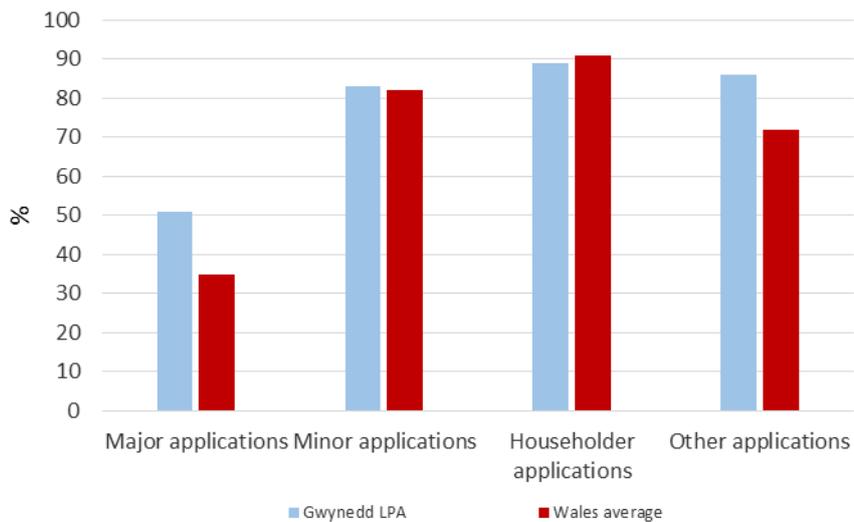
Figure 2: Average time taken (days) to determine applications, 2015-16



70. In 2015-16, 83% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales. This compared to 77% across Wales and we were one of 8 LPAs that had reached the 80% target. This is again an improvement on 2014-15 when 76% of planning applications were determined within the required timescales.

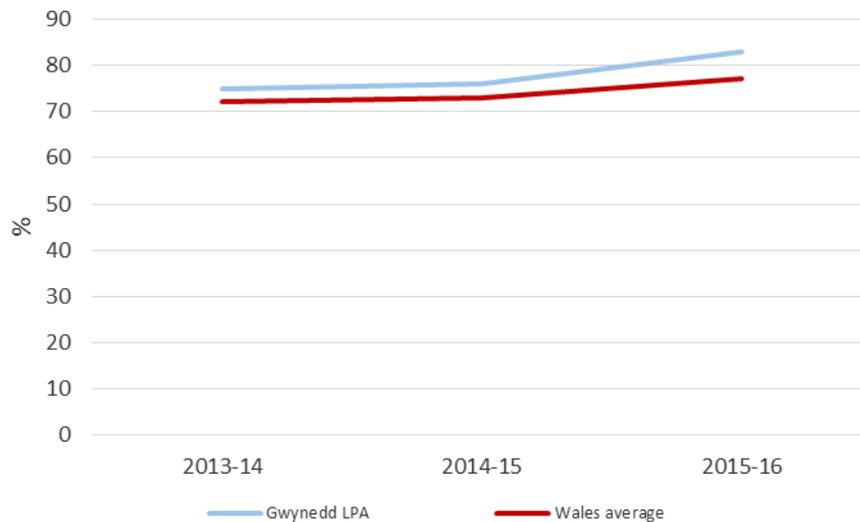
71. Figure 3 shows the percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales across the four main types of application for our LPA and Wales. It shows that we determined 89% of householder applications within the required timescales.

Figure 3: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales, by type, 2015-16



72. Between 2014-15 and 2015-16, as Figure 4 shows, the percentage of planning applications we determined within the required timescales increased from 76%. Wales also saw an increase this year.

Figure 4: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales



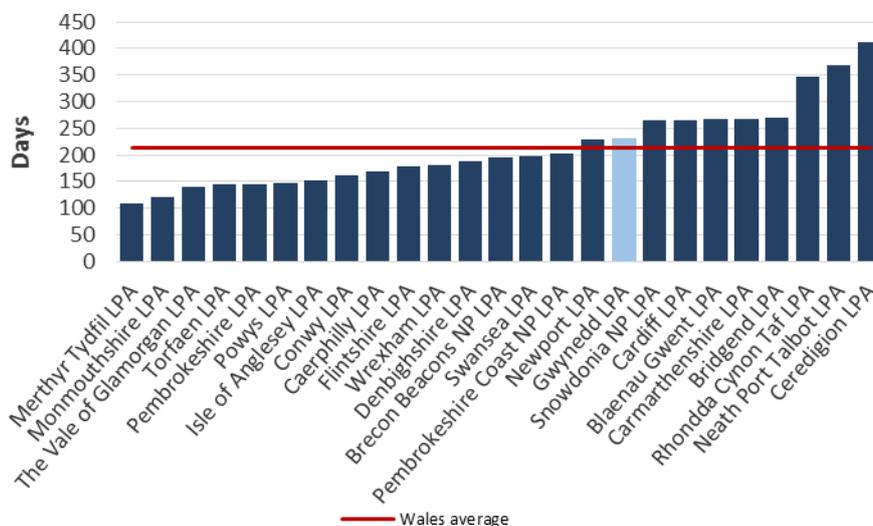
Over the same period:

- The number of applications we received increased;
- The number of applications we determined increased; and
- The number of applications we approved increased.

Major applications

73. We determined 35 major planning applications in 2015-16, none of which were subject to an EIA. Each application took, on average, 231 days (33 weeks) to determine. As Figure 5 shows, this was longer than the Wales average of 213 days (30 weeks).

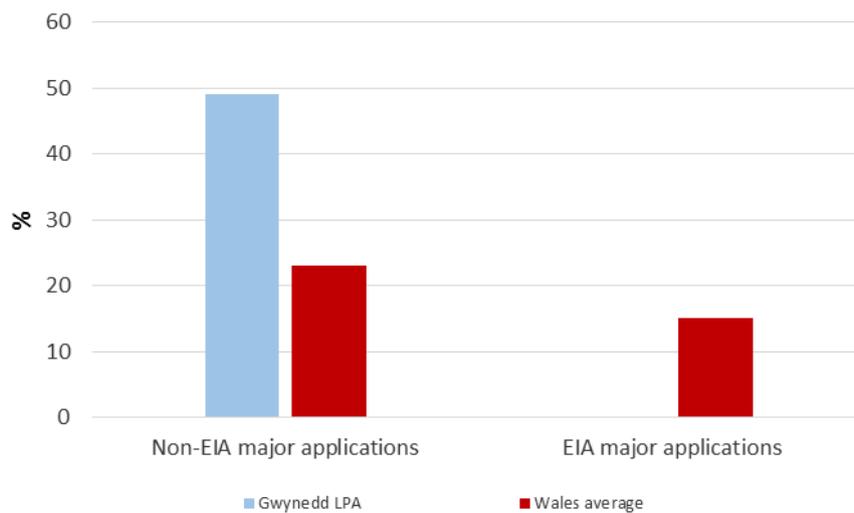
Figure 5: Average time (days) taken to determine a major application, 2015-16



74. 51% of these major applications were determined within the required timescales, the fifth highest percentage of all Welsh LPAs.

75. Figure 6 shows the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales by the type of major application. 49% of our 'standard' major applications i.e. those not requiring an EIA, were determined within the required timescales during the year.

Figure 6: Percentage of Major applications determined within the required timescales during the year, by type, 2015-16

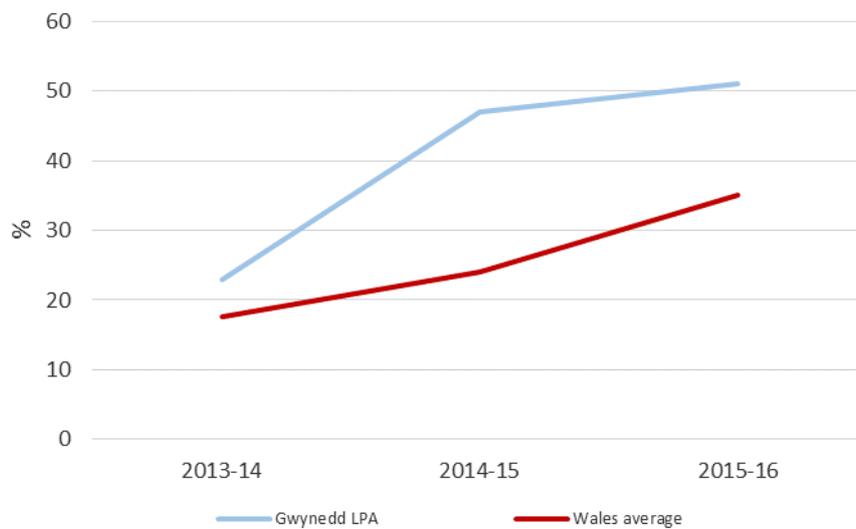


76. In addition we determined 1 major application that was subject to a PPA in the required timescales during the year.

77. Since 2014-15 the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales had increased from 47%. Similarly, the number of major applications determined increased while the number of applications subject to an EIA determined during the year stayed the same.

78. Figure 7 shows the trend in the percentage of major planning applications determined within the required timescales in recent years and how this compares to Wales.

Figure 7: Percentage of major planning applications determined within the required timescales



Over the same period:

- The percentage of minor applications determined within the required timescales increased from 77% to 83%;
- The percentage of householder applications determined within the required timescales decreased from 92% to 89%; and
- The percentage of other applications determined within required timescales increased from 75% to 86%.

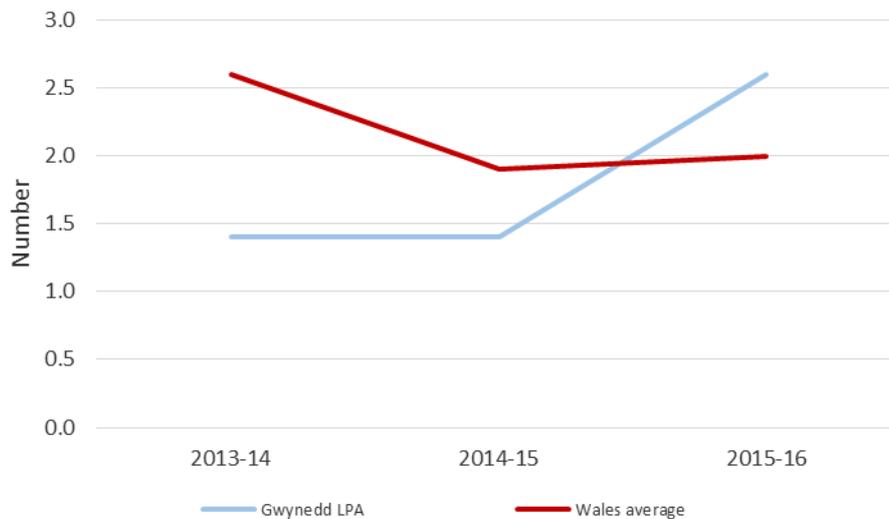
Quality

79. In 2015-16, our Planning Committee made 93 planning application decisions during the year, which equated to 9% of all planning applications determined. Across Wales 7% of all planning application decisions were made by planning committee.

80. 14% of these member-made decisions went against officer advice. This compared to 9% of member-made decisions across Wales. This equated to 1.3% of all planning application decisions going against officer advice; 0.6% across Wales.

81. In 2015-16 we received 27 appeals against our planning decisions, which equated to 2.6 appeals for every 100 applications received. This was the fifth highest ratio of appeals to applications in Wales. Figure 8 shows how the volume of appeals received has changed since 2014-15 and how this compares to Wales.

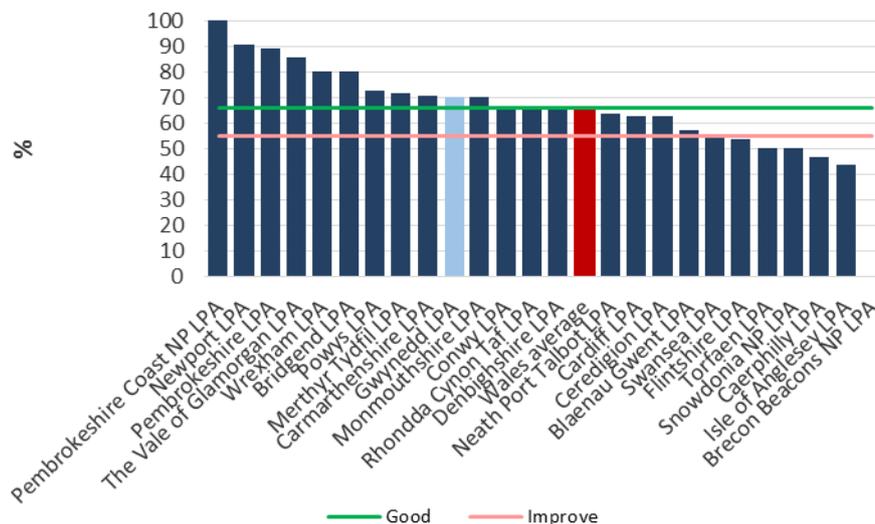
Figure 8: Number of appeals received per 100 planning applications



82. Over the same period the percentage of planning applications approved decreased from 93% to 89%.

83. Of the 27 appeals that were decided during the year, 70% were dismissed. As Figure 9 shows, this was higher than the percentage of appeals dismissed across Wales as a whole and we were one of 14 LPAs that reached the 66% target.

Figure 9: Percentage of appeals dismissed, 2015-16



84. During 2015-16 we had 2 applications for costs at a section 78 appeal upheld, making us one of the 5 LPAs to have at least one such application upheld in the year.

Engagement

85. We are:

- one of 24 LPAs that allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee; and
- one of 20 LPAs that had an online register of planning applications.

86. As Table 2 shows, 56% of respondents to our 2015-16 customer satisfaction survey agreed that the LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application.

Table 2: Feedback from our 2015-16 customer satisfaction survey

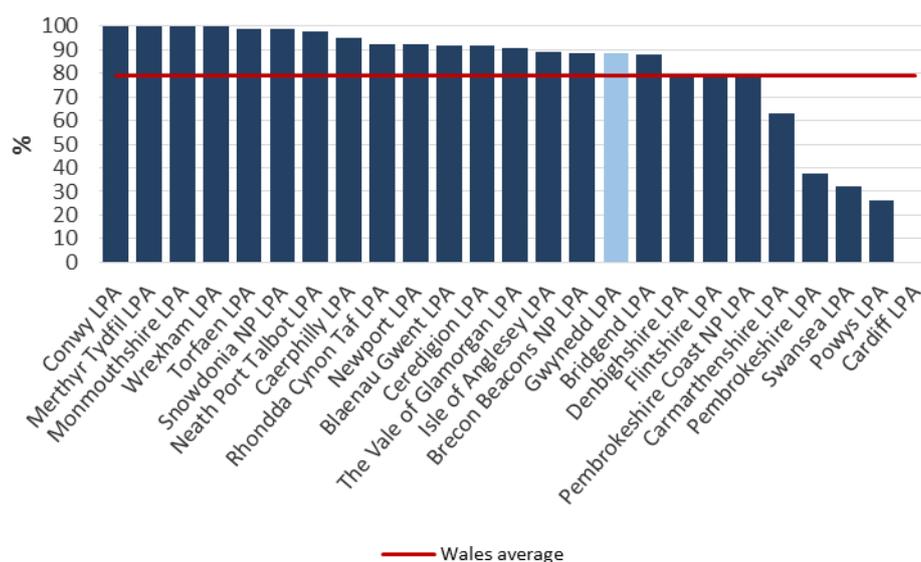
Percentage of respondents who agreed that:	%	
	Gwynedd LPA	Wales
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	56	58
They were listened to about their application	55	57

Enforcement

87. In 2015-16 we investigated 323 enforcement cases, which equated to 2.6 per 1,000 population. This compared to 1.9 enforcement cases investigated per 1,000 population across Wales. We took, on average, 85 days to investigate each enforcement case.

88. We investigated 89% of these enforcement cases within 84 days. Across Wales 79% were investigated within 84 days. Figure 10 shows the percentage of enforcement cases that were investigated within 84 days across all Welsh LPAs.

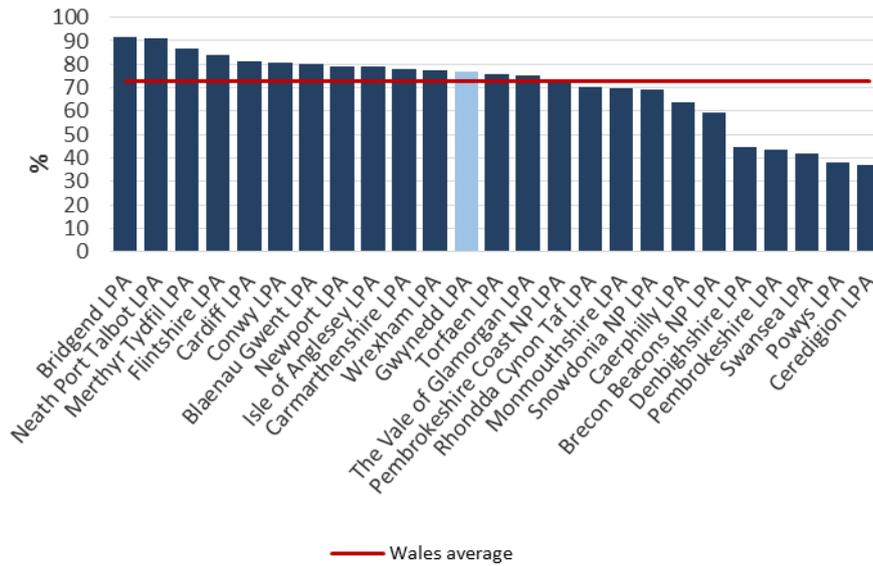
Figure 10: Percentage of enforcement cases investigated within 84 days, 2015-16



89. Over the same period, we resolved 323 enforcement cases, taking, on average, 149 days to resolve each case.

90. 77% of this enforcement action was taken within 180 days from the start of the case. As Figure 11 shows this compared to 73% of enforcement cases resolved within 180 days across Wales. It is understood that the enforcement indicators are subject to further clarification and review.

Figure 11: Percentage of enforcement cases resolved in 180 days, 2015-16



ANNEX A - PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Plan making			
Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	Yes		No
LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	<12	13-17	18+
Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	Yes		No
The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	>5		<5
Efficiency			
Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	Not set	Not set	Not set
Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set
Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	>80	60.1-79.9	<60
Average time taken to determine all applications in days	<67	67-111	112+
Quality			
Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	<5	4.9-8.9	9+
Percentage of appeals dismissed	>66	55.1-65.9	<55
Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	0	1	2
Engagement			
Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	Yes		No
Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	Yes		No

WALES AVERAGE	Gwynedd LPA LAST YEAR	Gwynedd LPA THIS YEAR
Yes	Yes	Yes
47	16	12
Yes	N/A	N/A
3.9	3.3	2.9
35	47	51
213	255	231
77	76	83
77	84	60
9	8	8.6
67	56	70
0	0	2
Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	-	No

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Does the local planning authority's web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access, track their progress (and view their content)?	Yes	Partial	No
Enforcement			
Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days	Not set	Not set	Not set
Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases	Not set	Not set	Not set
Percentage of enforcement cases where enforcement action is taken or a retrospective application granted within 180 days from the start of the case (in those cases where it was expedient to enforce)?	Not set	Not set	Not set
Average time taken to take enforcement action	Not set	Not set	Not set

WALES AVERAGE	Gwynedd LPA LAST YEAR	Gwynedd LPA THIS YEAR
Yes	Yes	Yes
79	77	89
88	No Data	85
73	80	77
210	133	149

SECTION 1 – PLAN MAKING

Indicator	01. Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
A development plan (LDP or UDP) is in place and within the plan period	N/A	No development plan is in place (including where the plan has expired)

Authority’s performance	Yes
The Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan covers 2001 – 2016 and therefore remains the starting point for making decisions on planning applications and relevant appeals.	

Indicator	02. LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
The LDP is being progressed within 12 months of the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement	The LDP is being progressed within between 12 and 18 months of the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement	The LDP is being progressed more than 18 months later than the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement

Authority’s performance	12
The original Delivery Agreement set October 2013 as a target to publish the Deposit Plan for public consultation. The Deposit Plan was published for public consultation in February 2015, which is 16 months later than initially anticipated. The slippage can be accounted for by a number of factors, which include a late local election in Anglesey that delayed public consultation about the Preferred Strategy; new household projections published by the Welsh Government post Preferred Strategy that required additional analysis in order to comply with requirements set out in Planning Policy Wales. If the current timetable is achieved the Joint LDP will be adopted within 12 months after the target set out in the original Delivery Agreement (April 2016).	

Indicator	03. Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
An AMR is due, and has been prepared		An AMR is due, and has not been prepared

Authority’s performance	N/A
Not applicable as the Joint LDP has not been adopted.	

Indicator	04. The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	
"Good"		"Improvement needed"
The authority has a housing land supply of more than 5 years		The authority has a housing land supply of less than 5 years

Authority's performance	2.9
TAN 1 requires local planning authorities to apply a residual method of calculating housing land supply. The Housing Land Availability Study report that presents the results of the assessment of sites during 2015 – 2016 reveals a 2.9 years supply. However application of a past build rate trend would give the Council a 8.5 years supply.	

SECTION 2 - EFFICIENCY

Indicator	05. Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority's performance	51
The benchmarking data indicates that the performance is the fifth highest in Wales although it is accepted that this is largely influenced by the number of applications determined. Furthermore, this is an improvement on 2014-15.	

Indicator	06. Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority's performance	231
This is an improvement on 2014-15. The LPA tries to work with applicants / developers so that applications where possible, with the required evidence submitted, can be supported. Quicker decisions would be likely to have resulted in more applications refused planning permission and the associated loss of any potential social, economic and environmental benefits.	

Indicator	07. Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
More than 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Between 60% and 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Less than 60% of applications are determined within the statutory time period

Authority's performance	83
This is an improvement on 2014/15 (76%) and reflects the efforts made by the Service to try and determine applications (where possible) as soon as possible after the 21 days consultation period.	

Indicator	08. Average time taken to determine all applications in days	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Less than 67 days	Between 67 and 111 days	112 days or more

Authority's performance	60
This is an improvement on 2014-15 (84) and again reflects the efforts made by the Service to try and determine applications (where possible) as soon as possible after the 21 days consultation period.	

SECTION 3 - QUALITY

Indicator	09. Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Less than 5% of decisions	Between 5% and 9% of decisions	9% or more of decisions

Authority's performance	8.6
Where there are possible risks to the Council, the Planning Committee procedure includes referral of an application to a "cooling off" period. The application is then reported back to Planning Committee within 6 weeks with a report that highlights the planning policy context, the possible risks and possible options available to the Planning Committee. This procedure has worked well over the years and has managed to avoid possible risks to the Council.	

Indicator	10. Percentage of appeals dismissed	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
More than 66% (two thirds) of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal	Between 55% and 66% of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal	Less than 55% of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal

Authority's performance	70
This is an improvement on 2014-15 (56%).	

Indicator	11. Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
The authority has not had costs awarded against it at appeal	The authority has had costs awarded against it in one appeal case	The authority has had costs awarded against it in two or more appeal cases

Authority's performance	2
This represents a drop in comparison with 2014-15 when the figure was 0. Both applications were refused by the Planning Committee contrary to Officer's recommendations.	

SECTION 4 – ENGAGEMENT

Indicator	12. Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Members of the public are able to address the Planning Committee		Members of the public are not able to address the Planning Committee

Authority's performance	Yes
This has been in operation since 2010 and there are standard procedures in place.	

Indicator	13. Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	
“Good”		“Improvement needed”
Members of the public can seek advice from a duty planning officer		There is no duty planning officer available

Authority’s performance	No
There are formal pre-application advice procedures in place to deal with all planning inquiries and meetings can be arranged by prior appointment. The contact centre is used currently as the first point of contact for customers and this arrangement is currently under review.	

Indicator	14. Does the local planning authority’s web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access track their progress (and view their content)?	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
All documents are available online	Only the planning application details are available online, and access to other documents must be sought directly	No planning application information is published online

Authority’s performance	Yes
This is operational since 2005 with the option of submitting an application via the Planning Portal available since 2008.	

SECTION 5 – ENFORCEMENT

Indicator	15. Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority’s performance	89
Performance has improved from 2014-15 (77%) with benchmarking data indicating that it is above the Wales average.	

Indicator	16. Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority's performance	85
There are still currently issues regarding what exactly is measured and how this data can be captured in the back office system.	

Indicator	17. Percentage of enforcement cases where enforcement action is taken or a retrospective application granted within 180 days from the start of the case (in those cases where it was expedient to enforce)	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority's performance	77
Benchmarking data indicates that this is higher than the Wales average but the performance is influenced by the volume of cases. This represents a slight drop from 2014-15 (80).	

Indicator	18. Average time taken to take enforcement action	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority's performance	149
Benchmarking data indicates that this is higher than the Wales average but the performance is influenced by the volume and type of cases. As an Authority with most cases we try and negotiate to resolve cases where this is possible.	

SECTION 6 – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

The purpose of the Sustainable Development Indicators is to measure the contribution the planning system makes to sustainable development in Wales.

The Sustainable Development Indicators will be used to measure the progress against national planning sustainability objectives, set out in Planning Policy Wales, and can be used to demonstrate to our stakeholders the role and scope of the planning system in delivering wider objectives. The information will also be useful to local planning authorities to understand more about the outcomes of the planning system and help inform future decisions.

Authority's returns	In quarter 1 we provided a partial response (55 of 57 data items); In quarter 2 we provided a partial response (55 of 57 data items); In quarter 3 we provided a partial response (55 of 57 data items); In quarter 4 we provided a partial response (55 of 57 data items).
55 of 57 data items responded to with "0" value recorded where appropriate. Only data not responded to is the SD6 as the back office system is not set-up to facilitate recording this date. There is no date at present for this to be resolved. ANGEN CHECIO	

Indicator	SD1. The floor space (square metres) granted and refused planning permission for new economic development on allocated employment sites during the year.
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Granted (square metres)	
Authority's data	7,400

Refused (square metres)	
Authority's data	342

This data is not specifically related to performance but it reflects the positive approach to planning.

Indicator	SD2. Planning permission granted for renewable and low carbon energy development during the year.
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Granted permission (number of applications)	
Authority's data	18

Granted permission (MW energy generation)	
Authority's data	26

This data is not specifically related to performance. The data is a reflection of the Gwynedd Unitary

Development Plan Policy which supports small scale renewable energy projects that are less than 5MW (except within the AONB).

Indicator	SD3. The number of dwellings granted planning permission during the year.
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Market housing (number of units)	
Authority's data	237

Affordable housing (number of units)	
Authority's data	17

This data is not specifically related to performance but reflects a positive approach to planning. Furthermore, the 17 number of affordable houses only reflects schemes with a section 106 agreement to ensure affordability. It does not include the number of houses that are affordable due to size, location and the nature of the local housing market. This is data that the Planning Service has collected for 2015/16 which shows that 145 of the 237 houses granted permission were affordable through a 106, or as Housing Association development or due to their size and location.

Indicator	SD4. Planning permission granted and refused for development in C1 and C2 floodplain areas during the year.
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Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that DID NOT meet all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission	
Authority's data	0

Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that did not meet all TAN 15 tests which were REFUSED permission on flood risk grounds	
Authority's data	1

Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that MET all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission	
Authority's data	9

The data is not specifically related to performance but demonstrates that the LPA deals with applications in accordance with local and national planning policies.

Indicator	SD5. The area of land (ha) granted planning permission for new development on previously developed land and greenfield land during the year.
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Previously developed land (hectares)	
Authority's data	7

Greenfield land (hectares)	
Authority's data	4

The data is not specifically related to performance and is just a high level indication of where developments that were in accordance with planning policy will be located.

Indicator	SD6. The area of public open space (ha) that would be lost and gained as a result of development granted planning permission during the quarter.
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Open space lost (hectares)	
Authority's data	0

Open space gained (hectares)	
Authority's data	0

This data cannot be recorded at present as back office issues have not been resolved.

Indicator	SD7. The total financial contributions (£) agreed from new development granted planning permission during the quarter for the provision of community infrastructure.
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Gained via Section 106 agreements (£)	
Authority's data	0

Gained via Community Infrastructure Levy (£)	
Authority's data	0

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