

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LEADER,
COUNCILLOR LLINOS MEDI



Foreword

It's hard to believe that the new administration started a year ago. As expected, we've had a busy year as an authority. I'll try to compile the main achievements in my report, but it's important to emphasize that substantial work has happened here in the Council, and it's impossible to present it all in one report.

Before I begin, I'd like to thank everyone that works to ensure the authority's success, and through this, improves the quality of life on the island. Were very fortunate to be residents of 'the land of the can do', and that has become our ethos, that we can achieve anything through working together and showing our strength and capability as a small island to the whole of Wales.

Economy

During the year, we've received devastating news about companies closing their doors due to the challenging economy, energy costs, inflation, and general uncertainty in terms of the United Kingdom's economy. In my report, I want to share my deepest sympathies with the individuals and families who have paid the price for the current situation. I'd also like to take the opportunity to thank all the partners who came together so quickly to respond to the news and support the workers. I met with one Minister from Westminster that said he'd never seen an example where support had been arranged so quickly. We thank the Council staff and partners for giving their all during such a challenging time.

Business Units

Despite the sad news, as a Council we've managed to develop more business units, with 6 new units being built and located in Llangefni. We're also in the process of developing 7 other business units in Holyhead.

Energy Island

The programme has continued with numerous plans including Morlais, with the site being prepared. Holyhead Hydrogen Hub has received further support from the private sector, and we continue our discussions about the future of the Wylfa site, and our contribution to the energy policy alongside the rest of Britain. Several solar and marine energy plans have demanded officers' attention to ensure that the benefits for the island are protected, as well as the island's energy.

Grant Funding

During the last year, we've seen a change in the way grant money is allocated, and that has created extra pressure for the Council. This includes the Levelling Up Fund and the Shard Prosperity Fund. I'd like to congratulate the Council for managing to secure funding for the island, on top of their day-to-day duties. It's impossible to describe the extra pressure that this has put on the economics team as well as the Finance Department.

Town Centers

We've been out in the community consulting on the Town Center Strategy. This information will allow us to apply for further funding to fulfill the strategy's vision once Anglesey residents and businesses have voiced their opinions.

North of the Island

We've completed substantial work in the north region of the island, fulfilling plans to regenerate north Anglesey. The signage strategy has now been completed following feedback from the Town Council, and the signs will be installed during 23/24. We've opened a Hub with Môn CF in the heart of Amlwch Town during 2022, and we'd like to thank NDA for the grant funding to complete this work.

Freeport

We, as a Council, have worked with Stena to complete the first step in creating a Freeport on land in Holyhead, Rhosgoch and M-Sparc in Gaerwen. Yet again, this meant extra responsibility for Council staff, and I would like to congratulate them for fulfilling their duties. We're now in the process of presenting the business case to release the funding needed to start the work.

Arfor

We've secured extra funding for the Arfor scheme, which will ensure grants to strengthen the Welsh language and the economy.

Social Services

Adults

During this year we received the results of the Census that has highlighted the change within the island's demographic, with the number of older adults on the island increasing. This puts more emphasis on creating adult services of high standard and promoting independence within our communities. The following are a handful of achievements during the year -

CIW Report – Positive

In September, the Department received a very positive report from CIW highlighting the increase in the way services are provided. This has given us, as an Authority, more confidence during a challenging time within the social services field.

Age Friendly Island

A conference was held to draw attention to the constructive activities and partnerships with 3rd sector organisations on Anglesey. It was great to receive praise from the Older People's Commissioner for the partnership work that happens on the island.

Joint Learning Disability Fund

The Council worked with the Health Board to establish a joint fund to fund complex cases in the learning disabilities field, and ensuring services are co-commissioned. This will be considered as good practice across the north.

Extra Care Housing

Confirmation of the intention to move forward with developing a 3rd extra care housing plan on the Island. This will also contribute to the new challenge faced in terms of the change in the island's demographic.

Review of Day Activities

An independent review was completed on activities in order to give direction in terms of developing services for the future and creating closer contact with community hubs.

Housing and Support

We've analysed user needs for the future, and are working on plans to modernise, transform and improve housing quality. The first development in Llangefni will be ready by the Summer, and further developments will take place during the next few years.

Home Care Agreement

An agreement of provision has been reviewed and re-tendered, and a revised agreement will be in place from June onwards.

Children and Families

We're aware of the challenges that the Children Services face daily, and we're proud of their positive improvement journey. It's essential that we ensure that the children who need to be protected receive support, and that families can turn to our services for timely support. These are some of the achievements from this year -

Cartrefi Clyd Môn

During the Children and Young People Now Awards 2022, we received awards for the innovative projects that allows children on Anglesey to continue to live on the island when they come under the Local Authority's care. We should all be very proud of this scheme. Our children deserve the best.

Opening our Third Cartref Clyd

We look forward to welcoming at least two looked after children to their new home. It's somewhere that they can call home within Anglesey's community.

Care Inspectorate Wales

A Quality Assurance assessment by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) found that the County Council continues to achieve its statutory duties during challenging circumstances.

Recruiting and Keeping Foster Carers

The Foster Wales Anglesey team has continued to recruit new foster carers to join the fostering family, and during the last year, 3 new fostering households have been approved. We've also offered numerous activity days across Anglesey during the last 12 months to provide a variety of activities to our Looked After Children, as well as offering informal support to our Foster Carers.

Education for Looked After Children

We're pleased to be working with Welsh Government on a pilot to provide support to our Looked After Children, and to improve our education and social skills attainment.

National Transfer Scheme – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People

We've supported a number of young people who have reached Anglesey, either through the port or through the National Transfer Scheme.

Trauma Informed Island

All schools on Anglesey have received trauma training, and the ambition to be a Trauma Informed Island by 2050 is under way. Staff from Children and Families services, Youth Services, Leisure Centres and the third sector have received training, and this will allow us, as an island, to be more aware of the effect that trauma has on our children.

Leisure

As an Authority, we're very proud of our leisure services, and the presence of the Môn Active team across the Island ensures that everyone of every age can benefit from exercise. These are some of the achievements from this year.

Investment

We've continued to invest in our leisure centres during last year (and this year), including roof work at Plas Arthur and Holyhead, and modernising the cafe, the toilets, the reception area and the disabled changing rooms in Amlwch's swimming pool. As well as this, we've completed energy efficiency work that included installing new windows and insulation. We've also created a new fitness room in David Hughes Leisure Centre.

3G Fields

We've created a 7-a-side 3G field in Amlwch. We've also received a grant to create a further 7-a-side 3G field and 7-a-side 2G field at Bodedern Secondary School.

Promoting Use

The number of people using our leisure centers has increased this year to 539,031, exceeding pre-Covid levels, with more than 400 extra children taking part in our weekly swimming lessons. This is extremely important if we are to create a healthy and thriving Island.

Working with Education and Communities

The Sports Development team have achieved great work within our schools and communities, including creating a sports area in Anglesey Show, "Swim Safe" sessions for schools in Trearddur Bay, and an array of other activities to keep our children and young people active.

Working with Care and Health

The National Exercise Referral Scheme continues to do great work supporting our communities, including leading Dementia Actif Môn and creating sessions for people over 60.

Education

2022 was a historic year for us on Anglesey. We received a fantastic report from Estyn, that replaced the previous judgmental report received when the authority was last inspected. It was a pleasure to read the praise regarding firm leadership. The reference to good practice within the report was a clear contrast to the previous report. It was a pleasure to hear the feedback regarding the team in Estyn's meeting, recognizing the good work within the authority and highlighting the journey we've faced to achieve improvements. I would like to thank all the schools, the Education department, and the Council for contributing to this success.

The Co-operation Agreement

At the beginning of 2023, we signed a co-operation agreement with Coleg Llandrillo Menai. This is an opportunity for us to strengthen the relationship that exists for the benefit of the young people on Anglesey.

Official opening of Ysgol Corn Hir

We had a fantastic opportunity to visit Ysgol Corn Hir at the end of March before the children's return after Easter. It was fantastic to see our vision to provide the best opportunities for the children and staff being realized. It was also nice to hear the positive remarks from the community reading the resources and opportunities the new building has to offer.

Key and strategic roles

As an authority we have been successful in attracting a new Director of Education, Skills and Young People with a wealth of experience in Education. We have also taken advantage of the opportunity to work more strategically e.g. the Senior Archivist is now the Senior Manager for the Archives, Museum and Gallery Service. Also, the Wellbeing Manager role has been adapted to the role of Senior Health, Wellbeing and Safeguarding Manager to respond to specific growth areas in education. And lastly, to take a more integrated approach, the Service Manager for Looked After Children's Education, Youth and Children and Young People's Wellbeing is now a member of the Senior Leadership Team for the Learning Service and Children and Families Service.

Free School Meals

We have ensured, with the Properties Department, that every child in every school on Anglesey in Reception, Year 1 and 2 has access to free school meals through the new national scheme.

Area Schools

We have taken advantage of the Area Schools grant to invest £390k across 16 schools to ensure better community use. We also employ two family engagement officers to support specific areas on the Island.

The Welsh Language

As a Council we have created the Welsh in Education Strategy Plan 2022-32 which has now been adopted and is operational. A clear regional-county-catchment structure has been established for the Welsh language. The Language Centre (Moelfre and Cybi) has provided language immersion for 120 pupils during the year. Members of the team also supported 89 newcomers after attending the Centre through the aftercare scheme to ensure a continuation in language development.

Archive and Oriel

The archive has applied for accreditation and both services have created a new Service Level Agreement to support schools with the new curriculum, improve value for money and attract more visitors. The Oriel has also been successfully in re-tendering the café to a local company.

Libraries

We have developed more opportunities for adult education across the island to respond to the Welsh Government priority "A Second Change Nation". Also, the Libraries Service has created a new Service Level Agreement to support schools with the new curriculum.

Housing Services

Before moving on with this section of the report, I would like to pay tribute to the late portfolio holder, Alun Mummery. His commitment and enthusiasm towards the Services was obvious to everyone. The following is thanks to his tireless work.

Cost of Living

The Housing Service, in collaboration with the Finance Department, has undertaken a huge task in ensuring that the Welsh Government support has gone to those in genuine need. From foster carers to those with kidney disease. Also, help with energy costs and support for food banks. We are very fortunate of the partnerships we have with other agencies across the Island that protect those in need.

Ukrainian Refugees

As an Island we have welcomed and offered homes for 89 people and children from Ukraine in response to the War in Ukraine. because of the war. The Housing Department is supporting families and individuals.

Homelessness

The homelessness crisis is also affecting us as an island with 85 individuals being housed in emergency accommodation, six times higher than the pre covid figures. 1,002 people have received support through the Housing Support Grant to help prevent and deal with homelessness.

Bringing homes back into use

80- empty homes have been brought back into use since April last year with 28 of those receiving a First-time Buyers Grant utilising the money generated through the Council Tax Premium. We have also renovated 3 homes for First-time Buyers during this time, 1 in Dwyran and 2 in Penmon.

Shared Equity Policy

We have launched the Anglesey Help to Buy Scheme to support first-time buyers to purchase their first home here on the Island utilising the Council Tax Premium.

Buying Back and Building

Since September 2022 we have bought back 17 old Council houses. We have built 34 new Council Houses - 8 at Erw Lôn yr Ysgol, Llanfachraeth and 26 at Stad Ysgol Llaingoch. We are currently developing 6 flats at Cysgod yr Eglwys, Beaumaris, 4 flats at Plas Alltran, Caergybi and 14 properties at Parc y and 10 at Llys Llwydiarth, Pentraeth.

Climate and Environment

For several years, we have declared our aim to reduce Carbon and we are taking great strides as an authority. The Highways, Properties and Waste Department has played a leading role in achieving this goal.

Realizing the Re-fit Scheme

We have developed a system for our public buildings to save energy and reduce carbon emissions by installing Air Source Heat pumps at Council buildings and solar panels at several of our sites.

Electrical Vehicles Charging Point

We have installed charging points at several locations owned by the Council, and we have also worked with Menter Môn and communities on the island to install charging point in our towns and villages.

Electric Vehicles

As an Authority we have purchased more electric vehicles and this year we purchased a vehicle for the recycling centre.

Collating data

It may sound boring, but it is vital that we are aware of our carbon baseline as an Authority. Each department works closely to gain a better understanding of the situation and ensure a realistic action plan.

Clean streets

An external report from LEAMS - Keep Wales Tidy shows that all streets in Anglesey have a 'Good' standard of cleanliness.

Planting Trees and Biodiversity

We have planted trees at Council sites including Penhesgyn. We received a positive annual report with examples of land being left to grow wild to benefit the environment.

A few words in closing

Obviously, I have concentrated a lot on the Council's work on the island over the past 12 months. During this time, I have also worked on a Regional, National and UK level to deliver benefits for the Council and the Island. I have also ensured a strong voice for the Island during these discussions. But, to close I would like to share one important message that I am proud to lead the authority and be part of a team that is doing its very best to safeguard our island, her people, and her language. Despite this being my sixth year as Leader I am still honoured to work for the island and my home. I would like to thank you all for the privilege of working with you to ensure that we are still considered the Land of the Can Do. DIOLCH!