

ITEM NO. 4 - APPENDIX

# **Snowdonia National Park Centre Plas Tan y Bwlch**

## **Business Plan**

**2016 – 2019**



V6



**Snowdonia National Park Centre  
Plas Tan y Bwlch**

**This business plan sets out the operational  
running and development of the Centre  
from 2016 onwards.**

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## Summary

This Business Plan lays out the framework for the operation of Plas Tan y Bwlch for the next 3 year period. The Plan will be presented to the Snowdonia National Park Authority for approval and implementation.

Budgets for the Centre are given in the annual budget book and targets are included as a part of the Authorities Corporate Work Plan. Further details covering the work of the Education Team and the delivery of courses is given in the Authorities Communication Strategy and Education Strategy.

In implementing the Business Plan the Centre will:

- offer superior facilities for courses, conferences and activities – maintaining the 3 star standard.
- offer excellent facilities to schools, colleges and universities.
- reduce the reliance on external grant funding and subsidy from the Snowdonia National Park Authority
- act in a commercial manner to reduce / remove the net running cost of the Centre
- increase usage of the Centre by all segments to maximise the use of the facilities and occupancy.
- be an exemplar of good practice in sustainability.
- reduce the Carbon Footprint of the Centre.
- develop special facilities to enable us to maintain or increase the number of school and socially deprived groups using the centre.
- maintain and develop the number and range of courses offered through the medium of Welsh.
- constantly review the marketing of the Centre and the development of electronic marketing and sales opportunity.
- develop the standard of accommodation and catering in line with customer expectations and demands.
- maintain and develop links with local community organisations.

## 1. Introduction

Plas Tan y Bwlch was originally built at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a home for the Evans and Griffiths families, who were subsequently succeeded by the Oakeley family, important quarry and land owners in the area.

Plas Tan y Bwlch stands above the river Dwyryd in the Vale of Ffestiniog in Gwynedd. It is ideally located in the heart of the Snowdonia National Park, with no part of Snowdonia being more than one hour's drive away. The Centre has strong links and a commitment to the local community.

Since its establishment as a Study Centre in 1975, the Centre has enjoyed a national reputation in the field of environmental studies, and is unique in Wales for the range of courses and facilities it provides. The Centre won the Wales Tourist Board award for the best Specialist Activity Centre in 2003; was awarded Eco-Centre status in 2006 and the Customer Service Excellence Hallmark in 2009. The Snowdonia National Park is one of the best known destinations for visitors in the UK.

The Centre is monitored by the Plas Tan y Bwlch Management Board which reports back to the Snowdonia National Park Authority. The group is made up of 3 members with the ability to co-opt additional members if and when required.

The management of the Plas and all its facilities is the responsibility of the Head of Business and is a section within the Corporate Directorate.

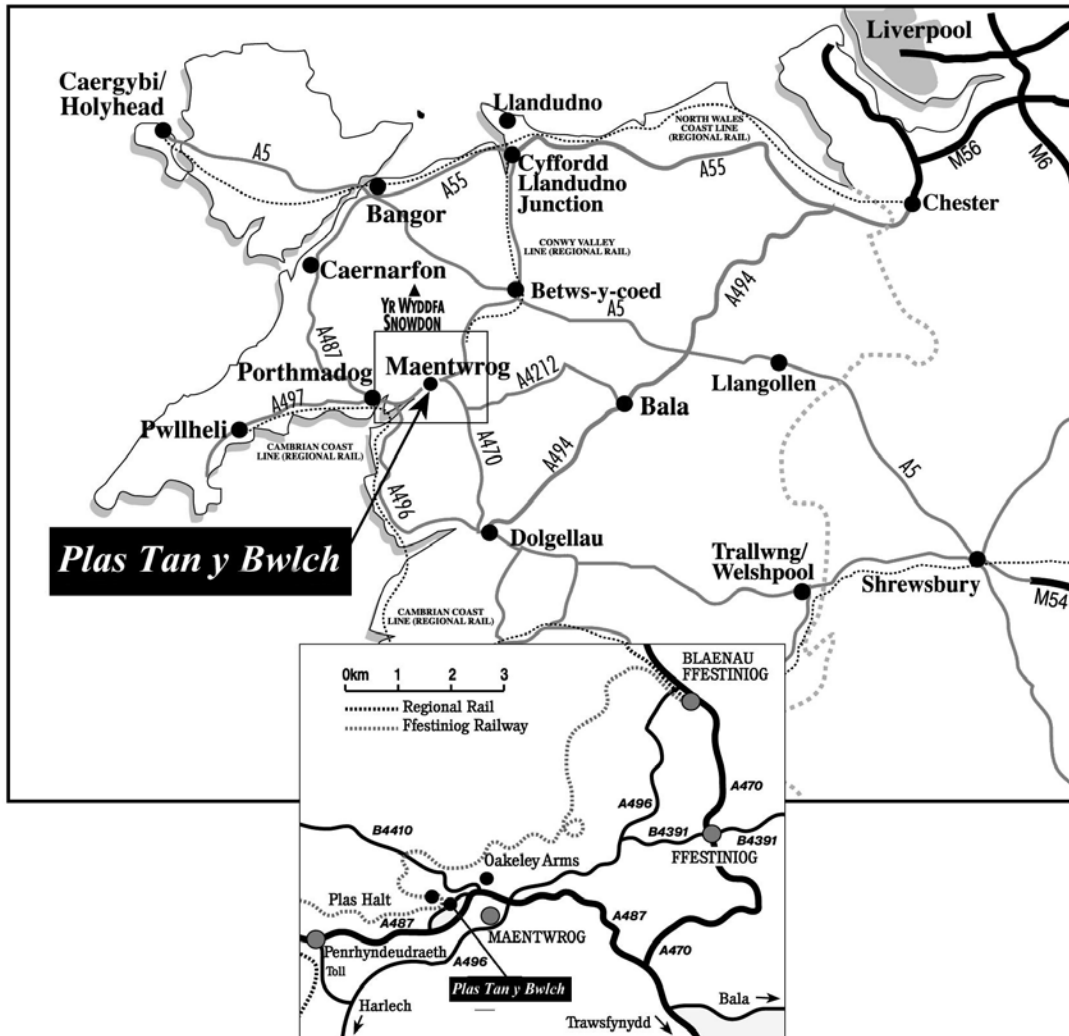
The Centre has developed a range of excellent facilities for professional, educational and public courses, including a lecture theatre, lecture and seminar rooms, reference and resources library, fieldwork rooms, bar, lounges and high quality AV and IT equipment. Course tutors include in-house staff as well as local, regional, national and international specialists.

Electricity is produced by our own 30kWh micro hydro system, water is drawn from the mill pond located below Llyn Mair. The majority of electricity generation takes place in the period November to March, with limited production in the remaining months.

The Centre is located within 100 acres of lakes, gardens and woodlands. The gardens were first laid out in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with many additions and improvements in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many rare and exotic plants flourish in the temperate climate.

Accommodation can be provided for 74 people in single, double and twin bedrooms.

## 2. Location



The Centre is located in the heart of the Snowdonia National Park making it the ideal venue for running courses and activities that use the Park as a resource. Improvements to the road network carried out in recent years and those planned for the future make the centre easily accessible from all parts of Wales, the UK and with Manchester and Liverpool Airports about two hours drive away, also from Europe and the rest of the World.

Public Transport links are generally good, with two National Rail stations less than 4 miles away. The Traws Cambria and National Express coach services both call at the end of the Centres drive.

### **3. Vision**

#### **National Dimension**

The 1995 Environment Act sets out the statutory purposes of the National Park Authority as:

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.
- Promote opportunities for the enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of the area by the public.

In carrying out the above the Authority should also:

- Foster the economic and social well-being of the communities within the National Park.

#### **The Authority**

The service priorities for the 2015-2016 financial year for the Authority are:

- ensure that the objectives in the Park Management Plan are delivered successfully by ourselves, our partners and our stakeholders in order to improve the state of the Park;
- ensure that the statutory planning function is adequately resourced and effectively managed in order to meet national policy, customer expectations and support sustainable communities;
- retaining property assets if they add value to the Authority and our core purposes that would otherwise not be provided;
- maintaining upland access paths; and
- maintaining access opportunities for all.

How the Authority goes about its business is equally important in these economic times and in this context the Authority will adopt the following approach:

- an enabling role with less emphasis placed on ownership and control;
- avoid embarking on projects that have long term maintenance obligations;
- encourage and enable local communities to take on responsibility and control for delivering services in their area;
- a strategic approach to sustainable tourism, environmental education and wardening; and
- sourcing new income streams to support Park purposes and the Authority.

We envisage that we will be able to ensure the Authority achieves these Priority Work areas by engaging with colleagues from all sections of the Authority in the provision of our services and maintaining the upgrading our facilities and by developing the facilities to maximise their income generation potential.



## **Plas Tan y Bwlch**

### Plas Tan y Bwlch Management Board's Vision

By 2020 Plas Tan y Bwlch will be sufficiently resilient to face its present and future challenges whilst at the same time conserving its unique heritage and developing international examples of opportunities to understand and enjoy the landscape. It will also provide opportunities for the Snowdonia National Park Authority to promote human physical and mental health through the landscape.

This will be achieved by operating within the following principals:

- Be the premier study centre in Wales for Public and Professional training courses specialising in environmental issues and through the medium of Welsh and English
- As the only residential study centre owned by a National Park Authority in the UK Plas Tan y Bwlch should act as an exemplar in all it does.
- To be commercially aware in all that it does.
- To manage and maintain and develop the gardens as visitor attraction, ensuring they offer a valuable visit.
- To develop first-class catering facilities for visitors in line with customer demand
- To offer high quality facilities, service and catering for all residential users of the Centre
- To be the premier location in Wales for the school / college courses we offer
- To continue to invest in new technology to enable the future presentation of courses and events electronically.
- To be a centre of excellence and exemplar of good environmental practices, maintaining Eco-Centre status
- To manage the hydro electricity scheme to ensure that it continues to work to its maximum potential, generating income and reducing the centre carbon footprint
- To promote awareness of climate change and appropriate actions to be taken
- To be a centre to develop awareness of sustainable, environmentally friendly activities.

## **4. Where are we now?**

### **Structure**

Plas Tan y Bwlch is a part of the Corporate Services directorate of the Authority. The Head of Business is responsible for all aspects of the management of the Centre, including:

- Facilities
- Maintenance
- Catering and cleaning
- Business Administration
- Finance monitoring, management and reporting
- Activities and day meetings
- Educational Course Programming and Content
- Educational Grant Aid
- Hydro Scheme
- Interpretation
- Marketing of activities and facilities
- Special events and Open Days
- General administration and staff support

Particularly on the subject of marketing, the promotion of the Centre's product must be tied into the communication and marketing strategy of the Authority. This area of work is outlined in more detail in the Marketing Strategy for the Centre.

Over recent years the National Park Authority has invested heavily in the facilities and building at Plas Tan y Bwlch

The Head of Business is charged with providing facilities to enable the service to arrange, run or host courses, events and day meetings for a variety of organisations as well as managing the facilities being developed to attract day visitors to the gardens and grounds.

For Plas Tan y Bwlch to continue to develop and improve and indeed to be able to carry out much of the activity it already does, joint working between the centre and other sections of the Authority will have to be maintained and developed.

### **Staffing**

The role of the Business Section is to manage and service the facilities offered by the Centre. The section is managed by the Head of Business, who reports to the Director of Corporate Services. The Head of Business has a close working relationship with the Head of Communication and Education to facilitate the seamless smooth running of the centre and the courses and activities provided. The section is split into three main areas of work:

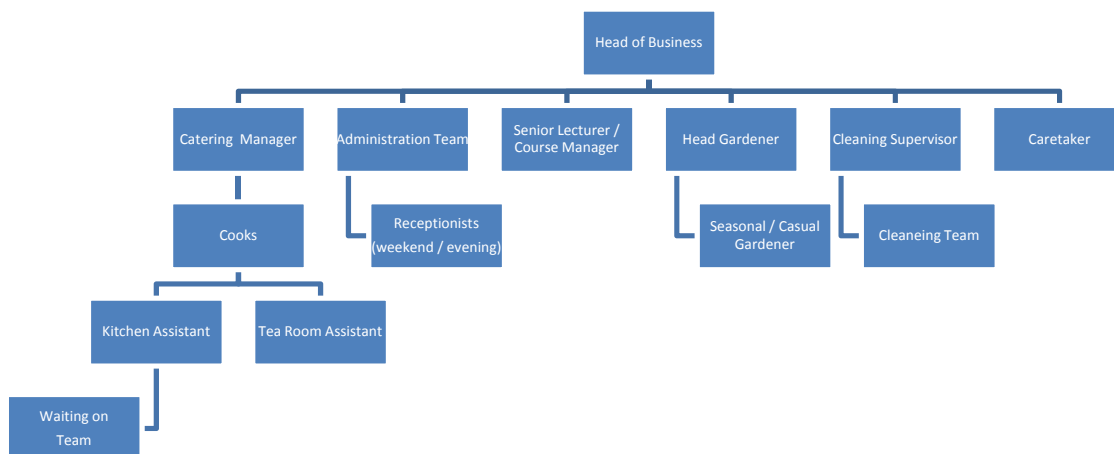
**Administration** – the role of Senior Lecturer sits within this area of work. The administration team carry out the reception, clerical and financial duties, including handling of bookings, receiving payments the planning and arrangement of the annual programmes of courses and dealing with marketing of the Centre and activities.

**Domestic Services** - these staff provided the catering and cleaning functions essential to the Centre and are managed on a day-to-day basis by the Catering Manager and the Cleaning Supervisor.

**Facilities and Gardens** – responsible for general maintenance and the upkeep of the house and gardens and grounds.

As the Centre continues to develop the business, as outlined in this plan, further changes will have to be made to the staff structure and the number of staff employed. Additional staff will usually be employed on a casual basis to cater to business need, once the level of business sustained and the area of work is profitable it may then be necessary to make posts permanent.

### Staff Structure



### Corporate Standards

It is important that the Centre continues to undertake its work in a manner which is in keeping with the rules and regulations of the Snowdonia National Park Authority. The Centre will adhere stringently to corporate matters relating to Personnel, Finance, Audit, Information Technology, Administration and Legal Services.

### Review

The Authority commissioned Mr Jim O'Rourke to undertake a full review of the Activities, Income and Expenditures of the Centre in 2013. The purpose of this report was to determine if

the Centre could reduce its net running costs, with an aim of becoming self financing. The Authority adopted the recommendations in this report in its meeting in March 2014, with the Centre following the business model proposed.

## **Assumptions**

When developing this Business Plan several assumptions have been made:

- That the Authority will continue to support the Centre while reducing net running costs and that the level of cuts outlined in the budget strategy will not increase significantly.
- That there will be no need for major capital investment in Plas Tan y Bwlch, capital investment may be available for some small projects.
- That there will be no major outside influences to affect the demand for the services offered.
- The development of the gardens will continue and that patronage of the Tea Room will increase.
- The decline in attendance on Professional Training courses will continue and that the need to organise such courses will therefore decrease.
- That the National Curriculum will continue to give emphasis to residential experiences for primary schools, and that there are no major changes to the 'A' level syllabus.
- That there will continue to be a demand from overseas operators and that external forces do not make our courses too expensive.

## **The Facilities**

The Centre has a total of 35 bedrooms, 28 with en-suite facilities and 7 standard rooms. The total number of bed spaces is 50 in the en-suite rooms and 25 in the standard bedrooms giving a maximum capacity of 75. Three en-suite bedrooms are on the ground floor with one having special facilities for wheelchair access. In practice the majority of participants on courses and conferences require single occupancy bedrooms.

There are 5 meeting / seminar rooms; the Oakeley Room and Library in the main house are wood panelled and are furnished with tables and chairs for approximately 50 people in each room, wireless internet access is available in both rooms along with all the bedrooms in the main house. In the Stablau there is the main Lecture Theatre with seating for 100, a Computer Training Room with seating for 15 and 8 networked computers and a Resource Library. There is a Field Workroom located behind the stables which is often also used as a art studio. Each room is fitted with computer projection, screens and other equipment required for presentations and meetings. The Library and Lecture Theatre are fitted with simultaneous translation facilities. The two libraries in the Centre are reasonably well stocked, however they have lacked investment in recent years and are in need of cataloguing and updating, this is however unlikely to have a significant impact on the business and is of low priority.

Catering facilities are provided by our own in-house team. The dining room has seating for 72, when required for special events and conference dinners meals can be provided in the Oakeley Room or Library. There is a modern bar and a small shop.

The Centre has 2 17 seat mini-buses, and an 8 seat people carrier. There is car parking close to the Centre for 25 cars with additional space available in the gardens car park and small overflow car park on the Oakeley Arms drive.

During recent years the centre has worked on a programme of upgrading its facilities. Wherever and whenever possible this has used sustainable and / or low energy fittings. There is a programme of redecoration for the bedrooms and public areas to maintain the standard of the facilities.

## **Our Current Main areas of Activity**

### **a) Public Courses**

Public courses are organised in a wide range of topics covering a variety of subjects based on the environment along with a raft of courses on specialist subjects. Topics include Mountain Walking, Painting, Photography, Culture, Bird Watching, History, Industrial Archaeology and Crafts. Participants usually book on these courses as individuals or couples although occasionally a small group will book spaces.

Public courses remain as one of our most significant sources of income and are very important to the ethos of Plas Tan y Bwlch Centre. They provide opportunities for life-long learning and are an excellent opportunity to provide knowledge of the Park and sustainability issues to the wider public.

The courses are organised by the centre and run by the Senior Lecturer or invited outside specialist tutors.

### **b) Professional Training Courses**

Professional Training courses are offered in a broad range of subject covering the environmental sector. They mainly cover the theory and practice associated with the management of habitats and features along with a series of courses associated with interpretation. The majority of participants are employed by local authorities or central government agencies.

The demand for these courses has declined in recent years, with number attending decreasing year on year. Funding for training courses was received from NRW (previously CCW) until March 2015. This grant funding enabled courses to be marketed at a subsidised rate, courses are now offered at full cost recovery.

### **c) School, College and University Courses**

Courses are organised for a wide range of schools, colleges and universities. These courses are generally tied to the syllabus of the class and are mainly environmentally based. A

successful programme of subsidised one night stay courses has been established for primary schools from within the National Park to supplement the long established courses for primary schools from Wales. Courses are also arranged for 'A' level studies and for modules for degree and post-graduate college and university groups.

There is a case for fostering courses for schools, colleges and universities since here lie our customers and the guardians of the future. It is important that the Plas Tan y Bwlch assists the Authority in fulfilling its statutory purposes.

The courses offered to schools are organised and run by the Education Section of the Authority, using the two Education Officers. As the courses are currently run it is unlikely that the courses would be viable as a commercial activity if the Education Section were to charge for staff time or if the Centre had to employ its own staff to run them.

Over recent years the charges levied for school courses has increased significantly to make them comparable with other providers in the field. There is also a desire to move schools away from one-night stays. Feedback from many of the small local schools is that they are unable to do this due to high cost of employing staff to cover in the school.

#### **d) Centre arranged courses - U.K. & Overseas market**

These courses are organised in a range of subjects similar to those in the Public Course programme, they are then tailored to the specific requirements of the group they are arranged for.

In this sector it is important to minimise the risks by working in partnership with a number of different companies. The strategy has been to reduce exposure to the volatile USA market by targeting business at a restricted number of weeks, in quieter periods. We have a successful course using a German travel operator who promotes the course with 5 or 6 operators in Germany, these courses have recently been reviewed to ensure they are run profitably.

#### **e) Independent residential groups**

This segment has several well established users, such as the Welsh Philatelic Society, Cymru ar Byd, and Cymdeithas Brodwaith. These groups organise their own activities. Many have been visiting Plas for 30 years. Once established they tend to be easy to organise. There is potential to increase this segment, although there is a lot of competition in this market.

The majority of marketing in recent years has been to this sector, this has proved successful and the number of groups using the Centre is increasing. Unfortunately some of these bookings are for one off events meaning that we have to continually promote ourselves to attract additional new groups.

#### **f) Residential Conferences**

Currently this is a very limited market, with the majority of residential conference organised for the 'environmental' sector and usually for only one night. This market requires the highest level of facilities and we are competing directly with local hotels.

### **g) Day bookings**

The Stablau and increased profile of Plas Tan y Bwlch has meant that we are well placed to develop this market despite the low population of our catchment area. The facilities need to be “positioned” in marketing terms as being accessible and affordable in a regional context. However accessible car parking remains a drawback.

### **h) Special Events**

The centre is able to host special events and functions such as civil weddings and receptions, birthday and anniversary parties and other non-educational events. These are undertaken at times when the centre would otherwise be empty.

Although this type of event tends to be of a one-off nature and requires additional preparation they are seen as highly profitable and this is an area that we are aiming to increase the level of business.

### **i) Gardens and Tea Room**

Following the extensive damage to the gardens during the winter of 2014 they are being developed as a visitor attraction. The centre has been fortunate in engaging the assistance of a nationally recognised garden consultant to work with the management and the Head Gardener on this project. The new road signage has significantly increase the number of users of the gardens and Tea Room.

In association with the development of the gardens the centre has opened a Tea Room in the under used conservatory. Early indications are that the gardens and Tea Room will comfortably achieve their income target in the first year.

Details of the specific targets are given in the Authority Corporate Work Programme.

## Funding

The full breakdown of the budgets for the Centre are given in the annual budget book for the Authority. In 2015/16 the income and expenditure is:

Income	Sales (Bar and Shop)	19,100
	Fees and Charges	603,000
	Electricity Generation	20,000
	Tea Room	15,000
	Gardens Entrance	10,000
	Education Visits	3,500
	Rents	8,000
		678,600
	Internal Charges to other services	52,450
	<b>Total income</b>	<b>731,050</b>
Expenditure	Employees	447,390
	Premises and Grounds	130,090
	Transport Costs	25,250
	Supplies and Service	257,280
	VAT	31,000
	Central Support Charges	214,000
	Capital Charges	172,520
	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1,277,530</b>
	Net Budget	<b>546,480</b>
	Net budget less Central Recharge and Support Costs	<b>159,960</b>



## **5. SWOT Analysis of Current Situation**

Following a session with the Plas Tan y Bwlch Management Board this is the result of the SWOT analysis undertaken, consultation has also been taken from colleagues and key stakeholders.

### **Key Strengths [Internal]**

- potential for strong co-working between Plas staff and expertise staff of the Authority
- facilities for disabled visitors both residentially and day
- location in an outstanding landscape and proximity of varied habitats, topography, heritage sites and issues for courses and the experience of the Centre in organising such events
- a building & gardens of historic value
- an excellent reputation for a quality and caring service to visitors
- bilingual facilities with an excellent reputation for courses taught in the medium of Welsh.
- the range of facilities available at the Centre at Visit Wales 3\* grading

### **Key Weaknesses**

- dependence on Public funding
- remote from centres of population in the UK
- the high maintenance cost of a grade II listed building
- lack of capacity for large groups at peak times of the year
- lack of facilities in the gardens for children
- lack of convenient car parking when there are residential groups and large numbers of day visitors at the centre
- lack of co-ordinated marketing under the branding of the SNPA

### **Key Opportunities**

- as the only Centre of its kind run by a National Park Authority to develop the visitor facilities to keep up with customer expectations
- to conform to and capitalise on WAG initiatives and prioritise laid out in policy documents
- to expand culinary experiences and give a more varied choice of menu using local produce
- to develop our facilities to further demonstrate good practice in all aspects of sustainability
- to further develop the number and type of courses offered in the medium of Welsh
- develop additional activities focussed on the gardens
- develop partnership working with external organisations such of the FSC, National Slate Museum and tourist attractions
- develop links with overseas operators to maximise the use of the Centre
- develop the professional training provision to shorter courses

### **Key Threats [External]**

- changes to the national economy that affect our customers
- maintaining and developing existing business activities while introducing new initiatives
- changes to information technology that we are unable to afford to upgrade to
- an incident which has a significant negative public relations impact
- continuous development of the gardens to remain as a desirable tourist attraction

## **6. WHERE WILL WE BE IN THREE YEARS TIME?**

### **Principal Objectives**

- To reduce the net running costs to the Authority of the Centre by increasing income and controlling expenditure, with an aim to become self financing.

The Centre will achieve the National Park Authority's purposes and objectives by working in an inclusive way and by following operating principals:

- To maintain and enhance our customer satisfaction levels.
- Develop courses and activities in Welsh and English to recognised standards in the environmental field, and that meet customer expectations and demand.
- Use in-house expertise from within the Authority to develop courses ensuring a high standard and quality is maintained.
- Maintain or improve on the quality of catering, using local quality suppliers whenever available and possible.
- Continue to develop the gardens and grounds to enhance the visitor experience and the education potential.
- To continue to develop the facilities, reducing the Carbon Footprint and as an exemplar of good practice.

### **We will achieve these objectives and principals by:**

- Financial – that the Centre sets a realistic budget, using forecasting and trend analysis and achieves it.
- Staff Time – that staff time is utilised in the most efficient way to achieve the goals of the Authority and the targets set.
- Centre Facilities – that best use is made of the Centre's facilities, maximising capacity while maintaining the ethos of the Centre and providing an atmosphere conducive with learning.
- Sustainability – to continue working towards being a centre of excellence and exemplar of good practice in all that we do.
- Activities – to offer a wide range of courses and activities to a wide range of audiences in both Welsh and English.

## Targets 2016/2017

Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Realistic	Timescale
To reduce the net running cost to the Authority	That the net running cost is reduced by a minimum of £25,000 per year	By maintaining existing business levels and continually developing new business opportunities and increasing fees and charges.	The target is considered achievable on current trends.	Annual reduction in net cost with annual review.
To increase use of the facilities at Plas	To increase income from Sunday Lunches by 10%	By increasing marketing and ensuring space is made available whenever possible	Little scope for increase in charge due to competition so reliant on marketing and word of mouth recommendation.	Marketed throughout the year.
	To increase income from the Tea Room by 15%	The increased marketing and additional exposure from events and the Festival of Gardens.	Ensure high level of customer service and quality of product is maintained.	Open Easter to October.
	To increase income from gardens admissions by 10% per year.	Continue to raise the profile of the gardens with joint marketing events.	High profile for gardens in North Wales in 2016 with major Festival of Gardens event.	Open throughout the year.
	Increase the bed occupancy levels to 65%	With the development of online Bed and Breakfast bookings and continually developing new residential markets.	Marketing in new areas once online booking is available.	Continually developing new areas. Online booking to be available for Summer 2016.

Utilising Staff Time – staff hours worked correlated to income generation.	The number of staff hours worked is in direct relationship with the income generated.	By managing staff time and rotas to make use of staff contracted hours.	Team leaders and managers will make use of forward planning to use annualised hours and casual staff.	Establish ratio during the year and continually monitor.
Sustainability	That the Hydro scheme is managed to ensure the income target is reached.	Current target of £20,000 per annum.	Dependent on rainfall, although target is set at a prudent level.	Throughout the year.
Activities	100% of front-line staff are bilingual.	All staff are able to communicate with customers in Welsh and English.	Considered essential to be able to offer high level of service to all customers.	Reviewed when making any staff appointments.
	That 100% of Public and Professional courses are assessed in line with the Welsh Language Act standard.	Assessments carried out for current programme of courses.	To be reviewed each year with effort made to find Welsh speaking tutors if demand for courses.	Ongoing throughout the year.
	That 80% of the courses organised run with at least the minimum number of participants.	Increased marketing for Public and Professional courses.	By developing courses that respond to customer expectations.	Monitored annually with ongoing reviews.

## Measuring Results

The Risk Profile for the Centre will be used to assess and monitor how it is progressing to achieve the Targets.

The Plas Tan y Bwlch Management Board will monitor financial information relating to the income and expenditure for the Centre and will highlight any shortfalls requiring action. The Customer Satisfaction levels will be monitored and any decrease in the level of results will be investigated.

## 7. How Will We Get There

We will meet the vision for the Centre by:

- Retaining high customer satisfaction levels, thus demonstrating our commitment to delivering high levels of customer service.  
*we will know we have achieved this when:*
  - We have implemented any areas for improvement from assessment reports and respond to feedback from customers
- Continue to develop, upgrade and refurbish the facilities for guests to maintain a high standard of decoration and furnishing enabling us to maintain or expand our occupancy levels.  
*we will know we have achieved this when:*
  - We maintain our customer satisfaction levels at above 95%
  - We increase the bed occupancy levels to 65% (current level 50% Wales average 56%)
- Continue to develop links with the Field Studies Council and other organisations in the provision of courses and activities.  
*we will know we have achieved this when:*
  - We maintain or increase the number of groups arranged for 2016 for future years
- Work with external organisations in the development of training courses and accreditation systems.  
*we will know we have achieved this when:*
  - We have implemented the Authorities Education Strategy
  - received accreditation of our training courses
  - we have increased attendees on training courses
- Maintain and develop the provision of Professional Training and Education courses, and explore sources of new grant support for such provision and continue to evolve new practices for the delivery of school courses  
*we will know we have achieved this when:*
  - we are successful in securing alternative sources of funding
  - school courses are run profitably
- Expand on the links with other sections within the Authority to use in-house expertise in presenting courses.  
*we will know we have achieved this when:*
  - the number of authority staff tutoring on our courses increases
- Adopt a flexible approach to business opportunities so that the Centre is able to react to new requests for courses and event, this will include rescheduling courses to make space available for group bookings.

*we will know we have achieved this when:*

- Income from group bookings increases by 10%.
- Encourage additional independent groups, conferences and special functions to use the Plas as a residential venue to occupy any available free space

*we will know we have achieved this when:*

- Income increases from independent groups by 10%
- To provide resources to continue to develop the gardens as a visitor attraction.

*we will know we have achieved this when:*

- Income Increases from day visitors to the gardens by 10%
- Develop the chalet to improve the facilities and then use a letting agent for bookings

*we will know we have achieved this when:*

- We have increased the number of night the chalet is let for on a self catering basis.
- Manage the Hydro Electricity generation scheme to maximise electricity production.

*we will know we have achieved this when:*

- We have decreased the amount of electricity taken from the National Grid
- We have increased the amount of heating by electricity thus reducing the amount of gas used

## **Pricing**

The Centre has adopted a pricing structure that has one price for all residential events and one for day meetings. Supplements and discounts are then applied to this base price depending on the type and length of the activity.

Discounts are offered to the Blas ar Plas programme of courses for primary schools from within Snowdonia, with a decreasing level of discounts being given for other primary school groups, secondary schools and colleges and universities, the level of discount offered will be reviewed annually when setting prices for all activities. Supplements are added to courses such as those for the American market where the services level and staff input is generally expected to be higher.

The Centre has the authority to offer additional discounts for certain activities. These would generally be for guaranteed repeat business, for large group bookings or those at times of years when the Centre is quieter.

When determining the price for a particular activity, as well as giving primary consideration to the budget requirements of the Authority, we also need to consider market forces. To enable us to do this we periodically review charges being made by similar establishments to ensure that the Centre does not either over or under charge. We will endeavour to charge the highest level of fees we can for a particular event or activity.

The pricing for the Centre is determined by the Plas Tan y Bwlch Management Board. When deciding on prices the board will carry out 'what-if' analysis to ensure that the maximum achievable charges are levied, whilst ensuring the Centre does not become uncompetitive by increasing prices by too much.

The following table presents an example of different levels of increase for the main areas of activity:

Area of Activity	2015/16 income	% increase			
		2.5	5.0	7.5	10.0
Public Courses	153,747	3,844	7,687	11,531	15,375
Professional Training	55,830	1,396	2,792	4,187	5,583
Independent Groups	194,870	4,872	9,744	14,615	19,487
School and College	114,500	2,863	5,725	8,588	11,450
Bed and Breakfast	12,700	318	635	953	1,270
Day Meetings	34,630	866	1,732	2,597	3,463
School Day Visits	2,365	59	118	177	237
Gardens and Tea Room	27,356	684	1,368	2,052	2,736
		14,900	29,800	44,700	59,600

When making the decision on charges increases it may be prudent to increase some by a larger or smaller percentage.

Special events such as private parties or weddings are costed on an individual basis depending on the requirements of the event and taking into account any additional staff time required to set up for the event.

The review of activities carried out in 2013 recommended increases in prices for the 2014/2015 to the 2016/2017 financial years. These recommendations were confirmed by the Plas Tan y Bwlch Management Board.

A summary of the recommendations are given below:

	Price 2015/16	Agreed % increase 2016/2017	Price 2016/17	Proposed % increase 2017/2018	Proposed price 2017/2018	
Blas ar Plas - Primary	£40.00	10%	£44.00			
Blas ar Plas – Secondary	£59.00	10%	£65.00			
Primary Schools	£45.00	10%	£49.00			
Secondary Schools	£76.00	5%	£80.00			1
Group Bookings	£81.60	5%	£85.20			
Joint Courses	£86.70	5%	£90.50			
Plas Courses	£102.00	5%	£106.50			
Day Meetings (inc VAT)	£25.00	5%	£26.25			2
Bed and Breakfast (inc VAT)	£42.95	5%	£45.00			

#### Notes

1 – the increase in prices for Secondary Schools was limited to 5% otherwise they would have become more expensive than a normal course.

2 – price for a full day meeting with buffet lunch, additional prices are available depending on the length of meeting and meal option taken.

#### Sustainability – looking forward

The Centre should be an exemplar of good practice in all that it does, this particularly relates to carbon reduction.

Whenever development or upgrading is carried out the Centre will use the most sustainable materials available. The programme to replace fittings with low energy type will continue.

#### Marketing and Promotion

At the heart of the process of developing an attractive and popular programme of courses, facilities and the garden attraction lies the need to market the product effectively. The Snowdonia National Park is developing a new Communications Strategy aimed at strengthening the way the Park communicates internally between departments, the way it presents its layers of information to the public, and also the way the Park is branded and identified. The branding aspect is heavily influenced by the 'Breathing Spaces' initiative which covers all national parks in the UK. Further detail is given in the Plas Tan y Bwlch Marketing Strategy.



The Centre has joined the marketing and promotion consortium Attractions of Snowdonia. This organisation carried out a wide variety of activities to promote its membership throughout North and Mid Wales and further afield. Being a part of this widely recognised consortium has proved beneficial, not only from the marketing activities, but also by attending meeting to organise joint ventures with other members.

Extensive use is made of social media channels, this is led by the Authorities Media and Events Officer. This form of marketing is particularly useful for the promotion of the gardens and Tea Room.

### **Corporate**

The Centre will continue to develop close working links with other departments within the Authority especially those which have a direct input into the development of the courses, facilities, grounds and woodlands, namely Ecology, Forestry, Property and Planning.

Whenever possible and practical the Centre will endeavour to use staff from within the Authority to lead / assist with the organisation of its courses. This will help to ensure that the courses offered reflect the Authorities own policies and practices.

### **Capital funding for Development Projects**

This will be sourced as a part of the annual National Park bid to the Welsh Assembly together with any other available grant aid. Any major restoration and / or development projects stand apart as requiring significant partnership funding.

Developments of the building of Plas Tan y Bwlch are linked to the Authority Asset Management Plan. Development of the facilities within the Centre are detailed in the Action Plan associated with this document.

The Authority have committee to spending the income from the Hydro Electricity scheme to improve facilities at in the Centre. These will be allocated on an annual basis to meet the priority areas.

### **Supplementary Capital costs**

Minibus replacement, IT equipment and extra or replacement equipment are bid for on an annual basis to the National Park Authority, if successful they then form part of Authority budgets.

### **Grant Support**

Grants will continue to be applied for from NRW to assist in the development of the Professional Training Courses. Grant funding will also be sought to support the provision of other aspects of the Centres work, especially the provision of educational courses for local schools.

