

MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	18 July 2024
TITLE	Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035
REASON TO SCRUTINISE	Council Plan 2023-28 - a Prosperous Gwynedd
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CABINET MEMBER	CLlr Dyfrig Siencyn CLlr Nia Jeffreys

1. Why it needs scrutiny?

1.1. At a meeting of the Committee on 2 February 2023, the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035 was scrutinised before being adopted by the Cabinet. Consideration was given to the Plan, the Council's ambition and priorities for a Sustainable Visitor Economy, the suitability of the joint operating structure with the National Park Authority and arrangements for establishing the New Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership to steer the implementation of the Action Plan. The Committee is eager to scrutinise the progress to date and the Action Plan.

2. What exactly needs scrutiny?

2.1. Following the establishing of governance arrangements, it could be timely to scrutinise:

- Progress to date
- Is there an action plan in place?
- What indicators are used to monitor progress / impact?

3. Summary of the Key Matters

3.1. This report provides an update to Members on what has been achieved so far focusing on:

- The background of the development of the Gwynedd and Eryri 2035 Plan ;
- The Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the National Park;
- The new operating structure that has been established between the Gwynedd and Eryri 2035 Partnership;
- The live Action Plan;
- Information about the monitoring system to measure progress and impact

3.2. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to accept the update and scrutinise the progress, the Action Plan and Measures.

4. Background: The Strategic Plan

- 4.1. The Council has been reviewing the tourism and visitor economy situation within the area for a number of years and several discussions and workshops were held before and during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.2. The Council Plan gives priority to a Prosperous Gwynedd and the Promoting our Culture and a Sustainable Visitor Economy project lies within this priority. Developing this Plan is part of this priority project. A bid for £46,040 in financial resources through the Gwynedd Plan to employ a Sustainable Tourism Coordinator to support this work has been successful.
- 4.3. Recognising the importance of the Eryri area to the Plan, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Cyngor Gwynedd and the Eryri National Park Authority on 26 November 2021 with the aim of:
Collaborating 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 qualities.
- 4.4. The development of the Gwynedd and Eryri 2035 Plan , its operating structure and its measures are the results of this Memorandum.
- 4.5. Since signing the Memorandum, discussions have continued with Conwy County Borough Council regarding their commitment to the Plan for the rural Conwy areas that are part of the Eryri National Park. There is now an agreement to commit to the partnership and an amended memorandum will be drawn up between the three public sector partners.
- 4.6. The Gwynedd and Eryri 2035 Plan is the only one of its kind in Wales and it is one of the very few that exists throughout Britain. With this in mind, the Plan, its operating methods and measures are innovative and ground breaking.
- 4.7. The Council consulted extensively on developing a Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035 Plan by holding a number of workshops and considering good practice in other locations across the world, including New Zealand, Denmark, Slovenia, the Isle of Aran, Park City and Jackson Hole (USA).
- 4.8. The Gwynedd and Eryri 2035 Sustainable Visitor Economy Strategic Plan was launched in Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog on 25 September 2023.
- 4.9. The new Plan's Vision is:
A visitor economy for the benefit and well-being of the people, environment, language and culture of Gwynedd and Eryri.
- 4.10. The Strategic Plan includes three principles based on the sustainable tourism pillars of UN Tourism, the Tourism Agency of the United Nations.
- 4.11. These are the agreed principles and objectives:
- 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 is world-leading 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 is world-leading in sustainable and low carbon developments and infrastructure

Ensure that the advantages to Gwynedd and Eryri 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 well-being 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

4.12. After launching the Plan, work has been ongoing to develop a new partnership structure to develop an Action Plan and monitor progress.

5. Partnership Structure

5.1. Operational principles have been agreed for the partnership, namely:

- 5.1.1. Strategic leadership at all levels to drive the vision and take action on the ground
- 5.1.2. Simple governance
- 5.1.3. Coordination and integration (horizontal and vertical across all organisations)
- 5.1.4. Make effective use of resources and assets
- 5.1.5. Better information when making decisions
- 5.1.6. Content and ownership by many
- 5.1.7. Drive change and innovation

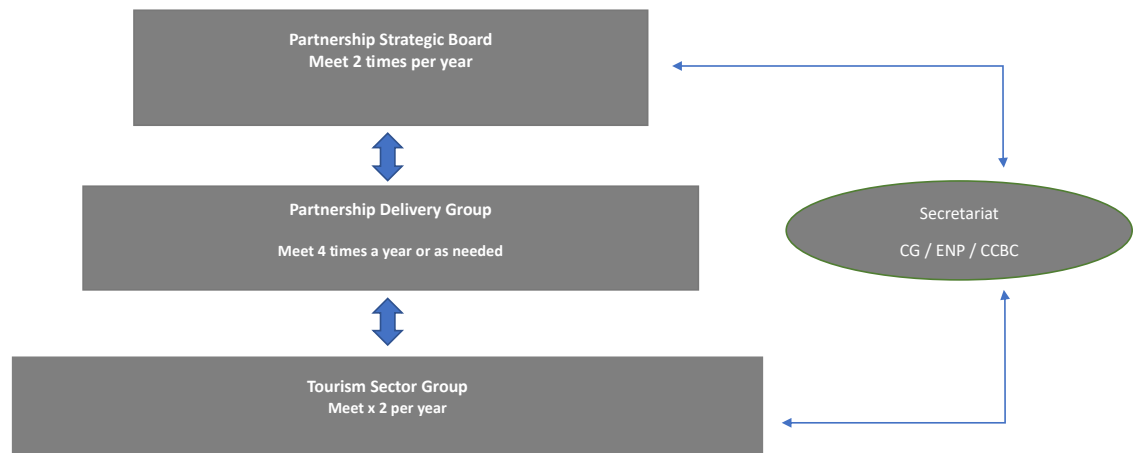
5.2. The following triangle illustrates the adopted operational principles:



5.2.1. It is intended for the partnership to be administrated in partnership between Cyngor Gwynedd, Conwy County Borough Council and the Eryri National Park Authority.

5.2.2. When seeking to develop the structure of the partnership, consideration was given to operating models in other areas of the world and specialist advice was received from Professor Terry Stevens who specialises in the destination management and sustainable tourism field.

5.2.3. The following illustrates the structure of the Gwynedd and Eryri 2035 Partnership:



5.2.4. The membership and meeting frequency of the new structure can be seen in **Appendix A**. There is an additional tier to the above structure which is an operational tier to support the partnership and ensure ownership from wider stakeholders and the public sector.

5.2.5. The partnership model seeks to reflect the operational principles by establishing:

- 5.2.5.1. A Tourism Sector Group to ensure broad ownership.
- 5.2.5.2. A Delivery Group to monitor and ensure action.
- 5.2.5.3. A Steering Group to offer strategic guidance, to approve the Action Plan and to be a strategic voice for the entire visitor economy.

5.2.6. The Steering Group is chaired jointly by the Leader of Cyngor Gwynedd and the Chair of the Eryri National Park Authority.

5.2.7. An innovative part of the new model is the Tourism Sector Group. The Tourism Sector Group brings together the tourism sector and the community sector to identify priorities and matters it also monitor the implementation of the Action Plan.

5.2.8. The Sector Group has already met twice in 2024 to feed activities into the Action Plan and to elect chairs.

5.2.9. In order to ensure balance and a balanced overview of the visitor economy, it was resolved to elect two co-chairs and two joint vice-chairs for the Group - one from the community sector and the other from the business sector. The following were elected for the coming year:

- 5.2.9.1. Community: Einir Young (Eco-Amgueddfa Llŷn (Co-chair) and Ceri Cunnington, Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog, (Co vice-chair)
- 5.2.9.2. Business: Michael Bewick, Greaves Cyf., Blaenau Ffestiniog (Co-chair) and Annwen Jones, Tŷ'n Rhos Holiday Cottages, Cricieth (Co vice-chair)

5.2.10. The voices of the co-chairs are present in all other elements of the Partnership's structure to ensure a voice for the industry and our communities in our discussions.

6. The Action Plan

- 6.1. The Gwynedd and Eryri 2035 Action Plan was developed following considerable consultation work, including:
 - 6.1.1. The discussions held when developing the Strategic Plan which identified the key challenges and opportunities for the area deriving from the visitor economy with Members, communities, businesses and partners.
 - 6.1.2. Discussions with public sector partners.
 - 6.1.3. Discussions with the Tourism Sector Group.
 - 6.1.4. Input from colleagues in Cyngor Gwynedd, Eryri National Park and Conwy County Borough Council.
 - 6.1.5. Consideration from priorities identified in Ardal Ni Plans.
- 6.2. This is a live document and it will be reviewed and developed as required. This is an Action Plan for the 2024 - 2025 period.
- 6.3. A copy of the Action Plan can be seen in **Appendix B**. Three specific themes have been identified for implementation with several activities or projects included in the themes:
 - 6.3.1. Research, Skills and Development
 - 6.3.2. Marketing and Communication
 - 6.3.3. Collaboration Projects
- 6.4. The Action Plan identifies the following:
 - 6.4.1. The relevant principle of the Strategic Plan
 - 6.4.2. The challenge or opportunity identified during the consultation
 - 6.4.3. The action to respond
 - 6.4.4. Who is leading
 - 6.4.5. The resources that are needed to take action
 - 6.4.6. Timetable
 - 6.4.7. How the impact of the action will be measured
- 6.5. Of course, some activities are more mature than others and the projects with confirmed funding have been highlighted in blue. If other activities emerge - these will be included in the Plan.
- 6.6. With the 2024-25 Action Plan, several activities had been planned before the Plan was adopted. Over time, it is intended for the Strategic Plan to fully steer and influence the projects that will be in the Action Plan.

7. Monitoring Progress and Measuring Impact

- 7.1. Progress when implementing the Strategic Plan and the Action Plan will be a crucial part of the partnership's new structure and the Tourism Sector Group, the Action Group and the Steering Group are all expected to monitor progress at their meetings.
- 7.2. The Action Plan offers clear timetables and outcomes and a lead body so that action progress can be monitored and delivery tracked.
- 7.3. Traditionally, the impact of the visitor economy has been measured based on STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Assessment Monitor) which focuses on numbers and the value of visitors to the local economy.
- 7.4. Whilst it is recognised that this is one method of monitoring impact, there is a strong feeling that we need to be measuring the impact of tourism in a much more holistic and balanced manner in terms of the agreed principles, while also examining the environmental, community and linguistic impacts.

- 7.5.** A Research Task Group worked in this field by collaborating with Cyngor Gwynedd's Research Unit, the Eryri National Park Authority, the Tourism, Marketing and Events Service and Bangor University. Good practice from other areas was also discussed - Denmark and Slovenia in particular.
- 7.6.** The outcome of this task group was establishing a 'dashboard' that will provide us with a balanced picture of the impact of the visitor economy in the area. Although several measures in the 'dashboard' are beyond the control of partners and, possibly, more widely than the visitor economy and visitors - it is a new tool that we will be able to use to monitor the eco-system of the visitor economy on a wider scale than ever before. The 'dashboard' can be seen in **Appendix C**.
- 7.7.** The 'dashboard' includes 26 measures that can be tracked over time but, in order to refine these measures and identify core measures that are influenced by partners, the following have been agreed to be monitored on a regular basis. Again, these may be adapted or amended when implemented:

Principle and Objective	Long-term Measures
<p>Celebrate, Respect and Protect our Communities, Language, Culture and Heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A visitor economy in the ownership of our communities with an emphasis on pride in one's area • A visitor economy that is world-leading in Heritage, Language, Culture and the Outdoors 	<p>% of the County's residents surveyed who stated that tourism in their area has a positive result</p> <p>% of the County's residents surveyed who believed that tourism has a positive influence on the Welsh language and culture</p> <p>% of businesses and visitor economy enterprises that have been awarded a GandE2035 Sustainable Tourism Champion accreditation</p> <p>Number of individuals registered on the Gwynedd / Eryri Ambassador scheme</p>
<p>Maintain and Respect our Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 is world-leading in sustainable and low carbon developments and infrastructure 	<p>% of the County's residents who were asked state that tourism has a negative influence on the environment and nature</p> <p>Number of Sherpa service users (seeking to identify further transport and environment measures)</p>
<p>Ensure that the advantages to Gwynedd and Eryri communities outweigh any disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A visitor economy that ensures that infrastructure and resources contribute towards the well-being of the community all year round 	<p>Overnight visitor spend</p> <p>Day visitor spend</p> <p>Numbers employed within the tourism sector</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A visitor economy that thrives for the well-being 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 	
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7.8. It can be seen from the Action Plan that several potential research projects have been identified. Positive discussions continue with Bangor University to pilot and develop specific research for the area, as well as projects that are also being developed by wider partners.

7.9. Two pilot research projects have already been held in Dyffryn Ogwen - one '*Taking advantage of the Wales Slate UNESCO World Heritage Site and developing sustainable tourism in North West Wales*' examining young people's perceptions of the designation and the other '*the Welsh language and the sustainable visitor economy: Bethesda pilot study*' to get an initial insight into some of the challenges, and the opportunities, that may arise following the world heritage designation on the sustainability of the Welsh language communities.

8. Consultation

8.1. Extensive consultation has been undertaken when developing the Gwynedd and Eryri Plan 2035 as seen from the information above. All elements of developing and implementing the Plan is totally reliant on working in partnership and consultation.

9. Resources

9.1. Although the Cabinet has approved £46,040 to appoint a Sustainable Tourism Coordinator, the budget to implement the Action Plan relies on receiving additional external funding. During 2024-25, Shared Prosperity and Welsh Government funding has been secured for implementation.

9.2. Our success to deliver the Action Plan will depend on the financial programmes that will be available in future. Potential opportunities can also derive from any Visitor Levy that may be established - should it become operational in the Gwynedd area. Should there be an agreement to implement such a levy - it would not be practically possible to do so until at least April 2027.

10. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

10.1. All elements of the development of the Gwynedd and Eryri Plan 2035 have included **residents and service users**. More consultation work has been undertaken on this Plan than any other tourism or destination management plan developed by the Council.

10.2. **Collaboration** and partnership is crucial to the success of the Plan and the structure of the new partnership has been established to take action.

10.3. An Action Plan, the Partnership and new monitoring and research methods have been established to **prevent** and respond to problems that may arise as a result of the visitor economy.

10.4. The Plan is operational until 2035 which means that we are seeking to respond in a coherent, balanced and collaborative manner in the **long-term** to ensure that we respond and make a difference to ensure a visitor economy for the benefit and well-being of the people, environment, language and culture of Gwynedd and Eryri.

10.5. **Integration** is an essential part of the new Action Plan and Partnership with meetings and a voice ensured for other public bodies and to ensure coherence and collaboration with partners through the structure. The Council, Conwy County Borough Council and the Eryri National Park Authority have all committed to collaborate and to integrate the Plan to our broader activities.

11. Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-Economic Duty

11.1. An Impact Assessment on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-Economic Disadvantage of the Plan was prepared - this can be seen in **Appendix CH**. The outcome of the assessment anticipates a substantial positive impact on some groups and cohorts and it suggests that not implementing the Plan may lead to negative outcomes.

11.2. Environmental, linguistic and equality matters will be addressed through the new measures and the 'dashboard'.

12. Next Steps

12.1. With the Gwynedd and Eryri 2035 Partnership now established and the first Action Plan adopted, the next steps will be to proceed to implement, monitor and report on progress through the tiers within the Partnership.

12.2. It is intended to hold a new Gwynedd and Eryri 2035 annual Summit / Forum during Autumn / Winter 2024 which will be an opportunity to raise awareness of our work, to discuss progress and also highlight good practice from other areas that seek to establish a sustainable visitor economy.

Background Information

[Report to the Scrutiny Committee 04/02/2021](#)

[The Plan's web-page on the Eryri Mountains and Coast website](#) - research, briefing notes, presentations.

Appendices

Appendix A Gwynedd and Eryri Partnership 2035 Structure and Membership

Appendix B Gwynedd and Eryri Action Plan 2035

Appendix C Measures 'Dashboard'

Appendix CH Impact Assessment on the Equality Characteristics of Welsh and Socio-economic Disadvantage