

LLŶN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 20/11/18

Present: Morgan Jones-Parry (Arfon and Dwyfor Local Access Forum) (Chair)
Councillor Gareth Williams (Gwynedd Council) (Vice-chair)

Members: Noel Davey (Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales), Brett Garner (Llŷn Fishermen's Association), Andy Godber (National Trust), John Gosling (Abersoch and Llŷn Tourism Partnership), Jina Gwyrfai (Llanaelhaearn Community Council), T. Victor Jones (Llanbedrog Community Council), Sian Parri (Tudweiliog Community Council), Sianelen Fleming (Pistyll Community Council), Alun Price (Natural Resources Wales), Glyn Roberts (Botwnnog Community Council), Councillor Angela Russell (Countryside Champion - Gwynedd Council) and Gruffydd Williams (Nefyn Town Council).

Officers: Bleddyn P. Jones (Llŷn AONB Service Manager), Wyn Williams (Countryside and Access Manager), Rhys Roberts (Coastal Path Project Officer - for item 5 on the agenda) and Bethan Adams (Member Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Anwen Davies, Simon Glyn, John Brynmor Hughes and Aled Wyn Jones (Gwynedd Council) along with Gillian Walker (Cyfeillion Llŷn).

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

2. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

3. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Joint Committee held on 17 July 2018 as a true record, subject to correcting paragraph 4 on page 5 of the agenda to read as follows:

"A member asked what was the total length of **underground** cables in the AONB. In response, the representative from SP Energy Networks noted that only a small portion of the whole network was **underground**. He added that they focused on the most practical areas for under-grounding electricity cables."

4. WALES COASTAL PATH

A presentation was given by the Coastal Path Project Officer. He elaborated on the Coastal Path project, noting that there were three elements to the project, namely maintenance, upgrading and development. After receiving funding from the Coastal Communities Fund, he noted that 18 circuits had been established along the Coast Path. He explained that there was funding for the project until at least 2021 and if any member had an observation or suggestion, they should e-mail LlwybrArfordir@gwynedd.llyw.cymru .

The Llŷn AONB Service Manager noted that the AONB Service had held many guided walks along the circuits. He highlighted that an information sheet about the circuits was available.

Members were given the opportunity to make observations and ask questions; members noted the following main points:

- Pleased that funding was available to maintain the Coastal Path;
- Was the grant funding available for the circuits as well?
- Was there more work to be done in the Bwlch Mawr area?
- The officer was congratulated on his work. O Ddrws i Ddrws played their part in terms of the Coastal Path's success with the Coastal Bus running during the summer. How much use was made of the Coastal Path?
- Was adding new sections of land to the Coastal Path difficult?
- Some parts of land in the Clynog and Trefor area had not been included as part of the Coastal Path. There was an act in England enforcing that land became part of the Coastal Path but negotiations were held in Wales.

In response to the above observations, the officers noted:

- A grant of approximately £100,000 had been received from Welsh Government every year since 2015 to develop the Coastal Path and to cover staffing costs;
- Funding the circuits was the Council's responsibility;
- The minor work in Bwlch Mawr had mostly been completed and that most of the work involved signage;
- That counters had been buried in the land to count the number of people who used the path. The latest user figures could be sent to the Llŷn AONB Service Manager to be shared with members;
- Adding new sections of land to the Coastal Path was a contentious subject. Landowners who committed sections of land to the Coastal Path received compensation and their legal and land agent costs would be paid. Work to form the path would be undertaken and in some instances a fence would also be constructed to keep dogs out of the fields. On the whole, landowners co-operated;
- A discussion had been held between the Local Authority and Welsh Government before the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 was adopted, where it was noted that enforcement would facilitate the process of completing the Coastal Path. Welsh Government had not adopted this part of the act, as it had been done in England, with the approach of getting landowners to buy-in to the idea instead of enforcement;
- Negotiating with landowners could take time. Completing the paperwork was easy but an application for an order would have to be made if landowners refused. The order process took approximately a period of one year;
- There were 35 landowners and 7 tenants in the area from Pontllyfni to Trefor and it took considerable time to negotiate.

The Chair thanked the Coastal Path Project Officer for the presentation and congratulated him for the work.

5. UPDATE ON THE LLŶN AONB SERVICE'S PROJECTS

The Llŷn AONB Service Manager submitted the report of the Llŷn AONB Project Officer on the AONB Service's projects. It was explained that the Project Officer was not present at the meeting due to illness. An update was given on the following projects:

- Rural Skills Training

- Access Improvement
- Guided Walks.

He referred to the Sustainable Development Fund noting that among projects supported during 2018/19 were:

- Llŷn Coastal Bus
- Taith Tridiau Llŷn (Three Day Challenge)
- Llandegwning Church
- Llŷn Maritime Museum
- Tafarn yr Heliwr (The Sportsman Public House)
- Old Photo Exhibition - Neuadd Sarn
- Restoration Plans - Neuadd Mynytho
- Pwllheli Food Festival.

In response to an observation by a member regarding rhododendron near the waterfall in Gyrn Goch, the Llŷn AONB Service Manager explained that the land in question was in private ownership; work had been completed by the landowner but more work needed to be done.

RESOLVED to accept the information.

6. REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES

The Llŷn AONB Service Manager submitted the report, which provided an update in terms of the review in relation to designated landscapes (National Parks and the AONB) in Wales.

He noted that Hannah Blythyn AM (Minister for Environment), had issued a statement in July 2018, titled "Valued and Resilient - the Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks".

As a follow-up to the statement, he explained that the Minister wrote to AONB Partnerships, Natural Resources Wales and the National Association for AONBs. In the letter, she asked the organisations to prepare a paper, on a joint basis, with proposals to have more equality between Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks, focusing on status, profile and resources whilst emphasising that there was a need to be practical and realistic in terms of the proposals.

He noted that the organisations had met, held discussions and prepared a joint response. He elaborated on the 12 proposals that had been noted in the response to increase equality between the AONB and the Parks in terms of status, profile and resources.

He reported that a meeting with the Minister had been held a week prior to this meeting and that another meeting would possibly be held to have further discussions.

A member noted that numerous discussions had been held since the report of Professor Terry Marsden had been published and that it appeared that there was a lack of will to fund.

In response, the Llŷn AONB Service Manager noted that he was not over-confident that there would be more financial resources. He added that cuts to the AONB Service

as part of the Gwynedd Challenge consultation had been halted in order to wait for the Marsden report. He thanked members for their support at the time.

In response to a question by a member in terms of the proposal to designate AONB Partnerships as a statutory consultant on planning matters, the Llŷn AONB Service Manager explained that AONB Services were not currently a statutory consultant and that a procedure through agreement was in place, with the Service submitting observations on planning applications. If the proposal would be implemented, he elaborated that it would be likely that the Joint Committee would consider some applications with others delegated to officers.

RESOLVED to accept the information.

7. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AT PISTYLL

A report was submitted by the Llŷn AONB Service Manager which noted the background and planning history of the Plas Pistyll and Pistyll Farm site, Pistyll. It was noted that the item was on the meeting's agenda at the request of the Chair following the receipt of a request from a member.

A member noted that the matter would receive consideration at the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 13 December 2018. He highlighted his concern that the developments originally permitted on the site by the Planning Committee in 2012 had been changed by means of a number of planning permissions under officers' delegated rights, changing them to holiday home developments with substantial changes to the original plan. He explained that assessments in terms of the landscape and visual impact of the developments had been submitted by the applicant as part of the application in 2012 and that what had been approved by officers using their delegated rights disregarded what had been noted in the assessments. He noted that eco developments that were in keeping with the landscape had been approved by the Planning Committee. He noted that there was a duty to protect the AONB. He explained that he had made a request through the Planning Committee Chair to seek the opinion of a barrister on the matter as it was a complex matter.

During the subsequent discussion, the following main points were noted by members:

- Pistyll Community Council had made a request to the Council's Chief Executive to seek the opinion of a barrister on the matter. Acknowledgement of the request had been received but no response had been received as yet;
- A lack of consultation on the planning applications had perhaps led to the local member at the time failing to give attention to the planning applications;
- There was a duty on the Joint Committee to look into the matter and a report was required to ensure that lessons had been learnt and that such a situation would never happen again;
- Council members should challenge the officers, the planning applications should have been submitted for a decision by the Planning Committee. Frustration that the observations of the AONB Unit and Joint Committee members did not receive sufficient attention;
- It was important that the public knew the facts;
- Pistyll Community Council had supported the original application in 2012 but developments on the site had intensified without the Community Council being aware of the applications;
- The local member could refer a planning application to the Planning Committee for a decision but perhaps they did not have the capacity to do so;

- The usual procedure of placing a planning application advertisement near the application site was insufficient and that such problems arose as a result;
- The situation brought the AONB into disrepute and that action was required in order to prevent this from happening again.

A member enquired if it would be possible to use the Joint Committee or the AONB Service's resources to obtain the opinion of a barrister on the matter. In response, the Llŷn AONB Service Manager noted that the Joint Committee did not have resources and that the resources of the AONB Service had been earmarked in a work programme that had been agreed with Natural Resources Wales.

It was proposed and seconded to send a letter from the Chair on behalf of the Joint Committee to the Council's Chief Executive seeking a barrister's opinion on the matter. A discussion was held on the wording of the letter.

RESOLVED that the Chair sends a letter to the Council's Chief Executive on behalf of the Llŷn AONB Joint Advisory Committee:

- To declare disappointment in terms of the situation regarding developments at Plas Pistyll and Pistyll Farm.**
- That the Joint Committee requests the Council to obtain legal opinion from an independent barrister, who is an expert in the field, on this specific case.**

The meeting commenced at 4.30pm and concluded at 6.05pm.

CHAIR