

## Doc 1 Questions from ATISN 26995 – due 17 June 2026

1	<p><b>Oversight, Governance and Ministerial Involvement</b> <i>Any correspondence, briefings, reports, or submissions between Welsh Government and NRW relating to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>o the closure of visitor centres in March 2025</i></li><li><i>o the introduction of paid parking from 1 April 2026</i></li><li><i>o the appointment of a private parking contractor</i></li></ul> <p><b>Welsh Government response:</b> <b>Information is included in NRW Board papers, which can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</b> <b>Below are updates received from NRW, and extracts from quarterly Sponsorship Committee meetings and other meetings where the Welsh Government and NRW discussed these matters.</b></p>
	<p>08 July 2024 - Extract from Communication, Customer and Commercial Directorate scale-impact-risks Paper, Case for Change Documentation:</p> <p>Stop: Exit from provision of café, information and shop facilities at visitor centres. Risks: Liability for buildings is increased through time take to offload asset. Reputational risk to the organisation. Increased risk through reduced onsite presence of injury and asb on this area of estate. Impacts: Increased burden on place-based teams, at a time when recreational staff will also be reduced. Reputational damage, increased complaints, correspondence and negative media coverage. Increased risk of legal challenge through use of an unsupervised, extensive recreational offer already on site.</p>
	<p>31 July 2024 - Extract from Communication, Customer and Commercial Paper, Case for Change Documentation</p> <p>Stops – 100% reduction. We are proposing to no longer operator catering and retail provision at Visitor Centres. Actively seeking out other partners to run them.</p>
	<p>27 August 2024 - Update on Visitor Centres from NRW:</p>

## Background and Context

Public funding is exceptionally tight across the whole of the UK. As such, we are having to look across all of our remit and critically review what we can and must continue to do, what we stop, and what we slow or do differently to fulfil our [Corporate Plan](#) ambitions. This is no different to any other public sector body at the moment.

We have launched a consultation with Trade Unions and started the process of engagement with staff on how we propose to reduce our grant in aid staff budget by £13 million for the 1 April 2025.

The purpose is to refocus resources on the activities that will have the most impact on nature, climate, and minimising pollution, as well as the statutory work that only NRW can do. The aim is to mitigate job losses as much as possible.

Some of these changes, if implemented, will impact our partners, customers, and stakeholders.

Following our consultation, the NRW Board will make a final decision on changes and at that point we will explain what the changes mean in the delivery of services.

There will not be a public consultation on our proposals. In 2022-23 we held a public consultation on our new Corporate Plan, Nature and People Thriving Together, which sets our strategic direction and priorities through to 2030. This consultation with the Trade Unions is about how we ensure a focus on those Corporate Plan priorities whilst adapting to live within our financial means.

## Proposed Implications for Visitor Centres

The provision of catering and retail services at our visitor centres are not a statutory requirement and they currently run at a total cost of just under £2m per

annum, of which 40-60% is funding through grant in aid (dependent on in year income).

Visitor numbers have declined since Covid and income is reducing, increasing the pressure on grant in aid funding. Therefore as part of our consultation proposal we have outlined a plan that means NRW would stop directly providing catering and retail provision at three sites; Coed y Brenin, Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Ynyslas. Should these proposals be agreed, the sites themselves will remain open for walking and biking as they are currently and services such as play areas, car parking and toilet provision will also remain available.

Although NRW is proposing not to run this provision ourselves, in the long term we do envisage that Coed y Brenin and Bwlch Nant yr Arian would be leased out to other providers; there has already been some interest from both local communities and private sector operators at both these sites. Given the sensitive nature of the surrounding Natural Nature Reserve at Ynyslas, we do not consider this suitable for outsourcing.

All of our sites need investment which NRW cannot currently commit too, so a procurement exercise and an effective lease at these sites is likely to provide long term and sustainable continuation of these sites well into the future.

If the proposal is accepted, then we will start to work with surrounding land managers to explore what is the feasible option for each site and what needs to be put to market to find this long term sustainable continuation, as well as support the access and recreation on the site which is also an increasingly expensive product of land management. This approach is in line with both the Commercial Strategy and the Land in Our Care Strategy which was launched in May 2024. We will likely go to market in early 2025. Depending on the interest and the proposals we could be looking at a lease agreement that takes around 2-3 years to be implemented, however this is a finger in the air estimate based on previous lease agreements such as that at Garwnant with Forest Holidays.

## Engagement to date

Although the proposal was only finalised in July 2024, some engagement has already taken place. We have held public meetings at Ganllwyd (1 Feb 2024) and in Borth (2 March 2024) to start to explain why this proposal was under consideration and how we hope that we will be able to find new models to support services for these visitor centres, including local community groups.

We have consistently explained that NRW will not be pulling back from the management of these sites, but we will be seeking to find partners that are better placed than a public body to provide retail and catering services.

Our Head of Sustainable Commercial Development has met with local politicians to explain what is happening and in Coed Y Brenin a constituted community group called Caru Coed Y Brenin has been

speaking to us about their potential plans to bid for running Coed Y Brenin.

Communications has also been received and responded to through our Board Questions process, Freedom of Information requests, Complaints team as well as via individual MSs and MPs.

## Future Engagement

Once the final decision has been made, whether it matches the proposal or not, we are planning to hold three public meetings around each Visitor Centre to explain the outcome and what the timeline is for what happens next.

The National Nature Reserves and Forests around visitor centres are key sites for us. There is no question that we want to conserve and protect these sites so that nature can recover, and we are unequivocal that public access to these sites will be maintained.

End of document

08 November 2024 – Extract from Welsh Government and NRW fortnightly meeting note:

### Handling plan for Visitor Centres – next steps

NRW advised it had a communications plan in place and three engagement events were to take place in November, one at each of the visitor centres, to allow for meaningful engagement with members of the public on next steps. *[personal information redacted]* and *[personal information redacted]* were leading on this engagement from NRW.

NRW advised they were planning to extend the current provision at the three centres until 31 March 2025 (in line with a commitment NRW's Chair gave to the Deputy First Minister). A paper was being developed to present to the Executive Team and Board on the transition process. In relation to Coed Y Brenin and Bwlch Nant Yr Arian, NRW were exploring the possibility of bringing forward the tendering process to commence earlier than May 2025.

15 November 2024 - Extract from Welsh Government and NRW Performance and Assurance meeting note:

NRW advised it was planning to extend the current provision at the three centres to 31 March 2025, subject to executive team agreement on 18 November. This includes recruitment of temporary staff if there are short term pressures. *[personal information redacted (WG)]* appealed for a consistent date for all three visitor centres. NRW advised Ynyslas was likely to have a community-run focus with a formal tender process for the other two centres. Comms will be shared with WG before the public meetings being held on 25, 26, 27 November.

19 November 2024 - Update on Visitor Centres from NRW:

From: NRW *[personal information redacted]*

Sent: 19 November 2024 18:45

To: *[personal information redacted]*

Subject: VC update

PN [Update on Natural Resources Wales' visitor centres - Natural Resources Wales Citizen Space - Citizen Space](#)

Dear *[personal information redacted]*,

As discussed, here is the update on the plan for VCs from *[personal information redacted]*. This captures what was agreed by ET yesterday in relation to next steps for VCs.

The press release will be sent to you once it's been finalised this end.

If you have any questions, it's probably best you ask *[personal information redacted]*, (who's copied in on this email).

If there's anything I can help with, let me know.

Thanks,

*[personal information redacted]*

1. An executive team decision was made on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024 that visitor centre provisions would remain in place until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.
2. From the 1<sup>st</sup> April new structures will come into place and staff that have been successfully matched through the case for change will move into their new roles, and those who have not successfully matched or have been through the Expression of Interest phase or asked for redundancy, will know what the future holds. In addition, closing at the end of the financial year makes practical sense from an accountancy

perspective, gives plenty of time to put interim solutions in place, and provides adequate opportunity to answer all public questions and allow the messaging on the future of the sites to embed.

3. A Phase One demobilisation plan has been drafted to cover off not only the demobilisation of the services but also to ensure interim measures at each site are prepared in time for the 1<sup>st</sup> April. This will include a concession contract for coffee cart at each site, ice cream concession for the summer months, and ensure all contracts such as grounds maintenance are continued. This includes a continuation of our lease holder Beics Brenin at CYB. The new car parking system, if agreed, will ensure the continuation of access to the sites for those that have purchased them.
4. A further decision will need to be taken at ET to confirm what is going to market for each site. Understandably the sites offer more than café and retail but include events, trail maintenance and management, and car park management to name just a couple. We will be exploring ways in which some of these services and associated liabilities might be offered as part of the tender document. We are keen to ensure that the VC provision is not only enhanced to help support local tourism and the sparse mid-Wales offer to holiday makers, but also serves local needs. We will be looking to secure maximum value, and do not yet know what that is. Therefore, a date for engaging with partners has not yet been agreed, beyond the initial public meetings and EOI for Ynyslas (see point 6).
5. This does NOT mean that there will be an impact on access to the WG woodland estate and current site access and recreation access will be maintained. We have followed a similar model in Garwnant where the VC and the surrounding recreation, even the price of the carpark, is facilitated by Forest Holidays, but still offers the same access to members of the public as before. We are looking to enhance not reduce access. It would be remiss for us, given the interest in the sites so far received, to not at least consider if there is scope for a) increasing value to users, b) reducing liability for NRW and 3) providing additional attraction to the local tourism market. One of the chief criticisms of NRW removing this provision is the impact on local tourism and the businesses that rely on it.
6. Ynyslas is different to the other sites in several areas. 1) it doesn't have a café only a standalone coffee machine and there is no café provision there to replace. 2) it is in a natural nature reserve that has very specific, statutory needs and requirements. Protecting the NNR is the number one priority, so we will only be offering a limited, community opportunity for a "use of space" agreement that will not cover any wider requirements or duties. In addition, the site will remain an office for the NNR staff, the other sites offices will be less accessible during the interim process. We have always stated very clearly that we will not be going out to tender for this site. There will be a short-term car park management concession that will cover the site to reduce ASB and collect car parking charges while we put the new barrierless ANPR cameras in place. Due to the sensitivity of the site and the fact that there is a risk of military ordnance at the site, it is taking more time to go through the necessary steps to install the hardware. A community expression of interest will be launched after the public meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> November and will be open for four weeks to allow members of the public to propose ways they can use the space.

04 December 2024 - Update on Visitor Centres from NRW:

Re Ynys Las Visitor Centre

At a public meeting in Borth on 25.11.24 NRW announced that they will be permanently closing the Visitor Centre at Ynys Las on 31.3.25.

I am writing, on behalf of [redacted], to request that, on 10.12.24 money is allocated to the Ynys Las Visitor Centre to keep it open for a further six months beyond 31.3.25 when the Senedd sets the budget for next year.

We are requesting this for the following reasons, so further plans for the Centre can be carefully considered by all stakeholders:

- Firstly, and most importantly, NRW's planned closure of the Visitor Centre coincides with the start of the breeding season for the protected Ringed Plovers, as well as all the other wildlife that inhabits the Nature Reserve. The numbers of this bird have increased significantly in recent years but this is a fragile recovery, and any changes to the methods and levels of their protection will leave this protected species very vulnerable.
- Rachel Reeves allocated £1.7 billion to Wales in the October 2024 budget so we believe there is money available to be ring fenced for Ynys Las Visitor Centre for a period of 6 months
- NRW informed the meeting in Borth on 25.11.24 they did not conduct a wider impact assessment regarding closing the centre during the Case for Change process. They confirmed any impact assessment was internal only, in as much as it affected NRW's considerations.
- NRW confirmed they currently have no definite plans as to how they will meet statutory and non statutory functions carried out by Visitor Centre staff, but hope some of these functions can be met by other staff within the estate.
- At a public meeting in Borth in March 2024 NRW were asked by [redacted], whether NRW would give any other interested parties time to put a bid together – he was given assurances that this would happen. At that time NRW stated they wanted a "thriving Visitor Centre", and were not sure about whether jobs would actually be lost.
- At the meeting in March 2024 NRW stated there would be continued meetings and public dialogue – the next public meeting was that of 25.11.24 which has led to a lot of public confusion and lack of considered opportunities to prepare for any outcomes from the Case for Change.
- NRW stated the tender process for any parties interested in taking over the Visitor Centre will start on 1.4.25 once it has closed. This seems contrary to usual business practice where it is felt advantageous to have a seamless transfer of one business to another. Motballed premises are less attractive for a number of business reasons – including unknown costs.
- NRW's planned closure of the Centre coincides with the start of the more lucrative tourist trade – again a missed business opportunity if there is no continuity of operation.

We trust this request will get due consideration and Ynys Las Visitor Centre will be given a 6 month operating period beyond 31.3.25. This could be seen as a bold

move but it will allow for solution focussed planning and preparation to take place so this vital inheritance for future generations can continue.

Without such a move we strongly feel an opportunity will be lost and all the progress made at the Reserve in terms of environmental protection will be in jeopardy.

Diolch yn fawr.

**From:** [personal information redacted]

**Sent:** 04 December 2024 09:55

**To:** [personal information redacted]

**Subject:** RE: NRW's VC's

Hi [personal information redacted],

The attached letter was left on a desk at Bwlch Nant Y Arian. I am assuming that a member of staff who is involved in the group has left it without intending for me to see it. However, as you will see I have addressed each point below.

The request for an additional funding for 6 months, doesn't do anything at all other than allow the provision to continue for some time with the hope, I assume that funding will be found to maintain the service longterm and I can't see that happening.

- Ringed Plovers are a duty of the NNR staff and they continue as part of the NNR team duties. I don't see how the closure date impacts this.
- It is for the WG to decide how additional funding from Westminster is spent and for the WG Treasury to allocate that funding. We are not going to tender for Ynyslas nor looking to replace a like for like service. Future Carpark income will be directed straight to the NNR. NRW has made £12m of savings much of which is important in protecting the environment and much of which is not understood by the group, so funding this will likely raise other issues. I am not sure in a prioritisation exercise the value of continuing the VC against other service streams would come out on top.
- A wider environmental assessment has been done, including assessing impacts to displacement if the car park was closed, but not an economic assessment, this is not NRW's remit.

- We are still working with the land management team to assess how some functions that VC staff have undertaken, but are not part of the officers job description, are managed in the longterm. Once exception to this is litterpicking and we will need to look at how we manage behaviours and influence the responsibility from the public as we do on the wider estate. We are however confident that our statutory duties in relation to the NNR will continue without interruption.
- I wasn't at this meeting so can't confirm what was or wasn't said, but it was before the case for change and the known savings needed and sometimes plans change and must adapt to circumstance.
- It was explained during the meeting why during the case for change, further engagement did not take place. I am not sure I understand who has not been able to consider opportunities. We have internally considered the impacts of the case for change and we accept that there are risks that need to be mitigated and this will be in place by the 31<sup>st</sup> March.
- There is no tender for Ynyslas. Community groups are being given the opportunity as an expression of interest for the Use of Space, not to manage a VC provision. This is live now.
- We are not stopping anyone enjoying the site over the 'lucrative' tourist period. All amenities bar access to the building will be available. The icecream concession will continue and we are looking to *[sic]*

Overall there is nothing in this paper that justifies the benefits of remaining open for another 6 months. The case can be made for all the centres in the shortterm, so we wouldn't accept this for just YL it would need to be funding for all sites which would leave us also £800K short of our £12m savings need plus push potential redundancy payments into the next financial year. It also would reduce affected staff the opportunity to find other work in NRW as by the time they would be in the redundancy process those vacancies will have been filled. I don't think this would be fair to staff. Being forced into a position to do things differently and be more effective or efficient is of course scary but ultimately doable.

Thanks

*[personal information redacted]*

13 December 2024 - Extract from Welsh Government and NRW Performance and Assurance meeting note:

*[personal information redacted]* advised there had been four public meetings regarding the visitor centres and NRW was continuing with its engagement. An Expression of Interest (Eoi) was open for Ynyslas, and interim food and beverage facilities planned from 1 April 2025.

*[personal information redacted]* confirmed that despite the current temporary closures for remedial work due to Storm Darragh, NRW is planning a comms campaign to encourage use of the visitor centres over the festive period. *[personal information redacted]* felt the local economy should not be impacted by the changes from April, as other establishments in the area should benefit from the new customers.

*[personal information redacted (WG)]* expressed caution to not fuel the impact assessment concerns and continue with the messaging that the visitor centres were open for business as usual. *[personal information redacted (WG)]* also encouraged NRW to loop in with Visit Wales to share this messaging.

*[personal information redacted]* noted a Plenary Debate scheduled for January in relation to NRW's Case for Change, specifically with interest around its visitor centres.

	<p>10 January 2025 - Extract from Welsh Government and NRW Performance and Assurance meeting note:</p> <p><i>[personal information redacted]</i> confirmed engagement was still taking place regards to visitor centres, but that lower levels of correspondence and complaints were being received. NRW was in touch with interested parties but there appeared to be a waning appetite within communities to provide facilities.</p> <p><i>[personal information redacted]</i> reminded the group of the Plenary debate regarding NRW's Case for Change and decisions around visitor centres, which is scheduled for 22 January.</p>
	<p>10 January 2025 - Extract from NRW's Paper for Welsh Government and NRW Performance and Assurance meeting - Update on Case for Change:</p> <p>Proposals for Visitor Centres continue to get the most attention, both in the media and on social channels. They have also been debated in the Senedd Chamber both at plenary and at Senedd Committee meetings.</p> <p>We held a series of public meetings around Visitor Centres in late November both face to face and online. Around 80 people attended each of the three face to face events with 40 online, including <i>[personal information redacted]</i>. 4 Further drop-in sessions are taking place at our Visitor Centre's throughout January.</p>
	<p>05 February 2025 - Extract from NRW-WG Sponsorship Committee Meeting Notes:</p> <p><i>[personal information redacted]</i> provided an update on visitor centres. Demobilisation of current services was underway to complete by 31 March where a concession for catering would be provided from 1 April.</p> <p>In relation to Ynyslas Visitor Centre, one expression of interest from a community group had been received. The other two centres (Coed-y-Brennin and Bwlch Nant Yr Arain) were subject to commercial procurement, but NRW were waiting further advice on TUPE arrangements for current staff before they could proceed.</p> <p>NRW also noted plans to instal Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) at visitor centre car parks. A discussion took place on the appropriate management of this to ensure enforcement was not too heavy, as this would further compound frustration of members of the public. <i>[personal information redacted]</i> (NRW) to meet with <i>[personal information redacted]</i> and <i>[personal information redacted]</i> to discuss further.</p> <p>Action 12 – <i>[personal information redacted]</i> (NRW) to meet with <i>[personal information redacted]</i> and <i>[personal information redacted]</i> (WG) to discuss ANPR arrangements at visitor centres.  <i>(This meeting took place 14 March 2025; no further information is available.)</i></p>
	<p>07 February 2025 - Extract from Welsh Government and NRW Performance and Assurance meeting note:</p>

	<p><i>[personal information redacted]</i> added NRW were waiting on TUPE legal advice for visitor centres (not Ynyslas). NRW asked if the Deputy First Minister is planning to visit Ynyslas following a request by a community group. WG confirmed that the offer to visit had been declined, advising the group to continue engaging with NRW.</p> <p><i>[personal information redacted (WG)]</i> requested a point of clarification about interim arrangements at visitor centres, particularly around Ynyslas and the Deputy First Minister has publicly stated its catering services would continue from April. NRW confirmed that it would not be continuing as there never has been that provision at Ynyslas, just a coffee machine that is available to community groups who wish to use the centre.</p>
	<p>04 April 2025 – Extract from Welsh Government and NRW Performance and Assurance meeting note:</p> <p>Visitor centres - arrangements are in place for a coffee cart at Nant yr Arian and plans are continuing with the 'use of space' at Ynyslas. There is an issue with a coffee cart for Coed y Brenin as NRW has received little interest in providing this service.</p> <p><u>Car Parking Charges</u></p> <p><i>[personal information redacted]</i> confirmed that any enforcement action of car parking charges at visitor centres will be the responsibility of the incoming provider. The provider will make its profit through enforcement charges rather than the standard car parking charges. That being said, NRW has agreed with the incoming provider that the first letter of enforcement will not be a demand for money. <i>[personal information redacted]</i> confirmed that communications lines have been prepared and will forward a paper to Sponsorship Team once finalised.</p> <p>Action: NRW to send Sponsorship Team communications' lines re: car parking enforcement at visitor centres. <i>[See below]</i></p>
	<p>17 April 2025 - Update on Visitor Centres from NRW:</p>

17 April 2025

## Visitor Centre Update

On 31 March NRW ceased retail and catering services at our three Visitor Centres. The sites and all our paths, trails, car parks and play areas remain open however and we are continuing to maintain our sites to ensure public access continues.

We are expecting the installation of the new ANPR car park cameras at each of the sites to take place from May 2025. When the new ANPR system is introduced, customers will be able to make payments via the machines on site, via telephone and by an app. While we wait for the new system to be installed, we are not renewing season passes as local visitors will be able to purchase these through the new system. There is no current enforcement on site so there is no additional charge for season ticket holders.

We still anticipate, in line with our last update, to go out to market for a long-term lease at Bwlch Nant y Arian and Coed Y Brenin in October of this year. We have been early approached by a number of interested parties, and we are expecting a competitive and value driven set of applications during the procurement process. We are currently finalising what will be offered as a Minimum Viable Product via our governance processes and expect to be able to provide an update to the public sometime in the summer. We are in the meantime encouraging interested parties to register on the Sell2Wales website in advance of the process going live.

### Bwlch Nant yr Arian

- The new temporary food and beverage concession is now in place, run by the Clifftop Railway. Their operating hours are 10:00 to 17:00 six days per week, from the beginning of Easter to the end of the Autumn half term holidays and 10:00 to 16:00 five days per week, from the end of the Autumn half term holidays to the beginning of the following Easter. – in both cases this includes weekends and bank holidays.
- A contract for Red Kite feeding and site inspections is now in place. Kite feeding times have moved from 3pm to 2pm over the summer for staff to accommodate this service. This change has resulted in a few complaints from the public. This change has been communicated via messaging on our website and signage on site and a google search for external sites that are still advertising the incorrect time.
- Temporary toilets within the car park are now in place. However, it has been necessary to use some disabled parking spaces to accommodate the toilets. We are still DDA compliant but are exploring option to increase spaces and replace those that are now blocked by the toilets.

## Coed Y Brenin

- Following concessions process there has been no interest for a temporary food and beverage concession at the site. We have now been out to market twice. The offer is restrained by the need to put a concession within the curtilage of the building and the potential fire risk as a result of that placement. We are now going out again with the same offer of beverages and cold food but using the Cwtch space under the building so that someone without a catering truck might be able to apply.
- Beics Brenin who have a cycle shop on the site are managing access to the toilet facilities and are being very helpful and signposting visitors, but more signage will be going up on site over the coming months.
- Meeting rooms remain available for booking by members of the public via our customer hub.
- The Trampler off-road mobility scooter is still available for hire and can be booked in advance by contacting the land management team.

## Ynyslas

- The Land Management team for Mid-North of which the senior land management officer is part, is responsible for the Dyfi National Nature Reserve. They also have a new contract in place for wardening services at the site.
- The community group that had expressed an interest in community use of the space at the Visitor Centre are still cautious of engaging with NRW [redacted]
- We have begun conversations with [redacted] for a potential partnership at the site.
- [redacted] have been awarded a contract for one year, with a possible extension of up to three years, to provide full-time site management for the beach car park at Ynyslas Visitor Centre. There are no changes to the free parking for residents who live within the qualifying area. This arrangement will remain in place while we go through the necessary processes to install the ANPR contract.
- [redacted] have also been awarded a contract to provide wardens on site to protect Ringed Plover enclosures. Through to the end of the Ringed Plover breeding season wardens will be on site during busy periods such as school holidays and weekends and up to two days during the week.
- Following the tender process there has been no interest in either the ice cream or temporary food and beverage concession at the site.
- The campaign group for Ynyslas continues to correspond with NRW although there are no new issues being raised. It is a shame that their actions are putting off potential partners from utilising the site for community benefit. They have also had to be sent a warning letter as they approached a member of staff on their personal social media accounts.

If you have any specific questions or would like any further detail, please do let me know.

Your sincerely,

[redacted]

11 June 2025 - Extract from NRW-WG Sponsorship Committee Meeting Notes:

*[personal information redacted]* provided an update on Visitor Centres, noting there was no catering provision at Ynyslas or Coed-Y-Brennin due to lack of interest following multiple attempts of going to market. In relation to Coed-Y-Brennin and Bwlch Nant Yr Arain, a timeline had been produced which scheduled tenders to go out in November 2025. NRW were continuing to keep members of the public and stakeholders updated via its community hub.

11 June 2025 - NRW-WG Sponsorship Committee Meeting Paper 4:



## Visitor Centre Update

### Carparking

#### Bwlch Nant Y Arian and Coed Y Brenin

The new pay and display machines and the introduction of parking enforcement will begin in early August when the new equipment can be installed. Signage and communications are currently being prepared onsite and on our website.

### Ynysias

█ have been awarded a contract for one year, with a possible extension to provide full-time site management for the beach car park at Ynysias Visitor Centre. Parking fees have been agreed with NRW and see no change from previous fees. █ are on site for more hours in a week than previous NRW staff. The same systems remain in place for beach safety with signage and red flags across the site and personnel on the gate handing out site information via leaflets to motorists which includes safety messages.

At all sites Season Tickets are still available via the contact centre. There continue to be no changes to the free parking for residents who live within the qualifying area or the purchase of season tickets for the site.

### Current Timescales for Marketing Exercise at Bwlch Nant Y Arian and Coed Y Brenin

These timescales are subject to change and internal governance timings. Please note that this will be communicated with some slight amendments but same timelines, for the CCEI Response to recommendation 11 and also for publication and release to Members of the Public before close of June.

Stage	Milestone date – Target	Notes
Draft invitation to tender (ITT) marketing documentation pack and Land and Planning Consultation (LPC)	End of July completion for wider consultation with internal stakeholders and legal checks	Drafting of documentation to include standard lease, financial models, business case templates, method statement requests and pre-qualification checking.
Agreement in principle from Project Board on	End of August	

the scope of offer to market		
Governance – Land Stewardship & Commercial Business Group	w/c 8 <sup>th</sup> September	Sign-off from Head of Sustainable Commercial Development and Land Stewardship.
Finalise ITT for final governance.	End of September	The Invitation to Tender will comprise two joint sections – one will be to establish compliance via a 'standard selection questions' (traditional PQQ) and the other will be the tender response.
Executive Team Sign-off	30 <sup>th</sup> September	
Land Estate Committee	2 <sup>nd</sup> October	For information only
NRW Board	8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> October	This may or may not be required, but assuming the political and public interest in the sites and potential for lifetime revenue generation we are including it in the timeline planning.
Publish ITT Notice on Sell2Wales	Early November	
Tender Returns	Early January 2026	Takes into account dead period over Christmas. Evaluation and shortlisting in January
Competitive Dialogue	February	Expected to take three weeks with 2 CD sessions per successful bidder through ITT
FTT	March	This based on the Most Advantageous Tender (MAT).
Successful Selection of preferred bidder	End of March	
Standstill Period	Early April	8 working days needed.
Award	End of April	
Commence Lease	May-June	

05 August 2025 - Car Parking Media Lines from NRW:

**From:** [personal information redacted]

**Sent:** 05 August 2025 14:38

**To:** [personal information redacted]

**Subject:** Car Parking Media Lines

Hi Both,

I've followed up on the media lines on car parking as discussed on Friday. We have a draft press release (below) but we don't yet have confirmation on when this will be issued so just sharing for info at this point. Once it's issued, we'll let you know.

Thanks,

[personal information redacted]

### **Changes to car parking at Coed y Brenin and Bwlch Nant yr Arian**

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is installing barrierless automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) systems at Coed y Brenin and Bwlch Nant yr Arian.

The new system will be introduced on (date) and will be managed in partnership with First Parking and RingGo following a procurement exercise.

Payments can be made by phone, via an app, as well as by card at physical parking machines and visitors can extend their parking time via these methods.

Visitors have up until midnight on the day of arrival to pay for their parking and there is a 30-minute window after arrival where they will not be charged

*[personal information redacted]* NRW's Head of Sustainable Commercial Development, said: "We are pleased to be working with First Parking and RingGo to introduce the new barrierless parking system to these two important sites. "As well as providing a better service to visitors, the new system will provide CCTV which will assist with reporting and investigating anti-social behavior and will allow us to monitor and issue fines for those parking overnight in our car parks." First Parking is an experienced parking company regulated by the British Parking Association, and RingGo is the largest parking app provider in the UK and is used by many local council car parks in Wales. Blue Badge holders will continue to be able to park free of charge and there will be no change for residents eligible for free parking. You can find out more information and how to apply for a season pass at (link to page digital is creating)

09 March 2026 - NRW Press notice for ANPR systems

**Updated car parking system at NRW sites**

An upgraded and improved car parking system is being introduced at three of our popular sites.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is installing barrierless automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) systems at Coed y Brenin, Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Newborough National Nature Reserve and Forest.

Installation will take place during the week commencing 16 March 2026 and the new system will go live on 30 March and will be managed in partnership with First Parking and RingGo following a procurement exercise.

Payments can be made online, via an app or by card at physical parking machines and visitors can extend their parking time via online or via the app.

Visitors have up until midnight on the day of arrival to pay for their parking and there is a 30-minute window after arrival where they will not be charged

Overnight parking is not allowed at any NRW site and those caught are liable to face a fine.

Neil Stoddart, NRW's Head of Sustainable Commercial Development, said:

"We are pleased to be working with First Parking and RingGo to introduce the new parking system to these three popular destinations.

"As well as providing a better service to visitors, the new system will provide CCTV which will assist with reporting and investigating anti-social behavior and will allow us to monitor and issue Penalty Charge Notices for those parking overnight in our car parks.

"Income generated will be reinvested into our recreation and environmental assets in the area to help us support communities and visitors to connect with the outdoors and nature."

First Parking is an experienced parking enforcement company regulated by the British Parking Association, and RingGo is the largest parking app provider in the UK and is used by many local council car parks in Wales.

Blue Badge holders will continue to be able to park free of charge and there will be no change for residents eligible for free parking.

You can find out more information and how to apply for a season pass at (link to page digital is creating).

End of document

2 ***Any ministerial advice, approvals, or decisions relating to these matters.***

**Welsh Government response:**  
**No approvals or decisions were required from the Welsh Government; these were operational matters for NRW. Briefings provided to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs for debates in Plenary are below.**

09 October 2024 - Briefing provided to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs for the Plenary Debate on petition P-06-1474: Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin and Ynyslas visitor centres. The transcript including the Minister's speech can be found [here](#).

NDM8682 Carolyn Thomas (North Wales)

To propose that the Senedd:

Notes the petition 'Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres' which received 13,247 signatures.

### Speech Summary

The purpose of the speech is for the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs (DFMCSCCRA) to address the Business Committee regarding a petition to prevent the perceived closure by NRW of three mid-Wales visitor centres (Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin and Ynyslas).

The speech provides the opportunity for the DFMCSCCRA to clarify that these three visitor centres will not be closing, but certain facilities (retail and catering) will be managed by external partners.

### Debate Background

#### The Petition

'*Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin and Ynyslas visitor centres*' - closed on 9 September having received 13,247 signatures, passing the threshold for the Petitions Committee to request for it to be considered for a debate in the Senedd.

The petition claims that closure of these centres runs contrary to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 and would have a far-reaching negative impact on the local economy, environment, and community well-being.

Petition: <https://petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/246323>

Letter from NRW to the Petitions Committee:

<https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s154029/Correspondence%20from%20Natural%20Resources%20Wales%2030%20September%202024.pdf>

#### Case for Change

In July, NRW held a consultation with its recognised Trade Unions on its proposed 'Case for Change'. Undertaking this Case for Change will support a reshaping of the organisation to address a funding gap of £13 million for next Financial Year 2025-26.

The Case included a proposal to transfer the provision of retail and catering services to more appropriate service providers at three visitor centres i.e. Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas.

This has been misrepresentation stating the centres would close, with a number of concerns being raised by users NRW has made it clear that these centres will not be closed, rather it will be seeking to find partners that are better placed to provide retail and catering services. The centres and their sites will remain open for walking, biking, play areas, car parking and toilet provision.

The aforementioned consultation recently closed on 13 September, it is now reviewing this feedback to determine if any changes are needed, whilst still meeting its cost saving targets.

NRW continues to engage with stakeholders and will provide more information once the Board has made its final decision, expected in the autumn.

Welsh Government officials are working with NRW to further understand the impact and ramification of its proposals, particularly in relation to the delivery of its front-line services and legal obligations.

#### Visitor Centres

Options to identify alternative catering and retail service providers at Bwlch Nant y Arian, Coed y Brenin and Ynyslas sites are currently being considered. Please note, all visitor centres have remained open in 2024.

These options include provision of opportunities to local businesses and partnership working with social and community groups to investigate the feasibility of future management of these centres.

A number of community groups at each site have asked to be involved and NRW will be holding public meetings to discuss next steps once a decision has been made by its Board.

#### Additional Petition P-06-1478 related to NRW

Carolyn Thomas MS, Chair of the Petitions Committee wrote to you on 4 October to inform you of a further petition: P-06-1478 *Comprehensively review NRW and its failure to deliver its statutory obligations to protect Wales*. Your Office will be asking us, week commencing, Monday 7 October to draft a response for your review.

<https://petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/246181>

At the time of this briefing, the petition had reached 362 signatures which exceeds the threshold required for the Petitions Committee to review and decide its response.

If the petition exceeds 10,000 signatures, the Petition Committee will request for it to be considered for a debate in the Senedd. The petition closes on 15 October 2024.

#### Additional background re benefits of increased access to the outdoors

##### Welsh Government Activity: Green Space

Facilitating increased access to the outdoors nearer to where people live and for a wider range of activities helps to address many of the policy objectives that the Welsh Government is pursuing, such as supporting the economy, encouraging vibrant rural communities, tackling poverty and improving both physical and mental health. It contributes to the goals set out in the Well-being and Future Generations Act 2015 and complements the provisions of the Active Travel (Wales) Act and the Environment (Wales) Act.

The Welsh Government is committed to driving up the quality of local green space and supporting communities to identify and take ownership or control of their local green space.

##### Benefits of Green Space

The evidence on the multiple benefits of green space is well established and is summarised in the Natural Resource Policy (2017).

## Health

It has been estimated that the cost of physical inactivity to Wales is around £650 million per year. The impact of low levels of physical activity on health, particularly amongst deprived communities is a serious concern for this Government.

There is well established evidence on the physical and mental benefits of being outside; just being in the natural environment or green space can significantly improve mental well-being. 1 in 4 adults in Wales experiences mental health problems or illness at some point during their lifetime. Based on figures for 2007-08, the annual cost of mental ill health in Wales is estimated to be £7.2 billion.

Physical activity has beneficial consequences in terms of increasing lifespans and reducing the incidence of chronic disease, including cardiovascular disease, some cancers, type II diabetes and osteoporosis.

Nearly two thirds take part in active recreation (National Survey for Wales 2017) – this figure will be negatively impacted should any closures of NRW visitor centres occur.

## Economic

There are significant economic benefits to having greater access to green spaces, every £1 of public spend on green space projects levers in £4.20 of private sector investment, boosting regeneration.

Access to green and blue space is linked to better health regardless of actual usage and of socio-economic status. It is predominantly free at point of use, ensuring access for people regardless of their means and abilities.

Outdoor recreation delivers significant benefits to Wales' economy and environment and generates significant health benefits for the population. Tourism is an important part of the economy of Wales.

Improving the diversity and extent of outdoor recreation facilities provides many opportunities because it is a growing economic sector in localities where many traditional agriculture and industry sectors are declining.

Walking as an activity generates £562m of additional demand in the Welsh economy and around 11,980 person-years of employment.

Woodlands and trees contribute to local economies through the recreational opportunities that they provide to visitors and local communities: in 2013, 72% of adults surveyed in Wales had visited woodland that year; and 88% of all off road cycling and mountain biking visits in Wales included time spent in woodland (Forestry may have more up to date figures).

In total £5.6bn was spent during visits to the outdoors for recreation by people living in Wales (Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey 2014).

## Tourism

The 2016 Visitor Survey showed almost seventy percent (70%) of people who live in the UK and over fifty percent (50%) of overseas visitors sight the landscape as their main reason for

visiting Wales. It also showed that twenty-five percent (25%) of day visitors take part in outdoor and sporting activities.

The Great Britain Day Visits Survey found that 102 million tourism day visits were made to Wales in 2016, generating expenditure of £4,096m. The number of tourism day visits to Wales in 2016 increased by 19%, while the amount spent has increased by 31% compared to the previous 12 months.

The Wales Visitor Survey 2016 showed that 67% of visitors to Wales come to enjoy the landscape and 32% were motivated to take part in outdoor activities during their trip. Walking (more than 2 miles) is the most popular activity undertaken by visitors. There has been a large increase in visitors taking part in mountain biking

### Children

Regular physical activity in children and young people promotes health and fitness and can establish active lifestyles during adulthood.

Physical activity is central to a child's optimal growth and development, particularly motor development, strength, balance and co-ordination.

The Welsh Government recognises the importance of play in children's lives, particularly outdoor play in green spaces. This contributes to children's health, development and appreciation of the environment.

The Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey 2014 found; 60% of people would like to visit the outdoors more often and participation in outdoor recreation is linked to attitudes and behaviours that are related to caring for the environment.

### Potential Questions

Will you step in and prevent the visitor centres from closing?

The visitor centres will not be closing. I must stress that only the catering and retail facilities at the sites are being considered for delivery by more appropriate providers. NRW needs to focus on its statutory duties and core functions and its aim is to find organisations or businesses that are better suited to provide the commercially focussed facilities.

Why does NRW not intend to continue with retail and catering at the visitor centres?

The provision of catering and retail services at the visitor centres is not a statutory requirement and NRW needs to focus on its statutory duties and core functions in order to address its financial shortfall.

What will happen to the visitor centres whilst waiting for someone to take over retail and catering?

Whatever the outcome of the consultation and future of the retail and catering services at the visitor centres, the centres themselves will remain open for all other facilities such as walking, biking, play areas, car parking and toilet provision.

How will you ensure future generations can benefit from these visitor centres?

Access to outdoor venues such as the visitor centres supports the economy, encourages vibrant rural communities, tackles poverty and improves both physical and mental health. Access to green and blue space is linked to better health regardless of actual usage and of socio-economic status. It is predominantly free at point of use, ensuring access for people regardless of their means and abilities.

What is the running cost of the visitor centres?

The visitor centres currently run at a total cost of just under £2m per annum. Around 40-60% is funding by the Welsh Government through grant in aid, the remainder with in-year income. The visitor centres are not financially self-supporting and so rely on a grant injection each year from other NRW income streams.

What about NRW's proposed job reductions?

A reduction of around 260 posts is needed to help address a £13 million budget shortfall. The vast majority of these posts are already vacant and NRW is committed to mitigate and avoid the risk of redundancies wherever possible and is working with its staff and Trade Unions to redeploy staff affected, wherever possible, into other funded posts.

Will access to trails be affected?

No.

NRW continues to work with organisations and community groups to ensure continued access to trails. We continue to work with NRW to bring in all of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate into the National Forest. The National Forest will in the future include a National Forest National trail, throughout Wales to help protect these vital sources of tourism for current and future generations.

Why will Ynyslas be closed for the winter?

Ynyslas was only open during the summer period pre-covid. Opening hours were extended over the winter period to facilitate access during lockdown. The removal of the provision over this winter would be back to business as usual.

22nd January 2025 - Briefing provided to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs for the Plenary Debate Natural Resources Wales: Case for Change. The transcript including the Minister's speech can be found [here](#).

Briefing Summary of key points to convey

*[Information removed – outside the scope of the request.]*

NRW has extended the current visitor centre retail and catering provisions until 31 March 2025 whilst activity gets underway to engage with the community and prospective partners. Interim measures are planned at each site ready for the start of the coming financial year.

*[Information removed – outside the scope of the request as it relates to WG budgets.]*

Following discussion with *[personal information redacted]*, the motion has been amended to more accurately reflect the current position with NRW's Case for Change implementation.

### Debate Background

*[Information removed – outside the scope of the request.]*

### Visitor Centres

One of NRW's proposals was to cease its provision of retail and catering services at its three visitor centres at Coed y Brenin, Ynyslas and Bwlch Nant yr Arian with the intention of seeking partners who are better placed to provide these services. NRW is now actively engaging with community groups and businesses as they look for partners to provide retail and catering services at the centres moving forward.

In the interim, NRW has extended the current visitor centre retail and catering provisions until the 31 March 2025 whilst activity gets underway to engage with community and prospective partners. This will allow NRW the time to arrange interim measures at each site ready for the start of the new financial year. These interim measures include a concession contract for a coffee cart at each site, ice cream concession for the summer months, and continuation of other contracts such as grounds maintenance. After 1 April, all sites will continue to remain open for walking, biking, play areas, car parking and toilet provision.

NRW has made clear through its Case for Change process that it is keen to work with the local businesses and communities to ensure each of the visitor centres have a long-term, sustainable future. To support this, NRW held a number of engagement sessions to update local communities and interested parties at the end of November marking the start of an open engagement process. Around 80 people attended each of the three face-to-face events and around 40 joined online.

In addition to this NRW launched a public engagement hub detailing how community groups can register their interest and engage with drop-in sessions scheduled throughout in January.

NRW is considering whether there is scope to increase the value of the visitor centres for users and whether extending the offer beyond retail and catering will provide additional attraction to prospective partners.

The offer at Ynyslas is unique as it forms part of the Dyfi National Nature Reserve (NNR). The viable provision there will be based on what the suggestions provided by the community to NRW, once the public engagement sessions and expression of interest process have concluded. Officials are working with NRW to ensure delivery of its front-line environmental services and legal obligations are not affected by the changes. In the meantime, NRW's Land Management Team will continue to manage and take care of the NNR, which includes ensuring litter is collected and the public are prevented from accessing the breeding sites.

Lines to take

1. The provision of catering and retail services at the visitor centres is not a statutory requirement and NRW needs to focus on its statutory duties and core functions in order to address its financial shortfall.
2. NRW needs to focus on its statutory duties and core functions and its aim is to find organisations or businesses that are better suited to provide the commercially focussed facilities.
3. NRW has extended the current visitor centre retail and catering provisions until the 31 March 2025 whilst activity gets underway to engage with the community and prospective partners. This will allow NRW the time to arrange interim measures at each site ready for the start of the new financial year.
4. These measures include a concession contract for a coffee cart at each site, ice cream concession for the summer months, and continuation of other contracts such as grounds maintenance.
5. I want to make clear, NRW will continue its management of these sites and the centres themselves will remain open for walking, biking, play areas, car parking and toilet provision.
6. To support a long-term, sustainable future for the visitor centres, NRW held a number of engagement sessions to update local communities and interested parties from the end of November marking the start of an open engagement process. Further drop-in sessions are taking place throughout January.
7. In addition, NRW has opened a public engagement hub to help identify community and partner interest.
8. Conservation activity and maintenance of the Ynyslas site is the responsibility of NRW's Land Management Team who are unaffected by NRW's Case for Change, therefore, these functions will continue as priorities for NRW.

### Economic impact Assessment

Sam Rowlands MS has previously queried whether an Economic Impact Assessment had been carried out as part of Case for Change. NRW confirmed this has not been done as the focus was on making savings across the organisation. The economic impact should be minimal as catering facilities will still be available to visitors, albeit in a different form.

An Equalities Impact Assessment for impacts on services including Visitor Centres has been undertaken and was published with the proposals.

### Lines to take

1. An Economic Impact Assessment was not undertaken explicitly for the Case for Change in its totality. The case for change proposals were developed to improve focus on priorities, directed by NRW's Corporate Plan and the Welsh Government's remit letter, and the need to realise savings in light of the current pressures on public sector finances.
2. NRW has to operate within its budget and focus on where it can have the most impact for nature and people thriving together, focussing on those things that only it can do.
3. NRW's vision is to work with partners, communities and other stakeholders to support social and environmental justice and focus on equity and inclusion so that it can build a future where nature and people genuinely thrive together in a way that is sustainable for future generations.
4. NRW will continue to manage the visitor centres which will remain open for walking, biking, play areas, car parking and toilet provision.

5. Visitors will still be able to buy refreshments via the concession carts at the visitor centres.

### Engagement

NRW continues to have proactive discussions to negotiate the best outcome possible for the visitor centres for visitors, local businesses and the community. The formal tender offer for Coed y Brenin and Nant yr Arian will be advertised on the Sell2Wales website.

### Lines to take

1. NRW launched an Engagement hub to gather thoughts and ideas from interested parties.
2. The engagement hub also details how to take part in the expression of interest process for the community use of Ynyslas Visitor Centre.
3. For Coed y Brenin and Nant yr Arian, once the offer has been developed, it will be advertised on Sell2Wales. This is expected to be in the new Financial Year.
4. NRW has indicated that Competitive Dialogue is the preferred method of tender for future development of these sites.
5. NRW is a public sector organisation and has strict procurement regulations and processes that must be followed.
6. To ensure fairness and parity, no proposals will be considered in advance of the start of any public tender.

08 October 2025 - Briefing provided to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs for the Plenary Debate on the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee report: Natural Resources Wales: Annual Scrutiny 2024-25. The transcript including the Minister's speech can be found [here](#).

### Debate Background

The Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee undertook its fourth annual scrutiny of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on 12 March 2025. This scrutiny session covered the period 2024-25.

Following the scrutiny session, the CCEI Committee published its [Annual Report on Natural Resources Wales 2024-25](#) on 21 May 2024. The report contained 11 Recommendations *[only recommendations 2 and 3 fall within scope of the request]*.

- Recommendation 2 - NRW must urgently provide a credible plan to reopen all three visitor centres. This must include clarity about its vision for the future of the visitor centres, the service levels it wishes to see and a financially viable strategy and timetable to achieve this. This should be provided to the Committee within three months.
- Recommendation 3 - In relation to the Dyfi National Nature Reserve, NRW must set out its proposed management of the nature reserve to reassure the Committee, and the wider public, that this will be adequate, at a minimum, to meet its statutory obligations.

The DFM [responded](#) to the report on 2 July 2025. NRW also provided a written [response](#) on 3 July 2025.

*[Information removed – outside the scope of the request.]*

## (2) Visitor Centres

### Lines to take

- Borth Community Hub is running a community space at Ynyslas, providing community activities and workshops to engage with and benefit the local community.
- Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin will be marketed to prospective partners in November.
- The focus will be on finding long-term, sustainable partners whose services will benefit local communities and enhance tourism.

### Supporting information

NRW has established a community management agreement with Borth Community Hub in August allowing part of the Ynyslas building to be used for community activities. Borth Community Hub is a charity which hosts a range of activities and workshops offering resources and services to communities from northern Ceredigion to Machynlleth.

NRW has offered prospective partners interested in Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin the chance to find out more information ahead of the upcoming marketing exercise. Tours took place in August and September.

Following a period of preparation work, legal checks, internal governance and subject to final approval, it is hoped the marketing exercise can be formally launched in November 2025 with the aim of contracts being in place by the end of April 2026. The exercise will be managed through the Sell2Wales procurement portal set up by the Welsh Government and interested parties can sign up to the platform in advance.

*[Information removed – outside the scope of the request.]*

12 November 2024 - Briefing email to the DFM in preparation for the Senedd's Business Statement

Hi *[personal information redacted]*,

Please see lines and briefing below as requested:

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Visitor Centres – ending of catering and retail operations

### Background

In July, NRW undertook a formal consultation with its recognised Trade Unions and engaged with its staff in relations to its proposed 'Case for Change'. Its Case for Change is intended to support a reshaping of the organisation so that it can operate effectively within the available budget, which has been under pressure like many parts of the public sector. To inform its proposals, NRW has undertaken a detailed assessment of its current activity against priorities to inform the proposed approach where capacity will be scaled back to address a funding gap of £13 million for FY 2025-26. One of NRW's proposal was to cease the provision of retail and catering services at its three visitor centres at Coed y Brenin, Ynyslas and Bwlch Nant yr

	<p>Arian with the intention of seeking partners who are better placed to provide these services. NRW Board made its final decision regarding its visitor centre on 5 November.</p> <p>Lines to take</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following NRW's Boards final decision on its Case for Change in relation to the provision of retail and cratering services at its three visitor centres, NRW's Commercial Team are engaging with local businesses and community groups as they explore the provision of opportunities to organisations to manage these services.</li> <li>• I understand that NRW has received a number of informal expressions of interests from local businesses and community groups in taking over responsibility for the running of the retail and catering services at the centres.</li> <li>• Now NRW Board has made its final decision, I expected engagement with interested parties to take place at pace to ensure there is limited disruption to these services. NRW have planned three public engagement sessions schedules to take place on 25, 26 and 27 November at which a formal expression of interest process will be opened.</li> <li>• I want to make clear, NRW will continue its management of these sites and the centres themselves will remain open for walking, biking, play areas, car parking and toilet provision.</li> </ul> <p>Kind regards  <i>[personal information redacted]</i></p>
3	<p><i>Any concerns, risks, or issues raised within Welsh Government about NRW's financial position, visitor centre closures, or parking strategy.</i></p> <p><b>Welsh Government response:</b>  <b>Please refer to the responses at Q1 plus those below.</b></p>
	<p>05 December 2024 - Extract from NRW-WG Sponsorship Committee Meeting Notes:</p> <p><i>[personal information redacted]</i> provided a brief update on recent engagement events held with members of the public in relation to visitor centres, flagging there was an online engagement session scheduled to take place that evening (5 December). An invitation for expressions of interest had opened in relation to Ynyslas Visitor Centre. <i>[personal information redacted (WG)]</i> emphasised the need for NRW's messaging to make clear the centres were not closing, that only retail and catering provision were to cease, and the sites remain open for the public.</p>
	<p>12 December 2024 - Extract from Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs Performance meeting with the Chair of NRW.</p> <p>The DFM and [the Chair] briefly discussed NRW's visitor centres where the DFM raised concerns around the speed of the process of bringing in other suppliers to provide retail and catering services. [The Chair] confirmed NRW are engaging with interested parties and he was growing in confidence of a seamless transition resulting.</p>
4	<p><b><i>Financial Scrutiny and Accountability</i></b>  <i>Any financial assessments, impact assessments, or business cases submitted by NRW to Welsh Government relating to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>o the closure of visitor centres</i></li> <li><i>o projected savings from closures</i></li> <li><i>o projected revenue from parking charges</i></li> </ul>

o *the use of ANPR based private parking enforcement*

**Welsh Government response:  
Please see response below.**

10 November 2025 – Email notification to NRW of Novel Contentious Repercussive Assessment of NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

From: *[personal information redacted]*

Sent: 10 November 2025 12:50

To: *[personal information redacted]*

**Subject:** RE: NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Good afternoon *[personal information redacted]*,

Thank you for sharing the attached revised NCR Assessment in relation to the visitor centres at Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin. To confirm, the assessment has been noted by Welsh Government.

The only comment we wish to make is regarding the mitigation for Risk 3, which has been changed.

From: 'To include a community member as part of the panel in a consultation'.

To: 'Open and transparent RfP process and scoring, with a greater weighting towards partnerships/local benefit and social value than towards income'.

We would encourage NRW to keep to its original plan to appoint a respected community member to the panel to help assess the bids.

Kind regards

*[personal information redacted]*

6 November 2026 - Internal approval of Novel Contentious Repercussive Assessment of NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

From: *[personal information redacted]*

Sent: 06 November 2025 10:44

To: *[personal information redacted]*

**Subject:** RE: NCR assessment for Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin

Sorry, yes I agree, non NCR.

From: *[personal information redacted]*

Sent: 06 November 2025 10:35

To: *[personal information redacted]*

**Subject:** RE: NCR assessment for Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin

Thanks both.

*[personal information redacted]*, does this mean you agree with NRW's assessment that this is non-NCR?

If so, I'll save your response and formally inform NRW, once we've had the discussion at the meeting tomorrow.

Thanks

*[personal information redacted]*

From: *[personal information redacted]*

Sent: 06 November 2025 09:06

To: *[personal information redacted]*

Subject: RE: NCR assessment for Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin

Nice work *[personal information redacted]*, we can raised this within the NCR section for tomorrows monthly meeting

From: *[personal information redacted]*

Sent: 06 November 2025 08:04

To: *[personal information redacted]*

Subject: RE: NCR assessment for Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin

Thanks *[personal information redacted]*, I agree with this point.

From: *[personal information redacted]*

Sent: 04 November 2025 12:01

To: *[personal information redacted]*

Subject: NCR assessment for Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin

Good morning *[personal information redacted]*,

Please find attached a revised NCR assessment for the commercial letting of NRW's Visitor Centres at Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin, for your consideration. NRW has deemed this as non-NCR. You previously were content with NRW's assessment of Bwlch VC being non-NCR but had some concerns over the language used. To address your concerns, NRW has removed the reference to 'closure' and included a line confirming the NRW managed estate includes WGWE land/buildings.

There are other minor changes in the document to reflect the inclusion of both VCs, however one point to note is:

Risk 3 Mitigation. To include a respected community member as part of the panel in a consultation. This line has been removed and replaced with: Open and transparent RfP (Request for Proposal) process and scoring, with a greater weighting towards partnerships/local benefit and social value than towards income.

Whilst this won't affect the NCR assessment, I think we should encourage NRW to keep to its original plan to appoint a community member to the panel to help assess the bids.

Kind regards,

*[personal information redacted]*

*[Information removed – outside the scope of the request as it relates to WG admin.]*

Thanks,

*[personal information redacted]*

30 October 2025 – Email from NRW Novel Contentious Repercussive Assessment of NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting



## Novel Contentious and Repercussive Form

<b>Project:</b>	Marketing and Commercial Letting of Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin Visitor Centres
<b>Directorate:</b>	Customer, Communication and Commercial
<b>Leadership Team:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Completed By:</b>	[REDACTED]

### Background

Following the Case for Change, retail and catering provision at Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin Visitor Centre (VC) ceased operating on March 31, 2025. NRW launched a public engagement exercise to identify potential partners to operate these services and enhance the wider recreation offer.

Our priority is now to find a partner who can collaborate with us to transform the sites into a thriving hub with a long-term, sustainable future.

Our proposed marketing is underpinned by the following guiding principles:

- Long-term viability – securing a lease of ideally at least 35 years, with appropriate review points;
- Local economic benefit – proposals should reinforce the site's role as a major tourist attraction and deliver added value to the local economy, including employment opportunities for local communities;
- Estate efficiency – reducing estate liabilities and supporting the delivery of our Well-being Objectives; and
- Ensure continued open access.

The commercial marketing proposals for Bwlch Nant yr Arian (BNyA) and Coed y Brenin (CyB) are being progressed in parallel. Both sites will be marketed in November 2025. The lease(s) will cover primary scope and secondary scope areas (subject to the bids), except for trails within the secondary scope areas which would be retained by NRW with rights granted to the tenant(s) (where relevant).

The selection process will include a 'competitive dialogue' phase. The process will be based on a tailored Request for Proposal (RFP) approach, drawing on elements typically found in a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) and Invitation to Tender (ITT), but adapted specifically for the marketing phase.

The process will include:

- Initial gateway and tender response evaluation and shortlisting phases;
- A competitive dialogue with shortlisted parties; and
- Final bid submission, evaluation, and selection of a preferred partner.

### Site Specific Details

Site	Primary Scope	Secondary Scope	Interim Arrangements
BNyA	The VC building, car park, and associated ancillary recreational infrastructure.	Trail network and former office	Toilets and cold food/drink concession

CyB	VC building + extension, car park, 3 playgrounds	Trails and Maesgwm site	Toilets open, no food/drink concession. NRW has made three unsuccessful attempts to secure a provider. A revised offer including hot food is being prepared, pending legal advice.
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While lifetime revenue is currently uncertain until the marketing exercise is completed, early estimates suggest potential income in the region of £3.5M per site, based on projected annual income of £100k per annum assuming a 35-year lease.

### Purpose

Our aim is to conduct an open marketing exercise to identify a suitable partner with whom we will enter into a lease of at least 35 years (with break clauses). However, although a 35 year plus lease is advisable for this kind of opportunity, bids will not be dismissed if they propose shorter lease terms and score suitably in other criteria.

### Transaction type and any additional approvals

Lease of the NRW managed estate for the purposes of recreational development. The term managed estate includes WGWE land/buildings.

### Please consider the questions below to help in your assessment of whether or not this decision is novel, contentious or repercussive

Questions	Yes	No	Please explain your answer
Will the proposal be a new undertaking for NRW?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We have leased land on the NRW-managed estate for recreational purposes multiple times. Other examples where we have done this include Gannant and Bike Park Wales.
Could your proposal be considered as non-standard for the sector?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NRW must exercise its functions so as to promote recreation, and we have leased land on the NRW-managed estate for recreational purposes multiple times.
Is there any doubt in the regularity (i.e. compliance with relevant legislation and guidance) of the proposal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	As above. We will ensure via the Lease that there is a duty placed upon the Lessee to ensure they obtain all necessary Consents, e.g. planning permissions (as appropriate).
Is there any doubt to the proposal's compliance with the standards expected of public bodies or officials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The project will be scrutinised at Land Stewardship and Commercial Business Group, Executive Team and Land Estates Committee. We also expect it will go to NRW Board.
Is the proposal politically sensitive and/or likely to attract negative media attention?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Although the VC programme review as part of the Case for Change attracted significant media attention, there is significant support from the public, Welsh Government, including political pressure, to see the VC buildings re-open. Welsh Government CCEI Committee is expecting NRW to commence the marketing exercise with a planned launch date in November 2025.
Could this proposal result in unwelcome consequences either internally or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The only unwelcome consequence would be if we are unable to find a suitable partner interested in helping to operate the VC. However, based on the

elsewhere, including in the public sector?			expressions of interest received to date, we expect to see several bidders.
Could this proposal set a precedent for the sector and wider public sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We have leased land on the NRW-managed estate for recreational purposes multiple times. Other examples where we have done this include Garwnant and Bike Park Wales. There is significant support from the public, Welsh Government, including political pressure, to see the VC buildings re-open
Does your proposal involve policy or practice change that has wide financial implications?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We have leased land on the NRW-managed estate for recreational purposes multiple times. Other examples where we have done this include Garwnant and Bike Park Wales.

**Operational impact**  
One of our key guiding principles underpinning the marketing is increasing overall value such as the reduction of estate liabilities, and increased engagement with the estate. The type of impacts will be dependent upon bidder responses. However, the operational impacts are considered to be within normal tolerances and would be no different to what we already allow on other projects, e.g. Garwnant and Bike Park Wales. It is important to note that we would be seeking to ensure that proposals complement the Forest Resource Plan (FRP).

**Legal consultation**  
NRW Legal Team are an integral advisor and key internal stakeholder on the project. They will be involved throughout the governance process from the Land & Property Consultation (LPC), throughout the marketing exercise, through to the Lease and associated documentation.

**Risks / Mitigation**

**1. Best value**

- Risk: Failure to achieve best value from the marketing exercise. There is a risk that NRW may not secure either monetary or social best value for the NRW-managed assets.
- Main Mitigations: Structured collaboration with extensive multi-discipline project team to maximise benefits and value. Clear and structured marketing exercise process with competitive dialogue for enhanced development and product testing.

**2. Bidder suitability**

- Risk: Potential bidders may not share values and look to benefit NRW's future delivery of the estate.
- Mitigation: Suitable RfP gateway (PQQ) questions to ensure that we are able to quickly discount unsuitable potential partners and robust sophisticated stages for early intervention.

**3. Reputational Concerns**

- Risk: Members of the Public continue to raise their concerns about the future of the VCs throughout the RfP process, leading to disquiet from community members who are close to the centres.
- Mitigation: Open and transparent RfP process and scoring, with a greater weighting towards partnerships/local benefit and social value than towards income.

**Benefits**

- Prosperous Wales – income into the Welsh economy via a long-term sustainable business proposal, enhancing local employment.

- Healthy Wales – subject to the outcome of marketing - potential to facilitate improved access and recreation opportunities through the provision of improved facilities.
- Cohesive community – the marketing aims to elicit outcomes which will help benefit the local community.
- Vibrant culture and language – the marketing will include outcomes which will help benefit the local community and therefore language.

**Alternative options**  
The other alternatives would be to a) mothball the buildings, b) seek to dispose via sale, or c) re-open and manage in-house. None of the above would be deemed acceptable given the significant support from the public, including political pressure, to see the VC buildings re-open – following our recent Case for Change.

Recommendation from officer completing the NCR assessment		
Do you perceive this proposal to be novel contentious or repercussive?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reasoning for conclusion:	We have leased land on the NRW-managed estate for recreational purposes multiple times. There is significant support from the public, including political pressure, to see the VC buildings re-open.	
Signature	Name [redacted] Job Title Commercial Lead Specialist Advisor Date 24/10/25	

Please send this form to the Financial Governance Co-ordinator for consideration and await confirmation of next steps before proceeding.

Review from the relevant Executive Director		
Do you perceive this proposal to be novel contentious or repercussive?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Explanation (if not consistent with officer recommendation above)		
Signature	Name [redacted] Job Title Director of Communications, Customer and Commercial Date 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	

Approval of the Chief Executive for submission to the NRW Board and WG		
Do you perceive this proposal to be novel contentious or repercussive?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Explanation (if different from Exec Director view)		
Signature	Name [redacted] Job Title Acting Executive Director of Evidence, Policy and Permitting (acting as Chief Executive, transfer of powers form attached). Date 30 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2025	

From: [personal information redacted]  
Sent: 30 October 2025 17:13  
To: [personal information redacted]  
Subject: RE: NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Hi [personal information redacted],

Please find attached the updated NCR form for the proposed commercial letting of the Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin Visitor Centres, which has now received required approvals internally. [personal information redacted] has signed with the delegated authority of [personal information redacted], who is on a short break (evidence of delegation attached).

Please let me know if any further information is required.

Thanks  
[personal information redacted]

From: [personal information redacted]  
Sent: 28 October 2025 13:15  
To: [personal information redacted]  
Subject: Re: NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Hi [personal information redacted],

Sponsorship Committee touched on this briefly this morning. Do you have the updated version ready to share with us please?

Thanks

*[personal information redacted]*

From: *[personal information redacted]*

Sent: 01 October 2025 15:57

To: *[personal information redacted]*

Subject: RE: NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Hi *[personal information redacted]*,

We don't mind which way around you want to do it, but if the situation is identical, it may be easier to amend the original to incorporate both VCs.

Either way, could you please include your response to our queries (attached) in the new version(s).

Thanks very much,

*[personal information redacted]*

From: *[personal information redacted]*

Sent: 01 October 2025 13:49

To: *[personal information redacted]*

Subject: RE: NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Hi *[personal information redacted]*,

The situation for Coed y Brenin is identical to the proposal for Bwlch Nant yr Arian, and both tenders will be launched at the same time. As we now have confirmation that BNyA is not deemed NCR, we'd apply the same view to Coed y Brenin.

Alternatively, would you prefer that the NCR is updated to include both sites?

Thanks,

*[personal information redacted]*

From: *[personal information redacted]*

Sent: 25 September 2025 15:28

To: *[personal information redacted]*

Subject: RE: NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Thanks for this response *[personal information redacted]*.

Can you confirm that this response refers to just Bwlch Nant yr Arian? Should we expect an additional NCR assessment for Coed y Brenin to come our way? Are you planning to launch the tenders for both at the same time?

Regards,

*[personal information redacted]*

From: *[personal information redacted]*

Sent: 25 September 2025 13:57

To: *[personal information redacted]*

Subject: RE: NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Afternoon *[personal information redacted]*,

In *[personal information redacted]* absence I have been asked to respond to the query relating to the attached NCR decision. The business area managing the visitor centres have provided the response below:

Thank you for your query regarding the terminology used about reopening Visitor Centres' buildings. We are currently drafting our marketing documentation pack for the opportunity and are excited to see what the market will propose. We are aiming to go-live with our offer to market in November 2025. To comply with our internal governance and help inform the scope of our offer to market, we have completed an internal Land and Property Consultation (LPC) process with representatives from key internal teams. This has established primary and secondary elements/areas. Primary elements are the minimum requirements of the offer to market and must be included in all bidders' proposals. These areas would be 'demised' via a long-term lease. These comprise:

- The main Visitor Centre building;
- Former office building;
- Car park;
- Events space building;
- Bird hide;
- Corral;
- Play areas;
- Skill park;
- Pathways around the lake; and
- Red kite feeding.

Secondary elements are optional and may be included at the discretion of bidders. These comprise:

- The small external office building;
- Recreation trails (outside the primary scope area); and
- The lake (adjacent to the main Visitor Centre building).

NRW will continue to ensure that both the temporary toilet provision and the temporary cold food and drink unit concession remain in place until the successful conclusion of this marketing process.

The NRW managed estate is an overarching term which also includes the WGWE.

I hope this clarifies the terminology and the current position. Please let me know if you need any further information.

Best regards,

*[personal information redacted]*

From: *[personal information redacted]*  
Sent: 22 September 2025 12:55  
To: *[personal information redacted]*  
Subject: FW: NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Good afternoon,

In *[personal information redacted]* absence, could someone please clarify the points raised below by WG Sponsorship on our NCR please?

Many thanks,  
*[personal information redacted]*

From: *[personal information redacted]*  
Sent: 22 September 2025 12:53  
To: *[personal information redacted]*  
Subject: FW: NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Hi *[personal information redacted]*,

Please see the email below from WG Sponsorship. Would you be able to clarify the points they've raised please?

Thanks,  
*[personal information redacted]*

From: *[personal information redacted]*  
Sent: 18 September 2025 17:00  
To: *[personal information redacted]*  
Subject: RE: NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Hi *[personal information redacted]*,  
Thank you for sharing the attached NCR Assessment in relation to NRW's Visitor Centres Commercial Letting, it is appreciated. To confirm, NRW's assessment has been considered, and officials agree with NRW's own assessment that this is not NCR.

Notwithstanding the above, it would be helpful if you would clarify, in a simple email reply, the terminology used regarding reopening Visitor Centres' buildings. You will no doubt recall the numerous and vociferous concerns expressed re Visitor Centres' closing and our joint responses saying that the visitor centres including toilets were to remain open and that only the catering and retail services would not be provided by NRW.

Finally, re the term 'NRW managed estate', does this also relate to WGWE land/buildings etc. in this context?

Many thanks  
*[personal information redacted]*

From: [personal information redacted]  
 Sent: 11 September 2025 16:16  
 To: [personal information redacted]  
 Subject: NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Good afternoon all,

Please see attached the NCR assessment for Bwlch Nant yr Arian Visitor Centre.

If you have any questions, or need anything else, let me know.

Thanks,  
 [personal information redacted]

11 September 2025 Email from NRW – Novel Contentious Repercussive Assessment of NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting (Bwlch Nant yr Arian only)



## Novel Contentious and Repercussive Form

Project:	Bwlch Nant yr Arian Visitor Centre Marketing
Directorate:	Customer, Communication and Commercial
Leadership Team:	[redacted]
Completed By:	[redacted]

### Background

Following the Case for Change, retail and catering provision at Bwlch Nant yr Arian Visitor Centre (VC) ceased operating on 31 March 2025. After the closure, we launched a public engagement exercise to identify potential partners interested in helping to operate these services and enhance the wider recreation offer.

Our priority is now to find a partner who can collaborate with us to transform the site into a thriving hub with a long-term, sustainable future.

Our proposed marketing is underpinned by the following guiding principles:

- Long-term viability – securing a lease of at least 35 years, with review points;
- Local economic benefit – proposals should support the site's role as a major tourist attraction and deliver added value to the local economy, including employment opportunities for local communities;
- Estate efficiency – reducing estate liabilities and supporting the delivery of our Well-being Objectives; and
- Ensure continued open access.

We plan to launch the marketing process in November 2025. This will include a 'competitive dialogue' phase. The process will be based on a tailored Request for Proposal (RfP) approach, drawing on elements typically found in a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) and Invitation to Tender (ITT), but adapted specifically for the marketing phase.

The process will include:

- Initial gateway and tender response evaluation and shortlisting phases;
- A competitive dialogue with shortlisted parties;
- Final bid submission, evaluation, and selection of a preferred partner.

While lifetime revenue is currently uncertain, early estimates suggest potential income in the region of £3.5M, based on projected annual income of £100k per annum over a 35-year lease.

### Purpose

Our aim is to conduct an open marketing exercise to identify a suitable partner with whom we will enter into a lease of at least 35 years (with break clauses). However, although a 35 year plus lease is advisable for this kind of opportunity, bids will not be dismissed if they propose shorter lease terms and score suitably in other criteria.

### Transaction type and any additional approvals

Lease of the NRW managed estate for the purposes of recreational development.

Please consider the questions below to help in your assessment of whether or not this decision is novel, contentious or repercussive			
Questions	Yes	No	Please explain your answer
Will the proposal be a new undertaking for NRW?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We have leased land on the NRW-managed estate for recreational purposes multiple times. Other examples where we have done this include Garwnant and Bike Park Wales.
Could your proposal be considered as non-standard for the sector?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NRW has a duty to promote recreation, and we have leased land on the NRW-managed estate for recreational purposes multiple times.
Is there any doubt in the regularity (i.e. compliance with relevant legislation and guidance) of the proposal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	As above. We will ensure via the Lease that there is a duty placed upon the Lessee to ensure they obtain all necessary Consents, e.g. planning permissions (as appropriate).
Is there any doubt to the proposal's propriety? (i.e. compliance with the standards expected of public bodies or officials)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The project will be scrutinised as Land Stewardship and Commercial Business Board, Executive Team and Land Estates Committee. We also expect it will go to NRW Board.
Is the proposal politically sensitive and/or likely to attract negative media attention?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Although the VC programme review as part of the Case for Change attracted significant media attention, there is significant support from the public, Welsh Government, including political pressure, to see the VC buildings re-open. Welsh Government's CCEI Committee is expecting NRW to commence the marketing exercise with a planned launch date in November 2025.
Could this proposal result in unwelcome consequences either internally or elsewhere, including in the public sector?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The only unwelcome consequence would be if we are unable to find a suitable partner interested in helping to operate the VC. However, based on the expressions of interest received to date, we expect to see several bidders.
Could this proposal set a precedent for the sector and wider public sector?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We have leased land on the NRW-managed estate for recreational purposes multiple times. Other examples where we have done this include Garwnant and Bike Park Wales. There is significant support from the public, Welsh Government, including political pressure, to see the VC buildings re-open.
Does your proposal involve policy or practice change that has wide financial implications?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We have leased land on the NRW-managed estate for recreational purposes multiple times. Other examples where we have done this include Garwnant and Bike Park Wales.

### Operational impact

Once of our key guiding principles underpinning the marketing is increasing overall value such as the reduction of estate liabilities, and increased engagement with the estate. The type of impacts will be dependent upon bidder responses. However, the operational impacts are considered to be within normal tolerances and would be no different to what we already allow on other projects, e.g. Garwnant and Bike Park Wales. It is important to note that we would be seeking to ensure that proposals compliment the Forest Resource Plan (FRP).

**Legal consultation**  
 NRW Legal Team are an integral advisor and key internal stakeholder on the project. They will be involved throughout the governance process from the Land & Property Consultation (LPC), throughout the marketing exercise, through to the Lease and associated documentation.

**Risks / Mitigation**

**1. Best value**

- Risk: Failure to achieve best value from the marketing exercise. There is a risk that NRW may not secure either monetary or social best value for its assets.
- Main Mitigations: Structured collaboration with extensive multi-discipline project team to maximise benefits and value. Clear and structured marketing exercise process with competitive dialogue for enhanced development and product testing.

**2. Bidder suitability**

- Risk: Potential bidders may not share values and look to benefit NRW's future delivery of the estate.
- Mitigation: Suitable RFP gateway (PQQ) questions to ensure that we are able to quickly discount unsuitable potential partners and robust sophisticated stages for early intervention.

**3. Reputational Concerns**

- Risk: Rumours from Members of the Public throughout the confidential process leading to disquiet from community members who are close to the centres.
- Mitigation: To include a respected community member as part of the panel in a consultation capacity.

**Benefits**

- Prosperous Wales – income into the Welsh economy via lease, employment and local employment.
- Healthy Wales – subject to the outcome of marketing - potential to facilitate improved access and recreation opportunities through the provision of improved facilities.
- Cohesive community – the marketing will include outcomes which will help benefit the local community.
- Vibrant culture and language – the marketing will include outcomes which will help benefit the local community and therefore language.

**Alternative options**  
 The other alternatives would be to a) mothball the buildings b) seek to dispose via sale, or c) re-open and manage in-house. None of the above would be deemed acceptable given the significant support from the public, including political pressure, to see the VC buildings re-open – following our recent Case for Change.

**Recommendation from officer completing the NCR assessment**

Do you perceive this proposal to be novel contentious or repercussive?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Reasoning for conclusion:</b>	We have leased land on the NRW-managed estate for recreational purposes multiple times. There is significant support from the public, including political pressure, to see the VC buildings re-open.	

Signature	Name	[Redacted]
	Job Title	Commercial Lead Specialist Advisor
	Date	04/07/25

Please send this form to the Financial Governance Co-ordinator for consideration and await confirmation of next steps before proceeding.

**Review from the relevant Executive Director**

Do you perceive this proposal to be novel contentious or repercussive?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Explanation (if not consistent with officer recommendation above)		
Signature	Name	[Redacted]
	Job Title	Executive Director of Communications, Customer & Commercial
	Date	11/07/2025

**Approval of the Chief Executive for submission to the NRW Board and WG**

Do you perceive this proposal to be novel contentious or repercussive?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Explanation (if different from Exec Director view)		
Signature	Name	[Redacted]
	Job Title	Interim CEO
	Date	31/07/2025

**From:** [personal information redacted]  
**Sent:** 11 September 2025 16:16  
**To:** [personal information redacted]  
**Subject:** NCR Assessment - NRW Visitor Centres Commercial Letting

Good afternoon all,

Please see attached the NCR assessment for Bwlch Nant yr Arian Visitor Centre.

If you have any questions, or need anything else, let me know.

Thanks,  
 [personal information redacted]

5	<p>Any Welsh Government analysis or commentary on NRW's financial modelling for these decisions.</p> <p><b>Welsh Government response:</b>  <b>The Welsh Government has not undertaken analysis on NRW's financial modelling; this was an operational matter for NRW, and the Welsh Government therefore holds no documents relating to this.</b></p>
6	<p>Any information held on the expected financial impact on local communities, tourism, or visitor numbers.</p>

	<p><b>Welsh Government response:</b>  <b>The Welsh Government holds no documents relating to this. Thought the process, NRW and Welsh Government consistently made clear that the centres and their sites will remain open for walking, biking, play areas, car parking and toilet provision.</b></p>
7	<p><b><i>Contract Oversight</i></b>  <i>Any Welsh Government involvement in, or oversight of, NRW's procurement process for the private parking contractor.</i></p> <p><b>Welsh Government response:</b>  <b>The Welsh Government holds no documents relating to this. Procurement is an operational matter for NRW.</b></p>
8	<p><i>Any Welsh Government records relating to the value, duration, or structure of the parking contract.</i></p> <p><b>Welsh Government response:</b>  <b>The Welsh Government holds no documents relating to this, other than the Press Notice in the response to Q1. Procurement is an operational matter for NRW.</b></p>
9	<p><i>Any concerns raised within Welsh Government about the use of private enforcement companies on public land.</i></p> <p><b>Welsh Government response:</b>  <b>The Welsh Government raised concerns at the Sponsorship Committee Meeting on 05 February 2025. See response to Q1 above.</b></p>
10	<p><b><i>Long Term Plans and Strategic Direction</i></b>  <i>Any Welsh Government documents, discussions, or correspondence relating to the long term future of the Coed y Brenin and Bwlch Nant y Arian visitor centre buildings.</i></p> <p><b>Welsh Government response:</b>  <b>The Welsh Government has not issued documents nor correspondence to NRW on this matter and therefore holds no documents relating to this. Debates involving the visitor centres took place within Senedd Plenary sessions and the transcripts are available on the links within the response to Q2 above.</b></p>
11	<p><i>Any strategic guidance issued to NRW regarding the management, disposal, redevelopment, or repurposing of these sites.</i></p> <p><b>Welsh Government response:</b>  <b>The Welsh Government has not issued strategic guidance to NRW on this matter and therefore holds no documents relating to this.</b></p>