

Meeting	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date	2 February, 2023
Title	Gwynedd and Eryri 2035: Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Strategic Plan
Author	Roland Evans, Assistant Head of Economy and Community Department
Cabinet Member	CLlr Dyfrig Siencyn CLlr Nia Jeffreys

Why does it need to be scrutinised?

- To scrutinise whether the Strategic Plan corresponds with the Council's ambition and priorities for the Sustainable Visitor Economy in the future? ([Appendix 1](#))
- To scrutinise whether a joint operating structure with the National Park Authority is suitable ([Appendix 2](#))
- To scrutinise the arrangements for establishing the New Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership to drive the implementation of the Action Plan ([Appendix 3](#))

What is the background and relevant considerations?

Cyngor Gwynedd and Eryri National Park Authority have reviewed their priorities and plans for the visitor economy in the area.

A review of the Destination Management Plan began in 2018 with a series of workshops for the tourism sector and community representatives.

COVID-19 has put tremendous pressure on communities across Gwynedd and Eryri with unprecedented numbers of visitors to the area. This period has highlighted some issues that need to be addressed to support a sustainable visitor economy in the area.

The process for developing principles for the visitor economy were presented to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 4 February 2021.

In November 2021, Cyngor Gwynedd and the National Park Authority signed an Memorandum of Understanding. The Objective of the Memorandum of Understanding is to *collaborate effectively and efficiently in partnership to realise the Vision and Principles of the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035 to protect and promote the area's special values.*

A joint Steering Board was established between the two bodies, which includes the Chief Executives, Cyngor Gwynedd Leader, Cabinet Member, Chair of the Park and Heads of Department.

The draft Plan was approved and submitted to the democratic structures of the Council and National Park by the joint Steering Board on 21 December 2022.

The draft Strategic Plan can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

Why do we need to act now?

1. Cynllun Eryri identifies the need for a Sustainable Tourism Plan.
2. We have a duty to protect the area's communities, environment and culture.
3. Cynllun Gwynedd prioritises a plan to ensure that Gwynedd's businesses and communities benefit from the visitors who come to the area and develops a Regeneration Plan for Gwynedd.
4. The Slate Landscape of North West Wales World Heritage Site Management Plan recognises the need to develop a plan to manage visitors to the area.
5. The Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty gives priority to sustainable tourism management.
6. The Gwynedd Destination Management Plan review highlighted new opportunities and threats to the future that need to be addressed.
7. Covid highlighted the need to respond in a sustainable way in the future in order to protect the special qualities of the area and our communities.
8. There are new opportunities for collaboration and an opportunity to learn from the experiences of other areas.
9. Data highlights the need for a better balance in the visitor economy and within the economy generally in the Gwynedd and Eryri National Park area.

What are the main issues in the area?

10. Pressure on areas and public services, e.g. car parks, bins, roads, rural areas.
11. Covid created tensions in some areas with unprecedented visitor numbers.
12. Salary levels and seasonal employment within the tourism sector.
13. Lack of diversity in the rural economy and possible overdependence on tourism.
14. Negative feelings within some communities and areas, but there may be opportunities if different actions are taken.
15. Potential impact on the language, communities and the environment.
16. Better means of measuring are needed to measure any negative and positive impacts.
17. An opportunity to integrate a Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan into the development of Area Regeneration Plans across Gwynedd.

What is the response of Cyngor Gwynedd and Eryri National Park?

Over the past six months, five events have been held via Zoom to discuss the visitor economy in Gwynedd and Eryri. Sessions were also held with councillors across Gwynedd. These have:

- Reached over 250 representatives
- Attracted over 1,500 observations by attendees
- Engaged with 14 areas of Gwynedd and Eryri National Park

- Reached over 100 public organisations, bodies or individual businesses
- Over 4,490 received information and an invitation to contribute at the events via the Cyngor Gwynedd Business Bulletin

Following feedback from these workshops, Cyngor Gwynedd and Eryri National Park have started to build on the Sustainable Visitor Economy Principles and developed the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Strategic Plan. This has also been influenced by good practice from other areas in Europe and internationally. We are unaware of any similar plan in development in Wales.

A Sustainable Visitor Economy Task and Finish Group was established to advise the Council and National Park on the content of the Strategic Plan, the methods of measuring impact and the appropriate implementation methods. The feedback of the Task and Finish Group, which included representatives from communities, businesses and potential principal operational partners, has been incorporated in the final draft Plan and action models.

The Strategic Plan: (Seen in Appendix 1)

The Council and the Park are developing the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035 with the following vision:

A visitor economy for the benefit and well-being of the people, environment, language and culture of Gwynedd and Eryri.

Both bodies have redefined the UNWTO definition (United Nations World Tourism Organisation) and have agreed on the Gwynedd and Eryri National Park Visitor Economy Principles:

1. Celebrate, respect and protect our communities, language, culture and heritage
2. Maintain and respect our environment
3. Ensure that the advantages to Gwynedd and Eryri communities outweigh any disadvantages

Objectives have also been developed to drive future priorities:

Celebrate, Respect and Protect our Communities, Language, Culture and Heritage

- A visitor economy in the ownership of our communities with an emphasis on pride in one's area
- A visitor economy that leads in Heritage, Language, Culture and the Outdoors

Maintain and Respect our Environment

- A visitor economy that respects our natural and built environment and considers the implications of visitor economy developments on our environment today and in the future
- A visitor economy that leads in sustainable and low carbon developments and infrastructure.

Ensure that the advantages for Gwynedd communities outweigh any disadvantages

- A visitor economy that ensures that infrastructure and resources contribute towards the well-being of the community all year round

- A visitor economy that thrives for the benefit of Gwynedd residents and businesses and that offers quality employment opportunities for local people all year round
- A visitor economy that promotes local ownership and supports local supply chains and produce

One of the first actions of this Plan will be to establish a Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership, which will bring partners together for the first time to formally discuss this field in the future.

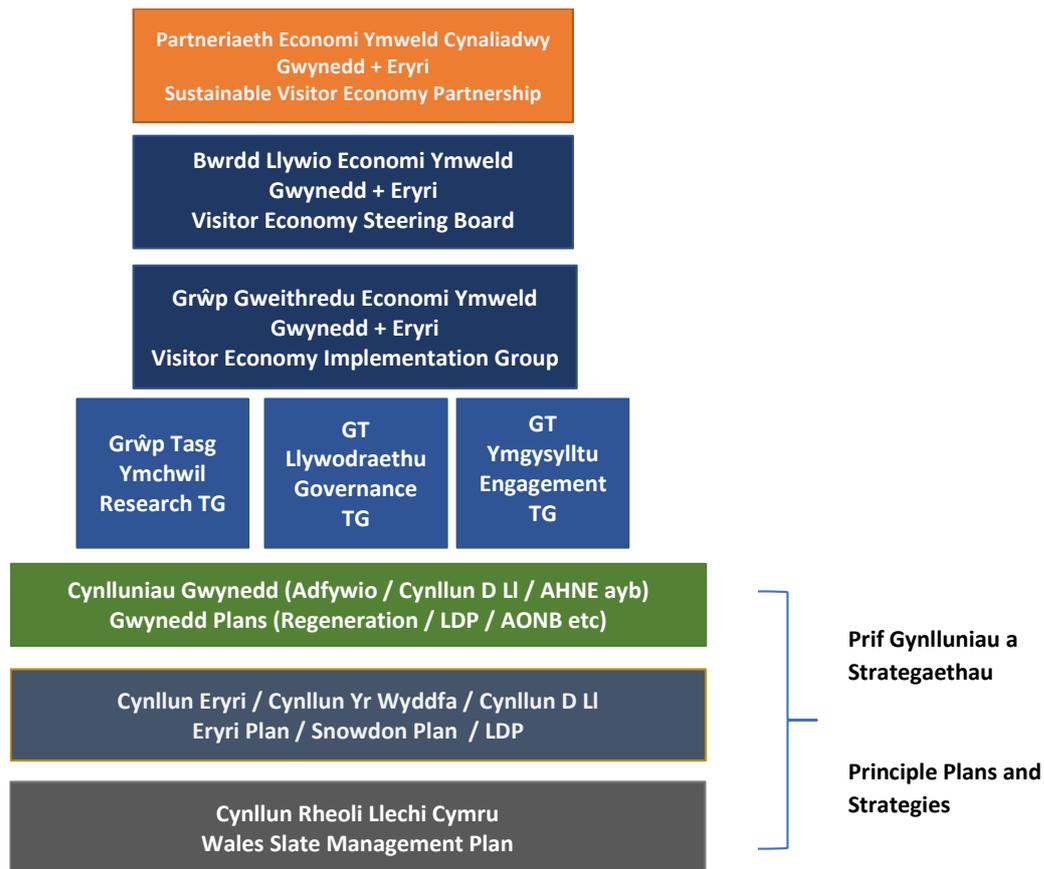
The new structure includes the following main elements:

Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership - A new multi-sector partnership to implement the Visitor Economy Plan by agreeing on action priorities, appropriate indicators, and regular monitoring. The draft Terms of Reference can be seen in Appendix 3.

Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Steering Board - A joint strategic Steering Board between Cyngor Gwynedd and Eryri National Park Authority with political and senior officer representation to agree upon the strategic direction of the visitor economy between both authorities. Representation from the Partnership will sit on the Steering Board. The Terms of Reference can be seen in Appendix 2.

Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Operational Group - A group of officers to implement the strategic priorities set by the Steering Board and to support the delivery of the action priorities, the indicators, and the monitoring work on behalf of the Partnership.

The following structure will be adopted in order to monitor and realise the Plan:



Finance

Despite the bleak financial forecasts ahead of us, there is an expectation that this Plan will also influence the other policies of Cyngor Gwynedd, Eryri National Park and partners in the fields of planning, destination management, environmental management, training and skills, regeneration, business support, events, etc., and to add value by changing the emphasis of activities or policies.

We are confident that a prioritised Strategic Plan and Action Plan will open the doors to funding from the UK and Welsh Governments as well as other future funding sources.

During our discussions and consultations on the development of this Plan, the Tourism Levy was raised as a potential way to support the sector and our communities in the future. Whilst the Welsh Government is currently consulting on this during the development of this Plan, and since there is no assurance that it will be adopted; the Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership and its Action Plan could be an inclusive and fair way to identify priority projects for investing the Tourism Levy in the future, should it be established.

Elements of the Strategic Plan are already operational in terms of action priorities across Cyngor Gwynedd and the National Park and the principles drive investments in some operational fields, e.g. the 'Arosfan' Project, Gwynedd and Eryri Ambassadors, Strategic Events, Eryri Mountains and Coast Communication messages, etc.

The proposed timetable for adopting the Strategic Plan is for it to be submitted to the Cabinet on 14 February 2023 for approval. There will be an opportunity to present the conclusions of the Scrutiny Committee to the Cabinet for consideration.

It will be submitted to the Park's Working Group on 25 January, before being submitted to the full Authority in February 2023.

See below the main subsequent actions:

Action	Lead Body	By when?
Establishing a Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership	Cyngor Gwynedd with support from Eryri National Park	Spring 2023
Developing and embedding the formal collaboration arrangements between the Council and the Park	Cyngor Gwynedd and Eryri National Park	2023
Adopting Balanced Indicators	Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership	Spring 2023
Establishing formal Monitoring Procedures	Cyngor Gwynedd	Spring 2023
Approving an Action Plan that identifies a lead body to deliver priorities	Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership	Summer 2023
Establishing Leaders within the Gwynedd and Eryri communities	Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership	Spring and Autumn 2023
Influencing partner policies and strategies	Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership	Continuous
Identifying funding opportunities	Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership	Continuous but during the annual review in December.
Continuous monitoring and reviewing, but with an annual review of progress	Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership with support from Cyngor Gwynedd and Eryri National Park	Continuous but a report to be submitted every December.
Communicating with all stakeholders of the visitor economy	Cyngor Gwynedd and Eryri National Park	Continuous