

LLŶN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 18/11/15

Present:

Councillor Gruffydd Williams (Chairman)
T. Victor Jones (Llanbedrog Community Council) (Vice-chairman)

Members: Councillors W. Gareth Roberts and Angela Russell (Gwynedd Council), Emily Bateman (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust), Noel Davey (Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales), John Gosling (Abersoch and Llŷn Partnership), Sian Parri (Tudweiliog Community Council), Alun Price (Natural Resources Wales) and Hedd Rhys (NFU Wales).

Officers: Bleddyn P. Jones (Llŷn AONB Service Manager), Elin Wyn Hughes (AONB Project Officer), Wyn Williams (Countryside and Access Manager), Alun Fôn Williams (Senior Tourism Development Officer - for item 5 on the agenda) and Bethan Adams (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Also in attendance: Councillor Dafydd Meurig (Cabinet Member - Regulatory)

Apologies: Councillor R. H. Wyn Williams, Arfon Hughes (Nefyn Town Council), William I. Hughes (Farmers' Union of Wales) and John Eric Williams (Cyfeillion Llŷn).

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee held on 24 June 2015, as a true record.

3. VISITOR CONTRIBUTIONS

A presentation was given by the Senior Tourism Development Officer on potential schemes to receive financial contributions from tourists in order to invest that in a specific area. He noted there were two types of potential schemes, namely a Visitor Tax Scheme and a Visitor Donation Scheme.

As it was not compulsory to contribute to a Visitor Donation Scheme, he noted that it was more attractive than the Visitor Tax Scheme. He reported that there were 25 similar schemes in operation in the United Kingdom which included a number of possible ways for visitors to contribute, such as:

- hotel bills;
- restaurant bills;
- car park tickets;
- attraction tickets;
- via i-beacons.

He noted that a visitor donation pilot scheme would commence in Llanberis in December 2015 for a period of a year and it was intended to disseminate the scheme across Gwynedd if it was successful.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and the Senior Tourism Development Officer responded as follows:

- Schemes of this type had potential but a human resource would be required to contact companies as well as a basic budget in order to ensure success;
- A pilot scheme would have to be undertaken due to LEADER grant scheme rules;
- The contribution would be voluntary with an option to opt-in or opt-out;
- Such a scheme would include the promotion of the Welsh language and culture;
- There were different examples of administering such schemes such as through a social initiative, volunteers etc.;
- He was more than willing to contact Menter Môn which was conducting the pilot in Llanberis in relation to establishing a scheme in the AONB.

The Senior Tourism Development Officer was thanked for his presentation.

3. RECENT PROJECTS OF THE LLŶN AONB UNIT

Submitted – a report by the Llŷn AONB Projects Officer on the work of the AONB Unit. She gave a presentation on recent successful projects that had been partially funded by the Sustainable Development Fund. It was noted that over £400,000 in grants had been allocated to over 100 projects since 2010.

In response to an observation from a member regarding a scheme to install electricity cables underground in the AONB, the AONB Projects Officer noted that photographs/maps were available from the unit.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

4. PLANNING MATTERS

Submitted – the report of the Llŷn AONB Service Manager providing an update on relevant planning matters to the Llŷn area and the AONB.

The Chairman noted that he was eager to discuss the Joint Committee's viewpoint on solar farms considering the increasing number of applications, in order to reach a consensus on whether or not a statement on applications of this type should be adopted, as it had been done with planning applications for wind turbines.

During the ensuing discussion the following main points were noted:

- There was a need to consider the cumulative impact of applications of this type on the landscape;
- It would be valuable for the Joint Committee to provide observations on planning applications;
- As there was a possibility that the feed-in tariff would be abolished next year, perhaps there would not be so many planning applications;
- Most of the already approved applications had been sufficiently screened;
- It was not possible to screen solar developments during the Winter months;
- There was a need to impose a limit on the size of solar panel schemes;
- There was no Supplementary Planning Guidance to protect the AONB from overdevelopments of this type and none would be in place for some time after the Council would adopt the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan 2011-2026;
- A system should be put in place to be able to call a special meeting of the Joint Committee to specifically address individual planning applications that would harm the AONB;
- The situation in other areas of natural beauty should be explored;
- Gwynedd Archaeological Service had undertaken a basic study assessment for Wales in terms of capacity for developments of this type and the report would be sent to the AONB Unit.

The Llŷn AONB Service Manager noted that he would formulate a comprehensive report in relation to solar developments for the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to accept the report;**
- (ii) to establish a system where the Chairman, in consultation with the Llŷn AONB Service Manager, can call a special meeting of the Joint Committee to specifically address individual planning applications that would harm the AONB;**
- (iii) the Llŷn AONB Service Manager will submit a report in relation to solar developments for the next meeting of the Joint Committee.**

5. AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

Submitted – the report of the Llŷn AONB Service Manager providing an update on the work of updating and reviewing the AONB Management Plan. Members were guided through Part 1 of the management plan which had been attached to the report. It was noted that it was aimed to bring Part 2 of the revised plan before the Joint Committee during Spring 2016.

Members were given an opportunity to provide observations, the Llŷn AONB Service Manager responded to the observations as follows:

- In terms of the impact of developments on the landscape, a specific reference would be made to developments such as wind turbines and solar panels in Part 2;
- National policies along with the Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan (GUDP) would deal with planning matters but there would be a reference in Part 2 to new trends and policies that affected the AONB;
- A Landscape Conservation Area designation would create a type of buffer to protect the setting of the AONB together with the views into and out of the AONB. He added that the GUDP took the designation into account;
- There would be an emphasis in the plan on creating a living landscape and sustaining a society. It was noted that attention was given to matters such as the local community's needs, traditional industries, community well-being and sustainable developments.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

6. GWYNEDD CHALLENGE

Submitted – the report of the Llŷn AONB Service Manager detailing the Council's arrangements in relation to a consultation on service cuts. It was noted that abolishing the AONB Unit had been included as a potential cut. It was added that abolishing the unit would save £39,150 for the Council.

It was noted that correspondence had been sent to members of the Joint Committee and working partners of the AONB Unit to draw their attention to the threat facing the unit. Members were encouraged to complete the Gwynedd Challenge questionnaire and it was noted that the public consultation period had been extended to 30 November 2015.

The Cabinet Member - Regulatory noted that responses to the consultation were assessed on the totality of information rather than on the number of individuals who had chosen whichever option. He encouraged members to complete the questionnaire either online or by completing the hard copy questionnaire.

He added that the cuts were being enforced on the Council and there would be implications for a number of services. He noted that approximately 65 Councillors had

assessed the number of options in workshops before the Cabinet would decide on the list of cuts which was the subject of the consultation. It was noted that further workshops would be held with all councillors at the beginning of 2016 to discuss the responses before the Cabinet would consider the proposals, and then the Full Council would decide on the budget for 2015-16 on 3 March 2016.

During the ensuing discussion, members noted the following main points:

- The questionnaire was not positive;
- No alternative proposals could be submitted;
- The Review of Designated Landscapes supported the designation of the AONB and its national importance;
- The review noted that the AONB administration would continue to be part of the Council;
- There was a statutory requirement in terms of protecting the area of beauty;
- The questionnaire was difficult to complete and too complicated;
- An approximate number of 1,500 had completed the questionnaire thus far and that this was disappointing bearing in mind that Gwynedd's population was approximately 120,000;
- The amount had to be saved in full to be able to submit a response online, and therefore, individuals did not continue with the questionnaire which meant that good ideas from a cross-section of the community could not be submitted in the last box of the questionnaire where it was asked for any other comments;
- More discussions should be held with Community Councils and relevant groups;
- The unit administered the Sustainable Development Fund, therefore, what would be the implications in terms of allocating grants?

The Cabinet Member - Regulatory was thanked for attending the meeting.

It was suggested that the Chairman should send a letter in response to the consultation noting the need to save the AONB Unit in order to protect the designation.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to accept the report;**
- (ii) that the Chairman should send a letter in response to the consultation noting the need to save the AONB Unit in order to protect the designation.**

7. A REVIEW OF WELSH DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES

Submitted – the report of the Llŷn AONB Service Manager setting the context of the Review of Welsh Designated Landscapes. It was noted that the final report that had been submitted to the Welsh Government included 69 recommendations.

It was reported that Carl Sargeant, the Minister for Natural Resources had published a statement on 29 October 2015 noting that he was establishing a working group, under the leadership of Lord Dafydd Ellis-Thomas, to consider the recommendations and submit their findings in a report next year.

It was noted that the Chairman and the Llŷn AONB Service Manager would attend the initial meeting of the working group on 20 November.

Members were guided through a summary of the final report and attention was drawn to specific recommendations.

During the ensuing discussion the following main observations were noted:

- Retaining the names of National Parks and AONB designations, with the main designation to be known as National Landscapes Wales, was to be supported as it would help to raise the status of the AONB;
- An act would have to be changed in order for the National Park and the AONB to be equal designations and that could take approximately four or five years;
- The report was supportive of the AONB designation and gave it authority and prominence;
- Establishing a working group would mean a delay in terms of implementing the recommendations;
- Caution was needed in terms of losing the Welsh element.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

The meeting commenced at 4.30pm and concluded at 7.20pm

CHAIRMAN