

Report to the special meeting of Communities Scrutiny Committee,

20 March 2019

**Role of Denbighshire County Council's Communications Service during the
Llantysilio Mountain Fire**

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This statement summarises the role of Denbighshire County Council's (DCC's) Communications function during the Llantysilio Mountain Fire in 2018.

It is common practice and 'business as usual' for the Communications Teams of Public Sector organisations to work together in order to ensure correct messages are shared appropriately.

Where there is a particular incident a 'Lead Organisation' creates the messages and shares with partners so that the messages can be promoted across a number of media platforms and with particular stakeholders (for example local Councillors)

In the case of the Llantysilio Fire, the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWF&RS) was considered the 'Lead Organisation', so the DCC Communications Team kept in close contact with the NWF&RS Press Team throughout the period, as well as with North Wales Police (NWP).

The Council's main communications activity throughout the period in question was therefore largely limited to sharing updates from the emergency services about the need for people to keep away from the mountainside, as well as details of road closures

DCC's Communications Team was also liaising as normal with DCC's Highways Team to publish information about road closures.

In addition the DCC Communications team was on-standby to deal with the potential of a rest centre being activated, and had a prepared press statement, on an 'if asked' basis (if the rest centre was activated).

In addition to statements and information described above, we issued a press release on 29 July, praising the on-going emergency efforts:

<https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/resident/news/July-2018/Council-praises-teams-for-Llantysilio-firefighting-efforts.aspx>

We also issued a number of updates to county councillors, as well as councillors representing Llangollen during the main activity. (See Appendix)

Appendix: Examples of messages sent to Councillors during the Llantysilio Fire

Message issued to Llangollen County Councillors – 26 July

Good morning,

As you are aware, there has been a fire burning on Llantysilio Mountain since last Friday and our countryside service colleagues have been assisting firefighters in their efforts to contain and extinguish the fire. The situation seems to have escalated over the last 12 hours. Our countryside teams have now deployed specialist equipment to assist the firefighters and are busy digging trenches that will act as fire breaks and aims to prevent the fire from spreading further.

David Shiel is our contact in Countryside Service and we intend to issue a news release later today about the partnership efforts.

We recognise this is a worrying time and we will do all we can as a Council to respond to the situation. If you have any enquiries, please feel free to get in touch.

Message issued 28 July

Dear councillors,

As you are aware, a fire has been burning at Llantysilio Mountain near the Horseshoe Pass for over a week and it intensified Thursday night into Friday. Our countryside teams have been working with North Wales Fire and Rescue Service during this period. They are helping with the work of digging trenches, so that fire breaks can be created to try and prevent the fire from spreading.

The county has well-prepared arrangements in place for dealing with major incidents and the Council is working closely with the Fire and Rescue Service, the lead agency in the response. We are keeping in close contact with the incident commander who is managing the situation and we are proactively responding to requests for assistance. Both the police and the fire and rescue service have advised people to stay away from the location and to leave the response to the agencies involved. That message has been relayed to the public via the media and social media and that advice still stands. Our own press team are re-sharing these messages.

The Horseshoe Pass has also been closed as a precautionary measure.

Social Services are also on stand-by to assist to open a rest centre, should any evacuations be necessary. There are 12 properties in the nearby vicinity that may need to be evacuated. However that has not been necessary at this stage and the situation is being constantly monitored.

We will keep you informed of any developments.

Message issued 29 July.

Dear councillors,

Here's an updated position regarding the fire at Llantysilio Mountain.

On Friday night, the escalating fire at Llantysilio Mountain near the Horseshoe Pass meant that the Council was placed on high alert to take immediate action if necessary.

Fire crews, assisted by the Council's countryside service teams have been making good progress in their efforts to extinguish the fire. The rain has certainly assisted the efforts. The crews are now focussing their efforts on tackling hot spots of fires.

In light of the improving situation, the Council has been given permission to stand down its rest centre arrangements. However, the situation will be closely monitored and we will be informed if the need for a rest centre arises again.