

Planning ahead for a challenging future

Delegates from across Wales arrived at the Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells on 2 July 2025 for a stimulating and lively exchange of views on some of the challenges which Community and Town Councils will face in the coming years.

The conference was hosted by One Voice Wales, the national representational body for Community and Town Councils in Wales.

Chair of One Voice Wales, Councillor Mike Theodoulou, looked forward to a day of innovation and ideas. He did not finish disappointed!

The Chief Executive of One Voice Wales, Lyn Cadwallader, set the scene for the conference. The event came against a background of increased scrutiny of the Community and Town Council sector, with a number of key recent [reviews and reports](#) setting the tone for the day.

But these were also times of innovation, challenge, and collaboration. The recent One Voice Wales [Awards](#) ceremony had helped to showcase the work of Community and Town Councils, while recent partnership opportunities with County Councils also pointed to an exciting future.

With an eye on the forthcoming 2026 Senedd elections, Matt Wellington, Deputy Director Local Government Policy Division, described some of the priorities for Community and Town Councils. Delegates watched a video presentation by the Minister for Housing and Local Government, Jayne Bryant MS.

Matt also took questions from an enthusiastic and knowledgeable audience. Important local issues and concerns were raised from the floor.

Dianne Bevan, a commissioner with the [Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru](#), addressed issues around the democratic health of Community and Town Councils. How can we encourage greater engagement with Councils? How can we stimulate interest from young people and socially isolated groups?

Lyn Cadwallader returned to the podium to contemplate the potential for clustering in helping manage the growing demands on Local Councils. Was this the shape of things to come, he wondered.

A fascinating presentation by Julie Starling, Clinical Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Programme Manager for Wales, outlined the work of [Save a Life Cymru](#) about defibrillator management and use of CPR brought a remarkable morning to a close.

But the fun was only just beginning, as Paul Funnell, Digital Development Manager at Powys County Council, introduced delegates to the potential which Artificial Intelligence or “AI” could bring to the Council Chamber! This was challenging stuff for sure and stimulated much debate and comment.

Delegates were brought “back to earth” by Gareth Kiddie of [GKA](#) who explored issues which Councils needed to address in considering any proposal for Community Asset Transfer. Many local facilities were under threat; could Community and Town Councils step in?

A series of four intimate workshops allowed delegates to get to grips with important current issues, such as planning for Community Boundary Reviews jointly led by Paul Egan of One Voice Wales and Emma Smith representing the [Society of Local Council Clerks \(SLCC\)](#), a Cost-of-Living Crisis and its impact on local people throughout Wales led by Emma Goode and the [One Voice Wales Cost-of-Living Team](#), and 'Digitalisation – enabling change and achieving greater efficiency and inclusion' presented by Paul Funnell of Powys County Council.

The 'Changing procurement landscape in Wales' also exercised the minds of practitioners present, led by Carl Thomas of the Procurement Reform Team at [Welsh Government](#).

Councillor Theodoulou brought the curtain down on an exceptional day. Yes, there were challenges, he said, but he remained confident that Community and Town Councils could face a world of change with optimism and belief. He urged delegates to take these important messages back to their communities.

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