

PLANNING COMMITTEE 20 October 2025

Present: Chair: Councillor Elwyn Edwards
Vice-chair: Councillor Huw Rowlands

Councillors: Delyth Lloyd Griffiths, Louise Hughes, Elin Hywel, Berwyn Parry Jones, Gareth T Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Cai Larsen, Edgar Owen, Gareth Coj Parry, Gareth A Roberts, John Pughe Roberts and Gruffydd Williams

Others invited - Local Members: Councillor Angela Russell and Councillor Beca Roberts

Officers: Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services - Monitoring Officer), Dafydd Williams (Head of Environment), Gwawr Hughes (Planning Manager), Glyn Llewelyn (Senior Planning Officer), Dafydd Jones (Solicitor) and Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor John Pughe

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND PROTOCOL MATTERS

- a) The following members declared that they were local members in relation to the items noted:
 - Councillor Angela Russell, (who was not a member of this Planning Committee), in item 5.1 (C23/0338/38/LL) on the agenda.
 - Councillor Beca Roberts (who was not a member of this Planning Committee), in item 5.2 (C24/0937/16/LL) on the agenda.
- b) Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services - Monitoring Officer) stated that he should declare an interest in item 5.2 (C24/0937/16/LL) on the agenda as he had been involved in the project in the Ambition Board. Although it was not an application from the Corporate Joint Committee, he considered that it would be inappropriate for him to be advising the Committee on this matter. He withdrew from the meeting during the discussion.

3. URGENT ITEMS

As a point of order, it was reported that since the Chair was joining the meeting virtually, the Monitoring Officer would be announcing the results of the voting on the applications.

4. MINUTES

The Chair accepted the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 29 September 2025 as a true record.

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee considered the following applications for development. Details of the applications were expanded upon, and questions were answered in relation to the plans and policy aspects.

5.1 APPLICATION NUMBER C23/0338/38/LL LAND ADJACENT TO LÔN PIN, LLANBEDROG, LL53 7PH

A full application for the installation of solar panels (PV) to create a 4.99MW solar farm with associated developments, including the creation of a new vehicular access and access tracks,

building a fence, landscaping, installing two transformer stations to gather and export electricity generated and installation of underground cables.

Attention was drawn to the late observations form.

- a) The Senior Planning Officer highlighted that the proposed development site was open agricultural land comprising natural hedges along its boundaries and scattered mature trees on and near the site. It was outside any existing development boundary with access obtained from an unclassified public road known as Lôn Pin while a series of public paths crossed adjacent lands; and the site was within the West Llŷn Special Landscape Area and the Llŷn and Enlli Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest designations with the nearest boundary of the Llŷn AONB approximately 1km away from the nearest part of the site of the proposed development.

Attention was drawn to the response to observations received on the original consultation of the application, highlighting that there was additional and revised information which included information regarding the vehicular access and access tracks, additional information in the form of detailed plans of the frames to hold the solar panels themselves; Green Infrastructure Statement; Language Statement; and responses to comments received from the Archaeological Service, Natural Resources Wales, Coed Cadw, the Community Council and Land Drainage Unit in relation to SUDS matters had been considered.

It was reported that the application was being submitted to the Committee as the area of the proposed development was larger than what could be considered by officers under the delegated procedure.

In accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Control Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 (as amended), it was explained that the development was defined as a "major development" due to the size of the area of the development. In line with the appropriate procedure, a Pre-application Consultation Report was received as part of the application and the developer had advertised the proposal to the public and the statutory consultees before submitting a formal planning application.

It was reported that the proposal had raised considerable concerns locally and it was acknowledged that several letters opposing the proposal had also been received.

It was explained that the principle of this type of development was supported and that adopted policies were supportive of such proposals as long as they fully met all relevant criteria. It was further noted that a pre-application enquiry discussion took place with the applicant with advice given regarding such a development. Attention was drawn to the technical reports submitted by eligible companies regarding aspects of the proposal and likely impact in terms of considerations, visual impact, brightness effects, transport management, etc. Full attention and assessment had been given to the content of all reports and information submitted but as it could not be ensured that the proposal would not cause significant harm to the residential amenities of neighbouring residents, the proposal was not acceptable.

The officers considered that the proposal was unacceptable and failed to fully meet the requirements of the relevant policies and as a result, recommended that the application be refused.

- b) Taking advantage of the right to speak, the applicant noted the following observations:
 - That the officer's report did not highlight the proposal's benefits.
 - That it was proposed to install the solar panels on two fields outside Llanbedrog.
 - The site had been carefully chosen to minimise the visual impact.
 - Those who would be affected would be offered help to screen around their dwelling to minimise the impact.

- Farming will be more sustainable – agricultural land use would continue.
- The proposal was to offer ecological improvements by strengthening hedges and planting wildflowers in the meadow.
- That an amount of money had been offered to the local community along with possibilities that would include community contributions and local ownership providing community benefits.
- The proposal would provide electricity for 1800 homes - Llanbedrog would be net zero.
- The scheme would provide employment locally – two full-time jobs and the opportunity to set up a community enterprise if there was interest.
- There was no reference to the Gwynedd Local Area Energy Scheme in the report and the benefits of this proposal's contribution to that scheme.
- It was understood that change was not easy, but that solar energy was beneficial and cheap.
- The report did not place enough weight on the proposal's compliance with relevant policies but placed too much weight on the visual impact.

c) Taking advantage of the right to speak, the Local Member made the following comments:

- That the title of the development as a solar 'farm' was misleading. This was not a traditional farm to rear livestock, preserve land, grow produce and encourage wildlife.
- That the farmland was high-quality land – the best agricultural land in Llanbedrog.
- The site was in a wonderful location.
- Public footpaths abutted the application site.
- That it touched the AONB – an area of beauty – the proposal was neither beautiful nor natural.
- That many people locally opposed the application.
- That Wern Fawr Farm had several listed buildings.
- A relatively narrow and uncontrolled local road network would cause problems particularly when the main A499 road was closed due to flooding
- The site was not one of the best for the sun – it was unlikely to generate much electricity.
- A fence and poles for CCTV would be installed around the site.
- The Local Member thanked the officers and called on the committee to refuse the application.

ch) It was proposed and seconded to refuse the application

d) During the ensuing discussion, the following observations were made by Members:

- That the use of solar panels on open ground was unacceptable.
- That this area of the Llŷn Peninsula was one of beauty.
- Grade 2 listed buildings were close to the site.
- That the land was good agricultural land.
- Although it was stated that the site would generate electricity for 1800 homes, this would not be possible all the time – another source of backup electricity would be required – this statement was therefore misleading.

RESOLVED: TO REFUSE THE APPLICATION

Reason:

The proposal was unacceptable given the requirements of criterion 1 and criterion 3 of policy ADN 2, as well as the requirements of policies PCYFF 3 and 4 and AMG 2 of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (2017) and a Landscape Sensitivity

and Capacity Study 2014 as a result of the size and location of the proposal within a Special Landscape Area and its visual impact on the character of the landscape, and that it has a significant harm on the residential visual amenities of nearby residents, specifically the Wern Newydd property.

5.2 APPLICATION NUMBER C24/0937/16/LL ZIP WORLD, CHWAREL PENRHYN, BETHESDA, BANGOR, LL57 4YG

Development of a new adventure tourism ride by way of a 'Swing' to include the erection of a swing platform structure, ramp and landing structure, associated cables and anchor structures together with associated works.

Attention was drawn to the late observations form which referred to comments from Llandygai Community Council along with a letter from the Chair of the Wales Slate Partnership Board. It was noted that a further objection from a member of the public had been received over the weekend, but that it did not raise any new issue.

Some of the Committee Members had visited the site on 20-10-25.

- a) The Planning Manager highlighted that it was a full application for the creation of an additional activity at the Zip World site at Penrhyn Quarry, Bethesda. The proposal was to establish a new ride in the form of a large swing with 6 seats with the works including the erection of a platform structure, a ramp and landing structure, cables connected to anchor structures.

It was explained that the application site included a piece of land within the Penrhyn Quarry area, to the south-west of the existing Zip World site, extending across the quarry lake towards a gallery at a higher level on the south side of the quarry pit. The proposed development would consist of four main elements:

- The lowest anchor point, ramp, landing area and cart;
- The swing and platform;
- The highest anchorage point;
- Connection via two tensioned cables, traversing the quarry between both anchorage points. These would be fixed in place by pairs of upright steel columns on concrete pad footings.

The site was partially located within the North West Wales Slate Landscape World Heritage Site along with the Dyffryn Ogwen Landscape of Outstanding Historic Landscape with the Penrhyn Quarry scheduled monuments nearby. It was noted that the starting point of the ride and the main Zip-World centre, including the car park, were located outside the World Heritage site designation.

Reference was made to the Policy PS 14 of the Local Development Plan (LDP) which supports proposals to develop a local year-round thriving tourism industry. Policy TWR 1 reflects this by supporting proposals for new visitor attractions or facilities, or to improve and extend the standard of existing facilities. It was highlighted that policy TWR 1 requires proposals to conform with criteria relating to the use of a suitable previously used site, the use of a site closely related to other existing buildings and the development of an activity which is restricted to a specific location. Given the use of the surrounding site as a popular tourist destination, and the post-industrial nature of the location and the economic benefit likely to derive from the development, it was deemed that this development would enhance and extend the range of facilities available for visitors in a way consistent with the principles of these policies.

It was reported that the proposal site was located within the catchment area of the quarry's activities which include the existing Zip World attraction with a variety of buildings and structures

located around the proposed structure. It was conveyed that any view of the structure itself would be seen within this context with a backdrop of an industrial nature. It was considered that the proposed structure was of a practical and functional design reflecting the industrial nature of the site with the steel columns that would support the wires and equipment resembling some of the quarry's adjacent construction.

A Landscape and Visual Assessment prepared by heritage experts was submitted with the application in which the overall impact on the World Heritage Site from six views was found to be 'negligible to minor harm' and in one case a 'minor beneficial effect'. These conclusions were acknowledged, and it was considered that the proposal would not be prominent in the landscape and would not have a detrimental visual effect locally.

Reference was made to a noise assessment that had been submitted as part of the application, and it was reported that the Public Protection Service accepted the conclusions relating to noise arising directly from the machinery associated with the proposal but noted concern about the lack of attention paid to the potential noise of customers using the swing. This was also reiterated as a concern by a local resident. In response, it was noted that this was a very difficult aspect to predict and manage, but that it could be assured, by means of an appropriate condition, that a process was in place to consider any complaints made by members of the public during the operational period and to ensure that specific action was taken to mitigate any problems, if there was evidence of significant harm. It was therefore considered that, in the context of all other activity taking place within the Zip World site and the nearby operational Quarry, the proposal would not have a significant adverse impact on local residents in terms of noise.

It was noted that there had been considerable discussion between the applicant and his agent and Cadw regarding heritage issues, and that a more recent version of the Heritage Impact Assessment contained mitigation measures which concluded that the beneficial/positive impacts represented by the proposals together with the additional mitigation measures, balanced against the adverse/negative impacts with a net result of an overall neutral impact.

It was noted that Cadw's comments on the Heritage Impact Assessment confirmed that their concerns about the impact on the World Heritage Site and the monuments would be reduced provided that all mitigation measures mentioned in the Assessment (which include the removal of existing structures from the site, the provision of purpose-built viewing areas accessible to non-swing participants offering a unique visual experience of the quarry and the Princess May, guided visits for swing participants including commentary, interpretive panels, vegetation management around the Princess May, provision of soft landscaping around the existing sewage treatment system, and a team training programme) would be implemented prior to the ride's first commercial operation, with the requirement for the expert report on the condition of the Princess May to be completed six months after the ride's first commercial operation. On that basis, the proposal was considered to generally meet the requirements of policies PS 20 and AT 1 in the LDP.

It was explained that the planning statement submitted as part of the application included consideration of the Language, and a commitment to support the Welsh Language by ensuring that it was visible as part of the development by installing bilingual signage, offering additional employment opportunities based on 20 full-time equivalent jobs to be met locally. It was noted that there would be a planning condition to ensure the use of bilingual signage, along with a note to promote the use of Welsh for businesses.

In the context of biodiversity matters, it was highlighted that the Biodiversity Unit was satisfied with the Ecological Surveys and improvements and therefore that the proposal complied with the requirements of policy PS19 and Planning Policy Wales. It was reiterated that the Transport Unit had no objection to the proposal.

The proposal was considered to be acceptable. Officers recommended that the application be approved subject to imposing planning conditions.

- b) Taking advantage of the right to speak, the applicant's agent noted the following points:
- That the application was one for an exciting new adventure development for Zip World visitors to experience excitement and an adrenaline rush.
 - The site was adjacent to a World Heritage Site.
 - This was the first development/additional attraction since the establishment of Zip World at Penrhyn Quarry in 2001.
 - That Zip World has been in contact with the Steering Group since 2023 about the proposal and that extensive discussions had taken place. The Steering Group had been able to contribute to the form, look and design of the initiative.
 - Mitigation Measures had been agreed with Cadw, who now supported the application.
 - Zip World made a significant contribution to the local economy – created a number of jobs.
 - That safety on the site was of a high standard.
 - A means of promoting heritage.
- c) Taking advantage of the right to speak, the Local Member made the following observations:
- She did not believe that the committee was in a position to make any decision because the documents submitted were not accurate or up-to-date.
 - Reference was made to the "Economic Impact Assessment", and specifically sections 3.6 and 3.7, highlighting clear references to the ambition to develop an "eBus network," and to the connection between the proposed Swing attraction and the eBus system. These references directly contradicted Zip World's public commitment made at a local community engagement meeting on 17 June 2025, – to eliminate the eBus element following strong local opposition. As a result, the Economic Impact Assessment, as well as the Temporary Travel Plan were based on a version of the plan that no longer existed. Zip World continued to use the eBus network to justify key claims about sustainability, carbon reduction, and the economic benefit of the enterprise and that this therefore undermined the validity of the evidence presented; the costs and carbon figures, and the broader economic assessments all depended on assumptions that were now incorrect.
 - There was a promise of 20 full-time equivalent jobs, but this figure was also linked to the Economic Impact Assessment which covered the eBus network. How many jobs were therefore pledged, given that the eBus network was no longer part of the plan?
 - There were no details as to what type of jobs these would be, or a guarantee that they would be permanent, and given that over 85% of Zip World's current workforce at Penrhyn Quarry and Llechwedd are on zero hours contracts, it was difficult to accept this figure.
 - The Economic Impact Assessment also uses company-wide data to justify a single attraction. Use of the headline figure of £690 million in economic value of the entire Zip World operation across Wales – it was not specific to the Swing and should not be used to support this application.
 - The report did not reflect the proposal under consideration. It was incomplete, inconsistent, and potentially misleading.
 - The committee was urged to defer a decision until accurate and up-to-date documents were submitted - including an Economic Impact Assessment and a revised Transport Plan that accurately described the current plan. Upon receipt of this, Committee members could assess the impacts appropriately and fairly.
 - It was suggested that it would be sensible for the committee, during a period of deferment, to look at Section 106 contributions – and how they could apply to major developments of this kind. If a project such as onshore wind of a similar financial

scale was expected to make a community contribution, then it would be reasonable to ask why this type of development should be treated differently.

- That the social benefit of Zip World was a weak claim – there was no stability, and the money did not stay within the local economy.

- d) In response to the comments, the Planning Manager noted that written confirmation had been received stating that the eBus no longer formed part of the application and the rest of the information submitted was accurate.

dd) The application was proposed and seconded

An amendment was proposed and seconded to defer so that further discussions could take place with the agent and more up-to-date and current information could be presented to the Committee.

A vote was taken on the proposal to defer.
The proposal fell.

- e) During the ensuing discussion, the following observations were made by Members:

- That there was a need to clear and tidy up around the historic 'Princess May' Water Tank before the swing was operational
- If the eBus no longer formed part of the application, was it possible to contribute to local buses and/or the local community to improve transport provision?
- That the application complied with local and national policies.
- That the ride was a natural addition to the site which was currently wasteland.
- It would offer employment locally.
- This was a 6-seater swing – it was not excessive – it was reasonably small for such a large site.
- That Zip World brings people to Wales – an area dependent on tourism.
- The company had high safety standards.
- That the figures were incorrect – it would be unreasonable to allow this without the correct figures.
- Zip World was an extractive company – they are not a local company.
- As the eBus did not form part of the application, local transport misses out.
- Insufficient parking spaces for the extra visitors.
- That more information was needed - incorrect information had been submitted and therefore the committee was urged to defer the matter.

RESOLVED: To approve subject to the receipt of positive observations from CADW and to the following conditions:

1. **5 years**
2. **Comply with the approved plans**
3. **Comply with the Construction Transport Management Plan**
4. **Comply with the Initial Ecological and Habitat Enhancement Assessment**
5. **Submit and agree a Heritage Management Plan**
6. **Submit an Environmental Method Statement**
7. **Submit and agree a Site Management Plan to include a mechanism to deal with complaints.**
8. **Welsh/bilingual signs**
9. **Cadw Conditions**

Note – Natural Resources Wales, Dŵr Cymru.

The meeting commenced at 13:00 and concluded at 14:00

CHAIR