**CYMDEITHAS ERYRI the SNOWDONIA SOCIETY AGM**

**50th Anniversary**. Held on Saturday 14th October 2017 at Plas Tan y Bwlch

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from : Hugh Morgan Daniel, John Lloyd Jones, Bob Lowe

*And 53 other members.*

**2. Matters Arising**

i. The minutes for the AGM held in 2016 were approved (proposed by Nigel Harley and seconded by Wyn Jones)

ii. There were no matters arising

**3. Chair’s Report - David Archer**

 i. Introduction : David Archer expressed his pleasure to see so many people attending the 50th Anniversary AGM. He mentioned Esme Kirby, the founder of the Snowdonia National Park Society. Esme’s aim was for an ‘Action’ society which would work in a practical way and David noted his belief that 50 years on the Society pulls true to Esme’s vision. The Society currently has 1350 members, but we need to attract more. There is a vigorous and expanding volunteer and conservation programme but there is much more volunteer work to be done. Threats to the National Park are not diminishing which makes the work and campaigning of the Society as important as ever.

ii. DA expressed that our 50th anniversary is both retrospective and forward looking.

Claire Holmes, the Society’s Events Coordinator was mentioned and the ambitious and varied programme that has been established to provide opportunities to celebrate and contribute to Snowdonia throughout the year.

iii) Events Overview :
**June -** The Birthday Picnic, 10th June, Dyffryn Mymbyr (the anniversary date of the first meeting and former home of Esme Kirby). The event celebrated the early years of the Society.

**July -** An exhibition of the Society’s work was launched at St Julitta’s Church, Capel Curig. The exhibition is travelling to various locations around the National Park and was also on show at the conference in Plas Tan y Bwlch.

**September -** The *M.A.D (Make A Difference)* weekend : A practical conservation event based at Craflwyn, Beddgelert. The event brought together a wide range of conservation bodies and approximately 80 volunteers. It was a great success which we hope to repeat in future years.

**October -** *‘Facing The Future’* Conference, which offered a great range of speakers that brought their own perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing the National Park in the short and long term.

iv. DA reported the 50th anniversary fund appeal which was launched to raise £50,000 to fund future campaigning and our conservation work programme. So far, some £35,000 has been raised. He thanked the members of the Society for their generosity and contributions. DA noted the strong financial position of the Society which will give the Trustees confidence to expand the Society’s staffing and work programme in the forthcoming years.

v. The Society’s active working relationship with the National Park Authority was mentioned and DA expressed the key importance of effective partnerships at a time of dwindling public funds and increasing pressures on the Park. He expressed that effective partnerships demand trust and respect but emphasized that there are occasions in which we need to challenge the Park Authority and other public bodies. David gave us the example of The Conwy Falls hydro scheme.

vi. DA reported a current threat from a worrying Welsh Government report on the future direction of the Welsh National Parks. The Society has expanded its membership to The Alliance for Designated Landscapes Wales (formerly Alliance for National Parks Cymru) and we hope to c-ordinate a response to this threat.

DA highlighted the importance of Society members writing letters to their Assembly Members. He told us that past letters have certainly come to the attention of Lesley Griffiths, Cabinet secretary for environment and rural affairs. It is important that we continue to write to our A.M as he believed it is very effective.

Vii. DA concluded by commending and thanking the Society’s staff.

- A special thanks to John Harold’s excellent team leading.

- The Ecosystem Project Conservation group of Mary-Kate Jones, Owain Thomas and Tamsin Fretwell.

- Frances Smith, the Society’s longest serving staff member who has now stepped aside from her role as Membership and fundraising officer though she continues to work on the production of the Society’s magazine. David spoke for the Society in wishing her all the best for the future and her replacement, Debbie Pritchard was welcomed to the team.

- Claire Holmes, Events and Publicity officer, is commended for the organising of the Society’s Anniversary events.

- Judith Bellis, the Society’s accountant is thanked for providing cover for essential tasks while the Society recruited new staff.

- Katherine Himsworth, the Society’s longest serving trustee has retired and her wise advice and hard work for the Society, (especially in the successful bid to HLF for the restoration work at Ty Hyll) was highly commended.

**4. Snowdonia’s Ecosystem Project report - Mary-Kate Jones**

Mary-Kate Jones gave a brief summary of the Project’s work during the year :

i. Points arising :

Since January 2017, over 77 workdays have been run which is the equivalent of 543 Volunteer days work. The Society’s volunteers have worked over 2500 hours and this is creeping ever closer to 3000. Mary-Kate is confident that by this time next year we will have beaten last year’s record of 3500 hours of volunteer work.

MK gave a special thanks to Owain and Tamsin for all their hard work in co-ordinating the various events. Thanks was also given to the many volunteers who took part in the events.

ii. Key events :

- MK gave an overview of key events such as the successful Make a Difference weekend and the- Volunteer Week in June both of which involved landscape clearance, managing habitats and litter picking.

- She explained the Credited Conservation Skills Unit which was launched in January 2017 as part of the 50th celebrations. An opportunity for young people who have an interest in the conservation sector to gain an accredited certificate through volunteering. So far the Society has welcomed 17 people who have completed the certificate and another intake will soon be taking part.

**5. Director’s Report - John Harold**

JH started by thanking everyone for coming together to celebrate the historic occasion of marking the 50th Anniversary of the Society. His report began by outlining the Society’s Campaign work, covering the year until the end of June 2017

Campaigns :

Saving the River Conwy

i. The year started with the campaign to save the river Conwy, the Fairy Glen and Conwy Falls. In July 2016 a national expert bryologist Dr Des Callaghan was commissioned to survey previously unaccessed parts of Fairy Glen. His report detailed some internationally important biodiversity and the Society supplied this evidence to Natural Resources Wales.

ii. In August 2016 RWE submitted their second planning application to build a ‘bypass’ on the river Conwy at Conwy Falls and Fairy Glen as part of their 5MW hydropower scheme and by September the Society took the difficult and long postponed step of going public on the National Trust’s involvement in the scheme

iii. The Society commissioned a technical report from a planning specialist for use in the planning objection. JH thanked everyone who contributed with their objections.

iv. By October 2016 , NRW commented on the planning application which raised serious concerns and the planning application was withdrawn by RWE. The Society engaged with the Environmental Law Foundation to secure a legal opinion signed off by a barrister and by December 2016 ELF came back with a legal opinion that it would be unlawful for NRW to grant water abstraction licence for the scheme.

v. Having presented this legal opinion to NRW, NRW publish their decision to refuse water abstraction licences. JH expressed his delight in this success and also that earlier this year the Conwy Falls was nominated by Dame Fiona Reynolds for Landmark of the Year in the Countryfile Awards.

Future Landscapes Wales

i. JH expressed serious concern regarding the Welsh government’s review of National Parks and AONB’s. He highlighted that the future of our National Parks is at stake and raised concern over the Welsh Government’s environmental legislation, drawing attention to certain actions which are lacking e.g.

· Novel policies are not the same thing as progress.

· Change needs to have a rational purpose.

· Politicians and policy makers need to listen to experts.

ii. JH explained the Society’s leading role in bringing these issues into the light, e.g. Conwy Falls campaign. He also mentioned that in March when the draft Future Landscapes report was leaked, the Society helped to highlight the fundamental issue – that the report turned away from the concept of a National Park as primarily a conservation designation.

iii. A debate took place in the Assembly on 6th June. JH thanked the efforts of our members and our partners and notes the success of the meeting wherein AM after AM stood up to say how strongly their constituents felt about this issue. The Society was directly quoted.

iv. During the summer the Society played a key role in supporting the Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes (with Professor Terry Marsden as Chair), to produce detailed evidence based and hard-hitting responses to the Future Landscapes process, report and the recently closed consultation on SMNR

Practical Overview

i. The Society has continued to deliver practical conservation work across the National Park, working closely with our partner organisations.

ii. JH mentioned the significant roles the Society has has played over the past 2 years, in the development of two major partnership projects : *Snowdon Partnership* and C*arneddau Landscape Partnership* project.

iii. JH mentioned the outstanding success of the MAD weekend which also covered a range of conservation organisations. He thanked Mary-Kate, Owain and the rest of the team for their hard and highly skilled work in developing the practical schemes of the Society. A special mention for Katherine Himsworth was given, who inspired the idea of the MAD weekend.

iv. JH drew to a close by thanking all members and trustees past and present for their words of support, campaigns and legacies. He described his Staff as ‘amazing’, and closed his report by highlighting that the Society’s membership and influence is increasing and he believes that Snowdonia Society is ‘fit to face the future’.

**6. Financial Report - Judith Bellis**

i. JB started by clarifying the final results of the financial year. Funds have increased to just over 770,000 which means an increase of 129,000. She noted that this was an amazing result and that the Society was in the best financial position they had ever been in.

ii. JB explained that 4 legacies were received this year, totalling 121,000. She expressed gratitude towards these legacies and highlighted the Society’s thanks towards these four generous people, including two members of the Society : Bob Cole, Frida Mottershead. She also mentioned Mrs Peggy Morris and Miss Pamela Hadley, who were not known to any of the Staff or Trustees of the Society.

iii. JB noted that the legacies made it possible to commit funds to raise the profile of the society.There has been a significant expansion of the Society’s practical conservation work programme and an additional Project Officer has been appointed in addition to the increasing of staff hours across the conservation team.

iv. JB expects the reserves at the end of the current financial year to be reduced. This is due to planned expenditure as a result of these legacies and should not be seen as a cause of concern.

v. JB thanked all members for their financial support, their subscriptions and donations. A special thanks was made to members who donated to the 50th Anniversary Fund which received 10,000 directly as donations from members

vi. Questions and Queries

**-** JB explained that accounts for 2016 and 2017 are correct but that the comparative figures carried over from last year include an error. The total funds of 2016 were approximately £4,000 more than they should have been.

**-** She highlights an error on P10, item 7 of the report. There is a sum of £4026 that has not been included in the total.

**-** The error has been carried forward on P6 of the report. The total funds in 2016 should be £641.52 (not £645.188 as printed).

**7. Questions to officers and Staff**

i. One question was brought forward by Wyn Jones :

**Wyn Jones** questioned the lack of public transport along the A5 route. Since the Padarn Bus service has been stopped, he questioned whether it would be possible to replace it with a more active Express Motors. W.J asked the board whether this was something the Society would be willing to campaign.

John Harold reassured WJ that the problem has been recognized and that issues regarding the local authority and the National Park will be further discussed with Helen Pye, who is already addressing a more joined up approach between Gwynedd and Conwy’s public transport.

**8. Motion to formally adopt the Annual report and Accounts** for the year ending 30th June 2017 was proposed by Sarah McCarthy and seconded by Nick Smythe.

**9. Motion to reappoint Bennet Brooks** as independent examiners of the society’s accounts for 2017/18 was proposed by Sian Roberts and Seconded by Janice Archer.

**10. Election of Officers and Trustees of the Executive Committee**

**President**
*John Lloyd Jones* was proposed by Dennis McIntyre and seconded by Sian Roberts.

**Vice presidents***Huw Morgan Daniel, David Firth, Sir John Houghton, Sir Simon Jenkins, Dr Morag McGrath* were proposed by Dennis McIntyre and seconded by Sian Roberts.

**Chair** : *David Archer* and **Vice Chair**: *Margaret Thomas,* was proposed by Netti Collister and seconded by Nick Smythe.

**Trustees***Charles Hawkins, David Archer, Margaret Thomas, Dr Jacob Buis* were proposed by Morag McGrath and seconded by Wyn Jones.

**11. Date of next year’s AGM :**27 October 2018 (provisional)