

CCB CYMDEITHAS ERYRI the SNOWDONIA SOCIETY AGM
Held on Saturday 17 October 2015 at Dragon Theatre, Barmouth

MINUTES

Present: 42 members, with President John Lloyd-Jones in the Chair.

Apologies were received from:

Vice-Presidents:

Sir John Houghton

Trustees:

Bob Lowe

Katherine Himsworth

Gareth Roberts

And 101 other members

1. The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in 2014 were approved *nem con* (proposed by Jacob Buis, seconded by Nick Smythe).

2. **Matters arising** - None

Chair's report

3. David Archer introduced himself.
 - i. He reported that it had been a busy year for the Society with the programme of volunteer work, business membership and social media presence all expanding. In the face of massive cut backs in public expenditure, the Society is building partnerships with individuals and organisations who are also passionate about the future of Snowdonia.
 - ii. DA commented on the challenges arising from UK and Welsh Government policies, Uncertainty about future subsidies for renewable energy is slowing down applications for large scale wind farms, but numbers of hydro-schemes, some potentially damaging, are increasing; new pylons are a potential threat at Glyn Rhonwy, near Llanberis, while old pylons across the Dwyrd estuary have come closer to being undergrounded.
 - iii. DA warned that while new adrenaline activity centres boost the local economy and are welcomed when sensitively located, budgets for the upkeep of footpaths, public transport and other essential services to safeguard the National Park are being slashed. With increased visitor pressure requiring more, not less, resources, he asked if a Visitor Payback scheme should now be revisited.
 - iv. DA said the Society is responding by developing partnerships with the National Park Authority, extending volunteer work to look after the Park, consulting via the Snowdon Partnership, working with other NGOs to co-ordinate effective responses to development threats, and with Business Members to improve links with the business sector.
 - v. DA reported on the Society's activities as part of the *Alliance for National Parks Cymru* established in response to new Welsh Government policies affecting the National Parks and AONBs in Wales. He expressed disappointment that the publication of the *Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales* had been delayed and would be too late to influence two Welsh Bills, the *Well-being of Future Generations Bill* and the *Planning Bill*, both enacted earlier in the summer and with implications for National Parks. He expressed concern as to how the two new Acts will tie in with the *Designated Landscapes Review* recommendations, particularly as neither Act gives any recognition to landscape.
 - vi. DA drew attention to a new Environment Bill being considered by the Welsh Government, concerning management of natural resources but failing to recognise landscapes and seascapes as a natural resource, or specifically refer to the Designated Landscapes which make up 25% Wales' land area. He

said that the Society will use next year's Welsh Government elections to press parties on their manifesto policies on National Parks.

- vii. DA praised the Society's effective and enthusiastic staff and welcomed Bethan Wynne Jones the new Growing Tŷ Hyll Officer.
- viii. He thanked fellow Trustees who devote their time and skills to the Society.
- ix. He thanked the members whose involvement the Society relies on, inviting comment on issues that concern them and feedback on the Society's performance.

Snowdonia Ecosystem Project Manager's presentation

4. Mary-Kate Jones presented a short film summarising the Project's work during the year:
 - i. A welcome to Bethan Wynne Jones, the new Growing Tŷ Hyll Officer
 - ii. Examples of the Projects' work clearing litter and maintaining footpaths on Snowdon, building dry stone walls, clearing Himalayan Balsam, conducting mammal surveys and work in the Tŷ Hyll woodland and gardens
 - iii. Over 70 workdays completed, over 2000 volunteer hours and over 50 new volunteers taking part
 - iv. Partners include NRW, SNPA and the National Trust
 - v. Volunteer days with various university and college groups
 - vi. Free training provided for volunteers in wildflower and grassland identification, dry-stone walling and bee-keeping
 - vii. Volunteers explaining the enjoyment they gain from volunteering with benefits including doing constructive, practical outdoor work, giving something back to the community and being physical and active in a beautiful place.
 - viii. A summary of workdays coming up and an invitation to all to come and try it
 - ix. A thank you to Owain and Bethan for organizing the workdays and to the volunteers who the Society's work depends on.

Director's Report

5. John Harold reported on how the Society has been developing its resources and capacity.
 - i. In the last 2 years, funding for the Society's practical work, a cornerstone for an 'action' Society, has moved from patchy stop-start funding to funding lasting 2-3 years, enabling better work planning and more engaged staff. In addition to previous funders, a significant amount of funding had recently been secured from the Esmé Kirby Snowdonia Trust, which will support the practical work, in particular at Tŷ Hyll, for the next 3 years or more.
 - ii. In addition to grant funding, the Society has been working very hard on increasing fund-raised income. He gave examples of merchandise, direct appeals and facilitating individuals to do their own fundraising, citing a recent Triathlon organised by Society members that raised £1,300. Legacies are an important funding stream that help with forward planning and as well as a few small legacies received the Society has been notified of legacies totalling £30,000 to come in over the next couple of years.
 - iii. JH reported that for the first time for several years, membership has shown a small increase for every quarter of the last year. He acknowledged the crucial role the membership plays.
 - iv. The Society is building its communications: development of the website, increased use of Facebook and its useful role in recruiting volunteers and communications; maintenance of the quality of the magazine. Facilitating these communication is a key part of his job, and is the basis of a strong organisation.
 - v. JH reminded the floor that the Society needs to build resources and improve communications because there is much work to be done, evidenced by the work of the Ecosystem Project, and also the acknowledgement received from other organisation of the crucial and valuable role the Project plays in their being able to continue their work.

- vi. The final strand of building capacity is building the Society's campaign capacity eg the capacity to respond effectively to changes in legislation. He cited one key example: the Conwy Falls hydro-electric scheme is an unusual planning issue for the Park, it being a long time since so many people have responded - 680 letters of objection and 30 in support, from individuals and local businesses. He said that, with serious implications for conservation in a very important local section of river corridor designated for its plant life, this case is a test for him of how the planning system works, testing its capacity and will to fulfill its own obligations. The next 6 weeks would be a busy time working and campaigning in partnership with other concerned groups.

Finance Report

6. Judith Bellis introduced herself.

- i. She explained that the Society has two main sources of income (ie: raised by ourselves from subscriptions, donations, legacies, investments and through Tŷ Hyll; and grant-funding) and income for this year has fallen from £123,000 to £104,000; as this is due to the timing of receipt of grants, this is not a matter for concern.
- ii. She also explained that the figure for debtors is higher this year (£24k compared to £13k last year), reflecting money owed to the Society at the year-end for project expenses incurred but not yet reimbursed.
- iii. JB said this is the third year CESS has achieved an operating surplus, reflecting an increase in the value of investments but this could be reversed eg should expenses arise which have not been budgeted for.
- iv. The Society received notice of legacies, and a further two which should come in in the present financial year, as mentioned by JH. JB expressed gratitude to those who have remembered the society in their wills and to families who name the society as recipients of memorial donations, of which the Society received several during the year.
- v. JB reported some of the Society's new fundraising efforts, drawing attention to JH's part in a triathlon, details of which are on the Society's website; a member asked for donations to the Society in lieu of presents at a birthday party, raising a very significant sum. Cards and seeds are for sale at this AGM and online. JB invited ideas and help for fundraising.
- vi. JB explained that fundraising and other efforts to increase income is necessary for the future security of the Society; grant funding for SEP is in place for the next two to three years, but there are no guarantees this will continue in the long term and generous reserves will help ensure the future of the project.
- vii. JB reminded the floor that the Society is only as strong as its members enable it to be and thanked them for their continuing support and for attending the AGM.

Mr John Lloyd-Jones remarked that the bottom-line for the Society's accounts was heartening. He expressed regret that the report of the *Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales* had been delayed..... and emphasised the importance of planning powers remaining with the National Parks.

Questions to Director and Officers

Mr JLJ invited questions from the floor.

7. **Mr JLJ** asked what the generating capacity of Conwy hydro-scheme would be.
8. **JH:** 4.5MW, with a 900m tunnel through rock and a 1km semi-buried tunnel. A significant length of the river will be depleted including in an SSSI designated for its lower plants; the primary qualifying feature for its SSSI status could be damaged. The response from NRW missed the point and fails to address concerns re their own designated site. This is not an isolated occurrence; NRW are not fulfilling their responsibilities.
9. **JLJ** – CPRW's contribution on this is pretty damning
10. **Netti Collister** – What does JH feel we can most usefully do in the next 6 weeks?

11. **JH** - We've just had the Planning Officer's report with a recommendation to approve the application. NRW's failure is a large part of its weakness. I have arranged to meet with locals and organizations who have objected. We need to, 1. Highlight errors etc in that report; 2. Disseminate this information widely, via media and individuals who can write so they get the message re facts and inappropriate interpretation of the facts. There are a wide range of varied interests united to oppose this.
12. **NC** - Can we communicate with the members via the website?
13. **JH** - Yes and via the e-newsletter
14. **Nick Smythe** – who collects the Feed-in-Tariff?
15. **JH** - The developer in negotiation with the landowner. This is one of the problems with the FIT – there is money to be made on a first-come-first-served basis. A community scheme would have a different balance of benefits. The NT as a key landowner may be susceptible to public opinion pressure or the thought of it, but I don't think they'll pull out now.
16. **NC** - Have sweeteners been offered to the local community?
17. **JH** – es, a few tens of thousands, a trivial proportion of the £1.5 to £2m per year FIT income.
18. **Margaret Thomas** – The scheme will cost £12m. It is under 5MW but still a big scheme.
19. **NC** – The monitoring of compliance for these schemes is very poor. It is very worrying.
20. **JH** –Yes – there are wider concerns about this. Schemes motivated by incentives make this more likely.
21. **David Firth** – I'm hearing enormous criticism of NRW all over Wales, including from staff who used to be at CCW. We must all get together to criticize NRW but there is reluctance due to grant implications. NRW is a failure. CCW wasn't perfect but the situation is going downhill.
22. **JH** – We receive significant grant-funding from NRW, but I haven't minced my words in my item to the Western Mail.
23. **JL** – Regarding what the Minister will do with our report [The Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales], I should say that different Ministers are giving their views to him. The Report will be a public report and there will be implications for the manifestos for Welsh Assembly elections next year. We need more AMs on board supporting National Parks.
24. **Peter Foulkes** – Will the 'Protected Landscapes' recommendations produce new Protected Landscapes legislation?
25. **JL** – The report was crafted to comply with the Well-being Act and the Planning Act. The Planning Act gives power to the Environment Minister to take planning powers away from National Parks, but doesn't say he has to do it. We are quite keen to have our independent view on this.
26. **KC Gordon** – DA said in his report we could consider a tourist charge. Please expand.
27. **DA** – We've seen an increase in the number of well-heeled people coming to the area for adrenalin activities. They might be keen to give to the area's upkeep. There have been discussions for many years in the Park on a 'tourist tax' as a way of encouraging visitors to make a donation. Gwynedd Council have resurrected the idea and looked at other National Parks, though the Snowdonia Park Authority decided against it.
28. **JH** – Helen Pye, the Snowdon Warden, has set up a partnership for looking after Snowdon, which, with our involvement, is now working with Gwynedd Council and Menter Môn to develop a Visitor Giving pilot on Snowdon massif itself; this will be via events, accommodation, etc.
29. **NT** - £4m was raised to save Snowdon for the nation.
30. **NS** – Whatever is done, please avoid the word 'tax'.
31. **JH** – And it will have to be made clear how the money will be used.
32. **Geoff Gibbs** – Some people are already familiar with the National Trust and Wildlife Trusts asking for additional donations on entry.
33. **Richard Williams Ellis** – It would be difficult to differentiate visitors and residents.
34. **JH** – The intention is to promote a sense of responsibility.

Adoption of 2014/15 Annual Report and Accounts

35. The motion to adopt the 2014/15 Annual Report and summary of the accounts for the year ending 30 June 2015 was proposed by Morag McGrath, seconded by David Firth and passed *nem con*.

Appointment of independent examiners

34. A motion to appoint Bennett Brooks as independent examiners of the Society's accounts for 2015/16 was proposed by Netti Collister, seconded by Nick Smythe and passed *nem con*.

Re-election of President and Vice-Presidents

35. The election of President, John Lloyd Jones, was proposed by Margaret Thomas, seconded by Netti Collister and passed *nem con*.

36. The election of Vice-Presidents, Sir John Houghton CBE FRS, Sir Simon Jenkins FSA, David Firth, Dr Morag McGrath and His Honour Huw Morgan Daniel CVO KStJ was proposed by Richard Williams Ellis, seconded by Netti Collister and passed *nem con*.

Election of officers and members of the Executive Committee

37. The election of the following was approved *nem con*:

- Chair: David Archer (proposed by Jacob Buis, seconded by Alan Davies)
- Executive Committee (Trustees): Jacob Buis, Gareth Roberts, Robert Lowe, Sarah McCarthy and Kevin Jones (proposed by Netti Collister, seconded by Margaret Thomas).

Any urgent business

38. None

39. John Harold thanked Mr John Lloyd Jones for chairing the meeting.

40. A provisional date of next year's meeting was announced as 22nd October 2016, tbc.