

3.0 THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE LLŶN AONB



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3.1 Introduction

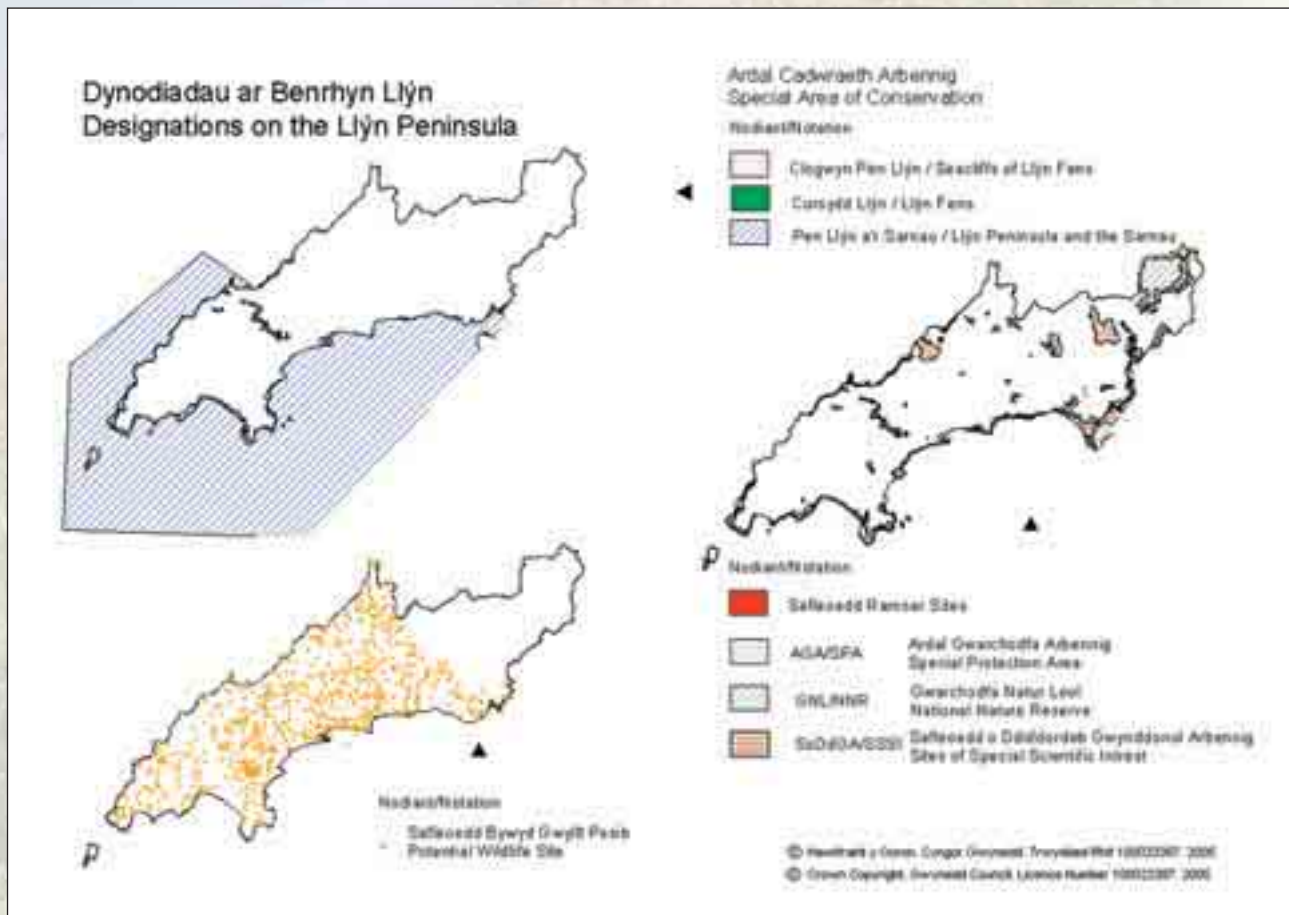
3.1.1 Identifying and defining the special qualities of the area is the first important step in the process of preparing the AONB Management Plan. Having defined the special qualities the next stage measures the extent and condition of these resources including assessing which changes have occurred over time and are continuing to take place. Some of these qualities will have remained fairly static such as the geology, the beauty of the landscape and coast but some of the qualities have deteriorated during the last century for example the decline in quality and area of resources such as habitats, species and historic buildings.

3.2 Special Qualities

3.2.1 The Countryside Council for Wales' guidelines ("AONB Management Plans 2002) emphasize that establishing what the special qualities on an area are, is an "essential starting point" in the process of preparing a Management Plan. The brief description of the Llŷn area in the Introduction provides an insight into its special qualities but in order to gain a clearer and fuller picture this section of the Plan will assess various sources of information and views about the area. This includes assessing information regarding the key designations, the views of various specialists in different fields, the perception and views of different people and groups of people and a general assessment of the material that has been written, stated and conveyed about the area.

3.3 Conservation designations on Llŷn

3.3.1 The most important features of Britain's landscape, coast, wildlife and historical environment have been acknowledged and safeguarded by a series of conservation designations. The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty itself is a statutory designation to protect the beauty of the landscape while there are a host of other designations, some statutory (by Act) or non-statutory (local designations) that have been made to safeguard other important features such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Some statutory designations are national while others are European or International. These designations provide varying levels of status and protection to different aspects and features of the area.



3.3.2 Due to the unique landscape and coastline, the wealth of habitats and species and archaeological and historic remains, many areas in Llŷn have been designated for conservation or protection purposes. A number of these designations are within the AONB while others are on or near the border such as Gors Geirch which is a Ramsar site. All the relevant designations are listed below:

DESIGNATION	TYPE	FEATURE
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Statutory	Landscape and coast
Landscape Conservation Area	Non-Statutory	Landscape
Environmentally Sensitive Area	Non-Statutory	Coast
Heritage Coastline	Non-Statutory	Rural environment
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Statutory	Biodiversity, geology/geomorphology
Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS)	Non-Statutory	Geology
RAMSAR site (adjoining)	Statutory	Wildlife
Special Protection Area	Statutory	Wildlife
Special Areas of Conservation	Statutory	Wildlife
Marine Special Area of Conservation	Statutory	Marine wildlife
National Nature Reserve	Statutory	Wildlife
Scheduled Ancient Monument	Statutory	Monuments
Listed Buildings	Statutory	Historic buildings
Conservation Areas	Statutory	Built environment
Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historical Interest	Non-Statutory	Historic environment

3.3.3 The following section on the state of the AONB will contain additional information about these designations. The number and variety of designations highlights the special and unique nature of Pen Llŷn as regards the beauty of the landscape and coast, geology and geomorphology, the wealth and abundance of wildlife and habitats and the historic environment.

3.4 Surveys and questionnaires

3.4.1 The most direct method of obtaining opinions regarding the special qualities of Llŷn AONB was by direct questioning and considering research work that included an element of posing questions and seeking opinions. It was vitally important to obtain the opinions, observations and impressions of different people about the area, including officers working in the area, people living and working here, and also visitors to the area. Luckily, we were able to use the results of a number of surveys in this section of the work, but a specialist survey of visitors to the AONB during the summer of 2003 was commissioned, due to lack of information.

3.4.2 Gwynedd Council – a questionnaire was prepared and distributed to a number of key officers within the Council, including Planning Officers, Wardens, Biodiversity Officers, Environmental Stewardship Officers and the Building Conservation Officer.

3.4.3 Local Residents – Fortunately, an excellent representation of local residents' views regarding the special characteristics of Llŷn, was available resulting from the *Gwynedd Landscape Strategy* prepared by Gwynedd Council and the Countryside Council for Wales in 1999. The Study was a pilot for a LANDMAP assessment of the Llŷn peninsula, and focus groups were set up as part of the consultation process,.

3.4.4 Survey of Llŷn Businesses – A survey was conducted on local people and businesses' opinions of Llŷn's special qualities, as part of research work on the area's economy carried out on behalf of the Council by Cynefin Environmental Ltd in 2003. The survey asked what features were particularly special about Llŷn.

3.4.5 Tourism Survey – This survey was carried out during the summer of 2003. The purpose of the study was to collect information from visitors regarding matters that were specific to the AONB, including what they thought were the area's 'special qualities'.

3.4.6 Having assessed and considered all the information from the above sources, the comments made and views expressed regarding the area's qualities were summarized according to a number of themes as follows:

Landscape and coast

Beautiful landscape, views, mountains, cliffs, diverse coastline, beaches, small harbours/estuaries, the sea and its influence.

Early development and historical remains

Archaeological and historic remains, historic field patterns, "cloddiau", stone walls, hedgerows, wells, remains of mining and quarrying operations.

Built heritage

Traditional buildings, farmhouses, cottages, chapels and churches.

Culture and community

Welsh culture, the Welsh language, the people.

Purity and tranquillity

Solitude, lack of development, tranquillity, clean air.

Wildlife

Biodiversity, wildlife and stock, semi-natural habitats, wild flowers, heaths, wetland, streams, trees.

Access

Public footpaths, rambling paths, beaches, narrow meandering lanes, freedom to roam, open land, common land.



Porth Ceiriad



From Nefyn beach towards Yr Eifl

3.5 Booklets and reports

3.5.1 In addition to obtaining direct opinions, it was also possible to consider the opinions expressed in publications including professional reports and booklets about the area. Clearly there is a large number of relevant documents which contain general and specialized information about the Llŷn area but for this section of the Plan a small selection of publications, a general guidebook, a book about the area and a specific report on the AONB, were assessed to gain a general picture of the special qualities of the area. Below a short summary of the references to the area's qualities in those documents is given:

Llŷn – A special place, National Trust, 1998. This booklet summarises special characteristics under the following titles: *The Distant Past, Lives of the Saints, Maritime Heritage, Quarrying, Landscape and Seascape of Llŷn, Wildlife, Farming and the Countryside, Fishing.*

Llŷn, Elfed Gruffydd, Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 1998. The titles of the chapters convey the special characteristics of Llŷn to the local author: *Geology, Prehistoric Remains, Mythology of the Stones, The Age of Saints, Arthur and Bardsey, Early Christian Remains, Religion, The Influence of the Sea, Wells, Llŷn Folklore, Legends, Fairs, The Pilgrims' Route, Bardsey Island, Wildlife, Leisure, The Names of Farms and Smallholdings in Llŷn.*

Penrhyn Llŷn – assessment of the Heritage Coast and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Dwyfor District Council, 1983. A detailed analysis of the area touching upon the following themes – *Landscapes, Economy, Society, Recreation, Conservation, Coastal Erosion.*

3.5.2 Detailed information on various special qualities, such as wildlife and historical remains, is included in plans, strategies and specialized documents. For example, Natur Gwynedd provides details of rare habitats and species while information on the wealth of historic remains is included in the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales.



Ynys Enlli



Gam Fadrun

3.6 Poetry and Art

3.6.1 As well as obtaining direct opinions, it was decided to consider the impression the area has made on people by looking at literature concerning the area. It was not possible to go into great detail however poetry and art have made an important contribution towards identifying the special qualities.

3.6.2 Poets have been very effusive on the subject of Llŷn. The various poems composed through the ages convey what the poet saw as being the special characteristics of Llŷn. Modern poets noted for their connection with Llŷn include R.S. Thomas, R. Gerallt Jones, Alan Llwyd, Gillian Clarke and Brenda Chamberlain. A collection of poems has been compiled in an anthology entitled *Cerddi Llŷn ac Eifionydd* (Poems of Llŷn and Eifionydd) published by Gomer Press recently (2002). The editor states that he hopes that the volume will “offer the reader a picture of the area, its people and history as well as being a source of information about the area”. The various poems included definitely give a picture of the area and there are a number of themes that arise consistently, namely:

- *impressive scenery, beauty, the sea and tidal movements, rocks and cliffs, hills and shores;*
- *Bardsey and the connection with religion/saints, ships and sailors;*
- *cottages and villages;*
- *notable characters such as Dic Aberdaron, Llŷn as the stronghold of the Welsh language, the effects of inward migration, indigenous society, special names of the houses and farms;*
- *peace and solitude and a ‘magical’ quality;*
- *the purple heather, yellow gorse flowers, seabirds;*
- *clean, golden beaches.*

3.6.3 Some lines from these poems are famous and well known for their descriptions of Llŷn, for instance:

“Lle i enaid gael llonydd” – T. Glynne Davies

“Creigiau Aberdaron a thonnau gwyllt y môr” – Albert Evans Jones (Cynan)

3.6.4 Llŷn has also made an impression on artists, including both native artists such as Elis Gwyn Jones, Emrys Parry and Rob Piercy and those who came to the area for a period to practice their craft. Pictures of the impressive views of Llŷn are prominent in the work of the artists, and there are many views of the sea, the sunset, various landscapes, coastline and also cottages/farms and local characters. A painting competition entitled “Hud a Lledrith yn Llŷn” was held in 2003. A considerable number of the paintings included scenes of the sea, coastline, hills, cairns and local characters.

3.7 Conclusions

3.7.1 After considering the various impressions and opinions of a wide variety of people, a fairly complete picture emerges of what exactly the numerous special qualities of Llŷn are. These can be arranged into seven broad categories:

- Landscape and coast
- Purity and tranquility
- Wildlife
- Historic environment
- Traditional buildings
- Culture and community
- Access and enjoyment.

3.7.2 The next section of the Plan will assess the state of these qualities while following sections will include a strategy and practical action plan to try and sustain and safeguard this wealth. The Plan will also aim to promote and foster action which would improve the condition or increase the size of the resource or quality. Additionally, in consideration of the fact that the AONB is a living landscape the Management Plan will aim to improve the area’s economic and social well-being in a way which is in-keeping with the area’s character.