

# LLŶN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Annual Report 2011



## **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit**

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## A Word from the Chair of the Llŷn AONB Joint Consultative Committee



I was elected as Chair of the Joint Advisory Committee for the Llŷn Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) this year and it is my pleasure to present the 2011 Annual Report.

This has been a busy year for the AONB Unit, the Joint Committee and the Grants Panel. The key projects on which the Unit has been working during the year are Village signs, the Character of Rural Roads and the Llŷn Coastal festival. Information on these has been included in the report which follows.

Elin Wyn Hughes was appointed the AONB Project Officer in March 2011 following on from Dafydd Jones and she started in post in April. Elin has been working on the Sustainable Development Fund and the AONB's competitions amongst other matters.

Lea Hughes still worked part time for the AONB Unit until the end of September 2011 - leading the work on the Coastal Festival. Many thanks to Lea for the valuable contribution to the AONB Unit and the best of luck in the new post with the National Trust.

The Management Plan review was also completed during this year. A copy of the revised Plan, ac associated documents, will be available to view on the AONB website soon.

The Grants Panel, which includes some members of the Joint Committee, has met numerous times during the year to consider and decide upon grant applications from the Sustainable Development Fund. Almost all the funding has been committed and it is foreseen that all funding will have been spent by the beginning of March 2011. Also, John Griffiths the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development has confirmed that the Fund will continue of at least the next two financial years (2012/13 a 2013/14) - good news for the Llŷn AONB.

Our aim, with the Countryside Council for Wales' continued support for the service, is to work on numerous projects again in 2012. With this backing and commitment we hope to be able to collaborate effectively for the benefit of the Llŷn Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty again in the new year.

**Councillor Liz Saville Roberts**

**November 2011**

## **AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)**

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 provided the basis for the designation of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). AONBs are areas of exceptional landscapes and views and in this sense they are on a par in terms of conservation value to National Parks with the work of protecting being equally important.

The principal purpose of designating an area as an AONB is to protect and enhance its natural beauty, which includes protecting the plants, wildlife and geographical elements as well as those features linked to the landscape. It is also crucial to protect archaeological remains, historical features and the local architecture. In view of the need to safeguard the social and economic welfare of Areas of Natural Beauty, consideration should also be given to the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries that contribute to the local economy.

## **LLŶN AONB**

The Llŷn Peninsula is well-known for its diverse and interesting coastline and the splendid landscape which was the basis for its designation as an AONB back in 1956. Approximately a quarter of the Llŷn Peninsula, a total of 15,500ha, lies within the designated area including most of the land along the coast although the area also extends inland.

The geology is reflected in the excellent variety of coastal landscapes varying from steep cliffs surrounding Aberdaron Bay to the beaches and sand-dune systems near Abersoch. The Eifl mountain range (564m) forms the highest point in Llŷn. A plateau then extends down towards the sea and the black rocks of Mynydd Mawr at the tip of the Peninsula. The narrow winding roads and whitewashed farmhouses and cottages are characteristic of the area which also has open areas of ancient common land.

Bardsey, which also lies within the AONB is very special island with Christian connections dating back to a very early period; pilgrims from both far and near have been attracted here throughout the ages. It features prominently in Welsh folklore and according to tradition 20,000 saints are buried here. The Island has a wealth of historic remains and edifices too and is home to a great variety of wildlife.

## THE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY UNIT

The Unit forms part of the Environmental Service in the Regulatory Department Directorate. The Unit comprises of two officers - the AONB Service manager (Bleddyn Jones) and the Project Officer (Elin Wyn Hughes).

The AONB Officers' main areas of work are as follows

- **AONB Management Plan:** Preparation, updating, monitoring and implementation.
- **Consultations:** On planning applications, development applications, relevant plans and strategies
- **Representation:** In meetings and on relevant committees
- **Projects:** Implementing projects identified in the Management Plan and contributing to other projects.
- **Awareness:** Raising awareness of the AONB and the unit's work in various ways e.g holding events, attending events, providing products, preparation and publication of Llygad Llŷn and managing the Llŷn AONB website
- **The Sustainable Development Fund:** Promoting and administrating the Fund including providing advice and assistance on drawing up applications, running projects and claiming funding.

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## PROJECTS

### Village signs

As a continuation of the traditional village signs project, traditional style signs have been commissioned for 4 additional villages during 2011, they were:

- Morfa Nefyn
- Ederne
- Sarn Mellteyrn
- Llithfaen

Traditional signs have replaced modern signs which were lacking in character. By now traditional signs have been installed at the entrances of a good number of the AONB's villages and they are creating a sense of place and continuity. Some further signs will be commissioned in 2012 if funds allow.



Ederne - modern sign



Ederne - traditional sign

### Ffynnon Dudwen (St Tudwen's Well)

During the past two years the AONB service have been working on Ffynnon Dudwen. This historic well is located near St Tudwen's Church on land which is part of Cae'r Ffynnon farm, Dinas. We are grateful to Gwyndaf a Wyn Davies, who farm the land, for allowing the work of clearing the well and making a path to go ahead.

The well is consecrated to Llandudwen - which is the Church established by Saint Tudwen around the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Myrddin Fardd refers to this well in his book *Llên Gwerin Sir Gaernarfon* (1908) in which he states that the water is used to baptise and also that people throw pins and money into the well in the hope of being healed from various ailments.

The well came to the AONB Unit's attention in 2005 when it was surveyed as part of a survey undertaken by Elfed Gruffydd. At the time it was overgrown by gorse and brambles.

Initial scrub clearance work was carried out in April 2010. Following this work it was possible to see the basic shape of the well but not much of the original built form had survived (according to written records there was a semi-circle stone wall). After clearing the site and the well a wooden fence was erected to keep livestock out.

The final part of this project was creating a new path from the roadway to the well itself. Gaps were created in the cloddiau and traditional kissing gates installed. All the work on the well was undertaken by local craftsman Dylan Robers, Edern.

In the Spring of 2011 the well was re-consecrated by the Bishop of Bangor.



Tudwen's Well, Summer 2011

### **The Character of Rural Roads**

The rural road network is one of the features which contributes to the rural character of Pen Llŷn. The AONB Unit has been working on a number of projects to sustain and restore some individual features on these roads, such as village signs, fingerposts, milestones etc. However, there is concern that the character of rural roads and lanes is being slowly eroded by minor new works and new developments such as new signage, installing kerbs and painting the road surface.

It was decided to commission a study of the Character of Llŷn's Rural Roads - which was undertaken by Gwynedd Consultancy. The Study identifies the road's historic features and also looks at more recent developments which have affected the character of these rural roads. Also, the report included recommendations as regards Good Practice and Guidelines for the future. The Study was presented to the JAC members in November and a period of consultation will be undertaken.



Signage clutter on Llŷn's rural roads

### Undergrounding power lines

After long discussions with ScottishPower a powerline which was prominent on the landscape near Llithfaen has been undergrounded. The cables, and associated poles, were leading up to Trefor Quarry (from the Llithfaen side) and within the Eifl SSSI. The view is now much more natural and expansive following the work. Our thanks to Alan Jones, the other workers at ScottishPower and local landowners.



The view across to the Eifl following the undergrounding work.

## Llŷn Coastal Festival

The Llŷn Coastal Festival was held for the second year running this year, with many events to ensure a special experience for people of all ages, locals or visitors alike.

There were fun days, musical festivals, guided walks, lectures on local history, and taster sessions on rowing, kayaking and surfing. There was close co-operation between the AONB Unit and other services such as Communities First (Pen Llŷn and South Pwllheli), the National Trust and Llŷn Maritime Museum. Following the success and interest in this year's events, talks have already begun for the arrangements of the 2012 Llŷn Coastal Festival.



John Dilwyn Williams leading a guided walk titled "Llŷn's Small Harbours"



Art work in Miri Morfa

## THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

### *Background*

The National Assembly for Wales provides funding for this Fund which is coordinated in Wales by the Countryside Council for Wales and then administered locally by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Units. The Sustainable Development Fund is a grant for environmental projects which are both innovative and sustainable, and projects with which local communities are involved in an Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

This year the Fund was decreased to £67,200 and there were worries of further cutbacks. However there was good news when John Griffiths, the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development confirmed that there would be £70,000 available for each AONB in Wales for the next two financial years (2012/13 and 2013/14).

Also in 2011 the AONB Unit published a revised booklet with information on the Fund and how to apply for a grant.

## ***Projects supported***

Below, there is a summary of the projects supported so far in 2011-12

- ◆ **Pwllheli Information Centre**- funding was given towards supporting the Centre during the low season in its current location in Pwllheli.
- ◆ **Nefyn Maritime Museum** - an application by the Trustees was supported towards the re-roofing of the Church.
- ◆ **Dic Aberdaron Memorial**- a contribution towards a slate plaque for one of Llŷn's famous characters.
- ◆ **Celebration of Y Rhiw's Sheepdog Trials** - contribution to mark the centenary.
- ◆ **Abersoch Regatta 125 Years**- contribution towards publishing a book to mark the regatta that has been running for 125 years.
- ◆ **Saving Llŷn's Archaeology** -contribution towards a a project by Gwynedd's Archaeological Trust in Porthdinllaen.
- ◆ **Llanengan Guidebook**- a contribution to publish a guidebook with information about the area.

Also, there were some projects supported in the previous two or three years, which continued to be funded this year:

- **Special Area of Conservation - Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau**
- **Llŷn Heritage Landscape Project**
- **Y Winllan Project**
- **Canolfan y Felin Uchaf , Rhoshirwaun**

More information about these project can be obtained by the AONB Unit.



Dic Aberdaron Memorial



Y Rhiw Sheepdog Trials Committee



Saving Llŷn's Archaeology



Volunteers - Y Winllan Project

## **PUBLICITY AND AWARENESS RAISING**

### ***Nefyn Show***

The AONB Unit had booked a tent and large screen television to display information on the AONB and the Unit's work again this year. Unfortunately it was very windy the night before the show and many of the tents, including the AONB one, had come down by morning ! However tables were set up to display information and officers were present during the day.

### ***Llygad Llŷn***

The fifth edition of Llygad Llŷn was published in April this year. The magazine contained information about the area, the designation, projects in progress, the Sustainable Development Fund and articles on topics such as the Llŷn Landscape Heritage project.

The newsletter was distributed to councillors, community councils, schools, groups and organisations. Copies were also available from the Council offices, Pwllheli Information Centre, Abersoch TIC and Oriol Glyn y Weddw. A second publication run had to be made in August as the newsletter had proved so popular. The work of preparing the next issues will begin before Christmas and will hopefully be published by April 2012.

### ***Llŷn Coastal Festival***

Details of the events arranged as part of the Llŷn Coastal festival have already been mentioned in the Annual report. All the events were also important in raising awareness of the AONB and the Unit's work.

### ***Llŷn AONB Competitions***

This year two competitions were included in the Llygad Llŷn newsletter. One was a photographic competition on the theme of Pen Llŷn through the seasons and the other a poetry competition on the theme of The Llŷn Peninsula.

There was a good response to both competitions and a presentation night was held at the Tonnau oriel in Pwllheli during November. A big thank you to all those who entered and to the judges - Myrddin ap dafydd and Mari Lewis Jones am feirniadu. There was also an article in the local press and information on the AONB website.

## **THE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act placed a requirement on relevant Local Authorities to draw up a Management Plan for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Although the Assembly has now abolished a number of statutory plans, the accountability for preparing the Management Plan remains.

The first Llŷn AONB Management Plan was published in 2005. The Plan included a detailed assessment of the condition of the area, an overview of activities and pressure, a strategy for the future and a programme of work for the 5 operational years.

AONB Management Plan are required to be reviewed every 5 years and the Countryside Council for Wales provide a written guide on the process. Reviewing the Plan entailed a substantial amount of work, including new research. Also a Strategic Environmental Assessment and a habitats regulation Assessment was needed.

The Plan review was completed during 2011. A copy of the revised Plan, and associated documents, will be available to view on the AONB website soon.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### ***National Association for AONB Conference 2008***

Around 150 AONB representatives from across Wales, England and Northern Ireland gathered at Falmouth for the National Association of AONB's Annual Conference this year. The theme for the conference was "Local Solutions to National Issues"

Due to the long journey to Falmouth the officers of the AONB Units did not attend this year. However, all the information on the Conference is available on the Association's website: [www.aonb.org.uk](http://www.aonb.org.uk) .

### ***Wales Protected Landscapes Calendar 2011***

The Wales Protected Landscapes Calendar was produced for the first time in 2008 with the task of co-ordinating it undertaken by the Association for AONB. Every National Park and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty contributed financially as well as providing stunning photographs and the calendar proved a resounding success.

The Calendar was produced again in 2009 and 2010. This year the work of coordinating the Calendar was undertaken by Anglesey AONB. The aim is to have the calendar ready by the end of November and copies will be distributed to the JAC members, local Councillors, partners, supporters and others with an interest in the Llŷn AONB

Undoubtedly the calendar is an effective means of raising awareness about the family of protected landscapes and specific areas.

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