

Partneriaeth
Eco Dyffryn Dyfi

Dyfi Eco Valley
Partnership



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Response to consultation

2/5/2002

1.0 Summary

These notes describe the consultations carried out since January and the Partnership's response to comments received. We are writing an action plan based on these notes. Your further comment is invited.

The Partnership has concluded that it should be the umbrella body for a variety of collective actions. The alternative would have been to focus narrowly on specific subjects like energy and the environment.

It is relevant to you because the action plan is intended to guide community regeneration work as a whole in the Dyfi valley. The Welsh Development Agency will be asked to support the implementation of relevant actions through its Community Regeneration Toolkit.

2.0 What is the Partnership?

2.1 The Dyfi Eco Valley Partnership (ecodyfi) is a locally-controlled organisation whose mission is to foster sustainable community regeneration in the Dyfi valley. It seeks to deliver environmental, economic and social benefits simultaneously and takes a long-term and global perspective in meeting local needs. It is a company limited by guarantee, not distributing profits to members.

2.2 Partners include local individuals, private companies, voluntary bodies, local authorities, Snowdonia National Park and the Welsh Development Agency. They can all influence policy and make things happen through open quarterly Board meetings, through membership of the Management Committee and by joining Working Groups on specific topics.

2.3 Ecodyfi opened a formal membership scheme in September 2001. 43 individuals and 14 organisations have paid to join so far, including 7 Town and Community Councils.

3.0 The consultation and review process

We are talking to as many people as we can about the future of the valley and the future of the Partnership. The main elements are as follows:

- Requests to speak to all the local groups . We have addressed the following meetings so far: Borth, Glantwymyn, Llanbrynmair and Machynlleth Town and Community Councils, Gweithgor Corris, Aberdyfi Partnership, Gwerin y Coed, Eglwysfach WI, Canolfan Aberhosan Committee, Machynlleth Forum, staff meeting at CAT.
- An MSc student, Llion Pugh, worked with us on work placement for two months, engaging the farming community . He used individual interviews and a large public meeting which targeted YFC members in particular.
- Machynlleth Chamber of Trade has distributed our consultation documents but relatively few shop owners have responded so far.
- 850 copies of a (printed) summary consultation document have been distributed to members and more widely, e.g. at the library, post offices, door-to-door and via group networks.
- A fuller (photocopied) consultation document was also used in smaller numbers.
- A preliminary questionnaire was inserted in copies of the Blewyn Glas.
- Discussions with key people in other organisations , including CAMAD and Cymad.
- Press releases to all the local media .
- Over 200 people have responded, including contributions at meetings.

The main questions we asked (with the responses in brackets) are as follows:

1. Are you happy for ecodyfi to co-ordinate community regeneration in Bro Ddyfi?

(Almost unanimously “yes”)

2. How would you change ecodyfi to make sure it is the voice of the community as a whole? For example, should some positions on the Board be reserved for representatives of bodies like local councils and businesses? Or should they be involved in other ways (perhaps through a “forum”)?

(see section on Internal Structures)

3. Do you agree with the kind of vision set out in the consultation documents?

(Yes)

4. Would you like your area to be included?

(Yes, except for the Aberdyfi Partnership. Ceredigion County Council is considering how active it wishes to be in the Partnership. At the moment we propose that the action plan covers the 12 other Town and Community areas in the present project area: Pennal, Corris, Mawddwy, Llanbrynmair, Glantwymyn, Cadfarch, Machynlleth, Ysgubor y Coed, Ceulanamaesmawr, Llangynfelin, Borth, Geneu’r Glyn)

5. Can you suggest any project ideas?

(a list of suggestions is available on request)

4.0 Vision and approach

Our vision is for the Dyfi valley to be a thriving, bilingual community, recognised for living sustainably .

This is based on the following propositions:

1. Strengthening the local economy is the key to meeting social needs.
2. Tourism and farming are the most important local industries.
3. Diversification in the local economy needs active encouragement. Opportunities include renewable energy services and activities requiring fast access to the internet.
4. The only kind of tourism that will succeed here is sustainable tourism. Short-term fixes will not do. Equally, the only kind of farming that will succeed here is sustainable farming.
5. Local distinctiveness is the key to success in many markets nowadays, particularly in tourism and increasingly in local produce (including foodstuffs). Much greater integration of image and co-operation between players would reinforce local strengths.
6. Food, holiday and other products will all benefit from being associated with a clean, green image of the valley – with the Dyfi valley as a leader in sustainable community regeneration.
7. Globalisation of production and distribution systems leads to unsustainable levels of resource use and waste creation and makes local economies more vulnerable to external factors. Reversing this trend is sometimes called “relocalisation”.

Our approach is expressed on our website as follows:

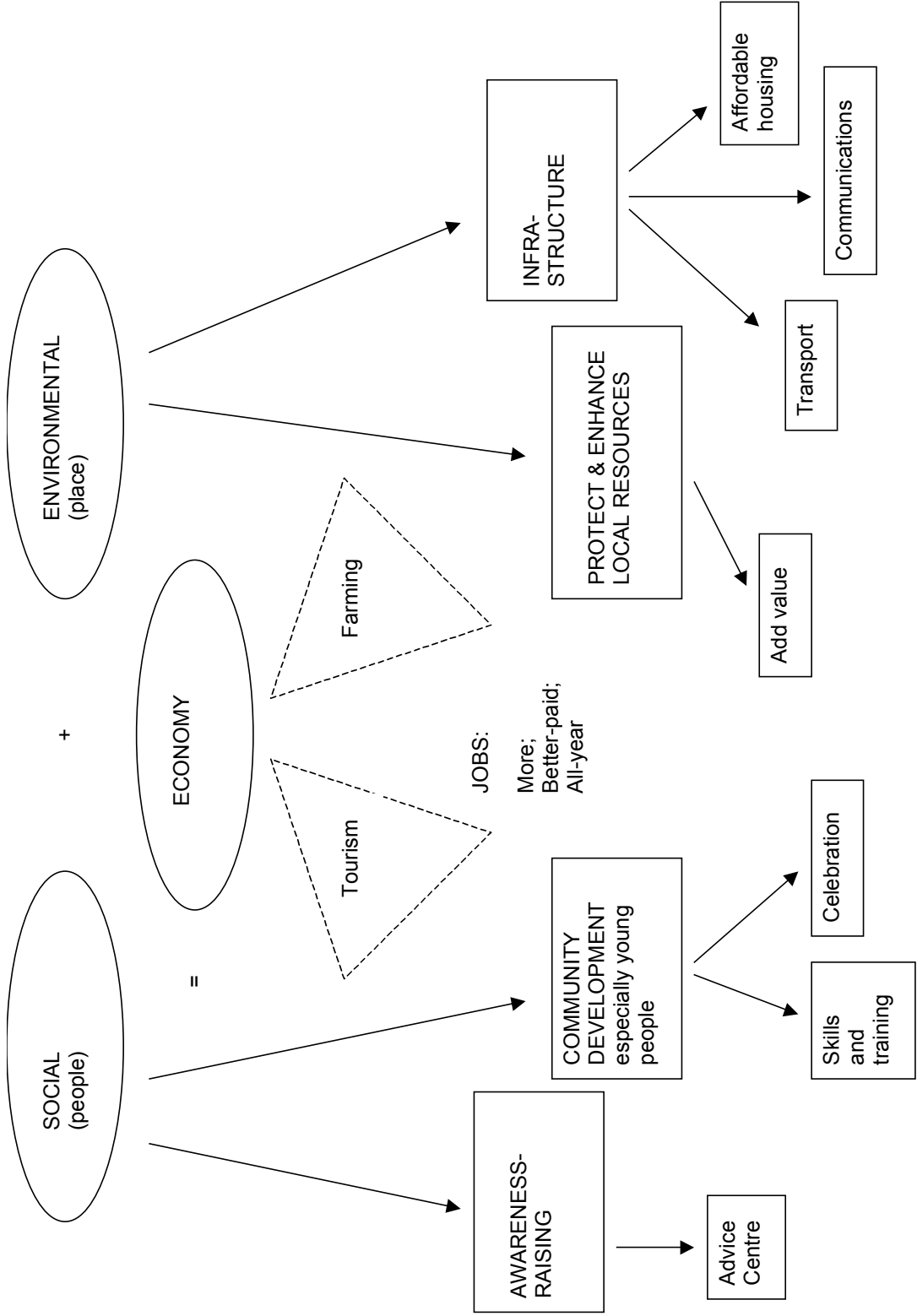
“We believe that strengthening local economies and meeting social needs goes hand in hand with valuing cultural and environmental assets. Do you? The Dyfi Valley is special. Southern Snowdonia and the coast provide landscapes and habitats of international importance. Owain Glyndŵr’s heritage and the Centre for Alternative Technology both flourish here. We are a bilingual community that embraces tradition and sees the need for change. Share our search for a more sustainable future.”

Our mission is to foster sustainable community regeneration in the Dyfi valley. Here are some thoughts to help explain what this means and how it might differ from any other kind of community regeneration:

- Local needs must be met within a long-term vision. This implies attention to global as well as local environmental quality and stability (e.g. climate change), to the robustness of the local economy (e.g. encouraging local purchasing) and to the capacity of local people to take responsibility for the future.
- Activities should deliver simultaneous economic, environmental and community benefits wherever possible.
- They should not focus narrowly on one subject area but make connections.

5.0 Themes for action

The key areas are illustrated on the following page.



Themes to guide actions:

6.0 Aims

The formal aims of the company need to be amended at the AGM on 9th May 2002 to reflect the above priorities. The Board suggests the following:

- a) To vigorously pursue the sustainable community regeneration and development of the Dyfi valley
- b) For the Dyfi Eco Valley to be presented as a successful template for the development of local sustainable economies elsewhere in the region, the UK and the World

7.0 Internal Structures

The Memorandum and Articles are available on request and will be amended at the AGM in the light of the current review process.

Currently there is a Board of 15 members. In future no places on the Board will be reserved for regional bodies (though individuals on the Board may indeed be councillors or have other connections with various organisations). Equally, staff should no longer be Directors as of right but may be elected or co-opted.

The proposal is as follows: 12 Board members will be elected by the membership; the voting system will ensure that there are four members from each county. The Board will have the power to co-opt a further 5 persons to ensure availability of sufficient skills, experience, enthusiasm, availability and balance.

There is a Management Committee of 6, appointed by the Board.

Working Groups will be constructed to manage the themes, actions or geographical areas, as appropriate. This will be the way that most people get involved – pursuing their particular interest but within a coordinated framework. For example, Gweithgor y Llechen Corris could act as one such group. Groups exist for Tourism and Transport and one will soon be convened for ICT.

Membership currently costs £5 for local individuals and £10 for local organisations. It is proposed that in both categories the actual membership fee be £1 and that existing members be offered the chance to reclaim the additional £4 and £9 they have already paid.

Mechanisms to ensure communication with Town and Community Councils will be established, for example, attendance by staff or Board members at some of their meetings (perhaps once a year).

Whatever the detail, we will ensure that the structures enable all sections of the Dyfi valley community to feel included and that everybody is encouraged to participate at an appropriate level.

DEVF is a member of the Development Trusts Association.

Development Trusts are defined as organisations which are:

- engaged in the economic, environmental & social regeneration of a defined area or community
- independent and aiming for self-sufficiency
- not for private profit
- community-based and owned
- actively involved in partnerships between the community, voluntary, private and public sectors

8.0 Image

Some people think that the Partnership is involved only with environmental and energy issues. This is not so. The perception arises from several factors, which we are addressing:

- Our first project and most publicity has been about renewable energy. Only recently have we had funding to get involved in other subjects. Now we hope to take on a variety of community regeneration projects.
- Our office is provided by a renewable energy company, Dulas Ltd, on the Eco Park. We intend to move to premises in Machynlleth not associated with a specific sector of the economy. We will be more accessible there.
- Many of the Board members have a specific interest in these subjects. We intend that new Board members with other skills and experiences will be elected or co-opted.
- The name! Most people take “eco” to mean environmental. In fact it denotes economy as well as ecology. Most respondents favoured keeping the name, because it indicates the valley’s “unique selling point” and it already has a good reputation. On the other hand, some people may be put off by the “eco” tag. We have found this issue very difficult, but considered that actions (the points above) speak louder than words. We are going to keep the official name but be known generally as the Ecodyfi Partnership.

A list of likely first-year projects is attached as an appendix

Appendix: Projects for the next twelve months

These are still provisional at this stage. They need further discussion with those who have been working them up and with the WDA.

Development Officer

A full-time worker to co-ordinate development work and projects. This officer will also carry out / manage any projects or consultancy work where there is no dedicated officer. Funding (for the first two years): 30 hours a week from the WDA Toolkit plus 7 hours a week from the Powys Objective 2 renewable energy project.

Administrative Officer

A part-time post will be created if there is sufficient income from project management fees. Otherwise the Development Officer will continue to carry responsibilities not within the job descriptions of individual project officers.

Office / Shop-front advice centre cum multi-purpose community building e.g. to provide a "drop-in", client meeting space, office facilities and administrative services for various bodies, such as the Credit Union, DEVP, Communities First, Telecentre (as appropriate); perhaps for the members of a suggested building association and for other micro-enterprises; and also to house the Machynlleth Telecentre (if appropriate). It could also display products from the area and house various resources (e.g. reference books).

Funding: WDA Toolkit, with contributions from other users if a shared building. Rental, business rates, insurance and other office costs (including lease of office equipment, phone and other consumables) to be specified.

Next steps: Continue discussions with other bodies and property owners

Development of the renewable energy industry and sites, including the use of local wood-fuel

Participation in 'Greenheat', combining several European-funded renewable energy projects.

Continue Solar Club

Funding: Fee from one of the Greenheat projects ("CORE"). Investigate options for earned income, perhaps with other Solar Clubs and the Cymru Solar network.

Using resources otherwise going to waste

Includes school-based projects and the creation of social enterprises based on (a) composting and growing, (b) plastics, cardboard and aluminium

Funding: Environment Wales (confirmed), Powys County Council (very likely), Enfys (under discussion)

Integrated transport

Three-year project beginning with a transport needs analysis. Aiming to improve access to transport for people living in and visiting the valley.

Funding: Application for all costs being made to Community Fund (lottery)

Training & creative space for young people, and temporary accommodation
A facility for people aged 16-25, combining short-term accommodation with spaces for training and constructive leisure use, including a music studio.
Funding: Mid Wales Housing Association would develop the site and access National Assembly funds for the housing element. A multi-agency steering group is examining potential properties and putting together a funding package.
Next steps: work with the steering group for the Machynlleth Foyer project

Information and Communications Technology including
(a) "Dyfinet" (wire-less broadband access), together with the stimulation of value-creating activities to take advantage of it e.g. video, IT and other media businesses, with a possibility of creating a consultancy and installation service
Next step: feasibility study cum community consultation process (leading to a Strategy Document and detailed plan)
Funding: WDA Toolkit
(b) Developing Machynlleth Telecentre and brokering best use of publicly-available ICT facilities and training
Next step: discuss at inaugural meeting of Partnership ICT Working Group

Sustainable tourism
Mostly delivered through the Dyfi valley Rural Tourism Growth Area (TGA) action plan. The TGA officer will be employed and line-managed by the Partnership, with reporting links to the funders / tourism partners. Synergy with other Partnership activities will be sought but this action plan does not duplicate actions identified within the draft TGA action plan.
Funding: Part of the Partnership Development Officer's time (probably one day a week on average) will be allocated to managing and assisting the TGA Officer. The TGA officer has a separate budget for salary and office costs.
Next steps: Recruit TGA Officer, integrate the two action plans

The provisional TGA action plan includes several actions related to cycling and walking, but the following project is noted here in case it is not in the final plan.

Cycle and footpaths around Dinas Mawddwy
Next steps: Work up proposals with Cymad when Cynefin has produced its report.

Borth Gateways Project
Newly-formed community lobbying and action group aiming to improve look and facilities of Borth and information about the village - including interpretation, signage and marketing tools.
Next steps: help them define priorities and investigate whether they can be carried out under the Ceredigion Tourism Growth Area.

Borth artists project
Gallery and associated activities run by artists collective
Next steps: they review property options; organise help with business planning

Lime and hemp in buildings

Market development / technical development / showcase activities / local growing of suitable cultivars. A local builder has experience of working with these materials in Switzerland and is convinced there is scope to introduce them to Wales.

Next steps: Liaise with JB Plant Fibres in N Wales; feasibility study, scoped in the light of their response.

Funding: WDA Toolkit, Glasu (LEADER+)

Local lamb and beef

Local slaughter, processing, packaging, distribution, branding and marketing – to local and wider markets. Assist existing abattoir in its expansion, explore organic certification for it and consider the idea for a non-profit farmer-owned company to deal collectively with meat.

Next steps: Consider options with Glasu and Powys Food Links officers as well as abattoir owner, CWYSI and farmers

“Incubator”, small or start-up workshops in Talybont Chapel conversion

Improve Corris Institute

Mostly exterior works in this next stage

Develop work spaces for wood-related businesses on Council yard at Dinas Mawddwy

This is adjacent to the Coed Meirion storage facility.

Next steps: Feasibility study in conjunction with Cymad

Mach Teenzone (wheeled facility)

The group of young people and helpers has designs for a skateboard park (with a shelter) that will also be suitable for bikes. Planning application being made and lease negotiated.

Next steps: group to clarify their funding plan and request assistance if required

Related projects and activities not funded through this action plan should also be noted, including Royal House. This project seeks to restore and manage a derelict medieval building for use as Tourist Information Centre and tourist self-catering. The Tabernacl Trust is leading the project in partnership with Powys County Council and others. The Heritage Lottery Fund is likely to provide most of the capital for the building but funding for internal works has not yet been identified.

Next steps: Clarify with the Tabernacl Trust whether there is a role for the Partnership.

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