

CYNGOR GWYNEDD

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

Draft minutes of the 9th Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC Liaison Group meeting held on the 8th March 2005 (starting 7pm) at Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog.

Present:

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| Cllr Ray Quant | Ceredigion County Council |
| Rowland Sharp | Sea Anglers |
| Bill Miller-Jones | Diver and Boat User |
| Rod Gritten | Snowdon National Park Authority |
| Lucy Kay | Countryside Council for Wales |
| Rhys Jones | Gwynedd Council |
| Alison Edwards | SAC Officer |
| Cllr Caerwyn Roberts | Snowdonia National Park Authority (chairman) |
| Mike Thrussell | Recreational Fishing |
| Glyn Roberts | Chairman of the Llŷn Fisherman's Association |
| Mike Bowyer | Marine Archaeology |
| Craig Rockcliff | Environment Agency |
| Alf Bowen | Aberdyfi Partnership |
| Bill Bracewell | Aberdyfi Partnership |
| Andy Hall | Arthog Outdoor Education Centre |

Introduction

Caerwyn Roberts welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that Lindsey Colbourne, who was meant to facilitate a section of the meeting, was unfortunately unable to attend due to bereavement. Caerwyn apologised for the amount of scaffolding around Plas Tan y Bwlch and explained that they had received Lottery funding to install a lift to accommodate the disabled and to carry out general maintenance. He also mentioned how good it is that the site is now formally designated as a full SAC.

1. Apologies:

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|--------------|---------------------------------|
| Jeff Morgan | Welsh Water |
| Andy Porter | Trinity Lighthouse |
| Peter Wight | Gwynedd Council |
| Barry Davies | Gwynedd Council |
| Helen Clay | Environment Agency |
| Gruff Jones | Keep Wales Tidy |
| Jill Whipp | Environment |
| Andy Jeffery | Outward Bound Wales |
| David Archer | Snowdon National Park Authority |

2. Minutes of the last meeting

- 2.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1 Item 4.2: RAs and others to address issue of links to plans and strategies of other groups and organisations. Alison Edwards explained that this is an extremely important issue but would probably be best tackled when the new conservation features are being added to the action plan. This way links to and between all conservation features can be considered and not just links to and between reefs and estuaries.
- 3.2 Item 4.4: Ray Quant asked if Ysgol Craig y Wylfa had been included on the contact list receiving information from Alison about the SAC. Alison confirmed that the school is on the contact list. Action completed.

- 3.3 Item 5.5: Alison to contact Dr Peter Lloyd about the Action Plan Review and all other Liaison Group members to contact Alison if they want to raise any issues in relation to the Action Plan. Alison confirmed that she had been in contact with Dr Peter Lloyd and that a few of the Liaison Group members had been in touch about the Review and their view had been taken on board. The Action Plan Review is also a topic on the agenda so will be discussed further then.

4. Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC is now fully designated

Caerwyn Roberts explained that all members of the Liaison Group should have had this information either by letter from CCW or an email from Alison.

Lucy Kay explained that Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau had been a candidate SAC since 1996 for its reefs and estuary features. Lucy then explained that the EU had been separated into biogeographic regions and that the UK was a part of the North Atlantic region and that there have been ongoing discussions by the member states. When the UK first submitted the list of proposed SACs the list was deemed insufficient and the process of moderation began. During this process Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau gained 7 habitat features and 3 species features. The UK list was resubmitted in 2002 and was accepted as a candidate SAC. However, it was policy in Wales that each cSAC was to be treated as a fully designated SAC. In early December 2004 the suite of cSACs in the North Atlantic were designated as SCI (Sites of Community Importance – a name given to the sites until the member state officially designates the sites within its own country). On December 13th 2004 the minister designated the sites in Wales as fully designated Special Areas of Conservation. The only exclusions have been the Dee and the Severn; they are still at the stage of proposed SAC (they are fully designated Special Protected Areas for their birds species). Lucy then asked if the Liaison Group had all received letters explaining this to which the Liaison Group replied that they had. Lucy explained that more information will be sent out, probably in May, and will include a copy of the formal registration document and a copy of the final map and a list of the conservation features. Lucy then explained that this designation wouldn't mean any significant change in how the SAC is managed since it is policy in Wales to treat any cSAC as fully designated. The original predicted timescale for designation was June 2004 (this was predicted in 1996). The prediction wasn't far out. Finally Lucy explained that the current Management Plan and Action Plan only tackle the reefs and estuaries but all the conservation features now have full designation under the Habitats Directive. Therefore both the Management Plan and Action Plan need updating. This is to be completed by the end of March 2006 in the current timetable. Lucy then asked if anyone had any questions.

Questions:

- Andy Hall asked what are the conservation features. Lucy replied by listing the features as follows:
 - Reefs
 - Estuaries
 - Large shallow inlets and bays
 - Sea caves
 - Coastal lagoons
 - Subtidal sandbanks
 - Intertidal sandbanks and mudflats
 - Atlantic salt meadows
 - Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand
 - Bottlenose dolphins
 - Grey seals
 - Otters
- Mike Parry mentioned that he has noticed that Wales seems to have a disproportionate amount of marine SACs as compared to the rest of the UK. Lucy replied that yes Wales' coastline is largely covered by SACs and that this reflects the vast wealth of habitats and species we have here in Wales and it is this that has resulted in the large sites that we have here in Wales. Lucy also explained that Natura 2000 looks after sites across Europe.

- Andy Hall asked if other countries had designated as many sites as the UK and if they were for similar species. Lucy replied by saying that she was not sure what was happening in other countries. Andy answered by saying that Countries such as Ireland and areas of France should have similar habitats and species to the UK and should therefore have similar areas designated. Lucy said that that information should be available on the Internet and that yes they should be designated. Rod added that it is not just a matter of having the habitat or species present but that they have to be in good condition. In Wales we have done very little to damage the habitats and species in the marine environment so we are left with habitats and species that are in very good condition.

5. Review of the Action Plan and Timetable

Alison briefly explained what the Review of the Action Plan entailed. Alison also explained that the new timetable had been included as an appendix in the Review. It was explained that the Liaison Group and the Relevant Authorities Group prioritising the actions from the Action Plan at the last Liaison Group meeting and these were the actions that were included in the timetable. Alison then asked if there were any questions regarding either the Review or the timetable.

Questions:

- Rowland Sharp asked what had been done about the actions referring to legal aspects. Rowland said that in his opinion these were the most important actions and that no other actions could be done until these had been completed. Alison replied by saying three actions refer to the clarification of legislative procedures:
 - 3.8 Clarify the legislative procedures for authorising shoreline defence structures
 - 3.4 Clarify the legislative procedures for authorising slipway development
 - 3.15 Clarify the legislative procedures for authorising land reclamation and flood bank works
 During the prioritisation process held at the Liaison Group meeting in September 2004 only action 3.8 was classed as a high priority. Therefore action 3.4 and action 3.15 are not in the current timetable. Rowland said that he was referring to clarifying the legislation regarding peoples right to cross the intertidal zone to fish and said that no other action could be completed without knowing this. Rowland said without knowing this the Relevant Authorities could not refuse access to the general public. Rowland also said that he had sent a letter to Gwynedd Council regarding this about three years ago and didn't get a reply. Alison replied by saying that the action he was talking about is not in the Management Plan or Action Plan but she would try and chase up the query with the Maritime Services Department in Gwynedd Council.
- A question was raised regarding what has been done about review of consents. Lucy replied by saying that it was a legal requirement for all planning authorities to undertake this process. Lucy said that CCW had just begun the process but that the EA had done a lot of work on this. Alison added that Gwynedd Council had just begun the process also and that they were looking at developments that have consents but have either not yet begun or have yet to complete the development. If a development proves to have an impact on the SAC then consent can be revoked.
- Bill Bracewell asked what the SAC meant for activities undertaken under harbour revision orders (HRO) and harbour empowerment orders (HEO). Lucy replied by saying activities carried out under HROs and HEOs still have to comply with the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the UK legislation for this, which is the Habitats Regulations. Lucy also said that in relation to the Action Plan the Relevant Authorities have identified a way to work through this logically to see if there are issues within the existing HROs and HEOs that need to be addressed in relation to their potential impact on the SAC and follow the procedure set out in the Habitat Regulations for assessment of plans and projects if necessary.

ACTION: Alison to pass the query re legislation regarding right of way on the foreshore to the Maritime Services department at Gwynedd Council.

6. Topics raised by the Liaison Group

Caerwyn Roberts explained that there had been a change to the agenda since the facilitator could not make the meeting. The time put aside for item six will be used to discuss any topic the Liaison Group would like to share / provide information on / receive information on. First there was a 15-minute break so members could gather their thoughts and perhaps meet other members. A flip chart was provided so members could make a note of chosen topics.

15 MINUTES BREAK

Artificial Offshore Reefs – Councillor Ray Quant

Ray Quant explained that there had been a proposal for an offshore reef just off Borth. Its main purpose would be coastal defence. It would have many extra advantages e.g. it will act as an artificial reef and attract fish and it will also provide the beach with a good surf break (which would hopefully bring more tourism to the area). Ceredigion County Council has paid for a feasibility study. One of the contacts for this project is Professor Kerry Black. He has designed an artificial reef before. The idea of an offshore artificial reef is to replace the use of hard rock and groins as coastal defence. Ray Quant said that he had all this information on disk if anyone was interested.

Questions:

- Mike Thrussell asked what material would be used.
 - o Ray Quant said geotec bags that would be filled with sand.
- Mike Thrussell said that he had put a request in for an artificial reef years ago to increase habitat and restrict trawling. The downside to this is that you can't dictate the movement of sand and that if you alter this somewhere will cop it. Mike then asked how far out were they intending to put the reef.
 - o Ray Quant said that they intended to place it 400 – 500m off low line. They have modelled it at different distances out to sea and the further out they went the more powerful the wave was at smashing over top the reef.
- Mike Bowyer asked how artificial reefs stopped the build up of sand.
 - o Mike Thrussell answered by saying that they don't really and sand will get through and in some cases artificial reefs are used to build up beaches. Mike also said that in the long term they are good but they do have a down side and in view of this need to be placed very carefully. In this particular case it is likely that Aberdyfi will be the place most affected. The artificial reef is likely to alter physical aspects such as currents.
- Alf Bowen said that there was a lady doing a PhD at Bangor University on siltation in the Dyfi estuary. Alf said that the information was available.

ACTION: **Alison to contact Ray Quant for a copy of the CD on artificial reefs and make the information available to the Liaison Group.**
 Alison to contact Alf Bowen for a copy of the report on siltation in the Dyfi estuary and make the information available to the Liaison Group.

Impact on borders of SAC – Mr Bill Bracewell and Mr Alf Bowen

A regeneration project is underway in Aberdyfi in an attempt to extend the tourist season. Aberdyfi is a unique area environmentally; it includes a SSSI, SAC, biosphere reserve, RAMSAR etc. So the idea is to build an ecocentre in order to show people what a fantastic environment Aberdyfi has got. The centre would also include a climbing wall and the whole centre would be built out of sustainable material. It

will be built with education and tourism primarily in mind. The proposed location is at the end of the car park in Aberdyfi. The SSSI and the SAC boundary come up to the car park. The ecocentre would be put in place of the children's play area and would extend somewhat into the SSSI and SAC. The architect of the Eden Centre has been contracted to design the ecocentre (at an estimated cost of £2.5 million). The children's play area will have to be relocated and the ecocentre would need 3-4 yards of the SAC for building. The idea of the new play area is to have wooden structures on the sand, i.e. no hard surface. The questions that Bill Bracewell and Alf Bowen asked were; what effect would this have on the SAC / would they be able to do it / what was the general reaction to this? They concluded by asking if people could look at what they are trying to do and try and reach a decision through weighing up the pros and cons.

Questions:

- Lucy said that she would try and answer the questions that they had posed but as she isn't personally involved in the project she could not answer fully. Lucy said that CCW have a statutory function where by they have to follow the relevant legislation no matter how big or small the intended project. The principle of the issue is valid because it is such a small area, however, if there were a number of small project the cumulative effect could be significant. CCW are interested in being supportive but they have to look at the SAC being built on and ensure that there will be no impact on the SAC. The likely impacts depend on the specifics of the proposal. The biggest likely impact is probably sediment movement. The estuary is a very dynamic system and long-term effects will have to be considered. Lucy said that she would also have to see the specific area. Lucy also said that the planning authorities would have to take into account of what CCW say.
- Bill Bracewell answered by saying that sometimes unrealistic decisions are made and that common sense should prevail.
- Caerwyn Roberts suggested that the best way forward was to get people on side and not to hound people with letters.

Bonfire on the "quangos" – Mr Mike Parry

Mike Parry asked Lucy what the future holds for CCW.

Lucy replied by saying that she was not sure of the situation with regard to year to year funding but that CCW was an assembly sponsored public body and that CCW had statutory responsibilities e.g. CROW Act. This means that it would be difficult to bring CCW into the assembly. There will be a staff move to Llandudno into the new assembly building. Lucy also pointed out that the Habitats Regulations need a conservation body (this is CCW). There is a potential for CCW to become more of a marine organisation which would tie in with ICZM (integrated coastal zone management) and the marine bill.

Alf Bowen mentioned the interaction between Ireland and Wales with Interreg bids.

It was also mentioned that the assembly has taken in Agri-environment schemes and that this has been bad news for SNPA because before this happened farmers would come into the SNPA offices in Penrhyndeudraeth to discuss issues.

John Mur Award – Mr Andy Hall

Andy Hall explained that the John Mur Award is an education award with conservation aspects. There are approximately 50 outdoor centres in the area that provide children with the opportunity of visiting the environment and to get involved and realise their place in the environment. They do a number of physical projects such as litter picks and collection of lobster pots (which they later take back to the fishermen). Andy said that these projects are working quite well. But they need to be aware of local issues.

Lucy said that the Relevant Authorities and the Liaison Group could provide useful input on local issues.

Caerwyn Roberts mentioned that SNPA has contributed to the John Mur Award through the sustainable development fund.

Abandoned lobster pots – Mr Bill Miller-Jones & Specific Issues – Ms Alison Edwards

Bill Miller-Jones explained that there is a problem with lost lobster pots within the SAC. Bill has spotted these pots when he has been out diving. Some have been washed away by currents or the line to the buoy has been cut by boat propellers etc. The problem these pots then cause can be devastating and is termed ghost fishing i.e. fish will swim into the pot and be unable to escape, when they die they attract other fish and then they can't escape and the cycle continues. Some countries have set up schemes to combat this by providing the fishermen with biodegradable inexpensive clips to attach to the door of the trap. These clips then rust away in a given amount of time and the door falls open. Bill then asked what the Liaison Group could do to combat this.

Alison replied by saying that this was a topic that she wanted to bring up (specific issues). Alison would like to see the Liaison Group tackle specific issues like this one by setting up working groups with interested members. Alison said that she was willing to organise any meetings needed etc. Alison said that she would like to see these groups working very proactively to tackle problems such as this head on. Alison asked if any interested member could either see her after the meeting or get in touch at a later date to arrange this.

Lucy asked if the NW&NWSFC had done any work on this. Mike Parry replied by saying that the fisherman's association had looked into it and there is a possibility that they could fund such a project. It has been on the table for a while.

The point was made that most of these lobster pots have not been abandoned but lost – they are very expensive and fishermen would not abandon them.

It was also mentioned that having identification on lobster pots would be useful in order to identify illegal pots. This could also help in the returning of pots to their owners.

Lucy said that a possibility could be to encourage divers to pick up lost lobster pots and return them, this would also go a long way in trying to decrease the animosity between divers and fishermen.

ACTION: Liaison Group members who wish to set up a working group for any specific issue to contact Alison.

North Wales Standing Environment Group (NWSEG) – Mr Rod Gritten

Rod explained that there is potential damage to the SAC from accidental oil spills. Rod explained that a standing environment group had been set up and that CCW, SNPA and the EA are collaborating long and short term solutions. Rod said that he was surprised at how much had been done including an emergency plan and also a long term environment impact response. They had also identified who is available and what skills we possess. Rod noted that the Liaison Group and Relevant Authorities Group had this action at the top of their priority list.

Climate change – Mr Rod Gritten

Rod mentioned that he had been asked to prepare a seminar on this topic. There is no doubt that climate change will happen, however, the time scale and extent of impact is not known. Only the broad areas of impact are known e.g. there will be an increase in storminess and the severity of storms. Seas are becoming warmer and we are beginning to see strange fish in our waters. We still don't fully understand the implications of sea level rise, we don't even know how high they will rise. Rod then said that it was

important to look at this and see it in a positive light, at the end of the day this will happen so why not see what the advantages are.

It was mentioned that perhaps some ideas e.g. ecocentre won't be appropriate in 20 years time. Some predict that sea level will rise by 80m, however, they don't mention the time scale involved in this.

Alf Bowen mentioned that Sir John Haughton was the chair of the ecocentre project and is also the adviser on climate change to the assembly.

Mike Bower said that there are public lectures in Bangor on climate change. Mike also mentioned that studies have been undertaken on Liverpool Bay and that we know that sea level has been higher in the past than it is today so we really don't know much about it. There are studies underway in the collage.

Rod Gritten was asked if he could distribute the paper he was working on the Liaison Group members.

Lucy said that she liked the idea of positive thinking especially with regards to things like coastal defence – we need to embrace new options.

Rod said that historically yes sea level has gone up and down but in the last 100 years it has been increasing at a faster rate and that the general trend is that levels are increasing.

Mike Bower asked if we could have a meeting or presentation on climate change. The rest of the Liaison Group agreed that they would be interested. They also said that they would like it to be sooner rather than later. It was also mentioned that it should be open to other authorities. Plas Tan y Bwlch was mentioned as a good venue. Alf Bowen mentioned that Sir John Haughton would be a good speaker. Mike Bowyer mentioned that he knew someone and would Alison the contact details.

ACTION: **Alison to arrange a presentation on climate change.**
 Mike Bower to give Alison the contact details of his climate change contacts.
 Rod to give Alison a copy of his seminar for distribution.

Interpretation boards – Ms Alison Edwards

Alison explained that Andy Jeffery had been in touch asking if it would be possible to get some interpretation boards for the SAC at Outward Bound Wales. Alison explained that they had just submitted an Interreg bid for a raising awareness project entitled 'Sea's Living Coasts' which is to include interpretation boards. The project has just secured match funding from Gwynedd Council - 25% of the project cost. The Interreg partner is Fingal County Council in Ireland. The project is to include; theatre project, interpretation boards, beach leaflet, audience research, youth/school project mobile exhibition, underwater video and project officer. The outcome of the application should be known by July and if funding has been secured the project will begin in September and run until June 2008.

7. Close of meeting & date of next meeting

Caerwyn Roberts thanked the translator Eluned Edwards and for everyone's attendance and contribution during the evening. He felt that item six on the agenda proved very interesting.

The date for the next meeting is to be confirmed but is likely to be in September.