

# Jane Davidson meets the people at PLANED

The Welsh Assembly minister responsible for issues of sustainability and climate change has had an insight into the work of an organisation which has promoted sustainability in communities and businesses across Pembrokeshire since its inception two decades ago.



Meeting the minister: PLANED chair, Stephen Alderman, and co-ordinator, Joan Asby, with Welsh Assembly minister, Jane Davidson.

Jane Davidson, minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, visited the offices of PLANED at Narberth to meet staff and representatives of the communities which have benefited from its support. She was met by chair, Stephen Alderman, a Pembrokeshire dairy farmer. The minister heard how pioneering initiatives such as the ‘Sustainable Development Tool’ had enabled communities in Pembrokeshire to play a greater role in improving the

quality of life in their area.

The ‘toolkit’, a series of bilingual cards, is used in conjunction with wider Visioning Workshops to enable participants develop sustainable projects. It has now been run in over 20 communities, including Ambleston and Maenclochog. Representatives of these communities explained their projects to the minister.

Ms Davidson met residents of villages including Freshwater East who told her how PLANED had helped the community.

Vicki Tomlinson said it had encouraged residents to think beyond the basics. “We have been empowered as individuals to feel we can make things happen, that we don’t have to wait for it to be done for us,” she said.

PLANED is regarded as being ahead of its time on sustainability issues.

More recent projects it has initiated include the ‘Pembrokeshire Valuing the Environment Network’ and also the ‘Community Energy Network’. This provides community groups with opportunities to learn from others who have developed environmental, recycling and energy projects, to share expertise with other community groups and to develop their own projects.

Jo Horsley, of Environment Wales, a Welsh Assembly initiative which supports community groups, says PLANED’s approach enables communities to “open up their thoughts”.

“It is quite astounding the difference it makes, PLANED gets them to see what is so special about their communities,” she said.