

# **Carmarthenshire Local Planning Authority**

## **PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016**

**(Reporting period April 2015 – March 2016)**



## **PREFACE**

I am delighted to introduce the second Annual Performance Report for Carmarthenshire County Council's Planning Service, a service which plays a key role in delivering Council priorities, which will cover every aspect of people's lives. I fully welcome the Planning Annual Performance Report (APR), as it captures the ongoing work being carried out on improving performance and will form a basis for year-on-year analysis.

Good planning is at the heart of what we are about as a Council, making good, safe places for our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time in. The planning service can help in delivering these aims whilst generating growth in the economy and protecting our natural habitats. With the adoption of the Planning (Wales) Act in July 2015, and the introduction of the numerous and significant pieces of secondary legislation that follows, this is a landmark year for Planning in Wales and this Council will be embracing the move towards positive planning that the Act prescribes.



**Councillor Mair Stephens**  
**Executive Board Member for HR, Efficiencies and Collaboration**

## **CONTEXT**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this Annual Performance Report is to set out the planning context within which the Local Planning Authority within Carmarthenshire operates, both corporately and in terms of Carmarthenshire as a county, for 2015/16. The report excludes parts of the County covered by Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, as they have their own Development Management function and Local Development Plan, and will have prepared their own Annual Performance Report for the same period.

### **The County**

Carmarthenshire is a diverse County with the agricultural economy and landscape of the rural areas sitting side by side with the urban and industrial south-eastern area. However, as a primarily rural County, the population density is low at 75.7 persons per sq. kilometre, compared with 140 persons per sq. kilometre for Wales as a whole. This scarcity of population is more apparent in rural Carmarthenshire than it is in the south and east of the County where 65% of the population reside on 35% of the land.

The main urban centres of the County include Llanelli, Ammanford/Cross Hands and Carmarthen with the former representing historically important industrial centres within the South eastern area. The historic market town of Carmarthen, sitting at the gateway to west Wales and due to its central geographic location, typically serves the needs of the County's rural hinterland and beyond. The County's other large settlements vary in size and many of them make notable contributions to the needs and requirements of their community and the surrounding area. These are supplemented by a number of rural villages and settlements which are self-sufficient in terms of facilities and services; however, many other smaller settlements lack services and facilities. The needs of residents in these latter areas are typically met by neighbouring settlements.

The adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) builds upon the spatial characteristics and diversity of the County and its communities and seeks to consolidate the existing spatial settlement pattern and previous development plan frameworks, whilst continuing to reflect and promote sustainability. It seeks to implement a land use framework which reflects and promotes accessibility to essential services and facilities, thus reducing the need to travel and improving social inclusion. It represents a plan-led approach based firmly upon the existing spatial context aimed at achieving viable, self-supporting settlements and sustainable rural communities. This allows for the potential consolidation of existing facilities and provides for the support, retention and continued provision of viable facilities, services and employment opportunities at accessible and appropriate locations. It also enables the further development of sustainable local economies and facilitates regeneration opportunities.

The County's strategic importance is confirmed by the fact that it is situated within three areas identified in the Wales Spatial Plan (WSP):

- Pembrokeshire - The Haven;
- Swansea Bay - Waterfront and the Western Valleys; and
- Central Wales.

The Swansea Bay City Region encompasses the Council areas of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, City and County of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. It brings together business, local government and a range of other partners, working towards creating economic prosperity for the people who live and work in our City Region. The Swansea Bay City Region Economic Regeneration Strategy 2013 – 2030 sets out the strategic framework for the region aimed at supporting the area's development over the coming decades. The LDP, in recognising the role of Carmarthenshire, makes provision through its policies and proposals for employment development (including regeneration), with the economy an important component of the Plan's Strategy. The emerging role of the City Region will be a consideration to ensuring the continued compatibility of the approaches in each County in terms of the strategic context of the Region.

#### Planning background

The Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted on 10 December 2014, and sets out the spatial vision for the future of Carmarthenshire (excluding that area within the Brecon Beacons National Park which has its own LDP), along with a framework for the distribution and delivery of growth and development. It sets out land-use planning policies and proposals for the future across Carmarthenshire and forms the basis for the determination of planning applications and in guiding future opportunities for investment and growth.

LDP policies include land-use allocations for different types of development (i.e. housing, employment, retailing, education, open space, built and natural environment etc.) as well as criteria for assessing individual proposals. The LDP has a direct effect on the lives of every resident of the County as well as major implications on investment programmes, other plans and strategies, communities and landowners. The LDP will guide development up to 2021, and will be monitored in accordance with the monitoring framework set out in that Plan and reviewed, as required.

The first Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) on the LDP is being prepared to see how the LDP is actually working in practice. This first report will be submitted to the Welsh Government and published on the Carmarthenshire County Council website by 31 October 2016. This process will be repeated from now on and submitted to Welsh Government in October of each year. By the second and third year AMR's, trends and patterns should start to appear in the information collected which will assist the Council in deciding whether any changes to the Plan are necessary and if so when such changes should be pursued.

#### Planning and the community strategy and wider strategic and operational activity of the Council

Carmarthenshire's [Integrated Community Strategy](#) (ICS) sets out a vision for the County from 2011 to 2016. A variety of organisations from all sectors in Carmarthenshire worked together

through the Local Service Board to develop this Strategy which will try to address the challenges facing the County in the next few years. The Strategy sets a clear direction for the Council's actions and describes the commitment made by all partners in the County. The Vision is for a: **“Carmarthenshire that enables people to live healthy and fulfilled lives by working together to build strong, bilingual and sustainable communities.”**

The ICS sets out strategic outcomes that communicate drivers and aspirations for Carmarthenshire, thus:

- People in Carmarthenshire are healthier;
- People in Carmarthenshire fulfil their learning potential;
- People who live, work and visit Carmarthenshire are safe and feel safer;
- Carmarthenshire's communities and environment are sustainable; and,
- Carmarthenshire has a stronger and more prosperous economy.

There is a synergy between the LDP and the ICS. The Vision of the LDP is closely aligned to that of the ICS, with the LDP vision providing the spatial dimension of that common vision. The synergy between the documents is exemplified through the commitment in both to a sustainable Carmarthenshire with the LDP providing a land use expression to this objective.

The emergence and implications of the Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 will need to be monitored to ensure continuity of purpose and content between future iterations of both documents. These ways of working will continue to look to the long term, taking an integrated approach, working with others.

Over the next few years, Wellbeing Plans will replace the ICS and will provide part of the evidence base and context for future LDPs and any Strategic Development Plans. The LDP will remain a key tool to deliver Wellbeing Plans and there are clear advantages in terms of efficiency, engagement and outcomes to undertake both processes together. The progression towards Wellbeing Plans and the recent transfer from the Local Service Board to Public Service Board will be considered within subsequent AMRs to ensure the continued alignment of these two core Plans.

The LDP also works hand in hand with other corporate plans and strategies to achieve sustainable outcomes. Many of these strategies have a common sustainability agenda. Some of these strategies include:

- Carmarthenshire Housing Strategy: People Homes and Communities;
- Transformations: Strategic Regeneration Plan for Carmarthenshire: 2015-2030;
- Carmarthenshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and Review;
- Joint Transport Plan for South West Wales: 2015 - 2020;
- South Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party - Regional Technical Statement;
- Open All Year – A Tourism Strategy for South West Wales;
- Carmarthenshire Rural Development Plan;
- Gypsy and Traveller Community Strategy for Carmarthenshire County Council;
- Local Housing Market Assessment, Carmarthenshire County Council;
- County Council Corporate Plan 2014-2017.

In addition to working with partners within the County, liaison with neighbouring authorities has and remains a key feature across the South West Wales region playing an important role

in the LDP's preparatory process and also in taking forward the many new implications emerging from the Planning Act (Wales) 2015. The Council has had regular contact with neighbouring authorities, both individually and collectively at regional level (through the South West Wales Regional Planning Group, which include Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, City and County of Swansea, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Powys and Neath Port Talbot), to ensure alignment between respective LDPs. Certain factors preclude complete conformity, but constructive discussions and shared information and experience has minimised the risk of conflicting policies, and ensured an appropriate level of integration.

Work is ongoing on assessing the feasibility of introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); the Planning Act 2008 and the CIL Regulations 2010 have introduced the opportunity to implement this new regime for funding infrastructure to support new development.

Introduction of CIL is not a mandatory requirement for Local Authorities. However, the new legislation effectively scales back the scope of Section 106 legal agreements, limiting them to affordable housing and 'on site' mitigation measures only. Therefore, if Carmarthenshire does not implement CIL, the Council will potentially lose out on collecting contributions from developers to fund vital infrastructure.

The District Valuers Service (DVS) have been commissioned to undertake a viability study to inform the deliberations of adopting a CIL Charging Schedule. The study will provide an evidence base of land, sales and rental values, construction costs and development viability for a range of land uses across Carmarthenshire (excluding the Brecon Beacons National Park area). This will form key evidence in informing the Council in considering whether the introduction of CIL would be viable in Carmarthenshire. The viability assessment is a central element of the CIL evidence base and will inform further evidence including an infrastructure delivery plan and the Preliminary and Draft Charging Schedule. Consultation on the Preliminary and Draft Schedule, Viability Report and Infrastructure evidence is taking place during Autumn 2016, with reporting back to Council to occur later in the year.

#### Existing and previous major influences on land use

The County is characterised by a rural and urban split which typifies the variability within settlements and their historic and future roles. This is exemplified by the predominately South Eastern urban areas and their post-industrial needs in terms of regeneration. The challenges faced by such settlements are often of a marked difference in terms of scale to those of rural areas which face separate challenges in respect of depopulation and changes within the agricultural industry. This encapsulates the diversity of Carmarthenshire's communities and settlements which are diverse in character, scale and role with a settlement's size not always reflective of its role. In this respect the distribution of opportunities for growth based on its position within the LDP hierarchy could not be predicated on a simplistic interpretation of distribution where growth is provided, for example across all tier 3 settlements (as defined by the LDP) on an equal basis. Indeed this equally applies within the Growth Areas (as defined by the LDP) where each has manifestly different issues and considerations underpinning potential for growth but within the context of their importance in strategic terms and the function they perform.

There are a number of considerations that affect the suitability of land for development across the County, notably flooding (many of the larger towns are situated adjacent to the sea and/or rivers) and nature conservation and designations (notably Llanelli/Burry Port and Cross

Hands). Furthermore, there are a number of social considerations including areas of linguistic interest in terms of the Welsh language – notably within the Gwendraeth and Amman Valleys which need to be taken into account in looking at the suitability of developments being proposed and their potential impacts.

The significance of addressing the challenges of location and sustainability facing certain rural communities has been recognised through the LDP and its suitable settlement hierarchy. The various exceptions policies included in the LDP seek to ensure that organic and sustainable growth in such rural areas is where appropriate achievable.

Historic/landscape setting of the area, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, conservation areas etc.

The richness of Carmarthenshire's natural, built and cultural environment is an important spatial consideration in planning for the future of the County, particularly in terms of the potential for growth and the sympathetic siting of development. The County includes sites designated at the international level to protect and enhance important nature conservation value, as well as striking landscapes and distinctive historic towns and villages. The importance of the County's built heritage is borne out by the 27 conservation areas designated within its settlements, 470 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (ranging from Prehistoric to post- Medieval/Modern features of cultural historic interest) and the large number of listed buildings. There are also a number of designated sites for nature conservation and biodiversity importance, including 7 Special Areas of Conservation, 3 Special Protection Areas, 1 Ramsar site (Burry Inlet), 82 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 5 National Nature Reserves, 5 Local Nature Reserves and 7 registered landscapes.

Population change and influence on Planning matters

The 2011 Census identified the population of Carmarthenshire at 183,777 with 78,829 households.

Between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, Carmarthenshire saw an increase of 11,070 in its population and an increase in households of 5,781. During the same period the housing stock rose by 6,969 dwellings. The current spread of population and households across the County broadly reflects the current urban form and established communities,

In preparing its LDP, the Council developed a revised scenario for population and household change. This used up dated evidence to derive the assumptions on future migration streams, but struck a balance between the very high net migration experienced mid-decade, the situation in 2009, which recorded the lowest net-migration to Carmarthenshire since 1993, along with all available and published data sources since the Welsh Government 2008-based projections. Consideration was given to the implications of the Welsh Government 2011-based Local Authority household projections and the projected reduction outlined within the 2011-based household projections against the strategic context of the LDP and its objectives. The Plan consequently is based on growth aspirations with an identified housing requirement of 15,197 dwellings over the plan period.

## **PLANNING SERVICE**

### The Service and its location within the Council

Carmarthenshire County Council consists of six Departments who report directly to the Chief Executive. Each Department is responsible for a number of Services, with each service area having a Head of Service.

The Corporate structure for Carmarthenshire County Council can be seen in Figure 1.

The Planning Service relocated to the Environment Department on 1 April 2015, with both a new Director of Environment and Head of Planning appointed during the 2015/2016 financial year. The relocation of the Planning Service means that it is now within the same Department as Highways and Transport, Property and Waste & Environmental Services. The Head of Planning reports directly to the Director of Environment.

Further changes to the structure of the Environment Department will be undertaken within 2016/17, with realignments between the services with regard to some function. These changes will not have a direct effect on the Planning Service.

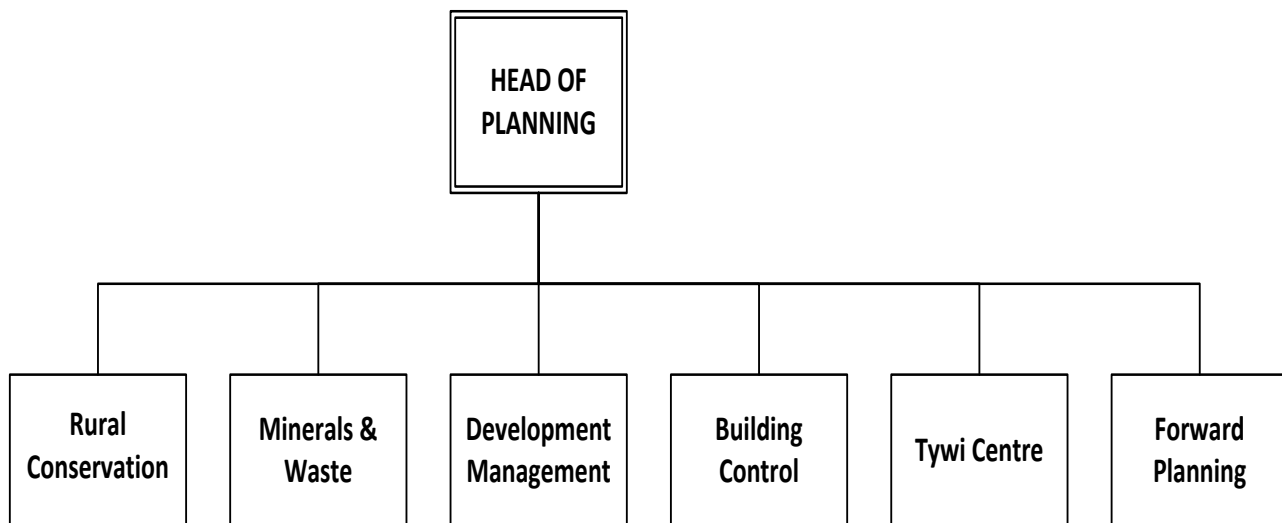
Figure 2 below sets out the structure of the Planning Service. As can be seen the Service is split into six separate functions (business units), each with a Business Manager and all reporting directly to the Head of Planning.



**Figure 1: Carmarthenshire County Council Corporate Structure**

<b>Chief Executive</b>					
Administration & Law					
Information Technology					
<b>Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration &amp; Policy)</b>	<b>Assistant Chief Executive (People Management &amp; Performance)</b>	<b>Director of Resources</b>	<b>Director of Education &amp; Children</b>	<b>Director of Community Services</b>	<b>Director of Environment</b>
Customer Services	Fitness for Work	Corporate Property	Education	Leisure & Sport	Property
Complaints	HR	Financial Services	Children's Services	Mental Health & Learning Disabilities	Waste & Environmental Services
Electoral Services	Translation	Audit, Risk & Procurement	Strategic Development	Regional Collaboration	Highways & Transport
Communications				Public Protection & Housing	Planning
Corporate Policy & Partnership					
Performance & Information Management					
Community Safety					
Press					
Regeneration					

**Figure 2: Planning Service Structure**



The Planning Service is located at Carmarthen, Llanelli and Llandeilo, occupying six separate sites in total as follows:

### **Head of Planning**

The Head of Planning, plus 2 support staff, is located at Spilman Street, Carmarthen.

### **Rural Conservation**

The Rural Conservation Team is primarily based at Carmarthen (Spilman Street) and Llandeilo (Civic Offices). The Team also has representation near Cross Hands in terms of the Management of the Caeau Mynydd Mawr project. One officer is also currently based at the Llanelli Office at least part of the week.

### **Minerals and Waste**

The Minerals and Waste Team have their base at Llandeilo, within the Civic Offices - although they are largely site based due to the nature of their duties which includes undertaking the Minerals and Waste function for a number of South West Wales LPAs.

### **Development Management**

Development Management, which includes Planning Enforcement, Ecology and Built Conservation, currently have three separate teams. These teams are located at Ty Elwyn, Llanelli as well as Spilman Street, Carmarthen and Civic Offices, Llandeilo. This means that the County is currently split into East, South and West teams. The administrative hub for the registration of all planning applications and data management is undertaken at Civic Offices, Llandeilo. Although all three Teams have Development Management Officers and Enforcement Officers the Teams share between them the services of one Built Conservation Officer and one Ecologist.

### **Building Control**

Building Control also have presence in three locations, which are Ty Elwyn, Llanelli, Civic Offices, Llandeilo and St David's Park, Carmarthen, with St David's Park being the base for plan vetting and all administrative functions. The advantages of co-locating Building Control

and the Development Management Teams is widely acknowledged by the Llanelli and Llandeilo Officers. Discussions are therefore now underway to relocate the Officers based at St David's Park to Spilman Street. The discussion also extends to the Team's support staff with Spilman Street or Civic Offices, Llandeilo currently being looked at in terms of a relocation for later this year.

### Canolfan Tywi Centre

The Canolfan Tywi Centre promotes Bulit Heritage, and its vision is to create a future where the land, buildings and culture of West Wales are better understood, enjoyed and sensitively maintained. The Canolfan Tywi Centre project's aim is to work to make the County's heritage more understandable, more accessible and fully integrated into people's daily lives. The team of 4 staff are based at the National Trust Offices, Dinefwr Farm, Llandeilo.

### **Forward Planning**

Forward Planning is the only function entirely located at Spilman Street, Carmarthen.

### Wider organisational activities impacting on the service

The Service has identified Priority Based Budgeting (PBB) savings for a three year period of some £200,000 for the next three years (2016 – 2019), having already made savings over the period 2013/15 with 8 FTE staff being lost as a result of severance.

The Development Management Unit underwent an internal review process in 2015, with an emphasis of challenge being introduced through Systems Thinking. This has resulted in a redesigned service/system delivery, and is now being rolled out to other areas within the Service - Minerals and Waste. This review process includes the capacity for challenge and further examination on a regular basis, to ensure that the system and service remain up to date and relevant. The general principles underlying this include the need for early engagement and stress the importance of building quality into submissions at as early a stage as possible. It is noted that this resonates with some of the basic tenets of the Positive Planning agenda of Welsh Government. The service area is also developing its own suite of monitoring measures, with a view to better evidencing quality in the process and being able to understand the customer 'end to end' experience. In addition to the above qualitative aspects, it is anticipated that this will realise further financial savings. Some of the savings to date have been achieved through changes such as a move to a more paperless way of working which has reduced printing and copying costs. The full impact will be evaluated as the new systems roll out further.

The Minerals and Waste team has, for a number of years now, established service level agreements with several other Local Authorities (LAs) in West Wales. The Local Authorities are:

- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority;
- Pembrokeshire County Council;
- Brecon Beacons National Park Authority;
- Powys County Council;
- Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council;

- Vale of Glamorgan Council; and
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

These vary in format but include all of, or a combination of those LAs monitoring, planning applications and enforcement needs in relation to Minerals and Waste matters.

In addition, the Development Management enforcement function has also been subject of an internal review, in the form of a Member-led Scrutiny Committee Review. This resulted in numerous recommendations being made in terms of how the County Council operates its Planning Enforcement function, particularly in areas where there is a potential overlap with regulatory powers under other legislation. A multi-disciplinary group has now been set up which meets quarterly and is chaired with the Executive Board Member who has responsibility regarding all enforcement matters.

The Planning Service has procured and recently appointed a provider for the development of a new 'back office' system that is cloud based. This new system should provide greater flexibility and provide opportunities for bespoke development to be undertaken in-house. The system also offers a more focussed opportunity for performance measurement. This new system should be in place by 2017/2018.

Additionally, the County Council's electronic data management system (EDMS), known as Information@Work, is being reviewed with greater opportunity being provided for the sharing of information on a cross departmental basis. This would better inform and support the Development Team approach to dealing with major development proposals that are being introduced within the County. The intention is, subject to safeguards, to extend this to external agencies such as Natural Resources Wales, with a view to, for example, better informing consideration of development proposals.

October 2015 saw the first fee increase in relation to planning applications in Wales for a number of years – however the fees only go part way to cost recovery.

On 16 March 2016, fees were introduced for Pre-application advice across Wales; the fees vary depending on the size and scale of the proposed development. Further details can be found at [http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/residents/planning/planning-applications/pre-application-service/#.V6xZcU2V\\_IU](http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/residents/planning/planning-applications/pre-application-service/#.V6xZcU2V_IU). The impact of these new pre application fees on the application process will need to be monitored during 2016/17. Only larger planning applications are required to go down the pre application process, though others can also chose to do so if they so wish. The Council has political support for introducing a charging schedule for a discretionary pre-application service, and this will be further considered during 2016/17, with an additional charging schedule for Developments of National Significance currently being progressed.

New Building Control fees for Carmarthenshire will also be introduced during 2016/2017, to enable fairer and more transparent setting of charges based upon the principle of cost recovery. By relating charges to estimates of actual work, and the cost of providing the services, through professional and administrative staff, the fee schedule will be able to more closely follow commercial models for estimating and charging for services which should improve the competitiveness of the Local Authority Building Control in the marketplace and provide more direct competition with approved inspectors.

2015/2016 also saw the passing of a large number of secondary legislations to support the new Planning Act (Wales) by Welsh Government (WG) which was introduced in 2015. The 'package' as a whole is geared towards changing the culture of Local Planning Authorities to being perceived as enabling organisations that are able to produce positive and pragmatic decisions in a timely manner. A key element of this is the role played by colleague departments within the County Council, with an emphasis placed on early involvement of the Planning Service, and also ensuring that consultations on planning applications are providing a positive and substantive response within a specified timescale. Officers have been engaged in disseminating the current understanding in relation to these new requirements both within the Council (colleagues and Local Members) and also externally with agents and developers. The full impact of these changes is yet to be understood with most changes having only been introduced during March 2016.

Operating budget:

The actual Planning Application fee income against that budgeted is indicated Table 1 below. The Planning Service retains its fee income, although, as the figures below show, there is a discrepancy between the budgeted income and the actual. This is a key factor when setting the annual operating budget.

**Table 1: Budgeted and Actual Income re: Planning Fees**

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Budgeted income					£1,194,630	
Actual Income	£1,375,178	£869,096	£965,491	£830,881	£876,801	

**Further comments to be inserted by Head of Planning, as well as confirmation of income figures.**

Staffing:

The **Development Management** (DM) Unit within the Planning Service is managed by a Development Management Manager, who has direct line management responsibility for three Senior Development Management Officers (SDMO). The Unit currently operates out of three office locations - Carmarthen, Llanelli, and Llandeilo - with the SDMOs leading the teams in these areas. In total, the teams have 10 Development Management Officers (DMO), in addition to 2 Development Management Assistants (DMA) (one DMA post is currently vacant and the other is currently working within the Minerals and Waste Team). The DMA posts are fixed term appointments where the Council provide training (normally post graduate) opportunities. These are posts that have been operated for a number of years, and three of the current DMOs have graduated up from these DMA positions.

There is a full time Ecologist who spends the majority of their time commenting on planning applications and inputting to planning policy. The Ecologist is based in Spilman Street, Carmarthen.

The Development Management Manager also has responsibility for an Enforcement team of four officers, and also has one Conservation Officer (previously having been 3) and one Conservation Enforcement Officer.

The DM function is given technical support by a team headed by the Information Management Officer (IMO). This support is in the form of registration of applications, updating of databases/GIS, scanning of information/plans, in addition to them undertaking Land Searches. The team is also responsible for all Planning-related IT development and website maintenance and updating. Under the IMO there are 5 Registration/Searches Officers, in addition to 2.6 FTE Data Support Assistants.

The DM team currently receives administrative support from 3 Administration Assistants whilst there is also a part time Appeals Administration Assistant.

The **Forward Planning** Team currently consists of a Forward Planning Manager along with four Forward Planning Officers covering all aspects of Planning Policy including the development plan policy, Supplementary Planning Guidance, site delivery initiatives and monitoring including the AMR, Regional Waste and Joint Housing Land Availability.

In addition there is a Contributions Officer (a post occupied by a seconded Forward Planning Officer) who has a specific remit for Section 106 matters and the consideration of a Community Infrastructure Levy for the County. The Team are supported by a specialist Graphic Design Officer and two technical assistants. The team has one vacant Forward Planning Officer post (the officer currently seconded to Contributions Officer), together with a further vacant post on the structure.

It is acknowledged that staff development and broadening its remit, whilst prioritising its statutory functions is key to the portfolio's future success. In this respect the Forward Planning team established an internal planning consultancy role during 2014/15, to assist in maximising delivery opportunities on Council owned sites and to ensure there is clarity in relation to future development opportunities. This has resultant revenue benefits and reduces the financial burden to the Council through unnecessary use of external consultants. It is also an approach which is key to staff retention through financial income and a fresh and stimulating workload.

There are seven staff currently working in the **Minerals and Waste** Unit; no vacancies are being carried. The Unit provides minerals and waste planning services for Carmarthenshire and for seven other Local Planning Authorities under Service Level Agreements, which have already been listed previously.

Loss of skilled personnel within the Minerals/Waste team has been identified as a significant risk which would result in the inability to provide a minerals and waste service at current levels. In addition, it is anticipated that demand for Minerals and Waste services will increase due to loss of key personnel in other Authorities which is adding pressure on existing staff resources.

A Development Management Assistant has been appointed as an additional post within the Minerals and Waste Unit. The post holder has been enrolled on a Masters Course in Planning in order to develop planning skills. Four members of the Unit have also been enrolled on an Institute of Quarrying distance learning course in order to develop their skills. Further appointments/transfers may be required in order to fully address succession planning in the short/medium term with the potential for this to be funded through additional income streams.

The Business Manager is therefore currently looking at succession planning and any structural changes that may be needed to ensure the Team remains resilient.

The Planning Service also draws heavily on the expertise and input of the **Rural Conservation Team** – who are located within the Planning Service (9 Officers in total, not all full time). Much of the Landscape Officer's time is taken up with planning matters – particularly those relating to wind turbines. Other Officers who make up part of the team also contribute significantly to the planning process.

The potential loss of skilled personnel within the **Building Control** team has been identified as a risk which would result in the inability to provide a service at current levels. The management of the Business unit has for the past year or so been undertaken on a temporary basis jointly by the Principle Officers. The Head of Service is looking at revising this to ensure the Unit had one point of contact and responsibility with regard to management matters. The Head of Service is also working with the two Principles on succession planning to identify whether changes are needed to the current structure to improve resilience but also opportunities for junior staff to progress.

All Business Unit Managers understand the value of, and promote, training opportunities that support the business aims whilst allowing career progression and development. The DMA posts are an established indication of this, although there are other opportunities provided through ILM courses, and internal projects such as the Continuous Improvement Programme and the Future Leaders Programme.

All staff have annual appraisals, and regular one-to-one meetings with managers. Regular internal training seminars are arranged (3 or 4 annually) which count towards Continual Professional Development (CPD). The portfolio also supports and undertakes training and development sessions to other staff, Members and Town and Community Councils building on experiences and lesson learned. The County Council does not pay membership fees of professional institutes.

The Service also operates regular agent seminars, with this being seen as particularly relevant in the more recent times of legislative change. These seminars offer Continued Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for the agents and occur in March and September.

## **YOUR LOCAL STORY**

### Workload: Development Management

Carmarthenshire County Council is maintaining a general overall performance that sees it running in the mid 70% for determining all types of Planning applications within 8 weeks. The recent period of internal review has had some impact in terms of people coming to understand new systems and practices. As stated previously, the introduction of pre application fees during March 2016, and their impact on the application process will be monitored during 2016/17.

The numbers of applications that the Council has dealt with is indicated in the table overleaf:

**Table 2: Planning applications dealt with annually**

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Application Numbers	1828	1788	1627	1905	1907	1663

The numbers of applications per officer will, at a very general level, be in the region of 150 per officer. That figure is predicted on a full caseload being undertaken by the three team leaders (SDMOs) although the supervisory and mentoring reality is that this will not be the case. The 10 DMOs could expect to deal with in the region of **180** applications.

The Development Management service reflects the diverse nature of Carmarthenshire in terms of its rurality in the north and west, the numerous historic market towns interspersed throughout, and the post-industrial areas of the south and east with the former coal mines and steel works. This diversity, which generates the third highest number of applications across Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in Wales, is framed within a wide geographical context, with the County's administrative area being the third largest, accommodating the 4<sup>th</sup> largest population in Wales. Whilst the DM function deals with high numbers of Planning applications, its percentage of householder applications is relatively low (just over 20% in the last two years), reflecting the higher number of minor applications that are dealt with in the rural areas, in addition to the more major development proposals on the regionally important Strategic Sites of Carmarthen, Cross Hands, and Llanelli, as identified in the adopted LDP.

The Council is committed to understanding the impacts of its service delivery upon residents, and, as mentioned, is looking at alternative ways of measuring such, insomuch as it is seeking to better understand and measure the customer end-to-end time. There is a commitment to reducing the numbers of incomplete and unsuccessful applications, and to ensuring a consistently positive and pragmatic approach to service delivery and outcomes. This is reflected in the customer surveys that see Carmarthenshire scoring above the Welsh average in areas such as availability of planning officers to discuss issues prior to submission of an application, having opportunities to amend proposals prior to determination, and an understanding of what information is required.

The service area is in a period of change, and is seeking to adjust to that in terms of systems and processes, and promoting a behavioural change to facilitate economic development and regeneration where appropriate. There remain concerns that the positive actions the LPA is undertaking in this regard will be unreasonably challenged by budgetary pressures in the coming years. A three year programme has been identified in terms of savings and efficiencies, and the service review, whilst being framed to some extent by this, is also enabling these efficiencies to be introduced and realised. Changes to this framework have the capacity to impact significantly and negatively on the performance agenda being pursued.

#### Workload: Forward Planning

Recognising the need to maximise the opportunities for delivery, and the necessity to work within a financially restrictive environment the Forward Planning team provides a responsive service to other service areas to assist in bringing sites forward and for their disposal on the open market. The production of policy notes and site specific briefs and assistance with preparing and submitting planning applications is a proactive and positive approach developing collaborative working arrangements. The resultant revenue benefits, and the



reduction of use of external consultants are becoming apparent, however the necessity to manage staff resources effectively to ensure core responsibilities are maintained make the role vulnerable to loss of staffing numbers. Whilst these risks are noted the benefits highlighted along with broadening staff skill sets is recognised as an ongoing opportunity. The Forward Planning Manager is currently exploring further opportunities in relation to assisting other Divisions in bringing forward Council sites for development – this consideration includes how to continue with this work when work on LDP review commences and becomes priority.

The recruitment of a Contributions Officer forms part of a process to consider the potential of adopting a CIL charge for Carmarthenshire. The preparation of evidence and the identification of a clear timetable is ongoing. The progression of CIL presents financial and workload pressures, and whilst provision has however been made for staffing, examination and some evidential costs, time and resource management is key to its effective development. A report considering the progressing CIL was presented to County Council in [January 2016](#) (agenda item 10). The Council resolved to progress a CIL for Carmarthenshire, and authorised the production of a Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule, which will identify the amount of CIL sought from each qualifying development, and to conduct a formal consultation on its content along with the associated evidence base.

Ongoing requirements in relation to the maintenance of an up to date portfolio of evidence is paramount not only from a Forward Planning and LDP perspective, but also in ensuring DM decision making and requirements from applicants/developers is fully informed. The recent completion of the Carmarthenshire Retail Study 2015 Update is an example of a policy area where specialist input is required, and where prevailing circumstances in relation to factors such as market conditions are in a state of constant change. Consequently there is an ongoing requirement to review, interpret and prepare core evidence, and to ensure they are robust and stand up to scrutiny. The current high level of retail interest being exhibited in the County also requires specialist skills in responding to retail impact assessments and the need to utilise such expertise ensuring the broader impacts of development proposals are understood raises challenges from a policy and DM perspective. The need to employee consultant expertise will in some form remain despite the Service undertaking as much of the evidence work as possible in-house.

Further Supplementary Guidance (SPG) have been prepared in accordance with the commitments given within the LDP. Consultation on the following five draft SPGs concluded on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2016:

- Placemaking and Design
- Archaeology and Development;
- Leisure & Open Space Requirements for New Developments;
- Natural Environment and Biodiversity; and
- Rural Development.

Work on completing Supplementary Planning Guidance through to adoption, to include minor amendments to reflect some observations received during the consultation period, will continue to 2016/2017.

For the APR and AMR period, the Council undertook the Joint Housing Land Availability Study (JHLAS) for the Carmarthenshire area, excluding the area that falls within the Brecon

Beacons National Park. This is a statutory requirement and the 2015 study showed that Carmarthenshire had a housing land supply of 3.7 years. Early indications are that the 2016 study showed that Carmarthenshire had a housing land supply of 4.2 years.

#### Workload: Minerals and Waste

Demand for Minerals and Waste services is increasing due to loss of key personnel in other Authorities which is adding pressure on Carmarthenshire's existing staff resources within the Minerals and Waste Unit. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council was entered into in June 2015 and a SLA with the Vale of Glamorgan Council was entered into in October 2015. These are in addition to the ones already held by the Unit.

The Unit provides the Secretariat for the South Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party in accordance with Welsh Government (WG) requirements, which is grant funded from WG. The Unit also acts as the Lead Authority for waste monitoring in the South West Wales Region in accordance with WG requirements. An Interim Report for 2015/16 has been produced and submitted to the Welsh Government during March 2016. Work on the production of the 2016/17 has started.

In order to increase efficiency given the additional workload the Unit is trialling different agile working options which will reduce travel time, reduce wastage and reduce office space requirements. This will require investment in digitising data and in agile working software which integrates with current back office systems.

#### Workload: Rural Conservation

Carmarthenshire's landscapes and its habitats and species are some of the county's most important natural resources. They make up the green infrastructure which provides a framework for our social, economic and environmental health. The Unit promotes the understanding, conservation, enhancement, and responsible management of these resources, consistent with Carmarthenshire's Integrated Community Strategy and Carmarthenshire County Council's core values.

The Unit provides advice to development management, other Council departments and the general public on landscape, trees, woodlands, hedgerows, biodiversity, Common Land and on development within the Caeau Mynydd Mawr SPG area. It is also instrumental in ensuring that approved developments and other projects comply with relevant legislation and LDP policies relating to the natural environment.

The Rural Conservation Business Unit carries out the following statutory functions:

- Tree Preservation Orders - Town and Country Planning (Trees) Regulations 1999;
- Hedgerow Regulations 1997; and
- Commons Registration Act 1965.

It also works to ensure that the Council's operations are compliant under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

### Workload: Building Control

The Unit has maintained its position as a CIOB Chartered Building Consultancy and has established a network of more than [70 local partners](#) including agents, consultants and other construction professionals to ensure the delivery of a high standard of service. In conjunction with Coleg Sir Gar, regular training seminars/workshops are hosted for the benefit of customers to provide advice and assistance in understanding and interpreting existing and proposed changes to legislation.

Annual [Building Excellence Awards](#) were also held, the aim is to celebrate the success of design and construction teams that have produced outstanding buildings within the County as part of a National initiative that rewards good building practice. Two schemes from the [Carmarthenshire Building Control Awards](#) (Charles Church – Machynys and TRJ – Ffwrnes) went forward to the Wales LABC Awards held at the Millennium Centre, Cardiff during the autumn of 2015. These two schemes then went on to represent Carmarthenshire at the National LABC Awards in London during November 2015, receiving national recognition. The Awards scheme whether it's County, regional or nationally is a prized marketing tool for the department and the long standing membership with the LABC has been invaluable in terms of promoting the Unit.

The Unit also provides a technical resource, a common interpretation and a voice in National Government.

### Workload: Tywi Centre

The Unit is based in Llandeilo and since it was founded in 2008 has received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Rural Development Plan (RDP) for Wales 2007-2013 which is funded by the Welsh Government and the European Fund for Rural Development, Natural Resources Wales, the National Trust, the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and Cadw. It also generates some income from provision of consultancy and training services.

[Building our Heritage Bursary Programme](#) is a specific programme managed by the Unit which has taken heritage building skills training across Wales. Working in partnership with the Natural Building Centre in Llanrwst, 30 students will have been trained over 2 years, following the same training model as the previous Foundations in Heritage programme. In addition, an intensive introductory programme for 10 women was been designed and delivered, to promote greater equality within the construction sector. This project will be completed in March 2017.

[Consultancy and Training Services](#) are also provided by the Unit. The success of the RDP funded Traditional Skills Training and Information Project, which ended in March 2014, and the reputation for delivering high quality training in the Heritage sector, has provided the Centre with opportunity to investigate developing a sustainable heritage skills training and information centre. Developing the capacity of the Centre through training skills assessors and trainers, identifying mechanisms for setting up as an accredited training centre, and investigating closer cooperative working with Coleg Sir Gâr, CITB and The Welsh Traditional Buildings Forum will be the focus over the forthcoming year.

The Team and projects have existed to date predominantly as a result of various funding streams. The future form of the Centre is currently being considered, with the

aim being to make the Team self sufficient and less dependant on grant funding. The Tywi Centre Business Plan will be completed by late 2016/early 2017. The Plan will identify mechanisms to ensure the long term sustainability of the Tywi Centre, for example income generation through training and information provision. Different delivery mechanisms, such as Special Purpose Vehicle, will be investigated as part of the Plan.

### Current projects

The sections above have referred to the Service reviews the LPA has been carrying out over the recent years, this being part of an ongoing, rolling programme of check, plan, review. The impacts of this have been significant in terms of improving how information is processed and shared, and also understanding what the customer expects in terms of timeliness and quality of service delivery and decision making.

As part of the ongoing reviews, the LPA has considered how it best engages with stakeholders and consultees, with a particular emphasis at the moment being the nature and timeliness of internal/external consultation responses. As outlined, this is being achieved, to some degree, by involving relevant parties as soon as possible in the pre-application process, and the intention is to formalise this (in line with a charging schedule) into a cross departmental/agency approach under the Development Team banner.

This has happened to some degree (not formalised) to help deliver a major strategic site on the western edge of Carmarthen, this being the subject of an adopted SPG in the form of a Planning and Development Brief that will see the delivery of 1100+ dwellings and a new school, as well as the provision of a major road infrastructure improvement. This will also benefit the aspirations of University of Wales Trinity St David's, as well as the proposed S4C Headquarter development.

The Council is currently giving thought to the delivery of its enforcement roles and activities. This will seek to understand best practice across the field, and will look at how resource can be best channelled into this area. This has been flagged by Members as a concern, and whilst there may be a drive to consolidate simpler enforcement practices into one area, the County Council has acknowledged that Planning Enforcement presents particular and specific challenges and remains as an area to be addressed on an individual basis. This includes having the capacity and ability to ensure that the staffing structure and base is best mobilised to effectively address pressure areas, and to remain fluid in doing so across the wider Carmarthenshire area.

Alongside its ongoing statutory function and delivering on other ongoing commitments, the Forward Planning team has established an internal planning consultancy to assist in maximising delivery opportunities on Council owned sites, and to ensure there is clarity in relation to future development opportunities. This represents an important step in maximising links and co-operation across service areas ensuring cost effective delivery with resultant revenue benefits and reducing use of external consultants thus offering best value in delivering the Council's objectives. In providing this service the Forward Planning team has agreed to a 3 year work programme with Council's Corporate Property team which includes production of site planning briefs and policy guidance. This supports the move towards enhanced fee income generation for the Unit and reductions in expenditure for the Council overall. Instructions have also been received from Council Regeneration and Tourism

Officers in relation to a number of briefs to maximise and facilitate economic development and tourism opportunities. There are also initial discussions with the Property Design and Projects Unit with a view to offering additional value.

The Planning Service is advising as part of the of a multi service Task Force created to consider matters relating to Llanelli Town Centre, including consideration on the potential for an Local Development Order to deal with specific issues within the town centre.

As has been alluded to, the Service has strong links to the Council's regeneration strategy and the regeneration team. This close working relationship will ensure that proposals are delivered in a consistent and co-ordinated manner which are in accordance with sound planning principles, and national and local planning policies.

The Service is undertaking the trial of tablet computers with the emphasis on trying to establish a better communications route to site based officers and where necessary advise on improvements to the system allowing the system to be tailored to how the department operates. It is hoped to reduce the amount of paper and documents produced to form a conventional paper file. This runs alongside, and is complementary to, the County Council's agile working strategy, and is seen as a key element in maintaining an effective delivery of service across the large geographical area of Carmarthenshire.

The Cross Hands area has been designated as one of the three growth centres in Carmarthenshire's LDP. The area is also suitable habitat for the Marsh Fritillary butterfly which is a feature of the Caeau Mynydd Mawr Special Area of Conservation (SAC). In implementing the project the Conservation Project Officer assists in the delivery of key economic objectives while ensuring that development is compliant with EU legislation The post is funded by receipts secured through Section 106 agreements, with receipts from development are in place to cover the salary of the project officer up until 2021, consistent with the LDP period.

During the year, the project has achieved the following:

- Installation of 1435m of fencing to allow grazing on neglected sites or better management of sites which are already grazed;
- Reintroduction of grazing by cattle or horses on 5 sites and better management of grazing on 1 site;
- Provision of water for stock on 3 sites;
- Stock handling and access facilities on 4 sites;
- Improving access to 2 sites to facilitate management works and to give access for grazing stock;
- Scrub clearance and removal of scrub trees to open up and restore grassland at 4 sites.

There are currently 16 management agreements in place, which includes 75.13ha of habitat suitable for breeding marsh fritillary.

The Common Land Officer and Rural Conservation Manager are continuing to work with the Biodiversity Officer in delivering the Heritage Lottery funded Carmarthenshire Bogs Project that is attracting £43,000 of grant aid. All six sites covered by this project are areas of common

land with no known owners: as such the Council is expected to protect these sites from illegal activities (scheme runs until December 2016). With this grant the Council is working to improve the conservation status of these commons.

Staff continue to facilitate the Carmarthenshire Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Partnership, which draws together all the organisations involved in nature conservation in the County. Practical projects are supported by Natural Resources Wales and the Biodiversity Officer delivered 12 projects across the county, some involve practical conservation, while others raised awareness of biodiversity issues and developed biodiversity best practice within other CCC departments consistent with CCC's NERC Act 2006 duty, and new duties set out in the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Minerals and Waste Unit have undertaken a 3 day review of the current process using the Vanguard/Systems Thinking approach. This provided the team with the opportunity to experience the service from the 'customer perspective', to identify what issues were impacting upon current performance, and what within the current system was causing this to happen. The re-design stage of the review was due commence in October 2015, however with the additional SLAs taken on during that period, this has been delayed and is now being rescheduled to commence during Autumn of 2016.

#### Local pressures

The Council has, in recent years, also had to deal with major renewable energy projects, particularly with regard to Wind Farm developments within Strategic Search Areas as defined in TAN 8. These have been relatively disproportionate in terms of the impacts upon officer time, and resource required to process, particularly where an Inquiry is involved.

On 24<sup>th</sup> June 2015 Western Power Distribution had their application for a 132kv electricity distribution line connection between Brechfa Forest West Wind Farm to an existing connection point west of Llandyfaelog (10km south of Carmarthen) accepted for consideration by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). RWE Innogy UK Ltd (RWE), the developer of the wind farm has decided to defer the connection between Brechfa Forest East and Brechfa Forest West wind farms.

To inform the Planning Inspectorate's assessment of the application the Head of Planning presented a Local Impact Report (LIR) to [Planning Committee](#) on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2015. The purpose of the LIR was for the Council to advise PINS on what local impacts it considers the proposed development would have on the local area by reference to specific issues. The LIR was a technical, evidence based document that PINS and Secretary of State must have regard to when assessing the application. The Local Authority also submitted a Written Representation setting out the views of the Council – this was in addition to the LIR and was at the request of the Planning Committee and was in response to the Council passed the following motion on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

*'That Carmarthenshire County Council finds it totally unacceptable that the proposed Brechfa Forest wind farm(s) National Grid connection should be made via an overhead line supported by wooden pylons. As the Council itself has no statutory power in this matter, we ask the UK Energy Secretary to ensure that the connection cable is laid underground for its entire length'.*

The Examination stage of the process commenced on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015 and ended on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016. PINS submitted its recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2016 (<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/Wales/Brechfa-Forest-Connection/>) who will have three months to make the decision. A decision is pending.

A recent source of pressure for the DM Unit has been the impacts of the requirement for financial contributions to be made towards the provision of Affordable Housing within the County. This requirement extends to single dwelling and has presented challenges in terms of perceptions of this, and how this is best secured through legal agreement. There has been a pressure on the Council's legal service as a result, although they have been the subject of a reduction in staffing. Work is now underway to assist DMO to deal with Unilateral Undertakings (UUs) in order that legal can concentrate on Section 106 applications. Legal support remains available to DMOs throughout as it is recognised that some UUs won't be straightforward. The benefits of this new approach should be experienced from late 2016 onwards. It is an area that agents have consistently asked for improvement in terms of timescales and clarity.

The 'lag' following LDP adoption with new allocated sites and them being brought forward presents challenges in relation to a 5 year supply particularly during early stages post adoption. This may have the effect of distorting a 'true' picture of land supply and of the availability of genuinely deliverable sites during initial years following adoption. The implementation of TAN1 and its methodology with the use of the residual method may as a consequence precipitate an increase in speculative applications based on an artificially suppressed 5 year land supply figure. The land supply position will be monitored closely through the JHLAS and the LDP AMR (3.7 years at 2016).

The introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 has through its provisions changed the way in which planning obligations can be sought through Section 106 Agreements. In this respect the scope for requiring planning obligations has been significantly scaled back. The CIL Regulations establish a far more limited approach to planning obligations via Section 106 Agreements.

As a result of this change, the tests for requiring planning obligations are being tested far more rigorously, and have required the adoption of a case by case based approach to determining contributions sought and will require the regular review of the evidence base in determining future requirements.

In addition, the CIL Regulations place a limit on the Local Planning Authority to pool Section 106 contributions. Since 6<sup>th</sup> April 2015, no more than 5 separate planning obligations can be used to provide funding for a single specific infrastructure project. This has had implications for those obligations which are based on cumulative impact and require pooled contributions for their delivery. The effect of this provision is in essence that the Local Planning Authority is no longer able to secure a planning obligation which contributes to, or funds any infrastructure project or type of infrastructure if 5 planning obligations have already been entered into which contribute to or fund the same project or infrastructure type. This limitation is back-dated and takes into consideration all planning obligations entered into since 6<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

Section 106 Agreements have traditionally been more generic in nature, typically specifying a general area within which funds should be spent. However, in order to ensure that the threshold of 5 pooled contributions is not exceeded, the Council are seeking planning obligations for specific identified infrastructure to ensure they comply with the tests set out in Reg. 122. These challenges are notable not only from a financial aspect but also from the perspective of project delivery. Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been produced in relation to Leisure and Open Space requirements for new developments, which seeks to provide further clarity in relation to compliance with the provisions of the CIL Regulations. Further SPG will be published in due course.



## WHAT SERVICE USERS THINK

### Customer satisfaction survey

In 2015-16 we conducted a customer satisfaction survey aimed at assessing the views of people that had received a planning application decision during the year. The survey is undertaken by all LPAs at the same time, asking the same questions. This joined up approach allows comparisons to be drawn across LPA areas.

The survey was sent to 769 people in Carmarthenshire, 11% of whom submitted a whole or partial response. The majority of responses (48%) were from members of the public. 10% of respondents had their most recent planning application refused.

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

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

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents that selected either 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree' for each statement for both Carmarthenshire and Wales.

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

Percentage of respondents who agreed that:	%	
	Carmarthenshire LPA	Wales
The LPA enforces its planning rules fairly and consistently	55	47
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	64	58
The LPA gives help throughout, including with conditions	55	49
The LPA responded promptly when they had questions	66	58
They were listened to about their application	65	57
They were kept informed about their application	65	49
They were satisfied overall with how the LPA handled their application	66	61

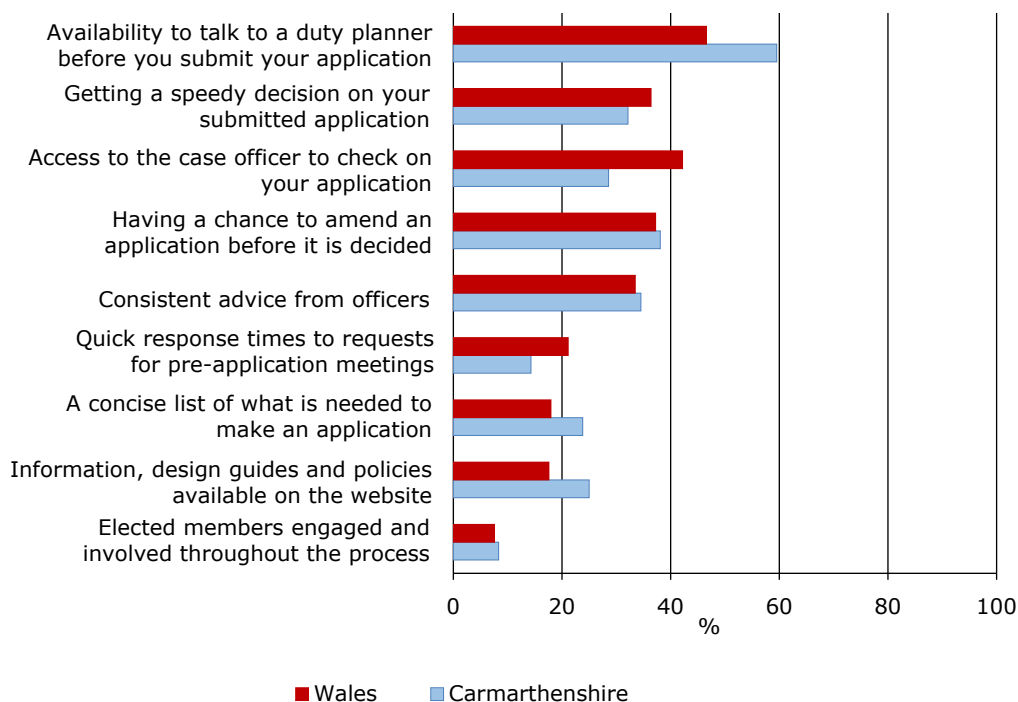
As can be seen from Table 1 above, Carmarthenshire's survey results exceed the Welsh average in every category, and it can be concluded that the service is considered to be performing well overall.

We also asked respondents to select three planning service characteristics from a list that they thought would most help them achieve successful developments. Figure 1 shows how often each characteristic was selected as a percentage of the total number of selections. For

Carmarthenshire, 'the availability to talk to a duty planner before submitting an application' was the most popular choice.

The lowest percentage for both Carmarthenshire and indeed Wales as a whole would appear to apply to the issue of consistency regarding planning advice and decisions. The survey was undertaken during the year in which the LDP was starting to be implemented and the LPA acknowledge that interpretation of new LDP policy needs to be consistent. Regular Team meetings have now been set up to allow discussion around new cases and application of planning policy. Matters are also being discussed at staff training days along with Forward Planning Officers attending individual Team meetings periodically to assist with interpretation of LDP policy. Discussion is also occurring in relation to the application of new secondary legislation which is emerging as a direct result if the Planning Act (Wales) 2015. It is therefore acknowledged that there have been a number of new challenges over the last year or so and that the importance of Team meetings and Staff Training days is emphasised.

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



Comments received include:

*In my experience all the officers concerned with the planning process were helpful, communicative, co-operative, friendly and fair.*

*I found the planing service to be very fair and professionally handled. The case officer I had was very helpful and effitiant. [sic]*

*Officers are often not available on the phone, and often do not acknowledge or reply to emails or voicemail messages.*

This snap shot of comments show there were negative as well as positive comments and the LPA must further consider those areas where criticism has been directed and if appropriate look at ways of improving those elements. For example in relation to the comment regarding phones, work is underway to identify the magnitude of the problem and what solutions to best apply.

The Authority also received feedback in relation to the performance of the service from the Agents meeting it held in March 2016. This was the first Agent's seminar to be held for a number of years. The meeting was chaired by the Chief Executive, with attendance from the Leader of the Council, Director of the Environment Department, The Head of Service for Planning along with Head of Service for Highways and a number of officers from the Planning Service and others who have an input into the planning process. Just over 30 agents attended the afternoon. At the seminar Officers reiterated the importance of working together. Short updates were provided in relation to legislative changes nationally and also work being undertaken locally. The main focus of the afternoon was however to discuss a few topics in small groups – each group facilitated by an Officer. Discussion focused around the themes: Pre application process, application process, highway matters, s106 issues and a general session for any other matters.

Agents were asked whether they had found the session useful. Officers took back the comments raised during the day. As a result the second Seminar was held in Autumn 2016 and it is intended to continue the seminar twice yearly.

Also over the course of the year The Head of Service for Planning, Development Management Officer and Head of Service for Highways have met on a 1:1 with some agents to explore their concerns regarding specific cases. These meetings have also been a useful aid to understand any areas for improvement.

## OUR PERFORMANCE 2015-16

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

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

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

### Plan making

As at 31 March 2016, we were one of 22 LPAs that had a current development plan in place. Since December 2014 Carmarthenshire has its own adopted LDP – which means not only does the LA have an adopted plan but it is also an up to date development plan.

During the APR period we had 3.7 years of housing land supply identified, making us one of 17 Welsh LPAs without the required 5 years supply. It is noted that TAN1 sets out how a Council should consider the reasons for the shortfall and whether the LDP should be reviewed either in whole or in part. It is however considered that as the LDP has so recently been adopted (15 months as at March 2016), these additional units catered for through the LDP will begin to filter through the system and will contribute to the housing land supply in the coming years. The report can be viewed at: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/planningstats/housing-land-availability-in-wales/?lang=en>

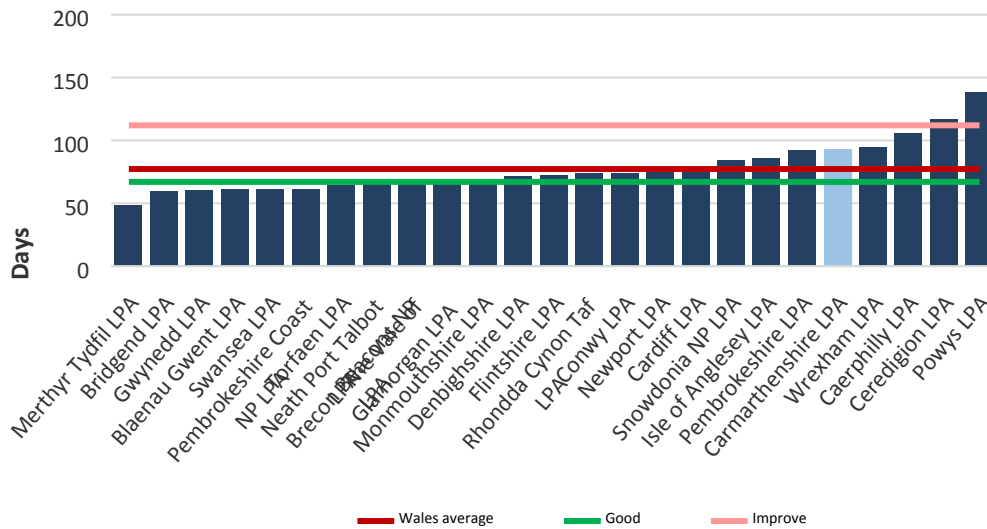
For those few applications that have been permitted to date it is too soon to have expected them to be completed and many applications are still in the system for larger more complicated sites. For this reason, it is not considered appropriate to undertake further measures to increase supply at this point in time.

Action: Continue to monitor. No other action appropriate at this time.

### Efficiency

In 2015-16 we determined 1461 planning applications, each taking, on average, 93 days (13 weeks) to determine. This compares to an average of 77 days (11 weeks) across Wales. Figure 2 shows the average time taken by each LPA to determine an application during the year. The period 2015/16 has seen Carmarthenshire fill vacant DMO posts within its structure, whilst there have been periods of sickness absence and one Officer working more or less full time on the Brechfa wind farm applications. Given the number of DM Officers as outlined above, with there being no current vacancies, the LPA is committed to improving this area of performance, allied to the commentary below on the ongoing review of service delivery.

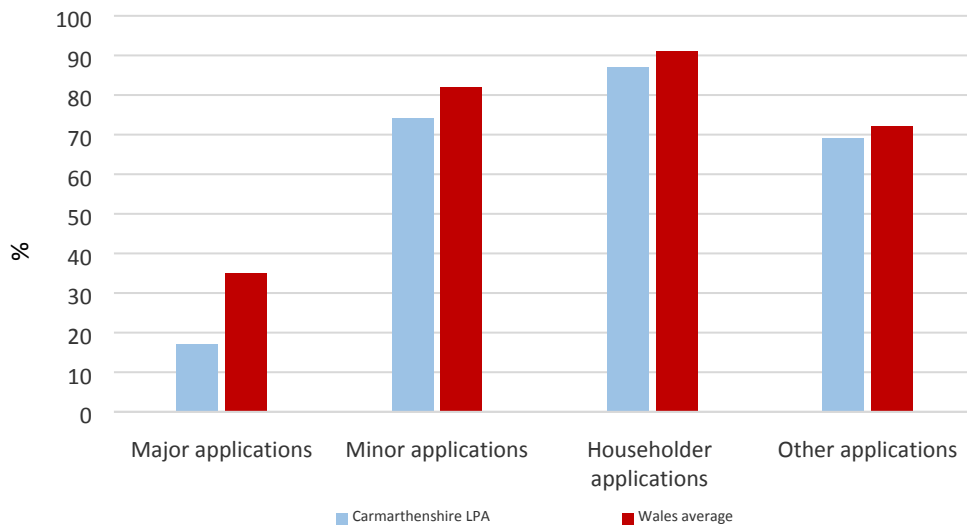
**Figure 2: Average time taken (days) to determine applications, 2015-16**



70% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales. This was the fifth lowest percentage in Wales and was below the 80% target. Only 8 out of 25 LPAs met the 80% target. The figure for Carmarthenshire is slightly lower than previous years, this has been down to a change of systems and processes in how applications are dealt with. It is however noted that the average time taken to deal with applications is low, and this reflects the improvements needed and which are being made in this area. This has now been rolled out across the whole DM Unit, and this should see the determination period for applications moving closer towards the 80% figure. Based on this on-going commitment for improvement no further action is therefore considered necessary at this stage over and above that which will naturally occur as a result of the Service Review that has been taking place over the past year.

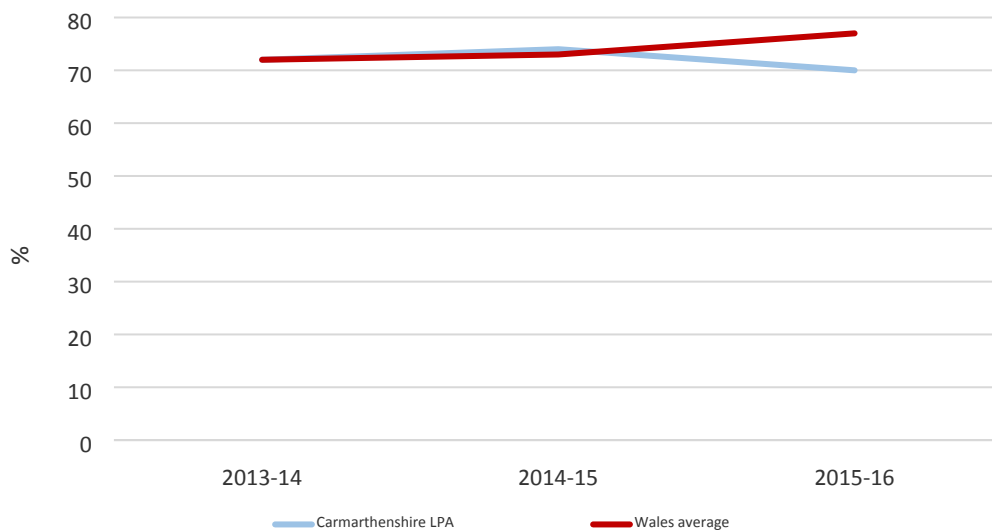
Figure 3 shows the percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales across the four main types of application for our LPA and Wales. It shows that we determined 87% of householder applications within the required timescales.

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



Between 2014-15 and 2015-16, as Figure 4 shows, the percentage of planning applications we determined within the required timescales decreased from 74%. Wales saw an increase this year.

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



Over the same period:

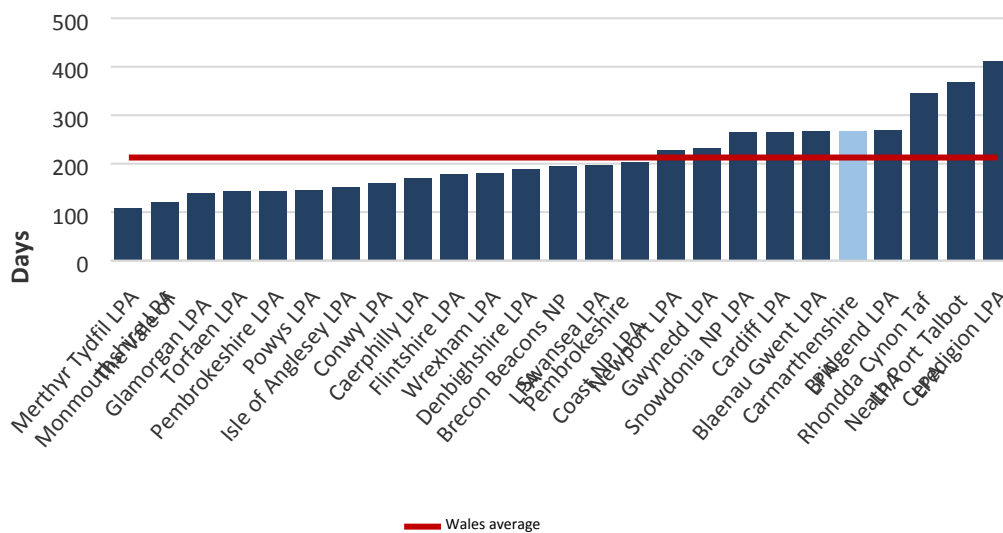
- The number of applications we received decreased;
- The number of applications we determined decreased; and
- The number of applications we approved decreased.

## Major applications

We determined 52 major planning applications in 2015-16, 4% (2 applications) of which were subject to an EIA. Each application (including those subject to an EIA) took, on average, 268 days (38 weeks) to determine. As Figure 5 shows, this was the fifth longest average time taken of all Welsh LPAs.

The Service is currently considering how it aligns its staffing structure to meet pressures arising from having to deal with major applications, as the average number per officer amounts to no more than 5 per year. There is also a focus on closer, and earlier, liaison with planning application consultees to seek to ensure that there are no delays arising from the formal consultation process as has been the case in the past. As the LPA develops its pre-application roles, including reference to the more formal Development Team approach, it is acknowledged that the statutory pre-application consultation requirements should drive improvements in this area in terms of overall timescales.

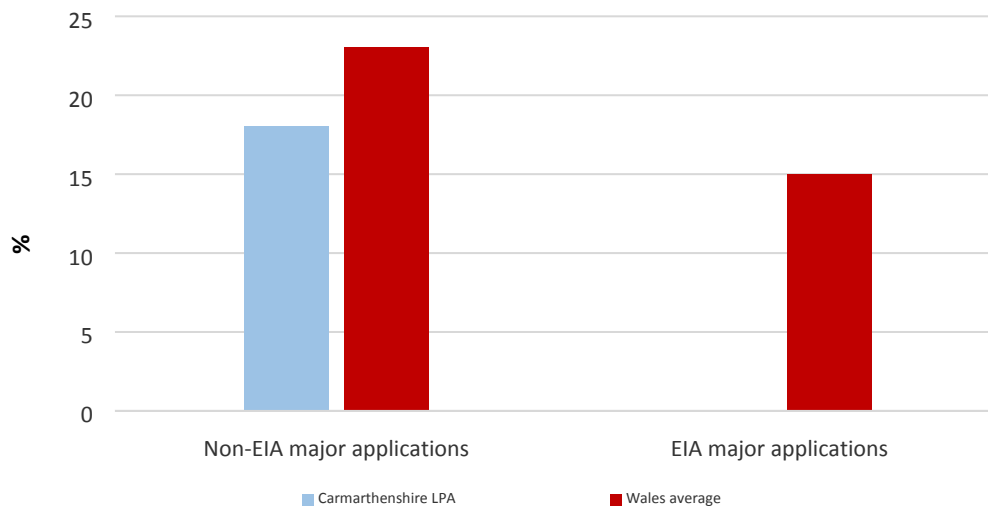
**Figure 5: Average time (days) taken to determine a major application, 2015-16**



17% of these major applications were determined within the required timescales, compared to 35% across Wales.

Figure 6 shows the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales by the type of major application. 18% of our 'standard' major applications i.e. those not requiring an EIA, were determined within the required timescales during the year.

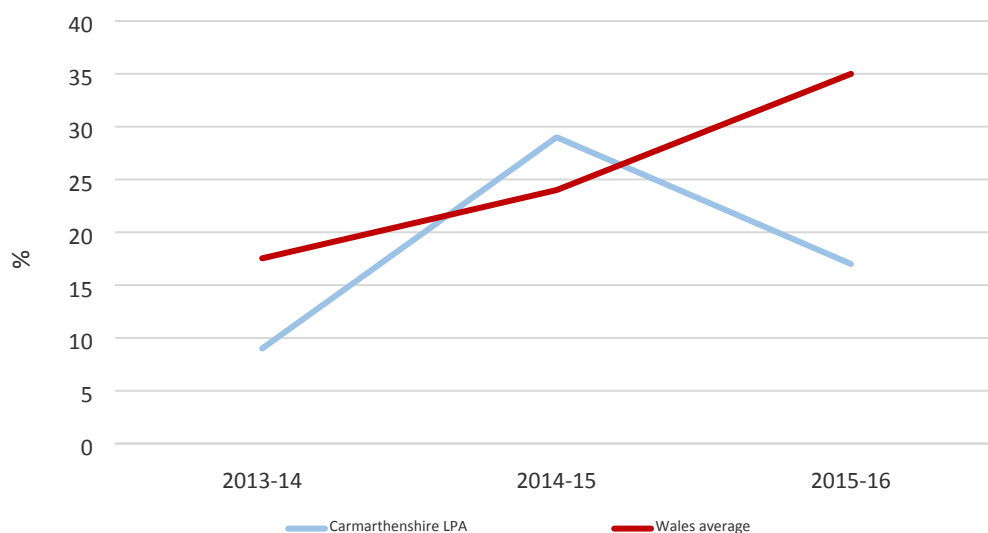
**Figure 6: Percentage of Major applications determined within the required timescales during the year, by type, 2015-16**



Since 2014-15 the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales had decreased from 29%. In contrast, the number of major applications determined increased while the number of applications subject to an EIA determined during the year decreased.

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

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



Over the same period:

- The percentage of minor applications determined within the required timescales stayed the same at 74%;
- The percentage of householder applications determined within the required timescales decreased from 88% to 87%; and



- The percentage of other applications determined within required timescales decreased from 77% to 69%.

The figures in this section relating to Efficiency show that the time taken to consider planning applications in Carmarthenshire needs to be improved. As has been acknowledged above the reduction in performance from that of previous years is has been the result of a number of factors including the systems review work which has resulted in rolling out new ways of working, absence (sickness) and a few large time consuming applications in relation to energy. It was also the first full year that the LDP had been adopted and Officers were therefore applying and interoperating policies for the first time. The Service is currently considering how it aligns its staffing structure to meet pressures arising from having to deal with major applications (charging for work in relation to Developments of National Significance being one option). The Development Management Manager is revisiting some of the system changes that have been implemented since the system Review, and to progress this work the Manager is setting up an Officer Improvement Board to take that work forward and to monitor future progress. In terms of the LDP implementation Officers from Forward Planning and Development Management are working together to assist with timely implementation – this extends to colleagues in other section e.g. Legal.

Based on this on-going commitment for improvement no further action is therefore considered necessary at this stage over and above that which will naturally occur as a result of re-visit of the Service Review that is due to be implemented in Autumn 2016.

- Action: Continue to monitor. No other action appropriate at this time.

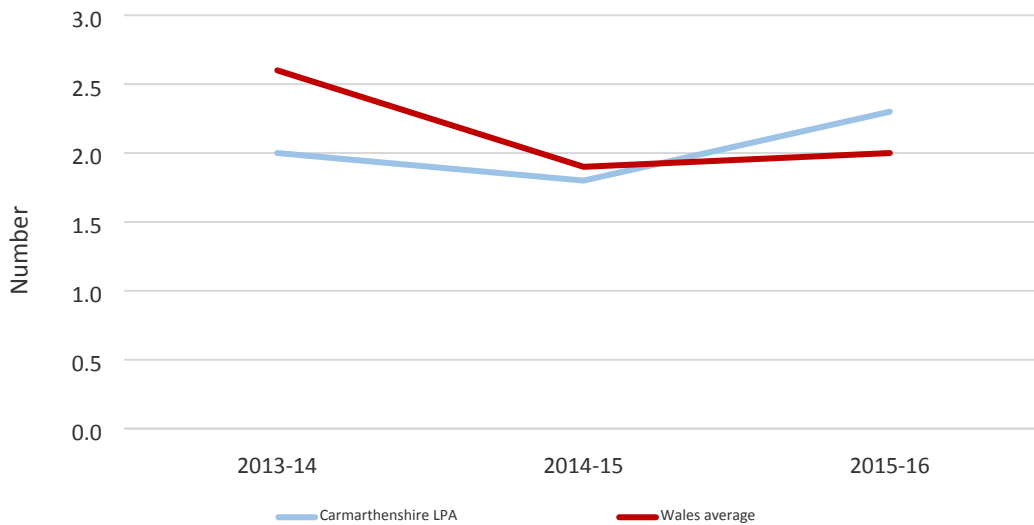
## Quality

In 2015-16, our Planning Committee made 86 planning application decisions during the year, which equated to 6% of all planning applications determined. Across Wales 7% of all planning application decisions were made by planning committee. This compares with 59 planning application decisions made by Planning Committee in the last two quarters of 2014/15, equating to 7% of all planning applications determined.

10% of these member-made decisions went against officer advice. This compared to 9% of member-made decisions across Wales. This equated to 0.6% of all planning application decisions going against officer advice; 0.6% across Wales. For 2014/15, 14% of the decision made at Committee went against officer advice in Carmarthenshire.

In 2015-16 we received 28 appeals against our planning decisions (32 were received during 2014/15), which equated to 2.3 appeals for every 100 applications received. Across Wales 2.0 appeals were received for every 100 applications. Figure 8 shows how the volume of appeals received has changed since 2014-15 and how this compares to Wales.

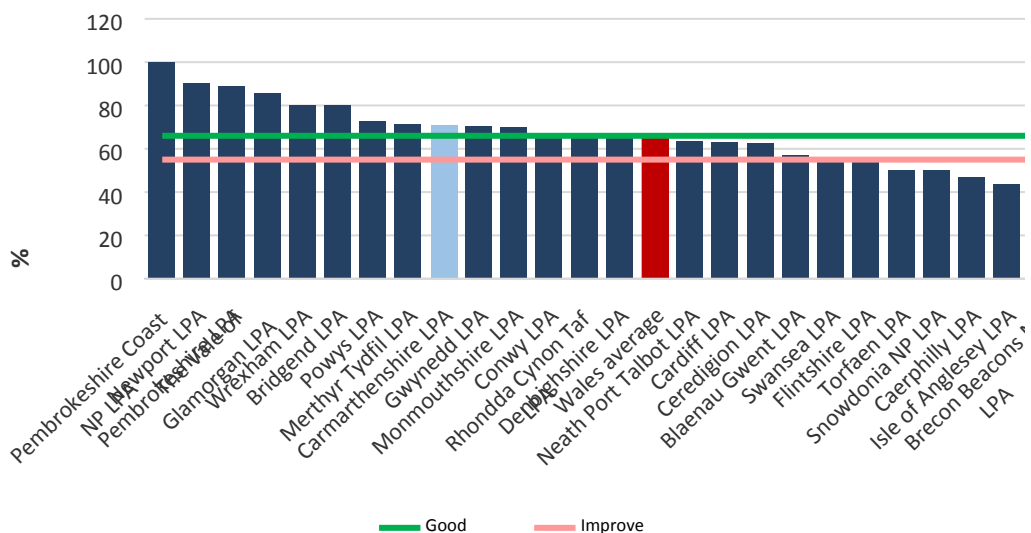
**Figure 8: Number of appeals received per 100 planning applications**



Over the same period the percentage of planning applications approved stayed the same at 93%.

Of the 24 appeals that were decided during the year, 71% were dismissed. As Figure 9 shows, this was higher than the percentage of appeals dismissed across Wales as a whole and we were one of 14 LPAs that reached or exceeded the 66% target.

**Figure 9: Percentage of appeals dismissed, 2015-16**



During 2015-16 we had no applications for costs at a section 78 appeal upheld.

- **Action:** The LPA is performing well and no further action is needed at present over and above that which will naturally occur as a result of the Service Review that has been taking place over the past year. This is a situation that will remain under constant scrutiny.

## Engagement

We are:

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

As Table 2 shows, 64% of respondents to our 2015-16 customer satisfaction survey agreed that the LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application.

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

Percentage of respondents who agreed that:	%	
	Carmarthenshire LPA	Wales
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	64	58
They were listened to about their application	65	57

- Action: The LPA is performing well and no further action is needed at present over and above that which will naturally occur as a result of the Service Review that remains on-going.

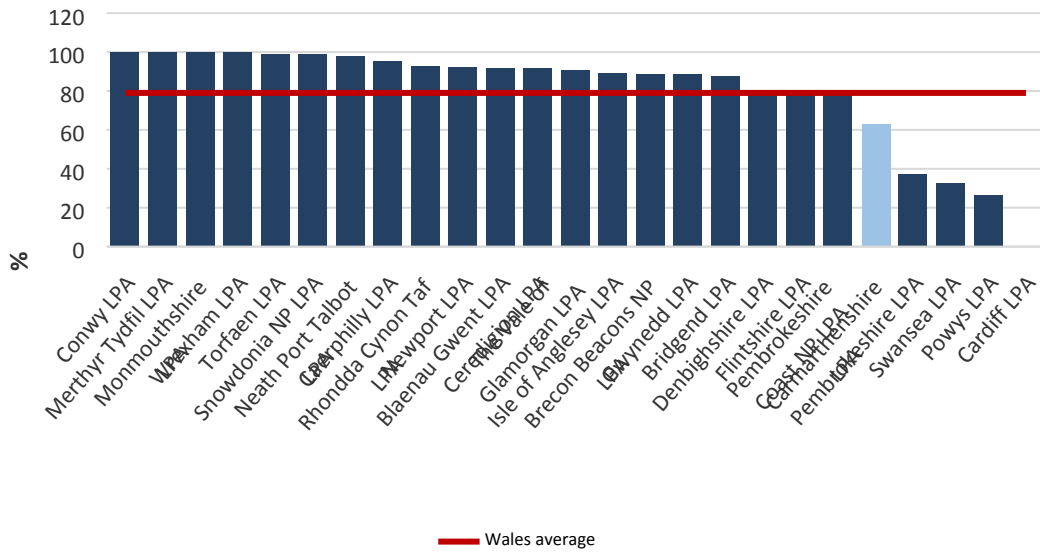
## Enforcement

In 2015-16 we investigated 494 enforcement cases, which equated to 2.7 per 1,000 population. This compared to 1.9 enforcement cases investigated per 1,000 population across Wales. We took, on average, 143 days to investigate each enforcement case.

We investigated 63% of these enforcement cases within 84 days. Across Wales 79% were investigated within 84 days. Figure 10 shows the percentage of enforcement cases that were investigated within 84 days across all Welsh LPAs.

The LPA sought to deal with a number of historically outstanding cases and this has impacted upon performance under this measure. Additionally, following recent Scrutiny reviews, an improved prioritisation protocol has been introduced that is ensuring earlier site visits and will seek to help improve performance. It is also acknowledged that the Enforcement section needs to be aligned more closely to the pressure areas such that it would increase the robustness and capacity to deal with those areas where there is greater demand.

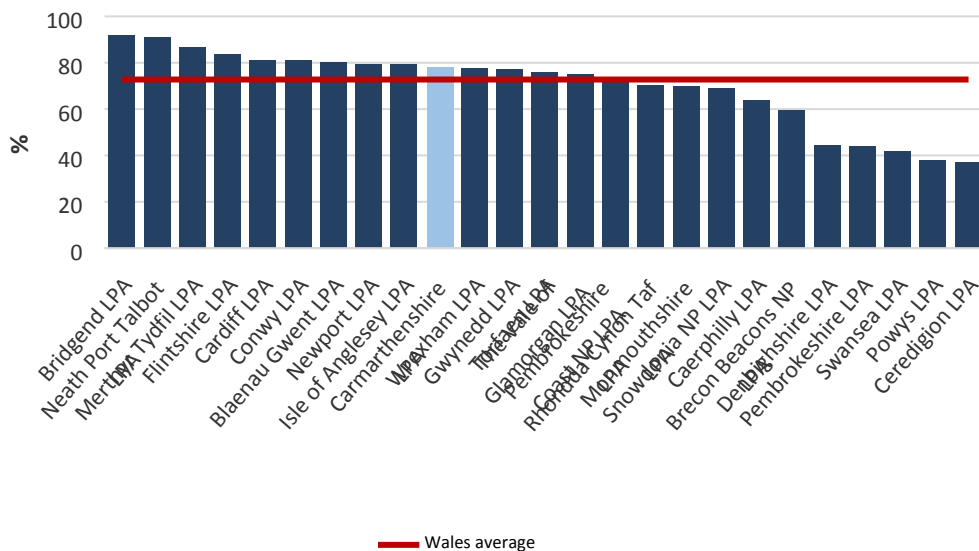
**Figure 10: Percentage of enforcement cases investigated within 84 days, 2015-16**



Over the same period, we resolved 468 enforcement cases, taking, on average, 142 days to resolve each case.

78% of this enforcement action was taken within 180 days from the start of the case. As Figure 11 shows this compared to 73% of enforcement cases resolved within 180 days across Wales.

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



It would appear from the above figures that Carmarthenshire are investigating a higher number of cases than the Welsh average per head of population. Improvements are needed and are being discussed as part of the overall service review work. Figures are also monitored twice yearly by Scrutiny Panel. This Scrutiny coupled with the on-going review work should over time see an improvement in the monitoring figures.

Action: The LPA is performing well and no further action is needed at present over and above that which will naturally occur as a result of the Service Review that has been taking place over the past year and continues into 2016/17.

## ANNEX A - PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

### OVERVIEW

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE	WALES AVERAGE	CARMARTHE NSHIRE LAST YEAR	CARMARTHE NSHIRE THIS YEAR
<b>Plan making</b>						
Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	Yes		No	Yes	YES	YES
LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	<12	13-17	18+	47	n/a	n/a
Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	Yes		No	Yes	n/a	n/a
The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	>5		<5	3.9	3.7	4.1
<b>Efficiency</b>						
Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	Not set	Not set	Not set	35	29	17
Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set	213	104	268
Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	>80	60.1-79.9	<60	77	74	70
Average time taken to determine all applications in days	<67	67-111	112+	77	38	93
<b>Quality</b>						
Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	<5	5-9	9+	9	14	10
Percentage of appeals dismissed	>66	55.1-65.9	<55	67	65	71
Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	0	1	2+	0	0	0
<b>Engagement</b>						
Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	Yes

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	Yes		No
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
<b>Enforcement</b>			
Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days	Not set	Not set	Not set
Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases	Not set	Not set	Not set
Percentage of enforcement cases where enforcement action is taken or a retrospective application 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
Average time taken to take enforcement action	Not set	Not set	Not set

WALES AVERAGE	CARMARTHE NSHIRE LAST YEAR	CARMARTHE NSHIRE THIS YEAR
Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Enforcement</b>		
79	70	63
88	No data	143
73	85	78
210	64.5	142

## SECTION 1 – PLAN MAKING

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

Authority's performance	Good
The LDP was adopted on 10 December 2014, and provides an up to date and robust land use framework.	

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

Authority's performance	Not Applicable
The LDP was adopted on 10 December 2014.	

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

Authority's performance	Good
The first AMR will be produced and submitted to the Welsh Government by 31 October 2016.	



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

<b>Authority's performance</b>	3.7 - Improvement needed
<p>Using the residual method of calculating housing land supply, the 2015 Joint Housing Land Availability Study Carmarthenshire, covering the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, has a 3.7 year housing land supply stock.</p> <p>It is noted that TAN1 sets out how an authority should consider the reasons for the shortfall and whether the LDP should be reviewed either in whole or in part. It is however considered that as the LDP has so recently been adopted, these additional units will begin to filter through the system and will contribute to the housing land supply in the coming years. To set matters in context, it generally takes much longer than 15 months for a development to be commenced and completed from the time of the initial application. For this reason, it is not considered necessary to undertake further measures to increase supply at this point in time.</p>	

## SECTION 2 - EFFICIENCY

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

<b>Authority's performance</b>	17%
<p>No Benchmark has been set to date for this Indicator by WG to date.</p> <p>The Service has undergone an internal review of its processes and systems, and has sought to 'redesign' the way in which it deals with all applications. This is manifest in this figure and should drive further improvement in this area.</p>	

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

<b>Authority's performance</b>	268 days
No Benchmark has been set to date for this Indicator by WG to date.	
The Service has undergone an internal review of its processes and systems, and has sought to 'redesign' the way in which it deals with all applications. This is manifest in this figure and should drive further improvement in this area.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>07. Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
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

<b>Authority's performance</b>	70% - Fair
Performance is slightly below the Wales average of 76.7% and remains under the target for 80%.	
The Service has undergone an internal review of its processes and systems, and has sought to 'redesign' the way in which it deals with all applications. This is manifest in this figure and should drive further improvement in this area.	

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

<b>Authority's performance</b>	93 days - Fair
Performance is higher than the Wales average of 77.2 days	
The Service has undergone an internal review of its processes and systems, and has sought to 'redesign' the way in which it deals with all applications. This is manifest in this figure and should drive further improvement in this area.	

**SECTION 3 - QUALITY**

Indicator	<b>09. Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
Less than 5% of decisions	Between 5% and 9% of decisions	9% or more of decisions

Authority’s performance	<b>10% - Improvement needed</b>
<p>Performance shows that improvement is needed. However, where Planning Committee go against Officer recommendation, the reasons for which (including policy basis) are included in the Council’s minutes.</p> <p>The LPA is making greater use of the allocated Member training events to increase awareness in relation to the Committee decision making, and is also refining its training for new Members.</p>	

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

Authority’s performance	<b>71% - Good</b>
<p>Given the relatively low numbers involved in these figures, the results get impacted upon by small margins. This result needs to be considered alongside the number of decisions made against officer recommendation (see above).</p> <p>This remains an area of focus.</p>	

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

Authority’s performance	<b>0 - Good</b>

**SECTION 4 – ENGAGEMENT**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>12. Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>		<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
Members of the public are able to address the Planning Committee		Members of the public are not able to address the Planning Committee

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
Carmarthenshire LPA allows members of the public to address the Planning Committee.	

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

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
Whilst not having a formal “duty officer” system, officers are available to deal with general public queries. As a result, the LPA would argue that it should not be categorised as in need of improvement, when a local review process has identified the current approach to be better accepted and more efficient than the previous duty officer system existed.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>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)?</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
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

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
The LPA publish all details relating to a Planning application on the website for Carmarthenshire County Council.	

**SECTION 5 – ENFORCEMENT**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>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</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	63
<p>No benchmark has been set to date for this Indicator.</p> <p>A Task and Finish Review of Planning Enforcement, made up of members of the Community Scrutiny and Planning Committees completed its report and the recommendations (23) were accepted by the Executive Board. It has been noted that significant progress has been made in certain areas, although there were still other areas of clarity and progress needed.</p> <p>A Multi-Disciplinary Enforcement Group has been set up, chaired by the Executive Board Member with responsibility for all areas of Enforcement, to bring together the various strands of enforcement authority-wide. The group has met on a number of occasions since late 2015, and provides opportunities for collaboration and identification of effective enforcement solutions.</p>	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>16. Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	143 days (data only available for quarters 2 to 4)
<p>No benchmark has been set to date for this Indicator, but is above the Wales average of 88.1 days.</p> <p>Data is only available to for quarters 2 to 4. However, the LPA is procuring a new back office system that will provide greater flexibility and functionality to be able to record and measure this in the future.</p>	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>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)</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	78%
No benchmark has been set to date for this Indicator.	
The percentage for Carmarthenshire is above the Wales average of 72.9%.	

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

<b>Authority's performance</b>	142 days
No benchmark has been set to date for this Indicator.	
The number of days taken to take enforcement action in Carmarthenshire is significantly lower than the Wales average (209.7 days). Carmarthenshire is therefore performing far better than most LAs in Wales in relation to the time taken to undertake Enforcement action.	

## SECTION 6 – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

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

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

<b>Authority's returns</b>	<p>In quarter 1 - data returned in part (see individual SD below)</p> <p>In quarter 2 - data returned in part (see individual SD below)</p> <p>In quarter 3 - data returned in part (see individual SD below)</p> <p>In quarter 4 - data returned in part (see individual SD below)</p>
<p>The Authority has returned on a quarterly basis in part the data sought as part of the SD indicators process.</p> <p>The returns have been as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Returns part complete. The LPA don't currently have a system in place to monitor refusals in relation to employment uses.</li> <li>2. Returns complete.</li> <li>3. Returns complete.</li> <li>4. Returns complete.</li> <li>5. Data not returned. The LPA don't currently have a system in place to monitor total land area of brownfield/greenfield developments.</li> <li>6. Data not returned. The LPA don't currently have a system in place to monitor total area gained/lost in relation to open space.</li> <li>7. Data not returned. Part A – data is however included in the APR. Part B isn't applicable as the LPA have not adopted CIL.</li> </ol> <p>Much of the data specified for collection was not readily available for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Data not supplied/required as part of the planning application until very recently:</b> Data required for collection was not necessarily captured in a readily accessible format on the old planning application forms. Since March/April 2015 the WG have updated planning application forms to facilitate the capture of SD data – unfortunately this was not in time to be of use regarding this first APR as most if not all of the applications determined within the year were already in before the new forms were released. It will be the 2016/17 APR therefore before the full benefit of these forms will be achieved.</li> <li>• <b>Time required to update planning application systems:</b> The LPA currently use MIS LGS (specifically the Headway product) to administer its planning application process. The LPA were advised in mid-2014 that MIS LGS was being bought out. At that time the LPA were advised that the Headway product would be discontinued over the course of the next couple of years. The LPA have therefore been working towards a replacement solution. This should be resolved during 2017, with the new product being geared up to dealing with monitoring far more effectively than its predecessor (including SD indicators). In the interim Headway remains the</li> </ul>	

system depended upon by the LPA. It has not been possible for the LPA to acquire or require changes to Headway in the interim – upgrades/modifications were not available due to the product being discontinued. This has therefore affected the logging and collecting of SD and will continue to do so until full migration on to a new system has been successfully completed.

- The LPA acknowledges that as we are now half way through the third APR period (2016/17) that any new system will not be in place to fully capture details for the APR until the fourth APR (2017/18).

The LPA will continue to work with WG and advise on the appropriateness of the various SDs. Any changes to SDs or the introduction of new ones should have a lead in period which allows systems to be updated prior to the commencement of the APR year for which the data is to be reported.



<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD1. The floorspace (square metres) granted and refused planning permission for new economic development on allocated employment sites during the year.</b>
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<b>Granted (square metres)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	4989

<b>Refused (square metres)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	No data available

The figure set out above in relation to applications granted is mainly accounted for by 3 large applications:

S/30823 - THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SINGLE STOREY FOOD GRADE INDUSTRIAL BUILDING WITH ASSOCIATED 2 STOREY OFFICE ELEMENT AND EXTERNAL SERVICE YARDS AND CAR PARKING – 4020 sqm (B2) at Cross Hands, Llanelli;

E/31416 - TO CONSTRUCT AN INDUSTRIAL UNIT TO PROVIDE OFFICES, STORAGE, TRAINING AND WELFARE FACILITIES FOR A LOCAL DEVELOPING PEST CONTROL BUSINESS – 246 sqm (B1/B8) at Capel Hendre, Ammanford;

E/33059 - PROPOSED COMMERCIAL BUILDING (B1, B2 AND B8) – 722.50 sqm at Llandeilo.

Data is not available on refusals at present (see explanation as part of introduction to SD Section above).

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD2. Planning permission granted for renewable and low carbon energy development during the year.</b>
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<b>Granted permission (number of applications)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	27

<b>Granted permission (MW energy generation)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	44

The 27 applications permitted are made up of the following:

- 1 Biomass;
- 7 Solar;
- 15 Wind;
- 1 Hydroelectric;
- 3 Anaerobic.

The majority of the MW generation potential can be accounted for by 1 planning application –

19MW Solar (Ferryside – planning application W/32171).

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD3. The number of dwellings granted planning permission during the year.</b>
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<b>Market housing (number of units)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	695

<b>Affordable housing (number of units)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	63

**Further comments to be inserted**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD4. Planning permission granted and refused for development in C1 and C2 floodplain areas during the year.</b>
------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<b>Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that DID NOT meet all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	0 residential units (0ha non-residential units)

<b>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</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	16 residential units -

<b>Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that MET all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	34 residential units - 30 residential units

No specific explanation needed with regards to the above. The results show that TAN 15 has been applied in an appropriate manner by the Carmarthenshire County Council.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD5. The area of land (ha) granted planning permission for new development on previously developed land and greenfield land</b>
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	during the year.
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<b>Previously developed land (hectares)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	Data not available.

<b>Greenfield land (hectares)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	Data not available.

Data not available. See explanation as part of introduction to SD Section above.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>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.</b>
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<b>Open space lost (hectares)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	Data not available.

<b>Open space gained (hectares)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	Data not available.

Data not available. See explanation as part of introduction to SD Section above.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD7. The total financial contributions (£) agreed from new development granted planning permission during the quarter for the provision of community infrastructure.</b>
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<b>Gained via Section 106 agreements (£)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	£3,575,074

<b>Gained via Community Infrastructure Levy (£)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	Not applicable.

**Gained via Section 106 agreements:** Although data has not been submitted to WG as part of the quarterly returns to date it is now possible to collect this information and therefore it has been included in this APR.

**Community Infrastructure Levy:** The LA do not currently operate a CIL regime. The second part of SD7 is therefore not applicable.