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Cymdeithasol



Advice for food growers and CSAs (Wales Only)  
Gaining Planning Permission



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# Advice for food growers and CSAs (Wales Only)

## Gaining Planning Permission

### Is growing food Agriculture?

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) enterprises and any type of horticulture, even if not for profit, are agricultural businesses in planning terms so a change of use application from green field land is not required.

Some planning authorities may be unfamiliar with the CSA concept. When making any planning enquiries make sure the planning authority is aware that this is an agricultural use of land which will enhance the rural economy of the local area. Social Farms & Gardens have compiled a factsheet for commercial and community growers to help determine if they need planning permission for proposed structures or proposed changes of use of land or buildings. It is available on the Tyfu Cymru Knowledge Hub [here](#).

### Can I put up a polytunnel or other essential structure?

Many CSAs and horticultural businesses cannot survive without certain buildings, whether to shelter volunteers and workers, store and pack produce, or to germinate and grow plants. These buildings are essential to the business and are 'reasonably necessary' for the purposes of agriculture. They are, however, likely to need planning permission, especially if you are operating on a farm under 5 hectares (12 acres), as farmers do not have any permitted development rights to build new structures on these farms in Wales. To qualify for these permitted development rights, you also need to be an existing farming enterprise, which can be tricky to prove if you are just starting out.

Planning issues can be complex and frustrating, but many horticultural enterprises do succeed in getting permission for the buildings and polytunnels they need. The important thing is to start right. Never invest money or time in land, or start development, before speaking to the relevant local planning authority regarding planning permission. When applying for planning permission, it is important to make a case that the structure is essential to the business and why you need it.

All local planning authorities in Wales operate a written statutory pre application query process. This incurs a fee, but it is recommended before securing land for your CSA.

All development in the UK is directed towards towns and cities. Any development proposals outside settlement limits are strictly controlled. As most farms, by their very nature, are outside settlement boundaries, structures on farms are only acceptable in principle, where –

- Their **design, scale and siting** respects the character of the surrounding area
- The **building is essential** for the purposes of agricultural enterprise on the farm.

Other considerations for new structures that need planning permission include (not exhaustive) -

1. The **remoteness** of the building. It should be **close to** other buildings to protect the **openness of the countryside** and the building should not create a use that encourages a lot of visits to the farm by car as the planning system in the UK does not like to see uses that encourage cars in countryside locations.
2. Impact on **biodiversity**, protected species and areas of special conservation value.
3. The potential for **surface water flooding** as a result of the building.
4. The impacts of the proposed development on the **amenity** of nearby residents (for example, privacy, noise, smell, sunlight, daylight, air pollution levels).
5. The right to a view is not a planning consideration but **visual impact** on the landscape is, so try not to site your packing shed or polytunnel on the brow of a hill. Siting a building to be shielded or hidden by a tall established tree or hedge will reduce the impact of the development on the landscape but be mindful of tree roots and whether the tree/s are protected by a tree preservation order.
6. Additional planning policy constraints apply if the proposed development is in a **national park**, **green belt**, **green wedge**. The impact on Biodiversity and the landscape are particularly important factors for consideration within national parks, while retaining the openness of the countryside and prevention of coalescence (merging) of settlements are important factors in areas allocated as green belt and green wedge.

## **What documents do I need to provide to submit a planning application?**

Your local planning authority will usually ask you to submit your planning application via the [Planning Portal](#).

The following information and documents will need to be submitted for your planning application to be registered by the local planning authority.

- Application form
- [Correct fee](#)
- Site location plan to scale with compass showing north
- Drawings to scale with a compass showing north

Further documentation may be required as advised by the planning officer dealing with your planning application to allow proper assessment of the planning application.

Examples include -

- Flood Consequences Assessment
- Tree/ Hedgerow survey
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Ecological Impact Assessment Report
- Scheme of ecological mitigation/compensation and enhancements
- Landscape Visual Impact Assessment
- Landscape-Drainage Strategy
- Business case for the agricultural enterprise
- Evidence that no other suitable buildings exist in the locality to meet the needs of the agricultural enterprise
- Visibility splays and plans to demonstrate access and egress in a forward gear
- Detail of foul drainage

## **Are there other applications I should submit alongside my planning application?**

In Wales areas of construction over 100 sq metres require a [sustainable drainage application](#) to be submitted to the local authority. This is separate to a planning application, you should enter pre application discussions with the SAB drainage officers in the local authority before preparing your planning application. There are 6 standards to fulfil in the application, the main purpose is to show that that surface water from the construction area will be collected for use or infiltrate into the ground rather than into a public drain or sewer.

## **What other uses can I carry out on my growing field?**

You may wish to encourage community visits to your farm through volunteering, education or for produce pickups each week. Such visits should be [ancillary and small scale](#) compared to the main use as a farm. Consider hub points close to or in towns or villages where people can pick up their produce and veg boxes. Educational visits should not attract large numbers of vehicles and should be occasional. Each case will be judged by the local planning authority on its own merits. It is a grey area, but daily visits by many cars will almost certainly amount to a change in use which will require planning permission. Try to consult and check in with local residents to see if traffic levels are bothering them. Once a local person makes a planning enforcement enquiry to the local planning authority their enforcement planning section are duty bound to investigate it fully, which can involve high levels of scrutiny.

## **What if I put a structure up without permission?**

Gaining planning permission BEFORE building anything is always the best way of starting out but, if you do put something up without permission always try to be accommodating to local authority officers who may have been asked to investigate a complaint. If a use or development is found to be unauthorised, a planning application will more than likely, be invited by the local planning authority and the considerations will be the same as if it were a 'proposed' use or development. You may wish to seek advice from Tyfu Cymru, the [Community Land Advisory Service Cymru](#) or take professional advice from a planning consultant at this point. If the use or development is considered to be unacceptable 'in principle', the farmer will be asked to regularise the situation or be faced with an enforcement notice. You can appeal the notice to the [Planning Inspectorate](#) but the enforcement notice stays on the land. It is served on the owner of the land and this means you could be in breach of any lease agreement you have entered into. The best thing to do is be as cooperative as possible and regularise the situation as soon as possible so that an enforcement notice is not needed.

