

# The Routledge Companion to Intangible Cultural Heritage

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## Chapter 37

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### The intangible made tangible in Wales

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# THE INTANGIBLE MADE TANGIBLE

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## Introduction

This chapter describes the establishment of #Ecoamgueddfa Llŷn,<sup>1</sup> the first ecomuseum in Wales and to our knowledge one of the first in the world to be fully digital – in other words, an ecomuseum that employs digital platforms to both manage and promote itself and make its resources increasingly available to a global audience. The chapter describes how the people currently inhabiting a small corner of Wales have started realising their ambitions of preserving, promoting and celebrating their language, culture and heritage and by doing so faced up to the economic and social realities and challenges of modern-day life ‘on the edge’. We explore how the ecomuseum concept has been adapted to this location, how it has evolved and is continuing to do so by introducing the people involved and witnessing the partnership that has developed. These people share a vision and a dream of using the natural resource base, the natural capital and human capital to secure a better economic future whilst celebrating the intangible cultural heritage they hold dear. The vision described is not exclusive, it can easily be translated and adapted to other locations and situations. Wherever people value their landscape, their language, their culture and heritage, there is potential for a location-specific ecomuseum to emerge and thrive. Uniquely, #Ecoamgueddfa Llŷn is based in the only place on Earth where Welsh is the majority language of the local population and is the main intangible cultural asset. We demonstrate that adopting a digital approach makes it possible to bring Welsh, Welshness and the associated ICH to a global audience. Books and the chapters therein have shelf lives. No sooner than the words are written, they are out of date. The #Ecoamgueddfa is a moving feast; things change daily. The key to progress is agility, flexibility and the ability to adapt and change as required together with total commitment to the concept of co-working, co-developing and co-promoting.

## Intangible cultural heritage

The definition and discussions around the term ‘intangible cultural heritage’ is well rehearsed elsewhere in this book. Accepting UNESCO’s interpretation that cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects but also includes oral traditions, performing

arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and the knowledge and skills to produce traditional arts, we would add that the language used to express those things, in our case Welsh, tops the list of intangibles. UNESCO believes that ‘an understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue and encourages mutual respect for others’<sup>2</sup>. We would argue that there must also be an understanding that sometimes, unless you speak a particular language, you will be excluded – otherwise, the very thing you claim to ‘respect’ will vanish. There must be a space where the intangible heritage can operate without external interference. Maintaining the balance between the right to express yourself in the language of your choice and being ‘inclusive’ is a challenge.

At the time of writing, Jeremy Paxman, a well-known English journalist, published an article in the *Financial Times*<sup>3</sup> (*FT*) entitled ‘*Voilà, English wins in the battle of global tongues*’. It was described in the *Daily Telegraph*<sup>4</sup> as ‘a brutal attack on our European neighbours’ because it contained very strong statements, such as ‘The problem is not that French is impossible to learn; you can hear it spoken perfectly in Tunisia, Algeria or Morocco. No, the real problem with French is that it is a *useless language*’ [our emphasis]; Paxman went on to say that France’s achievements are ‘long past’.

Jeremy Paxman is not universally adored. Igor Toronyi-Lalic, for example, writing in *The Spectator* (2014)<sup>5</sup> is less than impressed generally, but points out that there is every chance that Paxman will be increasingly regarded as a ‘national treasure’ and indeed, according to recent reports, will present a BBC documentary on the UK’s relationship with Brussels. Time will reveal the consequences of his contentious piece in the *FT*. In the context of the topic of this book generally and the Llŷn Peninsula in particular, however, the attitude demonstrated in this sort of declaration is a serious cause for concern. If a person closer to the centre than the periphery of the UK establishment feels free to express these opinions, without compunction, about a language that appears on UNESCO’s list of the world’s most widely spoken languages, then we must all sit up and take note. Otherwise the writing will well and truly be on the wall not only for Welsh and its associated ICH, but many other languages and cultures elsewhere.

## **The story so far**

### ***Pen Llŷn and the challenges for its people***

The Llŷn peninsula is in northwest Wales, a place blessed with a spectacular and varied landscape, a long arm extending from the mountains of Eryri<sup>6</sup> into the Irish Sea. Its geography forms a distinctive and ancient land for human occupation and communal identity. Despite comparative material poverty (according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), Dwyfor Meirionnydd is the lowest paid part of the UK), the people of the area share hidden assets, arguably more distinctive and precious, although not readily visible to the casual or even occasional visitor. They are custodians of a remarkably deep history and rich culture, forged over more than two millennia of unbroken language continuity and oral traditions.

From a European urban perspective, from southeast England and even from Cardiff, Wales’ capital city, the Llŷn Peninsula could be described as marginal; but it is not. It is conveniently located 100–150 miles (or 2–3 hours) or so away from the major English conurbations of Liverpool and Manchester. As a result, the town of Pwllheli and surrounding villages, such as Abersoch, are popular weekend retreats for the well-to-do. On Friday evenings, expressway and trunk roads are filled with cars – a good few of them Bentleys and Aston Martins –

towing their boats or caravans. This proximity to a large population can be a blessing and a curse. The influx boosts the local economy (albeit with mostly seasonal and low-quality employment) but not all visitors leave empty-handed – some are sufficiently enamoured of the area to purchase second homes, thus inflating house prices so that they become unaffordable to local people.

Cities have been siphoning off those people looking for a better life away from the rural hinterland for decades. By 1922, 80 per cent of the British lived in towns and the farm labour force (especially female) had been declining since the 1850s (Harvey, 2014, p. 21) and is a global phenomenon. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 54 per cent of the world's population lived in urban areas up from 34 per cent in 1960 and the trend is upwards,<sup>7</sup> predicted by UNICEF to be 70 per cent by 2050.<sup>8</sup> It is a fact of life that young, better educated citizens will look outward for a rewarding career; the service, hospitality and low-skill manual work available in areas such as the Llŷn Peninsula, coupled with the lack of affordable housing, accelerate this 'brain drain'.

This type of rural depopulation/repopulation and the associated challenges is not unique to the Llŷn Peninsula and the issue is well documented for the Lake District of England<sup>9</sup> and Highlands of Scotland. Jedrej and Nuttall (2013, p. 58), for example, speak of the 'Englishing' of Scotland. In Wales and in Pen Llŷn in particular, where the Welsh language and culture is at its most vibrant and most vulnerable to an influx of non-Welsh speakers (some of whom do attempt to learn the language, but others are from the Jeremy Paxman school of thought), there is a potential additional impact. But given that people wish to live in the Llŷn in vibrant communities with decent work and prospects for their families – and not be 'conserved or preserved' for sentimental reasons – the question is, what strategies can be implemented? Creating an ecomuseum is one of the solutions that has emerged and this is the story of how it was developed.

### ***The Llŷn Landscape Partnership***<sup>10</sup>

The partnership is a consortium of diverse organisations all with an interest in ensuring that the Llŷn Peninsula thrives as a home for its people and a destination for its visitors. In 2010, £700,000 of Heritage Lottery Funds were secured with additional, substantial contributions from the National Trust, the Countryside Council for Wales (as was, now incorporated into Natural Resources Wales) and Gwynedd Council through its Llŷn Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Sustainable Development Fund. In total, the project attracted an investment of £1.7 million to the area over a three-year period.

The partnership is innovative in that, for the first time, it brought together a number of environmental, statutory, educational and community agencies to collaborate for the benefit of the Peninsula and its people. From the outset, the partnership worked closely with the people who expressed clearly that they appreciate the natural beauty and the diverse landscape that are packed into such a small area. They also took great pride in the Welsh language and culture and had an interest in the area's industrial heritage as well. Further details of other aspects of the project can be found on the website.<sup>11</sup>

The partnership's co-ordinator, Arwel Jones, was familiar with the ecomuseum concept and organised a group of local people to visit the Ceumannan – Staffin Ecomuseum on the Isle of Skye, Scotland. They were impressed by the similarities between the two locations and recognised the potential of adapting the concept to meet the publicly stated aspiration of the Pen Llŷn community who wish to place value on their language, culture and heritage, and to share these with the next generation and to benefit economically by doing so. At

this point, Bangor University, in essence a university by the people for the people, was approached. It was founded in 1884 as a direct result of a campaign in the late-nineteenth century for higher education provision in Wales. Funds were raised by public subscription and a notable feature of this was the voluntary contributions made from their weekly wages by the farmers, quarrymen and other people of Gwynedd and beyond. In a letter (in Welsh) to the university's registrar, the secretary of one of the local college collection committees said that their reason for contributing was that their efforts to establish a university '... will show the world that they have an opinion and put a great price on such an important thing as education'.<sup>12</sup> The university is part of the people of Llŷn's heritage; they 'own' the university.

The group responsible for developing the work is now the university's Sustainability Lab,<sup>13</sup> a high-level corporate focal point for sustainability across the campus. Between 2010–2015, the group were part of WISE Network,<sup>14</sup> a European Structural Fund Project that provided businesses a unique opportunity to work in partnership with Bangor, Aberystwyth and Swansea Universities. The aim was to make facilities and expertise available to Welsh businesses to enable them to thrive and grow in an increasingly resource-efficient environment and to take advantage of 'green growth' opportunities. Sustainable business development was a cross-cutting theme and as a result we had the resources to free up academic time to collaborate with the sites in the Llŷn Peninsula, who through the Llŷn Landscape Partnership, had identified themselves as the seven core sites who would work together to develop the #Ecoamgueddfa.

### ***The ecomuseum concept***

According to the European Network of Ecomuseums, 'An Écomuseum is a dynamic way in which communities preserve, interpret and manage their heritage for a sustainable development. An Écomuseum is based on a community agreement' (quoted in Davis, 2011, p.85). An ecomuseum is much more than preservation though, and in Pen Llŷn it is viewed as a means of propagation. Oral histories, local characters (heroes and villains both) and the traditional place names that could otherwise disappear are being passed down to future generations and shared with the wider world. An ecomuseum is at its heart a museum without walls – a dynamic cultural, social and economic partnership.

The time for talking was over, time to turn the aspirations expressed in Pen Llŷn into reality. A decision was made to proceed, adopting an iterative, 'action research'<sup>15</sup> approach of 'learning by doing' (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p. 1), with insight delivered through actual change, all collaborators and the community benefiting and research being seen as a catalyst for change.

### **The seven core #Ecoamgueddfa partners**

In order to ensure that the visitor experience is as consistent as possible, it was decided that partners would be classified as 'core partners' if they shared certain characteristics. The following criteria needed to be met: adequate car parking; well maintained toilet and nappy-changing facilities; circular walks; either a good-quality café or proximity to decent refreshments; digital interpretation panels; and access to Wi-Fi. In this way, it's possible for visitors to know in advance that they have options to stay on the Peninsula, with at least seven different but easily accessible all-weather options for them to entertain themselves and their family. The sites that emerged form a 'necklace' around the coast (see Figure 37.1), all bar one directly located on the Wales Coastal Path.

The core partners are as follows:



Figure 37.1 A 'necklace' of #Ecoamgueddffa sites around the Llŷn Peninsula coast

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- *Nant Gwrtheyrn*, or 'the Nant' as it is often called, is a magical place located in a former quarrying village and is the northern gateway to the #Ecoamgueddffa. In the 1970s, following the closure of the quarry, the village was abandoned and fell into rack and ruin for a period but was rescued through the efforts of the local community (Clowes, 2004). It is now a 'best in class' facility specialising in delivering courses of Welsh for adults. The Nant's Heritage Centre houses displays providing insight into the history of the Victorian quarry community and the quarrying history of the peninsula. For a period in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the granite from Llŷn was in as strong a demand as to pave the streets of rapidly expanding English cities, such as Manchester and Birmingham, and other European cities. The Centre not only teaches Welsh language, it also provides introductory courses on Welsh culture and heritage and holds cultural events, such as St David's Day celebrations. There are organised walks to view the unique wildlife that can be found along the remote coastal valley and to Tre'r Ceiri.<sup>16</sup> Situated 450m above sea level on an exposed peak of Yr Eifl, Tre'r Ceiri is one of the best preserved and most densely occupied hillforts of the early Bronze Age in the UK (Wakelin and Griffiths, 2008).
- *The Llŷn Maritime Museum* was originally founded in 1977 by a group of local volunteers to showcase the area's rich maritime heritage. It is based at St Mary's Church in Nefyn; a church has been on the site since the sixth century. In 2000, the museum was forced to close its doors due to health and safety reasons but, undaunted, and over a number of years, the community rose to the challenge and in 2014 it reopened, housing a permanent exhibition, a stage for small performances, a research space, a café and a shop.

The museum has an impressive digital archive. The visitor can pore over videos of the sea captains of old and their ships. Historical records of local sailors and their adventures and local shipwrecks have been captured. Conversations with old mariners have been recorded and in 2015 a multi-media animated film on the history of Nefyn was premiered. Remarkably, the film (in Welsh and English versions) was created by a local farmer in one of his farm buildings – an example of economic diversification, benefiting from cultural heritage. In time, the whole collection will be available online and the site is currently working towards achieving ‘Accredited Museum’ status, which will enable it to borrow relevant Welsh national art and artefacts, further expanding the materials available locally.

Engagement with school children is an important aspect of the museum’s function. This happens in the form of seasonal events weaving the stories and local history into art and acting workshops. There is a close collaboration with schools during term times with children being exposed to Llŷn’s global profile, tracking the history and passage of ships, their captains and personnel, making the connections to the twenty or so modern-day sailors.

- *Canolfan y Felin Uchaf* is a charity that is in the process of transforming a Welsh farmhouse that has been redundant for decades into a holistic education centre and community enterprise. The training and opportunities for volunteering available to young people from all over the world are so popular that they are regularly oversubscribed. Beyond this, Felin Uchaf also has a business mentoring initiative supporting green business initiatives and rural enterprise in the community. A broad range of activities are on offer, ranging from organic gardening and permaculture to highly skilled eco-building and heritage skills training projects. In 2015, the renovation of a traditional fishing



*Figure 37.2* ‘Gwylan’ (‘Seagull’), a traditional Aberdaron boat renovated by local fishermen and college students at Felin Uchaf

boat was completed with local fishermen guiding the process (see Figure 37.2). A varied program of story-telling and folk music are held in the traditional round house, with local and European storytellers perpetuating oral history providing a local and international flavour. Lectures are organised when relevant – for example, during the summer months when the annual archaeological dig in nearby *Meillionydd*<sup>17</sup> takes place. The aim is to empower and enrich the lives of the young and not so young and their local communities.

- *Porth y Swnt*,<sup>18</sup> a National Trust property, is a unique new interpretation centre in the heart of Aberdaron. Inspired by the pilgrims who have travelled to Aberdaron and Bardsey Island for hundreds of years, Porth y Swnt takes the visitor on a special journey and provides ideas on where to go and what to do next using map guides, ranger recommendations and touch-screen technology. Of all the sites, this is the one that epitomises the ecomuseum concept. Its sole purpose is to offer snippets of information on what is out there in the local environment – the wider ‘museum without walls’. It uses poetry and art installations to capture and showcase the special qualities which make the Llŷn Peninsula so unique in terms of history, culture and environment. It nudges the visitor out to explore and provides bike rides, beach days, fun days and ‘fifty things to do before you’re eleven and three quarters’ and is also the home of one of the local ‘Taste of the Sea’ Festivals. A strong sense of place pervades Porth y Swnt – in ‘the deep’, on the land, in the light (this is the new home for the old lens from Bardsey lighthouse) and through the people.
- *Plas yn Rhiw*, another National Trust property in #Ecoamgueddfa’s portfolio, is a sixteenth-century manor house with Georgian additions set in delightful ornamental gardens with many flowering trees and shrub and beds framed by box hedges and grass paths. The spectacular views across Cardigan Bay from the property are among the most spectacular in Wales. This is the most traditional (in a UK sense) of the properties with its guided tours of the house and garden. But it also has, funded by the Llŷn Landscape Partnership, renovated two stone ‘*bwthyn unnos*’<sup>19</sup> cottages; one is decorated as it would have been originally, the other renovated to modern-day standards. The modernised house is occupied by a former inhabitant of Bardsey Island. Visitors are enchanted by his lovely little garden and he is more than happy to open his door and have a chat about his memories.
- *Oriel Plas Glyn y Weddu*,<sup>20</sup> in Llanbedrog, recently celebrated its 150th anniversary as Wales’ oldest art venue and commercial gallery. The Grade II\* listed dower house, built in 1856/7 for Lady Elizabeth Love Jones-Parry (a widow) of Madryn Estate, is a prime example of a Victorian Gothic mansion with a magnificent Jacobean staircase and hammer beam roof. It has a long association with art and was purpose built with ten airy gallery spaces to house the widow’s own art collection. There are monthly exhibitions by premier artists from Wales and beyond with a focus on promoting quality local artists specialising in depicting the Welsh landscape. In 2015, the gallery achieved Accredited Museum status and is eligible to borrow works of national importance to be exhibited locally.

The Plas has built an amphitheatre where cultural concerts are held, bringing local and international entertainment to the region. The lecture theatre below showcases videos of artists at work – another example of digital inclusion. There is also a ‘forgotten forest’, a woodland neglected for decades but now managed and accessible to visitors. The path through the woodland, past the gallery, is part of the Wales Coastal Path and links to a circular walk, which is in the #Ecoamgueddfa’s digital walk portfolio. Art



workshops are organised during the holiday season with resident artists engaged to inspire children and adults. In 2016, a ‘rubbish artist’ is making art out of waste material gathered on the nearby beach – inspiring children to upcycle, but also to raise awareness of the harm that waste can cause to the natural environment and the landscape.

- *Plas Heli* is the south-easterly gateway to the #Ecoamgueddfa, closing the loop started in Nant Gwrtheyrn. Based in Pwllheli, it is a not-for-profit company established to operate the new Welsh National Sailing Academy and Events Centre, which opened during the summer of 2015. It is a vibrant centre for local residents and visitors alike with meeting rooms available, a restaurant, bar and a large exhibition hall. It is ideally placed to take advantage of the sheltered water of Bae Ceredigion (Cardigan Bay) and used often for national, European and world championships.

Whilst Nant Gwrtheyrn uses language and culture to stimulate interest and entice locals and visitors to explore further and deeper into the Llŷn, *Plas Heli* is the home for community outdoor pursuits – sailing, rowing and surfing clubs are based here and the activities are held in Welsh, thus reinforcing the language as a contemporary and relevant medium of communication. Triathlons, and the Llŷn Sportive are hosted here, but also events such as the National Gŵyl Cerdd-dant 2016<sup>21</sup> will be held here. International visitors attracted by the top quality sailing events are made aware of the wider #Ecoamgueddfa offer, and accompanying family members not actively engaged in the sport are encouraged to venture west.

### **The #Ecoamgueddfa Knowledge Transfer Partnership**

By partnering with Bangor University’s Sustainability Lab, the #Ecoamgueddfa group was able to access the UK Technology Strategy Board’s Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) scheme.<sup>22</sup> It was identified as an appropriate vehicle for funding as it allowed a full time associate to be employed for eleven months to carry out the proof of concept work whilst also contributing towards university staff involvement beyond that provided for by the WISE Network. Funding was secured and #Ecoamgueddfa Llŷn was born – the first in Wales.

The #Ecoamgueddfa not only seemed appropriate at a local level, but chimed with Wales’ national aspirations to become a Sustainable Wales: this fundamental governing principle, in the form of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) 2015 Act,<sup>23</sup> reflecting the commitment incorporated in the legislation that established devolution to Wales from Westminster.

### ***The #Ecoamgueddfa***

The #Ecoamgueddfa KTP associate was in post by April 2014. An inaugural meeting was held in Cwrt in Aberdaron and Peter Davis, author of *Ecomuseums: A Sense of Place*, was invited to give the partnership a global overview and to remind us that we were a part of a global family of like-minded communities. It was very reassuring to see how well the Pen Llŷn vision and activities matched the original ideas of George Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine. Defining the limits of the ecomuseum was made easier as there is a maritime boundary on three sides containing the residents, landscapes, cultural property, architecture, identity, collective memories, visitors, traditions, nature, heritage and language that make up the ecomuseum.

The sense of spirit and sense of place is everywhere in the Llŷn, the community involvement strong and the concept sufficiently flexible to accommodate the people’s aspirations. Most of the key indicators/principles identified by Davis (2011) were also being met.

A decision was made early on to 'go digital' for two reasons: 1) funding is in short supply, the challenge is to work more smartly, to pool resources to make the most of what is available. The old days of printed material is over; paper products inevitably become out of date. However, this was not without its difficulties as behavioural change takes time; the first instinct 'to produce a leaflet' lingers; and 2) to give #Ecoamgueddfa, and all that it stands for, increasing global exposure. The language, culture and heritage of Pen Llŷn are no longer a well-kept secret in northwest Wales. It makes a bold declaration that these intangible assets are important to the people and that those more discerning visitors who make the effort to look beyond sand, sea and scenery will find a richness that will enhance their lives. As the Pen Llŷn community, promoted through #Ecoamgueddfa partnership and activity, works on providing interesting all-weather options outside the normal visitor season this message will be reinforced. Initial data shows that the reach has potential to be very wide-ranging.

### **Developing the brand – #Ecoamgueddfa – ‘Yr Amgueddfa Heb Walia’ (the museum without walls)**

The logo, a simple cube with no inner walls, represents the concept of a museum without walls. The word #Ecoamgueddfa written in large print and the strap line appears bilingually beneath. The hashtag (#) was added to reinforce the digital image and to encourage the digital audience to use the hashtag to create and share digital material associated with Pen Llŷn.

The #Ecoamgueddfa website, launched in September 2014, was the first step towards enabling the partners to present a united front whilst supporting their individual identities as it is designed as a portal to provide access to information about the seven sites from one location. It's a bilingual site (as are all the individual sites) and adapted for use by any digital device. The shared calendar, open to anyone on the Peninsula to use to advertise their events, is an excellent tool that enables visitors to know what is on well in advance and to plan their visits accordingly.

The #Ecoamgueddfa social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram) are used to promote ICH: landscape, language, folklore, music, local food, events, and are managed, monitored and developed daily. They are an excellent platform for community engagement, allowing individuals to create and share their own content from their own perspective and providing content that would not be easily accessible elsewhere. For example, two versions of the film *Heli Yn Y Gwaed (Salt in the Veins)*, documenting the experiences of local fishermen,<sup>24</sup> has been uploaded to the YouTube channel, which would otherwise have been lost and forgotten. Viewers are geographically dispersed, e.g. from the UK, Sweden, USA, Poland and Bangladesh, to name a few. Engagement via Twitter can vary from 2,000 people per week to 147,000 over three days, the variation reflecting the volume of 're-tweets' and the content of the original tweet. For anyone electing to go down the digital route it is essential to find an individual who can undertake this work in-house. Progress would not have been so rapid or so seamlessly maintained had it been necessary to outsource this work.

### ***The #Ecoamgueddfa Festival***

During the second week of June 2015, the first #Ecoamgueddfa festival was held. It was a means of effectively cementing the working relationships between the partners, combining communications to achieve a much greater public and tourism operator awareness of the #Ecoamgueddfa. Each partner site contributed at least one event spanning a period of eight days providing a new program of events across the centres, and acting as an early opener

for the 2015 tourism season. Activities included a day celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Welsh in Patagonia at Oriel Plas Glyn y Weddw, Llŷn Produce Market (which is now a monthly event), a fifty-mile Coastal Sportive around the peninsula, guided walks in Plas yn Rhiw and around Nefyn and other villages and an opportunity to meet the former inhabitants of Nant Gwrtheyrn. The world premiere of an animated film of the history of Nefyn was held at the Maritime Museum, an open day at the archaeological dig in Meillionydd and story-telling at the round house in Felin Uchaf drew the crowds as did the final event, the ‘Taste of the Sea’ food festival at Porth y Swnt.

Online brochures<sup>25</sup> (in Welsh and English) were produced with the aim of providing a varied menu of options to suit a wide range of audiences and tastes at different times of the day. If success is measured in numbers, some were clearly more successful than others. The main lesson was an obvious one; events do not organise, manage and publicise themselves. The level of success reflected the input – and this spoke for itself. Images from all the events are online.<sup>26</sup>

Two members of the Ceumannan – Staffin Ecomuseum visited during the festival. A meeting was held with the partners to share experiences and to gather ideas of how to collaborate and learn from each other. It has been agreed that a group from #Ecoamgueddfa will visit Staffin in September 2016 with a view to creating a partnership between Celtic ecomuseums.

### ***A word about the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015***

Wales takes its responsibility for sustainable development seriously and is one of the few legislatures in the world that has that commitment enshrined in law.<sup>27</sup> In 2015, the commitment was further refined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales 2015) Act. The focus of the Act is on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Although directed at public bodies, the sustainable principle (i.e. we should act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs), and the seven goals are relevant for everyone who wants to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

Furthermore, there are five ways of facilitating working together better, avoiding past mistakes and tackling long-term challenges:

- *Long-term thinking.* Balancing short term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
- *Prevention is better than cure.* Acting to prevent problems from occurring or getting worse helps us all meet our objectives.
- *Integration.* Considering how individual objectives might impact on each of the well-being goals.
- *Collaboration.* Working together to meet the well-being goals.
- *Involvement.* Engaging with people who are interested in achieving the goals and ensuring that they reflect the diversity of the region.

The #Ecoamgueddfa’s vision of being the museum without walls celebrating all aspects of Pen Llŷn’s vibrant identity ranging from the landscape, culture, heritage, community and the Welsh language and its ways of working described in this chapter reflect the aspirations of the Act and its goals.

In the context of this chapter, the main contribution of the #Ecoamgueddfa is to demonstrate clearly that Pen Llŷn can be a home *and* a destination whilst maintaining and

promoting a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, but we can also demonstrate that by focussing on this, we can and do meet all the other goals. This is a significant contribution to Wales and Welsh culture in an economic climate where intangibles are judged by their nominal cash value, with the likes of Jeremy Paxman casting aspersions on the validity of any language that is not English and the historic global linguistic colonisation when ‘England ruled the waves’. Our website and various social media channels act as a portal to capture, curate and promote the area’s rich cultural assets, such as archaeological excavation sites, video documentaries and films of local maritime history and digital publications, to name just a few. The Welsh language is at the heart of our digital marketing campaign. Everything we tweet, post or share with our worldwide audience is in Welsh and English. The Welsh language is an integral part of the identity and of Pen Llŷn; our digital platforms enable our voice to be heard, and it is heard by 150,000 people from sixty countries.

The #Ecoamgueddfa, through its digital archives, demonstrates that the people of Llŷn have had a global past through their maritime activities. Today we reach out to places with a different intangible cultural context, but with similar challenges, that can share our success. Humans shall, however, not live on bread alone, nor can they live exclusively on intangible cultural heritage. The main aim of #Ecoamgueddfa is to maximise the economic potential of ICH for the benefit of the people – bringing prosperity and making Pen Llŷn a great place to live without turning the place into ‘any resort anywhere’ and destroying the very thing that makes the place truly unique.

Biodiversity underpins ecosystems and an ecosystem approach provides a framework for considering ecosystems as a whole in decision making. The Welsh Government, through its Environment Bill (2016) and Natural Resources Wales (the Welsh Government-sponsored body), recognises that diverse and resilient ecosystems are integral to the functioning of a healthy environment. People and their shared local knowledge are a key part of ecosystems and the #Ecoamgueddfa contributes to this. By improving the community skill-set, the community itself is more able to maintain and improve the landscape, protect habitats and historic assets, improve access and opportunities to visit and experience industrial heritage and build on the pride that people have in their ICH, which can be shared and enjoyed by all.

The #Ecoamgueddfa is listed as one of the main legacy projects of the Llŷn Landscape Partnership and we suggest that it is an exemplar that could be replicated elsewhere in Wales and other areas of the UK and Europe. The #Ecoamgueddfa’s digital approach and close collaborative working described in this chapter is making a contribution towards equality of access and building cohesive communities. We believe that we are leading by example and the #Ecoamgueddfa model of collaboration and co-promotion can be used elsewhere in Wales and beyond. Recently, Bangor University signed a memorandum of understanding with the University of Makerere in Uganda and, through part-funding from Hub Africa Cymru, work is already in progress to investigate how best to engage with tourism clusters in Uganda to help them develop their own ecomuseum.

### **What next? Consolidation and expansion of the digital pathway to promote our intangible cultural heritage at home and abroad**

There is enormous potential for #Ecoamgueddfa to make even greater use of digital technologies, as could the wider tourism sector, an opinion informed by organisations such as the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (Pert, 2008). We believe the success of the #Ecoamgueddfa will ultimately be important for the strategic development of tourism in Wales, particularly in the context of Llŷn’s rural environment,

weak economy and constrained infrastructure. The technology and lessons learned should be transferable to other regions and settings in Wales and internationally.

The #Ecoamgueddfa has the potential to mix together all of the actual and virtual tourism assets and make something powerfully new of them, offering a more enriched and rewarding experience to contemporary visitors as well as the future ‘family activity holiday’ that is already in greater demand.

Developments of this nature could open up new opportunities for the inhabitants of Pen Llŷn to embrace their own heritage with greater pride and confidence, and that the potential for them to prosper in their own locale and on their own terms will be far greater. Yet further progress will require at least some external funding. The mantra of recent years is that this is an age of austerity and cutbacks. We, however, subscribe to the view that ‘this is the new normal’ and that funding for the ‘intangible’ in particular, will be increasingly difficult to access. Doing things smartly, differently and pooling resources will be the way forward. In line with the sustainable way of working promoted by the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the challenges we are setting ourselves are to identify how can we better integrate what we’re doing with others, and with whom can we/should we collaborate? Moreover, who should be involved? Looking to the long term, additional funds will be required and we are looking externally for partners who, like us, want to celebrate, promote and benefit economically from their tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Our aims (in no particular order and equally weighted) are as follows:

- 1 To enrich the visitor experience and drive up visitor numbers and expenditure, and in particular to extend the ‘shoulder season’ thereby establishing that the enterprises under the #Ecoamgueddfa umbrella can viably create significant additional economic, social and environmental value.
- 2 To create a new relationship between tour operators and visitors, and the community and its enterprises, that values all that Pen Llŷn has to offer – its landscape, natural beauty and ancient history, as well as the contemporary contribution of the people of Pen Llŷn in its continuing evolution as a home and a destination. People are intrinsic to the sustainable development of tourism in this distinct region of Wales. This is truly an ecosystem approach to addressing present-day challenges.
- 3 To equip and encourage local residents to engage with an evolving and adapting digital landscape that will actively secure the collaboration of visitors to engage with the sites, the walking routes, the events, the guides and attractions.

The #Ecoamgueddfa online ‘community’ will encourage feedback on hitherto well-kept secrets – the small shop selling local produce or the artisan hidden away in a quiet corner, the splendid piece of homemade *bara brith* and strong cup of tea, the local ale, a few new words and phrases of Welsh learnt during the day, and so on. As a result, residents and visitors alike will realise that this is not an ‘any beach anywhere’ sort of place or a fossilised and romantic backwater. They will start to realise that it is a unique, living, thriving corner of the globe with precious intangible assets where people live, work, play and celebrate their past and present whilst boldly facing the future.

If people are to actively engage and invest their time further, we have to address the following question: ‘If we are living in ‘the new normal’ and funding is limited then will investing our individual and collective time to engage with the #Ecoamgueddfa digital platform provide us with sufficient return on investment?’ We have already demonstrated in a short period of time that the #Ecoamgueddfa’s digital approach can work and that it can

play a significant role in safeguarding ICH. The next step is to further demonstrate through continuing action research that the #Ecoamgueddfa really does have quantifiable social, economic and cultural impact.

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## Notes

- 1 Introduction to the #Ecoamgueddfa (the Llŷn Ecomuseum) [www.ecoamgueddfa.org](http://www.ecoamgueddfa.org) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 2 <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>
- 3 Paxman, J. (2016) [www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6a9c9872-bac2-11e5-b151-8e15c9a029fb.html#axzz44q94yMfR](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6a9c9872-bac2-11e5-b151-8e15c9a029fb.html#axzz44q94yMfR) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 4 [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/08/jeremy-paxman-french-is-a-useless-language/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/08/jeremy-paxman-french-is-a-useless-language/) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 5 Toronyi-Lalic, I. (2014), <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2014/06/jeremy-paxmans-last-newsnight-made-we-want-to-be-sick/> [accessed 19/04/16].
- 6 In English – Snowdonia, a region in north Wales and a national park of 823 square miles (2,130 km<sup>2</sup>) in area.
- 7 World Health Organization (2016) [www.who.int/gho/urban\\_health/situation\\_trends/urban\\_population\\_growth\\_text/en/](http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth_text/en/) and [www.fastcodesign.com/1669244/by-2050-70-of-the-worlds-population-will-be-urban-is-that-a-good-thing](http://www.fastcodesign.com/1669244/by-2050-70-of-the-worlds-population-will-be-urban-is-that-a-good-thing) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 8 UNICEF [www.unicef.org/sowc2012/urbanmap/#](http://www.unicef.org/sowc2012/urbanmap/#) [accessed 19/04/16] and [www.fastcodesign.com/1669244/by-2050-70-of-the-worlds-population-will-be-urban-is-that-a-good-thing](http://www.fastcodesign.com/1669244/by-2050-70-of-the-worlds-population-will-be-urban-is-that-a-good-thing) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 9 A report on the The Loweswater Care Project by David Davies and Emer Clarke <http://westcumbriarivertrust.org/assets/content/projects/downloads/2010-Davis-David-and-Emer-Clark-Report-on-Tourism.doc> [accessed 19/04/16].
- 10 The Llŷn Landscape Partnership [www.ahne-llŷn-aonb.org/36/en-GB/Landscape-Partnership](http://www.ahne-llŷn-aonb.org/36/en-GB/Landscape-Partnership) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Roberts, G., Secretary of the college collection committee at Penrhyn Quarry in a letter to the University Registrar, available in the Bangor University archives.
- 13 Bangor University's Sustainability Lab [www.planet.cymru](http://www.planet.cymru) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 14 Wise Network [www.wisenetwork.org](http://www.wisenetwork.org) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 15 Action research, as defined by Reason and Bradbury (2001 p. 1), is:  

a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.
- 16 Tre'r Ceiri [www.museumwales.ac.uk/iron\\_age\\_teachers/hillforts/tre\\_ceiri/](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/iron_age_teachers/hillforts/tre_ceiri/) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 17 Bangor University's archaeological dig at Meillionydd <http://meillionydd.bangor.ac.uk/> [accessed 19/04/16].
- 18 The name translates as 'Gateway to the Sound', the strip of water separating mainland Wales from Bardsey Island.

- 19 It was traditional in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for young couples to squat on land, and if they were able to build a cottage overnight and have smoke coming from the chimney by dawn, they were allowed to keep the house plus an acre of land.
- 20 Oriel Plas Glyn y Weddw translates as 'The Gallery in the Widow's Vale'.
- 21 *Cerdd-dant* (string music) is the art of vocal improvisation over a given melody in Welsh musical tradition. It is an important competition in eisteddfodau. The singer or (small) choir sings a counter melody over a harp melody [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cerdd\\_Dant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cerdd_Dant) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 22 <https://connect.innovateuk.org/web/ktp> [accessed 19/04/16].
- 23 Welsh Government (2015) Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, The Essentials <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/150428-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf> [accessed 19/04/16].
- 24 *Heli Yn Y Gwaed/Salt in the Vêins* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hU9d\\_JEcBVg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hU9d_JEcBVg) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 25 #Ecoamgueddfa online booklets [http://issuu.com/ecoamgueddfa/docs/llyfryn\\_gwyl\\_ecoamgueddfa\\_hires](http://issuu.com/ecoamgueddfa/docs/llyfryn_gwyl_ecoamgueddfa_hires) [accessed 19/04/16] and [https://issuu.com/ecoamgueddfa/docs/eco\\_festival\\_booklet](https://issuu.com/ecoamgueddfa/docs/eco_festival_booklet) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 26 #Ecoamgueddfa gallery [https://www.facebook.com/ecoamgueddfa/photos\\_stream?tab=photos\\_albums](https://www.facebook.com/ecoamgueddfa/photos_stream?tab=photos_albums) [accessed 19/04/16].
- 27 The Government of Wales Act 1998, part 121 [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/38/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/38/contents) [accessed 19/04/16] and The Government of Wales Act 2006, part 79 [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/32/contents) [accessed 19/04/16].

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