

# CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET



<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>14 February 2023</b>
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Sioned E. Williams, Head of Economy and Community Department</b> <b>Esyllt Rhys Jones, Regeneration Programmes Manager</b>
<b>Contact Number:</b>	<b>32547 / 32513</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Levelling Up Fund – Llewyrch o'r Llechi Scheme</b>

## **Report to a meeting of the Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet**

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### **THE DECISION SOUGHT**

- a. To accept an offer letter for funding from the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, to implement the Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme jointly with partners within the Slate Valleys;
- b. To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department, in consultation with the Head of Finance Department and Head of Legal Services to agree on the contractual and operational arrangements and the complete financial package with partners.

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### **REASONS FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION**

Three substantial bids were submitted by the Economy and Community Department and the Environment Department to the Levelling Up Fund, UK Government. The Bywiogi Bangor and the Ardudwy Green Corridor bids were unsuccessful but the Llewyrch o'r Llechi bid was a success. A request is made for permission to accept the offer from the UK Government to undertake arrangements to implement the scheme.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. On 23 March 2022, the British Government announced details of the second round of the Levelling Up Fund. It is one of a package of funds launched by them after leaving the European Union and losing access to the Structural Funds that were available as a Member State.
- 1.2. The aim of the fund is to invest in local, visual and good quality infrastructure schemes in the fields of transport, regeneration and town centres together with cultural investments. A particular emphasis is placed on post-industrial areas, deprived towns and coastal communities.

- 1.3. The 'Glannau' bid submitted by Cyngor Gwynedd in 2021 was unsuccessful. One principal change by 2022 was that Gwynedd had moved from priority category 3 to priority category 1. This was to be welcomed and is likely to strengthen Gwynedd's bids.
- 1.4. The Cabinet's approval was received on 19 July 2022 to support the intention of targeting the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund for the Bywiogi Bangor, Llewyrch o'r Llechi, and Ardudwy Green Corridor schemes. The three bids were submitted in August 2022.

## 2. THE RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

- 2.1. On 19 January 2023, the British Government announced the successful schemes for the second round of the Levelling Up Fund. Of the three bids submitted by Cyngor Gwynedd, only Llewyrch o'r Llechi was successful. Confirmation was received of a £18.8m investment to be spent before the end of March 2025. It was agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 19 July 2022 that we would offer full details should the schemes be successful.
- 2.2. The Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme is a package worth approximately £27M in plans across the slate valleys of Gwynedd that respond to the theme of *investing in culture*. It identifies opportunities to capitalise on the benefits to the local community and economy arising from the World Heritage Site designation back in 2021. It is a scheme that offers opportunities and developments that contribute towards the regeneration of these communities.

The package includes:

- **Hwb Dinorwig** – a package of schemes to upgrade the provision of the Slate Museum, Parc Padarn and links with the quarries in the Llanberis area;
- **Hwb Ogwen** – a package of schemes to upgrade a building in the centre of Bethesda to improve the industrial and heritage offer, and improve the links between the town centre and the main attractions;
- **Hwb Ffestiniog** – a package of schemes to upgrade buildings in the centre of Blaenau Ffestiniog to improve the industrial and heritage offer, and improve the links between the town centre and the main attractions;
- **Town Centre Environmental Improvements and Conservation of Historic Structures** – schemes such as public art, upgrading street furniture, signage and interpretation, as well as conservation work to protect historic structures in the three areas.

Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 offers more detailed information about the full schemes.

- 2.3. The Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme is one part of the wider vision of the World Heritage Site designation, namely:

*Protect, preserve, improve and convey the area's important features to reinforce the cultural distinctiveness and strengthen the Welsh language, and become an important catalyst for economic regeneration and social inclusion.*

It is a wide-ranging work programme of collaborating with partners, businesses, the third sector and residents, to ensure the maximum benefit to all communities in the area in light of the designation, by means of a number of activities and interventions.

- 2.4. Funding for the Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme partly responds to the priorities identified in the World Heritage Site Management Plan, work is continuing to realise other priorities through budgets such as the Transforming Towns funding, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Cadw, and via wider schemes that include the private, public and voluntary sectors through our partners.
- 2.5. The decision sought through this report enables officers to move forward to accept the offer and to establish detailed governance and project management arrangements for the individual schemes described above.

#### Equality Matters

- 2.6. Every scheme that is part of the Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme will need to ensure that they comply with equality matters. A full assessment will be undertaken for each scheme as they are developed.
- 2.7. When a third-party partner is operating a scheme, it will be necessary to comply with equality matters and conduct a full assessment, which will form part of the legal agreement with the partner.

#### Issues relating to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015)

- 2.8. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 identifies seven well-being goals. It sets an ambition, permission and legal obligation to improve our social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being. This report and the work associated with the Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme responds to these Well-being Goals:
  - A Prosperous Wales – In Gwynedd, the economy is fragile and businesses in our towns and within the slate valleys, specifically, make a substantial contribution towards the county's economy, and offers a cross-section of employment opportunities. The scheme makes a positive contribution towards a prosperous economy;
  - A Healthier Wales – the theme of health and well-being is a prominent theme throughout the scheme especially the bespoke green infrastructure provision to improve the health and well-being of Gwynedd's residents;
  - A more equal Wales – the Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme offers a variety of opportunities and provisions for a broad cross-section of the population, regardless of the background or circumstances of the individuals;
  - A Wales of cohesive communities – vibrant and thriving communities offer a range of services in a pleasant and safe environment. This is crucial for the future of communities and a core part of this scheme;
  - A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh language – the Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme contributes towards protecting our culture through its people, attractions and services, along with the work of promoting the Welsh language. The Slate Valleys World Heritage Site designation and this scheme gives status and recognition to the cultural importance of Gwynedd;
  - A globally responsible Wales – active travel and leisure schemes, which are a prominent part of the scheme, support the carbon reduction agenda.
  - A Resilient Wales – Gwynedd's communities play a key role in establishing structures and opportunities that can face and respond to future economic and community

challenges. The Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme reflects a strong partnership, which includes the public, business and third sectors.

### **3. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE**

- 3.1. Work includes making governance arrangements and then implementing the Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme. The full scheme will need to be completed by March 2025.

### **4. VIEWS OF STATUTORY OFFICERS:**

#### **i. The Monitoring Officer:**

This offer constitutes a significant Investment in the identified areas. Entering into the grant agreement with UK Government will place responsibilities on the Council to administer the grants which are available subject to conditions. It is important therefore and in order to effectively support the work that funding agreements are in place from the outset which will allow for an effective process to achieve the objectives,

#### **ii. Head of Finance Department:**

The report clearly outlines the opportunities available to some areas of the county as a result of the success of this application and I am satisfied that the financial estimates are realistic. I will be working closely with officers from the Economy and Community Department and with the Monitoring Officer to develop appropriate governance arrangements for the Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme so that the interests of the Council can be protected whilst maximising the benefits of the scheme.