

Llyn

Ardal o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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# Llygad Llyn

Llyn AONB Newsletter

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*In this issue*  
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Seagrass

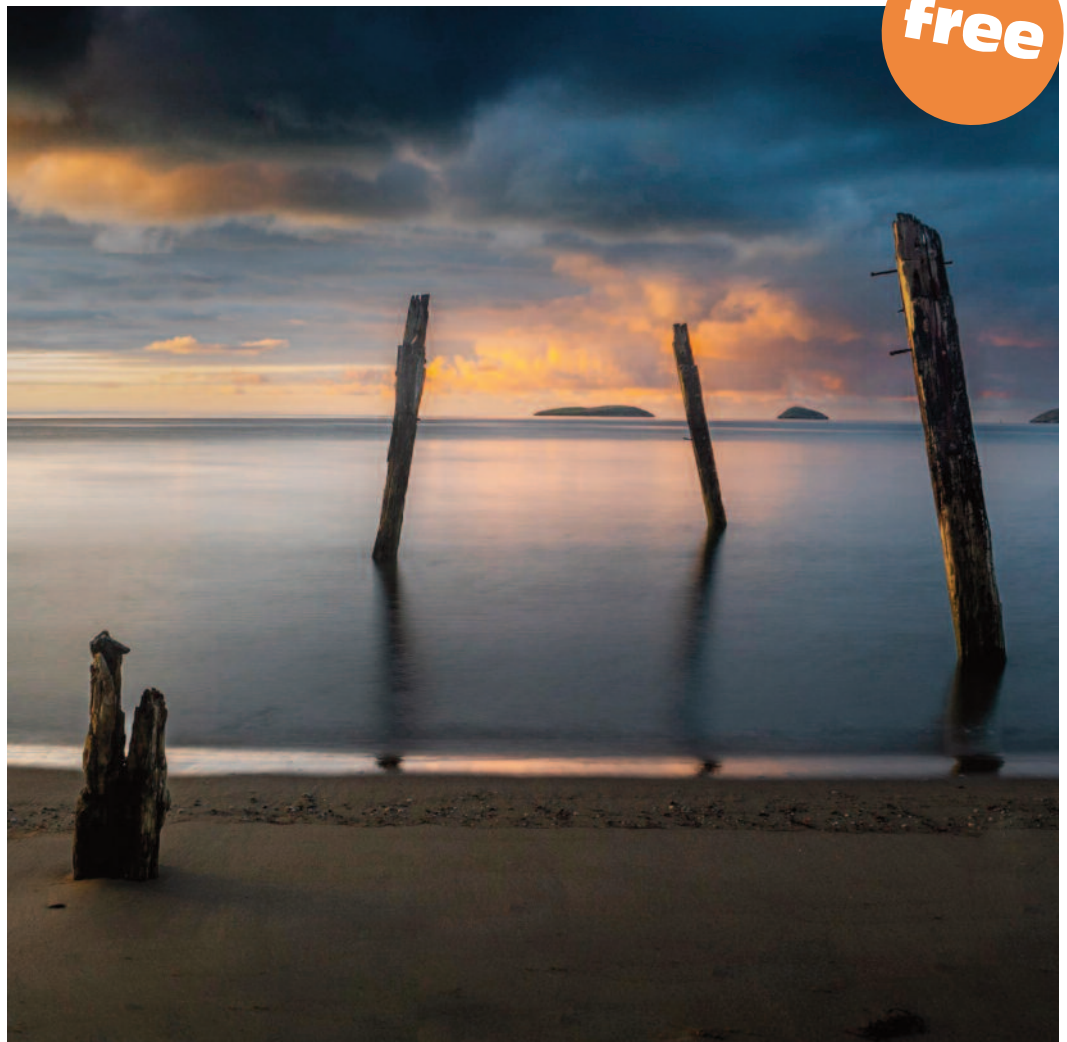
Friends of the  
AONB

Sustainable  
Development Fund

Ecomuseum

Traditional  
Boundaries

Sustainable  
Landscapes



# Welcome

Well it's strange to think that the National Eisteddfod of Wales was in Pen Llŷn last August! It was surprising to see so much activity in Boduan. The AONB Unit was present at the Gwynedd Council stand for several days and it was great to see people enjoying the festival. The field where there was so much excitement has gone back to pasture and only the occasional "Welcome" sign remains to remind us of the week.

During this last year the AONB Unit has been working on the implementation of Sustainable Places Sustainable Landscapes projects which are funded by the Welsh Government. These projects include renewing the steps of Porth Ysgo, refurbishing the Ganolfan in Llithfaen and improving some of the area's common lands. More information about these projects, and other projects such as seagrass restoration, can be found in this edition of Llygad Llŷn.

The Sustainable Development Fund has again supported a number of interesting environmental projects in Llŷn. Find out more about these projects and about the Fund itself and the grant application process in the newsletter.

In this issue you will also find information about the work of the Friends of the AONB which has been established to give people the opportunity to volunteer to help with practical work in the area. This crew has made a valuable contribution to improving access and restoring habitat in the AONB.

We are very keen to hear your opinion about Llygad Llŷn and about the work of the AONB Unit. We would also like to hear your ideas about new projects that would benefit the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or things you think need attention. Contact us on all counts by email, via the website, by phone or by letter.

Llygad Llŷn is sponsored by Natural Resources Wales and we are grateful for the grant which is a valuable contribution towards the design and printing costs.

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## AONB LLŶN TEAM – three members of staff work for the service:

### Llŷn AONB Officer Bleddyn Prys Jones

As the Llŷn's AONB Officer, Bleddyn leads the Council's core work within the AONB, leading on and coordinating the preparation and delivery of the statutory Management Plan for the area.

### Llŷn AONB Projects Officer Morus Llwyd Dafydd

The Project Officer leads on AONB projects, deals with the Sustainable Development Fund, and promotes the AONB.

### AONB Countryside Warden Kevin Roberts

The AONB Unit has received support from Welsh Government for the appointment of a Countryside Warden. The Warden will lead on access and nature projects within the AONB.



# Seagrass

It is an exciting period in terms of seagrass restoration in Pen Llŷn, with the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and their partners working on two ambitious projects to try and restore this vital habitat along our coastline.

Seagrass Ocean Rescue and Natur am Byth are the names of these projects that have been funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Therefore, with the vital support of volunteers and the local community, we will plant seagrass across an area of ten hectares in Pen Llŷn and the Isle of Anglesey, and we will also look at upgrading mooring systems to install ones that are more seagrass-friendly.

## What is seagrass?

Seagrass is the only flowering plant that lives completely in the sea. Unlike seaweed, it has roots, flowers and leaves - and is therefore very similar to plants that are found on dry land. Together, seagrass plants grow in an area to create a seagrass meadow, which is a very productive and important habitat with many advantages for people and the planet.

Seagrass meadows are identified as vital areas to nurture young fish, and their multiple long leaves provide the perfect shelter for small creatures to be able to shelter and hide from predators. The leaves also reduce the force of the waves by adding friction, and in doing so, creates a much more peaceful environment for small creatures to be able to settle in.

Through photosynthesis, seagrass fills the water column with oxygen which strongly draws in wildlife trying to take advantage of these conditions. With 30 times more animals living amongst the seagrass compared to the nearby sandy habitats, it is a vital hub for biodiversity.

However, wildlife is not the only element taking advantage of this important habitat. As young fish grow and migrate to the outer seas, commercial fish stocks are replenished. Therefore, habitats such as seagrass are vital for bringing food to the table, whilst also supporting our local businesses.

Another important function of seagrass is acting as a soak-away and carbon storage. Despite the fact that only 0.2% of the seabed is covered by seagrass, seagrass is responsible for more than 10% of the ocean's carbon storage. It therefore plays an integral part in regulating the climate.

However, despite all the positive facts, seagrass is an extremely fragile plant, and unfortunately, across Britain's coastline, it appears that we have lost up to 92% of our seagrass meadow. Diseases, water quality, damage by mooring and other anthropogenic impacts are highlighted as some of the reasons for this decline.

## Seagrass Ocean Rescue Project

To restore this important habitat in north Wales, we have many volunteers that harvest seeds of the largest seagrass meadow in Wales, which is the Porthdinllaen seagrass meadow. We collect the seeds by scuba diving, snorkelling or wading. It is a lot of fun, and it is a great opportunity to socialise and meet new people. The seeds collected are then





planted at the end of the winter season to give them an opportunity to sprout and take advantage of the sun's energy over the long spring and summer days.

We have already started to plant seagrass seeds in two sites in Pen Llŷn, namely Carreg y Defaid near Llanbedrog, and Penychain. During the first week of February 2024, a large group of volunteers came to support us in planting 340,000 seeds in these restoration sites. It was a very successful week and, as a project, we would like to show our gratitude for all the support that we have received during the days of collecting and planting seagrass seeds.

Small groups of volunteers have also been very proactive with Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC and the National Trust staff in Llŷn by collecting strands of seagrass that have been ripped from the meadow following storms and washed up to the shore in Porthdinllaen. After they are processed for biosecurity reasons, pieces of this seagrass are then transplanted to the restoration sites. With positive early signs showing that the transplanting work is effective, this is good news and very exciting!

## Natur am Byth Project

Another element of our work is to look into adapting and upgrading moorings to enable boat users to continue using and enjoying onshore activities as usual, but whilst also protecting and reducing changing impacts on the seagrass. We do this by changing traditional moorings, that normally use a metal chain to moor the boat onto a concrete block or an anchor on the seabed. Therefore, through the Natur am Byth project, we have installed helical moorings, that are much less harmful to the seagrass when installed compared to the traditional method. In addition, instead of using a metal chain to bind the boat to the anchor (which tends to scour and scrape the seabed and the seagrass), we use strong material that can also float. This means that the seabed is protected by reducing or mitigating the scouring and scraping.

As Porthdinllaen has an integral maritime history and heritage, and the sheltered conditions are, and have provided an ideal haven to moor boats over the centuries, it is vital to ensure that there are high-quality moorings that also protect the seagrass. Therefore, we are currently in the process of piloting four upgraded moorings, by monitoring and keeping an eye on any impact this has on the seagrass. If the trial is successful, the hope in the end is to install more upgraded moorings in Porthdinllaen to try and expand on the area of the moorings and increase the benefit that people and wildlife receives from this habitat.



## Raising awareness about seagrass

These projects are also a good opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of seagrass, and the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC has held several walks to view the Porthdinllaen seagrass meadow during spring tides. These guided tours have been an excellent opportunity to discuss the benefits of this habitat, and to answer any questions. Thank you to everyone who joined us on these tours, and it is very pleasing to be able to share our enthusiasm about this plant with you. There are more guided tours underway, so keep an eye on the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC social media sites for more information.

It is also pleasing to discuss with community groups, as well as visit local schools to discuss what we do. After visiting Pen Llŷn schools last year by distributing a Tir a Môr Education Pack - which is a new educational resource based on the local environment, it is great to revisit these schools by giving an opportunity for young people in the area to become part of the seagrass restoration work. These are a few photos of some of the children in Ysgol Pentreuchaf helping us to fill hemp bags with sand ready to put seeds into them before they are planted. The children also succeeded to collect 227 pieces of seagrass on our visit to Porthdinllaen to help restore and protect Pen Llŷn seagrass. Great work, kids!

# Friends of the AONB

The Llŷn AONB volunteer group, was established back in 2021 (Friends of the AONB). It gives the opportunity for volunteers to assist with practical work in the Area of Beauty here in Llŷn. The group meets regularly to do work such as cutting vegetation, maintaining paths and beach cleans. Over twenty people have registered and usually around 10 volunteers attend. We are very lucky to have a hard working, friendly group who turn up regularly. The activities are usually held on Fridays under the guidance of the AONB officers. We are grateful to the crew for their time and effort to help maintain and improve the features of the AONB.

We publicize  
the work through our Instagram page



**@ahnellŷnaonb**

## The re-opening of a path between Gyrn Goch and Trefor...

One of the team's biggest projects during 2023/24 was to re-open a path between Gyrn Goch and Trefor. The path had been closed for over 10 years; it was no longer possible to walk it due to the thick vegetation that had grown along it. Before starting the work, we needed the permission of the landowners, which was thankfully obtained. This work was linked to a previous project by Llŷn AONB in the Gyrn Goch area where a bridge was built over the river Hen. A total of 8 days was spent here in total and the path is now open thanks to the efforts of the Friends of the AONB.

This path was important for several reasons - it led to open access land, and the path is also part of the Pilgrim's journey towards Ynys Enlli. Ultimately the hope is that the path can be part of the coast path, as it offers much better views than the current path that goes alongside the main road.

## Porth Neigwl beach clean...

The volunteers spent a cold day at Porth Neigwl collecting rubbish from the beach back in November 2023. Thanks to volunteers from Friends of the AONB we collected over 15 bags of rubbish, with most of it being very fine plastic which causes more damage to the environment.

## Garn Boduan...

Several days were spent reopening a path up to Garn Boduan hillfort. Gorse and brambles had closed the path, and the overgrowth had to be cut back. The path is now open, and it is possible to walk up the Garn from the direction of Nefyn.

### Benefits of volunteering

- A new challenge. By volunteering you can challenge yourself to try something different, gain new experience and practice using your practical skills.
- Have fun! Enjoying and having fun is a part of volunteers as well as the work itself.
- Contribute to the community. By volunteering you can feel part of something outside of normal life.
- New skills. Volunteering can help you learn skills and gain new experiences.



# The Llŷn AONB

## Sustainable Development Fund

### What is it? .....

This is a Welsh Government Fund, and each AONB in Wales receives this money to allocate it to various projects in the community. Successful projects need to encourage sustainability, and contribute positively to communities in ways that are environmental, economic, social and cultural.

For further information regarding the fund please contact [ahnellynaonb@gwynedd.llyw.cymru](mailto:ahnellynaonb@gwynedd.llyw.cymru)

### 2023-24 Projects .....



## Restoration of Chough Habitat

The aim of this project is to improve the habitat for the chough in the Carreg area, Aberdaron, within the 'Aberdaron Shores and Enlli Island' Special Protection Area, in order to restore grazing by fencing off a piece of land. There are approximately 60 pairs of chough nesting in the AONB and it is important that we do our best to maintain these numbers.

Before the fence was installed it was very difficult to graze stock on the land in question. The Wales Coast Path runs through this management unit and because it is very narrow in places, walkers and their dogs can scare stock. Under-grazing has increased the overall height of the grass, limiting the foraging opportunities of the chough. As part of the project fences have been installed along the coastal slope, reducing the likelihood of any sheep or cattle going over the cliff edge and thereby restoring the confidence of the tenant to graze this management unit.

Cattle and sheep will remove dead vegetation and prevent plants and their flowers from being buried under the previous year's dead material. This will increase the number of flowering plants, such as heather, honey heather, spring star. It also means that choughs will be able to get hold of insects in the soil, to feed they favour short grass which they can get their beaks into. If the site were to be abandoned, much of it would probably turn into dense bracken, heather and gorse - an unsuitable habitat for the chough and for biodiversity in general. The project is part of our wider work to tackle climate and nature crises. The rate of biodiversity loss across the country is cause for concern, affecting species that depend on natural resources.





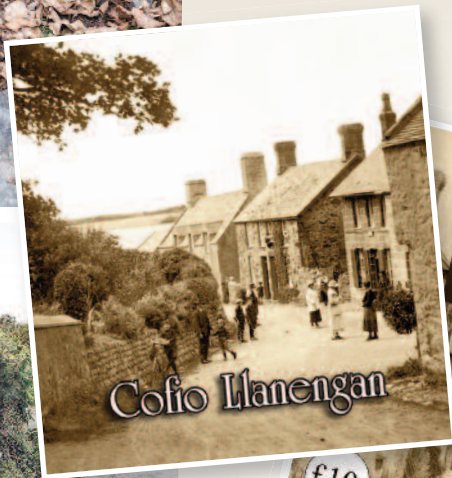
# Preserving Placenames



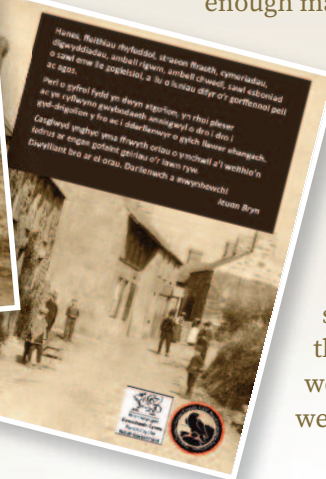
This project was started when it was realized that there was a tendency for indigenous names of the area being forgotten and new names being used instead. This realization was the spark for a small group to come together to try to improve the situation.

The main need identified was for signs on minor lanes and paths so that the original names were displayed. Slates were used to mark important historical buildings and sites in and around the village. An information board was placed to showing some of the history of historic buildings such as the Church, Ffynnon Engan, the chimney of the old lead works, the windmill and remnants of the war camp at Porth Neigwl. It was originally intended to produce a book of old photos but during research and discussion it became clear that there was enough material for a book

presenting the history of the village. Thanks to the support of the Fund, it all came true and the signs and slates can now be seen around the village. The community showed its support when 250 copies of the book 'Cofio Llanengan' were sold within a few weeks of being printed.



£10



LÔN BWLCH LLAN



# Storws Enlli

This was a project led by Bardsey Island Trust for the restoration of the Storws on Ynys Enlli. This was one of the largest projects financed by the Fund, receiving a grant of £30,000. The Trust succeeded in obtaining a grant of £40,000 from the Archaeological Heritage Fund and contributed £12,000 itself.

The Storws is one of the most ancient buildings on Ynys Enlli and it is the building that welcomes all visitors to the Island as they arrive at the “cafn” landing area. The Storws has been used as a place to store fish, grain, and essential materials for life on the Island.

The main objective was carrying out essential construction work to protect the structure of the building as the condition of the building had become fragile and it could not be used. It focused on repairing the structure and protecting the roof and walls, windows, and the access to the building. The biggest challenge, given its location was getting workers and materials on the Island. To do this, there had to be favourable weather for a long period, and to have workers who were happy to stay on the Island for a while. This meant that the work had to be done during the summer months. Despite the difficulties the project was a success and they managed to finish the Storws in September 2023. This work was a good pilot for the other restoration work that needs to be done on the rest of the buildings on Enlli.

Since the completion of the work, the building will be a place to :

- educate volunteers,
- welcome and educate visitors on the island,
- shelter from the weather,

The buildings on Enlli need to be protected for future generations in the same way as names, history, nature, the Welsh language and culture must be protected.



# ecoamgueddfa

At the heart of the Ecomuseum's mission, is the belief that there is a silver thread that draws us all together as people, and that thread is the sense of locality and belonging. Our work aims to validate and reinforce this sense, and draw visitors into Llŷn so that they can taste the sense themselves.

The Ecomuseum is not a tangible building, but rather an initiative between the heritage sites of Pen Llŷn that looks at the identity of places and the people who belong to them. Seven sites are part of the initiative namely; Nant Gwrtheyrn, Llŷn Maritime Museum, Menter y Felin Uchaf, Porth y Swnt, Plas yn Rhiw, Plas Carmel, and Oriel Plas Glyn y Weddw. Although this is the first Ecomuseum in Wales, the concept of Ecomuseums dates back to the 70s. The idea of an ecomuseum originally came from France. At the moment there are over 300 ecomuseums to be found all over the world and the majority of those in European countries.

In essence, the initiative works on the ground to ensure that Llŷn is recognized and respected as a home as well as a destination that is rich in heritage, cultural and environmental wealth, and has local ability to maintain its economy itself.

The Ecomuseum goes beyond the conventional ways of breathing life into our history, by uniting ancient and the modern culture in a way that is accessible to everyone. We see evidence of this through the Ecomuseum's website and social media accounts. These work as domains to collate the content of all heritage sites in Pen Llŷn - in terms of sharing content, walking tours, blogs, virtual tours and so much more. There is a wealth of information here that allows you to organize your activities during the week, or over the weekend, whether it's sun or shine.

For more information, visit [www.ecoamgueddfa.org](http://www.ecoamgueddfa.org) or follow our social accounts, @ecoamgueddfa.

This project is funded by the UK Government through the Shared Prosperity Fund programme.



# Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places

Under the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places scheme in Wales' Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as well as the National Parks, have received funding from the Welsh Government towards environmental projects. The grant is aimed at projects related to sustainable tourism, restoring nature, supporting communities and decarbonisation.

This grant program runs for three years, namely 2022-25.

Here is information about the projects we worked on in 2023-4:

## Porth Ysgo access, Rhiw

A footpath leads down to Porth Ysgo beach in the Rhiw area. About 30 years ago the National Trust built wooden steps to facilitate access to the beach and improve safety. By 2022 the condition of the stairs had deteriorated seriously and was hardly safe to use.

The project involved the removal of the original wooden stairs and the installation of new stairs using local treated timber. Renewing the stairs was a challenge due to the nature of the area, steep cliffs and poor access to the site. It was also necessary to complete the work in the winter, as Porth Ysgo is a popular place during the summer. Local contractors were appointed to carry out the work, which has now been completed to a high standard and there is easy access to Porth Ysgo once again.

Each Designated Landscape has its own projects but in addition to



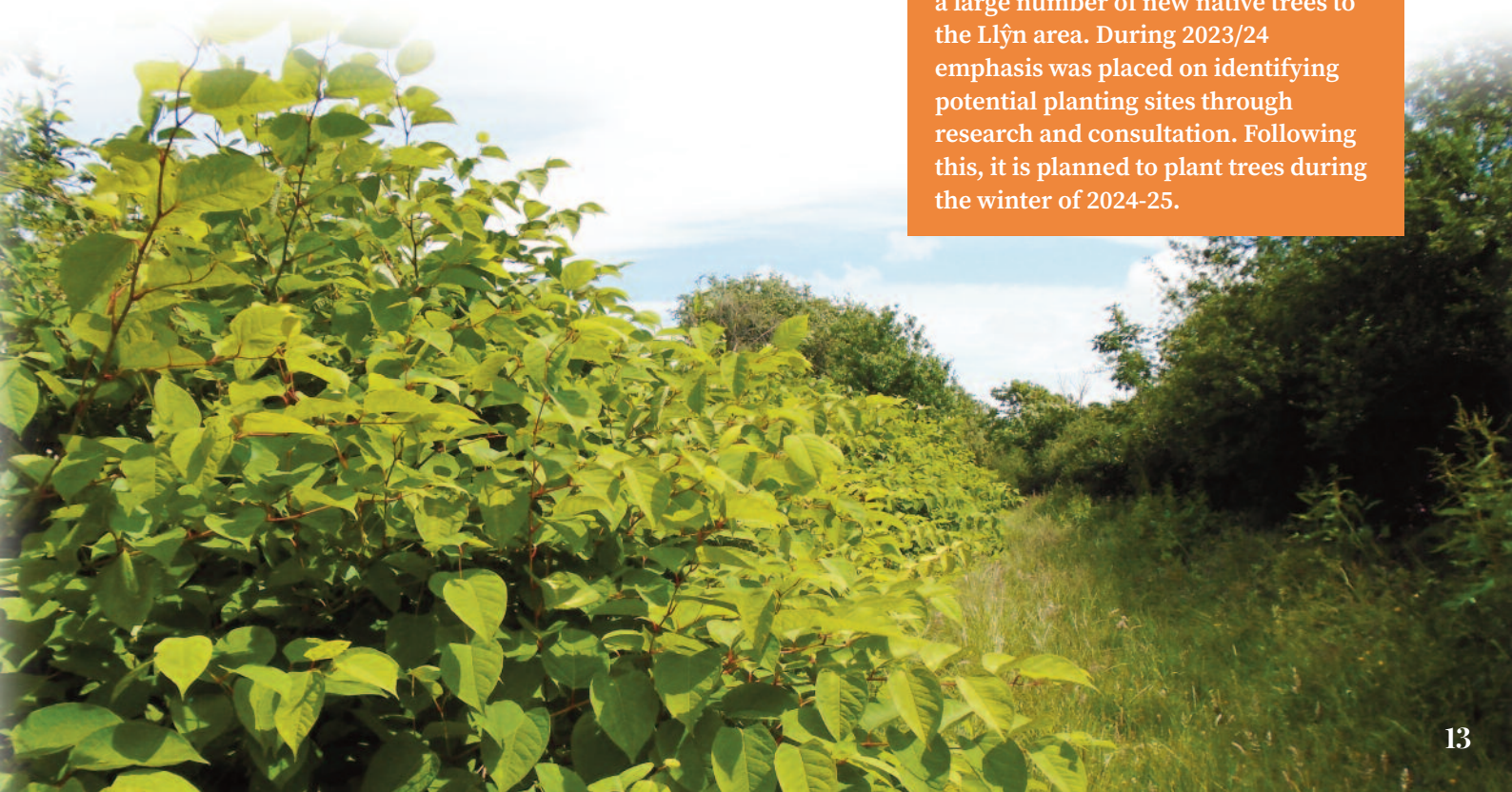
## Common Lands

This is also a three year project which continued from 2022-23 focusing on 3 key commons in Llŷn namely Rhos Botwnnog, Foel Gron Mynytho and Horeb/Mynytho. During the last year the work on the ground included improving a path through the common in Horeb and cutting overgrowth in Rhos Botwnnog (with the intention of reintroducing grazing to improve the condition of the site). Also, by collaborating with naturalists, new interpretation panels were prepared for the three sites and were installed by a local contractor.



## Invasive Plants Species

We are keen to restore nature and promote biodiversity in the AONB and alien plants such as Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and rhododendron disrupt local species. On that basis this project was developed to try to identify and define locations and areas where the invasive species are a problem in the area and also to trial methods of treating them. More surveys and treatment of the invasive plants will take place in 2024-25.



## Indigenous trees

This is a two-year project to introduce a large number of new native trees to the Llŷn area. During 2023/24 emphasis was placed on identifying potential planting sites through research and consultation. Following this, it is planned to plant trees during the winter of 2024-25.



**The Ganolfan, Llithfaen**

The Ganolfan was a building that served the village of Llithfaen and the surrounding area as a meeting place, a place that held local events as well as being a location for the Snooker Club. The building had to be closed during the lockdown period and a problem had developed with dry rot. Other structural problems also needed attention.

The Ganolfan's project spanned over three years with initial work done in 2022-23 (condition survey and drawing up a Business Plan). It soon became clear that the Ganolfan needed more substantial work and that the internal facilities also needed to be upgraded. We succeeded in attracting a significant financial contribution to the project from the UK Government's Prosperity fund. Following a process of competitive tendering, the company D. G. Jones and Son Ltd. was appointed to renovate the Ganolfan and work began in January 2024. The project is being supervised by the Wakemans Ltd. company and the aim is to complete the work by the Autumn.

## Collaborative Projects

Each Designated Landscape has its own projects but in addition to that there are a number of collaborative projects. These are projects where a number of landscapes/areas work together on a project. Llŷn AONB has been part of 3 joint projects during 2022-25 namely:

### Traditional Boundaries –

a joint project with other designated areas of north Wales. Its purpose is to maintain and restore traditional boundaries - stone walls, banks and hedges. As well as being interesting features on the landscape these boundaries are important wildlife habitats. During 2023-24 we were focusing on the Cilan area.

**The Dark Sky** – this is a joint project with other designated landscapes of Wales. Following surveys of intrusive lighting in the areas, the project has funded more environmentally friendly lighting in a number of locations including Ysgol Crud y Werin, Aberdaron.

**Education Pack** – this is a project coordinated by the Pembroke National Park Authority on behalf of the landscapes in Wales. Lafan consultants have been appointed to work with local schools in each area to create an environmental education package that matches the new education curriculum.



Outdoor learning through  
Wales' landscapes

# Traditional Boundaries

The Llŷn AONB Unit has been working together with the Snowdonia National Park Authority, farmers and land managers on a new scheme to restore traditional boundaries in parts of Llŷn.

Traditional boundaries are an integral part of Llŷn's landscape for example dry stone walls, hedges, earth and stone banks. As well as fulfilling a practical function, these boundaries are extremely important for wildlife and the environment as well. They offer shelter to animals from the extreme winter weather or the scorching summer sun, while at the same time they provide habitat for wildlife.

Stone walls offer a safe haven for small creatures, and also provide a network of safe corridors for them to wander from one place to another.

Banks then provide a niche for pollinators and a feeding opportunity for choughs that eat insects that nest in the warm soil.

Hedgerows are beneficial to biodiversity and the environment alike, providing a food source for wildlife and the same time they benefit the environment as they improve air quality, store carbon and mitigate impact heavy rain by slowing water penetration.

The funding through the Welsh Government's 'Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places' scheme has allowed Llŷn AONB Unit to offer financial support to land managers to restore traditional boundaries on their lands. There is a similar scheme in other designated areas as well.



“

This is a special scheme that will benefit land managers, the environment, as well as the wider countryside economy by providing work opportunities for local contractors," said Rhys Owen, Head of Conservation, Trees and Agriculture at the Snowdonia National Park Authority.



# Llygad Llŷn Photography Competition

2023

Every two years the AONB Unit has a photography competition, there is no cost to enter, and the winners receive local gift vouchers.

The theme of last year's competition was "The Historical Environment of Llŷn". We had a good number of applicants and high quality photos. The competition provided an opportunity to showcase the environmental history of the Llŷn Peninsula and encourage others to appreciate this beautiful area. In terms of content we received photos showcasing that Llŷn of ancient buildings, structures and historical remains. The unique historical environment has been identified as one of the area's special qualities.

We received photographs of houses, chapels, churches, farm buildings, mills, bridges, cromlechs, long stones, round houses, remains of quarries and stone walls.

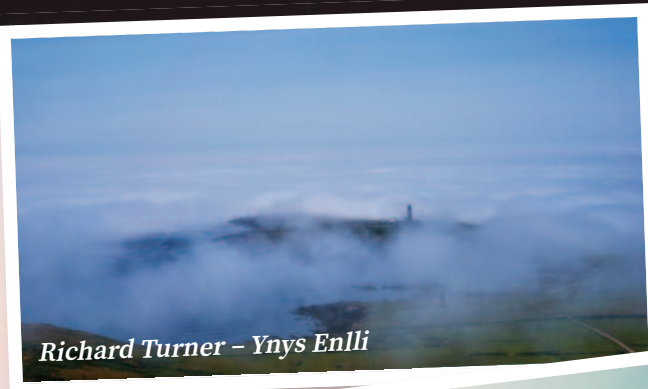
On the cover of the magazine, you can see an impressive photo of the Llanbedrog "stage quarry", Tŷn Tywyn by Dafydd Llyr Hughes. This image was the winner of the competition.

To the left is a photo of the dark sky above the monastery at Enlli. This photo came second in the competition and was taken by Emyr Owen who is the warden at Enlli.

And lastly, taking the third prize in our photography competition was Rhodri Jones, with this image of the lighthouse on Ynys Enlli. The lighthouse was built back in 1821, it is a significant and important building on the Island.



## Photos that received high praise in the Llygad Llŷn 2023 photography competition



Richard Turner - Ynys Enlli



Lali Jones - Porth Ysgaden



Llanbedrog Pier - Dafydd Hughes