

## DYFFRYN NANTLLE DESTINATION PLAN



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## **Contents**

- Executive Summary
- Visitor and Tourism Profile
- Infrastructure and Services
- Historic Built Environment Assessment
- Tourism : Challenges and Opportunities

Appendix 1 : Historic Built Environment Assessment Study

## **1 Executive Summary**

This Destination Plan was developed in conjunction with the *Bro Lleu Strategy* document, commissioned by Grŵp Cynefin. These two documents will feed into the Community Destination Plan for Dyffryn Nantlle, in support of the bid for UNESCO World Heritage Site Status for the Slate Landscape of North West Wales.

The aims of the Destination Plan are:

- Assess current provision and facilities for visitors to Dyffryn Nantlle
- Review the area's infrastructure and services
- Assess the historic built environment
- Consider the main challenges and opportunities for tourism in the area

The following research was undertaken:

- An assessment of the village's infrastructure, services, community provision, visitor offer and historic built environment, some of which included audit work from the perspective of a 'secret visitor';
- An assessment of the tourism sector's key strengths and weaknesses, as well as the challenges and opportunities presented;

The Plan is accompanied by an Action Plan, which sets out and priorities ongoing, proposed and potential projects, alongside requisite resources, timescales, project lead and potential partners; this document is a working document and will be updated regularly and reviewed annually by Gwynedd Council and its stakeholders. Projects listed have been identified in consultation with the community and stakeholders

## 2. Visitor and Tourism Assessment

In this section we assess Dyffryn Nantlle's visitor offer in order to better understand the challenges and opportunities for the future development of the town.

### Arrival/Layout

Penygroes, the main village in Dyffryn Nantlle, lies half way between Porthmadog and Caernarfon; the main road, the A487 bypasses the village.

There is a brown tourist information sign on the main road directing you to Dyffryn Nantlle, but once there, no other signs are to be found and no obvious tourist information centre.

The village is widespread and there's no main central point, apart from the busy Water Street crossroads with Siop Griffiths and the Banc on either side.

### Visitor information: orientation/signage/tourist information

There is one interpretation panel in the car park opposite the Co-op. It's not obvious that this is a public car park, therefore the visitor would not necessarily park there. The panel needs to be updated and refreshed stylistically.

It's not obvious when wandering around the village that this is a slate mining village, of great historical and cultural importance. There are slate heaps further up the valley, and of course Dorothea and Pen yr Orsedd quarries can be seen clearly. There are no signs to guide you into Dorothea Quarry to explore the important industrial heritage remains to be found there.

At the Inigo Jones Centre on the main road [see attractions section below], there's an extensive range of informational leaflets and books about the slate industry; there are some leaflets about the area and local events in the Banc on Water Street.

### Facilities

**Public conveniences:** the public can use toilets situated in the Banc, Water Street, open Monday to Saturday, 9.00 – 4.30; and at Inigo Jones on the A487, 9.00 – 5.00, Monday – Sunday. Also at Garej Povey Open (Excluding Bank Holidays) 8.00 - 17.00 Monday -Friday 9.00 – 12.00 Saturdays.

### **Cafes/restaurants in Penygroes and surrounding area:**

Yr Orsaf – lively, good homemade food, open Tuesday – Saturday during the day; lunch time Sundays.

Y Banc – deli rather than cafe, serving tea/coffee, sandwiches, cakes; sells a wide range of local food and drink produce, open in the day only, Monday - Saturday.

Pant Du – café and restaurant at vineyard; good quality food; friendly staff; great location. Open 10.30 – 4.30, Monday – Sunday.

Elephant Cafe, Y Fron Community Centre – small attractive café with a panoramic view over Dyffryn Nantlle; 9.30 – 3.30, Thursday - Monday.

The Goat – pub, serves food

Beijing House – Chinese takeaway, open all day and evening

Pecish – kebab a pizza shop in village centre, open all day and evening.

Penygroes Tandoori – Indian takeaway, open evenings only.

XL Chip shop - open all day and evening.

### Visitor attractions and activities

These are the visitor attractions in the area :

**Inigo Jones Slate Works**– slate exporting business founded in 1861; the company has since diversified into manufacturing slate objects for domestic use. A self-guided tour with a video introduction is available for visitors who can see the machines and craftsmen in action; the slate workshops and showroom are open daily throughout the year. There is a wide selection of books about the North Wales slate industry; slate craft and general tourist information. Café on site is supplied by a local butcher.

**Pant Du Vineyard**– Wales’s first solar powered vineyard and orchard was established in 2007. The orchard produces cider pressed from traditional cider apples and Welsh variety apples. Guided tours of the vineyard, orchard and water source; wine tastings and meals are available for groups only. Café and bar on site; fantastic location overlooking Dyffryn Nantlle.

**Dorothea Quarry** – popular location for scuba diving. Divers must belong to North Wales Technical Divers (established in August 2018) and the British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC), as well as having technical qualifications in order to access the diving site, which is open on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the year.

**Glynllifon Country Park** – extensive grounds and woodland walks including wheelchair and pushchair routes. Art gallery, shop, café and units for craft businesses.

**Cae Gors** – quarryman’s cottage, home of author, Kate Roberts; open Tuesdays only from April 1 – March 31,2020; 10.00 – 4.00; managed by Cadw.

The areas is very popular with walkers (Snowdonia Slate Trail) and cyclists (Lôn Las Eifion)

## Accommodation provision

### Bunkhouse

Rhyd Ddu Outdoor Centre – historic school buildings, home of poet, T H Parry Williams; sleeps 31 in 6 bedrooms, with communal kitchen and dining room, managed by Antur Nantlle.

Canolfan y Fron – new bunkhouse in community centre; sleeps 18 in 4 en suite rooms; communal area and kitchen electric charging point.

Basecamp Hostel, Llanllyfni - the hostel accommodates twelve people in two ensuite rooms and three rooms with a shared bathroom, all of which are accessed via stairs. There is a self catering, communal kitchen

A bunkhouse will soon open as part of Siop Griffiths' visitor facilities in Penygroes.

### Hotels

No hotels are listed in Dyffryn Nantlle; there's 1 b and b in Penygroes and 1 in Groeslon. (There are several hotels in the surrounding area and in the nearest town, Caernarfon).

The Trigonos Centre, Nantlle offers bed and breakfast but availability is limited as it's mainly used for group hire and courses.

There is plenty of self catering accommodation in the wider area, which vary from basic to luxury properties.

Airbnb : Penygroes : 5; Talysarn : 8; Carmel : 5; Nantlle : 1; Y Fron : 3

### Camping Sites /Glamping

Grafog Farm Campsite – adjacent to Inigo Jones Slate Works; pre erected tents and 1 static caravan

Wigwam Camping, Graianog Farm, Llanllyfni – located on a working farm, the site offers a number of camping pods and grass pitches for tents and touring caravans.

Talymignedd, Drws y Coed – caravan and camping site

### **3 Infrastructure and Services**

**Bus:** Local bus service between Penygroes, Carmel, Y Fron and Caernarfon, Monday to Saturday. (3 buses a day start from Penygroes; 4 from Carmel).

5 buses run daily Caernarfon to Talysarn/Nantlle, between 9.15 – 17.25, Monday - Saturday; 5 on Sunday, between 8.30 – 17.30.

The bus service from Caernarfon to Porthmadog (9 buses daily, Monday to Saturday; 5 on Sunday); stops in Penygroes, some also stop in Llanllyfni, Nebo and Nazareth. From Porthmadog to Penygroes, there are 3 buses, Monday to Saturday.

The Trawscambria service stops in Penygroes, 11 buses daily, Monday to Saturday; 3 buses on Sunday and Bank Holidays.

Access by bus, taking into consideration the various services is quite extensive.

Improvements and a new bus stop are under way outside the Co-op.

**Road/Parking:** situated off the A487, the main road which links Porthmadog and Caernarfon. One free public car park in Penygroes, although no signage to direct you there; there are short stay car parking spaces on the main street, Water St.

It's not clear where is the centre of the village.

Cycle route : LônLas Eifion runs past Penygroes.

**Wi-Fi / mobile network:** free wi-fi in Plas Silyn Leisure Centre, and Library in Penygroes.

Plans in place for community wi-fi via Dyffryn Nantlle 2020/Antur Nantlle/ Community Council.

#### **Dyffryn Nantlle Online Profile**

[www.nantlle.com](http://www.nantlle.com) – comprehensive, bilingual website for the valley; community information rather than visitor information.

#### **Visitor Reviews**

As Penygroes is not really considered a tourist destination, there are few reviews about the village, but here are some remarks about the area in general:

*“Fantastic location for visiting Snowdonia ”; “Amazing landscapes and views; a very tranquil place.”*

*“Dorothea Lakes are amazing – the colour of the slate, the mountains around it and stillness of the deep water”*

*“Good locations for visiting Snowdonia but you need a car.*

#### **4 Historic Built Environment Assessment**

We have carried out **Historic Built Environment Assessments**, to which the following selection criteria have been applied:

##### **Statutory protection:**

- Listed buildings (by grade, I, II\*, II).
- Scheduled Monuments.
- Buildings and features within Conservation Areas.

##### **‘At risk status’:**

- As defined by Cadw’s buildings at risk register (BAR) for each individual area. Classifications as follows:
  - At Risk
  - Vulnerable
  - Not at Risk
- Based on a brief inspection from external (noting if uses are apparent whether the building or feature appears derelict or vulnerable).

##### **Context in terms of slate industry heritage:**

- Importance in the context of the slate industry heritage of the area (albeit the scope of work does not allow for heritage assessments or research on individual buildings or sites).
- Feedback from the consultation process on the perceived local significance of a building, feature or site.
- Providing a representative selection of the buildings which supported the slate industry and their communities.

##### **Regenerative and interpretive potential:**

- Potential of an individual building or site to contribute to the regeneration of the area, provide significant interpretive potential or other opportunity.

Our findings are set out in full in Appendix 1; here is a summary of prioritized built environment projects. These are not necessarily just the most significant sites, but those which balance significance (in the context of the slate industry) with the potential to provide significant community regeneration outcomes.

In Penygroes, the number of historic (designated) structures is limited. Recent works to Siop Griffiths (Listed as Muriau Stores) has secured the future of this, the most important



vulnerable structure, within the village boundary. Other, non-designated structures offer greater opportunities and are noted below.

The most significant sites, given the above criteria, are generally confined to the quarries of the Nantlle Valley above Penygroes. The Dorothea and Pen-yr-Orsedd quarry sites include some 30 listed buildings, all of which are defined as being at risk, as well as substantial scheduled monuments. A cohesive appraisal of the development potential of these buildings and features is required.

The highest priority sites have been identified as:

- 1. Dorothea Quarry.** In particular the Beam Engine/Engine House (II\*) and associated scheduled and listed structures nearest to Tal-y-Sarn. A comprehensive options appraisal of the quarry and its structures is needed. It should address the conservation or managed decline of the structures, potential re-use or restoration and general questions of access and interpretation.
- 2. Pen-yr-Orsedd Quarry.** A comprehensive options appraisal of the site is needed. It should address the conservation or managed decline of the structures, potential re-use or restoration in some cases, and general questions of access and interpretation. The group of structures, on the lower level (above Nantlle), comprising the former Hospital, Workshops, Barracks etc have better accessibility and associated regeneration potential, for workspace, accommodation or other uses. Conservation, access and interpretation to the Blondin aerial ropeways also needs to be considered as these are of particular significance.
- 3. Penygroes townscape.** Penygroes has suffered from the application of inappropriate materials to the facades of many buildings, the proliferation of pebbledash render (as opposed to traditional materials) creates a 'down at heel' appearance. A targeted programme of improvements, decoration (or removal) of pebbledash, reinstatement of traditional features, and street improvements could dramatically improve the townscape. This should, however, be accompanied by a clear design strategy and ethos, based on an understanding of the character of the village.
- 4. Improved Connections.** New connections from the village to the quarries, building on existing routes, need to be considered. The creation of a link along Afon Llyfni to Dorothea would be very effective and provide strong interpretive opportunities, especially with the connection to the Mabingogi.

## **5 Key Challenges and Opportunities**

It is evident from our consultation and research that there are some fundamental challenges facing Dyffryn Nantlle, which must be addressed in order for the village to maximise the benefits that will arise from the World Heritage nomination. Here we summarise the key challenges and opportunities that would enable the town to address these.

### **SWOT Analysis**

The following SWOT analysis assesses Dyffryn Nantlle from the visitor's perspective and summarises the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of its visitor offer:

<p><b><u>STRENGTHS:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good location between two major tourist destinations, Porthmadog and Caernarfon</li> <li>• Good bus connections</li> <li>• Beautiful landscape and views of Snowdon; splendid natural beauty</li> <li>• Close to Snowdon</li> <li>• The Inigo Jones tourist attractions provides lively interpretation of the slate industry</li> <li>• Culturally vibrant area, of particular interest to Welsh speaking visitors – the large number of local poets and writers is an indication of the quarrymen's dedication to education and cultural identity.</li> <li>• Many associations with the Mabinogi, which attracts international and Welsh visitors</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>WEAKNESSES:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The A487 bypasses Penygroes/Dyffryn Nantlle</li> <li>• Not a tourist destination</li> <li>• No main tourist attractions</li> <li>• No scenic routes marked and so visitors pass by unaware of its natural beauty</li> <li>• Lack of information/interpretation points</li> <li>• Few industrial heritage features in Penygroes village or information about Dorothea quarry at end of the valley</li> <li>• Food outlets open mainly in the day only apart from takeaways</li> <li>• No interpretation in Dorothea despite extensive buildings and features</li> <li>• Weak branding; lack of destination status for Penygroes</li> <li>• Branding is confused – previous initiatives promoted Bro Lleu rather than Dyffryn Nantlle.</li> <li>• Lack of quality accommodation, except for self-catering, in Dyffryn Nantlle itself</li> </ul>
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<p><u>OPPORTUNITIES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to create a strong brand and marketing messages around the slate industry; also the Mabinogi locations</li> <li>• Research possibility of installing more information/interpretation signage and developing more events to promote and celebrate the area's industrial and cultural heritage</li> <li>• Create new routes linking up with the quarries; river route which would explore the valley's natural beauty</li> <li>• Create stronger presence to celebrate the unique literary legacy of the Mabinogi and visual legacy of Richard Wilson</li> <li>• Dorothea Quarry (if made safe) could be developed as a tourist destination – providing leisure activities and guided history walks</li> <li>• Siop Griffiths and Antur Nantlle to work together on marketing initiatives to strengthen the marketing profile for the area in general.</li> </ul>	<p><u>THREATS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk that understanding of the slate industry's heritage could be lost unless more comprehensive interpretation facilities are not provided</li> <li>• Dorothea Quarry buildings could deteriorate further; the site becomes more dangerous, especially for those who use it for leisure activities</li> <li>• Defensive attitude risks creating unnecessary competition and duplication between the main organisations involved in developing visitor facilities</li> <li>• Destination marketing not clearly coordinated between community organisations and private businesses</li> <li>• Lack of agreement between community councils about destination branding and marketing</li> <li>• Opportunities missed due to reluctance to include various organisations and businesses in the tourism strategy</li> </ul>
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## **Appendix 1 Historic Built Environment Assessment Study**

Buildings and features matrix – Penygroes and Nantlle

WSTS.01 Listed buildings, Penygroes

WSTS.02 Nantlle Quarries, listed buildings

WSTS.04 Buildings and other feature, Penygroes

WSTS.07 Opportunities, Penygroes