

## Further consideration of the Mynyddoedd Pawb Petition (P-04-632)

6 October 2015

### Comments from *Mynyddoedd Pawb* following the latest correspondence to the Petitions Committee

#### Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

We are pleased with the support of the RCAHMW and its recognition that: "Traditional Welsh names .... are often the catalyst by which non-Welsh speakers begin to acquire a knowledge of the language, through their growing familiarity with the place name elements they encounter...".

#### Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism

We are pleased that the Deputy Minister accepts that Welsh place names are important resources in terms of identifying and managing our historical assets and that they add to the cultural distinctiveness of Wales.

#### Welsh Language Commissioner

We agree with the recommendations of the Welsh Language Commissioner that:

- A board or body should be established to deal with issues relating to names, and to set criteria for planning purposes
- The traditional names of landscape features and buildings of all kinds, as well as listed buildings, should be safeguarded.

We believe that such a board or body should be responsible for:

1. Proposing standard forms, and by means of a local consultation process, recognising forms in local dialect when appropriate.
2. Recording place names and ensuring that they are consistent in official documents and maps. There should be close co-operation with the OS to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of names.
3. Implementing a consultation procedure with regard to changing names, working on a catchment area level, i.e. the planning authorities across Wales. One example is that of an immigrant who wanted to remove a Welsh name, and when he was asked why, his answer was: "I could not care two hoots about your Welsh name", and he changed the name to 'Two Hoots' (this name change is recorded in the evidence of *Cymdeithas Enwau Lleoedd Cymru (The Welsh Place Name Society)* to the Communities, Equality and

Local Government Committee meeting on 2 September). We believe that, in order to protect our heritage from such disrespect, name changes should be allowed only by agreement of the local community and the local planning authority.

### **Responses not received**

We are disappointed that no response has yet been received from the *Welsh Tourist Board (Visit Wales)* and the *Wales Tourism Alliance*. We kindly ask you to contact them again.

We ask once again for consideration to be given to the objectives of the petition by the **Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism**, the **Education Minister** and the **Minister for Natural Resources and Planning**, and the **First Minister of Wales**, who is responsible for the **Welsh language**. In order to meet the objectives contained in our petition, co-operation between all the above departments is essential.

We also ask you to contact *Cadw*, the organisation which is responsible for protecting, through legislation, over 30,000 listed buildings and over 500 special architectural conservation areas throughout Wales. They do commendable work to protect the architectural integrity of these sites, but we are greatly concerned that they are not equally keen to protect the names of such sites. Names are just labels in Cadw publications, with no recognition of the cultural importance of the names.

Is the name not an integral part of the character of what is protected, enabling it to be placed in its appropriate historical and cultural context? Traditional names of buildings and all types of landscape features should be protected. This already takes place in other European countries out of respect for native culture and to preserve the character of the sites that visitors yearn to see.

### **Our petition aims:**

**To stimulate interest in the Welsh language and a respect for it, and to safeguard and increase the use of the language.**

Explaining the meanings of place names to non-Welsh speaking immigrants to an area could be a first step to welcoming them and introducing them to

the wealth of our heritage. For example, sessions to welcome people, and to enable them to socialise in the village of Nebo, in the Nantlle Valley, have been hosted by Mr O P Huws. Learning the meaning of the names of their own houses and the houses of neighbours, and who used to live in the houses, have proved very popular over the years. As a result, many of the newcomers have joined Welsh language classes and have integrated fully into **the** local community.

We need to celebrate the richness of our place names by ensuring that our cultural heritage is alive for everyone. Through **the latest technology**, which is developing daily, we can also present the wealth of our culture and language through the names of our landscapes. This could be just as attractive to Welsh speakers, Welsh learners and those who are interested in the language.

Discussions and joint working are currently taking place between *History Points*, the *Wales Coastal Path*, the *Place Name Society*, *Cymdeithas Edward Llwyd* and *Menter Iaith Conwy* (the Conwy Language Initiative).

As well as organised trips, the correct pronunciation of names in our landscapes could be provided to interested parties. There is also an opportunity here to go a step further, and to introduce **contemporary Welsh culture** to a wide audience. We suggest working with popular Welsh learning initiatives such as *Say Something in Welsh*.

**2. To increase the sense of identity among local communities by sharing the wealth of our cultural heritage with others.** Voluntary and public sector statutory bodies need to protect cultural heritage and show pride in our invisible as well as our visible heritage, which would provide an interesting variety to local people and visitors in terms of their perspective on the environment.

**3. Stimulate an interest and an awareness of the richness of our local heritage among visitors, thereby bringing educational and economic benefits to the local area.**

Welsh place names are amongst the most visible elements that tourists in Wales

appreciate, and that emphasise the distinctiveness of Wales. Some specific place names themselves attract tourists, e.g. Llanfairpwllgwyngyll ... .. and Beddgelert, while others can add greatly to cultural experience.

For example, very successful residential courses have been organised for several years at *Plas Tan y Bwlch*, Maentwrog on *The Mabinogion* tales. These courses are held in Welsh and in English. They focus on the 4th Tale: The Legend of Math Fab Mathonwy (story of Llew Llaw Gyffes, Blodeuwedd etc). An essential part of the course is to visit 15 sites in the Nantlle Valley and Ffestiniog area named in the legend. Similarly, field trips have also been organised as part of courses at Nant Gwrtheyrn the *Language Centre*.

**Education** in schools should ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to appreciate the wealth of our Welsh place names as part of their heritage, by **teaching** history, geography, mythology and historical land use in Wales.

Place names are an extremely useful means of giving added value to people and children's experience of history and the environment, in the countryside and in towns, through outdoor activities and field studies. The descriptive elements in names of landscapes and habitats enrich the appreciation of geographical and ecological features on field work exercises for schools.

Place names serve as a means to present the wealth of our heritage through their connections in history and legend, e.g. names of mountains, streams, lakes underpin many of our tales and legends.

(Further evidence available from Education Officers at *Glanllyn*, the Urdd youth organisation Camp, and *Snowdonia National Park Centre*, Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog, Gwynedd, *Menter Iaith Conwy*, the *Antur Stiniog* initiative and also *Blaenau Ffestiniog Youth Club*).

Place names are instrumental in knowing the landscape, and enhancing the enjoyment of walking and socialising outdoors, with obvious benefits to people's health and well-being (Further evidence is available from *Cymdeithas Edward Llwyd* (naturalists' society) and *Clwb Mynydda Cymru* (*Wales Mountaineering Club*))

Place names along with the heritage and history associated with them, should be an integral part of environmental study courses in **further and higher education**, and outdoor activities courses such as mountain leadership courses that are run by other organisations. Similarly, we should

work with outdoor activity centres in order to raise awareness of the richness of traditional indigenous place names, and to support their use of Welsh place names in their day-to-day activities.

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government: to promote and regulate the use of Welsh names on maps, signage and websites, to influence public bodies to use the indigenous name on each occasion, to encourage leisure and outdoor recreation organisations (which are often financed from public funds) to use the indigenous names and to include cultural heritage as part of their package to the visitor.

With the tremendous growth in the number of Welsh speakers who earn a living in the outdoor and environmental tourism sector over the last decade (**Evidence available from *Menter Iaith Conwy***) we are more aware than ever of the importance of protecting and promoting the indigenous place names in order to withstand the increasing threat from climbers, kayakers, surfers, mountain bikers etc. who invent English names for climbs, ponds and trails and disregard original Welsh names. This in turn weakens the cultural distinctiveness of our country.

We would like to note that the National Heritage Lottery Fund in Wales and Cornwall acknowledges that place names are a full element to be considered in the financing of their heritage portfolio. We hope that the Welsh Government will follow suit.

We ask the National Assembly for Wales to stress the importance of all of this to appropriate Ministers in the Welsh Government, providing guidance, so that they can persuade Local Authorities, Natural Resources Wales and National Park Authorities, together with other organisations in the statutory, public, voluntary and private sector, to take these appropriate and far-reaching steps to protect and celebrate this national heritage by means of the Welsh names of our landscape.

We look forward to positive discussions.

Appendix:

Response of the Snowdonia National Park to *Wales Tourism Alliance* comments following an interview on Radio Wales on 12/05/15

## **SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

Press Release

Wednesday, 13th May 2015

### **Snowdonia National Park Authority: Object to the comments of the Welsh Tourist Alliance.**

**At a meeting at Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog today (Wednesday, 13th May, 2015), Members of the SNPA resolved to declare that the Authority strongly disagrees with the comments of the Chair of the Wales Tourism Alliance regarding the use of the Welsh language in welcoming visitors to Wales.**

On behalf of the Authority, its Language Champion, Councillor Elwyn Edwards said:

"As an Authority, we support the campaign of Mynyddoedd Pawb and we call on the Welsh Government to ensure that Welsh names are protected and promoted.

Welsh names are part of our cultural heritage – they reflect aspects of our history, our landscape, our biodiversity, our language and our way of life.

These qualities are

the things that make us special, distinctive and attractive to visitors. It is therefore interesting to note the Welsh Government's announcement yesterday that 2014 was a record year for Wales in terms of tourism, as the number of British visitors to Wales reached 10 million.

There were no complaints from any of these visitors that the Welsh language was 'in the way' or a barrier of any kind.

As an Authority, our job is to protect our heritage and Welsh place names are a core element of our local heritage. If we lose our names, we will lose our history and our heritage.

In the past, the WTA has recognised the importance of the National Parks' statutory purpose in protecting and enhancing the beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of their areas. Therefore, we are disappointed to hear the destructive comments of the Chairman of the Alliance, which contradict this."  
End

#### Note to Editors

1. "Mynyddoedd Pawb" want the Welsh Government to protect and respect the wealth of place names in order to:
  - Stimulate interest in the Welsh language and a respect for it, and to safeguard and increase the use of the language.
  - Increase the sense of identity among local communities by sharing the wealth of our cultural heritage with others.
  - Stimulate an interest and an awareness of the richness of our local heritage among visitors, thereby bringing educational and economic benefits to the local area.
2. For further information, or to arrange an interview, please contact Llinos Angharad, Media and Events Officer, Snowdonia National Park Authority on 01766 772237 or 07766 255509.