



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

All Wales Planning Annual Performance Report 2014/15



INTRODUCTION

Carl Sargeant AM – Minister for Natural Resources

The 2014 fiscal year has been a period of positive change for the planning system in Wales. The first ever Planning Bill for Wales was introduced in October 2014, and benefitted from the input of stakeholders in Wales in crafting and refining the Bill as it progressed through scrutiny at the Assembly.

That input was instrumental in defining a planning system for Wales that is designed to meet our distinctive needs and aspirations. I am keen to maintain the momentum from broad stakeholder input to promote positive change.

The Bill became the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 in July, and work is proceeding quickly to implement it. The Act introduces new powers to create a more proactive and enabling planning service, but is not in itself the only means to achieve continuous improvement in the delivery of services. To achieve this, all stakeholders must work together in a spirit of co-operation, to share information and aspirations.

The Annual Performance Reports submitted to me in November 2015 provide a baseline to consider the impact and outcome of changes that have been made to legislation, and how they affect the operation of services at direct delivery level. This information can be used to inform, develop and hone future legislative and policy changes.

The scale of challenge faced by local planning authorities in delivering this statutory service in the light of ongoing budget restraint is significant. But the vigour and enthusiasm with which local planning authorities strive to provide better services to citizens in the light of these constraints, demonstrated in their Annual Performance Reports, is impressive.

I continue to be grateful for the support of stakeholders in not only striving for an excellent planning system which aims to provide the best service that it can, but also for their engagement in the collaborative approach to continuous service improvement.

Carl Sargeant AM
Minister for Natural Resources
March 2016



1 – Context

Annual Performance Reports – Background

The evidence base underpinning the changes to the Welsh planning system, which ultimately became the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, came to a common view that the existing system could serve users better.

As well as consulting on proposals for inclusion in the draft Planning (Wales) Bill in December 2013, the Welsh Government also consulted on a series of proposals to support and assist in the achievement of culture change and a collaborative approach to pursuit of service standards, to accompany the planned legislative changes.

The [Positive Planning Consultation](#) proposed the introduction of a series of indicators designed to both measure service standards in a comparable way, to realign the planning system to deliver a quality outcome for its users, and to foster collaboration, joint working and the sharing of best practice between planning stakeholders.

The framework for measuring and reporting on the delivery of planning services across Wales, proposed in the Positive Planning Consultation, included:

- a Performance Framework, publishing performance against indicators and targets agreed with stakeholders and informed by data collected on a quarterly basis;
- an Annual Performance Report, prepared by local planning authorities, summarising their performance over the previous financial year, and identifying areas of best practice and actions to be taken to drive improvement where required; and
- a cumulative Annual Performance Report, prepared by the Welsh Government, giving a strategic picture of common issues and factors in the delivery of local services and setting out areas for future work in delivering and sharing good practice.

The intended outcome of these measures is to:

- Provide a clear and accurate picture to all stakeholders of the levels of service delivery by Welsh local planning authorities, measured against [a suite of performance indicators and targets](#) developed and agreed with the Planning Officers Society for Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association.
- Identify where service standards of local planning authorities fall below acceptable levels, so that support measures can be introduced, where appropriate, and where this fails intervention to improve local services.
- Identify areas of good practice, to promote the sharing of good ideas amongst local planning authorities.
- Encourage local planning authorities to take a reflective, self-improvement approach to the local delivery of services, as part of the Annual Performance Report process.

- Enable a cumulative view on the operational issues faced by local planning authorities, measure the operational impact of legislative and policy changes, and provide support where appropriate to enable positive change.

This report constitutes a cumulative review of the state of the planning service being delivered by stakeholders across Wales, and the issues and opportunities faced by those with responsibility for delivering that service.

Although the 2014-15 Annual Performance Report covers local planning authorities and the Welsh Government, all stakeholders in the planning service have a part to play in ensuring that the system operates well. We will also report on the role of statutory consultees, and their responses to the duties placed upon them by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, in future years.

Annual Performance Reports – Implementation

This is the first generation of Annual Performance Reports, and constitutes a review of the delivery of planning services during the 2014-2015 financial year. Local planning authorities submitted their first Annual Performance Reports to the Welsh Government in November 2015.

The timescale for submission of APRs was planned to follow the submission of Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Reports in November 2015, given their ability to inform the Annual Performance Reports. To ensure timely submission of Annual Performance Reports and the progressing of actions within them, we plan to bring forward the submission date in the next reporting year, to align with submission of AMRs. This will have a number of benefits, including streamlining of local planning authority report approval processes.

The Minister for Natural Resources appointed a Positive Planning Advisory Group in November 2015, to advise on learning requirements and good practice. Examples taken from individual Annual Performance Reports will be taken forward by the Group, and in partnership with the Planning Officers Society Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association, and where appropriate, used to inform work to be undertaken by local planning authorities to improve their performance.

Further information

More information about the Planning Performance Framework is available at:

- The Performance Framework table for the period 2014-15 is at Annex A. An index of published local planning authority APRs is at Annex B.
- Our [Planning Performance Framework webpage](#) sets out current targets and the latest published reports on performance.
- Our [Annual Performance Report webpage](#) contains the performance indicators and targets to be reported upon, guidance on the format and production of Annual Performance Reports, and will host our Annual Performance Reports.

2 – Planning Services Delivered by Welsh Government

The business of the Welsh Government’s Planning Directorate

The activities of the Planning Directorate have been focused to a great extent on the development, drafting and refinement of the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, as it passed through the various stages of scrutiny in the National Assembly for Wales.

The Act itself was developed through consideration of an extensive evidence base, and was included in draft form in the [Positive Planning Consultation](#) in October 2013. The Bill was tabled in September 2014, and was scrutinised by the Finance, Environment and Sustainability, and Constitution and Legislative Affairs Committees, before being subject to debate and approval by the National Assembly in Plenary, in May 2015. The Act gained royal Assent in July 2015.

Work on the Act was supplemented by legislative and non-legislative activity. This included a variety of consultation exercises undertaken in the reporting period. Work areas included:

- Conceptualising a new National Development Framework, which will set out national policies on infrastructure and land use planning issues;
- The context for preparation of Strategic Development Plans to consider development policies on a strategic basis;
- Improvements to the Local Development Plan process to improve and enhance the production and adoption of development plans;
- Introduction of the Developments of National Significance application procedure to enable consideration of strategic and infrastructure development on a national basis;
- Refinements to the Development Management Process to enhance the performance of the system; and
- Revisions to national planning policy and technical advice to support these other changes.

More detail on the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 and associated work, is set out in our [Positive Planning Implementation Plan](#).

Planning decisions made by the Welsh Government

The Welsh Ministers have a statutory role in the planning process, which is to consider appeals. This activity is conducted by the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Welsh Ministers, although the Welsh Ministers may decide to determine an appeal themselves in some cases. More detail on this is provided below.

The Welsh Ministers also have powers which enable them to [recover a planning decision from local planning authorities](#), subject to certain circumstances. This process is invoked by request and is known as “calling in” a decision for determination. In practice, the consideration of the case is undertaken by officials, and a recommendation on a course of action on each case is put to the Minister for Natural Resources. If the Minister decides to call in the application then it will be processed by Planning Inspectorate Wales, with a Planning Inspector making a recommendation to the Welsh Ministers.

Our performance targets are based on the same premise as that used for determination of planning applications by local planning authorities; that is, that some cases are more complex than others and will require more work and more time to consider, but that 80% of all cases should ordinarily be handled within target time frames. We have also applied “fair” and “improve” bandings that are reflective of the targets set for determination of planning applications by local planning authorities. The table below lists the application types, their relevant performance targets, and the Welsh Government’s performance against those targets, for the 2014/15 Financial Year.

CASE TYPE	INDICATOR	TOTALS
	Good – >80	
	Fair – 60-80	
	Improve – <60	
Award of Costs cases within 84 days	Cases on time	4 of 5
	% on time	80
	Average days	61.7
Decisions whether or not to call in applications within 21 days	Cases on time	35 of 41
	% on time	85
	Average days	26.9
Notification Direction cases within 21 days	Cases on time	7 of 7
	% on time	100
	Average days	17.8
Recovered Appeals and Called In cases within 84 days	Cases on time	6 of 10
	% on time	60
	Average days	95
Compulsory Purchase Order Confirmations within 84 days	Cases on time	1 of 1
	% on time	100
	Average days	78
EIA Screening requests within 21 days	Cases on time	14 of 20
	% on time	70
	Average days	24.4
Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent Confirmations within 84 days	Cases on time	31 of 32
	% on time	97
	Average days	60.5
Transport and Works Act applications within 112 days	Cases on time	0 of 0
	% on time	N/A
	Average days	N/A

Fig 1 – Welsh Government Caseload Performance Statistics

The Planning Directorate determined 98 of its 116 cases within its target date, representing an average percentage rate of 84.4%. The timeliness for determining these cases broadly meets the set targets, although we acknowledge that delays in processing a small number of complex cases has had an effect on the small sample size of the caseload, and have

taken steps to address this. For example, in Quarter 1 2014/15, we considered 9 call-in requests in which 7 of those were determined within 21 days. Only 2 were determined over the 21 day performance target; these cases skewed the average time taken to determine all call-in requests in the quarter, to 33.4 days.

In practice, cases had been determined in shorter time periods than recorded. Enhanced record-keeping practices have streamlined the case handling process, and better use of ICT solutions to log, process and monitor cases, including the production and monitoring of performance statistics, has ensured that the data has more accurately reflected the performance of the Planning Directorate over time. As a consequence, performance against all these indicators gradually improved over the duration of the financial year.

We have also conducted a review of the Environmental Impact Assessment case process, and have transferred case handling responsibility to Planning Inspectorate (Wales). Those cases that remain to be considered by the Welsh Government are subject to a new, more streamlined internal procedure for determination.

While the figures above indicate that 84.4% of these cases are dealt with within 21 days, we believe there is scope to improve this and will continue to seek further improvements in performance, following an internal review of the call-in process.

Planning decisions made by the Planning Inspectorate (Wales), on behalf of the Welsh Government

Planning Inspectorate (PINS) is an executive agency of the Welsh and UK Government. It undertakes an independent public examination of development plans prior to their adoption. PINS also considers appeals made by applicants against the refusal of planning permission, or against conditions attached to the approval of planning permission, as well as appeals against enforcement action for breaches of planning control.

Planning Inspectorate (Wales) provides the above services specifically in Wales. It is funded by the Welsh Government and reports to the Minister for Natural Resources on its service performance. Planning Inspectorate (Wales) also contributes to a [PINS England and Wales annual report](#), and that contribution in relation to Wales is summarised below.

Performance against Ministerial and corporate targets

The Planning Inspectorate (Wales) continued to draw on the professional expertise and utilize additional inspector resource from the Bristol headquarters. This is cost effective and ensures quality and consistency in the services provided. Other benefits include access to the services of teams in the Bristol headquarters for finance, HR and IT.

The Planning Inspectorate (Wales) continued to meet the tighter written representations decision target of 85% for both planning and enforcement appeals. The overall workload in 2014-15 was less than in 2013-14, with a total appeals intake of around 1,040 compared to just over 1,100 in the previous year.

Two local development plans were adopted in 2014-15 (Carmarthenshire and Newport). Two examinations, Cardiff and Neath Port Talbot, were on-going at the year end.

In terms of quality, 99.5% of inspectors' decisions have been issued free from justified complaint or legal challenge during the year, against a target of 99%. For administration 99.3% of work was free from such errors.

The Director for Wales met and presented to planning committee members from all local planning authorities, offering them an opportunity to learn more about the role of the Planning Inspectorate. The Director has used the visits as an opportunity to encourage authorities to work collaboratively and share best practice.

Regular meetings were held with the sponsor division in Welsh Government. The Planning Inspectorate (Wales) continued to support the Government's objectives, working closely with officials to help deliver their planning reform agenda.

Staff

To ensure that customer expectations are met, inspectors and office based staff work flexibly. Experience and skills learned are frequently employed elsewhere in the business. Specific specialist training is provided to inspectors and office based staff as required. Inspectors are supported and mentored by existing senior inspectors to further their level of experience.

The professional development of planning officers is supported and opportunities to further their professional careers are provided. Their role in Local Development Plan work is increasing and they have recently taken on new work from Welsh Government. Welsh speaking members of staff have attended site visits to support inspectors where appellants were Welsh speakers and it was not possible to allocate a Welsh speaking inspector.

Continuous improvement

Welsh Government legislation was brought into force in the year that formalized the Householder Appeal Service and Commercial Appeal Service pilots. The power for the Planning Inspectorate to determine the procedure was also introduced, which has led to time and financial benefits.

The Planning Inspectorate (Wales) has undertaken rechargeable work in the year for various policy divisions of Welsh Government and provided inspectors to deal with local government compulsory purchase order inquiries.

The casework management used by the Planning Inspectorate (Wales) enables all appeal documentation to be published on the Appeals Casework Portal thereby making it accessible for all. Full use is made of other technology allowing for flexible working solutions.

3 – PERFORMANCE OF LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES

The following section considers the performance of the 25 local planning authorities in Wales as a whole, against the indicators and targets established in the Planning Performance Framework, and published in the Performance Framework table for Financial Year 2014/15 (attached at Annex A). Where relevant, charts are used to establish benchmarks and make relative comparisons of progress against indicators. Detailed consideration is given to each performance indicator.

Resourcing

As part of their Annual Performance Reports, local planning authorities were requested to report on funding and resourcing matters for local planning departments. Eleven of the 25 LPAs provided detailed information on budgeting and resourcing as part of their APRs.

Whilst the picture is mixed across Wales, it is apparent that there is an overall downward trend in funding being made available to deliver local planning services. Some authorities had experienced budget increases within the 2014/15 financial year – although it should be noted that these authorities have identified within their APRs that they have important areas of service improvement to address. By comparison, one authority in particular had received a 40% resourcing reduction over this period.

We acknowledged in our [consultation on planning fees in December 2014](#) that fees do not typically cover the full cost of providing planning services – especially for minor or householder applications, which form the majority of a local planning authority's workload. Whilst, as a result of that consultation exercise, we introduced an increase of 15% in planning fees in September 2015 (after the end of this reporting period), the way in which that fee is collected and spent varies between local planning authorities.

Whilst the financial planning and budgeting of local services is a matter for each respective authority, applicants pay a fee for a service, and expect a reasonable level of service for that payment; also, the level of service provided should be commensurate with the payment made. If authorities choose to pursue funding models that do not see a fee uplift transferred to planning departments, then the chosen funding model must be sufficient to deliver an appropriate level of service in light of fee income. The Minister has made a commitment work with local planning authorities to explore cost recovery. It will be difficult to justify consideration of any fee increase in the future if authorities do not retain fee increases within planning departments.

Staffing

The staffing and resourcing picture across Welsh local planning authorities is complex and varied. There is no common organisational model, and the workload and specialisms of officers varies considerably. In some departments, small development management teams deal with a high workload of complex and major applications, whilst in others with a comparative workload, there is a higher number of officers with a lower proportionate individual caseload, and also comparatively less complex applications to consider.

Local authorities and other public sector organisations have also faced a period of financial austerity in the light of reduced UK Government funding to the Welsh public sector. As a

consequence of strategic budget reductions, each department has wrestled with the need to make savings targets.

The majority of LPAs facing these issues have secured savings through a combination of deleting posts, holding vacancies within teams, or in some cases through voluntary redundancies. As a consequence, staff workload for remaining officers has increased and there is less opportunity for funding or facility time to ensure continuous development and training.

This has disproportionately affected the retention of expertise and skills within local planning departments, particularly in specialist fields and areas of discretionary activity such as enforcement. There is ongoing work on to rationalise use of resources and expertise in several areas, and North Wales authorities in particular are working closely to explore options for shared working practices in more detail. Similarly, joint minerals and waste services in North and South West Wales continue to provide valued and flexible services to multiple local planning authorities.

Local planning authorities are responsible for their own resourcing plans and commitments, but must ensure that planning departments are able to provide an appropriate level of service, including enforcement and specialist technical expertise on planning matters, or alternatively the relevant expertise should be secured through joint working or a service level agreement.

OVERVIEW OF WALES AVERAGE PERFORMANCE AGAINST ALL INDICATORS

This chart compares the average performance of Welsh local planning authorities against the 18 Performance Framework indicators, for the periods 2013/14 and 2014/15. A number of these indicators were introduced in November 2014. Comparative data for the earlier periods is not available.

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE		Wales Average 2013/14	Wales Average 2014/15
Plan making						
1. Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	Yes		No		Yes	Yes
2. LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	<12	13-17	18+		46	47
3. Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	Yes		No		Yes	Yes
4. The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	>5	4-4.9	<4		4.7	4.2
Efficiency						
5. Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	Not set	Not set	Not set		21	24
6. Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set		No Data	206
7. Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	>80	60.1-79.9	<60		72.1	72.7
8. Average time taken to determine all applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set		No Data	76.4
Quality						
9. Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	Not set	Not set	Not set		0.8	10.1
10. Percentage of appeals dismissed	>66	55.1-65.9	<55		65.4	65.6
11. Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	0	1	2		0	0

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE		Wales Average 2013/14	Wales Average 2014/15
Engagement						
12. Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	Yes		No		Yes	Yes
13. Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	Yes		No		No Data	Yes
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)?	Yes	Partial	No		Yes	Yes
Enforcement						
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	Not set	Not set	Not set		No Data	65.8
16. Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases	Not set	Not set	Not set		No Data	71.1
17. Percentage of enforcement cases where enforcement action is taken or a retrospective application received within 180 days from the start of the case (in those cases where it was expedient to enforce)	Not set	Not set	Not set		No Data	76.8
18. Average time taken to take enforcement action	Not set	Not set	Not set		No Data	175.5

SECTION 1 – PLAN MAKING

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

Performance	Yes (17 of 25)
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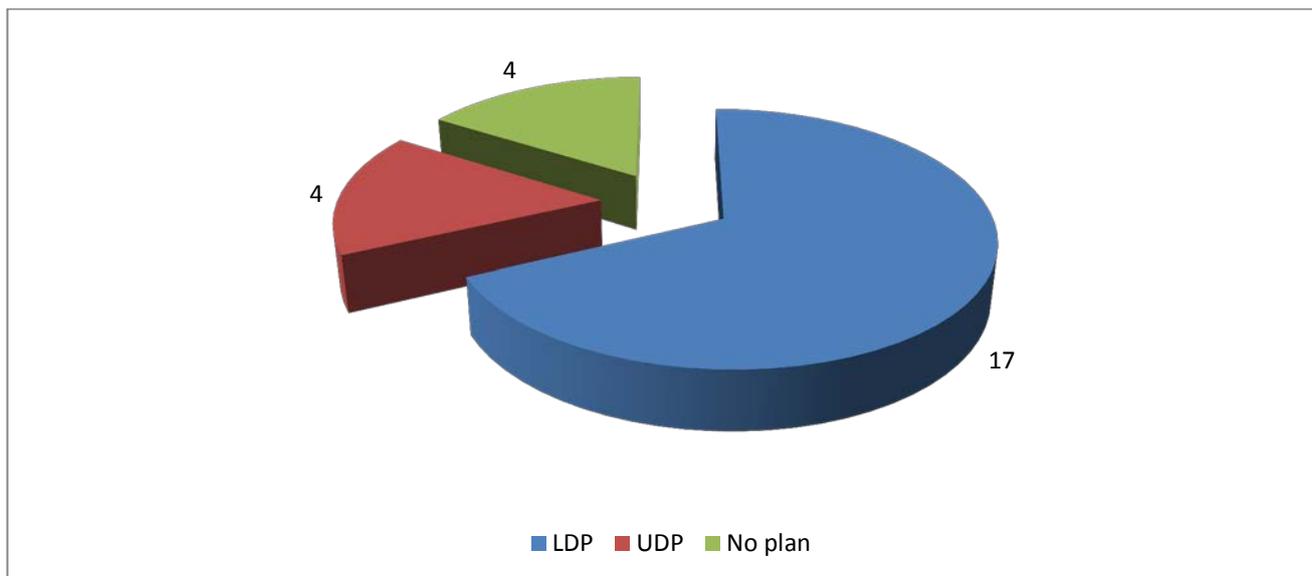


Fig 1 – Local planning authorities with an adopted development plan in March 2015

As of 31 March 2015, 21 of 25 local planning authorities had an adopted development plan in place. Two Local Development plans were adopted during the reporting period, bringing the total of adopted LDPs to 17, and four authorities had Unitary Development Plans in place. This leaves four authorities in Wales without a development plan in place at the end of financial year 2014/15.

In the case of each of these four authorities, work on the authority’s respective development plan has been significantly delayed, although each is expected to achieve key milestones in the next year – including two being adopted by March 2015.

Officers working on development plans have formed their own regional policy officers’ groups, to share experience and practice, and consider further options for collaboration on LDP progression. Welsh Government officials are also working closely with those authorities that are in the process of bringing forward or revising their LDPs.

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

Performance	47 months (across seven LDPs currently subject to delay)
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Each local planning authority must, very early in the process of preparing a Local Development Plan, publish a Delivery Agreement, setting out how it will bring the plan forward, including a timeline setting out key stages of progress. This indicator measures slippage from key milestones set out in the original Delivery Agreement timeline. It applies only to LPAs which had not yet adopted their LDP in March 2015.

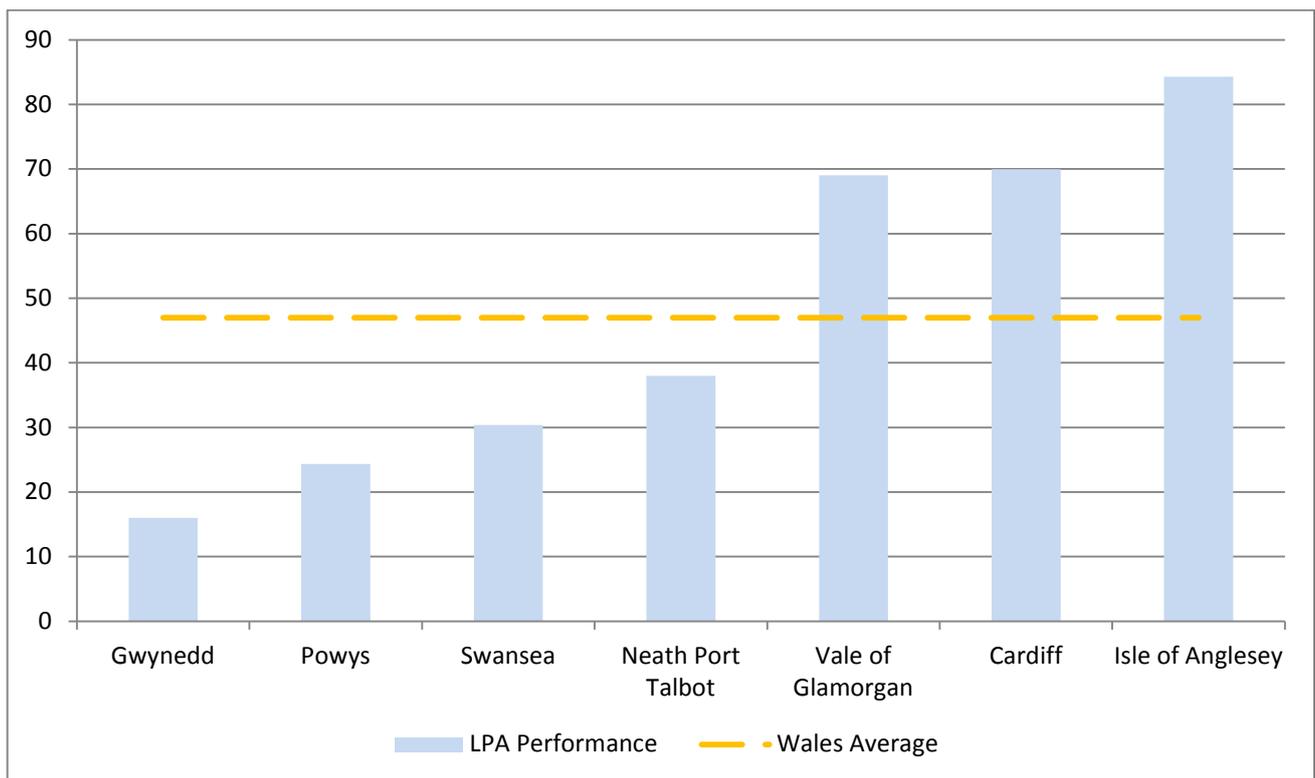


Fig 2 – Delay in LDP preparation, in months

Although seven authorities are listed above, Cyngor Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey County Council are pursuing a single joint LDP. Each of the six LDPs which were in preparation in March 2015 were subject to significant delay. In some cases, this has included the withdrawal of draft plans which were in an advanced stage of development. There are a

further two LDPs which are so early in stages of preparation that they have not reached any milestones for comparison, and so are excluded from the above chart.

Authorities progressing their development plans well, and in accordance with their delivery agreements, will avoid additional expense to the public purse by keeping the cost of work associated with the plan under control and reducing the risk of successful planning appeals.

We have also reflected on the LDP preparation process, in the light of feedback from LPAs and other stakeholders, and introduced a series of refinements, which will assist with the timely production and establishment of robust evidence to support LDP preparation. These refinements include changes to primary and secondary legislation, and revised guidance on development plan production. In addition, the experience of LPA officers in bringing forward LDPs will enable a well-grounded approach to project planning for future LDP reviews.

Those LPAs which were first to adopt their LDPs have now come to their trigger date for an LDP review, which is 4 years after adoption. As a consequence, these LPAs will also be measured against this indicator. We anticipate that LDP reviews will be progressed in accordance with their project plans. We will, however, continue to closely monitor LDP progress, and work with LPAs and other stakeholders.

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

Performance	Yes (8 of 8)
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An Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) is a legislative requirement. It reports on the progress on achieving the aims of the LDP, and indicates whether or not the LDP’s plan strategy and policies are working as intended. The context and indicators for an AMR are agreed as part of the public examination process, prior to LDP adoption. A negative trend against an AMR indicator may trigger a partial, or full, LDP review. The timely submission of AMRs has assisted in keeping the effectiveness and suitability of LDP policies under review.

Each LPA which was required to submit an AMR in October 2014 did so. The detail of the AMR, and the conclusions reached by the respective authority, can be found on each authority’s website.

Indicator	04. The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
The authority has a housing land supply of more than 5 years	The authority has a housing land supply of between 4 and 5 years	The authority has a housing land supply of less than 4 years

Performance	4.2 years
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The planning system is responsible for providing suitable sites for new housing through the LDP process. The way this need is calculated is known as the Joint Housing Land Availability Study. Each year every local planning authority conducts a study, and publishes the study findings. Local planning authorities are expected to demonstrate in their studies that there is enough suitable, available land within the authority to build housing for the next five years. A shortage of housing land may mean that the authority’s plan is not meeting housing demands and needs to be revised. This also means that an application for housing development not identified in the LDP is much more likely to be successful at appeal.

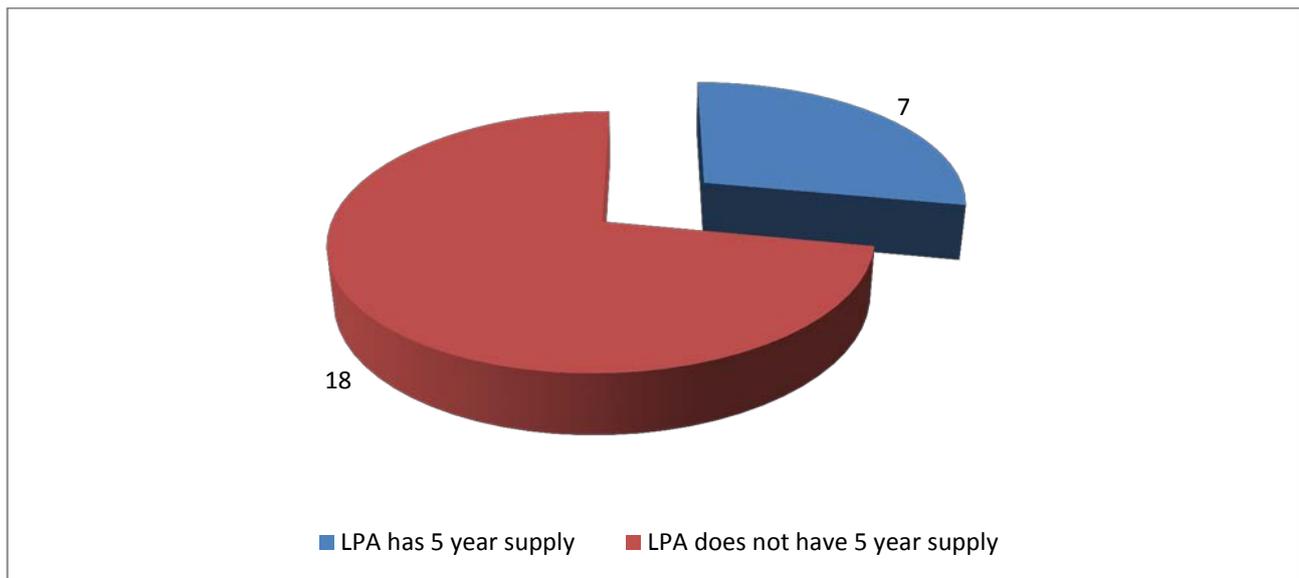


Fig 3 – Number of LPAs with a housing land supply of 5 years or more

The national policy context, as set out in [Planning Policy Wales](#) and [Technical Advice Note 1: Joint Housing Land Availability Studies](#) is that local planning authorities must maintain a minimum 5 year supply of housing land. If an authority fails to do so, then it must look to identify measures to address this shortfall, as part of its Annual Monitoring Report.

For future years the “fair” category will be removed, to ensure an accurate reflection of this policy.

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

Performance	24%
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Local planning authorities should determine planning applications within the timescales set out in legislation – 8 weeks for an ordinary application, or 16 weeks for an application that may have a significant environmental impact. Applicants can choose to extend this period, and where an extension is agreed, and this deadline is met, then an application is also deemed to be determined "on time".

Major planning applications are defined in planning law – by virtue of their size and scale they are likely to have an impact beyond their immediate locality, and can frequently raise complex technical issues which will require additional work for applicants, statutory consultees and infrastructure providers.

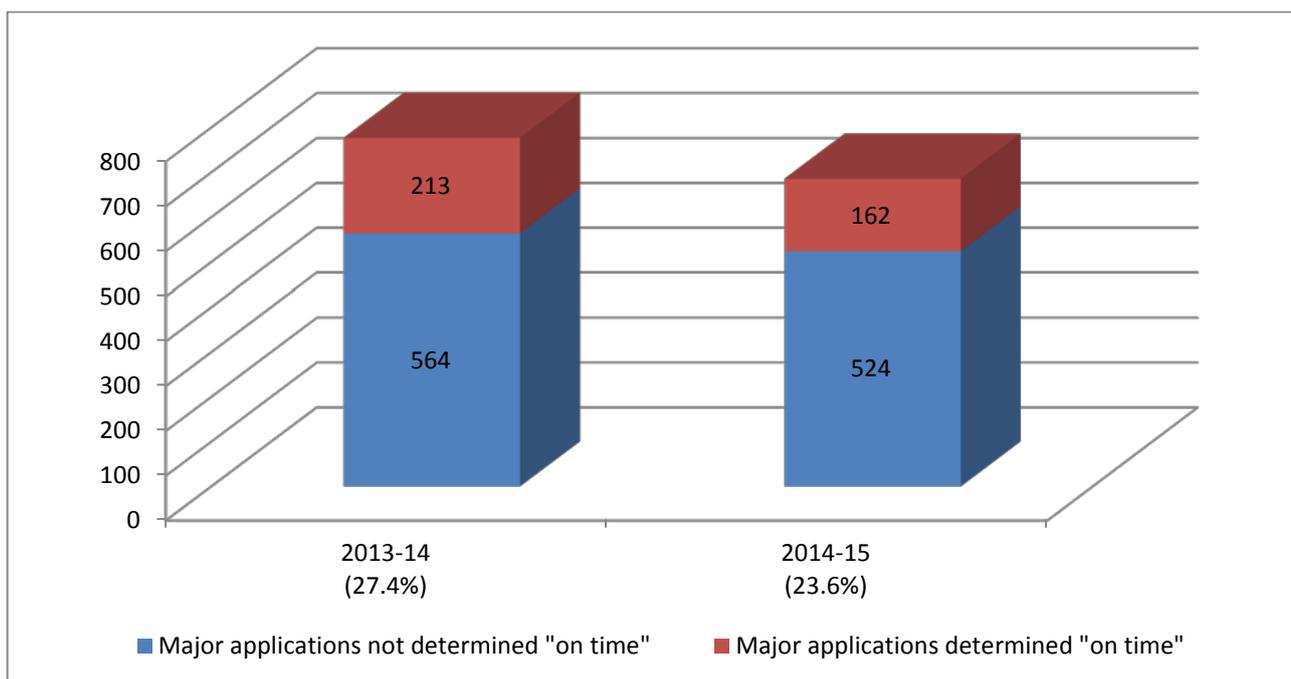


Fig 4 – Number of major planning applications determined on time

The above chart shows the overall performance of Welsh planning authorities in determining these major planning applications. 162 of 686 planning applications were determined within the statutory time periods set out above, during the 2014-15 financial year. This is a ratio of 23.6% determined within statutory time periods, a downward trend from 27.4% in the previous year, despite an overall reduction in the total number of major applications submitted.

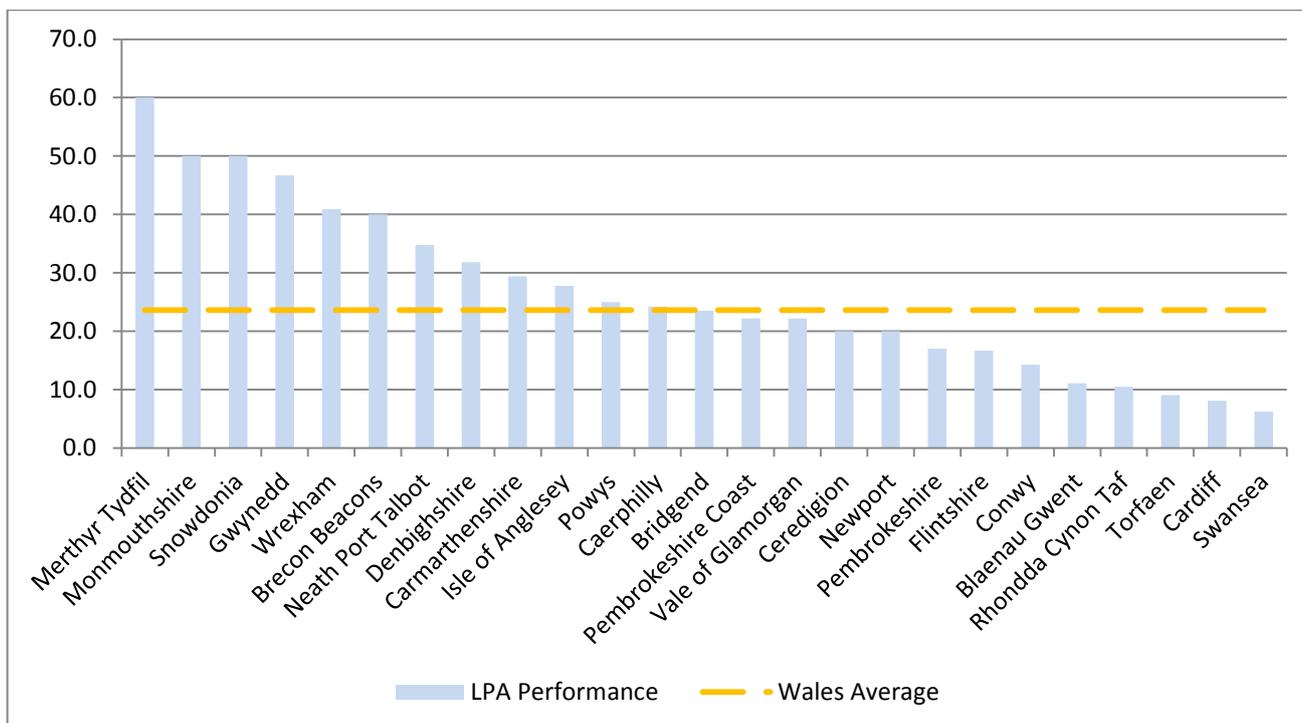


Fig 5 – Comparison of LPA performance for determination of major planning applications

The above chart shows the individual performance of each LPA against this indicator. Those local planning authorities shown above with the highest rate of applications determined within statutory time periods typically have a relative small number of such applications, and the largest authorities in Wales are least likely to meet the timescales for deciding planning applications set out in legislation.

Swift and efficient processing of applications is a key factor in the time taken to determine them, although if an application is ambiguous or incomplete then this can lead to delay. Planning authorities have reported that robust validation procedures have assisted in ensuring that good quality information is provided with an application, and a number of planning authorities reported in their APRs that a “development team” approach, bringing together various departments within an authority to work on a project, helps to process major applications smoothly, as does early transfer to the relevant case officer, and identifying early a target date for the application to be considered by Planning Committee.

The Welsh Government is also introducing a new requirement for major applications to be subject to community consultation prior to submission, under powers introduced in the Planning (Wales) Act 2015. This will give communities the opportunity to be informed on development proposals prior to the submission of planning applications. The intention is that such proposals can be revised with the benefit of community input prior to submission, leading to less community opposition later. The outcome of this change on determination speeds will need to be measured in future years.

Some applications may be of such a nature that a local planning authority may need more than 8 weeks to determine them. This is reflected in the indicator, which for a “good” banding requires 80% or more of applications be determined in the statutory time periods, accepting that as many as 20% may need to take longer to enable full consideration of the issues raised.

We recognise the value in taking an enabling view on applications which may require further work, and we have agreed to take time extensions that are agreed with the applicant into account, when considering the timeliness of decisions.

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

Performance	206 days
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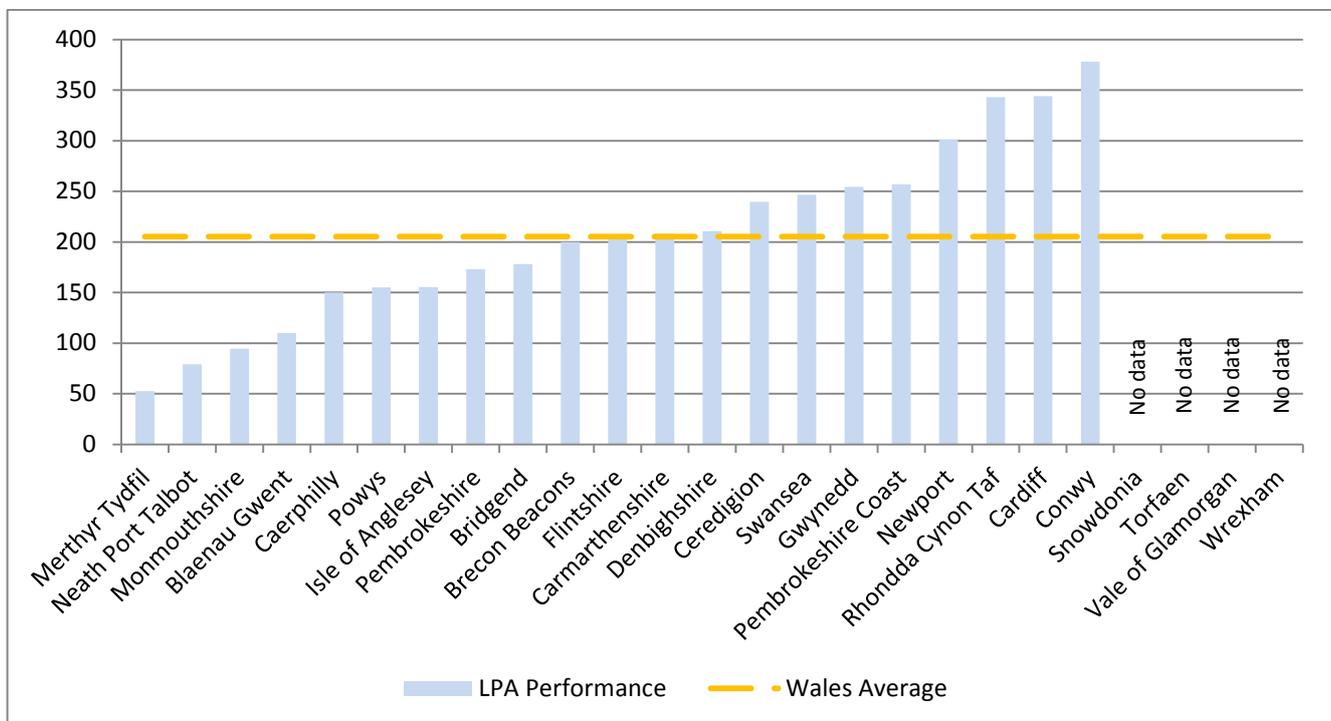


Fig 6 – Comparison of average time taken to determine major planning applications

The range of average days taken to determine a major application is significant. Comparison of this chart to the performance of individual LPAs as set out under indicator 05 above, shows that whilst an individual authority may not necessarily perform well on the determination of applications against statutory time periods, it can still determine those applications comparatively quicker than its peers. Four local planning authorities did not provide performance information for this reporting period.

The disparity in the charts is attributed to the relatively small sample size of major applications determined by some local planning authorities, and also the spectrum of development that falls within the “major” category. This means that an application for 10 houses is considered a major development, in much the same way as an application for

1,000 houses is also considered. However, the work, time and community interest in each development clearly varies considerably with scale.

In planning law, planning permission is not granted until a decision notice is issued. That cannot occur until the conclusion of negotiations between the authority and the developer, over any planning obligations are finalised. In the case of major developments, the legal consideration given to obligations can be extensive, and authorities have cited examples in their APRs of some cases taking several years to conclude.

This indicator has been revised, so that the time taken to finalise planning obligations is excluded once the decision whether or not to approve the application (subject to an obligation) has been taken.

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

Performance	72.7%
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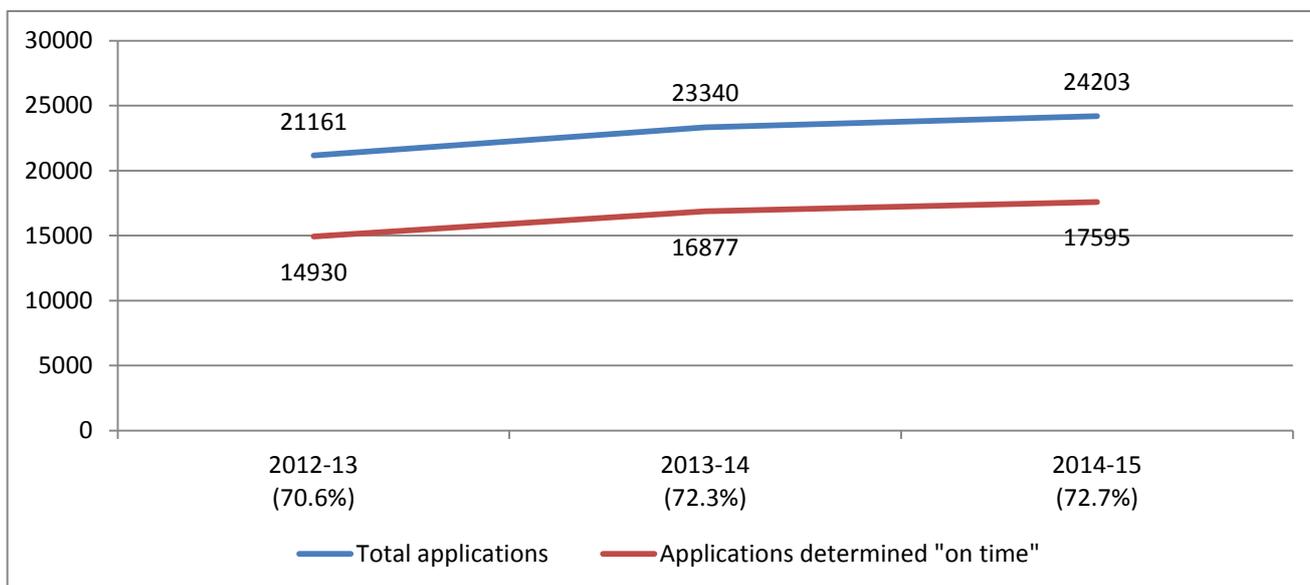


Fig 7 – Number of all planning applications determined on time

The planning application workload of Welsh local planning authorities over the previous three financial years, as set out in figure 7 above, has increased - and it is encouraging to note that the percentage of applications determined “on time” has also increased despite the higher workloads (for a definition of applications determined “on time”, see Indicator 05 above).

In financial year 2014/15 17,591 of 24,203 planning applications determined were decided within the statutory time period; a rate of 72.7%. This is a slight improvement on previous years, although falls short of the “good” standard of 80% to be determined “on time”.

The Welsh Government’s target of 80% to be determined “on time” reflects that there will be circumstances where an application may raise complex issues, or further work or Committee consideration is required. However, these cases are in the minority and will be “major” applications, which are considered as part of this indicator but also in isolation, in Indicators 05 and 06.

Individual local planning authority performance against this standard has also improved over the reporting period, with five LPAs achieving the “good” standard by the end of the financial year, an additional two from the beginning of the year. One LPA improved its performance in the reporting year, and moved from the “improve” banding, whilst one LPA has moved in to the “improve” banding.

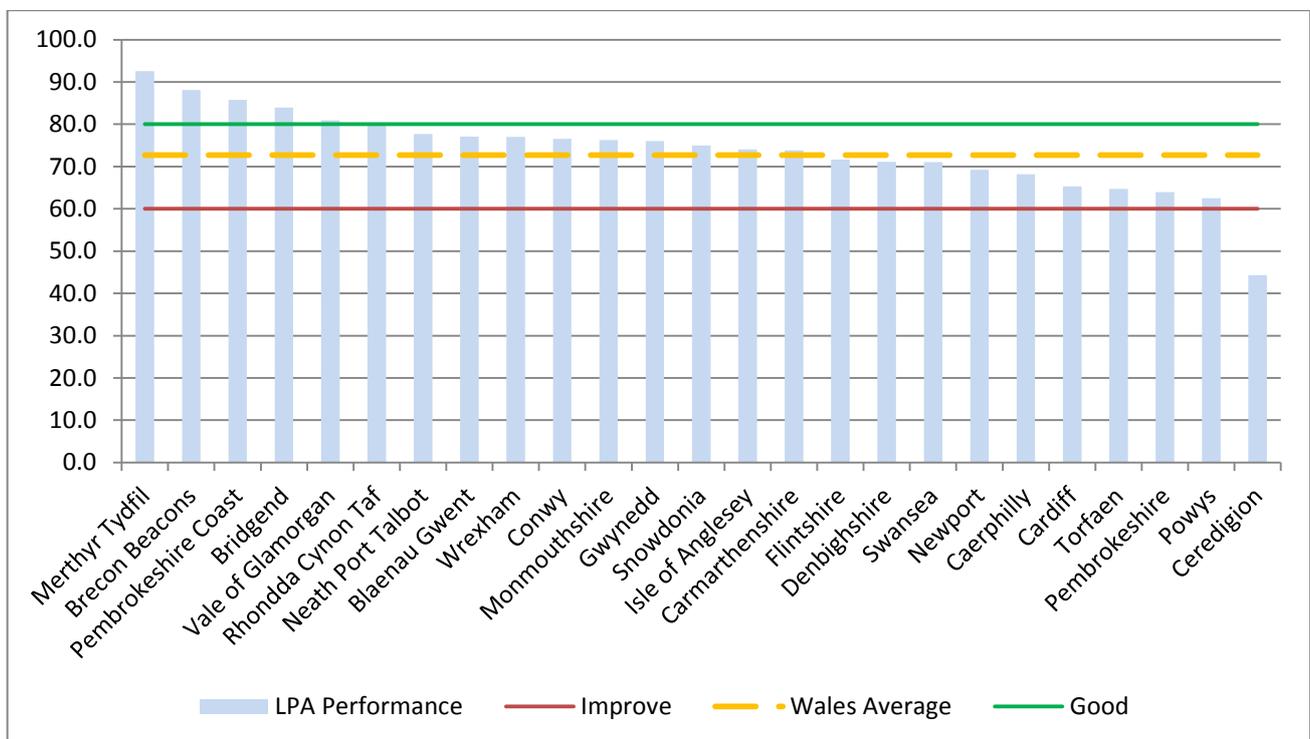


Fig 8 – Comparison of LPA performance for determination of all planning applications

Those authorities that achieve a high standard of performance have established practices that ensure the smooth handling of planning applications, including pre-application services, and locally developed application validation and case monitoring processes. More details are available in the authorities’ Annual Performance Reports. Those authorities that did not achieve a “fair” performance banding will receive assistance, to explore options for service improvement.

The Welsh Government has introduced a number of changes to the operation of the development management system, which may also improve the timeliness for processing planning applications (see Indicator 05 above for details).

Indicator	08. Average time taken to determine all applications in days	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Performance	76.4 days (average)
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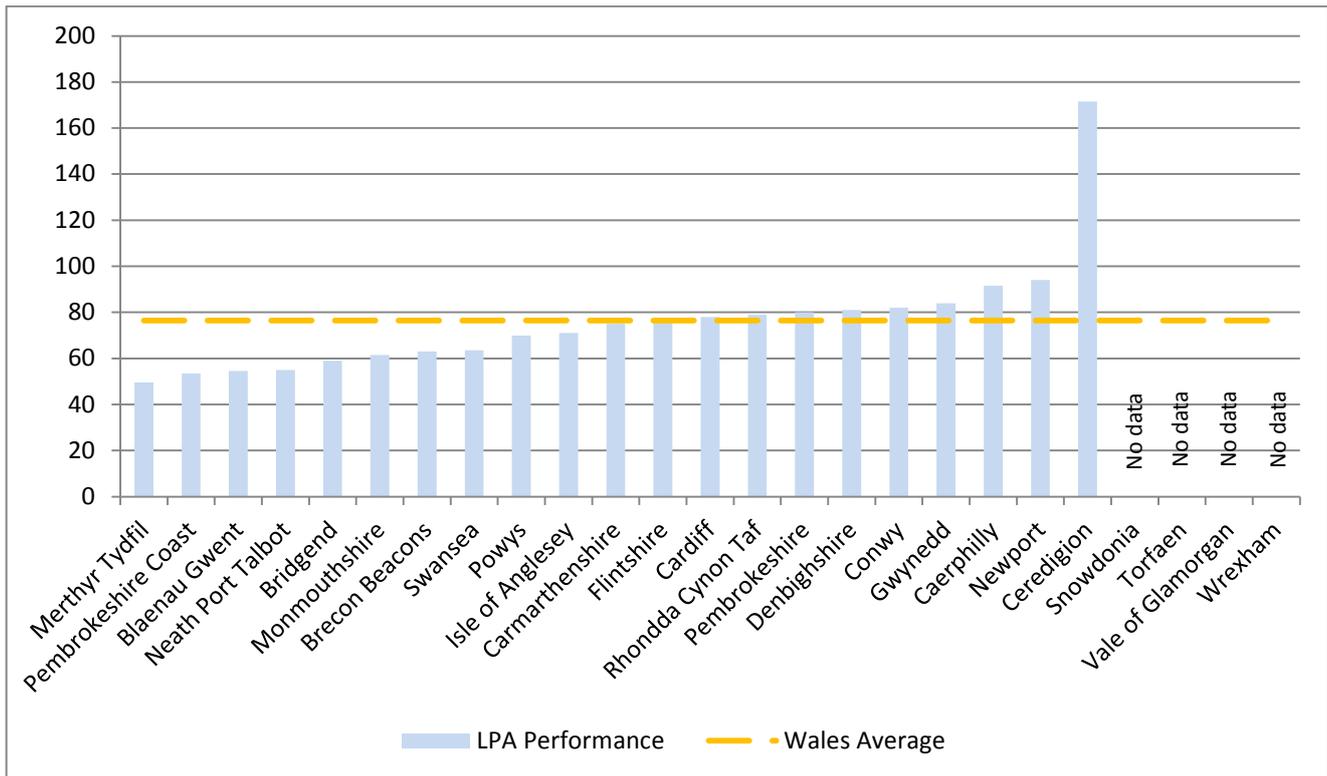


Fig 9 – Comparison of average time taken to determine all planning applications

The above chart shows a comparison of average determination speeds for all application types. This indicator was introduced in November 2014 in agreement with the Planning Officers Society for Wales. There is no historic data to establish performance bandings, these will be agreed in the future. The indicator seeks to establish a comparator to Indicator 07; applications not determined within statutory time periods should still be progressed, and this indicator takes a more holistic view on how long applications may take to be determined. Four local planning authorities did not submit performance data for this indicator in the reporting period.

The Welsh average for time taken to determine application is 76.4 days; at 84 days, the applicant has the right to appeal on the grounds of non-determination, and so this is overall a good standard of performance, although the average is skewed by one performance outlier.

LPAs have reported that the average time taken to determine each application depends not only on the scale and complexity of the issues raised, but also on the accuracy and

completeness of the application at the point of submission. A number of authorities have reported in their APRs that a pre-application advice service has been helpful to applicants, in informing development proposals and in refining the quality of submissions.

SECTION 3 - QUALITY

Indicator	09. Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Performance	10.1%
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This new measure, introduced in November 2014, considers the number of planning decisions made by a Planning Committee, which were contrary to the recommendation set out in the officer’s report. As the measure was introduced mid-year, the statistical analysis is based on 6 months of data.

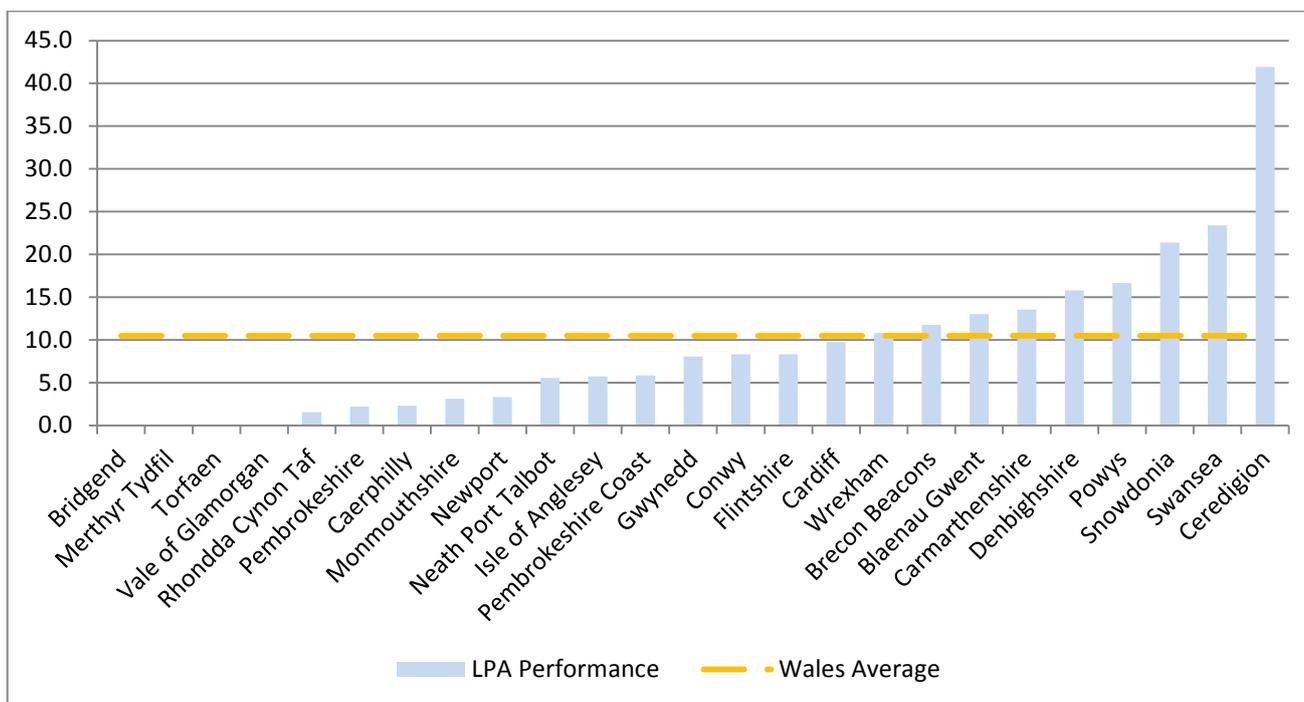


Fig 10 – Percentage of planning applications determined contrary to officer advice

Local planning authorities are required to determine planning applications in accordance with the policies set out in the relevant adopted development plan, unless material considerations lead them to decide otherwise. In preparing a report, officers must base their advice in the relevant development plan policies, and so this indicator can be seen as a broad measure of adherence to policy, and a barometer of those decisions where other factors override policy.

The ratio of planning decisions to be decided by a Committee is currently a matter for each local planning authority to determine. This will be informed by size and scale, adherence to

development plan policy, impact on communities and local interest in the matter. Higher delegation rates, however, tend to lead to more timely and consistent planning decisions.

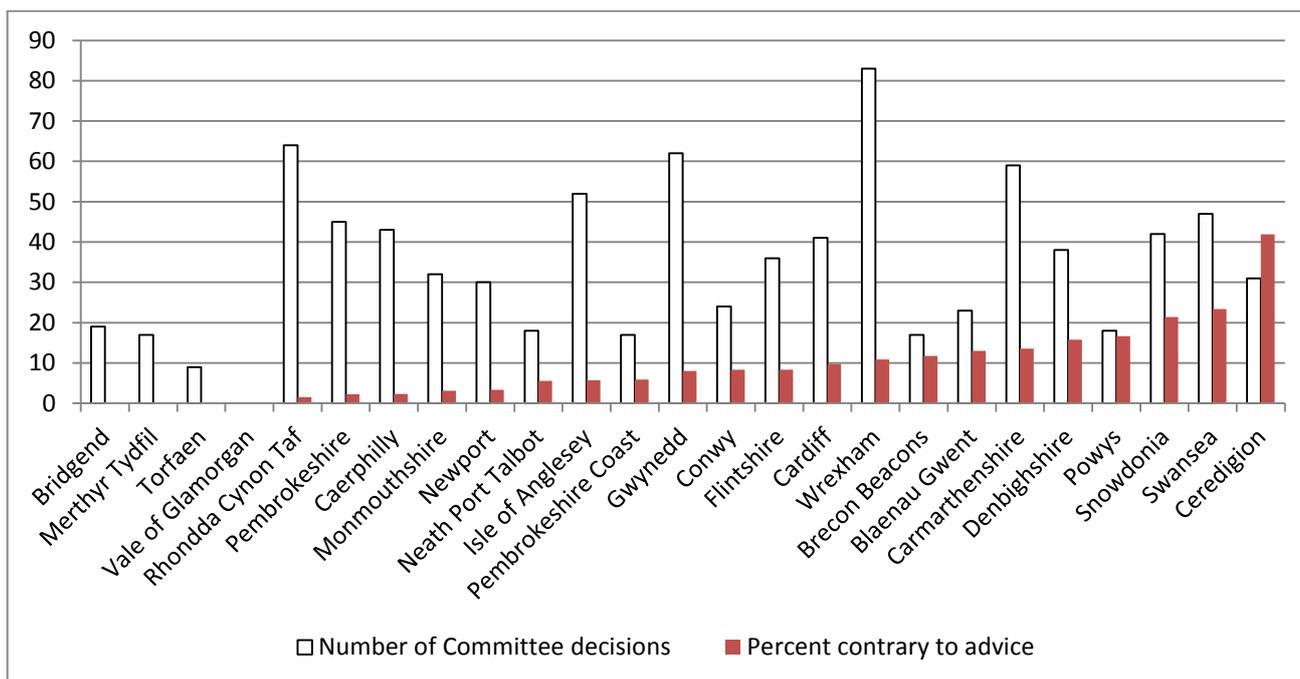


Fig 11 – Percentage of planning applications determined contrary to officer advice compared against total number of Committee decisions

88 of 867 decisions were made contrary to officer recommendations in the reporting period, achieving an average of 10.1%. Four authorities reported that no applications were determined contrary to officer recommendation. Of these four, one authority did not provide information on the number of applications determined by Committee.

A low number of decisions made contrary to officer recommendation, in comparison to the overall number of Committee decisions made, indicates a robust policy and evidence base for decisions by Members and certainty for applicants. For example, refusing an application because it is not in accordance with plan policies leaves the authority well placed to defend its decision at appeal, and the reverse also applies. A low ratio of approvals contrary to officer advice also indicates a healthy relationship and level of trust between officers and Members in an authority.

Local planning authorities have reported that post-appeal reports have been helpful in assisting Committees in ensuring that decisions made are consistent and in accordance with the authority’s relevant development plan policies. Some authorities also carry out site visits to developments which were previously approved contrary to officer advice, to consider the implications for development plan policies and future decisions.

A number of local planning authorities also changed their Committee procedures during the reporting year. Two authorities in particular had previously put planning decisions to the full authority, but changed to make these decisions via a more intensively trained and informed Planning Committee. Both authorities report that the practice has proven effective in reaching decisions that are better informed by policy, and that applications are more likely to be determined on targeted Committee dates. A positive trend in statistics for these authorities in future years is anticipated.

In addition, some authorities have introduced “cooling off” periods, where an application which is determined contrary to officer advice will be deferred for reconsideration and confirmation at a future Planning Committee; this gives Members the opportunity to consider the issues afresh, and some authorities report that this is successful in reducing Member decisions contrary to plan policies, although there is a consequent delay in decisions.

The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 includes powers to introduce standard Committee practices for local planning authorities, including Committee sizes and delegation rates.

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
Performance	65.6%	

Planning decisions should be based on the policies set out in the relevant adopted development plan, unless material considerations lead the authority to decide otherwise. Applicants have the right to appeal to the Welsh Ministers against the refusal of permission, or the imposition of conditions attached to approval.

If an authority bases its planning decision or relevant conditions on the development plan’s policies, then it is more likely to be able to defend the decision that it has made, should the applicant seek to appeal. Conversely, if planning decisions are less well related to the LDP, then it will be more challenging for the authority to defend its decision at appeal.

It should be noted that applicants have the opportunity to provide additional information at appeal, which was not necessarily available when local planning authorities initially refused permission. The Inspector is required to take these into account, which means that the Inspector may decide on cases with information which was not present, or materially different, to that in front of the authority when it initially refused permission. Consequently, the Inspector’s decision on each case may not necessarily be considered an “absolute” indicator of the appropriateness of the authority’s initial planning decision.

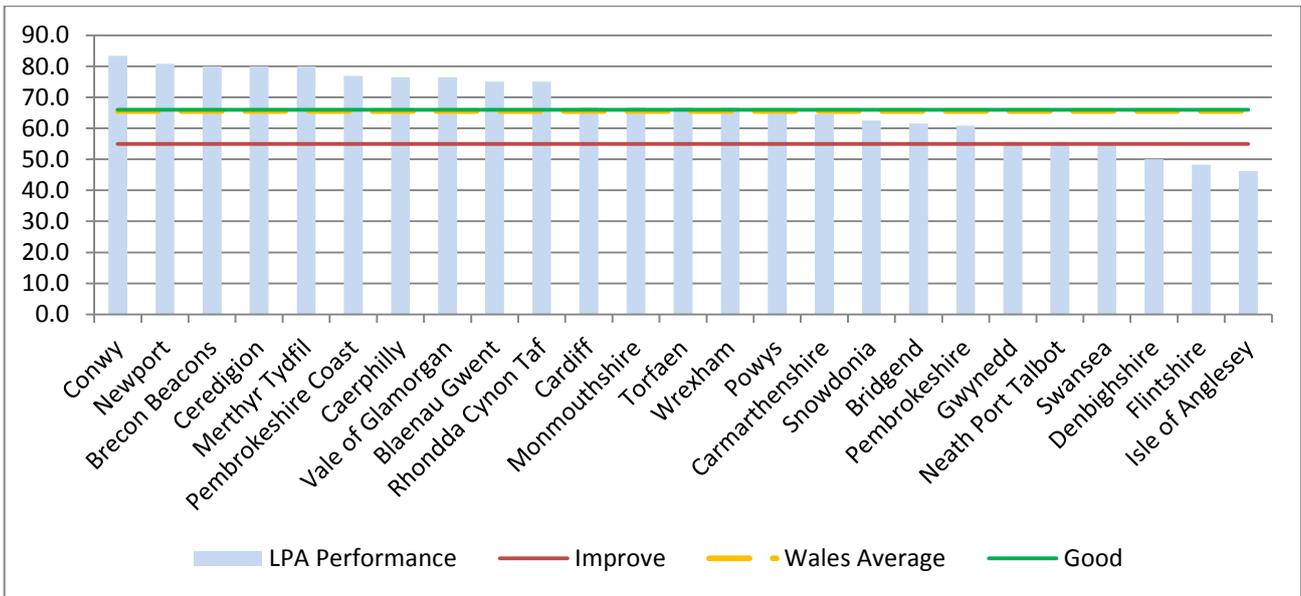


Fig 12 – Percentage of planning appeals dismissed

The “good” performance banding for this indicator (greater than 66% of appeals dismissed) is based on the average for performance of Welsh planning authorities at appeal in the 2012/13 financial year. The above chart shows that in total, 326 of 497 appeals were dismissed in 2014/15, with an average of 65.6% - just slightly below the “good” banding. This is also a very slight improvement from 65.4% in the previous year.

The chart is indexed by percentage of appeals dismissed, with the highest percentage on the left and the lowest on the right. However, we recognise that in the cases of some authorities, the very small number of appeals determined mean that a very small number of upheld appeals can have a disproportionate impact on performance against this indicator.

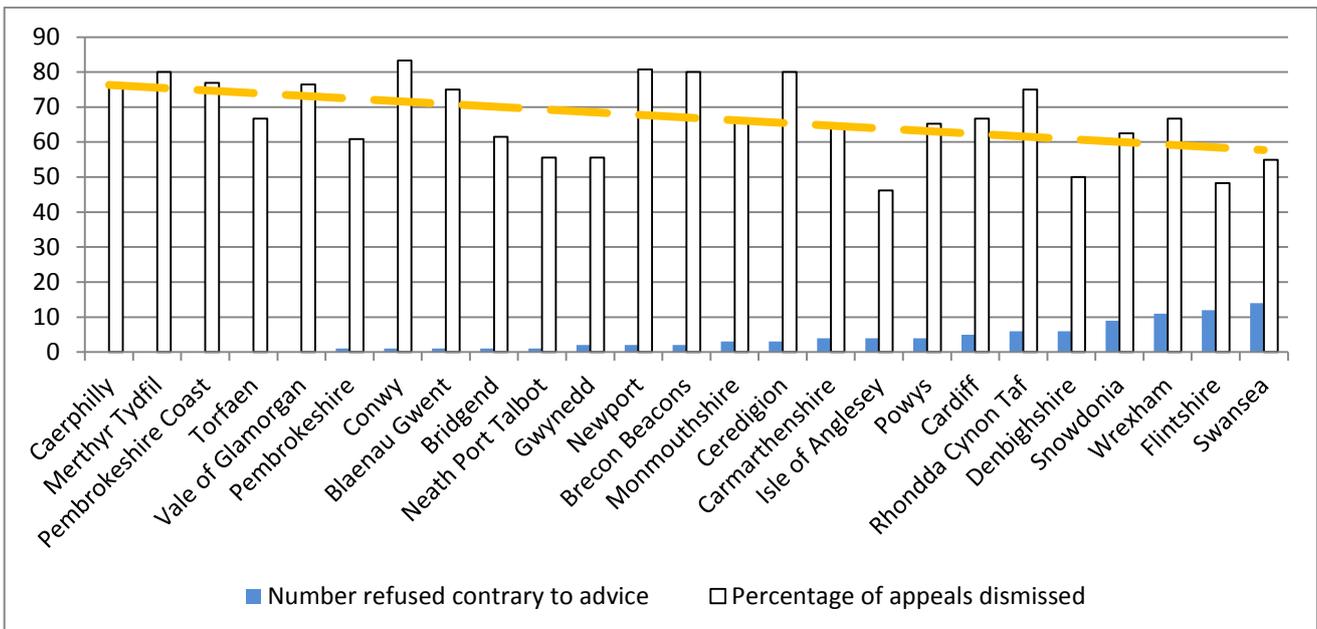


Fig 13 – Comparison of refusal overturns and appeals dismissed

Fig 13 above compares the number of refusals of permission contrary to officer advice with the success rate of the authority at appeal in the same reporting period. It should be understood that not all refusals go to appeal, and of those, not all are successful – nevertheless the trend line indicates a link between the likelihood of an authority’s decision to be upheld at appeal and the authority’s typical conformity with officer advice.

The action taken by some authorities to develop Member skills and review Committee decisions, as set out in Indicator 09 above, may assist in addressing the number of refusals contrary to officer recommendation. The correlation between refusal overturns and success at appeal will be considered in future years.

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

Performance	0 appeals (20 of 25)
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During an appeal, both the appellant and the relevant authority have the opportunity to seek to recover costs for the appeal process. The costs cover the work and effort required for the appeal to be considered – this can include the time and costs required for officers or agents to give evidence.

If an authority has costs awarded against it at appeal, then this is because the Inspector considers that the authority has been unreasonable in refusing permission. The performance indicator is set in the context that a local planning authority should never be considered to have refused permission unreasonably.

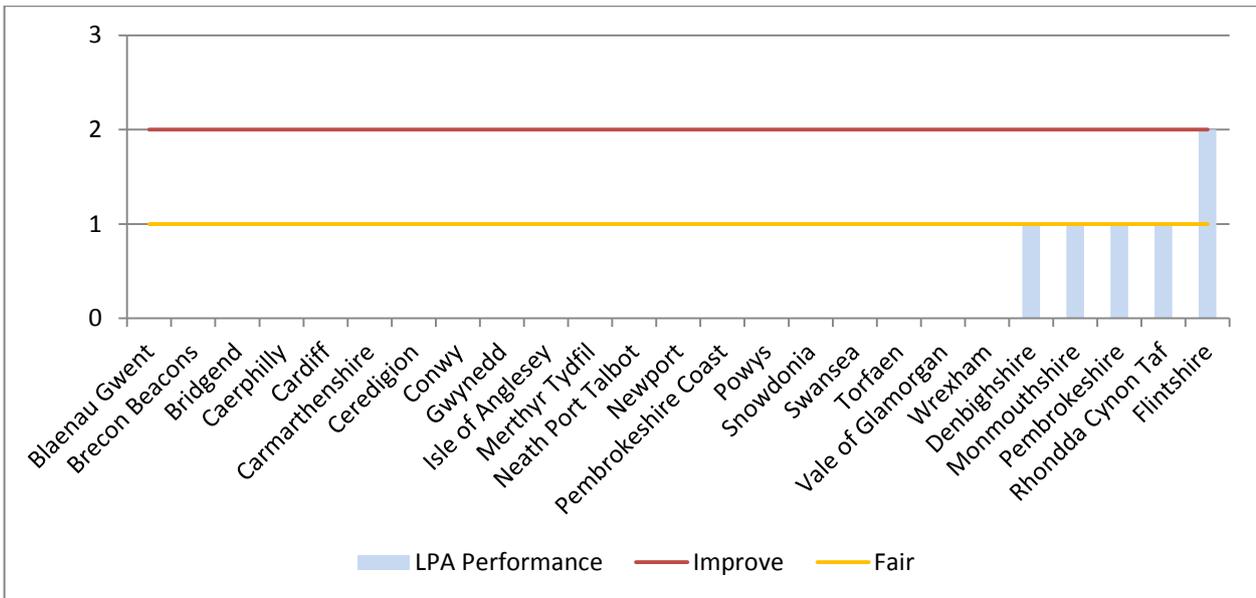


Fig 14 – Number of cases where costs have been awarded against the local planning authority at appeal

Fig 14 above illustrates that costs were only awarded against local planning authorities in six cases – although one authority was subject to award of costs twice. 20 of 25 authorities did not have costs awarded against them at appeal, which is a successful outcome against this indicator.

Some authorities have reported that the review of cases where costs are awarded at appeal has assisted them in understanding why their decisions were viewed by the inspector as unreasonable, and they have incorporated this learning into their future decisions.

SECTION 4 – ENGAGEMENT

Indicator	12. Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	
“Good”		“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

Performance	Yes (24 of 25)
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Planning decisions are made by local planning authorities in the wider public interest. They must be, and must be seen to be, reflective of the needs, views and aspirations of the communities where development takes place. Community investment in planning decisions depends on the belief that such decisions are made with their concerns taken into consideration.

Planning legislation requires that local planning authorities give publicity to planning applications, so that communities can make their views known. However, many individuals may prefer to articulate their views verbally and direct to elected Members when they determine applications at Planning Committee. Where such opportunities are provided, then a request to address Committee is normally made in advance and time is normally limited to between 3 and 5 minutes per individual.

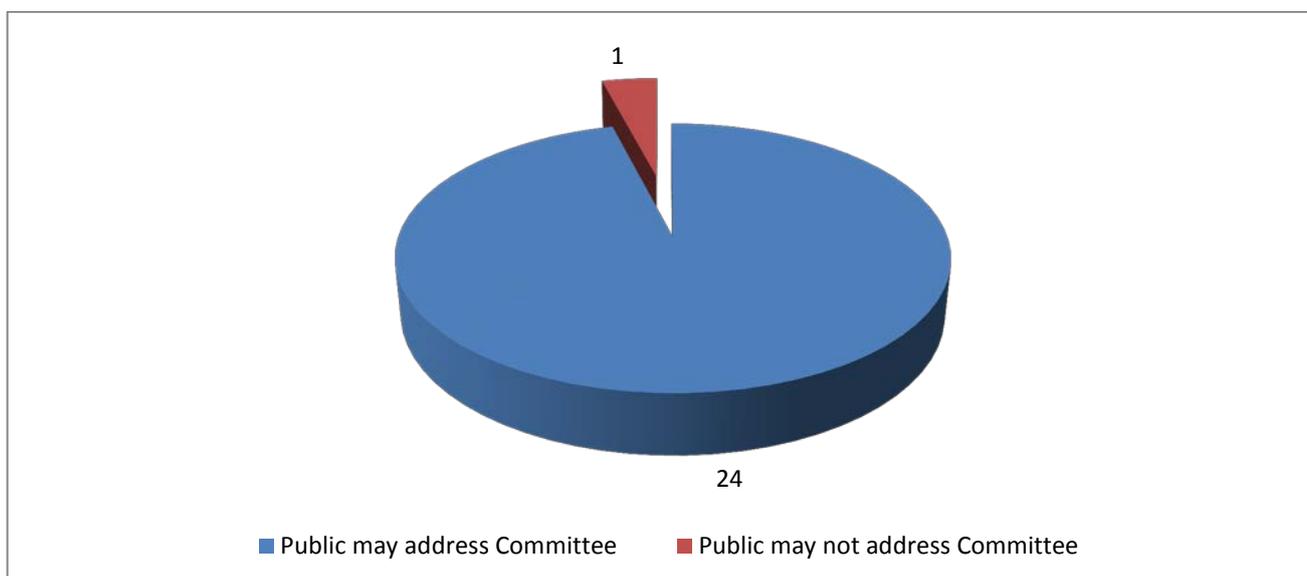


Fig 15 – number of authorities which allow members of the public to address Planning Committee

At the time of the production of the 2014-15 Performance Framework table, we were informed that three authorities did not permit members of the public to directly address their Planning Committee, when the Committee determined applications. Since the submission of Annual Performance Reports in November 2015, we have been informed that two of those authorities have now introduced the ability for members of the public to address

Planning Committee. This leaves only one authority with no opportunity for individuals to do so.

The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 includes powers that would allow the planning committee procedures to be uniform across Wales. These could be used to require authorities to provide opportunities for members of the public to address the Committee.

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

Performance	Yes (22 of 25)
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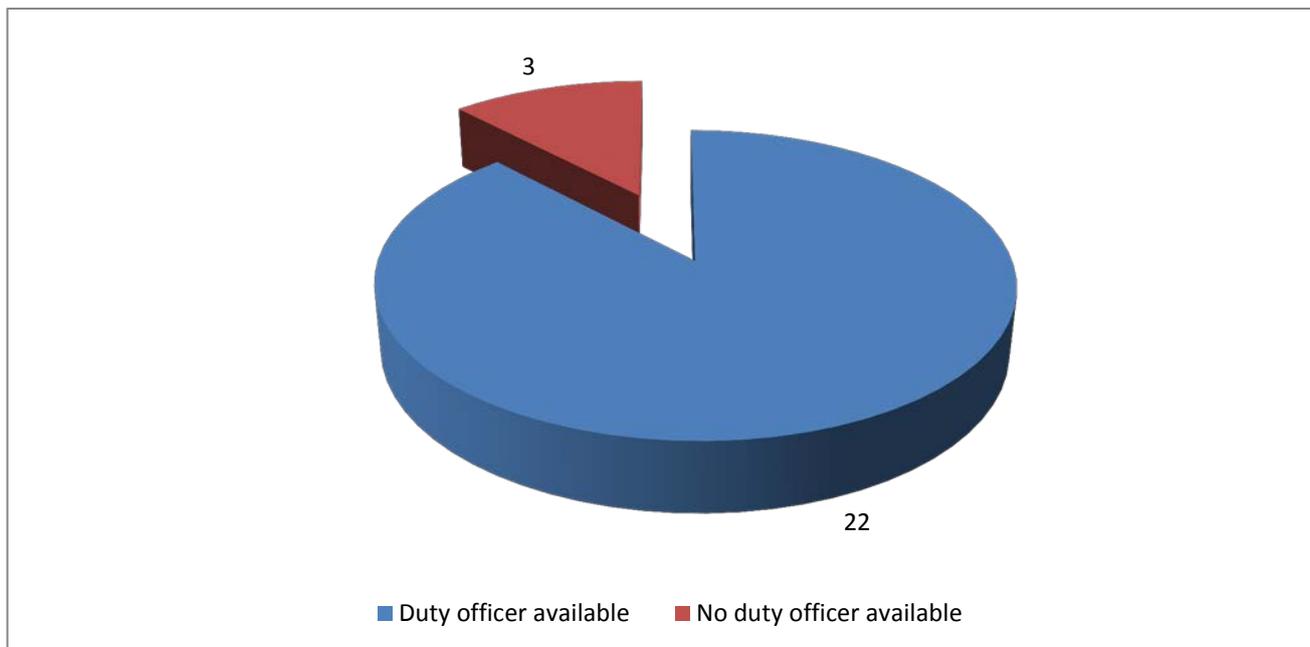


Fig 16 – number of authorities which provide a “duty officer” service

Planning service users may seek advice or information from a local planning department on developments, either as an applicant or as a third party affected by a development. Service users have an expectation that they will be able to receive advice from an officer of the authority who is able to provide an experienced and well informed point of view on specific development proposals. The extent of that service is dependent on the nature and scale of any proposed development, and applicants may be directed towards a formal pre-application service which may also be subject to a local charging scheme.

22 of 25 authorities reported that they had a duty officer system in place to ensure that an officer of the authority, who dealt with planning applications as part of their ordinary work, was available to provide advice and guidance to applicants and third parties.

Three authorities reported that they had no duty officer in place. In these cases, authorities reported to us that the decision not to provide a duty officer system was based on budget and workload management issues.

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

Performance	Yes (20 of 25)
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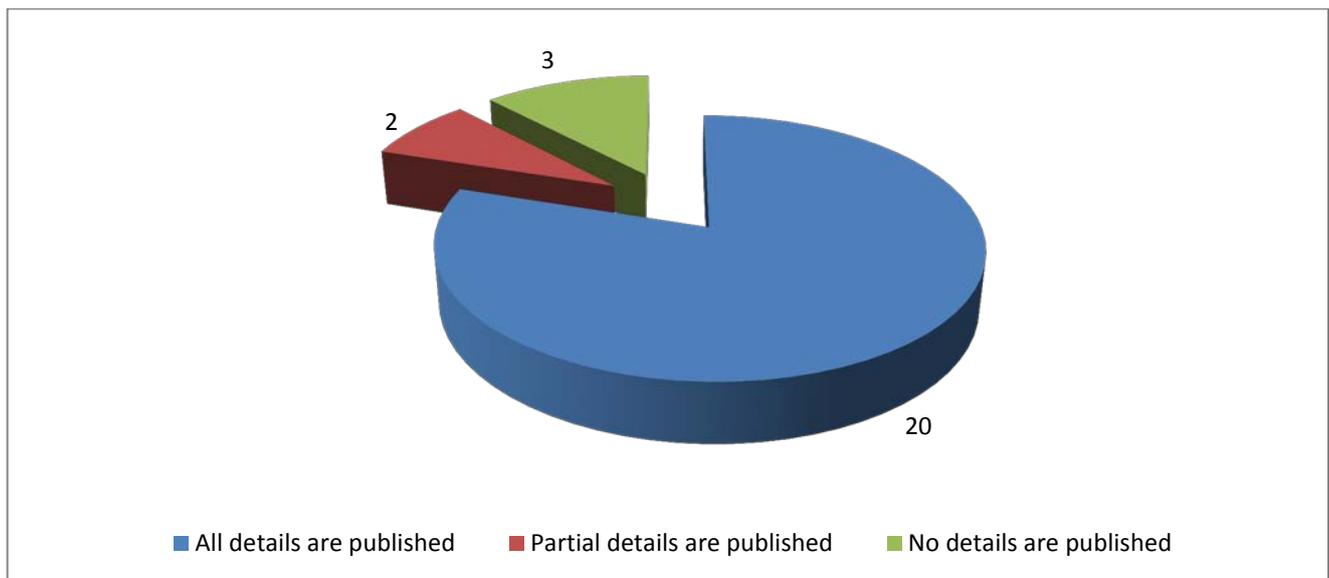


Fig 17 – number of authorities which publish planning application information on their web site

The Welsh Government has provided funding and support to local planning authorities, to enable applicants to submit planning applications electronically, via the Planning Portal. Roughly 50% of all planning applications are now made in this way, and those which are submitted to local planning authorities in hard copy are transferred into an authority’s electronic planning application case work system.

As a consequence, all planning applications and associated documents are stored and managed in electronic format, and many planning software providers offer services that will automatically publish these to the internet.

Convenient access to accurate planning application information enables members of the public to exercise their rights to participate in the decision making process. Local planning authorities must take any comments received into account when deciding whether or not to grant planning permission, and are required to give publicity to applications, and to place copies of the planning application and associated documents in a public planning register. The benefit of publishing planning applications online is that members of the public have access to planning information at a time and location of their convenience, and can engage in the planning process much more easily.

20 of 25 authorities report that they reproduce their public planning registers in their entirety, on their websites. Of the remaining five authorities, each is exploring options to increase access to planning application information, although this is subject to a variety of considerations, including budgets for ICT services. Two of the authorities indicated that they are exploring options to publish full details for applications to the internet, over the next few months.

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

Performance	65.8%
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This new measure, introduced in November 2014, considers the percentage of planning enforcement cases which are investigated by a local planning authority within 84 days. “Investigated” means that the authority has received a complaint that unlawful development has been undertaken, has looked into the matter, decided whether or not the development is unlawful, and informed the complainant of this decision. As the measure was introduced mid-year, the statistical analysis is based on 6 months of data, rather than 12 months.

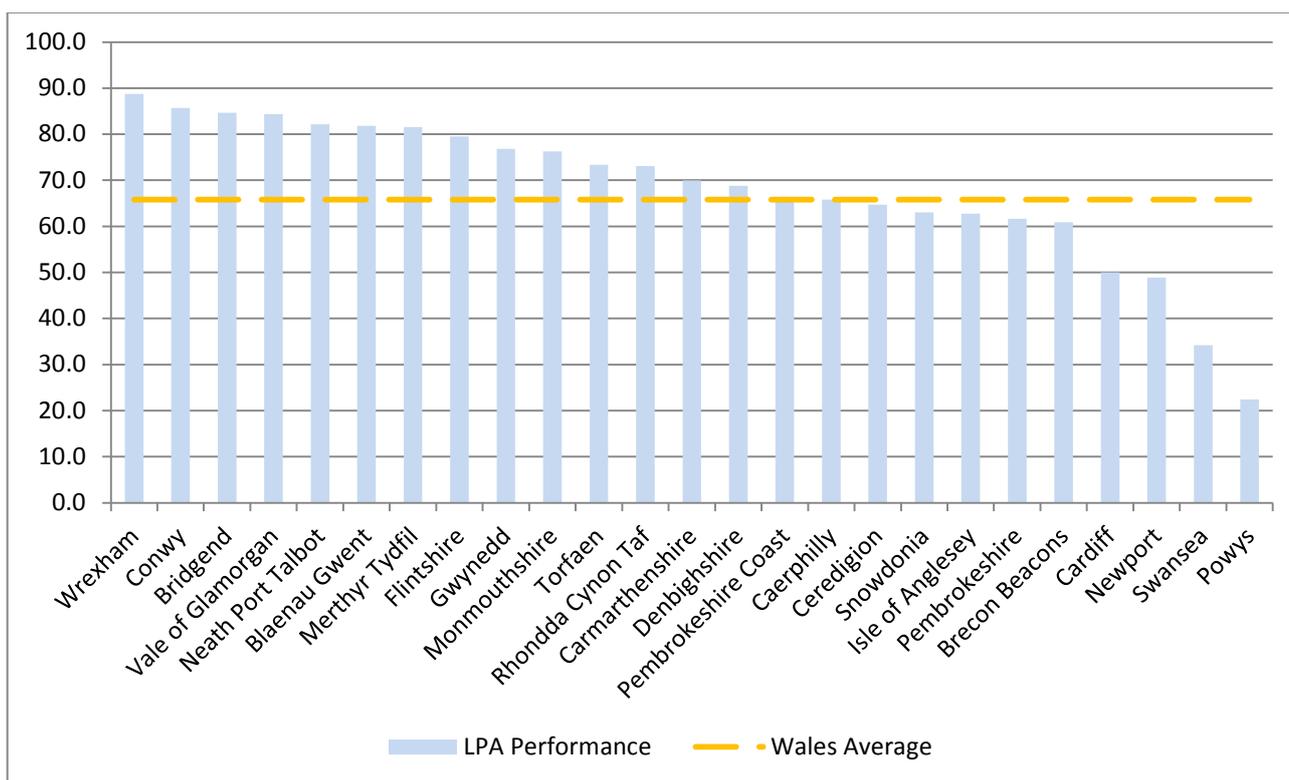


Fig 18 – percentage of enforcement complaints investigated within 84 days

The above chart shows that in the majority of cases (65.8%), complaints of breaches of planning control are investigated within the target date of 84 days. Some authorities with lower than average performance in this indicator reported that they are dealing with a backlog of enforcement complaints.

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

Performance	71.1 days
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This indicator is intended as a comparator to the performance of authorities against the 84 day timescale for investigating performance cases. This indicator was introduced in November 2014, and 14 of 25 local planning authorities have reported performance.

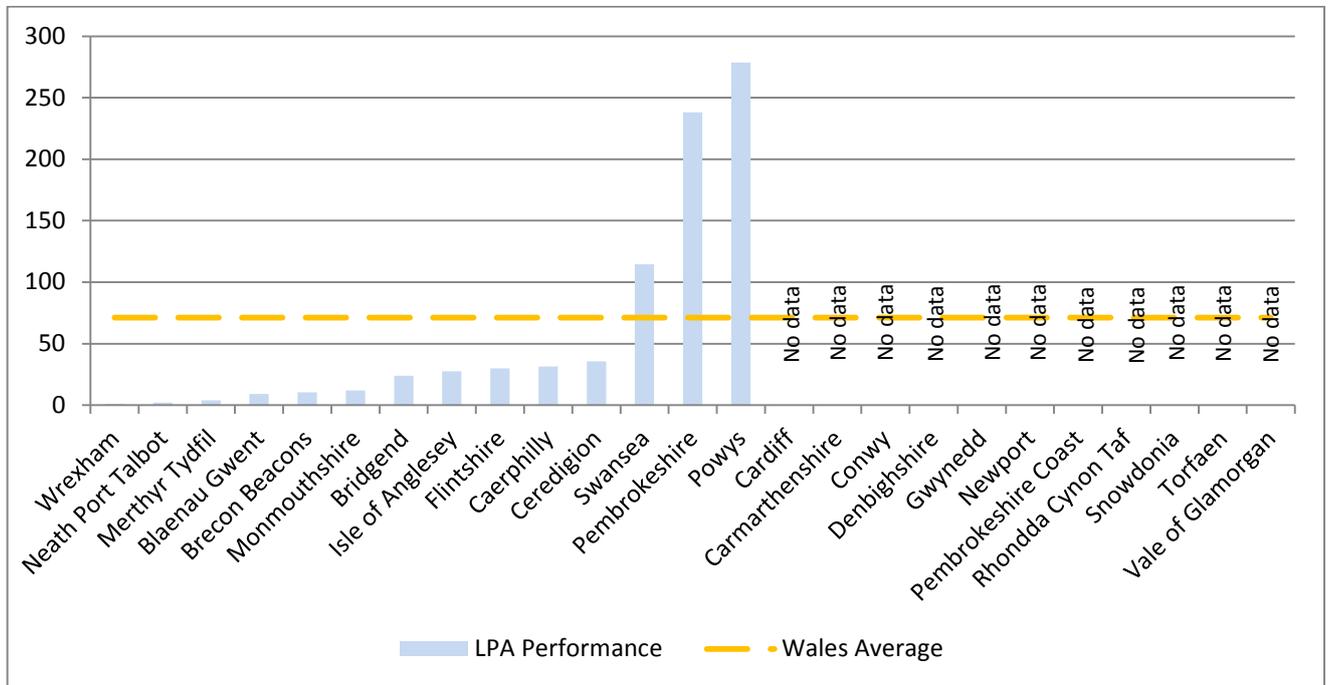


Fig 19 – Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases

The above chart shows that the majority of enforcement complaints are investigated swiftly. 11 of 14 reporting authorities dealt with enforcement complaints within 40 days, with three authorities taking significantly longer; these three performance rankings have disproportionately affected the national average. Those authorities performing less favourably against this indicator report that they had enforcement officer vacancies, or have chosen to remove enforcement officer posts, and pass enforcement casework to development management officers. For further detail on the background for why each authority has reported these rankings, see the authority’s respective Annual Performance Report.

Indicator	17. Percentage of enforcement cases where enforcement action is taken or a retrospective application received 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

Performance	76.8%
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Having established that enforcement action is appropriate and expedient, a local planning authority should take steps to regularise breaches of planning control, within a reasonable time frame. The period of 180 days is set in the context of the authority ordinarily taking up to 84 days to identify breaches (as set out in Indicators 15 and 16).

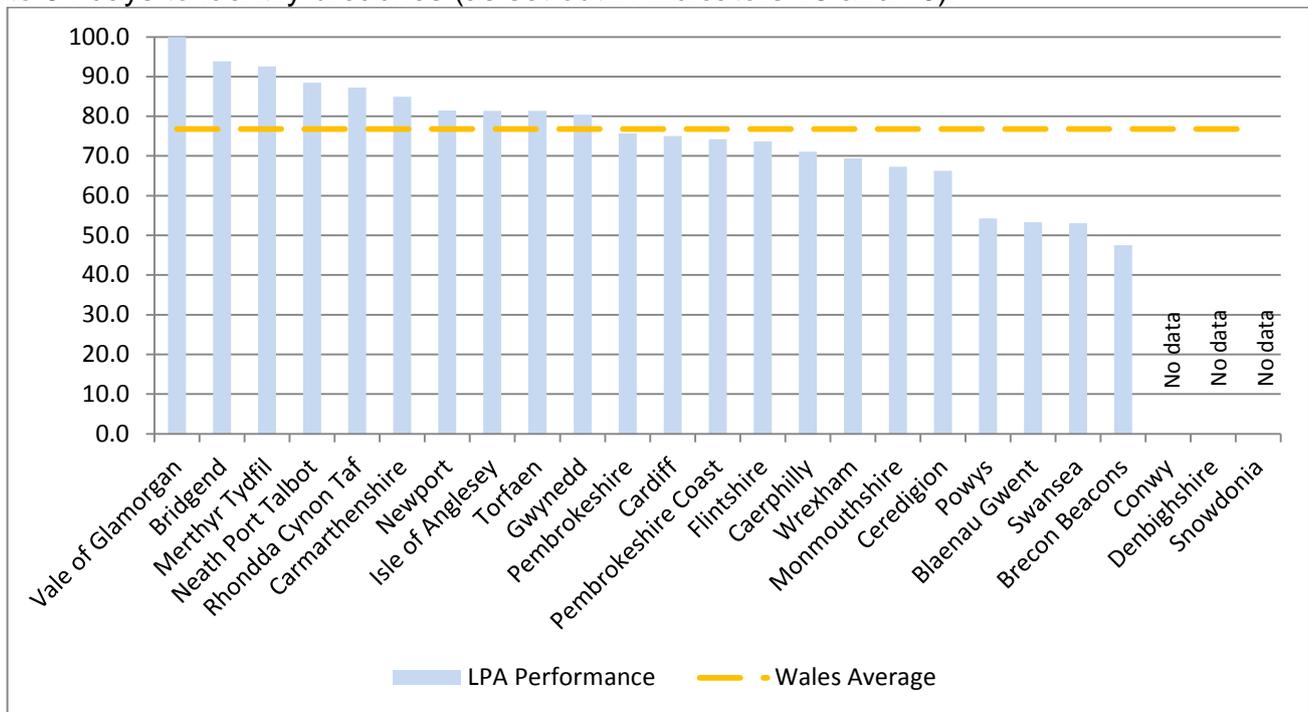


Fig 20 – percentage of enforcement complaints resolved within 180 days

The above chart shows that 76.8% of enforcement cases where action is required are acted upon within 180 days. Three authorities did not provide performance information for this indicator.

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

Performance	175.5 days
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This indicator is intended as a comparator to the performance of authorities against the 180 day timescale for resolving performance cases, where action is required. This indicator was introduced in November 2014, and 5 local planning authorities have not reported performance data.

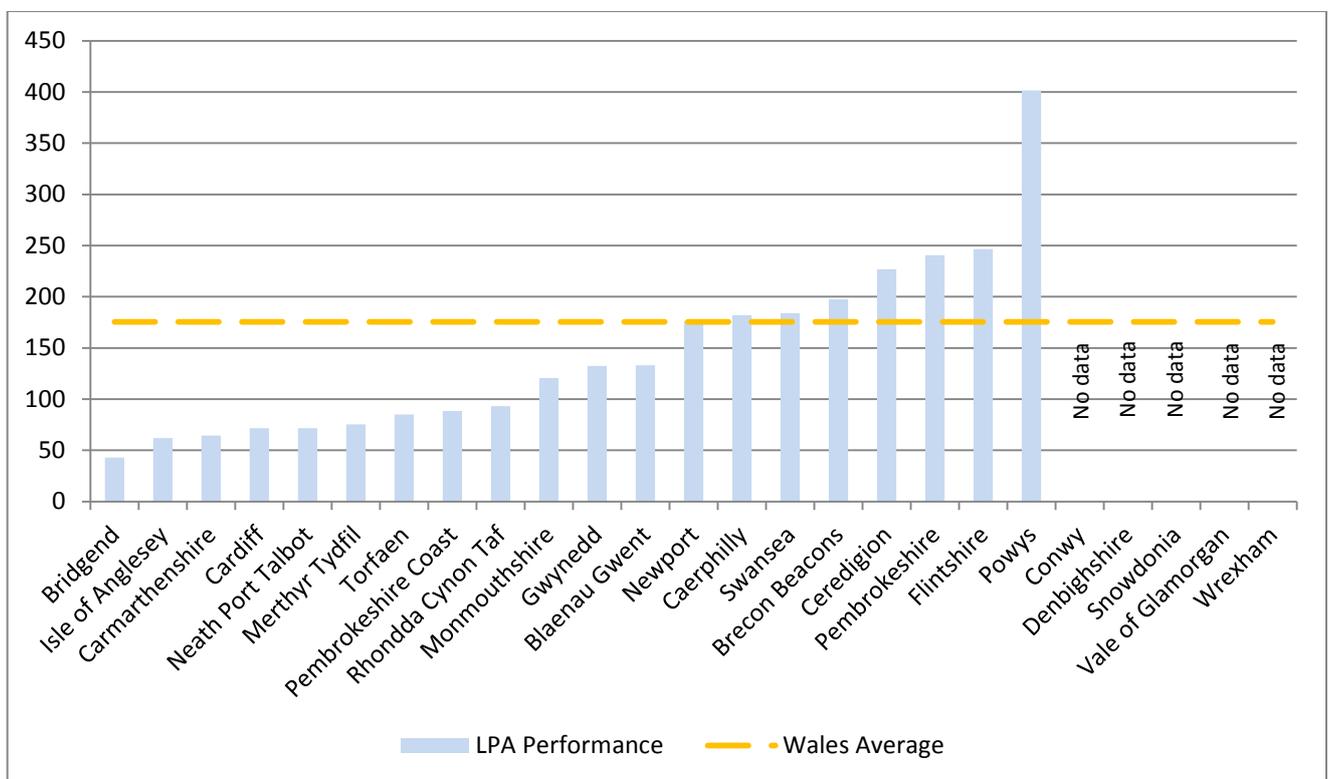


Fig 21 – Average time taken to resolve enforcement cases

The above table shows that in the majority of cases where LPAs have reported performance, their average time taken to resolve enforcement cases is within the 180 day time frame developed in consultation with stakeholders. There is however one significantly outlying report on this indicator, which has affected the average for Wales.

For further detail on the background for why each authority has reported these rankings, see the authority’s respective Annual Performance Report.

4 – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Welsh Government remains one of the few administrations in the world to have a statutory duty in relation to sustainable development. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on public bodies (including Welsh Ministers) to carry out sustainable development¹. The Act provides a clear definition of sustainable development in Wales:

“Sustainable development” means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals.

Acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle means that a body must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The planning system is necessary and central to achieving the sustainable development of Wales. It provides the legislative and policy framework to manage the use and development of land in the public interest.

The Welsh Government is committed to measuring the contribution that the planning system makes. We have developed a monitoring framework, a set of Sustainable Development Indicators, to complement and support our wider measure of progress towards Sustainable Development in Wales through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

Sustainable Development Indicators

Background

In 2009 the Welsh Government committed to initiate, in consultation with local government, a monitoring framework to measure key sustainable development outcomes delivered by the planning system. In 2011 the National Assembly for Wales’s Sustainability Committee reported on its Inquiry into Planning in Wales and recommended that the Welsh Government should provide specific evidence of the contribution that the planning process is making to sustainable development in an annual report.

The Sustainable Development Indicators in this report have been derived following an independent assessment, by specialist research consultants, of the contribution the planning system makes to sustainable development. The research report, published in August 2011, proposed a suite of 18 indicators². The findings of the research were used to form the basis of a consultation, held between November 2011 and January 2012, seeking the views of stakeholders³.

The consultation analysis and subsequent refinement work informed a number of changes. In particular, the proposed structure was simplified and the number of indicators was

¹ [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

² [Welsh Assembly Government \(2011\) Research: A Strategic Monitoring Framework for the Planning System](#)

³ [Welsh Assembly Government \(2011\) Consultation: A Strategic Monitoring Framework for the Planning System](#)

reduced. The result is a set of seven key indicators to measure sustainable development outcomes of significant planning applications determined in Wales.

- SD1 Economic Renewal - Economic Development
- SD2 A Low Carbon Economy - Renewable Energy
- SD3 Access to Better Homes – New Homes (including affordable housing)
- SD4 Resilience to Climate Change – Flood Risk
- SD5 Efficient Land Use – Previously Developed Land
- SD6 Open Space – Open Space Lost/Gained
- SD7 Community Infrastructure – Contributions Secured for Community Facilities

These indicators, when reviewed collectively, give a high level view of the contribution the planning system is making to the delivery of sustainable development in Wales. The information can be used by local planning authorities to help inform future decisions and development plan preparation or revision. The information can also be used by local planning authorities to demonstrate how they are meeting their duty, under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, to carry out sustainable development.

Implementation

This is the first year that the Sustainable Development Indicators have been reported. After an initial trial run in early 2014, local authorities have been providing returns on a quarterly basis and this data has been used to produce this report. However, we have not received full data from all local planning authorities. The following local planning authorities have not provided any data:

- City of Cardiff Council
- Flintshire County Council
- Wrexham County Borough Council

The following local planning authorities have provided partial responses:

- Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
- Carmarthenshire County Council
- Ceredigion County Council
- Denbighshire County Council
- Gwynedd County Council
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Powys County Council
- Snowdonia National Park Authority
- City and County of Swansea Council
- Torfaen County Borough Council
- Vale of Glamorgan Council

The following local authorities provided full responses:

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
- Bridgend County Borough Council
- Caerphilly County Borough Council

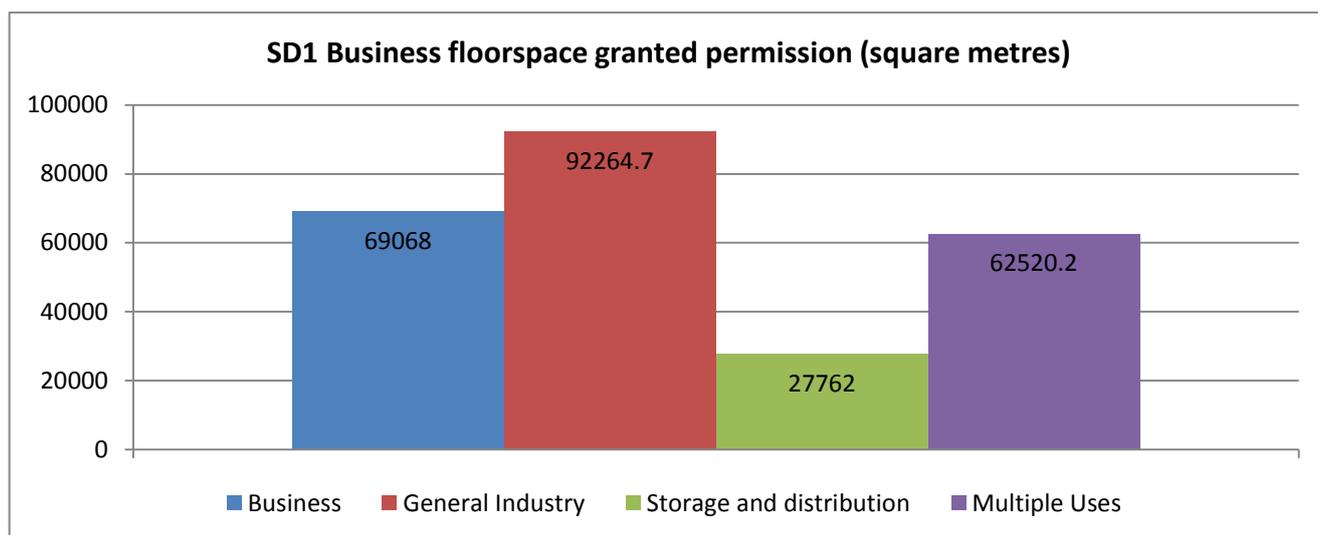
- Conwy County Borough Council
- Isle of Anglesey County Council
- Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
- Monmouthshire County Council
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- Newport City Council

As the data received is incomplete, it only gives a partial view of the contribution the planning system is making to sustainable development. As a result, we have decided not to publish the information outside of this report this year. We will work with local planning authorities next year to improve the response rate for this important data.

Indicator	SD1. The floorspace (square metres) granted and refused planning permission for new economic development on allocated employment sites during the year.
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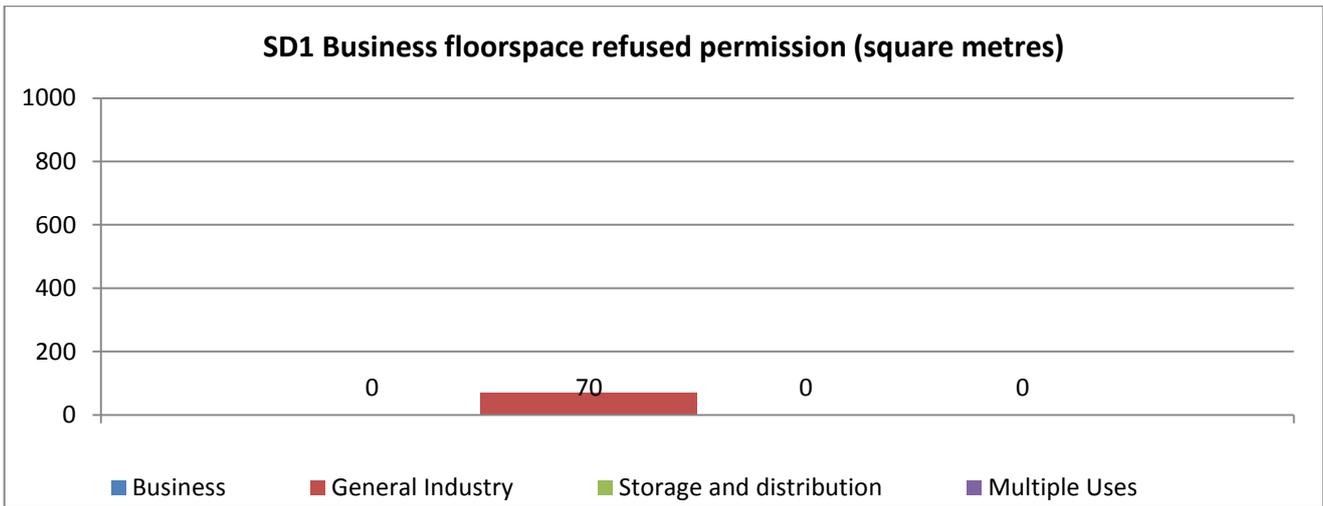
Granted (square metres)

Performance	251,615
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Refused (square metres)

Performance	70
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The planning system should support economic development and steer such development to the most appropriate locations. This indicator provides information on the contribution the planning system is making to delivering traditional economic development in identified employment sites.

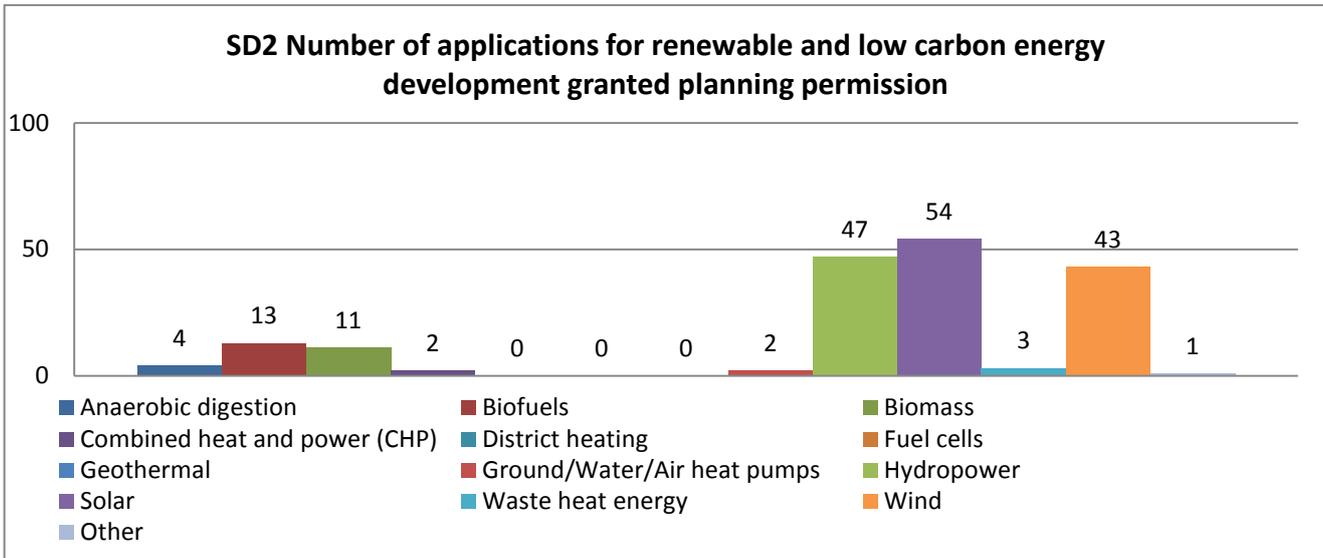
Although the data is not complete, it shows that the local planning authorities who have provided data have facilitated 251,615 square metres of new floor space for economic development. This reflects the importance of planning for employment land provision and the role of development plans in allocating land for economic development.

The Annual Performance Reports have indicated that the take-up rate of employment land in some areas has been limited as a result of low levels of demand.

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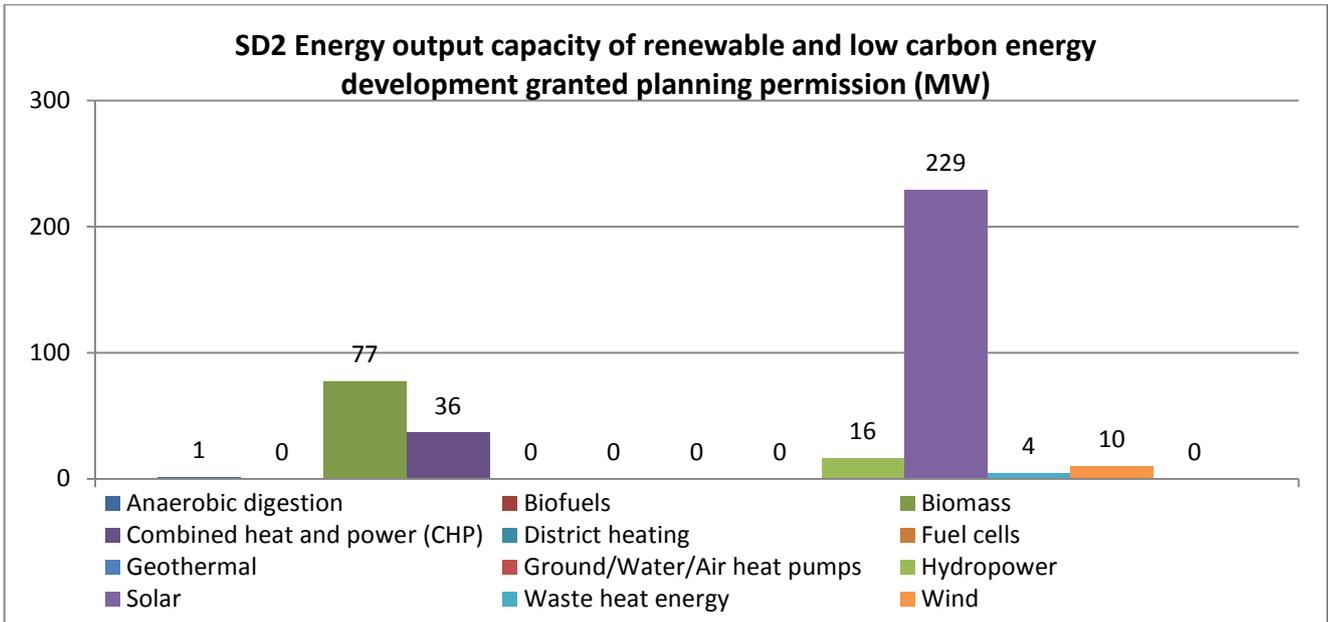
Granted permission (number of applications)

Performance	180
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Granted permission (MW energy generation)

Performance	374
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The planning system can facilitate renewable and low carbon energy generation. This indicator tells us the contribution the planning system is making to delivering renewable and low carbon energy generation and moving towards a low carbon economy.

The data gives an indication of the role of the planning system in facilitating a mix of renewable and low carbon energy development. In particular, from the data provided, there has been a significant number of planning applications granted planning permission for biomass, combined heat and power, hydropower, solar and wind energy developments.

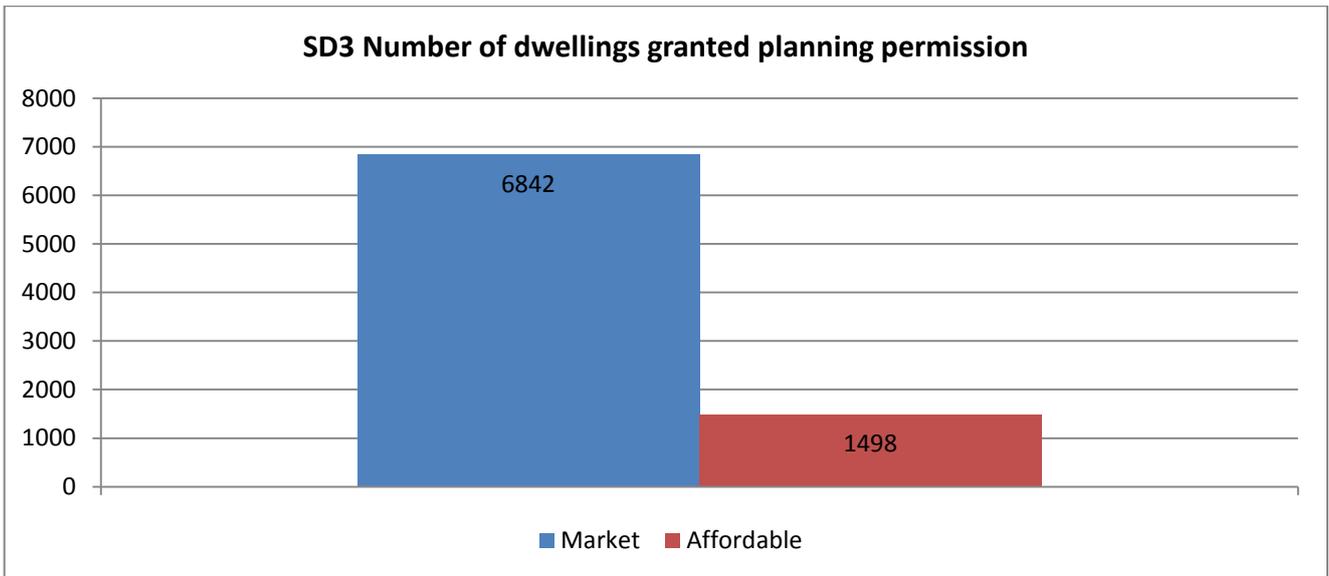
Indicator	SD3. The number of dwellings granted planning permission during the year.
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Market housing (number of units)

Performance	6,842
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Affordable housing (number of units)

Performance	1,498
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The planning system can facilitate the provision of market and affordable housing to meet local housing requirements. This indicator provides information on the contribution of the planning system to delivering new housing.

Given that some local planning authorities have not provided data, the number of dwellings approved is likely to be significantly higher. However, for the local planning authorities who have provided data, 18% of dwellings granted planning permission were affordable housing.

It should be noted that this data relates to the number of dwellings granted planning permission, not constructed, and is not comparable with housing completion data published by StatsWales.

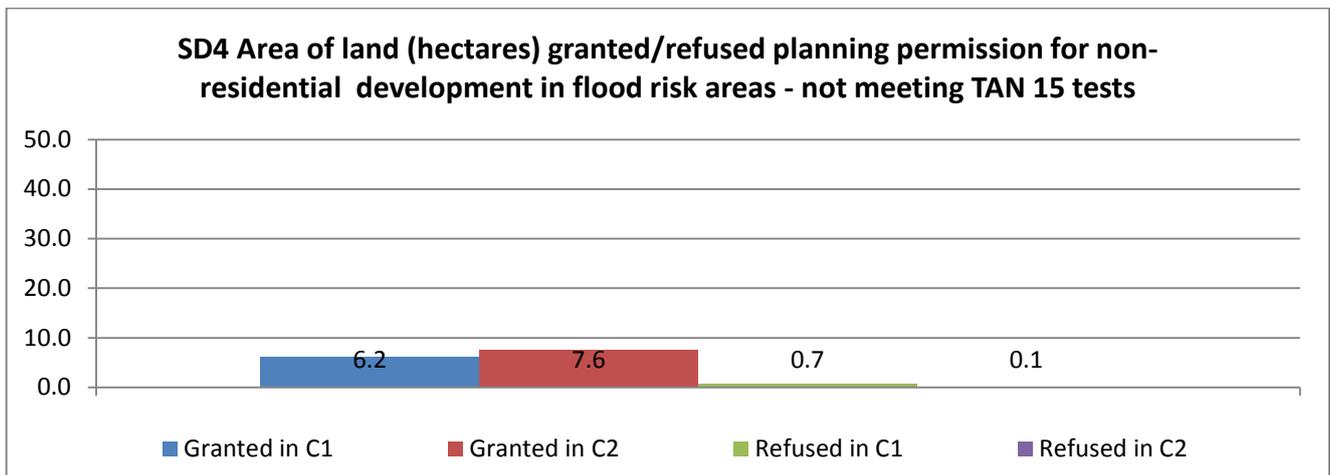
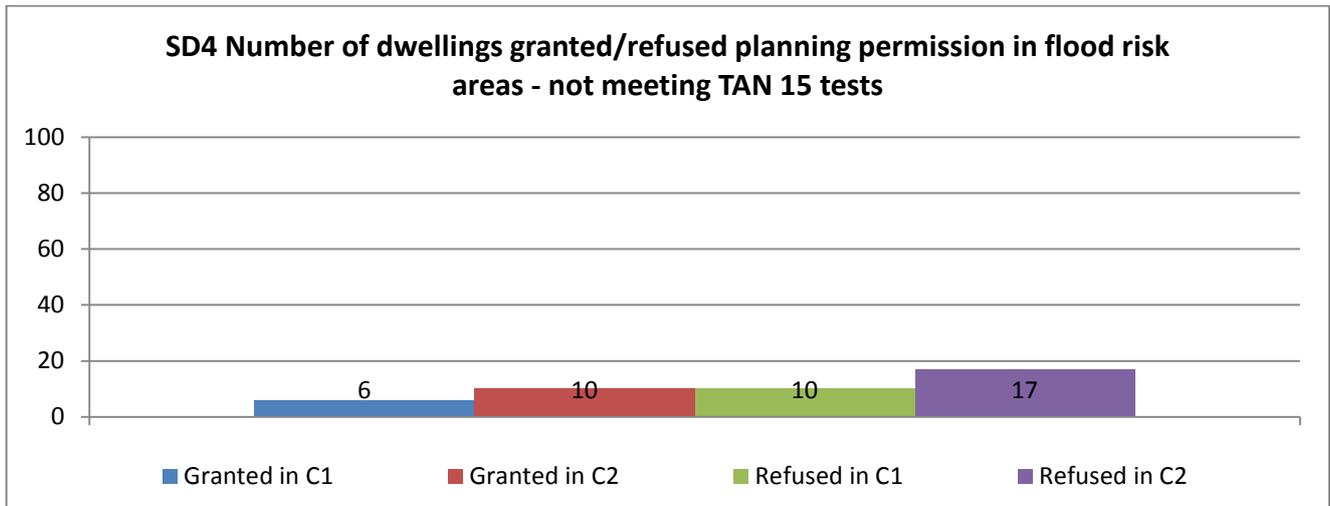
Indicator	SD4. Planning permission granted and refused for development in C1 and C2 floodplain areas during the year.
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Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that DID NOT meet all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission

Performance	16 dwellings (13.8 hectares of non-residential units)
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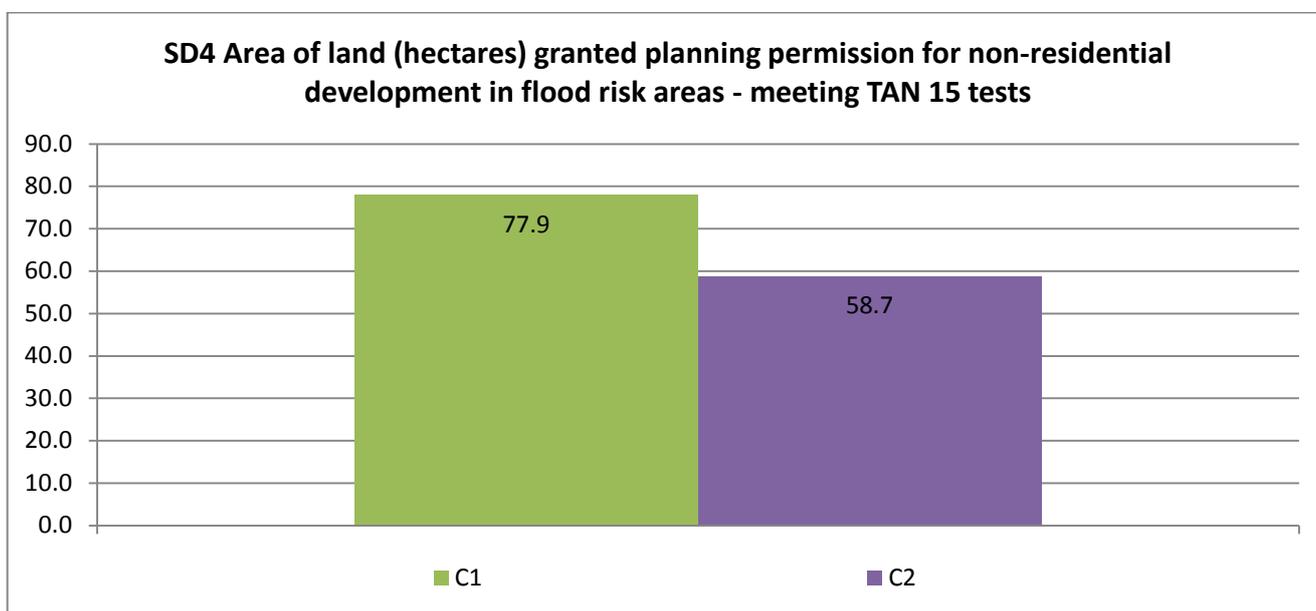
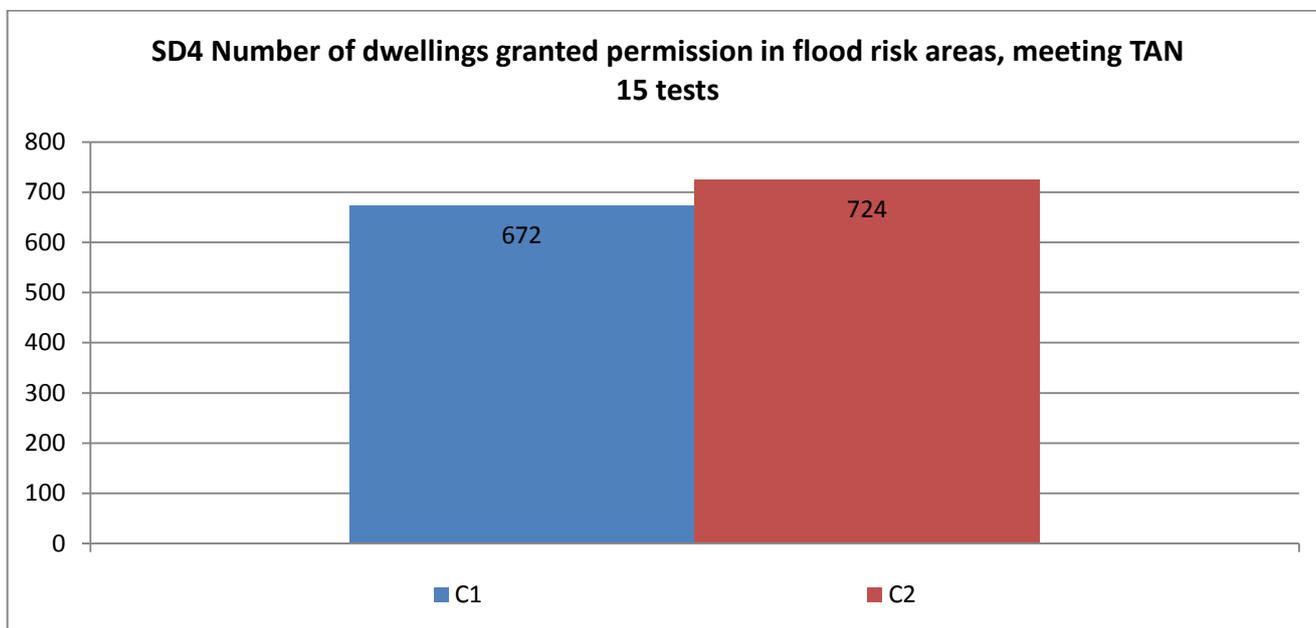
Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that did not meet all TAN 15 tests which were REFUSED permission on flood risk grounds

Performance	27 dwellings (0.8 hectares of non-residential units)
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Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that MET all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission

Performance	672 dwellings (724 hectares of non-residential units)
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The planning system has an important role in ensuring that new development is not exposed unnecessarily to flooding and can guide development to locations at little or no risk from flooding. This indicator provides information on how planning applications for development in floodplain areas are being managed.

The results from those authorities that provided data demonstrate that very few applications for residential dwellings, which do not meet the TAN 15 tests, were approved in C1 and C2

flood zones (16 dwellings in all). A further 27 proposed dwellings on the floodplain were refused permission, which suggests that very few proposals for development that conflict with the precautionary framework set out in TAN 15 are submitted by developers. Nearly 1400 new dwellings were approved on the floodplain where the TAN 15 tests were satisfied.

Most types of non-residential developments are classed as less vulnerable to flooding in TAN 15. Nearly 140 hectares of land was approved for development where the TAN 15 tests were met, but nearly 14 hectares was approved for the development where the tests were not met.

The results as a whole indicate that local planning authorities recognise the risk of allowing new development in areas at risk of flooding, and that the advice of Natural Resources Wales informs the vast majority of decisions on planning applications. The results also indicate however that a small number of developments continue to be approved contrary to the policies and tests set out in TAN 15.

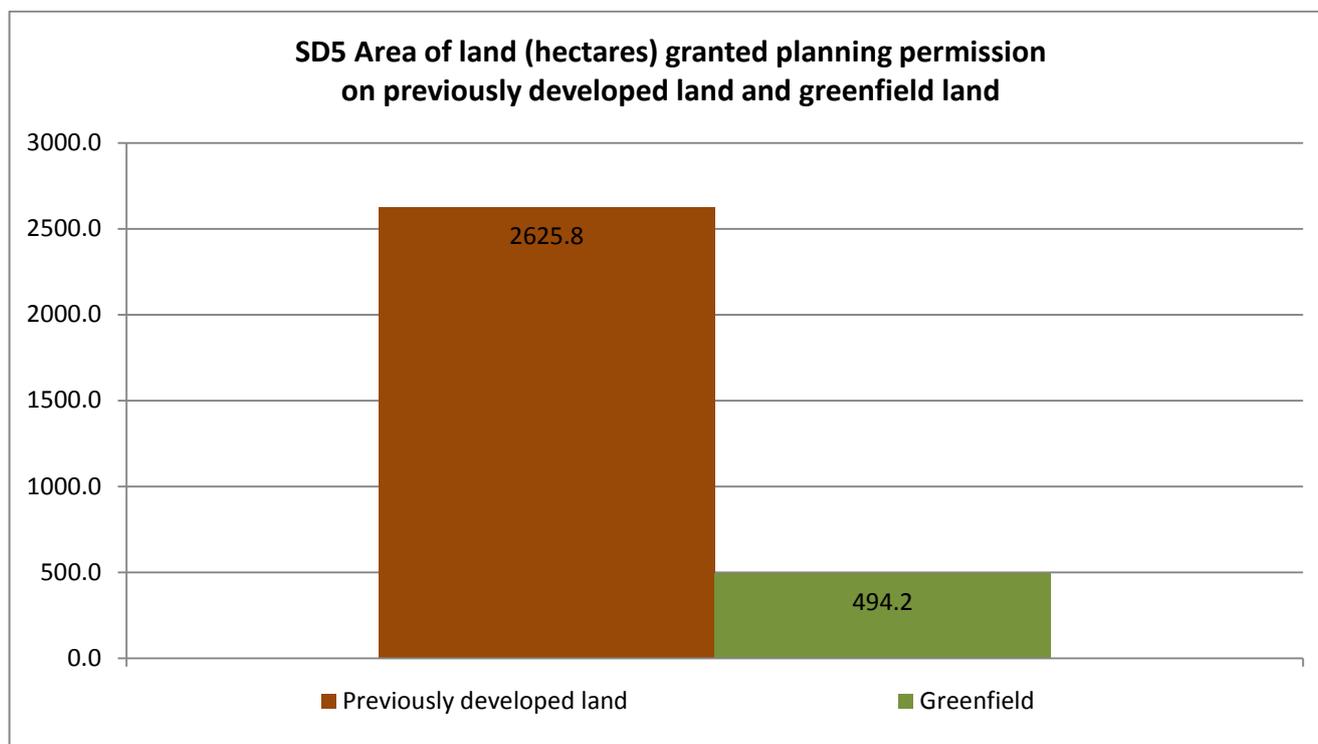
Indicator	SD5. The area of land (ha) granted planning permission for new development on previously developed land and greenfield land during the year.
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Previously developed land (hectares)

Performance	2,625.8 hectares
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Greenfield land (hectares)

Performance	494.2 hectares
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The planning system can ensure that, wherever possible, previously developed land is used in preference to greenfield sites, particularly those of high agricultural or ecological value.

This data tells us that the planning system is directing new development primarily to previously developed land. 84% of land granted planning permission for new development was on previously developed land.

The Annual Performance Reports highlighted that many local planning authorities have sought to direct development to previously developed land in their Local Development Plan.

Local planning authorities with higher levels of development on greenfield land were primarily more rural in nature and, in their Annual Performance Report, cited a lack of previously developed land. One local planning authority also highlighted that the density of development approved on previously developed land was higher than more suburban development on greenfield land.

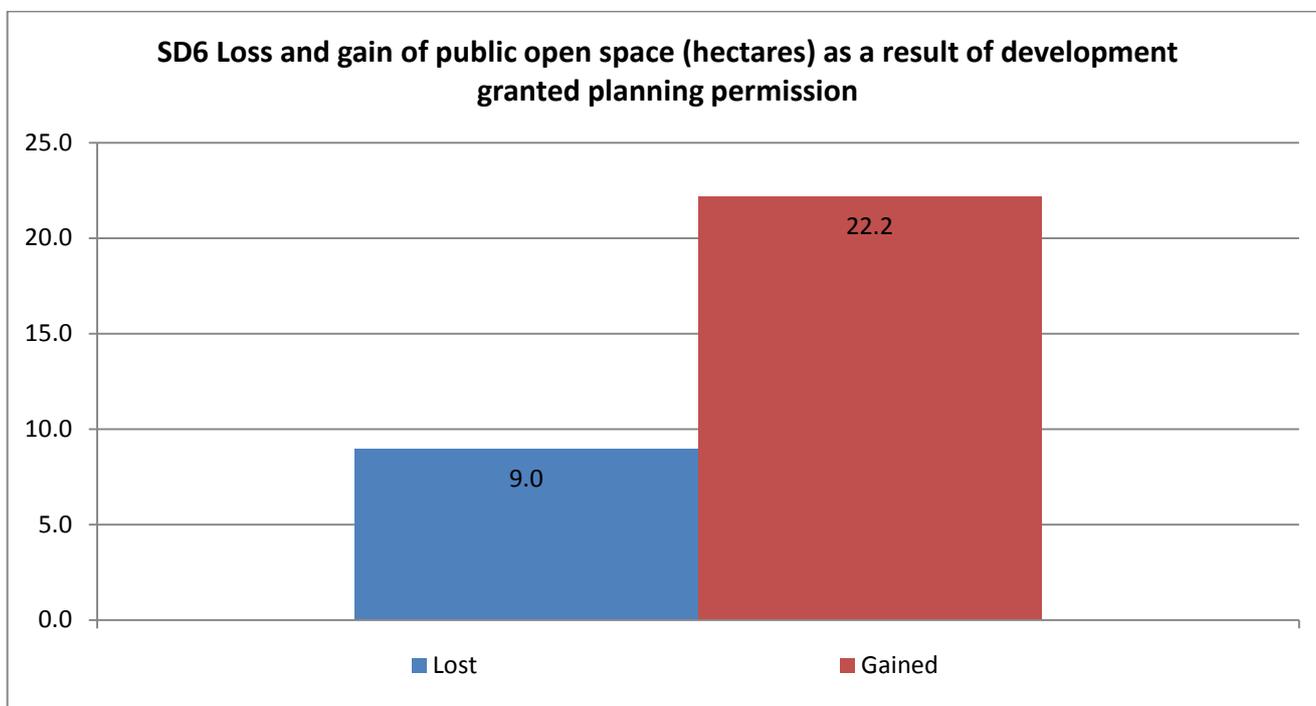
Indicator	SD6. The area of public open space (ha) that would be lost and gained as a result of development granted planning permission during the quarter.
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Open space lost (hectares)

Performance	9.0 hectares
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Open space gained (hectares)

Performance	22.2 hectares
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Open spaces can provide recreational, amenity and environmental value as well as having a role in climate protection and adaptation to the impacts of climate change. This indicator

measures how the planning system is protecting existing, and facilitating the provision of new, open spaces.

The data shows that, from the local planning authorities who have provided data, a significantly higher amount of open space has been gained as a result of new development than lost. The Annual Performance Reports highlighted some of the reasons for the loss of open space, including two schemes which enabled an affordable housing development and school respectively, both retaining and improving the quality of the playing fields on the site.

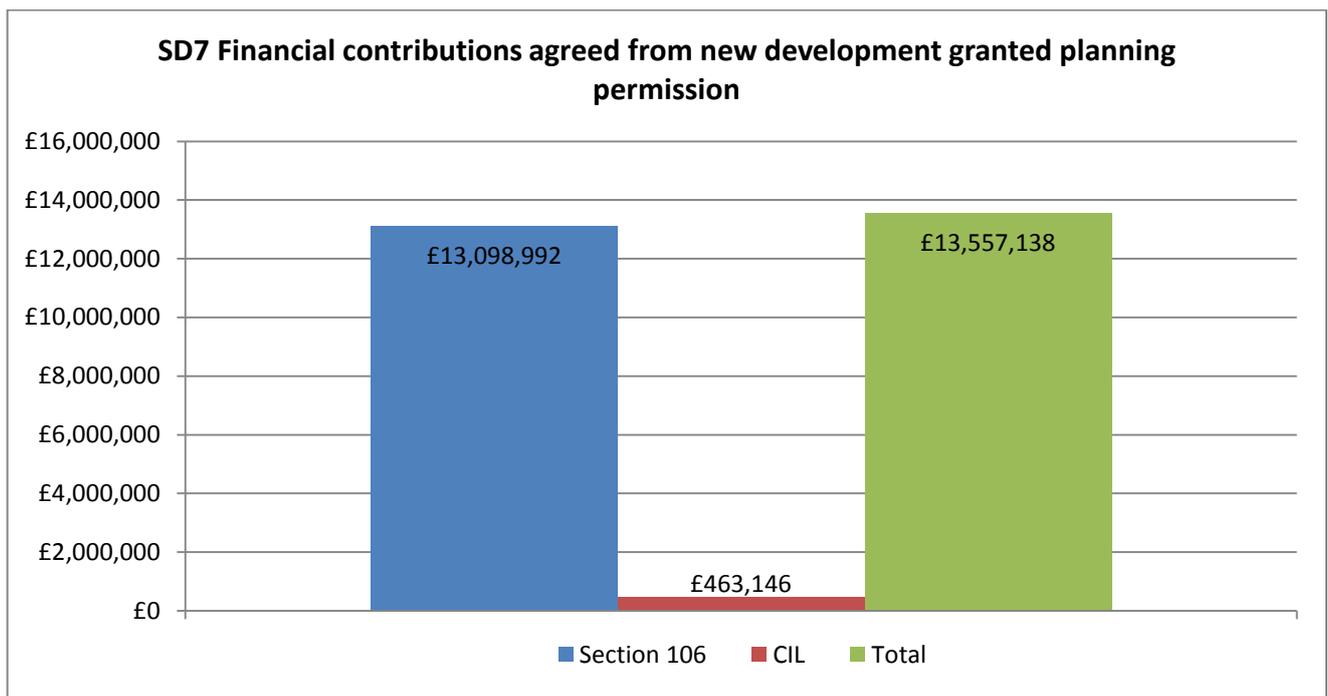
Indicator	SD7. The total financial contributions (£) agreed from new development granted planning permission during the quarter for the provision of community infrastructure.
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Gained via Section 106 agreements (£)

Performance	£13,098,992
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Gained via Community Infrastructure Levy (£)

Performance	£463,146
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Financial contributions can be used to fund the provision of community infrastructure required to support sustainable development. This indicator measures the level of financial contributions agreed for the provision of community infrastructure.

The data shows that the local planning authorities that have provided returns have secured a significant amount of financial contributions to fund community infrastructure, primarily through Section 106 Agreements. The Annual Performance Reports identified that a number of local planning authorities have recently adopted, or are in the process of developing, a Community Infrastructure Levy.

5 – CONCLUSION

The Annual Performance Report process is an essential tool to assess service delivery, and to identify options for future improvement. Local planning authorities reported that they have found the process particularly useful for this purpose, as it has allowed them to identify areas for further work, identify resource implications and chart a course for improvement. The preparation of Annual Performance Reports has been particularly helpful in framing business plans and future budgeting requirements.

In terms of broader reporting on performance of the system across Wales, the Welsh planning service is broadly operating at a reasonable level given resource constraints. However, there remain areas for further improvement, which will need to be addressed on an individual and collaborative basis.

Annual Performance Reports submitted by LPAs have identified areas where further work is needed in the short to medium term to address service shortfalls. We intend to meet with individual authorities to obtain further detail on their proposed actions and areas where support can be provided to improve service delivery in those specific aspects.

There are also many examples of approaches to common service and operational issues. This creates an opportunity for local planning authorities to work together more closely, through groups including the Planning Officers Society for Wales and with support from the Welsh Local Government Association, to identify and champion examples of good practice identified within the Annual Performance Reports.

This is the first year of the Annual Performance Reporting process and it has provided a number of key messages about the way that the system operates, and what actions we might take to improve it. A number of significant actions are in train, with the wealth of changes that are being introduced as a consequence of the Planning (Wales) Act and implementing subordinate legislation. We expect that these changes will have a positive impact on the handling and determination of major applications, and will monitor the situation closely.

We will continue to work with authorities to improve the collection of performance data whilst seeking ways to minimise the burden of collection, although the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places an increased emphasis on Welsh public bodies to demonstrate how they contribute to sustainable development. In particular, we will work with LPAs to improve the recording of sustainable development data as a means to demonstrate the important role that planning plays in supporting a sustainable Wales.

Finally, there is an increasing commitment to sharing of specialist expertise and common resources, which will assist local planning authorities in achieving maximum service outputs with their limited resources. The collaborative work by North Wales authorities in this area is advancing well and the impact of closer joint working will be of interest to other authorities in the future.

ANNEX A

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK TABLE - FINANCIAL YEAR 2014/15

MEASURE	WALES AVERAGE	Blaenau Gwent	Brecon Beacons National Park	Bridgend	Caerphilly	Cardiff	Cardamarthenshire	Ceredigion	Conwy	Denbighshire	Flintshire	Gwynedd	Isle of Anglesey	Merthyr Tydfil	Monmouthshire	Neath Port Talbot	Newport	Pembrokeshire	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park	Powys	Rhondda Cynon Taf	Snowdonia National Park	Swansea	Torfaen	Vale of Glamorgan	Wrexham	
Plan making																											
Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	47					70						16	84			38				24			30			69	
Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	Yes	Yes			Yes			Yes						Yes				Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes					
The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	4.2	2.6	5.5	6	2.5	3.6	4.9	3.7	4.8	1.8	3.7	3.7	4.7	2.5	5.2	2.5	9.2	5.3	2.7	1.5	2.8	8.3	2.7	4.7	7.3	3.1	

Efficiency																											
Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	24	11	40	24	24	8	29	20	14	32	17	47	28	60	50	35	20	17	22	25	11	50	6	9	22	41	
	162 of 686	1 of 9	2 of 5	4 of 17	8 of 33	3 of 37	15 of 51	4 of 20	4 of 28	7 of 22	10 of 60	14 of 30	5 of 18	6 of 10	6 of 12	8 of 23	7 of 35	9 of 53	2 of 9	15 of 60	4 of 38	1 of 2	2 of 32	1 of 11	6 of 27	18 of 44	
Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	206.0	55.0	200.0	89.0	150.0	172.0	104.0	239.5	378.0	210.5	203.5	254.5	155.5	52.5	94.5	79.0	301.5	173.0	128.5	77.5	343.0	No Data	246.5	No Data	No Data	No Data	
Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	72.7	77.1	88.1	83.9	68.1	65.3	73.8	44.3	76.6	71.1	71.7	76.0	74.1	92.5	76.3	77.7	69.2	64.0	85.7	62.5	79.9	75.0	71.0	64.7	80.9	77.0	
	17591 of 24203	296 of 384	461 of 523	659 of 785	678 of 995	1695 of 2596	1283 of 1738	297 of 670	614 of 802	735 of 1034	877 of 1224	690 of 908	654 of 883	285 of 308	803 of 1053	649 of 835	730 of 1055	582 of 910	511 of 596	568 of 909	1117 of 1398	348 of 464	1232 of 1734	341 of 527	920 of 1137	566 of 735	
Average time taken to determine all applications in days	76.4	54.5	63.0	29.5	91.5	39.0	37.5	171.5	82.0	81.0	76.5	84.0	71.0	49.5	61.5	55.0	94.0	80.0	53.5	35.0	79.0	No Data	63.5	No Data	No Data	No Data	

Quality																											
Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	10.1	13.0	11.8	0.0	2.3	9.8	13.6	41.9	8.3	15.8	8.3	8.1	5.8	0.0	3.1	5.6	3.3	2.2	5.9	16.7	1.6	21.4	23.4	0.0	0.0	10.8	
	88 of 867	3 of 23	2 of 17	0 of 19	1 of 43	4 of 41	8 of 59	13 of 31	2 of 24	6 of 38	3 of 36	5 of 62	3 of 52	0 of 17	1 of 32	1 of 18	1 of 30	1 of 45	1 of 17	3 of 18	1 of 64	9 of 42	11 of 47	0 of 9	No Data	9 of 83	
Percentage of appeals dismissed	65.6	75.0	80.0	61.5	76.5	66.7	64.5	80.0	83.3	50.0	48.3	55.6	46.2	80.0	66.7	55.6	80.8	60.9	76.9	65.2	75.0	62.5	54.9	66.7	76.5	66.7	
Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Engagement																											
Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes							
Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes							
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	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Part-ial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Part-ial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Enforcement																											
Percentage of enforcement cases investigated within 84 days	65.8	81.8	60.9	84.7	65.8	50.0	69.9	64.7	85.7	68.8	79.5	76.8	62.8	81.5	76.3	82.2	48.9	61.7	66.2	22.4	73.1	63.0	34.2	73.4	84.3	88.7	
Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases	71.1	9.0	10.5	24.0	31.5	No Data	No Data	35.5	No Data	No Data	30.0	No Data	27.5	4.0	12.0	2.0	No Data	238.0	No Data	278.5	No Data	No Data	114.5	No Data	No Data	1.0	
Percentage of enforcement cases resolved within 180 days	76.8	53.3	47.5	93.8	71.1	75.0	84.9	66.3	No Data	No Data	73.6	80.3	81.4	92.6	67.3	88.5	81.5	75.6	74.2	54.3	87.3	No Data	53.1	81.4	100.0	69.4	
Average time taken to take enforcement action	175.5	133.0	197.5	43.0	182.0	71.5	64.5	227.0	No Data	No Data	246.5	132.5	62.0	75.5	120.5	71.5	176.0	240.5	88.5	401.5	93.0	No Data	184.0	85.0	No Data	No Data	

Annex B

List of links to local planning authority Annual Performance Reports for 2014-15

Below is a list of web links, where available, to the Annual Performance Reports of each local planning authority.

[Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council](#)

[Brecon Beacons National Park Authority](#)

[Bridgend County Borough Council](#)

[Caerphilly County Borough Council](#)

The City of Cardiff Council

[Carmarthenshire County Council](#)

Ceredigion County Council

Conwy County Borough Council

[Denbighshire County Council](#)

Flintshire County Council

[Gwynedd Council](#)

Isle of Anglesey County Council

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

[Monmouthshire County Council](#)

[Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council](#)

[Newport City Council](#)

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

[Pembrokeshire County Council](#)

[Powys County Council](#)

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Snowdonia National Park Authority

[City and County of Swansea](#)

[Torfaen County Borough Council](#)

Vale of Glamorgan Council

Wrexham County Borough Council