
LLŶN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 17/11/2021

Present:

Cllr Gruffydd Williams (Chair)

Members: Councillors Anwen J. Davies, John Brynmor Hughes, Aled Wyn Jones, Angela Russell (Gwynedd Council) and also Andrew Davidson (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust), Noel Davey (Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales), Jina Gwyrfai (Llanaelhaearn Community Council), T. Victor Jones (Llanbedrog Community Council), Molly Lovatt (Natural Resources Wales) and Wenda Williams, (Aberdaron Community Council).

Officers: Bleddyn P. Jones (AONB Service Manager), Morus Llwyd Dafydd (Llŷn AONB Projects Officer), Wyn Williams (Countryside Manager) and Sioned Mai Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

Present for item 5: Cynan Jones (Consultant) and Wil Parry (O Ddrws i Ddrws).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Gareth Williams, Andy Godber (National Trust), Rhydian Owen (Farmers' Union) and Sian Parri (Tudweiliog Community Council).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None to note.

3. URGENT ITEMS

It was reported that John Gosling (Abersoch and Llŷn Toursim Partnership) had stepped down, and he was thanked for his service on this Joint Committee.

It was noted that it was important for the Joint Committee to submit its observations on the Clwyd Alun development at Penrhos. Some members were concerned about the scale of the development and the number of houses proposed. It was hoped that the provision would be sufficient to meet the nursing needs and the lack of older people's homes within the County. The AONB Service Officer would share a link to the consultation with the Joint Committee to allow the members to submit their observations.

It was also decided that the Llŷn AONB Officer should summarise the Joint Committee's observations and submit them to the consultation.

The proposal to install Solar Panels on Coed y Wern land was discussed. It was noted that there were not currently many details available; no planning application had been submitted, only a pre-application. It was likely that a planning application would be submitted in due course. It was added that this site was not in the AONB, although it was visible from the AONB. It was reported that the Joint Committee had requested to provide input on such matters.

It was decided to hold a Special Meeting to discuss the potential development. Solar Panels on Coed y Wern land when relevant (currently premature).

It was noted that a Tourism Conference would be held on 30 November 2021, entitled 'Tourism Conference, Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035 Event'. The AONB Service Officer was asked to provide details to the Joint Committee members that wished to participate.

It was decided that an invitation should be sent to Joint Committee members to attend the Conference.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Joint Committee held on 26 May 2021, as a true record.

The opportunity was taken to report back on the situation of the Hillfort in Dinas Dinlle, and the concern about the condition of the Hillfort and its deterioration due to erosion. A meeting had been held in July between the AONB Officer, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust and the National Trust representative and the Head of YGC to discuss the erosion from the sea and land. It was decided that nature should be left to take its course; it was reported that there was no protection policy and no available funding. The AONB Officer read the letter that had been received from CADW in response.

5. LLŶN COASTAL BUS

Cynan Jones (Consultant) and Wil Parry (O Ddrws i Ddrws) were welcomed to the meeting. The report from the O Ddrws i Ddrws officer was presented, noting that the objective of the Llŷn Fflecsi Bus was to offer a service that was more flexible for passengers who wished to use public transport in Llŷn.

He further explained that the Llŷn Fflecsi Bus project had been established during the Summer 2021, following an offer from Transport for Wales in April 2021 to run a Fflecsi Pilot in Llŷn. This was an on-demand, corner to corner bus service; the Pilot had proceeded as there were already existing schemes to make the Llŷn Coastal bus an on-demand service. This scheme would serve additional areas to those on the Llŷn Coastal Bus route. It was intended to create a service to supplement the public services, and encourage local residents and visitors to reduce their dependency on cars. The bus service could be booked over the phone or through the App.

It was reported that the Covid-19 situation had created uncertainty, especially during spring 2021 when planning ahead was difficult. It was acknowledged that things had gone wrong; there had been delays with the App and copyright issues about updating the leaflet from the designer. Apologies were expressed that neither the AONB nor Natural Resources Wales had been given due acknowledgement and publicity. The service would continue in 2022, and it was hoped that the situation would be more stable by then.

The Consultant guided the Joint Committee through his evaluation of the service, noting that the App had work exceptionally well, e.g. current information about the location of the bus was provided on time. The bus also reached the end of its route on time, sometimes early. It was noted that the Llŷn Fflecsi bus service had scored 4.9 out of 5 on the App by service users, which was very positive. The Consultant added that he had received further statistics that day, and they would be added to the report.

During the discussion, members raised the following matters:-

- A question was asked about the period over which the figure of 1590 requests were received.

- Interest was expressed in comparing the number of passengers from the 2019 bus service with these numbers, if this was possible.
- A question was asked about how much notice was required to book the bus. Concern was noted that we were leaving a stable and dependable service and moving to a service that might be less user-friendly.
- A question was asked about how many tourists and how many local people used the service.
- It was questioned whether the service truly reduced the carbon footprint.
- Concern was expressed that this service would weaken the public bus service and a question was asked about what would happen to the core service if fewer people used it, and grants such the one for this enterprise ran out.
- It was suggested that other groups should be targeted in addition to walkers, and to consider providing a similar evening service.

In response, the following was noted:

- 1590 requests had been received between 19 July 2021 and 1 November 2021, and of these, 1469 trips were completed.
- Although it was difficult to compare the project as it was a different service to the normal service, i.e. carried fewer passengers, and due to the Covid-19 period.
- The bus could be booked in a matter of hours but generally, the average booking time on the App was two days in advance. It was noted that a one-way journey cost £3, and it was added that this price was far cheaper than the price of a taxi.
- There should be a way of measuring how many tourists and how many local people used the service. The observation was appreciated, and it was suggested the reason for the journey could be asked, thereby providing more information about who was using the service.
- Evidence from other places supported the notion that this service would reduce the carbon footprint. It was added that O Ddrws i Ddrws would have an electric minibus next year that would substantially reduce the carbon footprint.
- In response to concerns regarding the public bus service, it was explained that the purpose of the project was to see whether there was a different way to provide the core service. It was acknowledged that more work was needed to look at integration rather than duplication. It was added that the public bus service as it stood was ineffective and it was proposed that the service needed to be more flexible. The O Ddrws i Ddrws Officer would be very pleased to see one of the public bus service operators running this service as it was so convenient and flexible, and reduced the mileage made by empty buses that made it more cost effective.
- It was explained that Transport for Wales and Gwynedd Council were currently undertaking a review of Gwynedd's public transport networks.

DECISION

It was decided to accept the information contained in the report to Evaluate the Llŷn Fflecsi Bus and the verbal report by Cynan Jones (Consultant) and Wil Parry (O Ddrws i Ddrws).

6. AIRCRAFT NOISE OVER LLŶN AONB

An update was provided on this urgent matter that had been raised at the meeting held in May. The report noted that a letter had been sent by the Joint Committee to express concern about the noise of aircraft from RAF Valley flying over the Llŷn AONB. The response received from the Squadron Leader in RAF Valley was noted; it reported that

whenever possible they tried to undertake their training over the sea. Additionally, Jeremy Quinn, in response to a question from Hywel Williams MP, had said that the RAF intended to increase its engagement with communities and be more proactive in publishing information on its website.

During the discussion, members raised the following matters:-

- It was noted that the noise levels had reduced over the past months, and that the number of complaints from local people had also reduced.
- Some Members had visited RAF Valley, and it was noted that they now had the necessary equipment to enable the Texan T1 to be flown over the sea.

In response, the following was noted:

- The situation would continue to be monitored.

DECISION

To note and accept the information in the report.

7. GWYRDDNI PARTNERSHIP

Information was provided about GwyrddNI, a new Climate Change organisation established in Gwynedd. The statement provided by GwyrddNi Project Officer, Elis Smits, was outlined, and it was noted that perhaps he could attend a future meeting of the Joint Committee to provide the group with a further update. It was explained that the organisation's intention was to encourage discussions about climate change and to bring people together to learn and take action locally. It was noted that more information was available on the internet if Joint Committee members wanted further details, and that the AONB Services Officer could also share any further information received.

During the discussion, members raised the following matters:-

- For information, it was noted that the member representing Llanbedrog Community Council had already had a telephone conversation with Elis Smits, having read his statement. It was reported that Mr Smits would be attending the Prynawn Difyr meeting in Pwllheli the following day to introduce himself and to give a presentation to the group.

DECISION

Resolved to accept the information in the report from the GwyrddNi Project Officer, Elis Smits.

8. DARK SKY DESIGNATION

The Joint Committee was provided with a summary of the Llŷn AONB Officer's report, and was requested to support the recommendation to support an application to the IDA (International Dark Sky Association) for a Dark Skies Park status for the area.

It was reported that discussions had already taken place between the Unit's staff and the IDA's staff, who were very supportive of the intention to submit an application for

dark skies status for the Llŷn AONB. It was considered that this area had a strong case for receiving the designation. The IDA was of the opinion that an International Dark Sky Park status rather than a Community status would be more appropriate for this area, and would be a better reflection of the quality of this dark sky. It was added that the application would be submitted next year if the Joint Committee was supportive.

During the discussion, members raised the following matters:-

- It was noted that some of the Community/Town Councils were uncertain about supporting the application. It was reported that women in particular tended to be wary of the darkness when walking at night, and that many of the concerns stemmed from this.
- The AONB Service Officer was asked to attend a Meeting of Nefyn Town Council, and other Community Councils, to give a presentation to members and alleviate their fears. It was believed that there was scope for a further discussion on this matter.
- A Member said that he was not in favour of the application due to safety reasons, and concerns that the designation would be used as a reason not to proceed with some matters, such as the provision of more road lighting.
- Additionally, there were concerns regarding farms; it was argued that farms needed brighter lighting due to the fact that work took place there at night.
- A question was asked about the difference between a Dark Sky Community and Park.
- Some members of the Joint Committee wished to support this application; it was noted that the purpose of the designation was to ensure that lighting was available in the places where it was needed, and to reduce light wastage and pollution.
- It was argued that this area was suitable for the project, and that many people enjoyed star-gazing in the area.
- It was proposed to defer the matter in order to undertake further consultation.

In response, the following was noted:

- There was no intention to switch off street lights. Rather, it was intended to promote, educate, hold events and use best practice, e.g. direct lights downwards, use lighting that was less bright.
- Dark Sky Park status was more prestigious than Community status as they were larger in size and fewer in number. It was explained that the whole AONB area would receive Park status.
- There were many benefits from the above designation, and assurance was given that the designation would not affect the area's residents.
- The AONB Service Officer would be willing to attend Town/Community Council meetings, or to have further conversations with Members who were dubious about the scheme, and bring the matter back to this Joint Committee. It was reported that it would be preferable to have the Joint Committee's support.
- There would be further consultation on this issue. The AONB Service officer would arrange a virtual meeting at the beginning of the year at the earliest, and would invite all the Community/Town Councils within the AONB in order to provide the Committee with an opportunity to ask questions. It was added that there were insufficient resources to visit each individual Community/Town Council.
- A virtual meeting had already been arranged for Town/Community Councils, which was somewhat frustrating, but the AONB Officer would re-arrange in order to provide a further opportunity.

DECISION

It was resolved t to defer the matter in order to undertake further consultation. The AONB Service officer would arrange a virtual meeting at the beginning of the year and invite all the Community/Town Councils within the AONB. The Llŷn AONB Officer will send information on to the Community Councils; the officer would contact the Community Council Clerks to make arrangements.

9. CAPITAL PROJECTS

Information was provided about the Llŷn AONB capital projects, providing an update on this year's projects, namely:

- Porth Meudwy track repair – It was noted that a financial contribution had been made following the landslide that had disrupted the road. The work had now been completed and the track had been repaired.
- Improvements to the quay area at Trefor – It was reported drat plans for the tender had been completed and it was hoped to start the work soon in the new year.
- Improvements to a series of public rights of way in the AONB – It was noted that there were a total of six paths and the majority of the work had been installed. The AONB Service Officer added that he was confident that the work would be completed within the timetable.
- Toilet refurbishment, Lôn Gam, Nefyn – it was explained that the background work had been completed regarding costs prior to the recent landslide, that had delayed progress. It was further reported that it had been confirmed that the work could proceed; the tender documents were currently being prepared.

It was added that conversations had taken place with Welsh Government. It was necessary to wait until the Senedd had set the budget before receiving confirmation that funding was available for the 2022/23 financial year. Following the receipt of this confirmation the Joint Committee would know how much funding was available, and there would then be time for consultation. It was noted that the themes for the projects would remain the same as for the current year.

During the discussion, members raised the following matters:-

- A question was asked about how much funding was given to the Porth Meudwy project.

In response, the Llŷn AONB Service Officer noted that a contribution of £30k had been made towards this work. He added that the work was being managed by Gwynedd Consultancy.

DECISION

To accept the information in the report.

The meeting commenced at 4.00pm and concluded at 5.50pm.

CHAIR