

Cymdeithas Ddinesig Porthaethwy a'r Cylch Menai Bridge & District Civic Society.

Y Llais Annibynnol
The Independent Voice.

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

I write to you as Chairman for the first time and I would like to thank both Committee and membership for the support and help that you have given me in this early period.

I would also like to acknowledge the commitment of the Committee and ,in particular, pay tribute to the exceptional contributions by Maureen and Jane. As Secretary , Maureen is tireless in her efforts in support of the Society and associated bodies and Jane has produced a comprehensive, varied and exciting programme of events for the remainder of the year.

Maureen has listed the particular successes of the last few months below and they demonstrate that the Society is in good health and ready to meet the challenges of the future.

We have an excellent record in helping to defend our heritage in Menai Bridge and its environment and a determination to proceed in similar vein.

As well as protecting our history, scenery and unique ecology, it is important that we are focussed on the future of the area as well as the present.

With the latter in mind, I think that two of the more important current aims should be :-

1. To create a pleasanter civic environment for residents of the town by promoting the improvement of traffic flow and parking awareness
2. To encourage an enjoyable experience for all visitors by providing greater awareness of the town, its boundaries, history and attractions.

I know that these aims are shared by both the Town Council and the Chamber of Commerce and we will cooperate fully with them.

As to the future, there are many threats to our well-being in this area and we must be constantly vigilant. The support of members is vital in sustaining a healthy, progressive Civic Society and your input of suggestions, ideas and criticisms is welcome and will be acknowledged.

I look forward to seeing you at events in the coming months.

ACTIVITIES.

The Summer months are always a quiet time but this year we were unfortunate that the visit to the Anglesey churches had to be postponed in July because one of the churches was being renovated and had scaffolding around it and it was not possible to contact the caretaker of one of the others.

However, our visit to **Plas Cadnant** was as popular as ever and as fascinating. We are very fortunate that Anthony is willing to welcome us annually and spend time explaining his plans for the next stage of renovation.

Cochwillan and Felin Cochwillan were also of great interest and the hospitality at the felin was superb. The weather was also just right and the short walk down to the river was delightful. Our Coffee Morning was disappointing and we have decided not to include one in our programme this year.

Jane has produced a programme for the next few months which we hope will contain something of interest to everyone.

We haven't arranged anything for December as there are so many other activities going on. Last year we arranged a pre-Christmas tea early in the month but not many of you attended. If you have any preferences, please let us know as soon as possible. I know many of you do not want to come out on the dark evenings.

As you are aware, much of our concerns are to do with planning matters. Menai Bridge is a great magnet for the developers—often with unwelcome results.

In January, I reported that we were disgusted that the planning permission was granted for the building of a house in the grounds of Noddfa. I believe the plans have been changed but it is still scheduled to go ahead.

We thought we might be more successful opposing the plans for knocking down two bungalows in Tyddyn Isaf in order to access the land behind and build a small estate.

Initially, the plan was rejected but was pushed through at the next stage.

Again, after strong opposition, planning permission has been refused for four houses at Hafod Wern. All of these went through the Planning Committee and site visits were made.

We feel we have been more successful with our input to Min y Don. Our Chairman has had several conversations with the new developers—Hurstwood—and they seem to genuinely want to cooperate. The ACC Planning Department have also found them willing to compromise and our County Councillor—Keith Evans- has taken a close interest in ensuring that all the details of siting, design, external appearance and landscaping are acceptable. There are still the two blocks but I understand that the front one may have only six apartments while the rear one could have fourteen., this would presumably include affordable housing.

On-going.

I am still trying to engage in discussion with the Estate Dept. with regard to the Old Quarry at New Street. It is still blocked at one end to prevent people walking through. We have had no further response to our enquiry about leasing it and tidying it up.

Have you any suggestions for other areas to which we could consider turning our attention? The Pier Bonc has been mentioned.

As you can see, we are being active in monitoring Planning Applications but only a few are brought to the Planning Committee. These have to be raised by our County Councillors , no one else is allowed to request their inclusion. There are also many more which are delegated. This is how the Wood Street development got through without public discussion. Also, the only information supplied says “extension and alterations”. In order to learn what these are intended to be, you often have to go to the Planning Office in Llangefni.

We are still represented on the Environmental Steering Group, Medwrn Mon, the Bangor Memorial Arch Working group, the Menai Bridge Partnership and the stakeholders' meetings for the Local Development Plan. There is some disquiet over the proposals put forward by a section of the committee. These would entail removing the development boundary around towns and villages, allowing 3% development annually in addition to purely local building. What could almost be called a developers' charter ! It's of the utmost importance that the local organizations are represented at all meetings to monitor the discussions.

The Anglesey group of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales are putting together a folder of what they consider to be designs / developments that are completely out of character for an area. In Menai Bridge, we are inserting the Wood Street development (old Bingo Hall),the huge house built on the original boathouse on St George's Road and the rendered wall behind the old timber yard. Other possibilities were considered but we could make our own booklet !

The branch is suggesting to the ACC that there should be a **County Architect** to oversee design of properties and new development in addition to the fully qualified Landscape Architect who works in the Planning Services. It is felt that that the architect should be experienced, fully independent and decisions made should not be over-ridden.

I feel that we should fully support this suggestion being put forward and wonder whether we should also write to Mr. Arthur Owen and produce a local folder.

Ragwort and its control is one of my passions and has occupied a great deal of my time and energy this spring and summer. I make no apologies for including the information here as it is a threat to most of the country and Anglesey, with its natural boundaries, could manage to control it much better than it does. It is illegal to allow it to spread.

Briefly, it is a tall plant with dense clusters of bright yellow daisy-like flowers with feathery edged leaves. Each seed head can produce well over 50,000 seeds which are dispersed by the wind and grow prolifically on all types of soil. However, it is associated mainly with disturbed, poorly-managed, neglected land. It is very difficult to control. The only sure way of destroying it is to pull / dig it out and spray the rosettes. It loves high places!

Last year, a small group of us spent hours clearing it from **Church Island** as we were so concerned at the impression created for visitors.

It is **toxic** -especially when it is dying and protective clothing should be worn when handling it. Children should not be allowed to do so as it can spark an allergic reaction in susceptible humans (rash, breathing difficulties.)

I first became aware of it as a danger to horses. It is estimated that over 5,000 horses die annually in this country from eating the plant which becomes more palatable as it dies. It has a cumulative effect and destroys the liver, leading to a slow and painful death.

Other grazing animals such as cattle and sheep can be affected.

The ACC Highways Department has a legal responsibility to clear it from the road verges when it is reported. Please report any you see.

The country-wide ignorance / indifference is frightening in its long-term implications for the environment and both human and animal health. My aim is to ensure that as many people as possible are fully informed.

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