

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> March 2020</b>
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	<b>Cllr. Tony Thomas (Lead Member for Housing &amp; Communities)/Emlyn Jones (Head of Planning, Public Protection &amp; Countryside Services)</b>
<b>Report author</b>	<b>Huw Rees (Countryside &amp; Heritage Services Manager)</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Progress Report on Recommendations stemming from the Llantysilio Mountain Fire Review</b>

## **1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1 To monitor progress made in relation to implementing the Llantysilio Mountain Fire Review recommendations in conjunction with the Council's partner agencies and organisations.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

- 2.1 To provide update information on the recommendations made by this Committee in relation to the review into the Llantysilio Mountain Fire of Summer 2018. This is an update report and no decision is required.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

- 3.1 The Committee is requested to consider the information provided and comment accordingly.
- 3.2 That the Committee confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 2) as part of its consideration

## 4. Report details

- 4.1 Following the Communities Scrutiny Review into the Llantysilio fire, a number of recommendations were suggested. These are outlined in Appendix 1, *Llantysilio Mountain Fire –Monitoring Action Plan* and a brief progress statement is provided where possible. A number of the recommendations were attributed to external partners individually or jointly and the Authority has limited influence in their progress. The Authority has requested an update from Partners in these cases. These responses are documented in Appendix 1 when provided.

Please find below a link to the Committee's report, published in September 2019:

<https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/your-council/about-the-council/Communities-Scrutiny-Committee-Llantysilio-Mountain-Fire-Report.pdf>

- 4.2 Denbighshire County Council (DCC), North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) met in November 2019 to review some of the recommendations and discuss joint funding for a Moorland Officer Post, wildfire prevention procedures and better moorland management. NWFRS were unable to contribute to the post but stated they would be partners in any initiatives to improve prevention and fire management. NRW responded positively to funding a joint post at that time and it can now be confirmed they will be contributing £20,000/yr. for the next 3 years to the post. Any further funding commitment was not possible at this time. At the time of writing, the Countryside Service had submitted a bid to the Corporate Plan Board for the remaining £84K over 3 years to fund the post. The Board will consider the case in April 2020.
- 4.3 Following a report commissioned by NRW - *Llantysilio Mountain Fire Preliminary Assessment and SSSI Management Recommendations* (already circulated to the Committee and Appendix 3), NRW and the Countryside Service have met on site to discuss options for restoration of the moorland. These options vary depending on location and costs also vary. Outcomes for implementation of the report will be considered when the Moorland Officer is in post.

- 4.4 NRW with the Countryside Service have begun prioritising areas for response with particular attention being given to areas that are vulnerable to further damage from water run-off.
- 4.5 The Countryside Service and AONB have been successful in securing some funding from Welsh Government to begin some restoration works this winter. Some restoration work has taken place on a trial plot on Moel y Faen – on the eastern edge of the Mountain.
- 4.6 As requested by Members, correspondence was sent to Welsh Government in October 2019 and a reply was received from the Minister in the same month (Appendices 4a, 4b and 4c). To date the responses to the Sustainable Farming and Land Use Consultation have not been published.

## **5 How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

- 5.1 The subject of this report falls within the Environment and Resilient Communities Priorities of the Corporate Plan. Improved management of the moorland and better prevention of wildfires will have a positive impact on natural habitats and biodiversity. A better managed moorland and wildfire procedures will improve working conditions for livestock farmers and landowners and increase community trust and resilience in the event of a wildfire.

## **6 What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

- 6.1 The direct costs associated with the Moorland Officer Post have been detailed in Section 4. The appointment of the post and development of improved partnership working around both moorland management and the prevention of wildfires should have a positive effect on other Denbighshire County Council services. The development of effective systems to manage wildfires should benefit all partners and is led by the Fire Service. It is envisaged that the post will also help coordinate improved communication and procedures with partners.

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

7.1 A Well-being Impact Assessment has not been completed for this progress report.

7.2 However, an Impact Assessment was completed for the Moorland Officer Proposal Business Case presented to the Corporate Plan Board. The assessment is attached as Appendix 2.

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

8.1 This progress report is based on recommendations from a previous Communities Scrutiny Committee with contributions from the public and partner agencies.

## **9 Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1 It is welcome that NRW have agreed to part fund the Moorland Officer Post. DCC's element of the funding has been included in the financial projections for the Corporate Plan funding and will be signed off by SLT in the coming weeks.

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

10.1 This is an update report with no decisions/ recommendations, so no risks are associated with this report.

10.2 However, there will be risks associated with not delivering the recommendations highlighted by the inquiry. These include, but are not limited to the following; increasing number and intensity of wildfires (with associated potential danger to life and loss of property and livelihoods), increasing loss (perhaps permanent loss) of moorland habitat and associated reductions in species and biodiversity; loss of livelihoods in the farming community, rural skills, cultural diversity and traditional ways of life. These potential risks can be reduced through better coordination of wildfire management, restoration and improved management of the moorland.

## **11 Power to make the decision**

11.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7 of the Council's Constitution outlines Scrutiny's powers in relation to considering matters which affect the Council's area or its inhabitants, policy development and review, along with monitoring performance and the delivery of policy objectives.