

- Grŵp Siarter Amgylcheddol Awyr Agored -  
- North Wales Environmental Outdoor Charter Group -

13th February - 7 pm - Pwllheli Sailing Club

Attendees:

Catherine Miles - Snowdonia-Active  
Ashley Charlwood - Canoe Wales  
Dan Jackson - Nant Gwynant OEC  
Ifer Gwyn - Snowdonia National Park  
Jim Langley - Nature's Work  
Bob Lowe - Pwllheli Sailing Academy and Events Centre  
David Hughes - Pwllheli Sailing Club  
Mike Thornbury - Abersoch Angling  
Mike Parry - Pwllheli Partnership/ Welsh Tourist Board  
Will Parry - Felin Uchaf

20 minute presentation from Catherine Miles which can be found here.

Questions taken which opened up into a discussion naturally on the types of issues on the Llŷn and how the charter group could benefit the members in this area.

The point was made by Bob Lowe that the hot spots for recreation are also the hot spots for conservation. For example the Sea Grass at Porth Dinllaen. There are concerns that anchoring is having a negative impact on the Sea Grass. This is something that has been brought to the attention of the CCW who are concerned of the impact sailing is having on the wildlife in this area. Suggestions were made such as 'best practice' could be explored and guidelines put together to minimise the impact users are having on the Sea Grass.

WISE training was brought up as an example of the type of training that could be applicable to the types of users in the Pwllheli/ Llŷn area.

Bob Lowe also brought up that there are particular restrictions at particular climbing crags in the area due to nesting choughs and other birds. NWEOCG can consult with the BMC to make sure nesting seasons and restrictions are widely publicised.

Will Parry asked where the group was just for 'sweat and wet' activity. It was expressed that at the moment the group wishes to remain as inclusive as possible, without defining the term 'activity provider'. The environmental charter is a very positive document therefore anyone who wishes the practice and promote the charter is welcomed by the group.

Will mentioned something his organisation is starting to use is QI codes placed on notice boards which will lead visitors to information about the heritage of the area. Will suggested this might be a good way of conveying the message of the charter to the public or activity providers who perhaps are not local to the area.

Mike Thornbury mentioned the biggest problem is not the providers themselves but the public who are unaware of the impact they are having on the area. Mike was even more specific by saying it is not the young people who are a problem but adults. Mike who runs a fishing business in Abersoch, expressed the problems lie with fishermen who leave rubbish, overfish by taking home fish under the legal limit and taking home too many fish than they could possibly eat.

Ashley Charlwood wondered whether a survey on the impact users have on a particular area would be an effective way to raise awareness of the impact activities have with the intention of trying to inspire behavioural change.

Several times it was expressed throughout the evening that a lot could be done to promote best practice amongst the public and that many activity providers are aware of environmental issues and already follow best practice. It was stressed that NWEOCG aims to address activity providers to identify problems with the sector, offer education to providers to help them pass on the message of best practice and sustainability, ask for the help of providers to help write up codes of best practice with the aim of these messages being passed onto the public.

It was also suggested that material produced by the charter group could also be used for schools and other educational establishments.

Mike Parry who represents the Pwllheli Partnership and also sits on the Welsh Tourist Board expressed he felt that NWEOCG would be welcomed as a host for a variety of initiatives to help ensure the sustainable development of the outdoor sector. Mike suggested that businesses and organisations could work towards a certain status of environmentalism. For example 'champions' of environmental awareness. This status could be achieved by attending x amount of training sessions and would demonstrate the environmental knowledge of the practitioner. The 'champion' status could then be used as a symbol of quality and knowledge whilst giving businesses a competitive edge and added value to their business.

Mike asked how many people are likely to sign up to the charter. The answer to this question is a difficult one to answer. Ashley Charlwood mentioned there are 300 kayak instructors alone who live in North Wales who could potentially sign up to the charter, this is only figure does not even account from those who don't live in the area but do visit with groups. Ifer Gwyn suggested that the Tourism Partnership North Wales would have a list of business in tourism. It is evident that the numbers of those who could potentially sign the charter would represent a significant proportion of activity users in the area.

Several comments were made about making videos for the NWEOCG and their initiatives. This 'visual gold' as it was referred to would entice potential members and also be used a marketing and promotional tool to the public.

David Hughes asked whether there were such a thing as the 'top 10' issues/ things to be aware of with each activity. It was explained that although there can be particular issues at specific venues there is generic best practice for each activity. David suggested this could be something that is made into short film, a booklet or for the website. These top 10 ideas could then be drip fed to bring about behavioral change.

On way the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter group have done this is by producing DVDs to promote reconciling conservation with recreation. These are based on generic best practice for an activity and not necessarily specific for Pembrokeshire. For example part of the coasteering DVD produced by POC was filmed on Anglesey. These DVDs are an effective way to promote good practice, funding dependent there is potential to produce something similar with those on the Llŷn and surrounding area.

Bob Lowe mentioned that a lot of projects have already been developed which attempt to ensure this reconciliation of recreation with conservation however, unfortunately lack of funding has meant such projects could not continue. These previous projects could provide a good framework for developing particular projects through NWEOCG, funding dependent. An example Bob gave was the Blue Green a project piloted by several organisations.

A few members of the group present had completed NGB qualification and noted the environmental aspect of these courses was disappointing lacking in content. A short discussion was had on the matter. Although, this seems like an obvious place to start with trying to get qualifications changed, the process is incredibly difficult. The NWEOCG are aiming to have their environmental courses CPD accredited so that instructors will be able to use the course credits towards other qualifications.

It was evident from the those present and given the location of the meeting that the majority of people in attendance are concerned about the impact water related activity has on wildlife and natural environments. This will be something NWEOCG will take into consideration when discussing how the group can meet these needs.

Summary of Main Points:

- Hot spots for recreation are hot spots for conservation
- Sea Grass - Possible 'best practice' to avoid damage
- WISE training could be relevant to this area
- Nesting Restrictions and climbing venues promoted through NWEOCG website
- QI codes to inform public
- Environmental awareness needs explicitly raising amongst the public
- Survey of impact could raise awareness
- Material NWEOCG produce could be used for schools and other educational establishments
- Providers could aim to become "champions" of environmental awareness through attendance at NWEOCG training events and an accreditation system
- Films to raise awareness of best practice
- NGB could address the content of the environmental module of their courses
- NWEOCG trying to get courses CPD credits to satisfy instructors professional needs