

Your Ref: P-06-1447 and P-06-1474
Our Ref: CX24-130 and CX24-154

Gareth Price
Petitions Committee Clerk
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

By email only: petitions@senedd.wales

2 January 2025

Dear Gareth,

P-06-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve

P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres

On 31 July 2024, NRW launched a consultation with our Trade Unions that looked across our remit at ways of making a minimum saving of £13 million, while simultaneously focusing on priority areas in keeping with our Corporate Plan. Among the proposals we considered was whether we should continue to operate catering and retail provision at our Visitor Centres at Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin and Ynyslas.

At the Board meeting on 5 November, our Board agreed to implement the Case for Change. We are now in position to provide the Petitions Committee with an update as promised in our earlier response letters, dated 14 August and 30 September.

We appreciate the strength of public feeling regarding the Visitor Centres and that the decision to stop these services will be disappointing to many. Catering and retail services at all three sites – Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin and Ynyslas – will remain open until 31 March 2025, after which they will close. The sites will continue to be open for recreation access, such as walking and biking and services such as play areas, car parking and toilet provision will also remain available.

We would also like to clarify that our Visitor Centre staff are not responsible for managing the land in and around the centres. This is the responsibility of our land management teams. Therefore, there will be no change to trail and access management nor the maintenance and management of wildlife and the natural environment.

Our priority is finding partners who can work with us to make Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin thriving hubs with a long-term sustainable future. Ensuring that we find the

right partner for the right site is essential, but we do need time to make sure that we are delivering the greatest value for users, local businesses and communities.

In the meantime, we are exploring temporary solutions to minimise disruption and continue providing valued services to visitors.

Of the three sites, Ynyslas is unique as it forms part of the Dyfi National Nature Reserve (NNR) and as such has specific statutory needs and requirements, of which protecting the NNR is priority. This will include retaining an onsite office for land management staff. Ynyslas Visitor Centre will therefore not be offered commercially and will be solely put forward for community use via Expressions of Interest. Those who have registered an interest in Ynyslas have been contacted by email to advise the Expression of Interest process is open and that the application form is available to download via the [Consultation Hub](#) on our website.

We've already received interest in both Coed y Brenin and Bwlch Nant yr Arian. However, to ensure fairness and parity, no proposals are being considered in advance of the public tender exercise that will begin in 2025. The process will be conducted via the Sell2Wales website and those interested can register on the platform in advance of any process starting. We will provide more details of this process, including the start date, in due course.

Details of those who have already contacted us have been added to a mailing list of interested parties, so they will receive details of the tendering process when available.

Although the public tender exercise has not started, we have been meeting interested parties informally and have arranged drop-in sessions for each site, the details of which are available on the Consultation Hub. To confirm, no formal discussions have taken place. All meetings have been informal and tentative to help identify whether the tender is right for them.

The public engagement sessions for each of our sites to update members of the community and stakeholders on the future of Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Ynyslas and Coed y Brenin visitor centres were held towards the end of November. These were well attended and gave us the important opportunity to provide up-to-date information on the changes to retail and catering at our Visitor Centres, and answer specific questions and concerns from the public.

Following on from these we have produced a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) which will be available for the public to view online via our Consultation Hub. We will continue to update the FAQs as we work through the impact of the Case for Change on Visitor Centres. Any questions or queries can also be directed to a dedicated mailbox ymgysylltu.masnachol@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk.

We trust this assists and will be happy to respond to any further queries about the Visitor Centres.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ceri Davies', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ceri Davies

Prif Swyddog Gweithredol Dros Do
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg, heb i hynny arwain at oedi.
Correspondence in Welsh is welcomed, and we will respond in Welsh without it leading to a delay.