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Cymdeithas Eryri the Snowdonia Society
1967 - 2017

Yn gwarchod, gwella a dathlu Eryri ers 50 mlynedd - Protecting, enhancing and celebrating Snowdonia for 50 years

Elusen gofrestredig rhif/Registered Charity no: 1155401

Caru Eryri: Volunteering Wales Strategic Grant 2022

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Caru Eryri is a volunteer programme delivered in partnership by:

- Cymdeithas Eryri Snowdonia Society
- The Outdoor Partnership
- Snowdonia National Park Authority
- National Trust

Caru Eryri volunteer teams patrol locations where visitor pressures and impacts are most acute. Professional leaders and trained volunteers provide information for visitors, clear litter and maintain footpaths. Their work provides a significant resource for site management, separate but complementary to the work of formal Warden services.

The Caru Eryri scheme has achieved a considerable amount on the ground in Snowdonia, and this work is highly visible. The programme is an example of what can be delivered by third sector organisations working in close partnership with a public body. This delivery can be viewed in terms of its practical outputs and the volunteer experience. Part 1 of this report does that.

However, the work can also be evaluated in terms of how organisations engage with each other and across sectoral boundaries, in responding to significant challenges and needs. We consider how the partners have:

- worked together around clear shared objectives.
- initiated new ways of working and evolved existing ones.
- demonstrated the potential of shared systems and pooled resources.

As we adjust to the new realities after the pandemic upheaval, we expect pressures to continue in designated landscapes and indeed more widely in places that people want to visit. We may well be seeing significant changes in the relationships between communities, environment and tourism in Wales. If so, this has implications for what and how we expect our designated landscapes to deliver. With the already massive challenges of nature recovery and climate change, this demands that we are all open to changing how we work together. This in turn means that third sector bodies need to be open to thinking about our own roles and priorities.

In the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, we have already seen this openness at work, as part of the wide-ranging engagement now starting up as the area prepares the way for designation of a new National Park. This will be the first designated by Wales and for Wales, within a radically different legislative and cultural framework to that which accompanied the first National Parks in Wales more than 70 years ago. There is much that the third sector can contribute to this evolutionary process, if we are part of the conversation, and if we are geared up to be part of the action.

In sharing learning as part of this project we have found a remarkable level of sectoral cohesion around the opportunities which are now evident in Wales. We do not take for granted the obvious benefits of being able to work with a serious and stable government with a forward-looking environmental agenda.

For organisations with a long history of advocacy work, this raises a key and perhaps unexpected question; how can we be effective in support of government, where we now find ourselves in alignment on many fronts? This is not a trivial question; for some of us it drives our approach to practical work on the ground with volunteers.

A great deal of valuable work is being delivered with volunteers by our designated landscapes third sector colleagues. Much of this is practical, tackling familiar care and maintenance work that always needs doing. Collectively this represents a considerable resource for the various responsible public bodies. Some - indeed much - of this is carried out in partnership with others - National Park Authorities, AONB partnerships, Natural Resources Wales, National Trust etc.

However, the recording of these volunteer inputs is patchy and uncoordinated; this could usefully be improved. Much of this work is not, or only loosely, aligned with existing strategies, structures and work plans. No doubt this allows for a diversity of approaches, but we could expect the reach and efficacy of our work to be magnified if we were more closely aligned with something resembling a strategic approach. This is a challenge for the third sector in terms of how we see our role and our work.

During the Small Nation: Big Landscapes conference a joint statement was drafted <https://www.cnp.org.uk/news/national-parks-movement-speaks-one-voice>. Careful reading of this highlights the difficulty which faces anyone working across Wales and England, where the legislative basis and legislatures

themselves are so very different. We are fortunate that Campaign for National Parks, as an umbrella body, has become well-informed and committed to working in Wales in a way which properly reflects and respects those differences.

We are also fortunate to have the Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes (AWDL) which provides a distinct Welsh voice to respond on designated landscapes matters from a third sector perspective. Neither AWDL nor CNP have capacity or remit to develop practical work or partnerships on the ground, of the kind exemplified by Caru Eryri. Yet this type of work provides the greatest opportunity for people in Wales to be involved in environmental action, to do their bit to look after the precious natural resources of the nation. As the Caru Eryri partnership, we are doing what we can to help build this agenda.

The Snowdonia Society is currently the only dedicated designated landscapes third sector body with significant staff capacity in Wales. We see our contribution centred on the development of joined up opportunities for young people. We have already seen how young people, - engaged, inspired, trained and trusted to lead – are a powerful tool for delivering work that makes a difference.

We believe the role of volunteers is key as Wales develops:

- innovations such as a National Nature Service, helping more people contribute in a joined-up way towards their own health and well-being and the needs of society, nature recovery and climate action
- more responsible and respectful models of tourism
- new relationships between people and places which reflect the distinctive approaches and frameworks of Wales.

If you would like to receive a copy of the full report then please contact Mary-Kate Jones, Programme Manager – Snowdonia Society mary-kate@snowdonia-society.org.uk.