



CYNGOR SIR
YNYS MÔN
ISLE OF ANGLESEY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Public Consultation Report on the Future of the Llangefni Golf Course

Playing Fields – Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions

October 2020

Status: Official

Prepared by:

The Regulation & Economic Development Service

The Isle of Anglesey County Council

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg

This document is available in Welsh

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Isle of Anglesey County Council (IACC)('the County Council') wishes to engage with the community, playing field users and other interested persons and parties regarding a proposal to dispose of the Llangefni Golf Course. The purpose of this report is to provide the reader with an accurate summary of factors being considered and relevant to this decision making process and to ensure that all relevant persons have an opportunity to put forward their views and make representations to enable the County Council to decide whether to proceed with the disposal or not.
- 1.2 The report will provide historical context, the County Councils position as well as outline what the next steps are in relation to the future of the site.
- 1.3 In compliance with the County Council's obligations pursuant to the Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Regulations 2015 and its legal duties under the Future Generations and Well-Being Act 2015 the County Council has carried out an impact assessment of the effect the proposed disposal may have (details of which accompany this Report) and now intends to commence a period of consultation and engagement with the local community and interested groups and parties to further inform the Council's decision making process.

2.0 Historical Context

- 2.1 The Llangefni municipal golf course was opened in 1983 by the then Ynys Môn Borough Council to provide a low cost "pay and play" facility for beginner and intermediate level golfers. At the time private courses were inaccessible to many individuals due restrictive membership policies and expensive green fees.
- 2.2 In 2008/ 09 the authority received £225,234 of Sports Wales grant funding to improve the facility. In order to complete the necessary works, the facility was forced to close. Following the reopening of the full facility in 2009/ 10 there was an un-sustained negligible increase in the participation figures for the golf course as a standalone facility (only 596). However this was not sustained and it is generally considered that when the facility shut, customers started to play elsewhere and never fully returned.
- 2.3 There was an average annual reduction in participation figures between 2007/ 2014 of 10,855 (56%) and the facility demonstrated a continued decline in participation figures which resulted in the income generated for 2013/ 14 being £2,667 less than it achieved before the inclusion of the driving range.
- 2.4 Between the years of 2007 – 2014 the golf course facility was incurring average annual **losses of £28,000** which the County Council had to subsidise. This was not sustainable.
- 2.5 Following a number of expressions of interest, a decision was taken by the Executive Committee on May 26th 2015 to transfer the management and responsibility of running the golf course to the Llangefni Partnership. This was a short-term arrangement without any formal marketing to ensure the facility remained open.
- 2.6 On 9th August 2017 the Executive Committee endorsed the decision taken by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Public Protection and Economic Development to extend the lease to the Partnership until 1st October 2018

- 2.7 On the 21st May 2018 a decision in principle by the Executive Committee supported the proposed sale of the golf course land (circa 40 acres) but retaining the driving range and associated buildings to be run on behalf of the County Council.
- 2.8 In a joint statement between the County Council and the Llangefni Partnership, it was confirmed that following reviewing the financial facts and an independent feasibility study, the Llangefni Partnership Board unanimously decided that the levels of investment to further develop and maintain the facility were financially unviable. Therefore, the Llangefni Social Enterprise had not sought to apply for a lease extension or Community Asset Transfer from the County Council. [Here](#)

3.0 Current Position

- 3.1 Following the expiration of the lease on 1st October 2018, the County Council have taken steps to secure the site and also undertaken some ground remediation works to negate damage to the land. The land has also been subject to some baling and grazing.
- 3.2 An open tender process to manage and operate the driving range was also undertaken with coach and PGA professional Matthew Wharton successfully securing an agreement with the County Council. The driving range facility which has seen investment reopened in January 2019 and is extremely successful.
- 3.3 In line with the relevant regulations, the County Council now wishes to engage and consult with the wider community on the potential impact on any proposed disposal of the Llangefni Golf Course on the community.

4.0 The County Council's Proposed Disposal

- 4.1 The proposal put forward is that the red outline (please see Annex A) measuring some 16.84 hectares or 41.6 acres is to advertised for sale on the open market to achieve best value pursuant to s123 Local Government Act 1972. This would be inclusive of the former groundsman's dwelling house (Y Ffridd) to be marketed openly as an agricultural smallholding. It is expected this marketing would take some 12 weeks.
- 4.2 All of the other areas would be retained:
1. Shaded – The golf practice greens, driving range and compound area to be retained under lease to third party as existing.
 2. Shaded – The allotment gardens on Lon Clai to be retained under lease to third party as existing.
 3. Shaded – Land adjacent to Lon Clai to be retained under lease to third party as existing.
 4. Blue outline – Oriol Ynys Mon and associated car park retained.
- 4.3 It should also be noted that as per the Executive's decision in May 2018, that "*the capital receipt from any potential sale is ring-fenced to support the modernisation and improvement of Plas Arthur to meet current standards*". This it is hoped will mitigate the loss of the golf course and significantly enhance the leisure provision elsewhere should the County Council decide at the conclusion of the consultation process to proceed with the disposal of the Llangefni Golf Course. Prioritising multi-sport facilities which caters for a more diverse end-user will make it easier for families to play in the same place, ensure year round use and offer the best value for money.

4.4 The County Council needs to ensure that its built facilities are fit for purpose, future proofed and that they are operated on a commercial basis providing a variety of activities for all in the community. This will ensure the facilities sustained use and improvement in public health and well-being as well as strengthening the Welsh language.

5.0 The Game of Golf

4.1 The barriers to entry for golf are well-known. It has suffered from having an image problem and is an expensive game when compared to other alternative sports, it is costly and the very nature of the game means that this is unlikely to change. The direct and in-direct costs involved in maintaining huge areas of land and having up-to-date equipment will always be high.

5.2 According to KPMG in their comprehensive “Golf Participation Report for Europe 2018” ([Report Link](#)) Wales had:

1. 44,551 registered golfers in 2017
2. This is down 871 or 1.92% from 45,422 in 2016
3. 145 golf courses in 2017
4. This is down 3% from 149 in 2016
5. This equated to an average of 307 registered golfers per golf course

5.3 In October 2018, following the closure of the golf course, the County Council engaged with 6 of the 7 golf courses on the Island – Baron Hill, Bull Bay, Henllys Hall, Holyhead, Anglesey Golf Course Rhosneigr and Stowrs Wen. No contact details for the “pay and play” in Treaddur Bay could be found.

5.4 No responses were received and follow-up e-mails were sent which elicited three of the 6 to respond. Their confidential, unedited responses to our questions are as detailed below.

Response 1	
1. What impact do you think the closure of Llangefni will have on the game of golf?	This may have an effect on the game of golf from the aspect of the unemployed or beginners.
2. Is there sufficient, or even an over-supply of golf courses on Anglesey?	Yes, I believe there are sufficient courses on the Island.
3. Is it positive that a PGA professional has been successful in securing the driving range lease?	Very much so, with developing the game and introducing beginners to the game.
4. Do you believe there are opportunities for joint working?	Yes
5. Over the past 5 years, have your participation numbers gone down, remained static or increased?	Unfortunately, numbers have reduced.
6. Are you offering concessions or deals to attract new members?	Yes
7. Are you pro-active on social media platforms to market and raise awareness of your golf course? If so, please share your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram details.	Very much so

8. How do you generally see the future of the game of golf on Anglesey and beyond	Tough times ahead but hopefully another Tiger Woods on the horizon?
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Response 2	
1. What impact do you think the closure of Llangefni will have on the game of golf?	This will have a massive impact on Golf in general on Anglesey.
2. Is there sufficient, or even an oversupply of golf courses on Anglesey?	I would suggest that there is currently an oversupply of traditional members 18 hole golf courses. However there is a lack of feeder clubs, in fact there aren't any feeder golf courses apart from Llangefni. Llangefni is central to the island and has historically produced a large proportion of golfers who then follow up by joining members golf clubs
3. Is it positive that a PGA professional has been successful in securing the driving range lease?	Yes, members from Bull Bay along with Anglesey GC, Holyhead GC, Barron Hill GC & Henllys all use these facilities as the only available range on Anglesey
4. Do you believe there are opportunities for joint working?	We are all at fault and partnerships should have been developed years ago. Golf was slow in reacting to a changing market and consumer demands but we are now aware and reacting to it. Therefore yes there are opportunities for developing partnerships.
5. Over the past 5 years, have your participation numbers gone down, remained static or increased?	Participation remains static, but we are active in recruiting new and returning golfers.
6. Are you offering concessions or deals to attract new members?	Yes, we offer reduced membership for new and returning golfers
7. Are you pro-active on social media platforms to market and raise awareness of your golf course? If so, please share your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram details.	Yes
8. How do you generally see the future of the game of golf on Anglesey and beyond	Golf Clubs have been slow to react to changing demands over the years and as a result golf has struggled. In conjunction with Golf Wales and North Wales Tourism clubs have woken up and understanding that we must be more active and welcoming. We at X are relatively positive and are investing a lot of time in recruiting juniors, ladies and male golfers but it's going to be a huge challenge due to an aging membership. Nationally Golf is on the increase, particularly among juniors and Ladies and this is a result of a lot of hard work and changes in attitudes.

Response 3	
1. What impact do you think the closure of Llangefni will have on the game of golf?	We believe the closure will have an impact on the game of golf on the Island as many golfers began their golfing experience at Llangefni, it offered an affordable way for beginners to have their first taste of golf
2. Is there sufficient, or even an over-supply of golf courses on Anglesey?	With 6 clubs on the island with the opportunity to play 9/ 18hole courses we think there are sufficient clubs on the Island. The opening of both Storws Wen & Henllys Hall in the past 25 years has put financial pressure on the long-standing clubs on the Island; but has possibly enhanced the golfers experience & visitors experience, with the help of the council Anglesey could promote itself as a golf destination.
3. Is it positive that a PGA professional has been successful in securing the driving range lease?	Yes it is positive that a PGA professional has been successful in securing the driving range lease
4. Do you believe there are opportunities for joint working?	Yes there are definitely opportunities for joint working both with Matthew Wharton & the council in promoting the Island as a destination for the tourist golfer. We will support Matthews efforts to promote the game on the Island;
5. Over the past 5 years, have your participation numbers gone down, remained static or increased?	Our participation numbers have been static, largely due to us being a 9 hole course.
6. Are you offering concessions or deals to attract new members?	Yes we proactively market the club all clubs are offering deals of some sort which does generate new members.
7. Are you pro-active on social media platforms to market and raise awareness of your golf course? If so, please share your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram details.	Yes invested in a new website last year, have an Instagram page & facebook page;
8. How do you generally see the future of the game of golf on Anglesey and beyond	Golf is in decline at the moment, many people are reluctant to spend 4/5 hours on a golf course, this has helped our 9 hole club combat the decline seen in many other clubs in the UK.

6.0 IACC Response and Interpretation of the Feedback

- 6.1 There is no legal requirement for the County Council to provide a golf service either directly or indirectly. At a time of reduced financial support, the County Council needs to review its discretionary services and seek to reduce its expenditure on non-essential services. Leisure remains a discretionary service.

6.2 There are a number of challenges the Leisure Function as a discretionary (non-statutory) Service has had and are dealing with as a result of the current financial outlook.

1. Meeting annual efficiency saving targets;
2. Substantial budget reduction over the intervening years (60%+);
3. The need to maintain the provision of facilities and activities;
4. Negative perceptions and a poor image/ reputation;
5. Poor quality of facilities (due to age and lack of investment);
6. The costs and overheads associated with ageing buildings and wet-side facilities;
7. Increasing user expectations;
8. The need to establish a new customer focussed and commercial driven outlook and culture;
9. Lack of capacity and capability to drive change; and
10. Differing political expectations and ambitions.

6.3 The County Council is also of the opinion that it should not be competing with the private sector in the delivery of golf, and that an argument can be made there is an over-provision with the Island having a total of 7 golfing facilities. Seven courses is one golf course per 9,997 of the Anglesey population, only Scotland and Iceland have similar figures (KPMG, 2018). Annex D displays where the golf courses are located on Anglesey and that a sufficient geographical coverage. Distances to each of the other courses from Llangefni are as follows:

Golf Course	Distance in Miles
Henllys Hall, Beaumaris	11.8
Baron Hill, Beaumaris	11.7
Anglesey GC, Rhosneigr	11.1
Trearddur Bay GC	16.8
Holyhead GC	15.8
Bull Bay GC, Amlwch	13.8
Storws Wen, Brynteg	5.6

6.4 Unfortunately, 3 of the 6 did not respond therefore it is not possible to have a full illustration on the state of the game on Anglesey. However, the responses indicate and anecdotal evidence suggests to the County Council that golf courses are struggling in terms of retaining new members and ageing current members. This is not a sustainable long-term scenario going forward.

6.5 It should also be noted that as per the Executive's decision in May 2018, that the capital receipt from the sale of the golf course land will be ring-fenced to mitigate the loss and enhance leisure provision elsewhere, namely Plas Arthur in Llangefni. Prioritising multi-sport facilities will make it easier for families to play in the same place, ensure year round use and offer the best value for money.

6.6 The impact of sports facilities that can only be used for a single sport is likely to be less than one that can cater to a wider range of people who want to play different sports. New sporting infrastructure needs to accommodate the maximum possible number of sports so that people have the broadest choice of how to be active.

7.0 Impact of Proposed Disposal on Strategic Policies

7.1 In accordance with Regulation 6 of the Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions)(Wales) Regulations 2015 the County Council is required to

assess the effect that the proposed disposal would have on relevant strategies, plans and assessments for the local area concerned and how the disposal would impact on the outcomes set out in these plans and strategies. The relevant plans are:

- a) The local development plan required under section 62 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- b) The play sufficiency assessment required under section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010
- c) The community strategy required under section 39 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (replaced by local well-being plan)
- d) The health and well-being strategy required under section 40 of National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006
- e) Such other strategies, plans and assessments as the Local Authority considers appropriate. In this instance we have also considered the impact against the County Councils current Leisure Strategy.

7.2 The above have all been considered and assessed against the proposed disposal decision and either a Positive Impact or a Negative Impact – are outlined in the table below. For further details of the full impact assessments, please see the supporting documents accompanying this Report.

Topic Area	Positive/ Neutral	Negative
Joint Local Development Plan, Open Space Assessment	✓	
Play Sufficiency Assessment	✓	
Future Well-Being of Generations Act	✓	
Local Well-Being Assessment	✓	
Equalities Impact Assessment	✓	
Welsh Language Impact Assessment	✓	
County Councils Leisure Strategy	✓	

7.3 Having undertaken the impact assessments against the above areas, our conclusion as a County Council is that there will be some negative impacts but these will be minimal and the majority of impacts will be neutral or positive. The identified negative impacts are:

- a) That we recognise that the provision of golf at Llangefni was cheaper than at other courses at £4 per round. For comparison, Trearddur Bay is approximately £5, Storws Wen £10 and Baron Hill £13. In mitigation however, the driving range has remained open for use to the golfing community.
- b) A recognition that those with limited access to transport (especially living locally/ walking distance) could be impacted by its closure. Travelling to Trearddur Bay will be less of an issue as this is well served by bus routes, getting to alternative provision at Storws Wen or Baron Hill will be challenging. In mitigation, the driving range has remained open for use to the golfing community.

7.4 In relation to the two identified negative impacts above, it is not possible for the County Council to fully mitigate these effects. Concessionary travel schemes are available on Anglesey and further information on this scheme can be found at <https://www.anglesey.gov.uk/en/Residents/Parking-roads-and-travel/Public-transport/Travel-passes.aspx>

8.0 Proposed Consultation/ Engagement

- 8.1 There are a number of steps a Local Authority must before making a decision to dispose of a playing field, or any part of a playing field. These can be viewed by following link to the Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Regulations 2015 [Here](#). Meaningful engagement with the local community and interested groups and persons is at the heart of the Regulations.
- 8.2 The Future Generations Act (2015) requires public bodies in Wales to “think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities...and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities...”
- 8.3 To that end the County Council will ensure that throughout the process it complies fully with all applicable regulations and invites representations from any interested persons and or groups.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 Since 2007-2014 when the golf course was in the County Councils ownership it was losing an average of £28,000 per annum. As this loss was being subsidised, it was unsustainable.
- 9.2 The Llangefni Social Enterprise was running the facility on the County Council’s behalf between 2015 and 2018. However, their conclusion was that financially it was too much of a burden and they did not seek an asset transfer nor a longer lease. The facility was handed back to the County Council 1st October 2018.
- 9.3 The County Council has successfully secured the immediate future of the driving range and practice area and a PGA Professional is now a tenant managing and operating the driving range facility. This aspect has been welcomed by a number of the driving range users.
- 9.4 If having considered representations made pursuant to this process the County Council decides to proceed with the decision to dispose then the former golf course land (circa 41.6 acres) along with the greenkeepers former house (Ffridd) will be advertised for sale on the open market as a small-holding. Any capital funding secured will be ring-fenced and invested in our existing leisure facilities. The Executive has already endorsed the decision in principle to use the proceeds of sale for this purpose (subject to the outcome of the consultation process and expiry of relevant timescales pursuant to the Regulations)
- 9.5 Developing multi-sport facilities is the priority for the County Council as this ensures year round use, offers the best value for money and can help improve the health and well-being of all members of our communities by offering multiple choices. This is also consistent with the County Council’s objectives set out in its Local Well-being Plan and our Leisure Strategy.

As a result of the above, the County Council is consulting on the:

- 1. Llangefni Golf Course land and the Ffridd house being sold on the open market to create a new small-holding.**
- 2. That the capital receipt is ring-fenced and reinvested in our leisure facilities to enhance and improve the range of activities they offer.**
- 3. The driving range, practice areas and shop will remain as a golfing facility and open to the public to continue to use.**

4. We have completed impact assessments on the positive, neutral and negative effects on Equalities and the Welsh Language. In your opinion, have we missed anything?

We welcome your comments and thoughts on these proposals.

Please contact Tudur H. Jones, tudurjones@anglesey.gov.uk or 01248 752 435

Full details and the consultation material can be found at the following locations:

- Anglesey Business Centre Llangefni, LL77 7XA

Supporting Documents –

Annex A – Site Boundary and Location Plan

Annex B – Location Map of Anglesey Golf Provision

- Equality Impact Assessment
- Welsh Language Impact Assessment
- Well Being & Future Generations Act Impact Assessment
- Joint Local Development Plan, Open Space Impact Assessment
- Play Sufficiency Impact Assessment
- Play Sufficiency Impact Assessment – Sports Development
- Leisure Strategy Impact Assessment