

ANNUAL REPORT

CYNGOR GWYNEDD
DIGITAL PLAN
2023-28



(PERIOD 2024-2025)

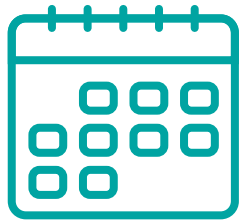


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Cefnogi pobol Gwynedd mewn byd digidol



This annual report summarises the **progress, challenges, and next steps** of Cyngor Gwynedd's Digital Plan across its main priority areas. The Council's Digital Plan is an ambitious 5-year programme (2023–2028) with five core digital priorities, delivered through a series of key projects.



Duration of Plan

5 years

2023–2028



Priority Areas

5

Key Digital
Areas



Projects

29

Digital transformation
projects

Overview

The Cyngor Gwynedd Digital Plan 2023/2028 sets out a long-term vision to transform the Council into a **digital council** that leverages technology to improve residents' lives and continually strengthen services. This report reviews progress since the plan's launch, assesses how the **priority projects** contribute to the broader vision, and identifies any necessary strategic changes for the future.

1. Vision and Goals Summary

Longterm Vision

Create a Digital County where technology is used wisely to deliver public services more efficiently and effectively, putting the customer at the centre of everything that is done. The Council aims for continuous improvement in how citizens can connect with services, use data as the basis for decisions, and strengthen digital resilience and security within the organisation.

Main Strategic Objectives

Customer-focused

Improve the citizen's experience when interacting with the Council through inclusive and bilingual digital methods.

Efficient Services

Automate routine and repetitive tasks to improve efficiency, freeing up staff time to focus on adding value.

Educated Decisions

Use integrated data and information resources to guide wise decisions across the Council.

Digital Workforce

Develop the digital skills of all staff members and promote a culture of digital innovation in the workplace.

Resilient Infrastructure

Invest in robust IT infrastructure and cybersecurity measures to protect the Council's services from disruption.

In summary, the above vision and goals establish a framework for how Cyngor Gwynedd will develop digitally. They unite in the intention to **innovate digitally** to improve the standard of living for Gwynedd residents and maintain first-class services in the face of current and future challenges.

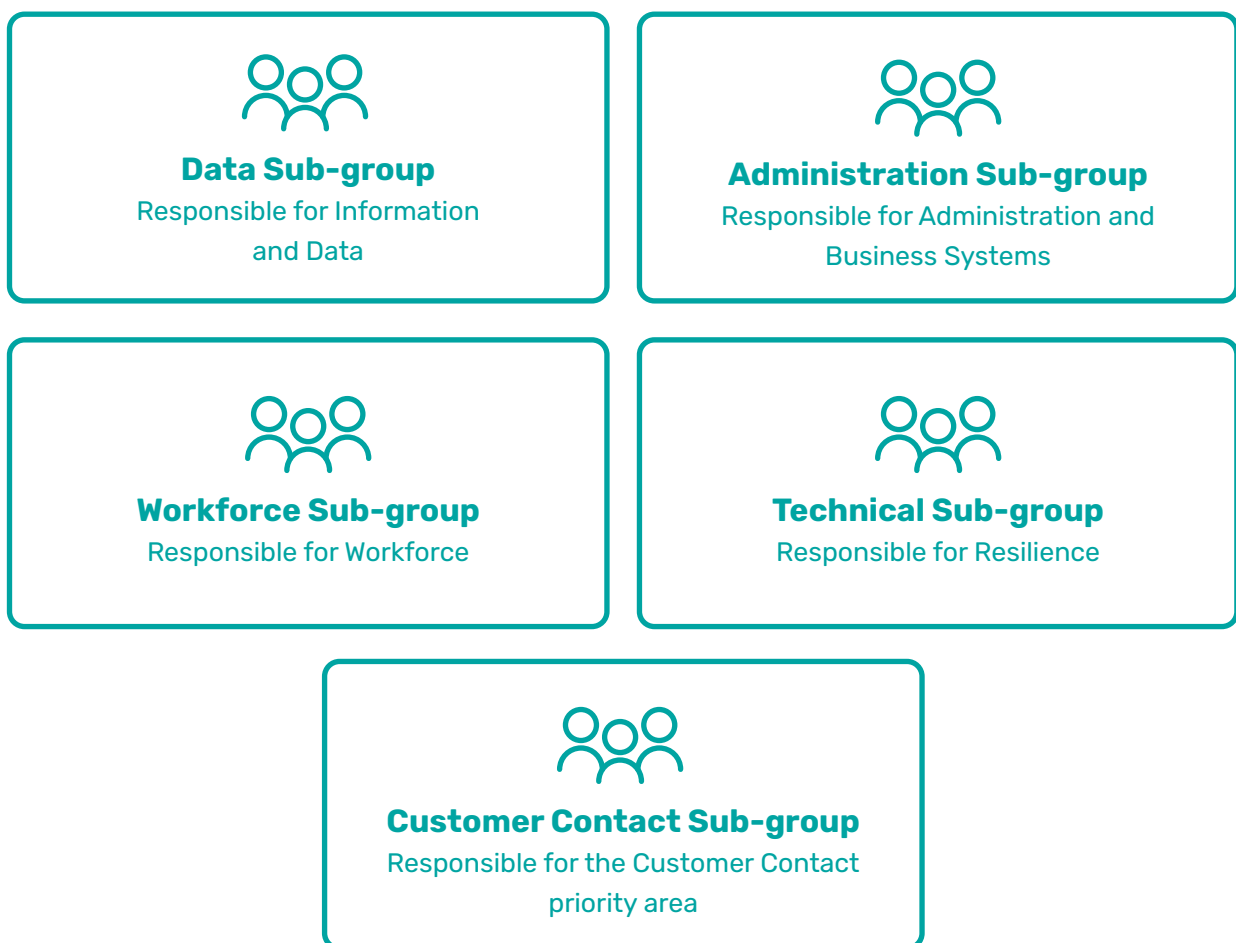
2. Governance Arrangements

The Digital Plan was adopted by Cyngor Gwynedd's Cabinet on November 7th, 2023.

Governance Structure

The **Council's Digital Transformation Board** (chaired by the Corporate Director) provides strategic guidance for the Digital Plan, supported by the *Cabinet Member, Head of Finance, Head of Legal Services, Assistant Head of Finance (Digital), Infrastructure Systems Manager, and Chairs of the digital sub-groups*, and is accountable to the *Corporate Management Team*.

Five digital sub-groups were established to include representatives from every service, ensuring all parts of the Council contribute to and commit to the digital vision:



Changes to Governance

Minor changes were made to the governance arrangements during the year, including a greater focus on cyber arrangements and the establishment of a specific group for this area, chaired by the *Assistant Head of Finance (Digital)*, accountable to the *Emergency Planning Strategic Group and the Digital Transformation Board*. The Technical Sub-group was discontinued as part of these changes.

The *Finance and IT Department* reports on progress as part of the corporate performance process, and the Digital Board will present an annual report on achievements.

3. Impact of the Digital Plan

The Digital Plan has had a significant impact across several key areas:

Improving Services for Residents

- Digital technology has led to more efficient, accurate, and accessible services for Gwynedd residents.
- Projects such as upgrading phone systems, redesigning the corporate website, and developing the apGwynedd app have made Council services more convenient and improved the customer experience.

Strengthening the Workforce

- The plan has enabled the workforce to adopt new ways of working, such as hybrid working and using new technologies.
- Investment in digital training and providing digital accounts for all staff ensures readiness for future challenges and the ability to deliver high-quality services.

Improvements to Digital Infrastructure

- Upgrading analogue lines, improving broadcasting provision, and strengthening cyber defences have made Council systems more reliable and secure.
- Efforts to improve connectivity and digital inclusion ensure more people can access digital services.

Innovation and Automation

- The introduction of artificial intelligence and process automation has reduced administrative burdens and freed up resources to focus on core services.
- The Council has started using new technologies to improve data collection and usage, enabling more informed decisions.

Collaboration and Partnerships

- The Plan has strengthened collaboration with local and regional partners, including schools, public organisations, and technology companies.
- This collaboration has enabled resource sharing, expertise, and the development of innovative solutions on a wider scale.

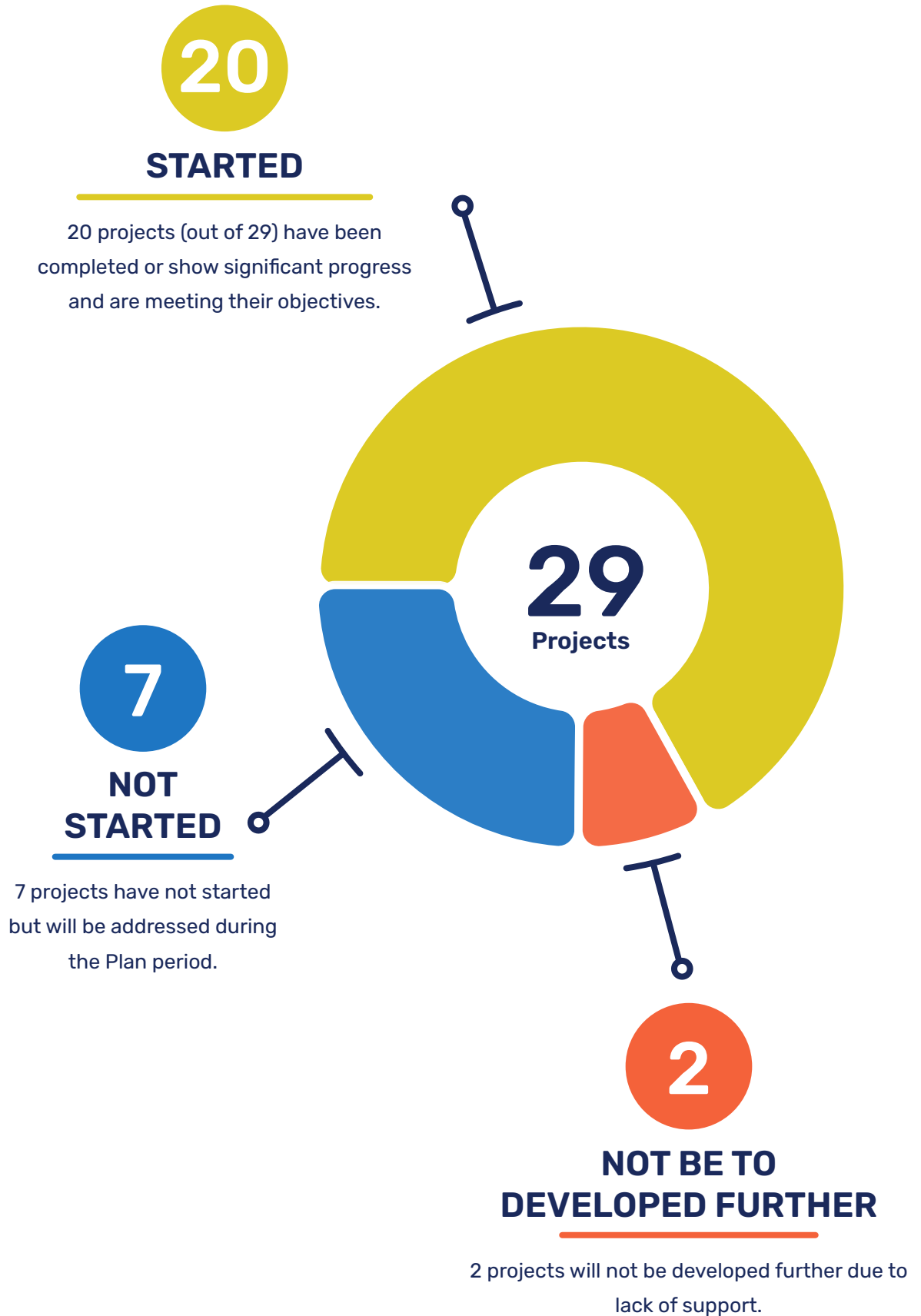
Inclusive and Bilingual Services

- The Plan ensures the Council's digital services are inclusive and available in both Welsh and English, reflecting the needs of the Gwynedd community.

4. Progress on Priority Projects

Project Progress Overview

The Digital Plan includes several specific projects within the five priorities. During the year:



5. Annual Review of the Plan

Strategic Changes and Direction

In line with the intention to review the Plan annually, it is important to note any **priority revisions** or **additions** made during the year.

Reference	Description	Provided Financial Support	Progress (2024/25)	Expected (2025/26)
GD1	Identify our data	No	Started	Continue
GD2	Data Charter	No	Started	Continue
GD3	Create a data warehouse (wGwynedd)	No	Yet to Start	Yet to Start
GD4	Data reporting platform	Yes	Started	Completed
GD5	Data literacy training	No	Yet to Start	Yet to Start
GD6	Performance reporting	No	Started	Continue
GSB1	Introduce Artificial Intelligence	No	Started	Continue
GSB2	Digitise and automate invoicing	No	Yet to Start	Started
GSB3	Reduce and improve our use of paper	No	Started	Continue
GSB4	Rationalise the systems in use	No	Yet to Start	Yet to Start
GSB5	Review of Enterprise Resource Management systems	Yes	Started	Continue
GSB6	Internet of Things	No	Started	Completed
GSB7	Make the best use of the Microsoft365 platform	Yes	Started	Continue
GSB8	Facilitate collaboration with partners	No	Started	Continue
GSB9	Connectivity and digital inclusion	No	Started	Continue
GWEI1	Introduce a digital account for every officer	No	Started	Continue
GWEI2	Support the vision of the “working for the future” program	No	Started	Continue
GWEI3	Digital skills and mindset training	No	Yet to Start	Yet to Start
GWEI4	Promote Cyngor Gwynedd as a digital employer	Yes	Started	Continue
GWYD1	Upgrade analogue lines to digital	No	Started	Completed
GWYD2	Business continuity	Yes	Started	Completed
GWYD3	Upgrade broadcasting provision in the Council chambers	Yes	Started	Completed
CC1	Extend communication, inquiry and service request methods	Yes	Yet to Start	Started
CC2	Improvements to the Council’s phone provision	Yes	Started	Completed
CC3	Redesign the Council’s corporate website	Yes	Started	Completed
CC4	Develop and promote apGwynedd	No	Yet to Start	Started
CC5	Siop Gwynedd video kiosk	No	Stop	Stop
CC6	Payment machines	No	Stop	Stop
YSG1	Support and develop the Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy	Cefnogaeth Amgen	Completed	Revisit

Adjustments to the Plan

Two projects have been identified within the Customer Contact priority area that will not proceed in their original form. Details of these are noted below.

Scope and Funding

Some projects were prioritised over others based on the financial support awarded to them. Nine projects received financial support, with eight of these underway by 2024/25. All financially supported projects will be in progress by 2025/26, with six completed, two continuing, and one transitioning to become an ongoing effort.

Prioritisation within current resources

In addition to prioritising projects with new financial support, it was determined that some projects needed prioritisation within our existing resources. Eleven such projects were implemented during 2024/25, and two will be fully completed during 2025/26, work will continue on another six, and three projects will be embedded as ongoing efforts.

Not a priority area

Six projects that were not designated as a priority are yet to start. Two will be implemented during 2025/26 due to dependencies and/or overlap with other projects that are underway or completed. The remaining four will remain dormant unless they are re-prioritised.

Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy

The scope of the Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy has been completed. A new support service has been established for schools, and the vision of providing laptops to every pupil from Year 2 to Year 11 has been realised. Work to establish a new digital strategy for schools will commence during 2025/26.

Lessons and Recommendations:

Key Lessons

- Broad engagement during the drafting of the Plan was beneficial in raising the profile of digital to a wider audience.
- Strong, cross-departmental governance structures have been key to delivering a Plan focused on services rather than just technology.

Recommendations

- There is a need to look at alternative ways to prioritise projects and manage future expectations, including funding arrangements.
- The annual report is an important step in keeping the digital agenda alive, but there is a need to establish ongoing engagement arrangements to keep the Plan current in response to changes in Council services and the continuous evolution of digital technology.

6. Information and Data

Priority Focus

"Using data and information to make better decisions and learn." This means **improving access to information** for staff and customers, **improving data** quality, and ensuring Council decisions are informed by reliable data.

GD1

Identify our data

We have reviewed and updated the information we hold about all the Council's systems (over 300 of them) to create one standardised list. Having a complete, up-to-date list will help make several activities in this area more efficient – but one important use of this work is to provide a starting point for aligning and rationalising the various data the Council holds in its systems, and to enable better integration of data across different systems.

Status

In progress (work to continue until Q4 2025/26)

GD2

Data Charter

We have drafted a Data Charter that will establish a clear corporate approach for managing and using data correctly, responsibly, and consistently. The Charter includes policies, guidelines, and support for all Council staff when dealing with data, and its content can be adapted and added to in the future as new needs arise.

The next step is to package and promote the Charter in a way that highlights its relevance to Council staff – work on this is underway for publication and launch in early 2026.

Status

In progress (launch in Q4 2025/26)

GD3

Create a data warehouse

Projects GD1 and GD2 address a large share of the issues that a data warehouse would resolve (data inconsistencies, lack of accuracy, duplication), choosing to prioritise those first.

While a data warehouse could further improve the situation, it would likely be a lengthy project requiring external support to deliver.

Status

Not started (review in 2026/27 following completion of other developments in the area)

GD4

Data reporting platform

Following research into the various platforms available for analysing and presenting data, the Council's Data Charter will acknowledge that different platforms may suit different uses, but it will note that Microsoft Power BI offers several advantages, is increasingly used across the Council, and will be the general platform for the central team.

Regarding Power BI, we identified the need to ensure the Council gets the best use from it; as a result, we have investigated licensing arrangements and the possibilities for publishing interactive reports on the Council's website. Also, as part of the Data Charter, there will be guidelines for staff who create and publish Power BI reports to ensure consistent and secure use.

Status

In progress (completion in Q4 2025/26 after publishing guidelines and starting to publish Power BI reports on the website)

GD5

Data literacy training

This will be addressed as part of the training programs to develop the workforce in the Digital field.

Status

Not started (targeted for 2026/27)

GD6

Performance reporting

We have investigated the various methods currently used within the Council for collecting and reporting performance information; this confirmed there is potential for improvement in achieving more consistency, reducing duplication, and improving access to information when publishing performance reports.

Some of the developments already underway (improving data accuracy, promoting the Power BI reporting platform, and enabling interactive report publishing on websites) will help address many of these issues. However, we need to consider whether further steps can be taken to avoid duplication and achieve greater consistency in arrangements.

Status

In progress (further work to be completed in 2026/27)

7. Administration and Business Systems

Priority Focus

'Facilitate and automate work that is routine and repetitive and use technology to improve our services and the processes that support them.' This includes modernising the Council's internal processes through technology to increase **productivity** and **accuracy** in carrying out everyday administrative tasks.

GSB1

Introduce Artificial Intelligence

Support for this project was marginal when the Digital Plan was introduced, and no financial backing was awarded for further development. However, some AI projects have been incorporated into the Digital Service's work programs, including projects to improve search results for content on the corporate website and projects to read and categorise emails and content to enhance information and prioritise tasks for the Taxation Service and School Management.

There is recognition that further support is needed for this project, and additional funding has been allocated to accelerate the Council's journey on this path. A designated officer will be appointed to identify areas and activities where this technology can make a significant difference during 2025/26.

Status

In progress (designated officer to be appointed in Q3 2025/26)

GSB2

Digitise and automate invoicing arrangements

This is a campaign to improve our arrangements around financial systems by adopting modern processes, reducing administrative effort, speeding up processes, and improving data. This project has been delayed while **GSB5: Review of organisational management systems progresses**, and the second phase of the project will include aspects of improving our invoicing arrangements.

Status

Not started (dependent on GSB5)

GSB3

Reduce and improve our use of paper

The Digital Plan acknowledges that we cannot eliminate paper use entirely, but there is scope to increase digital provision and reduce reliance on historic paper processes. Some pilot projects have started to outsource and rationalise the process of maintaining paper provision, but further steps are needed to reduce usage.

Status

In progress (some pilot projects tested)

GSB4

Rationalise the systems in use

There are well over 300 systems in use within Cyngor Gwynedd, each with ownership costs. Duplication of functions and data also occurs, leading to multiple versions of the truth. No resource has been identified to deliver this task, and a request for resources will be submitted to accelerate the task in 2027/28.

Status

Not started (targeted for 2027/28)

GSB5

Review of organisational management systems

One of the main priorities of the Plan, elevated following the announcement that support for the Council's current payroll system will end in late 2026. Several activities have progressed, including a review by experts in the field. The project is on a healthy track, and procurement steps are expected to be completed by mid-Q3 2025/26, with implementation of the new system starting before the end of the quarter.

The second phase of the project will move on to review our financial systems, either by upgrading current provision or procuring an alternative solution.

Status

In progress (provider selection and implementation start in Q3 2025/26)

GSB6

Internet of Things (IoT)

This is a rapidly developing area, and Cyngor Gwynedd has already introduced several provisions using this technology, most relating to flood issues. However, there is no designated expertise to focus on this type of provision, and a short-term project will be delivered during Q3 2025/26 to produce a series of use cases in environmental and care fields in preparation for presenting a full business case to mainstream the provision and strengthen services.

Status

In progress (some projects completed; funding request from the prosperity fund to create at least six use cases will be made in 2025/26)

GSB7

Make the best use of the Microsoft365 platform

This is the platform used by every officer with a computer in the Council, extending further to Elected Members and some field workers. It includes the Windows operating system, email provision, iGwynedd content repository, SharePoint, and standard Microsoft Office software packages (such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and more). The platform evolves continuously, and its deployment can have far-reaching impacts on information accuracy and security.

The information service has been strengthened by adding an officer for two years to collaborate with the IT Service to identify the impact of introducing packages or adjustments to the Microsoft365 platform so that more functions can be used securely. In addition, and to facilitate technical support and provision, an agreement has been made with Microsoft for broader platform support.

Status

In progress (work to continue until end of 2026/27 and reviewed thereafter)

GSB8

Facilitate collaboration with partners

Several projects arise where the Authority is asked or offers to act within national or regional partnerships. Examples include the HWB platform for schools, the Connecting Care project for our care system, the North Wales Digital Ambition Board for connectivity and digital inclusion, and several smaller projects by the Welsh Local Government Authority and the Centre for Digital Public Services. There is representation in all these, and projects such as HWB and Connect Care are excellent examples of collaboration.

Status

In progress (this is an ongoing effort)

GSB9

Connectivity and digital inclusion

The North Wales Digital Ambition program operates several projects to improve broadband connectivity, mobile phone signals, and new connectivity infrastructure developments. Several Cyngor Gwynedd officers support these projects, including a commitment to offer Council property, whether buildings or street furniture, to facilitate improvements to connectivity infrastructure.

Status

In progress (this is an ongoing effort)

8. Workforce

Priority Focus

'Develop an effective and productive workforce where digital competence is natural for everyone.'

This goal ensures that every staff member – both office-based and frontline – can take advantage of technology and possesses the appropriate digital skills to perform their job effectively.

GWEI1

Introduce a digital account for every officer

Significant work has been done on this project to identify what type of digital presence is needed and for which workforce segments. A business case will be prepared for submission to the Council's bidding process in 2025/26 to secure support to extend the provision during 2026/27.

Status

In progress (bid to be submitted in 2025/26 for funding in 2026/27)

GWEI2

Support the vision of the "Working for the Future" program

In this case, "future" likely refers to normalising the new way of working as we emerge from the post-Covid period. Indeed, our ability to maintain services during that time was transformative, and ongoing support is in place to continue helping the Council sustain flexibility in how we work, whether through maintaining and developing hybrid locations, providing desk-booking systems, or continuing to enhance our remote working capability.

Status

In progress (this is an ongoing effort)

GWEI3

Digital skills and mindset training

The intention is to develop training programs to help the workforce identify opportunities to improve our services and administration through technology. Training will accelerate the use of technology that is already in employees' hands and make them aware of other innovative solutions that can be used. This is an invaluable step to condition our workforce to continuously develop and ask: *"How can I do this better?"*

Status

Not started (targeted for 2026/27)

GWEI4

Promote Cyngor Gwynedd as a digital employer

The vision here was to create opportunities to nurture digital talent and showcase Cyngor Gwynedd as a forward-thinking digital employer. A total of nine digital degree apprentices has been introduced so far: six in software development, two in data science, and one in cybersecurity. Despite this success, our campaigns to attract a Tomorrow's Leader in the Digital Transformation field were unsuccessful, but we will continue to support and develop digital resources through our trainee and apprenticeship programs for the future.

Status

In progress (this is an ongoing effort)

9. Resilience

Priority Focus

'Develop robust digital infrastructure to safeguard the Council's services.' This relates to ensuring that the Council's digital systems are reliable and secure, with measures in place to prevent and resolve disruptions – whether caused by a natural disaster or a cyber threat.

GWYD1

Upgrade analogue lines to digital

Analog connection networks, such as phone lines and basic broadband connections, will be switched off by the end of January 2027. This is a UK Government campaign and affects the entire population.

The Council has several such connections, some historic and no longer in use, with others still necessary for the continuity of certain services. The first phase of the project ended at the close of 2024, with a register of all connections prepared. Several connections have already been terminated, with alternative technology established for those that continue to support services. The intention is to complete the second phase of the project by the end of 2025/26, and Departments have received a register of their active connections to make alternative arrangements.

Status

In progress (completion by end of 2025/26)

GWYD2

Service continuity

Any organisation providing digital services is subject to cyber attacks, and it is the organisation's duty to take necessary steps to protect against such attacks and have the ability to recover from a situation where an attack has breached the organisation's defences. In line with the steps outlined in the Plan, the Council has added resources to its cyber resilience team and adopted a governance framework for its cyber campaigns. A new backup system and antivirus software was introduced to strengthen our defences and recovery capability in case of an attack.

Status

Completed, but the effort is ongoing

GWYD3

Upgrade broadcasting provision in the Council Chambers

Financial support was allocated to improve visual provision in Hywel Dda Chamber, but full implementation of the project and establishing a complete, up-to-date provision requires further financial support. Improvements to Hywel Dda will be delivered by the end of Quarter 2 2025/26, and a request for additional funding to upgrade both chambers will be submitted during the 2025/26 bidding period for 2026/27.

Status

In progress (first phase to be completed in Q2 2025/26, continuation dependent on further financial support)

10. Customer Contact

Primary Focus

'Ensure a service that is inclusive and bilingual, that puts the customer first and operates in a location and at a time convenient for the customer.' This is an objective aimed at strengthening interactions between our service users and the Council's services.

CC1

Extend communication, inquiry, and service application methods

This project is a further development of project CC2, adding additional digital contact channels for the Council. It will introduce the ability for residents to use contact methods such as WhatsApp, interactive text messaging, and smart chatbots, as well as further develop email communication. This platform will be integrated with the phone system, with several elements supported by Artificial Intelligence technology. Work is expected to start on this during the final quarter of 2025/26.

Status

Not started (dependent on full delivery of CC2)

CC2

Improvements to the Council's phone provision

This project is one of the main priorities of the Plan, and following a procurement exercise, Cisco was appointed as the provider for our new system. Cisco is one of the world's leading digital companies, and a close and productive relationship has developed through the project, including announcing support and provision for the Welsh language on their Webex telephony platform.

Several phone numbers have already been transferred to the new provision, including the Contact Centre, and the migration work will continue until mid-2025/26. Further changes will be introduced during 2025/26 to shape the provision and drive improvements in our call-answering performance, building on the initial introduction of a new phone system integrated within the Teams platform.

Status

In progress (to be fully completed before the end of Q3 2025/26)

CC3

Redesign the Council's corporate website

The design of the Council's website is outdated and ineffective in terms of search and content discovery, with these two specific areas addressed within the project. Artificial Intelligence technology is being used to improve the search experience, and the content management software has been upgraded to allow further development of the website's appearance.

Status

In progress (to be completed in Q3 2025/26)

CC4

Develop and promote apGwynedd

apGwynedd is available on both Apple and Android platforms and delivers a selection of Council website functions on a simple and effective app. It was launched in 2018, and although it has not been widely promoted, it has been downloaded to 20,000 devices. The content needs reviewing and updating slightly before moving to a promotional campaign, which will happen after the new website design (CC3 project) and new communication/engagement methods (CC1 project) are established.

Status

Not started (target to begin work in Q2 2026/27)

CC5

Siop Gwynedd video kiosk

It was concluded that this project is impractical and goes against the purpose of maintaining centres where the public can drop in for face-to-face service. For now, this project will not be developed further, but it may be reintroduced in the future in an alternative form, such as introducing kiosks in Siop Gwynedd for providing information or making payments. No financial support was received for developing this project.

Status

Will not be delivered

CC6

Service payment machines

Support for this project was marginal, and efforts for it will be redirected to other projects. No financial support was received for developing this project.

Status

Will not be delivered

11. Schools and Education

Primary Focus

Digital education receives specific attention in the Plan. The Council adopted the **Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy** at the end of 2021, '**supporting digital teaching to ensure the best opportunities for Gwynedd pupils**'. The corporate Digital Plan aligns with the schools' strategy and seeks to strengthen connections between them.

YSG1

Support and develop the Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy

It has been three years since the Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy was introduced, and support for the strategy continues to grow stronger. The vision of providing a laptop to every pupil from Year 3 to Year 11 was completed during 2024/25, and significant further investment has been made to upgrade provision to support learning in schools. The strategy has become slightly outdated since its introduction, and work is underway to revise it during 2025/26.

Status

Review the Strategy during 2025/26 and introduce a new Strategy in 2026/27.

12. Summary

The Cyngor Gwynedd Digital Plan 2023–2028 sets an ambitious vision for the Council’s digital transformation, focusing on five strategic priorities: information and data, administration and business systems, workforce, resilience, and customer contact. During 2024–2025, significant progress was made on many projects, with 20 of the 29 priority projects either completed or showing good progress. The report highlights the importance of strong governance, cross-departmental engagement, and prioritising financial resources to ensure the Plan’s success.

Key lessons include the need to continue adapting and prioritising projects in line with changes in technology and service requirements, and the emphasis on developing the workforce’s digital skills. The report also draws attention to the importance of collaboration with partners, improving digital infrastructure, and ensuring services are inclusive and bilingual.

Looking ahead, the Council is committed to reviewing the Plan annually, strengthening engagement arrangements, and ensuring the Digital Plan remains relevant and effective in supporting Gwynedd residents and Council staff. Next steps include completing remaining projects, developing new strategies for schools and education, and continuing to invest in technology and skills to ensure Cyngor Gwynedd leads the way as a modern digital council.

