

**Denbighshire County Council's Communities Scrutiny Committee
Review of the Llantysilio Mountain Fire of the summer of 2018
20 March 2019**

Denbighshire County Council's Countryside Service's submission

Session One - Review of the Response to the Fire

Thursday 19th July

The Countryside Service attended Llantysilio Mountain above Rhewl on the South West slopes of Moel Gamelin following reports from local resident of fire. Fire Service were already in attendance.

Countryside Service informed Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

The Countryside Service have two fire foggers - specialist fire-fighting equipment specifically designed for heathland fires. They work through high pressure hose systems that emit a fine mist over the fire to starve it of oxygen. They are highly effective and use relatively low volumes of water so are ideal for working in remote areas. They are mounted in the back of an ordinary pickup so are highly mobile.

Both Fire Foggers were made available and staff worked alongside the Fire Service to try and bring the fire under control.

The Countryside Service also have experience in managing heathland fires and use burning as a management technique on moorlands on the Clwydian Range and Llantysilio every year. The Service have, over the years, offered training in heather burning as a management technique to students at Coleg Llysfasi and conservation agencies and have specialist equipment to support this activity.

The Service continued to attend and work alongside the Fire Service throughout the week.

Wednesday 25th July

Although the fire appeared to be out on 24th July by the 25th it re-ignited and burned out of control.

Friday 27th July

The Fire Service requested fire breaks to be cut in order to slow the fire which had by now reached the slopes of Moel y Faen above the Horseshoe Pass. The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) arranged for NRW to attend to cut breaks under the direction of the Fire Service. NRW teams attended with tractor mounted flail.

In the evening as the fire advanced towards the Horseshoe Pass road the Fire Service requested breaks to be cut alongside the road – This required a tractor with

a side mounted flail which was provided through Denbighshire Highways – Tim Towers.

Rangers Service Staff continued to work along-side the fire service to try and bring the fire under control.

Sunday 29th July

Large areas of the fire now smouldering under-ground within the peat soil layer. The Countryside Service continued to work with Fire Service to dampen down these areas until 1st August.

General Comments

Throughout the incident the Countryside Service offered its support to the Fire Service on a daily basis through the Incident Command Unit and were directed on site by the Fire Service as and when required. There were no formal or direct lines of communication. As the Incident Commander changed on a daily basis it was very difficult to maintain any continuity and often felt like we were starting again in offering and explaining what resources we had to offer. This was particularly true between 25th July and 29th July when the fire was at its height and things were progressing quickly.

As stated above we have specialist heathland fire-fighting equipment and experience in tackling heathland fires. We also have a thorough knowledge and experience of the terrain on Llantysilio Mountain. We were not involved in discussions about the advancement of the fire or in decisions on its management.

We remained in contact with Fire Service throughout August but no requests for operational support from the Countryside Service were received after 1st August.

Assistance was also offered at the more recent fire above Glyndyfrdwy on 26th and 27th February when a controlled burn got out of control. Ranger teams attended with both fire foggers which proved effective in helping to bring the fire under control and ultimately putting it out.