

MEETING	Economy and Community Scrutiny Committee
DATE	11 December 2025
TITLE	Performance Report – Cabinet Member for the Economy and Community
REASON TO SCRUTINISE	An Opportunity to Scrutinise the Performance of the Department's Services 2025/26
AUTHOR	Sioned E Williams
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr R Medwyn Hughes

1. Why does it need to be scrutinised?

- 1.1 For Committee Members to scrutinise performance matters within the Department.

2. Background / Context

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update you on what has been achieved in the area that I am responsible for as Cabinet Member for the Economy and Community Department. This includes outlining the latest regarding the pledges in the Council Plan; the Department's day-to-day work; as well as the latest in terms of the savings scheme and cuts.
- 2.2 We are operating under the Council Plan 2023-28, and I herein report on the progress made to the end of Quarter 2, whilst acknowledging that it is still early days in the context of some of the pledges that are new in the document since April this year. Nevertheless, all matters have been the subject of discussion and have been challenged by me at a performance challenge meeting, and I am satisfied with the performance of the Department.

3. Performance of Projects in the Council Plan

- 3.1 The table in Appendix 1 gives an update on the progress of the four priority projects in the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 which the Economy and Community Department is responsible for implementing. Three of these projects are in the Prosperous Gwynedd section of the Plan, which aims to strengthen the economy and support Gwynedd residents to earn a decent wage. However, the responsibility for leading a workstream within the 'Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities' project in the Caring Gwynedd programme has been transferred to the Department since the beginning of January 2025.
- 3.2 From the information, you will note that the Department has made good progress against the main milestones of these projects over recent months. The main risk that is common to these four schemes is that the funds that have financed the work since

2023 expire in March 2026 and there is uncertainty around the Government budgets that will replace them.

- 3.3 I would like to draw particular attention to the following matters:

Priority Project: Promoting our Culture and a Sustainable Visitor Economy

- 3.4 The Gwynedd & Eryri Action Plan 2035 (G&E2035) has been put into practice to support a sustainable visitor economy in the County – based on the key points raised in the 2024 Residents Survey, feedback from attendees at the February summit and discussions within the G&E2035 and Ardal Ni Partnership structures. Improvements are being carried out on Gwynedd's most popular beaches and also to public facilities in Eryri through Visit Wales funding. Training for event organisers and tourism businesses has been undertaken. A 'Hwyl in Eryri and Pen Llŷn' marketing campaign through SPF funding has been run to promote out of season visits, the special qualities of the area, to support local businesses and for people to respect the area and our communities when visiting.
- 3.5 The Visitor Accommodation (Register and Levy) Etc. (Wales) Act came into force in September. The Council is working with the counties of Conwy and Anglesey and the Welsh Revenue Authority to ensure that our impact assessment, consultation and decision-making procedures are aligned where possible. A report will be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee at your meeting in February 2026.
- 3.6 Grants worth almost £300,000 have been offered to 69 organisations across Gwynedd to support cultural activities, events and healthy living. The activities of the Diwylliesiant 2 project are underway and support the activities of the Council's Cultural Services, Antur Waunfawr and the Llŷn Eco-museum.
- 3.7 We held a culture workshop at Neuadd Dwyfor on 15 October to co-develop a vision and objectives for culture in Gwynedd for the future. The vision and objectives will be refined and confirmed over the coming months and will set a direction and ambition for the future. The Council has secured funding from the Welsh Government to support research into the contribution of culture to the economy and well-being of Gwynedd's communities which will contribute to a culture action plan.
- 3.8 I am delighted to see progress in our Llewyrch o'r Llechi project which is funded through the UK Government, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Welsh Government and other funds across the slate communities. The project's activities have now attracted over £35m of investment to Gwynedd. The Annual Wales Slate Celebration was held on 23 October at Neuadd Ogwen, Bethesda where we had the opportunity to hear about the excellent work being done by the Council and our partners. The Yr Aelwyd building in Blaenau Ffestiniog has opened in recent weeks, public art has been unveiled in our slate towns and villages, street and signage improvements have been undertaken, and construction work on the new Parc Padarn visitor centre has been completed. As well as the capital works, important activities within our communities and schools have been carried out to raise awareness of our heritage and to inspire pride and confidence in our communities.

Priority Project: Regenerating Communities and Town Centres

- 3.9 The project has achieved all of the milestones agreed for the last quarter, but there is considerable effort by the services at present to complete expenditure on various grants and support partners to overcome barriers so as to achieve outcomes and submit full claims.
- 3.10 Over the last few months the Supporting Communities Service has continued to review and update the Local Regeneration Plans for each of the 13 regeneration areas. Each area is different, and the local arrangements are tailored to individual areas, and the Service offers further support within areas where local structures have not been established.
- 3.11 Earlier this year, £800k of the Shared Prosperity Fund was secured for a Key Fund during the 2025/6 period. Following an application process, 33 local projects have been supported through the Key Fund (these are noted in the Supporting Communities Service's performance report). During the last quarter, there has been considerable effort to support the local groups/organisations to complete projects on schedule.
- 3.12 Similarly, the Regeneration Programme Service has attracted a cumulative total investment of £8.9m for projects that contribute to the promotion and regeneration of town centres. Currently, efforts are focused on implementing the projects in order to claim the grant funding during Q4.
- 3.13 This year, as part of the Gwynedd Ni Regeneration Scheme, the Town and Community Councils Fund was established as a pilot scheme and proposals for a contribution were invited from each of these Councils. With a budget of £370k, grants have been offered to 55 Gwynedd Town/Community Councils. The nature of the projects varies and includes a series of murals around towns/villages, new play equipment in parks that are managed by local Councils, street furniture which include bicycle storage racks, benches, information panels, improvements to community centres and landscaping.
- 3.14 There will be an opportunity for the Committee to further scrutinise the Department's activity in supporting town centre regeneration as we intend to submit a dedicated report in the new year.

Priority Project: Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for businesses and community enterprises to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work

- 3.15 In recent months there has been significant effort by the Department to achieve the objectives of the extra one year's worth of the Welsh Government's ARFOR scheme and the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). These two funding programmes, which expire at the end of March 2026, have been instrumental in supporting the activities of the priority project.
- 3.16 A package to distribute over £900,000 of financial support to the county's businesses and social enterprises is being implemented. Two application rounds have been held, and the results of the second round are about to be released. There has been a concerted effort by the Department to encourage new applicants from all parts of

Gwynedd for the funding; 14 business support sessions were held, with 181 enterprises attending.

- 3.17 There is also a support scheme in place to help people in Gwynedd who are already employed earn a higher salary by improving their skills to get a better job or solving a problem that prevents them from working more hours. Since the summer, 48 people have already benefited from the scheme.
- 3.18 The Department has secured almost £600,000 from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority to support our work to develop the economy over the next 3 years and to develop an alternative plan for the Trawsfynydd site. I'm pleased to report that good progress has been made on developing a business case for the development of the Trawsfynydd Science Park, to protect, retain and create new well-paying jobs in Gwynedd.
- 3.19 Work is also underway to produce a new strategy for the next decade for Gwynedd's economy and I am grateful for the input received from the Scrutiny Committee and stakeholders. Having a strategy is especially important in light of recent announcements by the UK and Welsh Governments about the future of funding to develop the local economy and establish the [Local Growth Fund](#); with less money for a more limited selection of activities, being able to identify our priorities will be key.
- 3.20 Finally, I am pleased to confirm that construction work has commenced to erect 10 new works units in Minffordd. We anticipate that the units will be ready in the autumn of 2026.

Priority Project: Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities

- 3.21 While the main milestones of this project have been achieved, I am keen to review our arrangements for supporting the hubs in order to create a model that would be more sustainable for the future. We will be discussing opportunities with partners over the next year.
- 3.22 Over the past few months, the Supporting Communities Service has been successful in securing grant funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund to co-ordinate and implement a Community Resilience project with providers and partners in the third sector. Over the last few months there has been considerable effort in establishing working arrangements and progressing with the work programme. A review of the network of community hub partners is underway which will identify where and how Libraries can be brought into the model.

4. The Department's day-to-day work

- 4.1 The Department's Performance Dashboard can be seen in Appendix 2 and it is scrutinised regularly. I would like to draw the Cabinet Members' attention to the following matters:

Leisure Resources Service – Byw'n Iach, and the Padarn and Glynllifon Country Parks

- 4.2 The grant investment work at Parc Padarn and Glynllifon is ongoing. At Parc Padarn improvements to the Incline, a new Welcome Block and car park improvements have now been completed, along with improvements to the paths network at Glynllifon Park. The average customer satisfaction of the Country Parks is 88%, but it is also worth noting that wider work is currently taking place at Parc Padarn, including investment in the National Slate Museum which is currently closed.
- 4.3 The cumulative number of visits to Byw'n lach leisure centres to the end of September is estimated to be around 420,984 – which is around 40,779 lower than the same period in 2024/5. The economic situation and the significant increase in the cost of living are thought to have put additional pressure on the leisure sector's income. Many households have had to face prioritising essential spending over spending on leisure activities.
- 4.4 The 2025/6 figures (to date) show that Byw'n lach average customer satisfaction has increased by 1% to 84.51% since last year. However, feedback regarding the quality of facilities is scoring the lowest and is a factor that affects customers' experience, and efforts continue to try to identify opportunities to improve them.
- 4.5 Over the last few months we have managed to attract grants to make improvements to the fitness room at Dwyfor Leisure Centre, improvements to the Arfon Tennis Centre, refurbish the 3G pitch at Tywyn, and improvements have been completed to the 3G pitches at Dolgellau and Porthmadog, along with water treatment improvements at the Bala and Arfon Centres.
- 4.6 As reported earlier this year, I remain concerned that the number of Gwynedd pupils receiving swimming lessons in our centres continues to fall. Following discussions with Byw'n lach and the Education Department, we wrote to the Governing Bodies of Gwynedd schools asking them to give further consideration to the risks and inequalities across the county. Byw'n lach is also considering developing specific packages for schools that would potentially make visits to the leisure centres more attractive and offer further value for money.

Maritime Services, Hafan Pwllheli and Victoria Dock, Caernarfon.

- 4.7 You will note from the Appendix that 68% of respondents to a beach customer satisfaction survey considered their experience to be 'very good' or 'good'. The feedback received from these surveys is very useful to enable this service to respond with other Council Departments.
- 4.8 The number of customers with a mooring agreement increased by 9% in our harbours in 2025/26 compared to last year, from 250 to 273 (excluding Hafan Pwllheli and Caernarfon Dock). You will also note that Hafan Pwllheli's berths had a 97% occupancy rate in 2025/26, with 86% of the berths in the outer harbour occupied over the same period.

- 4.9 Concerns remain regarding siltation levels in Pwllheli harbour. Over the past few months the Service (with the technical support of YGC) has moved forward by undertaking further preparatory and technical work as part of a dredging strategy. Fairly recently, strong winds (storm Amy) caused damage to our harbours, and I am very grateful to the staff for their excellent work in dealing with the situation.

Archives, Museums, Arts and Libraries Services

- 4.10 You will note that 93% of Archives Service users are 'very satisfied' with the service (a 2% increase), 5% satisfied, 2% dissatisfied. Most of the comments received were very positive, but of those who were not satisfied, comments were received about the opening hours. Opening hours were reduced to the minimum allowed by the National Archives because of cuts in 2016. The Service secured a grant of £141,000 from the Welsh Government to invest in the Caernarfon Record Office and Dolgellau Record Office. The work will be completed by April 2026 and will improve the energy conservation of the buildings and the user experience and atmosphere in the research rooms.
- 4.11 The Community Arts Service has continued to support arts and well-being activities across Gwynedd, and 99% of attendees to the sessions believed they had benefited from the activity. 'Stiwdio Lles', a project by Frân Wen with Bangor University, offers art sessions on prescription for young people. One attendee noted *"It has to carry on, the arts make such a difference to people's health and well-being."*
- 4.12 Through SPF funding, Storiell's engagement activities and events have remained popular. A company has been appointed to run the Storiell café and it will hopefully reopen in the new year. A public session was held to consult on Storiell's outside spaces and the link with Pontio. Funding was secured for the Lloyd George Museum and Storiell to draw up Audience Development Plans in order to increase visitor numbers to both venues.

Community Regeneration and Support Programme Services

- 4.13 The Economic Development, Tourism, and Community Regeneration and Support services have focused their efforts over the past year on implementing the priority projects outlined in Appendix 1. The performance of these services relies on grant funding and every support package provided to partners, communities and initiatives are monitored and evaluated according to the financiers' terms.

5. External Auditors' Reports (if relevant)

- 5.1 The Annual Assessment Report 2024-25 for the Gwynedd Libraries Service has been received from the Welsh Government's Culture Division. I am pleased to note that the Service satisfies all 13 Core Entitlements. It is noted: *'That customers appreciate Gwynedd Libraries, and they think highly of them. The service continues to perform well in a number of areas including e-loans and virtual visits. In addition, Gwynedd is leading on the implementation of the LMS Cymru project. (...)'*

- 5.2 The aspect of this year's report that is of greatest concern is the reduction in both the total number of staff and the total number of qualified staff. Although it is positive that members of staff are supported through the CILIP Chartership, which will hopefully impact on the numbers of qualified staff in the future, the continued reduction in staffing numbers is likely to have an impact on the service's ability to continue to meet customers' needs to the same high level that it has provided in the past.
- 5.3 The Service has faced changes to the staffing structure – in particular due to the need to make savings and cuts because of the current financial climate, but by supporting training, we are trying to manage this criticism. I would like to convey my thanks to the staff of the Libraries Service for their work and congratulate them on the results of the assessment report.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The report has been created based on the information and content of a recent meeting to challenge and support the performance of the Department on 10 November 2025, with the Chief Executive, the Head of Department, Service Managers and myself attending this meeting.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Progress reports on milestones of projects in the Council Plan

Appendix 2: The Department's Performance Measures