

Report to:	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 March 2019
Lead Officer:	Corporate Director: Economic and Community Ambition
Report Author:	Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Title:	Review of the Summer 2018 Llantysilio Mountain Fire

1. What is the report about?

To outline the purpose of the meeting and the anticipated objectives of holding the review.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To brief the Committee on the background to the review; and
- 2.2 outline the process that will be followed in undertaking the review.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee reviews:

- 3.1 the response to the fire and lessons learnt from it; and
- 3.2 land management issues arising from the Llantysilio Mountain fire for a forthcoming report and recommendations by the Committee.

4. Report details

Background

- 4.1 The summer of 2018 was an exceptionally dry summer. During this prolonged period of dry weather a number of wildfires ignited in various part of the UK. One such fire ignited on an area of Llantysilio Mountain, near Llangollen, on or about 18th July 2018. This fire continued to burn on and off until 25th September 2018. Between approximately 19th July and 20th August 2018 the daily lives of a number of local residents were affected as were local businesses, and those who had grazing rights on the mountain. The livelihood of the latter group may be affected for a prolonged period of time.
- 4.2 The moorland on Llantysilio Mountain has an extensive peat base, this contributed towards the protracted nature of the fire. An area of mountain, which has a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designation, of approximately 290 hectares (circa 700 acres) was damaged by the fire. A map outlining the approximate area affected by the fire is attached at Appendix 1 for information. Due to the difficult nature of the

terrain and SSSI designation a number of public agencies were involved with the fire incident and the recovery work on the mountain. The recovery work is continuing and will continue for a number of years.

- 4.3 As the response to the fire involved a number of public agencies and other organisations the North Wales Local Resilience Forum (NWLRF) held an incident debrief meeting on 14th November 2018. A copy of the report from that meeting, which outlines what worked well and areas that require improvement for similar incidents in future, is attached at Appendix 2 for information.
- 4.4 Following the fire a number of county councillors representing the local area were of the view that particular aspects of the incident merited detailed examination, these being the:
- (i) fire incident and the multi-agency response to it; and
 - (ii) fire's impact on the local area, environment and businesses

Local councillors' views were shared by other county councillors who felt that it would be beneficial to review the above areas in order to see if lessons could be learnt from the response and management of the incident to help:

- (i) devise practical solutions that may be used to improve multi-agency responses to similar emergencies in future; and
- (ii) establish whether land management practices could be better utilised to mitigate against the spread of fires, or to isolate fires in future.

Hence the reason for convening the current meeting to which a range of stakeholders and organisations have been invited to attend.

The review and how it will be conducted

- 4.5 It is important to emphasise that the purpose of the review is not to apportion blame on any individual, service, organisation or group with respect of the fire or the response to it, but to better understand and learn from the event to help improve the response and management of similar incidents in future.
- 4.6 The purpose of the current meeting is to receive and exchange information from a wide-range of agencies, organisations and other stakeholders involved with the fire incident and those affected by it, as well as to hear from those agencies, organisations and individuals involved with the management and the grazing of the mountain.
- 4.7 The Committee will sit in two sessions. A brief outline of the contents of both sessions is provided below:

Session 1: Review of the response to the fire and lessons learnt from it: during this session the Committee will consider statements from the following agencies, organisations or their representatives on their involvement with the incidents:

- (i) North Wales Regional Emergency Planning Service (**Appendix 3(a)**)
- (ii) Natural Resources Wales (**Appendix 3(b)**)
- (iii) North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) (**Appendix 3(c)**)
- (iv) North Wales Police (no written statement received)
- (v) Denbighshire County Council's Countryside Services (**Appendix 3(d)**)

- (vi) Denbighshire County Council's Public Protection Service (**Appendix 3(e)**)
- (vii) Denbighshire County Council's Highways Service (**Appendix 3(f)**)
- (viii) Denbighshire County Council's Customers, Communication & Marketing Service (**Appendix 3(g)**)
- (ix) Horseshoe Pass Graziers Association (**Appendix 3(h)**)
- (x) Llantysilio Estate (**Appendix 3(i)**)
- (xi) Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (**Appendix 3(j)**)
- (xii) Hafren Dyfrdwy (**Appendix 3(k)**)
- (xiii) Llantysilio Community Council (**Appendix 3(l)**)

Session 2: Review of land management arrangements: during this session the Committee consider statements from the following agencies, organisations or their representatives on their involvement with the land management of the mountain:

- (i) Natural Resources Wales (**Appendix 4(a)**)
- (ii) Denbighshire County Council's Countryside Services (**Appendix 4(b)**)
- (iii) Llantysilio Estate (Mr Tate) (**Appendix 4(c)**)
- (iv) Horseshoe Pass Graziers Association (**included in Appendix 3(h)**)
- (v) Llantysilio Community Council (**Appendix 4(d)**)
- (vi) North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (if NWFRS feels it is appropriate for it to contribute to this session – see Appendix 3(c))

All of the above named organisations were invited to provide short written statements regarding their involvement with one and/or both of the aspects under review. The written statements received are attached at appendices 3(a) to 3(l) and 4(a) to 4(d).

- 4.8 Each agency, organisation or representative, including those who have not submitted written statements will be given a maximum of 5 minutes each to present their summaries and following each presentation the Committee will ask questions of the representatives. Organisations will be requested to provide full, written responses after the meeting to any questions raised at the meeting which cannot be answered adequately by the representative(s) present.
- 4.9 Once the Committee has concluded its questions, time permitting, members of the public in attendance, who have informed the Council in advance of their wish to address the committee in relation to either the fire incident or land management matters, will be invited to do so prior to the end of the relevant session. Members of the public who wish to address the meeting will be permitted a maximum of 3 minutes to put their points across. Rhian Evans, Scrutiny Co-ordinator at Denbighshire County Council is the contact for members of the public to register requests by 12 noon on 19 March 2019 to address the meeting. Telephone number: 01824 712554 or e-mail: rhian.evans@denbighshire.gov.uk
- 4.10 Provision will be made on the day to enable anyone in attendance at the meeting to write down a question they feel relevant. That question will be forwarded to the relevant organisation(s) and their subsequent response will be carefully considered by the Committee along with all other relevant information.
- 4.11 As the purpose of this meeting is to facilitate an exchange of information and a public discussion of the incident and future land management issues, no formal conclusions or recommendations will be drawn up at the end of meeting itself. All the information

received will be collated, and any questions or information which cannot be answered or provided at the meeting, will be requested in writing from the relevant party and will be included as part of the overall evidence which the Committee will consider when preparing its findings and conclusions, and when drafting its report.

- 4.12 The Committee's conclusions and any recommendations will be published at a later date following consultation on accuracy with the participating organisations.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Examining issues relating to the fire incident and land management in the area and learning lessons in relation to them will support the Council to deliver its Environment and Resilient Communities corporate priorities.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The costs of undertaking this review are mainly connected to officer time. Any other costs will be met from existing budgets within the Legal, HR and Democratic Services budget.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

Not applicable

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

The review itself constitutes a consultation process with all stakeholders involved in the fire incident and/or engaged in the management of the mountain with a view to learning lessons which will improve multi-agency responses to similar incidents in future, help mitigate against incidents developing into major events and causing extensive damage.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not applicable.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

By reviewing the action taken in response to the fire, as well as land management practices in the area, and learning lessons from them the aim is to ensure responses to similar incidents in future are as effective as possible, and that all possible action is taken on a regular basis to avoid similar incidents occurring and developing into major events that can potentially pose a risk life, property and businesses, and scar the landscape.

11. Power to make the Decision

- 11.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000

11.2 Section 7.4.1 of the Council's Constitution stipulates that in relation to policy development and review that Scrutiny "may liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interest of local people are enhanced by collaborative working" whilst Section 7.4.2(e) states that Scrutiny may "review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Scrutiny Committee and local people about their activities and performance."

Contact Officer:

Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Tel: 01824 712554