

# **Ceredigion Engagement and Participation Policy ‘Talking, Listening and Working Together’ Annual Report 2023-2024**



**Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg**



Cyngor Sir  
**CEREDIGION**  
County Council

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# **Ceredigion Engagement and Participation**

## **Annual Report**

### **2023-2024**

This report outlines the work undertaken by the Council during 2023-24 to deliver our Engagement and Participation Policy.

#### **Why Engage?**

We adopted our Engagement and Participation Policy in October 2022. It sets out how we will talk and listen with all of those who live, work or study in Ceredigion, including people whose voices are seldom heard.

It's important that we listen to people in Ceredigion to hear about their own vision for their communities and about what they want in terms of service provision.

Our legal duty to consult is set out in various pieces of legislation, including:

- **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** – the Council must involve people with an interest in achieving the National Well-being goals.
- **The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021** – the Council must encourage public participation in our decision making and to consult local people about the extent to which the council is exercising its functions effectively.
- **The Welsh Language Measure 2011** – the Council must ask the public for their views on the impact that our decisions will have on the Welsh Language.
- **The Equality Act 2010** – the Council must involve and engage with people who share Protected Characteristics.
- **The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996** – the Council must consult with organisations specified in the Regulations and must inform people that are likely to be affected by a traffic order.
- **School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013** – the Council must comply with the [School Organisation Code](#) which outlines the principles that should be taken into account when proposing to make changes to school provision.

It is not just about our legal duty, however. Engaging and consulting with the public gives us better information to help our decision making. This can lead to better outcomes for our residents.

### **What is Participation?**

Participation is an approach to encourage the active involvement of people in a project, programme or activity. This can range from engagement, consultation through to collaboration and empowerment.

### **What is Engagement?**

We may run a specific engagement campaign to gather additional views before developing a new plan or project that results in a change in service.

### **What is Consultation?**

Consultations are typically used to gather people's thoughts on a draft plan or project that we have developed, particularly when it will result in a change in service.

Eleven engagement campaigns and twelve consultation campaigns were completed during 2023-24. There is more detail in Section 2 of this report. The Equalities and Inclusion team keeps a timetable of all the campaigns. This helps us to keep to a consistent approach when the campaigns are developed by the various teams across the council.

We also make sure that the results of campaigns are used to inform decisions taken by Elected Members. In 2023-24 Cabinet and full Council made eleven decisions which resulted in changes to a service, policy or strategy that would significantly impact on the public. Council officers prepare a report for Elected Members to help inform their decisions. 100% of the reports requiring this type of decision included a synopsis of the consultation carried out to help develop the proposed change. Details can be seen in the relevant report to Cabinet or Council, and these are all published on our website.

We take a 'continuous engagement' approach to developing our services. This involves regular meetings with specific stakeholders. For example, Ceredigion Youth Council, Disability Forum, Local Nature Partnership and the Carers forum. This is part of our approach to engagement and participation. It gives us a head start when we develop new services and strategies because we have been talking regularly with the people who have lived experience of the topic.

Our new Engagement Toolkit lists the mandatory stakeholders that must receive information about public consultations. The list includes Elected Members, Leadership Group, Town and Community Councils, Ceredigion County Council staff and members of Ceredigion Public Services Board. The toolkit also lists contact details of people who can help us to promote our consultations. For example, Ceredigion Family Centre Network, Young Farmers clubs and the Armed Forces Veterans Forum.

## **SECTION 1**

### **Action plan: Progress 2023-24**

#### **Aim 1: To mainstream effective engagement and participation across Ceredigion County Council**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>RAG status</b>
To develop an Engagement toolkit and deliver training on its use to all Corporate Managers.	The toolkit is developed and available for all staff to download from our internal website. A session on its use was delivered to Corporate Managers in November 2023.	Equalities and Inclusion officers	<b>Green</b> action is on track
To maintain a timetable of consultation and engagement exercises carried out by all Council Services.	The timetable is held by the Equalities and Inclusion team and updated on an ongoing basis.	Equalities and Inclusion officers	<b>Green</b> action is complete
To publish an Engagement Annual Report to monitor the developments as we change how we engage with the public.	This report fulfils the requirement for 2023-24. The report is scrutinised by Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee before being published on our website.	Equalities and Inclusion officers	<b>Green</b> action is on track

**Aim 2: To ensure that we engage with the people of Ceredigion in the best way**

Action	Progress	Responsibility	RAG status
To revise and update our list of Stakeholder groups.	The list has been revised and is updated when needed. It is part of the Engagement toolkit and available to all Council staff.	Equalities and Inclusion officers	<b>Green</b> action is complete
To develop the use of online engagement platforms and maintain the use of non-digital engagement methods.	<p>The corporate <a href="#">Engagement and Consultations webpage</a> is updated on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>My Account was launched in March 2024. This new online customer account service is designed to improve communication with people who use Council services. At the end of March 2024, 366 people had signed up to be kept updated on Ceredigion Council consultations via My Account. We will develop this online platform during 2024-25.</p> <p>Non-digital methods of engagement continue to be used. Paper copies of surveys are available on request from our Libraries and Leisure/Wellbeing Centres and posters are created to promote our campaigns. Focus groups and drop in sessions take place when appropriate. Attendance at these is often low, but the quality of information gathered is high.</p>	All Corporate Managers	<b>Amber</b> some progress made
To improve the way that we feedback to those who have participated in our engagement exercises.	A consistent feedback method is outlined in the Engagement toolkit. The importance of feedback will be further highlighted in training on use of the toolkit.	All Corporate Managers	<b>Amber</b> some progress made

**Aim 3: To meet our statutory duties and responsibilities under legislation**

Action	Progress	Responsibility	RAG status
<p>To ensure a mechanism is in place so that the public can attend Council meetings in person or remotely via a hybrid meeting system.</p>	<p>The draft protocol for Attendance at Local Authority multi-location Meetings and Electronic Broadcasts of Meetings was presented to Democratic Services Committee on 09/06/2023 and approved by Council on 26/10/23.</p>	<p>Democratic Services</p>	<p><b>Green</b> complete</p>
<p>To revise and update our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) tool</p>	<p>The revised Integrated Impact Assessment tool was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and has been approved by Cabinet. A training session was delivered to Corporate Managers in September 2023 and to Elected Members in October 2023. It has been used by officers from 1st December 2023.</p>	<p>Equalities and Inclusion officers</p>	<p><b>Green</b> complete</p>
<p>To establish an e-petition system and publish a protocol that sets out how the Council intends to handle and respond to petitions.</p>	<p>The Petitions Protocol is listed under Part 5 (Codes and Protocols) of Ceredigion County Council constitution. The constitution is publicly available on the Council's website - <a href="#">The Council's Constitution - Ceredigion County Council</a>.</p> <p>A report on amendments to the protocol, to include e-petitions, was presented to Democratic Services Committee in September 2023 and to full Council meeting in December 2023. The revised Petitions Protocol is now approved and the current document in the Council's Constitution has been replaced with the revised protocol.</p>	<p>Democratic Services</p>	<p><b>Green</b> complete</p>



**Aim 4: To keep up to date with the latest innovations and best practice in the field of engagement**

Action	Progress	Responsibility	RAG status
To review and revise Ceredigion County Council's Engagement and Participation Policy	The current Engagement and Participation Policy was published in October 2022. It will be reviewed in 2025, or before this if required.	Equalities and Inclusion officers	<b>Green</b> action is on track
To keep an engagement toolkit up to date for all staff to use.	The new engagement toolkit was published on our internal website in January 2024. It was updated in February 2024 following a suggestion from Ceredigion Youth Forum. We will continue to update it, as necessary.	Equalities and Inclusion officers	<b>Green</b> action is on track
To liaise with Engagement and Equalities colleagues across Wales.	<p>The Equalities and Inclusion manager is a member of Social Care Wales's Resourceful Communities Partnership Group.</p> <p>Ceredigion Public Services Board receives bespoke support from the Co-production Network for Wales to help us develop methods of meaningful engagement and involvement, moving towards full co-production.</p> <p>We also benefit from research and information circulated by Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) and Data Cymru. This helps us to keep up to date with national developments and good practice.</p>	Equalities and Inclusion officers	<b>Green</b> action is on track

## **SECTION 2**

### **Eleven Engagement campaigns were run in 2023-24**

#### **1. Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans (March 2023 – March 2024)**

Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic merit. This was a campaign to collect views and knowledge from local residents and interested parties, such as Historical Societies, to inform the appraisals and management plans.

**Number of responses:** 57

**What next:** The initial engagement was used to inform the preparation of draft conservation area appraisals and plans. Further consultation will be required before they are adopted.

#### **2. Respite and Day Services provision (March – June 2023)**

A review of these services was undertaken as part of the work to deliver the Council's Through Age Wellbeing Strategy. People were asked for their opinion on current respite and day services and asked what they would like to see in the future.

**Number of responses:** 411

**What next:** The results of the campaign and a proposed action plan were approved by Cabinet in December 2023. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website. The Through Age Wellbeing programme board and Healthier Ceredigion Strategic Group will ensure that the action plan is delivered.

#### **3. Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 (May – July 2023)**

A regional fact finding exercise asking for public opinion on the state of equality in Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Powys. A report on the engagement campaign was presented to Cabinet in October 2023.

**Number of responses:** 224

**What next:** The responses were used to write the first draft of Ceredigion Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website.



#### **4. Growing Mid Wales - Net Zero survey (August – September 2023)**

A regional survey to identify opportunities and challenges that businesses in Mid Wales are facing to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Feedback was provided to the public, businesses and key stakeholders via the Growing Mid Wales newsletter January 2024.

**Number of responses:** 78

**What next:** A business event was held in March 2024 to disseminate the findings. Insights are being used to shape future funding initiatives, inform electricity grid investments and ensure tailored support is available to local enterprises.

#### **5. Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership - Employment and Skills survey (October – December 2023)**

A regional survey to identify recruitment and skills challenges faced by employers and businesses in Ceredigion and Powys. The campaign was promoted via local business networks and the Regional Skills Partnership website. Results were fed back via the same channels.

**Number of responses:** 111 (32 from Ceredigion, 70 from Powys, 9 from the rest of Wales or outside Wales).

**What next:** Responses will assist in shaping the delivery of employability and skills support in Mid Wales. Responses will also be discussed at the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership cluster group meetings

#### **6. Ceredigion Local Nature Partnership - Nature Recovery Action plan (November 2023 – March 2024)**

People were asked to complete an online survey or attend a workshop and share their thoughts and feedback on the first draft of the Nature Recovery Action plan. The campaign was targeted at organisations, landowners, academics, businesses and the public sector.

**Number of responses:** 48

**What next:** Responses were used to help develop the second draft of the Partnership's Nature Recovery Action Plan. There will be a consultation on this in 2024-25.

### **7. Ceredigion Local Nature Partnership - Support for Meadow Management (December 2023 – January 2024)**

The Local Nature Partnership wanted to learn more about what additional support may be needed to restore and enhance our special grassland habitats. People were asked to complete an online survey, take part in a structured interview or join a discussion at one of the Local Nature Partnership meetings.

**Number of responses:** 71

**What next:** Ceredigion Biodiversity team will arrange a meeting with stakeholders in April 2024 to discuss the next steps.

### **8. Wellbeing Centre, Cardigan (December 2023 – February 2024)**

People were asked to say what they would like to see as part of a potential Wellbeing Centre development in Cardigan to serve the south of the county. People were invited to respond via an online survey or by attending a focus group.

**Number of responses:** 417

**What next:** The information will inform a report to Cabinet on a proposed location for a Wellbeing Centre in Cardigan and a draft proposal of the facilities and service that could be offered.

### **9. 16+ and NEET survey (January – March 2024)**

This campaign was aimed at people in Ceredigion that are not in employment, education or training. We wanted to know more about their barriers to employment. This will help the Employment Support team to tailor the support they offer.

**Number of responses:** 6

**What next:** The engagement method will be reviewed. The campaign may be run again to try and get more responses.

## **10. Emotional Wellbeing of Unpaid Carers (January – March 2024)**

This campaign was aimed specifically at unpaid Carers. We wanted to learn more about their use of our Leisure and Wellbeing Centres. This will help us to offer services that meet their needs.

**Number of responses:** 29

**What next:** The responses have been shared with the Carers and Community Support Team. The data has not yet been analysed. We will create a summary report and an infographic of the results and share this with the public.

## **11. Growing Mid Wales - Local Area Energy Planning (January – March 2024)**

People were asked to share their opinion on current energy and transport use, low-carbon energy technologies and heating systems and sustainable travel options. The aim is to identify an effective route towards meeting the national net zero target.

**Number of responses:** 542

**What next:** Our Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) was finalised in March 2024. It will be presented to Cabinet in May 2024. The report provides the evidence required to help develop a pipeline of projects to transform the energy system to zero carbon over time. Insights from the survey will be incorporated into the development of these projects. In addition, the LAEP will be used to make sure that the National Energy Plan for Wales considers local needs and priorities whilst mapping out future energy demand and supply for all parts of the country.

## **Twelve Consultation campaigns were run in 2023-24**

### **1. Reuse of former New Quay library building (February – May 2023)**

The Council's Charity Trustee Committee asked people, mainly in New Quay, if they agreed with a proposal to change the purpose of this Trust to "to advance the education of the inhabitants of New Quay." People were also asked how the trust site could be used in the future within the new proposed purpose.

**Number of responses:** 32

**What next:** The results were presented to the Charity Trustee Committee in June 2023. It was agreed to change the purpose as proposed and to ask if any group or organisation are interested in taking on the site. 3 expressions of interest are being considered. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website.

### **2. Future use of trust monies of charity 'Old County School, Tregaron' (March – May 2023)**

The Council's Charity Trustee Committee asked people, mainly in Tregaron, for their opinion on how the money held in trust from the sale of the school should be spent to advance the education of pre-school and school-age children in Tregaron.

**Number of responses:** 25

**What next:** The results were presented to the Charity Trustee Committee in June 2023. Most of the responses related to sporting facilities. Discussions are taking place with officers from Porth Cymorth Cynnar and Schools services to explore relevant options. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website.

### **3. 20mph limits on county roads (4th to 28th April 2023)**

The proposals to amend the speed limit on certain county roads were advertised to the public. This consultation was associated with Welsh Government's scheme to reduce speed limit on street lit/residential roads in September 2023.

**Number of responses:** 76

**What next:** The results were presented to Cabinet in June 2023. Cabinet noted officers' response to the objections and approved the making and publication of the Traffic Regulation Order. It was felt that this decision is justified on the broad grounds provided by the Welsh Government for this national scheme. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website.

#### **4. Local Housing Strategy – 'Housing for All' (May – June 2023)**

People were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the vision, priorities, objectives and actions proposed in the Strategy. The consultation resulted in some changes being made to the final version of the Strategy.

**Number of responses:** 40

**What next:** Cabinet accepted the changes to the Strategy on 3rd October. It was approved by full Council on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website.

#### **5. Ceredigion Stakeholder survey (June – August 2023)**

People were asked for feedback about how well we run council services for the people of Ceredigion. This consultation was part of our annual self-assessment process, and the responses informed our self-assessment report 2022-23.

**Number of responses:** 148

**What next:** The Self-Assessment report 2022-23 was approved by full Council in December 2023. It was also submitted to Welsh Ministers, Estyn and the Auditor General for Wales. The report is now published on our website and includes a list of opportunities for improvement for us to address.

#### **6. Council Tax Premiums on 2nd Homes and Long Term Empty Properties (September – November 2023)**

People were asked for their opinion on the level of council tax premiums that should be charged on long-term empty properties and second homes in Ceredigion. The survey was promoted to the general public in Ceredigion and also to people who own 2<sup>nd</sup> homes.

**Number of responses:** 1,403

**What next:** The report was presented to full Council in December 2023. Council agreed to increase the Council tax premium on long term empty properties from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, the increase being dependent on the length of time the property has been empty. Council agreed to increase the Council tax premium on 2<sup>nd</sup> homes to 100% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and to 150% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website.

## **7. Harbours Management Policy (September – October 2023)**

This campaign was open to the public and targeted at people with an interest in the harbours in Aberaeron, Aberystwyth and New Quay. People were asked for feedback on the revised policy. Stakeholders were kept updated via Harbour Users Consultative Committee meetings and Calm Waters publications. Amendments were made to the policy as a result of the consultation.

**Number of responses:** 108

**What next:** The responses and the revised policy were presented to Cabinet in February 2024. Cabinet approved the revisions made as a result of the consultation and agreed to adopt the new Harbours Management policy. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website.

## **8. School Reorganisation (September – October 2023)**

People were asked for their opinion on the proposal to change the language medium in the Foundation Phase at Comins Coch, Llwyn yr Eos, St Padarn, Plascrug and New Quay primary schools and to admit 3-year-old pupils on a part time basis at Comins Coch, St Padarn and New Quay primary schools.

**Number of responses:** 74 (New Quay: 10 responses; Comins Coch: 14 responses; Plascrug: 27 responses; Llwyn yr Eos: 6 responses; St Padarn: 11 responses). The School Council at each of the five schools and Estyn also responded.

**What next:** Cabinet decided to amend the language provision in the Foundation Phase at Comins Coch, Llwyn yr Eos, St Padarn, Plascrug and New Quay primary schools. Cabinet also decided to admit 3-year old pupils on a part time basis at Comins Coch and St Padarn primary schools, but not at New Quay primary school. The reports and the minutes of the meetings, in February and March 2024 are published on the Council website.

### **9. Review of Polling Stations (October – November 2023)**

As part of this review, people were invited to provide feedback about their local polling station, including parking facilities, accessibility and overall suitability. People were also asked for feedback on changes to polling stations as suggested by the Returning Officer.

**Number of responses:** 16

**What next:** A report on the consultation process and the proposed changes to polling stations were discussed at full Council meeting in January 2024. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website.

### **10. Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 (October – December 2023)**

People were asked if they felt that the draft Equality Objectives were the right ones for Ceredigion and if the draft action plan would help the Council to achieve the objectives.

**Number of responses:** 59

**What next:** A report was presented to Cabinet in March 2024. Cabinet approved the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website. The Plan itself is also published on the website and a report on progress of the plan will be published each year

### **11. Local Housing Market Assessment (December 2023 – January 2024)**

This was not a public consultation. The Welsh Government assessment tool was completed following a period of desk top research and engagement with a range of stakeholders. Specific stakeholders, including Registered Social Landlords, a private developer representative, Care Society, West Wales Domestic Abuse Service, Elected Members and relevant council teams were invited to comment on the findings of the Assessment. Their feedback resulted in some changes to the draft Assessment.

**Number of responses:** 18

**What next:** Cabinet approved the Assessment at their meeting in March 2024. Any necessary actions which may follow will form part of the Housing Strategy or the Local Development Plan. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website.



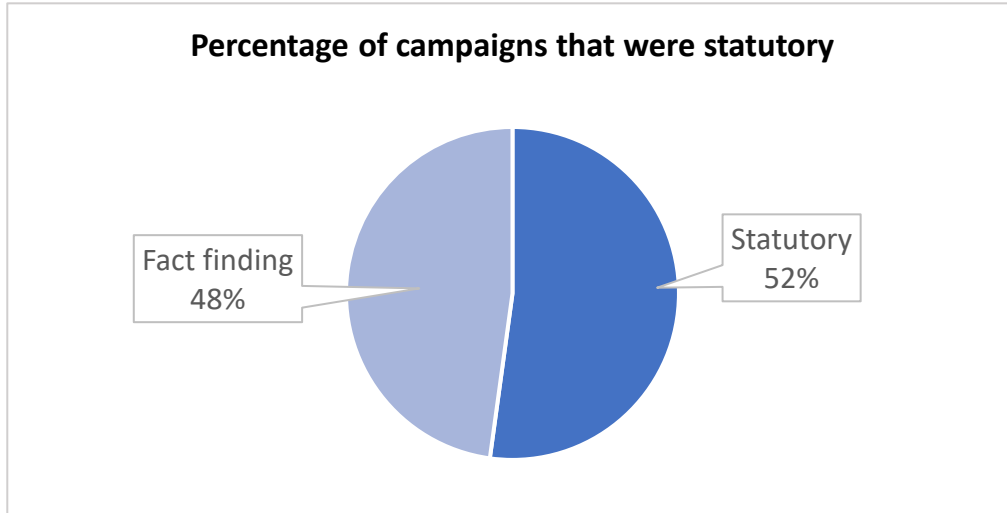
## **12. Additional Licensing scheme for HMOs (January – February 2024)**

People were asked for feedback on the quality of service provided by their landlord and by Rent Smart Wales. They were also asked for feedback about the HMO licensing scheme. Responses were fed into the review of the existing licensing scheme, due to end in April 2024.

**Number of responses:** 17

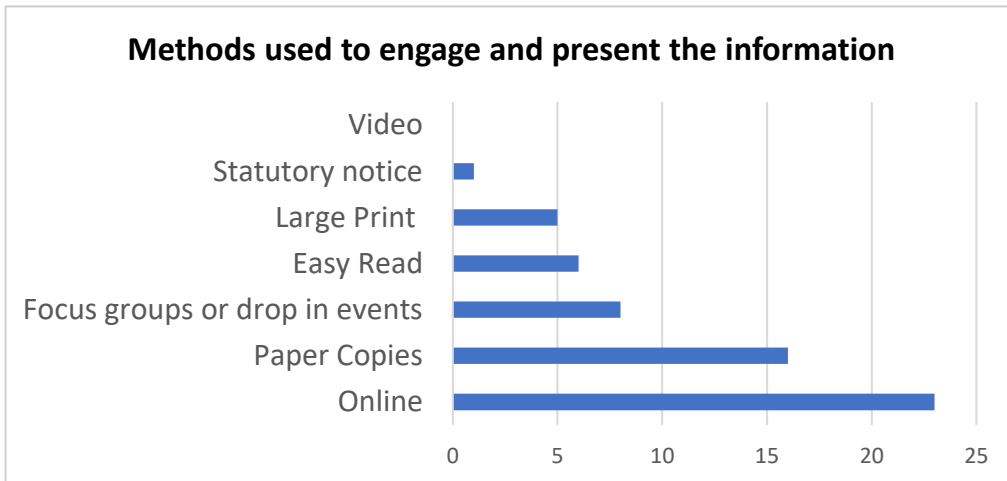
**What next:** The review of the existing Additional Licensing scheme was discussed by Cabinet in March 2024. The report and the minutes of the meeting are published on the Council website. The Public Notice with details of the scheme are also published on the website.

## Analysis of engagement and consultation campaigns 2023-24



Nearly all of the campaigns were fact finding, to inform a plan, strategy or service but over half were required by legislation – statutory. For example:

- Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021
- Housing Act (Wales) 2014
- The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996
- Representation of the People Act 1983

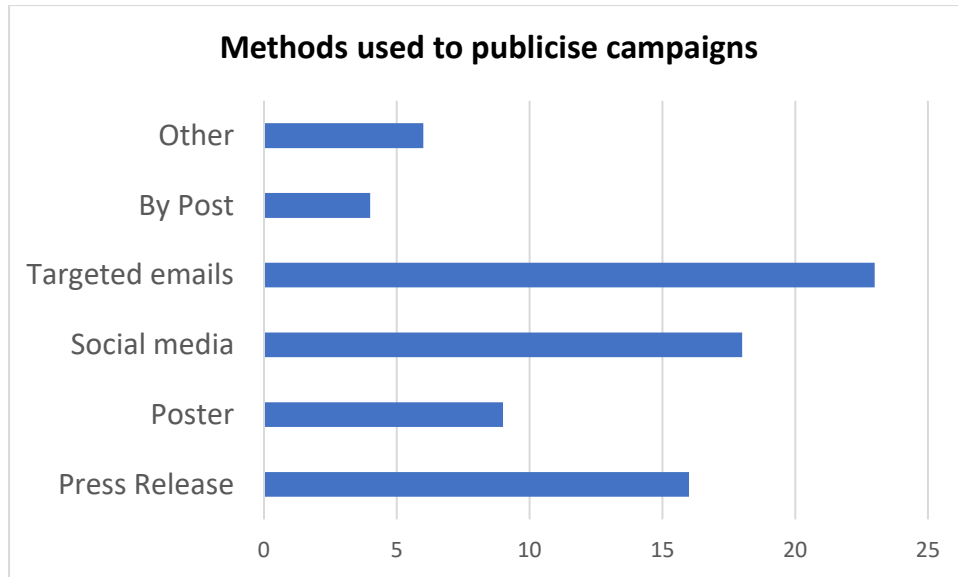


All campaigns were available via an online survey, paper copies were often available.

8 campaigns involved focus groups or drop in events.

6 campaigns provided Easy Read versions of the information and 5 campaigns provided Large Print versions.

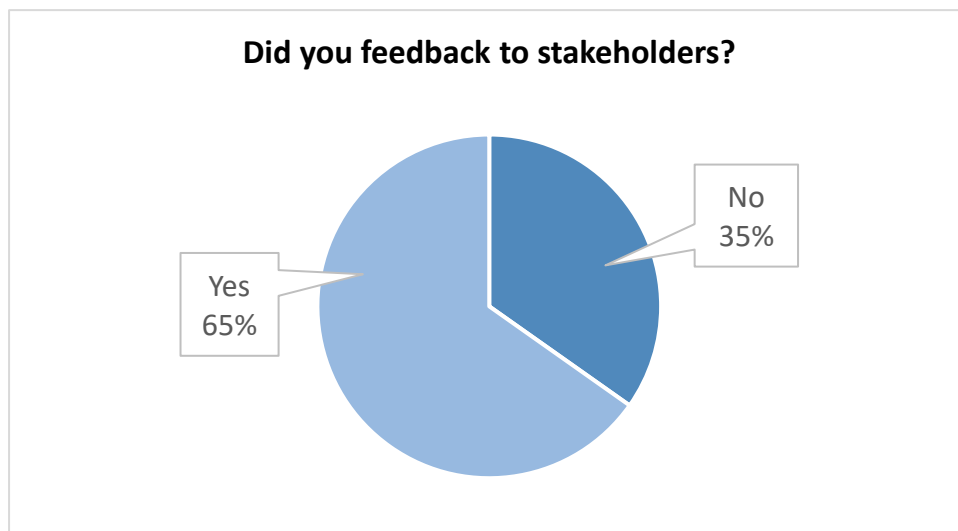
Ceredigion Youth Council have suggested that videos may be a good method. This format has not yet been tried.



Campaigns were publicised via a range of different methods. Most campaigns involved 3 or 4 methods.

The main methods utilised were emails targeted at specific stakeholders, social media posts and a press release.

Many council teams meet regularly with groups of stakeholders and have a ready-made network of key stakeholders. These networks were used to help promote campaigns.



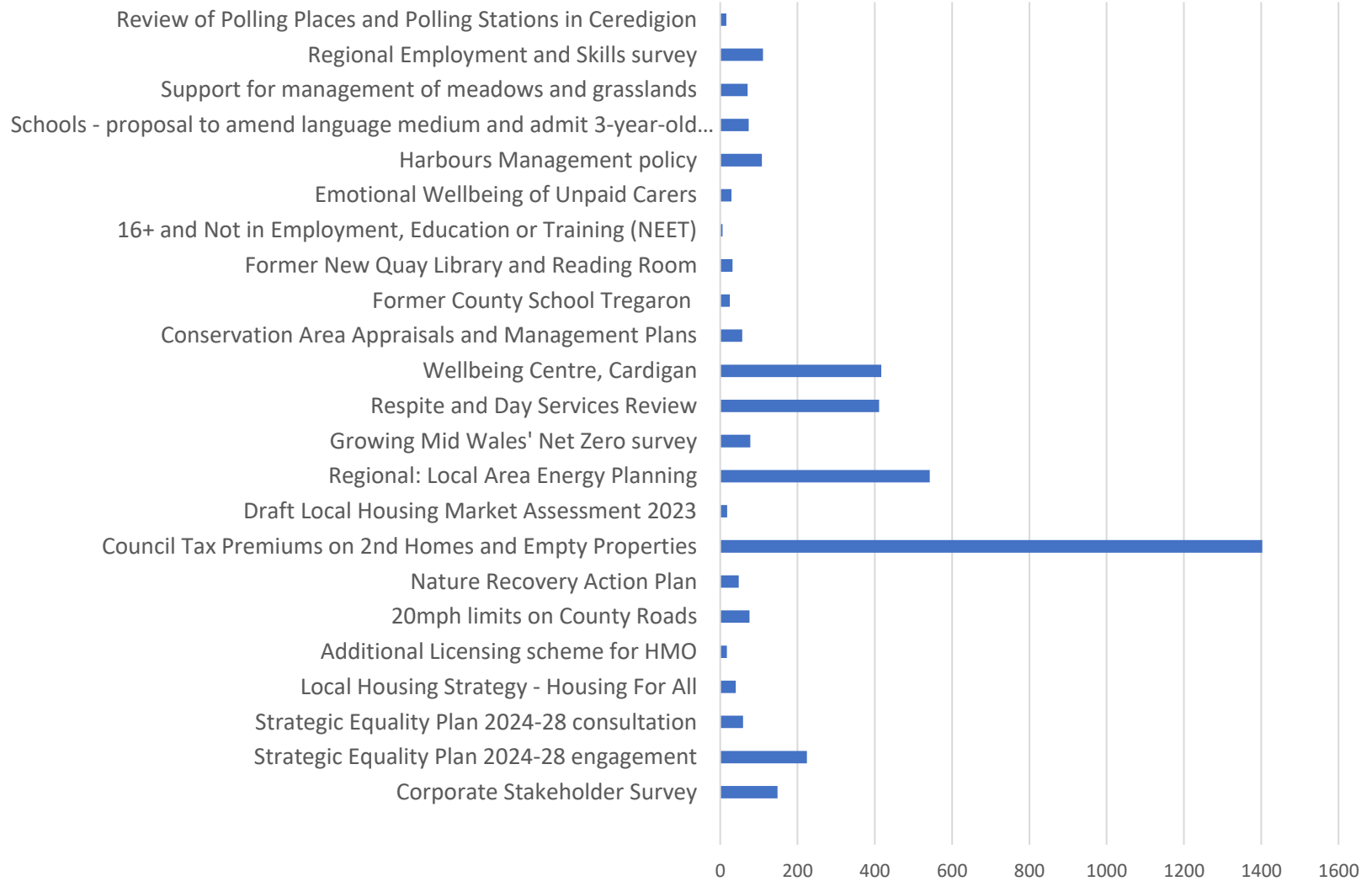
The majority of officers reported that they did feedback the results of their campaign with the public and named stakeholders.

The main method of feeding back the results was via the report made to Cabinet, which is publicly available on our website.

A small number of campaigns ended with a specific message to stakeholders to thank them for taking part and explaining the results and next steps.

This is an area for improvement.

## Number of responses to engagement and consultation campaigns 2023-24



## Conclusion

This is the second annual report on the progress we have made in delivering Ceredigion Engagement and Participation policy ‘Talking, Listening and Working Together’.

There were 23 engagement and consultation campaigns during 2023-24. This is seven more than last year. Four campaigns were regional. Three were run on behalf of the Growing Mid Wales board and covered Ceredigion and Powys. The engagement exercise that informed our Strategic Equality Plan was also regional, covering Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Powys and Carmarthenshire.

The number of responses depends on the topic of the campaign. There was a very high number of responses to our consultation on the level of council tax premiums payable on 2<sup>nd</sup> homes and long term empty properties – a very emotive subject. Conversely, the campaign to identify barriers faced by people who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) received only 6 responses. This campaign was aimed at young people who are NEET, widely recognised as a very difficult group to engage with.

The Action Plan has progressed significantly since March 2023, as shown in the table below.

	2022-23	2023-24
Green – action is on track or complete	6	10
Amber – some progress is being made	5	2
Red – no progress is being made	1	0

The two actions that are rated as Amber (showing some progress) involve the development of an online engagement platform and improving the way that we feedback to those who have participated in our engagement and consultation campaigns. There are plans in place to progress this work. We anticipate that all actions will be on track or complete by the time the third annual report is produced, in Spring 2025.

### Future Improvement work

The new My Account platform will help us to develop our online relationship with people who have expressed a specific interest in our consultations. We are also working on improvements to the Engagement and Consultation webpage so that people can see the results of their feedback more clearly.

The Engagement and Participation policy will be reviewed in 2025 and it is likely that the action plan will include a new set of actions. This will ensure that we continue to improve our practice.