

LLŶN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 26/11/2024

Present:

Members: Councillors: **Gareth Williams, Gareth Tudor Jones, Gruffydd Williams** along with **Sian Parri** (Tudweiliog Community Council) (Chair of this meeting due to the absence of the Chair), **Jina Gwyrfai** (Llanaelhaearn Community Council), **Noel Davey** (Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales), **Linda Ashton** (Natural Resources Wales), **Gillian Walker** (Cyfeillion Llŷn), **Eirian Allport** (Clynnog Fawr Community Council), **Dewi Evans** (Aberdaron Community Council), **Hedd Rhys** (NFU) and **Morgan Jones-Parry** (Arfon and Dwyfor Access Forum)

Officers: **Bleddyn P. Jones** (Llŷn AONB Officer), **Elin Wyn Hughes** (Llŷn AONB Activities Officer), **Heledd Fflur Jones** (Planning Policy Team Leader) and **Rhodri Jones** (Democracy Services Officer).

Present for Item 5: **Keith Davies** (Principal Advisor for Designated Landscapes, Natural Resources Wales)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

- **T Victor Jones** (Llanbedrog Community Council) (Chair).
- **Einir Wyn** (Llanengan Community Council)
- **Councillor Angela Russell** (Cyngor Gwynedd Countryside Champion)
- **Councillor John Brynmor Hughes**
- **Euros Jones** (FWAG Cymru)
- **Jenny Emmett** (Gwynedd Archaeology)
- **Rhydian Owen** (Farmers' Union of Wales)
- **Morus Llwyd Dafydd** (Llŷn AONB Project Officer)

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the last meeting of this Joint Committee held on 10 September, 2024, as a true record.

It was confirmed that Officers had sent a letter to the Welsh Government conveying the Joint Committee's encouragement for them to act on the recommendations of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities as a matter of urgency. The Vice Chair asked for a copy of the letter.

5. REVIEWING THE AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

The report was submitted by the Llŷn AONB Officer and Principal Advisor for Designated Landscapes, Natural Resources Wales.

Members were reminded that it was Cyngor Gwynedd's responsibility to prepare and review a Management Plan for the AONB in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Despite this, it was stressed that the Joint Committee had an important advisory role in the preparation and review of the Management Plan including:

- Advising on the preparation and implementation of a Management Plan for the AONB
- Monitoring and evaluating progress within the Management Plan's operational programme on an annual basis and regularly review the Plan itself.

It was explained that the Authority must follow guidance in preparing and reviewing the Management Plan. Attention was drawn to the guidelines issued by the Countryside Council for Wales but it was explained that they were now out of date. It was explained that Natural Resources Wales was a statutory adviser for the Welsh Government on landscape designations (AONBs and National Parks). It was ensured that Natural Resources Wales had commissioned a 'Land Use Consultants' company to review and update these guidelines to enable them to be suitable for areas of outstanding natural beauty and National Parks in Wales. It was highlighted that the guidelines aimed to ensure that Management Plans:

- Led, planned and managed transformational change
- Concurred with relevant policies and legislation
- Engaged with stakeholders throughout the process

It was confirmed that the new guidelines for the Management Plan would intertwine national requirements and priorities of the local area.

It was ensured that Natural Resources Wales were eager to assist Officers and the Joint Committee through the management plan review process.

During the discussion, the following observations were noted:

Concern was raised that the Land Use Consultants company was London-based and it was asked how it was ensured that local priorities were being met within the guidelines. It was explained by the Principal Advisor for Designated Landscapes that the company had been commissioned by tender to develop the guidelines due to a lack of capacity within the team at Natural Resources Wales. It was ensured that the company had extensive experience of completing policy work in the area of designated landscapes in Wales and beyond. It was emphasised that they were a suitable company for the work and had received clear guidance from Natural Resources Wales on managerial, partnership and local matters throughout the process. It was explained that the Joint Advisory Committee and Llŷn AONB Officers had a role in ensuring that the Management Plan intertwined the guidance with Llŷn's priorities and needs.

The increasing pressure on climate change issues was discussed noting that the Welsh Government had recently re-considered forestry and biodiversity plans in the Sustainable Farming Plan. It was considered on what basis these issues were given great emphasis within the planning. In response to the comments, the Principal Advisor for Designated

Landscapes stressed that climate change was leading to constant challenges across Wales. It was explained that striving to solve these challenges was a priority as it also conserved and restored nature in doing so.

Enquiries were made about Sites of Special Scientific Interest – the Principal Advisor for Designated Landscapes noted that he was not dealing with this issue but he would ask at NRW who could respond to queries about the matter.

A timetable to create the Management Plan was discussed stating that the current plan aimed to be operational between 2015 and 2020 but the timing had slipped resulting in it being operational from 2017 to 2025. It was asked whether it was possible to have a Management Plan that was in place for 10 years to avoid such slippages. In response, the Principal Advisor for Designated Landscapes confirmed that there was no barrier to Management Plans being operational for extended periods, but stressed the importance to keep it under constant review and ensure it received due attention within the Local Development Plan. The Planning Policy Team Leader elaborated that the base date for a new Local Development Plan was 2024 - 2039 and envisaged that the plan would be adopted in 2027.

It was enquired whether there was assurance that the Welsh language received due attention within the guidelines, reminding members that the Llŷn AONB had decided not to use the 'National Landscapes' title in the future and was undertaking work to ensure that the Welsh language was central in all aspects of the area. In response, the Principal Advisor for Designated Landscapes confirmed that Land Use Consultancy's work had already ended as the guidelines had been produced. It was accepted that the Welsh language was central to all operations of the Llŷn AONB and Cyngor Gwynedd and this was expected to continue with the formulation of a new Management Plan that reflected this. It was suggested to develop an impact report on the Welsh language as the Plan was developed, to look to see if there were additional measures that could be taken to protect the language and strengthen existing arrangements.

DECISION

To accept the report, noting the observations made during the discussion.

6. AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

The report was submitted by the Llŷn AONB Officer.

It was explained that a number of steps needed to be followed when reviewing the Management Plan. It was detailed that this process included:

- Considering the efficiency of the current Plan
- Considering the latest information about the area's features
- Taking into account and incorporating information from relevant plans and strategies
- Reviewing the vision, aims, objectives and policies of the plan
- Creating a new action plan for the Management Plan period
- Reviewing the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations.

It was elaborated that a Draft Management Plan would be shared with residents of the AONB as well as agencies with the opportunity to comment on its contents. It was emphasised that the Joint Committee had an advisory role throughout the process and residents' comments would be included in a report for the consideration of the Joint Committee.

Members were reminded that one of the initial steps of reviewing the Management Plans was to assess the condition of various features to understand if changes had occurred during the previous period. It was detailed that a Report of the Condition of the AONB had been commissioned in 2021 and work was ongoing to gather more up-to-date local information to supplement this report to assist with the development of a Management Plan.

Attention was drawn to the features of the Llŷn AONB as defined in the creation of the previous Management Plan, noting that these were not aspects that were likely to change as they were core to the area. It was detailed that the features would not be modified for the new Management Plan, noting that they included:

- Beautiful Landscape and Coast
- Calm and Clean Environment
- A Wealth of Wildlife and Habitats
- The Historic Environment
- The Welsh Language and Culture
- People and Close-knit Communities
- Local Produce and Businesses
- Access and Rights of Way

It was reported that the long-term vision of the AONB was now outdated and a modified vision had been formulated to guide the AONB to 2050. It was detailed that this revised vision was:

"An area of beautiful landscape and coast where indigenous wildlife thrives, low levels of environmental pollution and an abundance of public access opportunities. Historic buildings and features in good condition, local businesses succeeding and Llŷn communities maintaining the Welsh language and culture".

It was confirmed that it was important to review the policies of the Management Plan, noting that some of these policies would be submitted to the Joint Committee for consideration of appropriate revisions. It was also noted that new policies may be created and these would also be submitted to the Joint Committee.

It was reported that a draft timetable of the process of developing a Management Plan would be submitted to the Joint Committee at a meeting in April 2025.

Members were asked to contact the officers if they were aware of any issue affecting the features of the Llŷn AONB and to offer ideas for projects that could address those challenges.

During the discussion, the following observations were noted:

The revised vision up to 2050 was discussed and the following wording for it was suggested:

"... Historic buildings and features in good condition, local businesses succeeding and Llŷn AONB communities maintaining and strengthening the Welsh language and its culture."

It was elaborated on the importance of ensuring wildlife habitats were also mentioned within the vision to ensure it received long-term consideration.

It was felt that many contentious matters of the previous Management Plan remained relevant in the development of a new Management Plan. The importance of ensuring that the Welsh language was protected within the policies of the Management Plan was noted in order to strengthen it for the future. It was also noted that it was important to consider any contentious matters that had not been resolved within the previous Management Plan period to assess if they could be achieved during the new Plan period considering the resources and capacity of the AONB unit.

DECISION

- **To accept the report, noting the observations made during the discussion.**
- **Amend the wording of the revised long-term vision as follows, and accept it:**
 - "A beautiful landscape and coastal area with native wildlife and their habitat flourishing, a low level of environmental pollution and a variety of access and public opportunities. Historic buildings and features in good condition, local businesses succeeding and Llŷn AONB communities maintaining and strengthening the Welsh language and its culture".
- **Circulate a Report of the Condition of the AONB (2021) with Members noting that the information within the report is now slightly out of date.**
- **Consider the current Management Plan and contentious matters that have not been resolved at the next meeting.**

The meeting commenced at 4.00pm and concluded at 5.10pm.

CHAIR