

COMMITTEE	Llyn AONB Joint Advisory Committee
DATE	November 18 th 2020
TITLE	Coronavirus
PURPOSE	Inform Members
AUTHOR	AONB Officer
RECOMMENDATION	Accept the Information

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Coronavirus arrived in the British Isles at the beginning of 2020 and the first lockdown period began on 23rd of March. Only food shops, garages and chemists were allowed to be open and the message to everyone was to stay at home except for exercise once a day.
- 1.2 The daily news was frightening with the number of people in hospitals and intensive care increasing daily and the death toll from coronavirus mounting.

2.0 THE LOCKDOWN PERIOD

- 2.1 The first lockdown period was in effect throughout the UK, most European countries and indeed many of the world's countries. It was an unprecedented time in our history.
- 2.2 On the whole the presence of the virus in rural counties such as Gwynedd was low, however everyone was very vigilant and took steps to protect themselves and the community
- 2.3 During the first few months of lockdown weather was good and the days long. There was very little traffic on the roads and many walked paths and sites near their homes. It was a time when many people took more of an interest in their local environment and nature. There was also more use of local shops and produce and of online services.
- 2.4 The lockdown periods have been very difficult for a lot of people unable to see friends and family due to the restrictions that were imposed. In Llyn, like many other tourist areas, there was concern that some second home owners and visitors had travelled to the area – and home-made signs with various messages were seen here and there.

3.0 EASING RESTRICTIONS

- 3.1 With the easing of restrictions, which seemed to happen fairly quickly, there were concerns regarding increased risk for communities, a rise in traffic and crowds. On the other hand many businesses which had been closed were

glad to be open again and gaining income – which brought economic benefit to the area.

- 3.2 It appears that the pandemic has had an effect on the local housing market in Llŷn. In these last months it has been said that many homes have been sold to people from outside the area and that house prices have increased. This has led to local concerns and tensions.
- 3.3 On visitor numbers the perception is that these figures were higher, or significantly higher, this summer. This is not unexpected – because people had been in lockdown for a long period of time and there were difficulties in overseas travel. Unfortunately there are no data on local visitor numbers – and this makes a case for undertaking future surveys in order to get a clearer picture of the situation.

4.0 THE AONB UNIT

- 4.1 Due to the pandemic all public events had been cancelled and it was therefore not possible to promote the AONB through this medium. However there were regular communications between officers to discuss the effects and implications of the pandemic, the restrictions, effects on projects etc.
- 4.2 All scheduled events such as traditional skills training, guided walks, talks and work with volunteers had to be cancelled. Hopefully these can recommence in 2021.
- 4.3 It was not possible to distribute Llygad Llŷn during Easter as planned however this was managed in August when restrictions were eased. The newsletter was sent out through the post, as a supplement to Llanw Llŷn and through some attractions which had re-opened.
- 4.4 During the summer we took the opportunity to update the AONB website. It was decided to revise the website so as to be similar to the other Welsh AONBs and also easier to navigate – including on mobile phones. Also the information and images were updated and new links to more recent projects and the Instagram account were included. The refreshed site will also be easier to update in future. Please see www.ahne-lyn-aonb.org .
- 4.5 Some Planning applications did come in during the lockdown period and numbers increased as the restrictions were eased in June and July. The AONB Unit has continued to make representations on the relevant applications.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Accept the information.