

**Snowdonia Society AGM 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2011 - Director's Report**  
**CCB Cymdeithas Eryri 22ain Hydref 2011 – Adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Gweithredol**

*Croeso cynnes i Gyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol Cymdeithas Eryri, sydd eto yn cael ei cynnal mewn ardal hyfryd ein Parc Cenedlaethol, ardal dach chi heb ei fforio eto, digon posib. Diolch o galon i Julian am y daith gerdded o gwmpas y gwarchodfa 'bore 'ma - taith ddiddorol ac addysgol – mae ei waith wedi neud lles mawr i'r amgylchedd a'r bywyd gwylt.*

*Swm i'n licio rhoi fy adroddiad heddiw yn Gymraeg – mae'n iaith hardd, a dwi'n coelio'n arw yn pwysigrwydd yr iaith yn Eryri a'r ardal lleol. Yn anffodus, 'sa hynny'n anodd achos dydy fy Nghymraeg ddim digon da – a dwi'n ymddiheuro am hynny. Felly, fyddai'n rhoi fy adroddiad yn Saesneg, gan roi 'ngair i chi byddai'n gweithio'n galed i wella fy Nghymraeg at flwyddyn nesaf.*

I'm proud to be able to speak to you today as Acting Director at such an exciting and promising time for the Snowdonia Society. In what is now approaching two years working for the charity I have seen big changes – not only amongst the staff and the location of the Society's office but also in the charity's ways of working. There is an incredible amount of passion and dedication amongst our staff and Trustees and throughout the last twelve months we have taken new approaches to engaging with local people in particular and reinforcing how important this National Park is to everyone who lives, works and visits and how much we can all do to protect it for many years to come.

Through our project work, which Bea will speak about shortly, we have involved huge numbers of young people from local colleges in both practical enhancement work and in 'sustainable living' workshops, encouraging traditional skills and recycling in place of ever increasing consumption. I see this as a big step forward – it's only by reaching out to these younger audiences that people will grow and develop with an awareness for the importance of the nature, landscapes and heritage all around them. For this reason, I also believe passionately in the importance of access for all in our National Park, as those who do not have access to and the opportunity to seek enjoyment in our wild places are never likely to see the benefit of preserving these places. I was delighted when more than 60 people attended our 'all ability walk' in July this year, people from all walks of life and with very different backgrounds coming together to enjoy the spectacular landscape in their local area, some of whom had not had the opportunity to participate in such an activity previously. The variety and number of events that we have held throughout the last twelve months have given both visitors and local people the opportunity to enjoy and learn about aspects of the National Park, including an exciting trip down Wrysgan mine near Tanygrisiau, a fascinating presentation on Snowdonia's ancient trees in Dolgellau and our BioBlitz event, when we did a survey at Ty Hyll to find as many species as we could within 24 hours. We'll do our best to put together equally attractive programmes of events for the future.

Of course, access to and enjoyment of the National Park can come at a cost, and all those who enjoy Snowdonia still need to consider the impact of human activity on the places we cherish. We continue to raise awareness of this issue through high profile litter picks, including on Snowdon, and numerous footpath maintenance workdays to control erosion. The Snowdonia Society is lucky to have two committed, skilled and enthusiastic members of staff to deliver these practical workdays, Bea Kelsall and Jenny Whitmore. Jenny has recently taken maternity leave and we wish her all the best for an exciting few months ahead. Jenny's post will be covered by Mike Klymko, who is also here today and brings with him an impressive record of engaging people with their local

environment, we are sure that he will be a real asset to our team. What we are able to do to enhance and preserve the special qualities of Snowdonia depends crucially on the enthusiastic volunteers who attend our workdays. A committed group of gardeners also meets at Ty Hyll once a week and has done wonders in making sure that the grounds of the house are a real haven for wildlife. If you have not yet experienced this way of getting out and enjoying the National Park through volunteering doing something worthwhile and fulfilling, I would encourage you to get involved!

Of course, although the rhododendron clearance, litter picks and footpath work are a very visible manifestation of the Society's commitment to the National Park, often the work which goes on behind the scenes is equally important but easily goes unnoticed. The Snowdonia Society continues to be an active campaigning organisation, and in the last twelve months has had a considerable impact. The National Park's Local Development Plan was adopted in summer 2011, with significant input throughout the drafting and examination process from the Snowdonia Society. The issue of overhead transmission lines was raised earlier in the year following proposals for a new nuclear power station on Anglesey, and the Snowdonia Society achieved considerable media coverage highlighting the importance of ensuring that the National Park is protected from any future transmission line development and also contributing to a National Grid consultation on undergrounding of transmission lines. Other high profile campaigns include the A470 improvements south of Dolgellau, which we have endeavoured to ensure have as little impact as possible on the ancient native oak woodland, and proposals for a wind farm development in a wild area of the Conwy valley outside of the Tan 8 strategic search area and within clear view of the National Park. Our members remain our eyes and ears in the National Park and we aim to be an effective voice for them, both in speaking out against damaging development and supporting appropriate development that will benefit the National Park and its communities.

A big preoccupation at the moment is the Society's exciting and ambitious plans for Ty Hyll. Following a lot of hard work by the previous Director Gareth Clubb and a committed group of Trustees, the Society has been successful in securing funding to the value of £140,000 to develop Ty Hyll as a centre of conservation for the Welsh honey bee, in partnership with the National Beekeeping Centre in the Conwy valley. The importance of honey bees and other pollinators will be explained to visitors through information boards and materials. Information will also be provided about the house itself, the Snowdonia Society and the National Park. Financial viability will be secured for the future by the provision of refreshments on the lower floor of the house, which will be run as a franchise. Importantly, access to the house will be improved to ensure that visitors with limited mobility can access all the facilities. The Trustees believe that these developments will not only attract new visitors and ensure that those visitors have a valuable educational experience at the house, they will also ensure that Ty Hyll and its grounds remain an asset that the charity can be proud of for many years to come.

Meanwhile, we're also benefiting from the new office base at Caban in Brynrefail, where the charity has fast become rooted in the local community. We are pleased to welcome any members who call in if they are passing, as many have done already. The new modern office is not only a pleasant environment in which to work, it has also contributed to office procedures – in particular membership administration – becoming much more streamlined, which in turn has helped the Society to cut costs dramatically. Our new office administrator, Frances Smith, deals with

membership enquiries, events and communications and has brought fresh new ideas to further improve efficiency and raise awareness of our work. The Society continues to develop its communication and publicity methods. Use of social media including Twitter and Facebook represents a vital low-cost method of communicating with new audiences and has proven very effective. Staff are committed to increasing our public profile in the National Park and beyond, through a combination of media appearances, regular press releases and ensuring that our membership forms are widely available throughout the National Park and surrounding communities. If you are able to help us with this and take some membership leaflets and magazines with you today to take back to your local information or community centre, please let us know.

Over the last 18 months we have cut our operating costs dramatically, not only through staffing changes but importantly through actions such as decreasing printing and postage costs, meaning much less of your money is spent on administration and governance and much more can go towards achieving the Society's objectives of protecting, enhancing and celebrating Snowdonia. Nevertheless, despite having done all we can to decrease our expenditure, the charity is still forecast to have a deficit in 2011-12 and will need to draw on its reserves. This is where fundraising comes in – if we are to continue operating with the same level of activity, we need more money. With such a small staff team it is not possible to devote large amounts of time to raising funds. In March this year Trustees agreed a recruitment strategy, which will be implemented by staff and volunteers step-by-step over coming months. Other funding avenues are being pursued, including collaborating with local sports events organisers to secure funds from proceeds of events and tapping in to the recently introduced carrier bag levy. We have also already applied for grants to ensure that our conservation Snowdonia volunteering work continues beyond April 2012. However, in order to fund our core costs, we still need your help – if every member recruited just one new member, the Society would no longer be operating at a deficit. I've already mentioned the importance of publicity and how you can help to take literature to your local communities, but why not encourage your friends to join, too? Why not organise a coffee morning or car boot sale with the proceeds to go towards the work we do in Snowdonia? We are hugely grateful to our members who have helped in these and similar ways – these kind of contributions are not only vital in funding both our practical and campaigning work, they also demonstrate the importance of the work we do and the esteem this is held in by many people. If you are able to commit even a small amount of time to volunteering with us in this way, please don't hesitate to let me or Frances know.

As David has already mentioned, this is an important time not just for the Snowdonia Society and Snowdonia National Park, but for National Parks and our natural environment on a wider scale. The world around us is changing fast, and it's up to us to ensure that we keep pace with that change and continue to strive to achieve our Vision for Snowdonia, as adopted in 2009, which foresees a National Park in which the unique and irreplaceable qualities, on which the economy depends, are proudly protected by thriving and cohesive communities. I hope that I've shown throughout my report how important you, our members, are, to achieving our goals. It is for you that we exist and through you that the Society will continue to thrive.

*Sarah Medcalf*

*Cyfarwyddwr Gweithredol ~Acting Director*