

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 20/10/2025
REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT HEAD OF DEPARTMENT	

Number: 2

Application Number: C24/0937/16/LL

Registration Date: 22/09/25

Application Type: Full

Community: Llandygai

Ward: Tregarth and Mynydd Llandygai

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

Location: Zip World, Penrhyn Quarry, Bethesda, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL574YG

Summary of the Recommendation: TO APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

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1 Description:

- 1.1 This is a full application for the creation of an additional activity on the *Zip World* site in Penrhyn Quarry, Bethesda. It is intended to establish a new ride in the form of a giant swing (6 seater) with the work to include erecting a platform structure, a ramp and landing structure, associated cables and anchor structures.
- 1.2 The application site includes a parcel of land within Penrhyn Quarry, to the south west of the existing Zip World site, extending across the quarry lake towards the south east towards the gallery on a higher level on the southern side of the quarry pit. The proposed development includes four main elements:
 - The lowest anchor point (northern), the ramp, the landing area and the cart;
 - The swing and platform;
 - The highest anchor point (southern);
 - The above would be connected by way of 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.
- 1.3 The site is partially located within the Slate Landscape of North West Wales World Heritage Site and the Dyffryn Ogwen Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest with the monuments of Penrhyn Quarry (quarry hospital, underground levels and relict areas) nearby.
- 1.4 The following information was submitted in support of the application:
 - Planning Statement
 - Heritage Impact Assessment;
 - Economic Impact Assessment;
 - Landscape and Visual Assessment;
 - Setting Assessment;
 - Noise Impact Assessment;
 - Ecological Appraisal Evaluation;
 - Habitat Enhancement
 - Drainage Strategy;
 - Interim Travel Plan
 - Construction Methodology Statement; and
 - Environmental Construction Management Plan

2. Relevant Policies:

- 2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and paragraph 2.1.2 of Planning Policy Wales emphasise that planning decisions should be in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Planning considerations include National Planning Policy and the Unitary Development Plan.
- 2.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on the Council to take reasonable steps in exercising its functions to meet the seven well-being goals within the Act. This

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report has been prepared in consideration of the Council's duty and the 'sustainable development principle', as set out in the 2015 Act. In reaching the recommendation, the Council has sought to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

2.3 Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan. (Composite Version including Matters Arising Changes, January 2017)

PCYFF 2 : Development criteria

PCYFF 3 : Design and Place Shaping

TWR 1: Visitor Attractions and Facilities

AT 1 : Conservation Areas, World Heritage Sites and Landscapes, Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

PS 1: The Welsh Language and Culture

PS 14: The Visitor Economy

PS 19: Conserving and where appropriate Enhancing the Natural Environment

PS 20: Protecting and where appropriate Enhancing Heritage Assets

2.4 National Policies:

Planning Policy Wales – (Edition 12, 2024)

Technical Advice Note 5: Planning and Nature Conservation

Technical Advice Note 11: Noise

Technical Advice Note 12: Design

Technical Advice Note 13: Tourism

Technical Advice Note 24: The historic environment

3. Relevant Planning History:

The site has an extensive planning history, although it does not relate to this specific development.

4. Consultations:

It is noted that there have been several consultations following the receipt of amended information during the consideration of the application - the latest observations received from the consultants are summarised below:

Town Council: No response received

Transportation Unit: No objection

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Cadw:

Advice

This response is based on the advice provided by Cadw's Senior Historic Environment Planning Officer.

We have significant concerns, however, we consider that if mitigating measures were undertaken, our concerns about the impact would be reduced.

The national policy and Cadw's role in the planning process are set out in Annex A.

Assessment

A revised Historic Impact Assessment has been submitted in support of this application. This clearly identifies the adverse impact of the proposed development on the settings of the scheduled monument and the World Heritage Site and provides the following proposed measures that will be implemented to offset these impacts: -

- Removal of detracting structures: including the removal of existing storage containers and redundant timber-clad shed, which are in close proximity to the lower anchorage point. This would help to remove 'visual clutter' from the immediate area.
- Dedicated viewing area around the lower anchorage point: including a dedicated heritage viewing area positioned to take advantage of views of the quarry pit and benched galleries. The area will be accessible to all visitors, including non-participants. It would offer a unique visual experience of the quarry for those who are unable to or do not wish to partake in the organised activities on offer.
- Dedicated viewing area near the Princess May headframe: positioned to provide unobstructed sightlines to the Princess May water-balance headframe and benched quarry galleries beyond. The area will be accessible to all visitors, including non-participants, and will be clearly demarcated from operational areas. A guided visit to the viewing area will also be included in the route for participants from the 'kit-up tent' to both the swing and the 'Little Top' zipline. The visit will be accompanied with commentary on the Princess May and its historical significance, delivered by the Zip World staff.
- Heritage interpretation panels: to be provided in the heritage viewing areas. A detailed scheme of interpretation to be developed and agreed with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and Cadw and agreed by way of a condition, prior to installation.
- Vegetation management around the Princess May headframe: in particular tackling the vegetation which screens views towards the structure and has the potential to cause damage to the structure if not managed. A method statement and management plan can be conditioned prior to any clearance work.

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- Soft landscaping screening to existing sewage treatment: to mitigate detrimental views of the sewage treatment plant from publicly accessible areas looking towards the Princess May headframe. This is expected to be low-level landscape screening to mitigate the visual impact of the sewage treatment facility as far as possible, using materials and a design which is sympathetic to the quarry environment
- Commission a specialist report (with recommendations) on the condition of the Princess May headframe and provide a copy of the report to the asset owner.
- Team training programme.

The methodology of the Historic Impact Assessment meets the ICOMOS guidance, and we are satisfied that the implementation of the above measures would offset the identified adverse impacts of the proposed development. Consequently, Cadw do not object to the positive determination of this application subject to conditions requiring that all the above measures are implemented before the first commercial operation of the ride, except for the requirement for the specialist report on the condition of the Princess May headframe which can be completed six months after the first commercial operation of the ride.

If required Cadw can assist in the preparation of suitably worded conditions to ensure that these measures are fully and appropriately implemented.

Natural Resources Wales:

Satisfied that concerns regarding the application can be overcome by the inclusion of a planning condition on any permission granted to ensure that a Method Statement is submitted, based on the principles outlined in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to safeguard the features of nearby protected sites

Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service:

No response received

Biodiversity Unit:

No objection - the Biodiversity Improvement Plan is reasonable and shows a Net Gain for Biodiversity in line with Planning Policy Wales.

Dŵr Cymru/Welsh Water

Observations for the applicant

Public Protection:

As this is the first of its type, it is very difficult to assess whether the swing will have a noise impact on the area. If the Authority approves the application, the Service would recommend that conditions are imposed on any permission in relation to the operational hours and the noise threshold as outlined in the noise report to ensure that local residents are not affected by noise.

We have concern about noise from customers screaming while they

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are on the Swing, and how this can be managed.

Land Drainage Unit:	No observations to submit.
National Park Officer:	No response received
Public Consultation:	<p>A notice was posted on site and in the press, and neighbours were informed. The response below was received to the public consultation process:</p> <p><i>"The proposed giant swing will be designed to create a 'terror' and 'thrill' experience for those who ride, leading to inevitable loud, anti-social screaming, to be suffered by the residents of Rhes Jams and the nearby community on a daily basis.</i></p> <p><i>If the proposed plan is approved, we ask Cyngor Gwynedd to discuss the above matter with Zip World to ensure that the company takes appropriate steps to mitigate our concerns."</i></p>

5. Assessment of the material planning considerations:

The principle of the development

- 5.1 An Economic Impact Assessment from a specialist company was submitted, which noted that the plan would:
- Secure jobs in the construction industry and throughout the supply chain.
 - Facilitate 20 all-year round operational FTE jobs with living wage and above.
 - Create additional GVA of at least £5 million over 10 years, relating to the direct jobs.
 - Support further indirect jobs in the tourism and hospitality sectors – supporting further wages and economic activity in the regional economy.
 - Commit Zip World to £1.9m of investment in North Wales.
 - The Benefit Cost Ratio for the Swing is high (over 4) which means the project is high value for money, contributing significant economic benefits to the local area.
- 5.2 Policy PS 14 of the Local Development Plan 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. 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 is believed that this development would enhance and extend the range of facilities available for visitors in a way that is consistent with the principles of these policies.

Visual amenities

- 5.3 The site is located within the catchment of the quarry's activities that includes the *Zip World* attraction with a variety of structures located around the proposed structure. Any view of the structure itself would be seen from within this context with its backdrop of an industrial nature. The proposed structure is of a practical and functional design, that in itself reflects the industrial nature of the site

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with steel columns suspending wires and equipment that resembles some of the adjacent quarry's construction.

5.4 A Landscape Visual Impact Statement prepared by heritage experts was submitted with the application, and the conclusions are summarised below:

- A total of six possible viewpoints were noted in relation to the proposals, and these include four viewpoints in close proximity and two viewpoints at a distance. It is considered that each of the six viewpoints is of high significance in the context of the nearby World Heritage site and the Registered Monuments.
- Four close viewpoints and two distant viewpoints were analysed for their impact on heritage assets within those viewpoints.
- The analysis shows that three of the nearby viewpoints would see a 'slight change' as a result of the proposals and that one close viewpoint would experience a 'moderate change'. For one of the distant viewpoints the proposals represent a 'negligible' change and for another distant viewpoint the proposals represent a 'moderate' change.
- It was found that the overall impact on the World Heritage Site from six viewpoints represented a 'negligible to slight' impact, and in one case a 'small beneficial impact'.

5.5 The above conclusions are acknowledged, and following a site visit by officers, it is accepted that they do reflect the likely visual impact of the proposed development. Ultimately, it is not believed that the structure would be prominent in the landscape and that it would not be detrimental to local visual amenities, and it is therefore considered that the application is acceptable under Policies PCYFF2 and PCYFF3 as they relate to protecting the area's overall visual amenities.

General and residential amenities

5.6 A Noise Assessment was submitted with the application which noted that a baseline noise survey was undertaken in two locations that represented the closest dwellings to the site, and a noise model of the proposed ride was developed. The noise model's results were used to provide a comparative assessment against the existing noise levels. The predicted noise levels of the swing ride were far below the overall residual noise levels of 10 dB or higher, suggesting that the noise would not be noticeable under normal conditions and that there would be no detrimental noise impact. Additionally, the consultants undertook a BS 4142 assessment, and these results show that the predicted Specific Sound Levels are far below the Background Sound Levels and only note a 'low' impact.

5.7 As this is the first ride of its kind in the UK, there are no details regarding the machinery and equipment to be installed, however, based on the findings of the baseline noise survey and relevant guidelines, the consultants recommended that suitable noise limits should be imposed through a planning condition in order to protect residential amenities.

5.8 The Public Protection Service largely accepted the conclusions of the report in relation to the noise deriving directly from the new machinery, although they expressed some concern regarding the lack of attention given to the noise from customers screaming while using the swing. This was supported by the concerns presented by a local resident. This is considered to be an extremely difficult aspect to predict and control, although it could be assured, by means of a suitable condition, that a process is in place to consider any complaints from members of the public during the operational period, to ensure that specific steps are taken to mitigate any problems if there is evidence of significant harm.

5.9 Ultimately, in the context of all the other activities within the Zip World site and the adjacent operational quarry, it is considered that the impact of this specific development on the area's overall noise levels would be minimal. It is therefore deemed that the proposal conforms to the requirements of Policy PCYFF2 of the LDP as it relates to the protection of the amenities of private properties from noise pollution.

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Heritage Matters

- 5.10 Following extensive discussion regarding heritage matters, including detailed discussions with Cadw following their observations on the first version of the Heritage Impact Assessment, an amended assessment was submitted, which included mitigation measures such as:
- The removal of two existing storage units and one timber shed which currently has a detrimental impact on the location
 - Create a viewing platform with an interpretation panel at the lowest anchorage point, focused on the old pit and terraced galleries
 - Create a specific viewing area with an interpretation panel focused on the Princess May headframe
 - Removal of the self-seeded vegetation surrounding the Princess May to improve its visibility within areas which are available to the public, including the new viewing area
 - Create low level screening for the existing sewage treatment area to mitigate the current impact
 - Measures are also proposed to reduce any possible long-term detrimental impact as far as possible, including submitting and agreeing detailed elements of the development (e.g. interpretation panels), improving staff training and an agreed programme of site maintenance. A heritage improvement plan will be adopted and will be subject of a five-yearly review in consultation with Cadw and the World Heritage Site Steering Group.
- 5.11 The Heritage Impact Assessment notes that the proposals include 'embedded mitigation' measures and 'additional mitigation' measures to ensure that any residual detrimental impacts are reduced to acceptable levels that are not of concern in relation to the World Heritage Site and Registered Monuments on the site. The Assessment concludes that the beneficial/positive impacts represented by the proposals and the 'additional mitigation measures' balance out the adverse/negative heritage impacts with a net result of overall neutral impact. It is considered that the proposed changes could contribute towards conserving and safeguarding Penrhyn Quarry's assets and features and their contribution to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage site for future generations.
- 5.12 Cadw's comments in relation to the Heritage Impact Assessment confirms that their concerns regarding the impact on the World Heritage Site and the monuments would be reduced provided mitigation measures are taken. Cadw do not object to the positive determination of the proposal subject to conditions requiring that all the mitigation measures included in the Assessment are implemented before the first commercial operation of the ride, except for the requirement for the specialist report on the condition of the Princess May which can be completed six months after the first commercial operation of the ride. On this basis, it is considered that the proposal on the whole will meet the requirements of policies PS 20 and AT 1 of the LDP as they relate to the protection of the area's heritage assets.

Biodiversity Matters

- 5.13 An Initial Ecological Assessment was submitted with the application, which concluded that the impact of the proposed work on the habitats and protected species on the site would be minimal. The report details the recommendations to mitigate the impacts on wildlife, including the chough. Following the Biodiversity Unit's original observations, a Habitat Enhancement Plan was received, which is deemed to be acceptable as a way of mitigating the detrimental impacts on biodiversity and securing appropriate improvements. With the inclusion of suitable conditions as part of the planning permission, it is believed that the development can meet the requirements of PS 19 in the LDP in relation to conserving and where appropriate, enhancing the natural environment.

Language Matters

- 5.14 Excluding the developments that meet the thresholds for submitting a Welsh Language Impact Statement/Assessment noted in Policy PS1, guidance is provided in terms of the type of relevant applications where consideration should be given to the Welsh language in Appendix 5 (The

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Screening Procedure) of the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) 'Maintaining and Creating Distinctive and Sustainable Communities'. The guidance contained states that every retail, commercial or industrial development that is not required to submit a Welsh Language Impact Statement/Assessment should show how consideration has been given to the language.

5.15 Due to the size of the development, it was not required to submit a Welsh Language Statement nor a Welsh Language Impact Assessment with this application, however, the Planning Statement submitted with the application explains the consideration given to the language as part of the plan, including the following points:

- A commitment by the applicant to support the Welsh language and ensure that the language is visible as part of the development.
- All the internal signage in public areas within the site to be bilingual, including those that are part of the proposed heritage interpretation plan.
- The proposal would provide additional employment opportunities in the local area. 82% of Zip World's employees are local and live near their workplace, and 65% are Welsh speakers. It is expected that the employment opportunities (20 additional FTE posts) offered by the proposal will be locally sourced.
- The development would raise awareness of the Welsh language and culture by staff greeting visitors and Welsh-speaking visitors would be able to speak Welsh during their visit.

5.16 Given the above, it is believed that the development is consistent with the requirements of Policy PS 1 and the relevant Planning Guidance.

6. Conclusions:

6.1 Having considered the above assessment, it is believed that this proposal is acceptable based on its principle, scale, visual amenities, residential amenities and heritage assets, and in compliance with relevant local and national planning policies and guidance relating to tourism promotion.

7. Recommendation:

To approve subject to the receipt of positive observations from Cadw and 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.