

## Q & A follow-up

Partners' update on the parking and transport strategy for Yr Wyddfa and Dyffryn Ogwen

### **1. Please can public transport be integrated/ coordinated before the overall project is in place?**

Integrated transport services is a key element of this long-term strategy and we are working with Transport for Wales to tie into the North Wales Metro programme. The variations in visitor numbers throughout the year makes it extremely challenging for a bus operator to plan schedules and introduce new bus routes. However, Mott MacDonald have looked at the complex issue of delivering bus service improvements in the area, and in particular to the Sherpa service. These include more frequent and well-connected routes, consistent branding, upgrades to existing bus stops with real time bus information displayed on interactive screens, with the aim to develop a fully integrated system when resources allow.

### **2. Can we have simple printed information for hospitality businesses on public transport links across the parc and also for links to Bangor railway station. Include times and how to pay?**

Transport for Wales and Gwynedd Council are currently working alongside a design company to produce new maps to show transport links across the National Park and other related information. Subject to funding, we hope to be in a position to issue prints of the new design within a few weeks.

### **3. Can you outline which stakeholders you've talked to directly, and are there some you know you still need to reach?**

For public transport related matters, we have been in regular contact with Gwynedd and Conwy Councils and various teams within Transport for Wales (including the bus team, payments and ticketing, communications, and the North Wales Metro team) and others such as the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways. This work builds on the initial public consultations held in March-April 2021.

With respect to Active Travel and Cycling and Walking, we have liaised with a number of stakeholders over the past year, including Gwynedd and Conwy Councils, the National Park, Transport for Wales, Natural Resources Wales, Sustrans, the Welsh Government and NMWTRA, as well as a number of local cycle shops and cycle hire business. We will continue to liaise and engage with stakeholders as we progress through this project.

- 4. Are there plans to upgrade and link paths through the Llanberis Pass to help pedestrians to not walk on the road where they choose not to use the bus? I'm aware upgrading paths is controversial.**

This is one of the most challenging sections of path on the Snowdon Circular due to the nature of the terrain and sensitivity of the landscapes. At present our focus is on other sections of the circular, but this is an area that we will assess in future in terms of improvements to try and encourage walkers off the road, however landscape impact will be one of our key considerations.

- 5. "Everything so far addresses 'visitors' and the local economy. No mention is made (so far) of people who live in the area or within a short distance of the park, and who use the park on a regular basis. Is it the intention that they are now treated as 'visitors' and are forced to follow all 'visitor' protocols? Bear in mind most visitors visit for very short period of time, whereas local people may use the park on an almost daily basis. If locally living people have to follow all visitor protocols, without concession of some sort, this would be a huge penalty for them."**

Definitely not. The strategy looks at managing visitors better by offering improved services in order to reduce the negative effects of too many vehicles on the environment, the visitor experience and on our communities. This work was commissioned following concerns from our communities and partners regarding the huge pressures facing communities due to the high levels of vehicles during specific times of the year. The strategy aims to offer great benefits to communities such as reduction in parking problems, improved bus services and residents permits to include discounted access to local services and attractions.

- 6. You have referred a lot to 'visitors' but much less to residents. Enrich the visitor experience. Why not enrich the experience of residents? Llanberis Mountain Rescue Team did not take part in the consultation and I have no recollection that an 'officer' contacted us. We therefore had no input into any initial investigation. What are your plans for managing access to the Upper Gorffwysfa car park. Will you ensure that the entire area's Rescue Teams and members of the team have free and unrestricted access to use or navigate the car park. Barry Davies Chair of Llanberis Mountain Rescue Team.**

The aspirations of the communities are at the heart of any development of this work so sincere apologies that you were not part of the initial consultation. The work of the Rescue Teams is a key part of mountain life and we greatly appreciate all the volunteers. Representatives of organizations on the Snowdon Partnership including the rescue teams, and various other organizations in the area were invited to various consultation events. All correspondence and

updates have been shared with the whole partnership following the consultation.

Undoubtedly, there is no intention to block access to the Rescue Teams whilst carrying out their invaluable work within the National Park.

**7. How do Conwy flexi user numbers compare with the service it has replaced?**

We are seeing a significant increase in the number traveling across the 6 services replaced with the Flexi on call service, and it is still increasing. 1093 people have signed up to use the service with 300 individuals using it in January, which is usually a quiet month for public transport journeys. The service has evidenced that there was very little demand in those communities where in the past it received a regular service. Also, on the contrary, we are seeing a significant increase in number of users and trips e.g. from Felin y Coed, Pentrefoelas, Ysbyty Ifan and Uwchaled, -before Flexi, these villages received only two bus services a week.

**8. How does the transport infrastructure cater for dog owners and their dogs?**

Dogs can be carried on buses at the discretion of the driver and must remain on the floor at all times.

**9. Will the transport infrastructure cater for 24/7 travel all year round, for those who go into the mountains for lengthy periods, and will this operate in any weather, irrespective, to cater for climbers, etc?**

As a first step, buses will operate longer hours to accommodate the needs of visitors and locals wanting earlier starts and/or later finishes. A key issue is the reliability of services so that people can rely on bus times, particularly the last bus of the day. For groups with particular activities such as educational trips or mountain climbers, access by minibuses and coaches needs to be maintained with appropriate parking and pick-up locations.

**10. Presume that mobile phone data won't record identity of phones, only numbers?**

This is correct, all will be fully GDPR compliant.

**11. The implication seemed to be that if there was only one option for a new multi-use walking/cycling route, there wouldn't be a need for consultation. Do you not think that consultation with user and resident groups is vital at all stages for all options?**

We are still at an early stage in the project, and we have already undertaken significant engagement with stakeholders as mentioned above and taken on board your feedback from the engagement sessions held in early 2021. As options for routes are progressed then there will be further engagement and consultation on any proposals, so that we can capture everyone's views and ensure that local communities can actively feed into this process.

**12. Very interesting to see the different developments under the three different authorities. Is there progress on joint and cross border working - to provide unified services and arrangements for Eryri?**

The work that has been done is a good example of cross-border joint working for example: improving the Sherpa network, the T10 bus service from Bangor to Corwen, making signage consistent across the area. However, the current situation (in terms of lack of investment and capacity) means that there are restrictions on moving some elements forward. Therefore, we are still in strategic discussions with both Councils and Transport Wales regarding the wider development and implementation of the strategy.

**13. What is the implementation timeline and plan?**

We are very thankful for the support from Transport for Wales to deliver some of the initial projects. However, we need a substantial investment to achieve the vision. With that investment the delivery timescale to implement all the recommendations is between 5-10 years.

**14. I notice you are accommodating cycling and walking - but what about horse riding? The speed and number of vehicles is increasing making it more dangerous to ride on the road.**

Thank you for raising this great point. The key aims of this work is to reduce the number of vehicles in the area and offer improved services which are convenient and zero carbon. As we move forward with the delivery of this strategy, we aim to consult with various user groups ensuring that the needs of everyone who enjoys the area are considered fully – including horse riders and owners.

**15. Will the buses have provision for bikes?**

It is intended that buses will carry up to three cycles inside. We will draw on experience from elsewhere and also determine how spaces should be allocated if there is strong demand or other needs for the space provided e.g. wheelchair users.

**16. Please could you consider cheaper/seasonal parking for locals.**

Yes definitely. One recommendation of the initial review was to develop permits for residents e.g. discounted access to public services and local attractions. We will consult further with residents, partners and businesses on how this might look as the work develops.

**17. Given that your major problems are congestion, poor behaviour and damage to the rural environment, why are you thinking of increasing or improving visitor attractions? Wouldn't it be better to rely on just those visitors that come for the countryside, without added facilities.**

This strategy is not about improving visitor attractions, but to manage visitors more effectively by reducing the number of vehicles in the Yr Wyddfa and Dyffryn Ogwen areas. This is through offering other modes of transport to residents and visitors which are zero carbon, convenient and appealing. Yr Wyddfa is a major visitor attraction with over 600,000 visitors annually, ensuring that the precious environment is protected and that residents and communities benefit from tourism in a way that is suitable to them, has been raised by many who live locally as a core concern

**18. What is a place plan? Slide said place plan for Nant Gwynant**

Following recent challenges in this specific area due to the huge increase in the area's popularity in 2021, a dedicated plan was considered necessary to achieve the overall objectives and vision set by communities and partners for the area.

**19. Mountaineers, climbers and kayakers are not catered for in these proposals. These proposals are for tourists based on an overload in the park due to Covid. What will you be doing for the serious user of the park?**

We will continue to consult fully with all users of the National Park as this work develops. Please share with us any ideas you might have on how this strategy could develop in line with all your recreational needs.

**20. Have you considered making the park traffic free, with only organised transport permitted?**

Eryri is a living, breathing National Park where nearly 26,000 people live and many more come to work. We aren't like National Parks in other parts of the world which are shut off from people, and therefore there are no gates or specific entry points. Our aim is to reduce the amount of cars in the Yr Wyddfa and Ogwen areas by increasing carpark capacity for visitors at gateway locations, and improving the offer of sustainable transport throughout the area, in line with the needs of those who live and work here full time. More details here <https://www.snowdonpartnership.co.uk/parking-and-transport>

**21. Will paying for the bus at the car park allow for Welsh seniors' passes?**

Any future offer will allow for Welsh senior passes.

**22. Pre-booking and more frequent services seem contradictory, the latter far more sensible - how do you balance these?**

Pen y Pass is currently the only pre-booking carpark owned by the Snowdonia National Park Authority. Last year, the improved bus service from Nant Peris and Llanberis to Pen y Pass was extremely helpful in allowing visitors without a booking to park and catch the bus to Pen y Pass which was running every 15 minutes.

**23. Do you have any means of securing a mobile phone signal in places like Bro Machno, so that the fflecsi service can actually communicate with the people who want to use the service?**

We have no control over phone signal and are aware that there is limited or no phone signal in some rural areas. If there is no phone signal, we encourage users to connect through WiFi (if available), or to book their journey by using the landline.

**24. Do you intend to install a live information Bus Shelter in Bethesda?**

Transport for Wales are working with Gwynedd Council on options to replace a bus shelter in Bethesda, subject to funding. It is hoped that the work can be completed by end of Summer 2022.

**25. Many of the 'problems' (eg. Parking, litter, public transport) that have arisen in both the original review and consultation are possibly better solved by working with third sector social enterprises rather than local government or private business. This would entail an imaginative approach to solution finding. Are the SNPA/County Councils seeing this as a viable opportunity, and what blocks are there to progress?**

Partneriaeth Yr Wyddfa is always looking for innovative and new ways of working. If you have any ideas on any third sector enterprises we could work with, please let us know.

**26. While the wider review and consultation will potentially result in better access to the Park for young people there is very little explicit reference to their needs. In the light of the pandemic and its effects, could we work harder to increase the value and accessibility of the offer to young people?**

Thank you for raising this important point – consultation with young people in the region definitely needs to be improved and we will strive to do so.

**27. It is obvious that what's unsustainable is the number of visitors and not the infrastructure. It must be honestly accepted that the Wyddfa and Ogwen areas are relatively small territorially, and that there are limits to the number of visitors that can be accommodated without adverse effects. It stands to reason that the overcrowding point, the excess level, needs to be determined. Further developing the infrastructure would be promoting over-tourism, including increasing existing parking spaces and creating new car parks, as this would promote an increase in numbers and exacerbate the problem rather than alleviate it. The creation of new 'honey pots' would also only initiate processes that would have detrimental effects on other parts of Eryri. Shouldn't Snowdonia National Park's primary functions be to protect the natural environment and protect the character of the communities, tailoring tourism accordingly? The landscape within the Park's boundaries is, after all, the natural environment of Eryri's communities.**

We recognize that the Wyddfa and Ogwen areas suffer under extreme pressure at certain times of the year due to unsustainable visitor numbers. This is one of the main reasons for Partneriaeth Yr Wyddfa / Snowdon Partnership commissioning a full report in the first place. The report identified the need for better parking and transport management in the area to ensure that the Park fulfills its duty to protect the environment and local communities. This strategy is not designed to attract more visitors, but offers a sustainable tourism model in order to get to grips with the challenge, while managing how visitors use the area better. The National Park has two main statutory purposes:

1. To protect and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.
2. Promote opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the National Park.

**28. In the research project into mobile phone users in Betws-y-Coed, how did you obtain the statistics on the peoples' ages? Did they explicitly consent to this? Is this potential invasion of privacy legal in Wales?**

The data collected from the current access point and from which the age group data shared at the webinar was collected was by way of the mobile phone user logging into the Conwy am Ddim/Purple wifi by completing the on-line form.

**29. Capventis" – something which we entirely failed to understand during the presentations. Can more information be provided about whatever this is?**

This is an initial scope of how data in the area can be brought together in one place and shared with those travelling to and through the area to encourage smarter decision making. This includes 'real time data' for example on the capacity of places, what is available locally, what else might be open at certain times, what the weather forecast is etc. The aim is to have input from local

businesses and organisations to encourage a one-stop shop for information. We are hoping a pilot of this will be tested out this summer.

**30. A comment on the all-important Sherpa bus service: Much was made during the meeting of the importance of a good bus service with easily gathered and reliable information for the public. Wanting the service on New Year's day 2022 (a Saturday) we set about trying to find out the timetable several days in advance. No amount of internet search nor phone calls yielded any info at all, not even calls direct to Gwynfor Coaches who apparently now have the franchise for the service. On the day we went by car to Pen y Pass, only to be told that (a) there was no parking space (unsurprising) and (b) there was no bus service at all that day (very surprising). As this must be one of the peak demand days in the year (see my survey response from March 2021) the total absence of a bus service AND the total lack of information on what kind of service would be available represents a double failure on the part of the franchisee. You really should replace Gwynfor Coaches and write a future contract that ensures the integrity of the service, if any of your efforts to reduce private car use are to have any credibility.**

We are aware that there were notifications on the websites of Gwynfor Coaches, Travel Line Cymru and Gwynedd Council that no buses run on New Year's Day. These notices were also on all buses and on social media. Furthermore, Gwynfor Coaches man their phones every day except Christmas Day and New Years Day which are public holidays.