

## **Cabinet – 16 December 2009**

### **Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre - Report of the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Barry Sanders

**Service:** Leisure and Culture

#### **Report Detail**

The former Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel identified the Council's use of Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre as a potential service to investigate during the 2009/10 budget setting process. It recommended that this piece of work was to be completed during the forthcoming year.

This recommendation was allocated to the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel, which succeeded the former Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel. The Panel appointed a small working group to consider the issue at its meeting on 8 June 2009 and reconvened on 17 June 2009.

At its meeting on 26 November 2009 the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel accepted the final report and recommendations of the Bryntysilio Working Group and recommended that the report be sent to Cabinet for consideration.

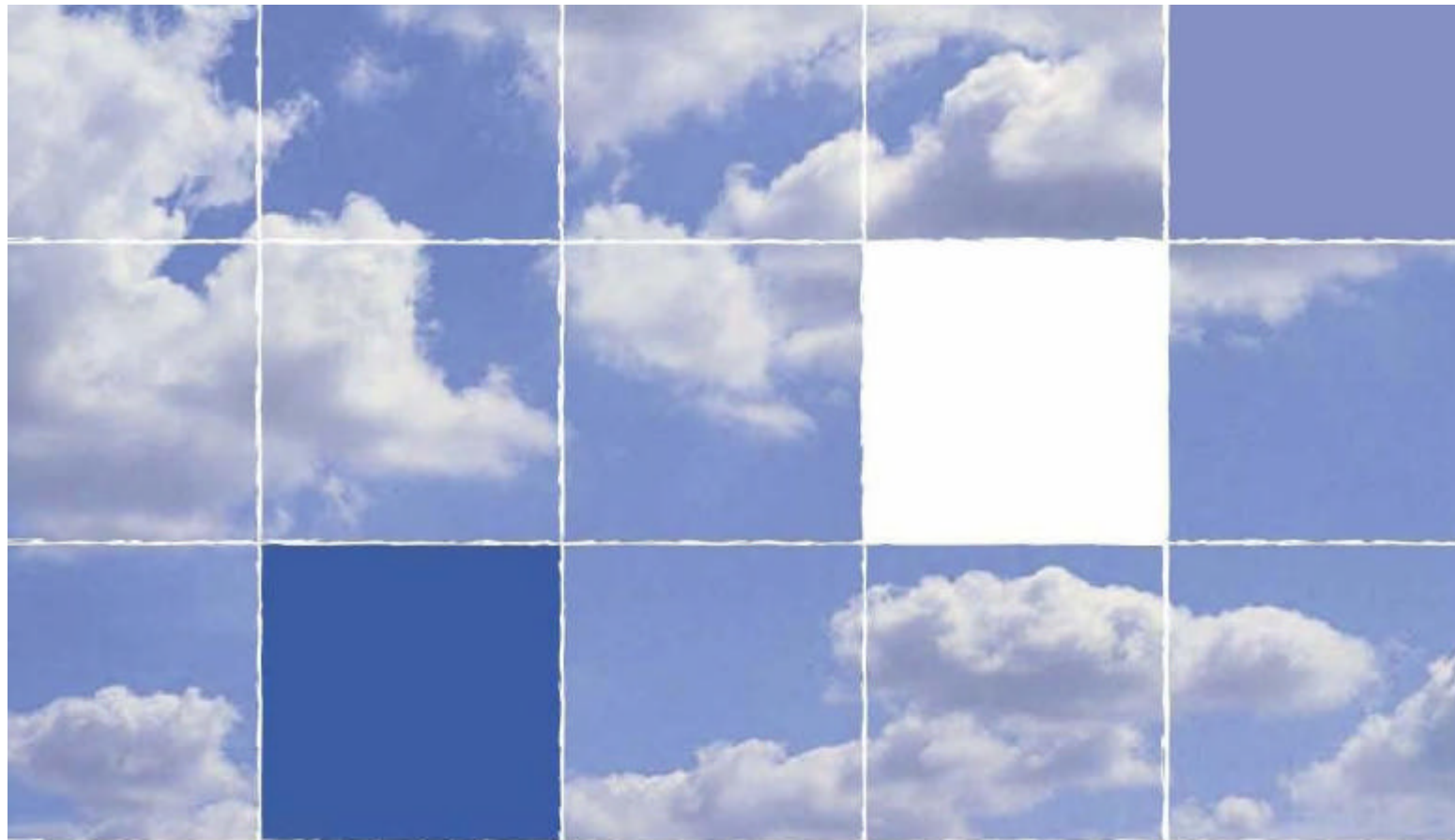
The working group's report is attached at **Appendix 1** and contains detailed recommendations for future service provision at the Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre.



**Councillor Louise Harrison**  
**Lead Member, Bryntysilio Working Group**  
**Chair, Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

#### **Author**

Craig Goodall  
Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer  
☎ (01922) 653317  
✉ [goodalllc@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:goodalllc@walsall.gov.uk)



# **Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre**

**Report by the Bryntysilio  
Working Group**

**To be presented to the Community Services Scrutiny  
and Performance Panel – 26 November 2009**



**Walsall Council**



## Chairs Foreword

Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre provides an excellent residential outdoor education experience to thousands of Walsall children each year. The working group were pleased to hear that the centre is held in high regard by school children, teachers and former visitors.

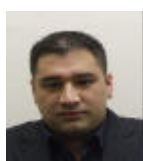
However these visits come at a high cost to the Council as each child's visit is subsidised by over £300 of local taxpayer's money. Whilst the working group were pleased that the centre is held in such high regard it is also important the centre is good value for money. In this area there are many improvements that the centre could undertake to improve its financial position by restructuring its operations, increasing its income streams and developing a business plan to drive the centre forward. In the current financial climate the Council simply cannot afford to subsidise the centre by £500,000 each year.

The working group would like to see the centre continue but this cannot be at any cost as there are credible and cheaper alternatives to delivering outdoor education to local children should Bryntysilio not be able to meet the challenges ahead.

I would like to thank all those who have assisted the working group over the last few months including, the remaining members of the working group, staff at Bryntysilio and Staffordshire County Council for their hospitality when accommodating the working group on their site visits, the Camp Trust, other witnesses and finally the working group's support officers.



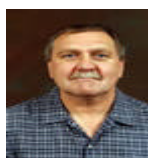
***Councillor Louise Harrison  
Lead Member, Bryntysilio Working Group  
Chair, Community Services Scrutiny and Performance  
Panel***



***Councillor Kamran  
Aftab***



***Councillor Melvin  
Pitt***



***Councillor Paul Bott***



***Councillor Ian  
Shires***



***Councillor Carl  
Creaney***

## Contents

Introduction	3
Terms of Reference	3
Membership	4
Methodology	4
Report Format	5
The Charity of the School Holiday Camp Trust of Walsall	6
Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre	6
Costs – Walsall Council and Schools	7
Alternative Providers	9
External Funding and Sponsorship	10
The Future of Outdoor Education	11
Schools Questionnaire	15
Review	15
Conclusion	16
Recommendations	16
Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference	18
Appendix 2 – List of Witnesses	21

## Introduction

The former Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel identified the Councils use of Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre as a potential service to investigate during the 2009/10 budget setting process and recommended that this piece of work was completed during the forthcoming year. The Panel were concerned about the costs incurred by the Council and wished to investigate the potential to use alternative facilities.

This recommendation was picked up the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel, which succeed the former Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel, who appointed a small working group to consider the issue at its meeting that took place on 8 June 2009 and reconvened on 17 June 2009.

## Terms of Reference

The working group held one meeting to consider its terms of reference that were agreed by the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel at its meeting on 8 September 2009. The agreed terms of reference were:

1. To investigate options to evolve the delivery of residential outdoor education by:
  - a. agreeing a new lease for the Bryntysilio centre;
  - b. withdrawing from the centre and investigate options to provide residential outdoor education by other means;
  - c. Investigating new sources of revenue, including:
    - i. S106 Planning Gain;
    - ii. Potential for contributions from local area;
    - iii. Other means of grant funding.
2. To investigate the value for money that
  - a. the current service provides, and;
  - b. an alternative service provider would provide.
3. To consider options in relation to the outstanding maintenance liabilities.
4. To investigate alternative sources of income.
5. Develop a recommendation of a preferred option for the provision of residential outdoor education.

A working groups full terms of reference can be viewed at appendix 1.



## Membership

Councillor Louise Harrison	Lead Member, <i>Conservative</i>
Councillor Kamran Aftab	<i>Conservative</i>
Councillor Paul Bott	<i>Independent</i>
Councillor Carl Creaney	<i>Labour</i>
Councillor Melvin Pitt	<i>Conservative</i>
Councillor Ian Shires	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>

The working group was supported by two officers:

Ben Percival	Sports and Leisure Service Manager
Craig Goodall	Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

## Methodology

In order to complete their work the working group held five meetings and went on two site visits. A questionnaire regarding Bryntysilio was emailed to every school in the borough. In addition to this the working group engaged with a number of Bryntysilio related groups on the social networking website, Facebook.

The working group's two site visits were to:

- Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre
- Staffordshire Outdoor Education Centres at Chasewater and Laches Wood

The working group held three witness sessions and spoke to:

- The Walsall Holiday Camp Trust
- Bryntysilio Staff
- Denbighshire County Council
- A selection of Primary, Secondary and Special Schools
- Representatives from Bryntysilio Facebook Groups
- Walsall Children's Services Serco
- Walsall Council Officers from:
  - Children's Services
  - Development Control
  - Property Services
  - Sports and Leisure
- Walsall Partnership External Funding Expert
- Woodlands Camp Outdoor Activity Centre

Due to high public interest updates on the working group's investigations, as well as photos from site visits, were uploaded to the social networking website Facebook to keep the group members fully informed with working group activity.

A full list of witnesses can be found at appendix 2.

## **Report Format**

The report is a summary of the evidence the working group received along with comments and suggestions for future action.





## The Charity of the School Holiday Camp Fund of Walsall

Following the First World War the Mayors of Walsall launched an appeal to raise funds to provide holidays for under-privileged children in Walsall. They established the *Charity of the School Holiday Camp Fund of Walsall* (the Camp Trust) and used these funds to buy a field in Streetly where a camp was created. In the 1960s they sold the field and purchased Bryntysilio Hall with the proceeds.

The Camp Trust use Bryntysilio to provide holidays to under-privileged Walsall children during school holidays when the centre is not in use by Walsall Council. Last year over 400 Walsall children were provided with a free holiday by the Camp Trust. **The working group heard that the Camp Trust currently find it difficult to its holiday weeks for disadvantaged children to capacity and believed the promotion of holiday weeks could improve. In addition to this the working group would like to suggest that the Camp Trust improves its definition of 'a disadvantaged child' as well as engaging with local partners to help identify disadvantaged children.** *Further recommendations on the Camp Trusts holiday weeks are made in the 'Future Service Template' section of this report.*

The Camp Trust consists of twelve individuals made up of two Walsall Council Members, six full time teachers and four co-optative Members (condition of membership is a person with a special knowledge of educational work).

## Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre

Bryntysilio Hall is located near Llangollen, North Wales. The centre is owned by the Camp Trust and leased to Walsall Council. The Council use the centre for residential outdoor education for 38 weeks per year; the Camp Trust use the centre to provide holidays for "under-privileged" children for the remaining 12 weeks and the centre is closed over Christmas. This arrangement has been in place for approximately 40 years.

### Building and Grounds

Bryntysilio was originally a private dwelling and was converted to accommodate residential outdoor education in the late 1960s. The centre comprises a main building, the top lodge (3 bedroom self contained cottage), the bottom lodge (a second 3 bedroom self contained cottage), a staff accommodation block and a classroom all set within considerable ornamental gardens.

On their visit to the centre the working group discovered a considerable maintenance backlog and felt that the centre overall was long overdue significant updating. The working group found that there were some differences of opinion regarding the work required to update the centre. **In order to resolve these differences the working group recommend that a new condition survey is commissioned. The condition survey should include a review of whether or not a full structural or other specialist/intrusive survey is required. The surveyor and remit should be jointly agreed by the Council and the Camp Trust. The working group recommend that no large scale repair work takes place at the centre until the new survey and any additional surveys as may be required have been completed.**

**In addition to this the working group recommend that local contractors are employed to complete any agreed repair work to save on travel time and CO2 emissions.**

A contributing factor to this was that the caretaker/premise supervisor responsible for maintenance was on long term sick leave. This work was being picked up by the gardener but at a consequence to the upkeep of the ornamental gardens. **The working group strongly recommend that this situation is rectified and a fulltime caretaker/premise supervisor be appointed as soon as practicable.**

**The working group felt that a portion of the substantial gardens at the centre could be converted into an eco-garden where the centre could grow its own vegetables and help reduce the centres overall costs. The eco-garden could be partially maintained by visiting school children.**

## **Costs – Walsall Council and Schools**

The Council pays all operating costs associated with Bryntysilio. A detailed breakdown of these costs is presented below based on the 2009/10 budgetary expenditure.

**Table 1 – Bryntysilio Operating Costs (Sport & Leisure Services)**

Employees	£376,227
Premises	£45,198
Transport	£18,280
Supplies & Services	£84,828
Third Party (schools' transport)	£20,178
Central Support Services	£67,894
Total Expenditure	£612,605
Income	£182,046
Net Cost	<b>£430,559</b>

In addition to the above, Walsall Council is responsible for maintaining the premises – this cost varies dependent on the requirement for responsive maintenance. Maintenance expenditure for the last 3 years is presented below.

**Table 2 – Bryntysilio Maintenance Costs (Property Services)**

Property Services 2006/7	£86,210
Property Services 2007/8	£34,044
Property Services 2008/9	£150,147
Property Services 3-year average	£90,134

These costs are in addition to those outlined in table 1. The £150,147 for 2008/9 is somewhat unrepresentative as this includes the full cost of replacing the drainage system, half of which (approximately £70,000) will ultimately be funded by the Camp Trust.

### Staffing

All staff at Bryntysilio are employed and wholly paid by Walsall Council although they also service the Camp Trust weeks. The centre currently employs 5 instructional staff, two trainee instructors and 14 administrative / domestic staff. This equates to 12.75 FTE staff. Of the instructional staff 3 are paid as teachers – the Head of Centre is paid on the teachers' leadership scale and the Deputy Head receives a standard additional payment for taking on substantial management responsibilities. The Head of Centre is also provided with free on-site accommodation in the bottom lodge. The employment of fully qualified teachers is no longer the norm in residential outdoor education although the Camp Trust are committed to retaining this.

**The working group recommend that the number of teaching staff employed at the centre is reduced. Expensive teaching posts can be replaced with instructors in line with outdoor education modernisation practices nationally.**

### Capacity

The centre currently has a maximum sleeping capacity of 36 children, which is extremely small in the context of other residential outdoor education centres operated by other local authorities. As a consequence of this limited capacity, whilst Bryntysilio is “fully booked” over half of Walsall school children never get to visit the centre – currently the centre can accommodate 1,400 pupils per year whilst there are approximately 3,700 pupils in each school year.

**The working group recommend that the capacity at the centre is doubled as soon as practicable to increase access and income streams to the centre. The long term aim of the centre should be to**

**have sufficient capacity to accommodate every child at Walsall at some point during their school care.**

*Further recommendations on how the centre could operate are contained in the 'Future Service Template' section of this report.*

### School charges

The current charge to schools for a 5-day residential visit is £185.00 per child, which rose from £135.00 on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2009. Although the price has risen significantly, it remains low in comparison with other similar centres (Sandwell charge £264) and in comparison with the actual cost of a 5-day stay (£504).

Another issue is that schools are currently only charged for the number of children they actually bring rather than the number of places they book – so for example if a school books 30 spaces and only brings 20, they are only charged for 20 and the Council lose the revenue for the missing 10. There is also no cancellation charge and on occasions schools have cancelled entire stays with only a few weeks' notice.

**The working group found that charges to schools were reasonable and were supportive of planned increases to fees. The working group also felt that fees should rise by a reasonable amount each year. Members also recommend that there should be a minimum charge per school for a week's stay and that cancellation fees should be introduced.**

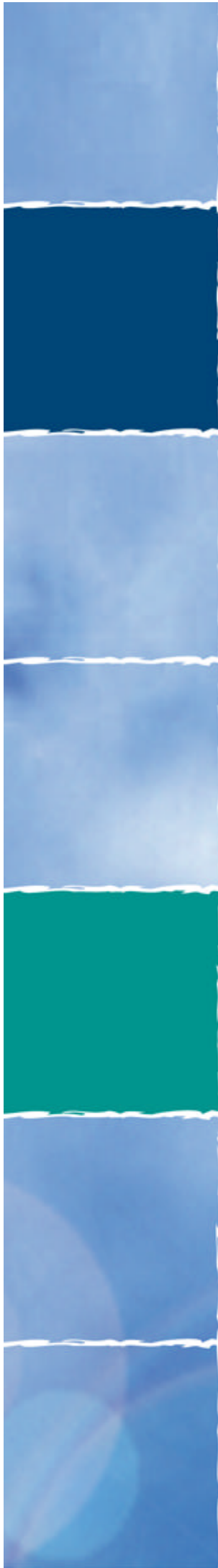
## **Alternative Providers**

The working group considered a number of alternative providers of residential outdoor education, both to provide a context for Bryntysilio and also as options for future provision to Walsall children.

The working group visited two of Staffordshire County Council's residential outdoor education Centres, Laches Wood and Chasewater, hosted by Ewart Gardner Staffordshire's Head of Outdoor Education Service. The working group were extremely impressed with the centres and the standard of service delivered. It represented a different model of provision, with larger centres staffed by instructors rather than teachers delivering a wide curriculum primarily on-site, making best use of the centres' facilities and grounds.

As a consequence Staffordshire's centres deliver 60,000 bed-nights at no cost to Staffordshire County Council with the full cost of the service recouped from charges to schools (approx £150 per child for a 5-day stay). This is in comparison to Bryntysilio which delivers 7,000 bed-nights charging £185 per child and requiring a £500,000 subsidy from Walsall Council.





The working group also meet with representatives from the Woodlands Camp Activity Centre in Aldridge. The working group were pleased that an activity centre such as this was situated so close to Walsall and were impressed with the centres ethos of bringing in external income.

**The working group acknowledge that the provision provided by Staffordshire County Council was a credible alternative to Bryntysilio.**

## **External Funding and Sponsorship**

The working group were keen to explore external funding opportunities.

Working group investigations confirmed that both the Council and the Camp Trust had previously sought external funding but had been unsuccessful. A key difficulty is that the centre is in Wales and provides services exclusively for children from England; therefore when funding bodies such as the National Lottery distributors are split into the home countries, neither the English nor Welsh parts will support Bryntysilio.

The working group also explored whether planning obligations such as Section 106 agreements could be used to support Bryntysilio. The working group learned that this would not be possible as the need for an out-of-borough facility could not be considered to be driven by in-borough housing development.

**The working group did however feel commercial sponsorship was an opportunity that had yet to be exploited – not least for the activities of the Camp Trust and strongly recommend that this avenue is pursued.**

### Local Partners

Due to the nature of the work delivered at the centre the working group felt it was likely that the activities delivered at Bryntysilio would meet the priorities of local partners.

**The working group recommend that this potential is explored by Cabinet with the view to securing additional funding for the centre. This could be in exchange for usage of the centre.**

**The working group recommend that Walsall Children's Services Serco is approached regarding corporate sponsorship due to the contribution the facilities at Bryntysilio provide to the delivery of the school curriculum.**

**The working group would also like to recommend that the Camp Trust works with local partners to identify disadvantaged children for holidays at Bryntysilio. The working group would also like to**

**suggest that disadvantaged families could be an additional target audience for holidays at the centre.**

#### Denbighshire County Council

As aforementioned Bryntysilio is located near Llangollen in North Wales within the boundaries of Denbighshire County Council. As set in their terms of reference the working group wanted to explore the possibility of developing a partnership with the local council in respect of Bryntysilio.

The working group met with Councillor Morfudd Jones, Denbighshire's Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Deputy Lead Member for Lifelong Learning. Whilst Councillor Jones was supportive of the centre and expressed a willingness to work collaboratively in the future although she was unable to give any commitment to provide additional funding to the centre.

**The working group recommend that the possibility of a partnership with Denbighshire County Council be explored. The working group note that a future partnership with the local council could open up new external revenue streams.**

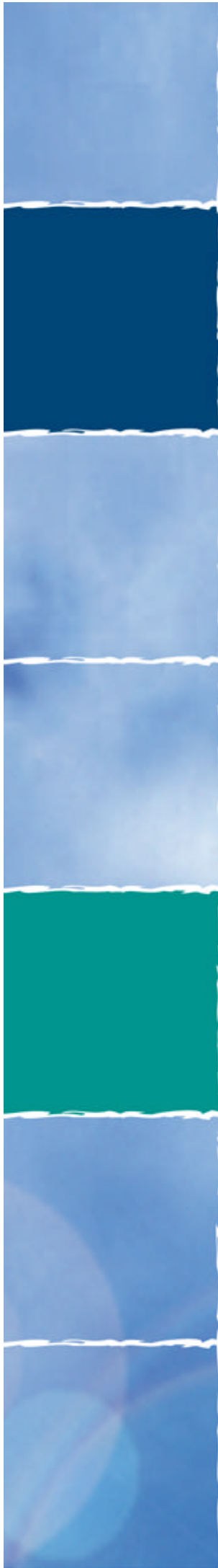
## **The Future of Outdoor Education**

The working group identified a number of possible options for the future provision of residential outdoor education which can be summarised as follows:

1. Retain the status-quo – keep the operation of Bryntysilio exactly as it is.
2. Externalise the provision – source residential outdoor education from another provider at no cost to Walsall Council and end the usage of Bryntysilio.
3. Evolve the service at Bryntysilio – continue the Councils usage of Bryntysilio, but radically alter how the service is delivered.

The working group quickly discounted option one – as it was not possible to justify the continuation of a £500,000 annual subsidy for a service that could not accommodate 60% of Walsall children and could be delivered at no cost in other authorities.

Option two was considered, however it was felt that Bryntysilio was a unique facility and something Walsall Council should be proud of and retain. The working group had heard from a number of existing and former users who had spoken highly and passionately of the Bryntysilio experience and as such felt the service should be retained.



The working group therefore decided to recommend the continuation of providing residential outdoor education at Bryntysilio. The centre was considered to be a valuable asset to the borough that would be hard to replace. The working group acknowledges that Bryntysilio has previously failed to evolve in keeping with the outdoor education sector and current management and practices were out-of-step with almost all other residential outdoor education centres. The working group recommend that Bryntysilio should be given the opportunity to restructure its operations, increase its income streams and develop a business plan to drive the centre forward.

However, the centre should not continue at any cost. If the centre cannot deliver a substantial income stream then the working group recommend that the future of the centre should be seriously considered as Council finances cannot sustain current levels of funding.

#### Future Service Template

The working group recommend that capacity should be increased either through low cost accommodation on the back field (potentially by the construction of log cabins) or through adaptation of the staff house and top lodge into a second dormitory block. On this basis that capacity should at least double it would be possible to accommodate two school groups simultaneously – doubling the throughput and hence the income.

Under this arrangement one school would undertake outdoor adventurous activities delivered by the Bryntysilio staff, whilst the second school would complete field studies, problem solving / team building activities led principally by accompanying school staff. The schools would swap over and spend half their week doing each.

The working group recommend limiting the centre to a 5-days a week (Monday-Friday) operation with school groups arriving early Monday morning & leaving late Friday afternoon – nearly 5 full days delivery in comparison to current practices which typically see schools arrive Monday lunchtime and leave early on Friday mornings. This would allow the Council to make savings on weekend staffing and free up weekends at the centre for commercial use such as self-sufficient “holiday” bookings or profitable corporate training events.

This revised service would address the capacity issues and should significantly increase income, whilst reducing overall costs. The anticipated effect of a full-year delivery is presented below.



**Table 3 – Financial impact of revised service template**

Current net cost	£520,000
Less increased income	-£193,000
Less saving from 5-day operation	-£74,000
Plus additional food, laundry & transport costs	£49,000
Revised net cost	£302,000
Total saving	£218,000

The proposal is to invest approximately £100,000 from the 2010/11 Bryntysilio revenue budget in the early part of next financial year to increase the capacity and allow the accommodation of two simultaneous school groups as described above from September 2010. This would then recoup the £100,000 investment in the second half of the year – so whilst there would be no net saving in 2010/11 we would deliver the required investment to facilitate savings in future years. On this basis it is anticipated that the revised service template should deliver a revenue saving of £218,000 from 2011/12 onwards.

**Due to the required initial investment to increase capacity at the centre the working group recommend that once this investment has been completed further investment should only be provided to the centre if it is delivering on its income targets which should be negotiated by Cabinet.**

To support this proposal the working group identified the following actions:

#### Relationships with Key Stakeholders

The working group felt that there had been a recent breakdown in communication between the Council, the Camp Trust and Centre Management.

**The working group strongly recommend that all sides make a positive contribution to re-establishing positive and engaged attitudes to ensure the long term sustainability of the centre.** Unless all parties are working together it is unlikely that the centre will survive.

#### Centre Management

**The working group recommend that the centre should remain in Sport and Leisure Services.** The idea of moving the centre to Children's Services management was explored but overall it was felt this would provide no material advantage to the long term success of the centre.

**A short, medium and long term business plan needs to be developed. The principal focus of the business plan should be**

increasing school capacity and drawing in external income from commercial users of the centre. A key component of the business plan should be a marketing strategy.

### Staff

As aforementioned the employment of teachers on teachers' pay, terms and conditions should be formally reviewed in line with practice at other outdoor education centres and the provision of free accommodation to the Head of Centre should be included in this review. The current situation regarding the caretaker/premise supervisor needs resolving urgently due to the number of outstanding works that need completing. Visiting school staff should also be utilised to oversee field studies, problem solving/team building activities to enable the centre to increase capacity but minimise the need for new instructor staff.

### Commercial Use

**The working group recommend that weekends should be kept free for commercial use.** Members were of the opinion that if promoted in the correct way weekend use of the centre could be very profitable and go some way towards reducing the centres reliance on the Councils funding.

The types of activities that the working group suggest could take place at the centre are:

- Corporate team building
- Activity weekends for scout and other similar groups
- A film set
- A wedding and reception venue - even if just by leasing the grounds to the centre for the erection of a marquee. As the site overlooks a World Heritage Site Members believed this idea had a lot of potential.
- Hosting partnership activities, for example, parenting classes and whole family counselling.

The working group acknowledge that the above list of suggestions is by no means exhaustive but Members encourage centre staff to seek out any commercial activity that can provide income to the centre.

### Lease

**The Council should sign a one-year rolling lease for the centre with the Camp Trust.** The working group acknowledge that this is some way from the 9-year lease that the Camp Trust would like to enter, however, a one-year lease is the only realistic option given the current financial situation being experienced by the Council.

## Camp Trust Holiday Weeks

The Camp Trust currently have access to the centre for 12 weeks each year. In practice this is actually 11 weeks as the centre is closed over Christmas. As aforementioned the Camp Trust often have difficulty in filling their allocation of spaces during their 11 weeks.

With this in mind along, with the need to increase income streams to sustain the centre from the Councils perspective, **the working group recommend that for the long term financial benefit of the centre Cabinet negotiate a reduction in the number of weeks made available to the Camp Trust. The working group suggest that this should be no more than 6 weeks per year and could be the six week school summer holiday period.**

In addition to this the Council currently pays for all the operating costs at the centre during Camp Trust holiday weeks. **The working group recommend that for the long term financial benefit of the centre that either Camp Trust holiday weeks are staffed by volunteers or the Camp Trust meets all operating costs of the centre during their holiday weeks.**

## **Schools Questionnaire**

As the main customers of Bryntysilio the working group wished to consult with all schools in the borough, including those schools that did not use the centre to seek their views. An anonymous questionnaire was emailed to all schools in the borough.

12 responses were received all from users of the centre. Feedback was all positive, particularly towards the flexible attitude of the staff at the centre to tailor activities to each schools specific needs.

A question was asked about how much a school would be prepared to pay for a 5 day visit to Bryntysilio and the answers ranged from 'as cheap as possible' up to £250.

The working group would like to thank all schools that returned questionnaires.

## **Review**

**The working group recommends that the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel re-establish a working group to review progress with the recommendations contained in this report six months after Cabinet have made their decision on the future of Bryntysilio.**

## Conclusion

The working group consider the above actions to represent the best option for the provision of residential outdoor education for Walsall children.

The working group recognise that Bryntysilio cannot continue in its existing format but recognise the centre is a valuable asset to the borough that would be hard to replace.

Other suitable outdoor education provision is available but the working group felt that Bryntysilio should be given the opportunity to restructure its operations, increase its income streams and develop a business plan to drive the centre forward.

However, it is important to point out that the working group felt the centre should not continue at any cost. If the centre cannot deliver a substantial income stream then the future of the centre should be seriously considered as Council finances cannot sustain current levels of funding.

## Recommendations

That:

1. the Council should continue to use Bryntysilio Hall to deliver residential outdoor education but not in its current format;
2. the Council, Camp Trust and Centre Management re-establish positive and engaged attitudes and work together closely to ensure the long-term sustainability of the centre;
3. the centre should develop a short, medium and long term business plan incorporating:
  - a. plans to increase capacity at the centre either through a new low-cost accommodation block or through adaptation of the staff house and top lodge;
  - b. utilising visiting teaching staff to deliver further activities rather than employing further instructor staff;
  - c. plans to move the centre to a standard Monday – Friday operation;
  - d. plans to develop commercial weekend activities at the site;
  - e. a comprehensive marketing strategy;
  - f. plans to work with local partners;
  - g. plans to work with Denbighshire County Council;
  - h. plans to maximise sponsorship and external income;
4. the employment of teaching staff delivering outdoor education should be formally reviewed in line with outdoor education practice elsewhere with the view to employing instructor staff;
5. Fees to schools for using the centre should rise each year;



6. there should be a minimum charge per group visit to the centre;
7. cancellation fees should be introduced at the centre;
8. following the initial investment required to increase capacity at the centre further investment should only be provided if the centre is delivering on its income targets which should be negotiated by Cabinet;
9. an eco-garden be developed at the centre;
10. a new condition survey of the centre is carried out on the following terms:
  - a. the surveyor and remit is jointly agreed by the Council and Camp Trust;
  - b. the survey includes an investigation into the possible need for further specialist surveys;
11. no large scale repair work should take place at the centre until the new survey, and any additional surveys as required, have been completed;
12. local contractors to the centre are employed to complete any agreed repair work;
13. the Council should sign a one-year rolling lease for the centre with the Camp Trust
14. the new lease should reduce the number of holiday weeks available to the Camp Trust;
15. the operational costs of Camp Trust holiday weeks should no longer be funded by the Council;
16. the Camp Trust should strengthen its definition of a 'disadvantaged child';
17. the Camp Trust should work with local partners to identify disadvantaged children;
18. the provision of free accommodation to the Head of Centre should be reviewed;
19. the current issues regarding the employment of a caretaker/premise supervisor need to be resolved as a matter of urgency;
20. Walsall Children's Services – Serco be approached regarding the possibility of corporate sponsorship at the centre;
21. the centre should remain under the management of Sports and Leisure Services;
22. the centre should not continue at any cost. If the centre cannot deliver a substantial income stream then the future of the centre should be seriously reconsidered;
23. The Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel re-establish a working group to review progress with the recommendations contained in this report six months after Cabinet have made their decision on the future of Bryntysilio.


## Appendix 1

<b>Work Group Name:</b>	Bryntysilio Review
<b>Panel:</b>	Community Services
<b>Municipal Year:</b>	2009/10
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Councillor L Harrison
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Ben Percival
<b>Support Officer:</b>	Craig Goodall
<b>Membership:</b>	Councillor I Shires Councillor C Creaney Councillor K Aftab Councillor P Bott

<b>1.</b>	<b>Context</b>
	<p>Bryntysilio was identified for scrutiny following the 2009/10 budget process during which it was identified as a possible saving – reflecting the current high cost of the service. Key drivers are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The limited capacity means that more than half of Walsall Children cannot go to Bryntysilio.</li> <li>• Walsall Council currently spends approximately £500,000 p.a. on the service.</li> <li>• The anticipated public spending restrictions make the sustainability of this level of funding doubtful.</li> <li>• To continue the current operation at Bryntysilio Council funding would actually have to increase (we are currently accumulating a significant maintenance backlog).</li> <li>• Our lease on Bryntysilio has expired – the new lease proposed by the landlord is 9 years long with break options at 3 year periods.</li> <li>• There are a range of alternative options for the provision of residential outdoor education either at Bryntysilio or elsewhere.</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. To investigate options to evolve the delivery of residential outdoor education by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. agreeing a new lease for the Bryntysilio centre</li> <li>b. withdrawing from the centre and investigate options to provide residential outdoor education by other means</li> <li>c. Investigating new sources of revenue, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. S106 Planning Gain</li> <li>ii. Potential for contributions from local area</li> <li>iii. Other means of grant funding</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>2. To investigate the value for money that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the current service provides</li> <li>b. an alternative service provider would provide</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. To consider options in relation to the outstanding maintenance liabilities.</li> </ul>

	<p>4. To investigate alternative sources of income</p> <p>5. Develop a recommendation of a preferred option for the provision of residential outdoor education</p>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Scope what's involved and what's not involved</b>
	<p>This review should focus on the provision of residential outdoor education for Walsall schools – the purpose for which Walsall Council currently leases Bryntysilio. Alternative provision should also be considered.</p> <p>This review should exclude the holiday activities delivered by the Bryntysilio Camp Trust – the Council does not fund nor control these activities.</p>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Equalities Implications</b>
	<p>We do not anticipate any equality implications there are suitable adaptations made for disability access...</p> <p>Demographic information can be provided on the children using Bryntysilio.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Who else will you want to take part?</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principle stakeholders in the service are Walsall schools (primary, secondary and special). We would need to ensure their views are considered especially in relation to proposals to amend delivery at Bryntysilio or procure alternative provision.</li> <li>• A key partner is the Bryntysilio Camp Trust the owners of the premises. Their views on any proposals to change the service at Bryntysilio should be considered and they would need to approve any significant departures from the existing delivery (based on the existing expired lease).</li> <li>• Officers from Property Services should also be consulted in relation to both maintenance liabilities and also any potential changes of use to buildings.</li> <li>• The Portfolio Holder should be invited to give evidence at an appropriate stage in the review.</li> <li>• Serco and Children's Services are responsible for the schools which utilise this facility.</li> <li>• Active groups and those people who have already involved should be consulted.</li> <li>• Development and Control</li> <li>• Denbighshire County Council</li> </ul>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Timescales &amp; Reporting Schedule</b>
	<p>Given the profile and sensitivity of the subject we should provide progress updates to each Community Services Scrutiny Panel meeting. In order for any recommendations to inform the 2010/11 budget setting process, recommendations would need to be made</p>





	to Cabinet in December.
	The working group wish to undertake a site visit as soon as possible to allow it to inform their review.
<b>6.</b>	<b>Risk factors</b>
	Consultation with schools may be challenging within the timescale outlined – especially given they will be largely unavailable until the second week in September.
	<b>A risk of the service review is redundancy costs.</b>

**List of witnesses**

*Bryntysilio Staff*

Anthea Cooper – Bryntysilio Centre Manager  
Barbara Raybould – Bryntysilio Bursar

*Camp Trust*

Austin Cheminais – Secretary  
Malcolm Barton – Chair  
Councillor Graham Wilkes – Member

*Denbighshire County Council*

Councillor Morfudd Jones – Cabinet Member for Children's Services  
and Deputy Lead Member for Lifelong Learning  
Jo Douglas – Regeneration Officer

*Children's Services - Serco*

Sue Wedgwood – Assistant Managing Director Children's Services

*Staffordshire County Council*

Ewart Gardener – Head of Outdoor Education  
Paul Bailey – Latches Wood, Manager

*Walsall Council*

Louise Hughes – Assistant Director – Universal Services  
Ben Percival – Sports and Leisure Manager  
Mike Gaffney – Capacity Building Manager – Third Sector  
Kevin Kendall – Head of Property Services  
Jim Ball – Service Manager – Building Services  
David Elsworthy – Head of Development Control

*Walsall Schools*

Andrew Cox – Assistant Headteacher – St Francis Assisi Secondary  
Martin Atkins – Headteacher – St. James Primary  
Marilyn Broadhurst – Castle Business and Enterprise College  
Gary Wilkins, Castle Business and Enterprise College

*Facebook Group Representatives*

Brett Spry – Friends of Bryntysilio Facebook Group (44 Members)  
Gemma Oliver - Save Our Bryntysilio Facebook (381 Members)