

Attention: Katherine Wheeler
Swyddog Cefnogi Pwyllgor, Senedd Cymru
Committee Support Officer, Welsh Parliament

12 September 2024

Dear Madam,

Re: The Designation of the Tywi Valley as an AONB - P- 06 - 1449

We refer to your letter dated 12 June 2024 - your reference Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/05516/24. By way of a response to the contents of that letter, and to your questions re. same, we'd like to make the following points:

1) Does it (the document) adequately address the issues that you raised?

No it does not.

The document fails to explain why the NRW is limited to the consideration of one issue at a time. Why cannot the NRW look at a crucial issue of the Tywi Valley AONB Designation, which is on the verge of being destroyed forever, at the same time as considering the issue of National Parks, for example?

Is the NRW only tasked to work on one issue at a time, even if this means that a huge part of Welsh natural heritage (the Tywi Valley) may be destroyed in the interim?

As you might be aware, the Tywi Valley is currently in the midst of a battle to prevent the erection of pylons along the length of the valley. If planning permission is granted

then the valley will never be the same again. Its outstanding natural beauty will be destroyed forever.

If, on the other hand, the Tywi Valley were an AONB, this would never have become a consideration.

For this reason we consider it to be a matter of emergency and we believe that the NRW should prioritize this idea of the AONB designation. I do not believe that the remit of the NRW is such that it can risk this possible atrocity which would forever spoil the beauty of the Valley.

Further, the NRW has recognized, on numerous occasions, that the Tywi Valley is clearly an area of outstanding natural beauty. This is evidenced by funding received for Tywi Valley related projects over the years. The NRW has often had a role in delivering or approving these. Specifically:

Tywi a River Through Time

2008 to 2011

The TAYO project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (£1.5 million) and the European Rural Development Plan (£557,378) between 2008 and 2011, aimed to conserve the Tywi valley's landscape and biodiversity. It left a lasting legacy, with ongoing community impact and activities. Future funding supported heritage skills bursaries.

The Taclo'r Tywi

Ongoing (?)

We have not been able to ascertain the funding amount for this project. Nevertheless, the Taclo'r Tywi project, administered by the NRW and funded by the Welsh Government's Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS-N2K), aimed to improve water quality and biodiversity in the River Tywi catchment area.

The Dyffryn Tywi – Tirwedd Hanes Ein Bro

EAFRD (WG RC_RDP Wales) contribution

£698,000.00

The Dyffryn Tywi – Tirwedd Hanes Ein Bro 2 year project, funded by European Structural Funds and the Welsh Government's Sustainable Management Scheme, aimed to sustainably manage the historic landscape of the Tywi Valley.

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/sites/walesruralnetwork/files/Evaluation%20of%20Dyffryn%20Tywi%20Final%20Report.pdf>

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/sites/walesruralnetwork/files/Dyffryn%20Tywi%20Landsker%20FINAL%20Report%20%202021.pdf>

Cycle Path

In October 2019, nearly £17 million was allocated from the Levelling Up Fund to extend the Tywi Valley Cycle Path. This is again substantial funding which indirectly recognizes the natural outstanding beauty of this area.

2) Do you have further questions in response?

Over 3.5 thousand individuals have signed our Petition. This shows considerable support for the designation of the Tywi Valley as an AONB.

When we have spoken to local politicians, all have expressed support for the designation.

However, the current anti-Pylon battle has led to what one might refer to as battle fatigue. So many individuals are so closely involved in this battle, they do not have time to also focus on, what many consider to be the far more important issue, which is the designation of the Tywi Valley as an AONB.

3) Is there anything additional that you would like the Committee to know at this stage, either in response to this document or as an update to the Committee?

It is impossible to understand why the Tywi Valley would not be considered worthy of AONB designation. There is absolutely no question that it is an area of outstanding natural beauty. This has been confirmed in numerous funding projects that have been supported by the NRW over the years.

We, the authors of the petition, and the supporters of the petition, believe that failure to consider the designation is tantamount to failure to protect what is an invaluable natural and cultural heritage asset.

There is no other place like the Tywi Valley. There is no other place with such richness of flora and fauna and such richness of cultural heritage.

To allow the valley to be destroyed, desecrated, really, is to allow an unforgivable cultural crime.

We believe that on the basis of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act allowing this to happen would be to breach the tenets of that legislation. In particular failure to consider the AONB Designation amounts to a failure to take action in accordance with the sustainable development principle aimed at achieving the goals of that piece of legislation.

We believe that by failing to consider the possibility of the designation of the Tywi Valley as an AONB the Senedd is betraying future generations of Wales and allowing the destruction of this area of outstanding natural beauty.

Last but not least, as a side note, if onshore windfarms can in future be built in England, where the power is needed, there'll be less need to erect windfarms in Wales. In fact, the need might be removed entirely. We believe that the Senedd must now take this into consideration given the new Government's attitude to onshore windfarms in England.

Many thanks for your consideration of the above.

Kind Regards,

Veronika Hurbis and Natalie Singh