Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT – PLANNING

1ST APRIL 2025 – 31ST MARCH 2026

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

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PREFACE

I am pleased to introduce Merthyr Tydfil LPA's Annual Performance Report for the period 2025-26. A variety of challenges for Councils remain in place, but without a resilient, resourceful and pro-active Planning Service the economic growth of the County Borough will suffer, and its residents and cultural and environmental assets will not be protected from harmful development. The continued close working relationships with our communities and stakeholders will ensure development in the right places and in doing so attract businesses.

It is clear from the evidence within this report that the performance of the Planning Service is having a positive impact on delivering these objectives. I am delighted that in the vast majority of the indicators Merthyr Tydfil's Planning Service performance is consistently in line with the Welsh Average.

Councillor David Jones- Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Communities

1 CONTEXT

1.1 Merthyr Tydfil is the smallest local authority in Wales with an area of around 11,100 hectares. Approximately one fifth of the County Borough lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park to the north, leaving some 8,668 hectares of land under the planning control of the County Borough Council.

1.2 Merthyr Tydfil has a population of approximately 58,300 of which, approximately 44,000 reside in the main town of Merthyr Tydfil which functions as the main commercial, retail and service centre of the County Borough and the Heads of the Valleys Region. The remainder of the population is distributed amongst a number of smaller settlements situated further south along the Taff and Taff Bargoed river valleys. These settlements contain a range of lower order services and facilities serving local needs.

1.3 Merthyr Tydfil fulfils a key strategic role at the centre of the Heads of the Valleys region, benefiting from high levels of accessibility through its location at the intersection of the A470 (T) and A465 (T) strategic transport corridors in the north, and the A470 (T) and A472 strategic transport corridors in the south. The County Borough lies just 25 minutes north of Cardiff and the M4 corridor. The recent completion of dualling the A465 (T) contributes to the establishment of an important new growth corridor across the Heads of the Valleys, and electrification of the Valley lines and the Metro will enhance levels of access to Cardiff and beyond.

Planning Background

1.4 The Replacement Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in January 2020 and covers the period from 2016 – 2031. A Delivery Agreement for a 2nd Replacement LDP has been approved by Council and agreed by Welsh Government during summer 2026 and work has now formally commenced on this plan. Key target dates are consultation on the Preferred Strategy during Autumn 2027; consultation on the Deposit LDP during Autumn 2028; with adoption of the new LDP anticipated in early 2030.

Historic/landscape setting of the area, including AONBs, conservation areas etc

1.5 The County Borough benefits from a rich and distinctive natural heritage which includes highly valued landscapes and biodiversity sites. The landscape of the countryside is primarily characterised by steeply sloping valley sides with their high ridges and open moorland. Much of this landscape has, however, been modified through human activity over the centuries and this is reflected in two historic landscape designations, namely the Merthyr Tydfil Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest and the Gelligaer Common Landscape of Special Historic Interest.

1.6 Two thirds of the County Borough is semi-natural in character. It consists of a complex array of landscape types including open moorland, common land, broad-leaved and coniferous woodlands, agriculturally productive land, semi-improved grassland, old

industrial landscapes and reclaimed areas. Merthyr Tydfil benefits from a range of environmental resources with a number of sites identified as having particular biodiversity and / or nature conservation importance. These include a Local Nature Reserve, two Sites of Special Scientific Interest and numerous Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. It should be noted that the Replacement LDP seeks to identify 5 Special Landscape Areas across the County Borough, Local Nature Reserves in each ward and support the implementation of the Open Space Strategy.

1.7 The built fabric of the Merthyr Tydfil reflects a rich heritage ranging from imposing bridges and viaducts to more humble workers cottages. The County Borough has 8 Conservation Areas, over 230 Listed Buildings and 50 Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

Urban rural mix and major settlements

1.8 The County Borough comprises of a mix of urban, semi-urban and rural communities situated in a rich and varied natural, semi-natural and historic environment containing exceptional wildlife habitats, historic landscapes and archaeological features. The steeply sloping valley sides with their high ridges and moorland vegetation define the character of the area and provide an environmental and ecological context for the settlements of the County Borough.

1.9 Being the smallest authority in Wales, the number of towns and villages is limited with many settlements serving a mainly residential role, as such the adopted LDP divides the County Borough into three distinct zones, namely the Primary Growth Area, comprising the northern sector which includes the main town centre of Merthyr Tydfil; the Secondary Growth Area, comprising the southern sector communities and the Other Growth Areas comprising the mid valley communities.

Population change and influence on LDP/forthcoming revisions

1.10 The population of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, as of the 2026 mid-year estimate is 59,258 individuals (up from 58,792 in 2021), accounting for 1.85% of the total Welsh population.

1.11 The population of Merthyr Tydfil remained relatively stable between to 2011 and 2021 census, remaining at c. 58,800 people with some decline of approximately 400 estimated over the past 5 years. Despite the relative stability, there have however been demographic changes within the population. Overall, there has been a significant increase in persons aged 65 years and over. Additionally, the number of children aged 15 and under has also increased. In contrast however, the number of individuals aged between 16 and 64 years has witnessed a decline. Moreover, in 2011, the working age population (age 16-64) was 64.7% of the total population, which has decreased to 62.1% in the 2021 Census.

1.12 Consideration of these demographic trends will be a key consideration as work commences on the 2nd Replacement LDP.

2 THE PLANNING SERVICE

2.1 The structure of the Local Authority is the Chief Executive supported by five Directors heading up Education, Social Services, Neighbourhood Services, Finance and Governance & Resources.

2.2 Planning Services sit within the Neighbourhood Services Directorate, which also includes Waste Services, Highways and Engineering, Environment (Street Cleansing, Parks, Cemeteries and Grounds Maintenance) and Decarbonisation.

2.3 The Planning Services Department includes the following services: Development Control, Planning Policy, and Building Control which are all lead by the Planning Services Manager, who reports to the Director of Neighbourhood Services.

2.4 The Planning Services Manager is supported by the Group Leader – Development Control (who has line management responsibility for Development Control including Enforcement); the Principal Planning Policy Officer (who has line management responsibility for planning policy, GIS and Ecology); and the Building Control Technical Manager.

Wider organisational activities impacting on the service

2.5 The impact of over 15 years of budgetary pressure continues to be felt both directly and indirectly by the Planning Department, as savings and staff reductions in its structure as well as in other departments contribute to the ability of the Planning Division to deliver its functions. A significant number of experienced and senior officers have left the organisation which has resulted in knowledge vacuums.

Budgets and Financial

Table 1 – Planning Application fee income

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Projected Income	£192,000	£192,000	£192,000	£192,000	£211,200
Actual Income	£349,017	£196,690	£243,039	£194,352	£191,772

2.6 Table 1 indicates the clear fluctuations in the level of income received each year. Unsurprisingly these variations correspond to the economic climate at that time. The service does not retain its fee income in order to re-invest in the service; any additional income received is recovered by the corporate centre in order to offset the net cost of operating the service or reduce overspend in other areas.

2.7 The overall budget of the Planning service has been reduced in real terms by approximately 30% since the previous APR in 2019.

2.8 Both teams have their own training budgets totalling £3.5k per year. This budget has been retained despite budgetary pressures as ensuring staff are trained on the latest changes to the planning system is critical in ensuring performance remains at an acceptable level.

Staff Issues

2.9 A restructure took place in 2023 which introduced the Planning Services Manager role, bridging the gap between team/group leaders and the Director of Neighbourhood Services. The Conservation Officer post was deleted, and the Planning Policy team was reduced from 3.6 FTE policy officers to 2 FTE. The policy team also includes the GIS Officer and the Councils' Ecologist. The Development Control team consists of a Group Leader; Principal Officer; 2.8 FTE Planning Officers; 1 FTE Enforcement Officer (Job Share); a Registration Technician and a Planning Technician.

2.10 The Planning Service remains relatively small in size and continues to operate with limited capacity across specialist planning functions. Whilst the service currently maintains an appropriate balance of experienced and developing officers, there are recognised succession planning risks associated with the concentration of specialist knowledge within a small number of key posts. In order to address these risks the service has explored joint working arrangements and collaborative relationships with neighbouring authorities and regional networks, particularly in relation to specialist advice. An informal arrangement with Caerphilly CBC in regard to Conservation/Heritage services has provided valuable support and expertise, although this remains dependent on the availability of the resource. This arrangement will be explored further with scope to formalise the arrangements. Consultancy support has also been used in regard to Enforcement capacity when a post has been vacant and resources have allowed.

2.11 Workforce resilience can be challenged when vacancies arise or where staff absence occurs due to the limited ability to absorb workloads within existing resources. Recruitment and retention of planners remains a challenge across Wales and the UK. Competition from both the private sector and larger authorities can make it difficult to attract suitably experienced candidates to planning roles.

2.12 The service has generally maintained staffing levels; however, recruitment to senior and specialist posts can be difficult and may impact service performance. For example, the Principal Planning Officer (Policy) role was vacant for over two years before being appointed in early 2026, delaying the formal commencement of work on the 2nd Replacement LDP, and part of the Enforcement Office job share has now been vacant for nearly a year.

Wider Organisational Issues/Opportunities

2.13 The service continues to both support and be impacted by a range of corporate and strategic initiatives, including ongoing digital transformation, service modernisation,

corporate budget pressures and cross-departmental work associated with regeneration, placemaking, housing growth and the preparation of the Second Replacement Local Development Plan (2026-2041).

2.14 Opportunities exist through closer integration with regeneration, housing, infrastructure and regional economic development programmes, including those linked to the Cardiff Capital Region and wider investment initiatives identified within the Local Development Plan delivery.

3 YOUR LOCAL STORY

Workload – Development Control

3.1 The principal planning officer and the group leader determine the more complex applications. In addition to determining applications officers also validate their own applications, issue decisions, carry out desk duty rota and respond to pre-application enquiries.

Table 2 – Number of applications received/determination figures

	2021/22	**2022/23**	**2023/24**	**2024/25**	**2025/26**
Applications received	409	341	302	312	307
Applications determined	360	287	227	257	300
% of applications determined on time	99	99	87	96	99
Welsh Average %	***78***	***83***	***85***	***91***	***92***
average no. of days taken to determine applications	51	63	88	90	98
Welsh Average no. of days	***102***	***104***	***111***	***112***	***114***

3.2 Whilst Merthyr Tydfil receives a lower number of applications than some other Authorities, it must be acknowledged that the corresponding number of planning officers dedicated to determining applications is low, being 3 full-time and one part time.

3.3 The performance level, in terms of determining planning applications on time, has been largely consistent over the last five years (see table 2), although there was a slight dip in 2023/24 (although still above the Welsh Average). Performance has continued to be above the Welsh Average, and in three out of the four quarters in 2025/26 100% of applications were determined on time.

Workload – Planning Policy

3.4 During 2025/26 the Principal Planning Officer (Policy) was recruited after being unable to appoint for the past two years. The recruitment of this officer has now enabled work to formally progress on the 2nd Replacement LDP.

3.5 The 2025/26 LDP Annual Monitoring Report is currently being finalised and is on schedule to be submitted to WG by the end of October.

Local Pressures

3.6 The Planning Service continues to manage a broad range of statutory responsibilities within a constrained resource environment. Whilst application numbers remain manageable overall, a relatively small number of complex or strategic developments (e.g

Ffos y Fran Land Reclamation Scheme, Rhydycar West Leisure Proposals) can have a disproportionate impact on officer capacity and service performance. This is particularly relevant where schemes require extensive consultation, Environmental Impact Assessment, legal agreements, viability considerations or ongoing negotiation with applicants and statutory consultees.

3.7 The service is also supporting the preparation of the Second Replacement Local Development Plan (2026-2041), which places additional demands on Planning Policy resources alongside day-to-day development management functions

Service Improvement

3.8 During 2025/26 the service focused on maintaining performance, improving governance arrangements, strengthening service planning and managing workforce capacity pressures. Progress has been made across a number of areas despite ongoing resource constraints.

3.9 Key improvements delivered since the 2019 APR include:

- Plan-making progress: The Replacement LDP was adopted in January 2020 and remains in place, and work on the 2nd Replacement LDP commenced during 2026 with the Delivery Agreement approved by Council and agreed by Welsh Government. Annual Monitoring Reports have continued to be produced on time.
- Development management performance: The service maintained strong performance in determining applications, with 100% of major applications and 99.3% of all applications determined within agreed timescales.
- Customer engagement and accessibility: Public speaking at Planning Committee was introduced in 2024, a duty planning officer service is maintained, and planning applications and documents continue to be fully accessible online.

3.10 Whilst positive outcomes have been observed, a number of challenges remain:

- The average time taken to determine major applications increased to 308 days, slightly above the Welsh average, and average determination times for all applications have continued to rise.
- Planning Committee decisions made contrary to officer recommendations affected appeal performance, with only 33% of appeals dismissed and costs awarded against the Council in two appeal cases.
- Enforcement performance remains affected by limited staffing resources, including longstanding vacancies within the enforcement function.

4 PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

4.1 This section details our performance in 2025-26. 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 Based on the performance indicators contained in Annex A, the Planning Service continues to perform strongly in a number of key operational areas, particularly application processing, customer engagement and maintaining an up-to-date development plan. However, challenges remain around housing delivery, planning appeal outcomes and enforcement capacity.

Plan Making

4.4 The Council maintains an up-to-date statutory planning framework through the adopted Replacement Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016-2031, which remains in force. Work on the 2nd Replacement LDP commenced during 2026, with the Delivery Agreement approved by Council and agreed by Welsh Government in July 2026. Annual Monitoring Reports have also been produced consistently since the plan's adoption in January 2020.

4.5 Progress has therefore continued on plan preparation; however, there was a significant delay of 26 months between triggering the plan review process and submission of the Delivery Agreement. In addition, housing delivery remains below planned levels, with approximately 65% of the required housing delivered during the current LDP period, representing a two-year shortfall against the adopted housing trajectory. This will be a key consideration in preparing the 2nd Replacement LDP.

Efficiency

4.6 The service has demonstrated excellent performance in determining planning applications within required timescales. During 2025/26:

- 100% of major applications were determined within agreed timescales.
- 99.3% of all applications were determined within required timescales.
- 100% of Listed Building Consent applications were determined within required timescales.

These results reflect strong working relationships between officers, applicants and consultees, as well as effective internal processes.

4.7 Although timescale compliance remains exceptionally high, average determination times have increased. Major applications took an average of 308 days to determine, slightly above the Wales average of 298 days, while all applications averaged 98 days, which remains better than the Wales average of 104.6 days. The service intends to review procedures to identify opportunities for further efficiencies.

Quality

4.8 Quality indicators produced mixed results during the year. A significant proportion of Planning Committee decisions (31.3%) were made contrary to officer recommendations, with five of sixteen committee decisions differing from professional advice.

4.9 Appeal performance was correspondingly weak, with only 33% of appeals successfully defended. Four of the six appeals decided during the year were allowed, and all related to decisions made contrary to officer recommendations. Two of these appeal cases also resulted in costs being awarded against the Council.

4.10 These indicators suggest a need to strengthen alignment between committee decision-making and officer recommendations in order to improve appeal outcomes and reduce financial risk.

Engagement

4.11 The service continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to public engagement and accessibility. Members of the public are able to address the Planning Committee, a facility introduced in 2024, helping to enhance transparency and community involvement in the planning process.

4.12 A duty planning officer is available throughout normal office hours to provide advice to residents and stakeholders, and the Council's website provides a comprehensive online planning register with access to all planning application documentation. These arrangements ensure that customers can readily obtain advice and track planning applications electronically. 2025/26 also saw the introduction of the facility to comment on planning applications via the MTCBC website.

Enforcement

4.13 Enforcement performance presents a mixed picture. Only 56% of enforcement cases were investigated within 84 days, below both the Welsh performance benchmark and the service's target range. Staffing constraints have been a significant contributory factor, with long-standing vacancies affecting the enforcement function.

4.14 However, once enforcement action was deemed necessary, the Council performed relatively well. Positive enforcement action was taken within an average of 167.5 days,

considerably better than the Welsh average of 275 days. This indicates that despite investigation delays, the service is effective in progressing formal action when required.

Overall Summary

4.15 Overall, the Planning Service delivered a strong performance during 2025/26 in maintaining an up-to-date development plan, processing applications efficiently and providing accessible services to the public. Key strengths include exceptional application determination rates, effective customer engagement and comparatively prompt enforcement action.

Areas for improvement include:

- increasing housing delivery;
- improving appeal outcomes by minimising departures from officer advice;
- addressing enforcement resource pressures to improve investigation time;

ANNEX A – PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE	WALES AVERAGE [Will be available from WG website]	Merthyr Tydfil CBC LAST YEAR (2024/25)	Merthyr Tydfil CBC THIS YEAR (2025/26)
Plan making						
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+	N/A	N/A	N/A
Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	Yes		No	YES	YES	YES
Time between triggering Regulation 41 and the submission of a Delivery Agreement to review the plan, in months			18+	35	14	26
LDP revision deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	<3		3+	29	N/A	N/A

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE	WALES AVERAGE [Will be available from WG website]	Merthyr Tydfil CBC LAST YEAR (2024/25)	Merthyr Tydfil CBC THIS YEAR (2025/26)
Delivery against the local planning authority's adopted housing trajectory	0-1 year		2>years	N/A	2	2
Efficiency						
Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	>60	50.1-59.9	<50	79.6	100	100
Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set	298	202	308
Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	>80	70.1-79.9	<70	91.6	96	99.3
Average time taken to determine all applications in days	<67	67-111	112+	104.6	90	98
Percentage of Listed Building Consent applications determined within time periods required	>80	70.1-79.9	<70	80.1	100	100
Quality						
Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	<5	5-9	9+	9.2	24	31.3

MEASURE	GOOD		IMPROVE	WALES AVERAGE [Will be available from WG website]	Merthyr Tydfil CBC LAST YEAR (2024/25)	Merthyr Tydfil CBC THIS YEAR (2025/26)
Percentage of appeals dismissed	>66		<55		88	33
Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	0		2+		1	2
Engagement						
Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	Yes		No	YES	YES	YES
Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	Yes		No	YES	YES	YES
Does the local planning authority's web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access, track their progress (and view their content)?	Yes		No	YES	YES	YES
Enforcement						
Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has	>80	70.1-79.9	<70	70.3	62	56.1

MEASURE	GOOD		IMPROVE	WALES AVERAGE [Will be available from WG website]	Merthyr Tydfil CBC LAST YEAR (2024/25)	Merthyr Tydfil CBC THIS YEAR (2025/26)
occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days						
Average time taken to take positive enforcement action	<100	101-200	200+	275.1	102	167.5

SECTION 1 – PLAN MAKING

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

Authority's performance	Yes
The Replacement Merthyr Tydfil LDP 2016-2031 was adopted in January 2020 and remains extant. Work on the 2nd Replacement LDP has commenced during 2026, with the Delivery Agreement approved by Council and agreed by Welsh Government in July.	

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	N/a
Work on the 2nd Replacement LDP has commenced during 2026, with the Delivery Agreement approved by Council and agreed by Welsh Government in July.	

Indicator	03. Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	
"Good"		**"Improvement needed"**

An AMR is due, and has been prepared		An AMR is due, and has not been prepared in time

Authority's performance	Yes
Annual monitoring reports have been produced and submitted every October since the adoption of the Replacement LDP in January 2020.	

Indicator	**04. Time between triggering Regulation 41 and the submission of a Delivery Agreement to review the plan, in months**	
"Good"	**"Fair"**	**"Improvement needed"**
The Delivery Agreement is submitted less than 12 months after Regulation 41 is triggered	The Delivery Agreement is submitted within 12 and 18 months after Regulations 41 is triggered	The Delivery Agreement is submitted more than 18 months after Regulation 41 is triggered

Authority's performance	26 months
Since the end of 2025/26 performance year, work on the 2nd Replacement LDP has commenced, with the Delivery Agreement approved by Council and agreed by Welsh Government in July.	

Indicator	**05. LDP revision deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months**
"Good"	**"Improvement needed"**
The LDP revision is being progressed within the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement	The LDP revision is being progressed later than the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement (more than the 3 month slippage allowance)

Authority's performance	N/a
Work on the 2nd Replacement LDP has commenced during 2026, with the Delivery Agreement approved by Council and agreed by Welsh Government in July.	

	06. Delivery against the local planning authority's adopted housing trajectory. (Shortfall of cumulative housing completions against the Anticipated Annual Build Rate (AABR) or Annual Average Requirement (AAR) in years)		

Authority's performance	2
Approximately 65% of the required housing has been delivered during the current LDP period. The level and location of housing growth will be a key consideration when preparing the 2nd Replacement LDP.	

SECTION 2 - EFFICIENCY

Indicator	**08. Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required**	
"Good"	**"Fair"**	**"Improvement needed"**
60% or more of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Between 50% and 60% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Less than 50% of applications are determined within the statutory time period

Authority's performance	100
100% of major applications were determined within the required time periods during 2025/26. Given that 70% of major applications were determined after 8 weeks and were subject to an agreement to extend the period of time to determine the application, it is clear that there has been a positive working relationship between officers and agents/applicants/developers through this part of the development process.	

Indicator	**09. Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days**	
"Good"	**"Fair"**	**"Improvement needed"**

Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority's performance	308 days (Wales average 298 days)
The time taken to determine major application has increase from 202 days in 2024/25 to 308 days in 2025/26. This data can be somewhat volatile in Merthyr Tydfil due to relatively lower numbers of major applications. As the figure for this year is slightly above the Wales average, a review of the major applications determined during 2025/26 will be undertaken to ascertain where determination could be made more efficient.	

Indicator	**10. Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required**	
"Good"	**"Fair"**	**"Improvement needed"**
80% or more of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Between 70% and 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Less than 70% of applications are determined within the statutory time period

Authority's performance	99.3%
This consistent performance (over the past 2 years) is a reflection of the commitment and dedication of officers and support staff and their relationship with all stakeholders. The processes and procedures (which have been amended over the years) have served the department well and been central to this performance. More importantly, so has the work ethic, enthusiasm and talent of the officers and their keenness to learn and work as part of a team.	

Indicator	**11. Average time taken to determine all applications in days**	
"Good"	**"Fair"**	**"Improvement needed"**
67 days or less	Between 67 and 111 days	Greater than 112 days

Authority's performance	98

This data shows Merthyr Tydfil performing better than the Wales average of 104.6 days; however this figure has been slowly increasing over the past few years (90 days in 2024/25). Whilst some of this increase could be linked to the increasing requirement of the planning systems such as demonstrating a net benefit for biodiversity, work will undertaken to determine whether there are any procedural issues that could be amended to improve this indicator.

	12. Percentage of Listed Building Consent applications determined within time periods required	

Authority's performance	100
This shows the close working relationship between planning officers and Cadw. The County Borough has a number of Listed Buildings at risk and others in need of urgent repairs and long-term viable uses. It is therefore essential that every possible effort is put into getting appropriate schemes consented in the most efficient time period. Early advice, often combined with the pre-planning application enquiry process, undoubtedly aids smooth and speedy decision making.	

SECTION 3 - QUALITY

	13. Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	

Authority's performance	31.3
16 applications were determined by members during 2025/26. Five applications were determined against officer recommendation:	

- Four applications for HMOs that were recommended for approval were refused by members.
- An application for a major leisure scheme was approved following recommendation for refusal.

	14. Percentage of appeals dismissed	

Authority's performance	33
Six appeal decisions were issued during 2025/26, with four appeals allowed. The four appeals allowed were all in relation to Member made decisions made against officer recommendation.	

	15. Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	

Authority's performance	2
Of the four appeals allowed, two decisions resulted in the authority having costs awarded against it. There was no application for costs in the remaining two appeals that were allowed.	

SECTION 4 – ENGAGEMENT

Indicator	16. Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	
"Good"		"Improvement needed"

Members of the public are able to address the Planning Committee		Members of the public are not able to address the Planning Committee

Authority's performance	Yes
Members of the public have been allowed to speak at Planning Committee since 2024.	

Indicator	**17. Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?**	
"Good"	**"Fair"**	**"Improvement needed"**
A duty planning officer is available during normal office hours	A duty planning officer is available, but not always during normal office hours	There is no duty planning officer available

Authority's performance	Yes
A duty planning officer is available Monday to Friday to provide general planning advice.	

Indicator	**18. Does the local planning authority's web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access track their progress (and view their content)?**	
"Good"	**"Fair"**	**"Improvement needed"**
All documents are available online	Only the planning application details are available online	No planning application information is published online

Authority's performance	Yes
All documents are available to view on-line.	

SECTION 5 – ENFORCEMENT

	19. 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	

Authority's performance	56

This performance is lower than the Welsh average of 70%. Performance regarding this indicator can be reflective of the approach to breaches taken by each local planning authority. Some may decide to quickly conclude that it is not expedient to take any further action. Others, as in the case of Merthyr Tydfil, may still invite applications although it is not expedient to take any further action.

Resource issues play a part in this data as the service only has 1 full-time enforcement officer post (made up of 2 job share officers) and one half of the job share has been vacant for periods of time during the past 2 to 3 years (as remains vacant at present).

Indicator	**20. Average time taken to take positive enforcement action**	
"Good"	**"Fair"**	**"Improvement needed"**
100 days or less	Between 101-200 days	Greater than 200 days

Authority's performance	167.5

This performance is better than the Welsh average of 275 days and would indicate that although cases are taking longer to investigate (see previous indicator), positive action is taken more quickly than in a number of other areas.

Again, resource issues play a part in this data as the service only has 1 full-time enforcement officer post (made up of 2 job-share officers), with one part of the role being vacant for portions of the year.

SECTION 6 – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

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

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

Authority's returns	See below

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

Granted (square metres)	
Authority's data	15,000sqm

Refused (square metres)	
Authority's data	0sqm

The 15,000 sqm stated above was permitted as part of the outline permission for the redevelopment of the Former Hoover Factory site (P/25/0165). The area provided above refers to an area of land specified for B class uses, and the land is an employment allocation within the LDP (EcW1.1 – Former Hoover Factory Car Park).

The following applications were also approved for employment uses at protected employment sites, but do not contribute to the figure above:

Application	Site	Proposal
P/24/0232	Pengarnddu Industrial Estate	Extension to building for storage of waste, plant and equipment
P/24/0196	Pengarnddu Industrial Estate	8MW Hydrogen Electrolyser Facility
P/25/0033	Yard 8, Abercanaid Industrial Estate	Storage units (Use Class B8)
P/25/0062 / P/25/0247	Willow Works, Abercanaid Industrial Estate	New storage unit with office
P/23/0167	Harlan Business Park	Extension to workshop
P/25/0319	Woodingtons Garage, Cefn Coed	Two adjoined industrial units

Indicator	**SD2. Planning permission granted for renewable and low carbon energy development during the year.**

Granted permission (number of applications)	
Authority's data	18

Granted permission (MW energy generation)	
Authority's data	8.4 MW

18 applications were granted permission during 2025/26 for renewable and low carbon energy development. The majority of these applications were for small scale renewables (solar PV or Air Source Heat Pumps) on domestic or small commercial buildings.

The most significant applications in relation to this indicator were:

- P/24/0196 (Land at Pengarnddu Industrial Estate, Dowlais) - Erection of Hydrogen Electrolyser Plant Facility (8 Megawatts) including storage containers and associated infrastructure.
- P/26/0038 (Plot 2, Pengarnddu Industrial Estate) – 16 containerised battery storage units.
- P/26/0026 & P/26/0042 (Cyfarthfa Retail Park) - Installation of 14 rapid EV charging stations and ancillary equipment.

Indicator	**SD3. The number of dwellings granted planning permission during the year.**

Market housing (number of units)	
Authority's data	431

Affordable housing (number of units)	
Authority's data	91

During 2025/26 522 dwellings were granted planning permission. The majority of these dwellings (440 in total, with a minimum 10% affordable housing secured) are accounted for through the outline permission granted at the Former Hoover Factory site.

A 100% affordable housing scheme was also permitted at Hillcrest, Penydarren. This will deliver 47 affordable homes through a local RSL.

The remaining dwellings were granted permission on a number of smaller sites or individual plots throughout the County Borough.

Indicator	**SD4. Planning permission granted and refused for development in Flood Zone 2, 3 and Defended during the year**

Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) which were GRANTED permission	
Authority's data	17 residential units – 0.7ha non-residential

Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) which were REFUSED permission on flood risk grounds	
Authority's data	0 residential units – 0.0ha non-residential

No applications were refused on permission on flood grounds during 2025/26.

The majority of applications granted permission within flood zones for residential units during 2025/26 were on properties above ground level, and all applications approved were justified in accordance with TAN 15

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

Previously developed land (hectares)	
Authority's data	29.1ha

Greenfield land (hectares)	
Authority's data	5.3ha

During 2025/26, development was granted permission on 34.4ha of land. 29.1ha of development was permitted on previously developed land (PDL), with 5.3ha being permitted on greenfield land.

The majority of development permitted on PDL was approximately 16ha permitted at the Former Hoover Factory site for a residential led mixed use development.

The most significant greenfield sites permitted were 1.4ha at Hillcrest, Penydarren (47 dwellings) which is an allocated housing site, and a solar farm (2.95ha) at land adjacent to Pen Y Dre High School.

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

Open space lost (hectares)	
Authority's data	0ha

Open space gained (hectares)	
Authority's data	0.14ha

The were no applications approved in 2025/26 that would result in the loss of public open space.

One permission resulted in a gain of open space (P/25/0021 – demolition of existing buildings and creation of new public realm – 34-37 High Street, Merthyr Tydfil).

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

Gained via Section 106 agreements (£)	
Authority's data	£65,000

Gained via Community Infrastructure Levy (£)	
Authority's data	£6,300

Contributions towards affordable housing provision were secure through S106 agreements on the following development:

- P/23/0187 – The Farm Shop, Trewlewis – Outline permission for 5 dwellings (£26,000)
- P/24/0236 – Ty Llwyd Farm, Treharris – Outline permission for 6 dwellings (£39,000)

Community Infrastructure Levy was secured on the following developments:

P/24/0200 – Cyfarthfa Retail Park – Erection of drive-through coffee shop.