

Value for money Arosfan pilot scheme arrangements

Cyngor Gwynedd

August 2026

We have prepared and published this report section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (Act 2004) to help enable the Auditor General to be satisfied (or not) that the Council has established appropriate arrangements to ensure value for money in terms of using its resources; and section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to help enable the Auditor General to assess the extent to which the Council operates in accordance with the sustainable development principle when taking steps to achieve its well-being objectives.

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Audit snapshot

What we looked at

- 1 We looked at the arrangements Cyngor Gwynedd (the Council) had to plan, deliver and review a pilot scheme to provide parking sites for motor homes. These sites are called Arosfan. We were keen to examine the extent to which these arrangements ensured value for money. Value for money means more than getting work done at the cheapest price; it also means providing a quality service in an effective manner. That is, a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This is what we assessed in relation to the Council's arrangements in carrying out the Arosfan motorhome car park scheme.

Why this is important

- 2 Local authorities spend a lot of money on capital and revenue schemes in achieving their well-being objectives, statutory duties and other strategic commitments.
- 3 Rising costs because of inflation and other factors, hand in hand with uncertainty about sources of income, mean that local authorities need to ensure that every spending project counts. It is essential for local authorities to have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure value for money when spending on projects.
- 4 For a number of years, the Council had been spending time and resources responding to an increasing number of complaints about anti-social behaviour from motorhome users in the area, including illegal parking. In 2020, an unprecedented number of people came to Gwynedd on holiday. This led to problems which included people's use of motorhomes. The Council's Cabinet requested officers to investigate options that could contribute to a more sustainable use of this holiday medium.

- 5 Notable practices that can testify to the success of the arrangements can be of help to other bodies as well as providing reassurance to the Council and the public.

What we have found

- 6 The Council has responded proactively to try and resolve a contentious local problem. The Council experienced various obstacles which meant that the pilot became operational at a later date and higher cost than expected. Following the delay, the Council has not carried out an evaluation so far. As a result, there is no certainty about the results or value for money of the arrangements to carry out the innovative Arosfan pilot.

What we recommend

- 7 We have made one recommendation to the Council in relation to project management arrangements. The Council should apply the recommendation in a way that is proportionate to the size of future projects.

Our findings

The Council completed the Arosfan pilot at a greater cost, on a smaller scale and later than expected

- 8 The project was not completed within budget, and the sites opened later than planned. In a 2021 Cabinet paper, the indicative cost for establishing six sites was £100,000, with a maximum of six sites planned. In a 2022 application for Welsh Government grant funding, the Council estimated the cost for six sites at £340,000, to be spent by the end of March 2023. By 2026, the Council had spent £364,562 on four motorhome parking sites.
- 9 The project was not completed on time either. April 2023 was the target date for opening the first site. It was noted in the November 2021 Cabinet report that that forum would receive a further report in three years' time, namely 2024. The Cabinet did not receive a report at that time even though the first site became operational in October 2023.
- 10 As a result, there is very limited assurance of two important elements of value for money, namely economy and efficiency.¹
- 11 Although the Council has established arrangements to review the value for money of Arosfan sites at the start of the project, the Council has not carried out an evaluation or carried out an exercise of lessons learned so far.
- 12 When carrying out the work, the Council drew up a comprehensive four stage Evaluation Plan to show how it will measure success in terms of results and other indicators. To be carried out at the end of the pilot period, the evaluation was meant to include
 - user satisfaction questionnaire;

¹ Under the [Public Audit \(Wales\) Act 2004](#) the Auditor General for Wales must be satisfied that local councils are putting in place appropriate arrangements to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and that they are economical (value for money) when using their resources.

- community and business questionnaire;
- income performance data; and
- complaints and fines data.

- 13 We were told that the Council will carry out this evaluation following autumn 2026 as all Arosfan sites weren't fully opened until May of that year. The Council reports on usage figures and is satisfied with the feedback it receives through the contact form on its website. Despite this, there can be no certainty as to whether the project has fully achieved the intended results and benefits to date. An evaluation was not carried out on a smaller scale to learn lessons either, even though one Arosfan site has opened since 2023.
- 14 Without carrying out an evaluation, the Council cannot be assured that it:
- benefits fully from lessons learned;
 - avoids repeating mistakes; nor
 - that its arrangements provide value for money.
- 15 Considering that the scheme was a pilot to assist the Council to decide whether it wishes to continue, expand or do away with the sites, carrying out an evaluation is important.

The Council thoroughly researched the options for motor home sites

- 16 The Council thoroughly investigated the subject of motor home car parks. This was presented as a strong basis for recommending that the Cabinet approve an innovative pilot to help the Council tackle a contentious problem.
- 17 For example, the research refers to legislative requirements and international practices in the field. The Council considered the needs of service users and the other important stakeholders, members of the affected communities and local business owners. The Council received an extremely high number of responses to the questionnaires which provided solid evidence of the demand and concerns.

- 18 The Council used its analysis of the responses to draw up the priorities in a detailed and subjective scoring matrix. This was used to create a shortlist of proposed sites to host the pilot. The matrix filtered sites through an initial assessment and then considered factors including:
- distance from public transport;
 - distance from a dwelling;
 - water and sewerage connection;
 - distance from a location of interest to visitors and walking/cycling routes; and
 - a possible adverse effect on views.
- 19 The research document did not specify how the project would fit in with the Council's well-being objectives or any other strategic goals. However, the pilot was incorporated as one of the Council's Plan projects later in 2023 to contribute towards achieving the Prosperous Gwynedd objective.
- 20 Thorough research, as seen here, is important in a value-for-money context in order to avoid introducing flawed policies.

The Council did not use all the recognised project management arrangements when carrying out the Arosfan pilot

- 21 There were gaps in the Council's arrangements to manage the Arosfan project. The Council had not drawn up the following standard project management conventions for carrying out and completing the work:
- a detailed timetable with time targets for the different components; nor
 - a communication plan.
- 22 It was noted that the sites' water infrastructure was the main obstacle to completing the work by the target date.

- 23 Although the Council drew up a basic risk register to support the application for grant money, it was not updated. Furthermore, the register did not refer to the risks which mainly led to the delay to the project.
- 24 It is good practice for public authorities to draw on the above recognized project management methods. These can help the Council identify and respond promptly when key steps slip and expenditure increases. It's also a means of identifying all risks in advance, dealing with them formally and is likely to contribute to gaining assurance of value for money.
- 25 The project was overseen by a predetermined governance procedure. A cross-departmental Project Board was created to discuss the pilot's progress, chaired by the Assistant Head of Department. The group continues to meet monthly. The Board reported to the Council's Significant Projects Group on one occasion. Since being included as one of the 2023-28 Council Plan projects, the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee receives updates on the pilot's usage figures. Despite this, there was no opportunity for the Council's scrutiny function to scrutinize the scheme in advance.
- 26 An appropriate level of initial scrutiny can assist the Council to identify financial and practical risks earlier by involving more people with different perspectives. It is reasonable to determine more supervision and checks when a project is of a pilot nature, to give assurance of value for money that resources are used in a way that helps the Council achieve its objectives.

Recommendations

27 Note that this recommendation is for the Council's general project management arrangements and that they should be applied in a way that is proportionate to the project in question.

R1 In order to increase the likelihood of successfully carrying out a project or a pilot of a project, the Council should use project management arrangements that are proportionate to the size of the work (**paragraphs 21-26**). These should include the following features as a minimum:

- risk register;
- communication plan;
- detailed budget; and
- detailed timetable.

Appendices

1 About our work

Scope of the audit

The audit dealt with the arrangements the Council had in place to plan, carry out and review its Arosfan project. The audit assessed the extent to which the Council's arrangements ensured value for money during each of these stages. Audit Wales considered evidence in relation to the arrangements in place for this project only. However, Audit Wales may comment on corporate arrangements where appropriate. The fieldwork was carried out during May 2026.

Audit questions and criteria

Questions

- Did the Council's arrangements to plan the project ensure value for money?
- Did the Council's arrangements to carry out the project ensure value for money?
- Did the Council's arrangements to review the project ensure value for money?

Criteria

Audit Wales used criteria in carrying out this audit. They are involved in planning, delivery and review arrangements. A number is known as what is expected according to good project management practice in CIPFA's view.

Methods

The audit used the following methods:

- Documents shared with us were reviewed; and

- We interviewed key officers (three interviews).

About us

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