

Llŷn Marine Ecosystem Project

The Llŷn Marine Ecosystems Project is a pilot project located in Pen Llŷn and is an evolution of the work of the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation (PLAS SAC). The project developed from recommendations in a document formulated by the Welsh Fishermen's Association (WFA) called '*Striking the Balance*' which proposed a method of managing the sea to improve our understanding of the marine environment and promote the recovery and resilience of ecosystems without having a detrimental impact on local fishermen and communities.

The approach taken by the project and aspirations for the project are supported in principle by recent legislative developments in Wales: The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, and the Environment Bill 2016.

The Gwynedd Marine Code

The code for marine recreational users in Gwynedd was dated therefore a new code was launched by this project earlier in the year. Following the success of a similar process in Ceredigion, discussions were held with the relevant officials and it was agreed to share the same code between the two counties. This avoided duplication and will maintain consistency across the bay. The code focuses on cetaceans and explains how to behave responsibly and respect the marine wildlife. With the cooperation of the maritime unit at Gwynedd Council, the code is now being distributed to each registered owner of a boat or jet ski in the county. The project officer has also been at the launching sites encouraging people to follow the code. An agreement is in place with the maritime unit of Anglesey Council to expand the code to Anglesey, and the project will meet with Conwy Council to discuss adopting our code in Conwy also.

Operation Neptune

The campaign was launched on the 20th of June at Abersoch in order to make it easier for people to contact the authorities if they suspect that someone is harassing marine wildlife and breaking the code. The campaign was launched in collaboration between the MP for Dwyfor Meirionnydd Liz Saville Roberts, Rob Taylor Countryside Crime Unit of North Wales Police, the local Councillor R H Wyn Williams, and Catrin Glyn from Gwynedd Council. Operation Neptune was launched following recent reports of dolphins being harassed by jet-skiers off the coast of Abersoch and follows a similar incident in Tywyn earlier in the year.

Next steps

1. Schools Competition

We will be running a competition between the five coastal high school in Gwynedd (Botwnnog, Glan-y-Môr, Eifionydd, Ysgol Ardudwy, Ysgol Tywyn) asking them to design a sticker to put on boats and jet skis, promoting the code, encouraging the public to call the police if any case of intentional disruption to wildlife is witnessed. A competition brief will be sent to the schools in September in order to get the stickers ready for the Year of the Sea 2018, by Visit Wales.

2. Accreditation Scheme

The Llyn Marine Ecosystem Project would like to establish a formal accreditation scheme, urging private businesses to formally agree to follow and encourage others to comply with the code. The businesses would include;

- Boat trips operators and water sports instructors
- Private launch sites (e.g. The Warren, Sunny Sands Camp Site)
- Boats and jet ski dealers

They would receive a certificate, which would be publicly displayed on their boat or store / site.

Ideally, the project and its partners would like to work across the county, so we can investigate ways to extend the service to monitor the coast better.