

# L.L.A.N.I. Ltd.

Annual Report 2006 - 2007

## **Introduction.**

This report discusses how L.L.A.N.I. Ltd has developed over the past year. It illustrates the projects that have been worked on in the last twelve months and sets out future developments as the company endeavours to fulfil its aim of securing the economic prosperity of the Llanidloes area.

L.L.A.N.I. Ltd has continued to develop its role in the community following its active involvement in delivering many of the actions of the Llanidloes Regeneration Plan. The company has established itself as a key partner in the delivery of regeneration projects and continues to develop fresh ideas for new projects that will contribute to the economic vitality of the area.

In addition, L.L.A.N.I. Ltd continues to play an important role, as secretariat to the Llanidloes and District Community Forum, in the ongoing consultation on the delivery of public services through the Community Strategy process in Powys.

L.L.A.N.I. Ltd has forged strong links with other local voluntary organisations, such as LLES Ltd, Llanidloes Community Transport and others, in order to pursue a number of partnership projects.

This report also highlights the challenging nature of the current climate for regeneration activities and outlines the direction to be taken by the company as it seeks to move towards a more self sustaining future.

The Company has been extremely fortunate to receive considerable financial assistance and advice from the Welsh Assembly Government's Department of Economy and Transport (possibly still better known locally by its pre WAG merger title of the Welsh Development Agency). This assistance has enabled the Company to undertake significant projects and develop coherent ideas for future development.

The company has also benefited from direct financial assistance and the help and advice of many officers at Powys County Council.

L.L.A.N.I. Ltd gratefully acknowledges the support received from the local community and from the public bodies who have become partners in the various projects undertaken by the company.

## **1. What is L.L.A.N.I. Ltd?**

### **1.1 Background Information**

L.L.A.N.I. Ltd was officially constituted as a company limited by guarantee in March of 2002. In effect the formation of the company was brought about by the re-structuring of the old Llanidloes LINK organisation in line with the new requirements of the European Union Toolkit Funding that was then the main source of regeneration funding in the Mid Wales area. This funding was drawn down to the Company through the Welsh Development Agency, now WAG DE&T. Some of the directors of the new company were members of LINK, thus maintaining a continuity of regeneration in Llanidloes dating back over many years to the days of the Town Forum.

### **1.2 Aims and Objectives of L.L.A.N.I. Ltd**

The main objects of the Company (as stated in the constitution) are:

- to improve the quality of life for the inhabitants of Llanidloes and the surrounding area through the provision of opportunities in partnership with others;
- to undertake any business, trade or industry, which in the opinion of the Company will be beneficial to Company members directly or indirectly or a percentage of members or the general community of Llanidloes;
- to promote, incite and help the development of other ventures in other areas of the United Kingdom which are similar or compatible with the objectives of the Company.

### **1.3 Membership and Officers of the Group**

All residents of Llanidloes, Trefeglwys, Llandinam, Llangurig, Old Hall and outlying areas, or anyone working within that area, are eligible to become members or directors of the company. Anybody wishing to become a member needs only to apply in writing to the Secretary of the Company at the company address of the Town Hall, Llanidloes. The current board of directors of the Company encompasses a wide range of professional experience in both the private and public sectors. A third of the board of directors retire annually, in rotation, at the AGM, though each retiring director can stand for immediate re-election by the membership at the meeting.

### **1.4 Additional Input**

The Company employs the services of a number of officers to implement the projects that it originates. The Company also maintains an office in the Town Hall where sign-posting advice is available to local businesses and groups in regard to the assistance available from statutory and other voluntary agencies.

### **1.5 Partnership Working**

L.L.A.N.I. Ltd was an integral part of the Llanidloes Task Force and played an active role in the delivery of the Llanidloes Regeneration Plan put together in the wake of the closure of the KTH factory in the town.

The Company provides the Secretariat to the Llanidloes & District Community Forum and is playing an active role in the ongoing consultations on service delivery and planning in Powys through the Community Strategy process.

The company organises the running of the Jungle Club, an after school and holiday club based in the grounds of Llanidloes Primary School; a social enterprise that generates the majority of its funding requirement from the charging of fees for the services it provides.

## **2. Review of the years activities**

### **2.1 L.L.A.N.I. Ltd Tourism Projects.**

#### **2.1.1 Enhancing the Tourism Product Offer**

The growth of the value of the local tourism economy is vital to the process of recovery from the impact of the closure of KTH and other local manufacturing businesses. In 2006 L.L.A.N.I. Ltd was successful in attracting a funding package worth £215,000 over two years to undertake joint marketing initiatives involving local SME's working in all sectors of the local economy. The aim of the project is to increase the profile of Llanidloes as a visitor destination through targeted marketing across a range of media. The funding enabled the appointment of a dedicated marketing officer for the area, Claire Jones, who has coordinated a number of advertising initiatives and commissioned the development of an area brochure, the redevelopment of the Llanidloes.com website that has been the company's main marketing tool over the last four years, and the production of a promotional DVD featuring Iolo Williams. Claire has also laid the foundations for the continuation of this vital project by establishing a Tourism Working Group made up of local SMEs, the role of which is both to monitor the delivery of the project and develop marketing links between businesses that can persist after the current funding assistance expires.

One of the targets against which the Welsh European Funding Office will measure the success of the project has already been met by Claire, namely the supporting of 75 SMEs through their involvement in joint marketing initiatives. In total, 122 have been supported to date. The match funding target of £26,000 has also been exceeded.

#### **2.1.2 Countryside Access Network**

Along with promoting Llanidloes as a tourism destination, L.L.A.N.I. Ltd is keenly aware that it is also necessary to develop the tourism infrastructure of the area, whether through direct intervention or the promotion of business networking.

An example of direct intervention has been the development of a countryside access network. Having been successful in securing funding from the Spirit2 scheme administered by PAVO for the employment of a countryside access officer, Richard Dix, an intensive period of surveying the state of existing rights of way resulted in the identification of some 40 linear and circular routes that, following capital improvements, form the basis of a countryside access network. Following successful applications to Powys County Council's Community Tourism Capital Grants Scheme, the chosen routes have benefited from new gates and stiles, bridges, and way-marking. This improvement work is now almost complete, and the emphasis of the project has now changed towards the interpretive materials needed to publicise the network and guide walkers and horse riders around it. A general leaflet on the network was produced in 2006, together with a booklet entitled "Twenty Walks Around Llanidloes" (published by Kittiwake Books). In addition, ten routes have been developed as part of the Leaping Stiles website, designed to promote walking breaks in mid Wales, whilst printable route descriptions and maps are being uploaded to the Walk Llanidloes section of the Llanidloes.com website.

Cycling routes have not been forgotten, the company having successfully applied for funding to develop cycling routes in addition to the walking routes. Again using the Llanidloes website as a base, a number of routes have been developed ranging from short family friendly cycle rides to more challenging long distance routes around the greater Llanidloes area.

L.L.A.N.I. Ltd is convinced that the completed network will form an important resource that can be the focus for marketing the area as a centre for activities.

### **2.1.3 Events and Festivals**

L.L.A.N.I. Ltd also continues to work on supporting the development of events and festivals that can provide a focus for marketing activity aimed at attracting new visitors to the area. The Festival of the Great Outdoors, hosted by local activity providers with the assistance of the company, continues to grow in popularity. The event this year generated approximately £5,000 of direct income to local business through ticket sales alone. Factor in spending on accommodation and meals for participants, who came from all over the country, and the value of this one event to the local economy is not to be underestimated.

The development of the countryside access network has been accompanied by the development of a 25mile challenge walking event and trail called the Sarn Sabrina, together with a shorter, half distance, Semi Sabrina Walk. The second running of the event in May of this year saw 85 competitors taking part in the walk, a significant increase on the inaugural event in 2006.

L.L.A.N.I. Ltd also assists with the annual *Viva Llanidloes!* festival. The festival is a mixture of entertainment and the visual arts, with a variety of exhibitions and events arranged during the last week in May. The festival relies upon input from groups, associations and local business through the organising of small events that, when joined together, form a full, diverse and entertaining programme. The festival has yet to reach its full potential, but with perseverance it should develop into an important fixture in the Llanidloes event's calendar, capable of attracting visitors from far and wide.

Other high points in the local events calendar such as the Fancy Dress and Carnival have also benefited from the input of the company in the last twelve months, ensuring that the Llanidloes area has a diverse and colourful range of things to do and see, for all ages, and for local and visitors alike.

L.L.A.N.I. Ltd is also a partner with LLES Ltd in the development of the Green Fair which will take place in October. Having assisted LLES with the development of the funding application / package for the fair, the company has also employed the expertise of its marketing officer in the design and distribution of the promotional material for the Fair.

### **2.1.4 Tourism Research – Llyn Clywedog**

Having, through visitor satisfaction surveys conducted over the last two years, identified the Llyn Clywedog as an important, and somewhat under developed element within the tourism product of the area, L.L.A.N.I. Ltd secured funding to commission consultants Annex 360 to look at the current state of the lake, and with it the Hafren Forest, and to identify potential developments in infrastructure and activities, and suggest a marketing message for the area.

This wide ranging study (the report is available to view on the About Us section of [www.llanidloes.com](http://www.llanidloes.com)) provides a body of evidence that will be central to the development of a range of projects in the near future, that will both seek to improve environmental aspects around the lake and develop the economic potential of Clywedog and Hafren Forest as visitor attractions

### **2.1.5 Information Centre**

In 2006 Powys County Council closed the dedicated Tourism Information Centre on the High Street in Llanidloes as part of its new Access to Services Agenda, whereby various Council services, including tourism information, would be accessed through a one stop shop facility based at the town's library. Given the limited hours of opening at the library and what was seen as down grading of the importance of tourism information, L.L.A.N.I. Ltd investigated the means of re-establishing a high street

presence for visitor information to complement the marketing activities of the company.

Having been successful in attracting funding from the PAVO administered Spirit2 grant scheme, and complimenting the opening hours of the Customer Services Point at the library, the Information Centre opened on Longbridge Street at the beginning of April. The Centre was, and remains, very much an experiment to see if sufficient income streams can be generated to support tourist information services long term. By providing marketing services through the Centre and the sub rental of surplus space, together with the sale of visitor related merchandise, it was hoped to create a social enterprise capable of sustaining itself. However, circumstances beyond the control of the company have forced the closure of the Centre on Longbridge Street, though the project still goes on with an alternative venue having been found at the library where the company will both continue to offer tourism information and expand the hours of opening of the Council's Customer Services point.

### **2.1.6 Heritage Product Development**

In the past year L.L.A.N.I. Ltd managed a small scale study into the heritage tourism product in the Llanidloes (Arwystli) area. The study sought to identify what physical remains are visible on the ground and their accessibility to visitors, together with possible interpretation within the context of the Llanidloes / Arwystli story. Building on this groundwork, L.L.A.N.I. Ltd is currently developing ideas for heritage tours and interpretation of local sites of interest. Such tours will primarily be available through the medium of the website, and will feature audio pod casts downloadable to MP3 players. The first pod cast, featuring the Town Walk will be available on line soon, and other pod casts will be developed for accessible sites of interest throughout the area.

In the fullness of time, the company would also like to develop exhibitions focusing on key periods and personalities in the history of the area, such as the once independent mediaeval kingdom of Arwystli and David Davies of Llandinam.

## **2.2 Streetscape Enhancements**

### **2.2.1 Public Art**

In 2006, L.L.A.N.I. Ltd exhibited design ideas and subsequently developed a proposal for public art to be incorporated within a programme of hard landscaping streetscape enhancement undertaken by Powys County Council. Agreement on WAG funding support for the inclusion of public art has been obtained and an application to draw down the required funding has been submitted and awaits confirmation. Pieces of artwork, based on the original design ideas developed in 2006 will then be commissioned and erected, principally at the public parks and open spaces in Llanidloes. Along with the general smartening up of pavements and street furniture, finger posting and interpretive signage, the pieces of artwork will enhance the look and feel of the town and boost its growing reputation as a place to practice, see and purchase art.

### **2.2.2 Gateway Feature**

The development of a gateway feature for Llanidloes has been long on the agenda of L.L.A.N.I. Ltd. The development of the public art proposal for the town looked long and hard at this question, but the then ongoing construction of the new roundabout and access road into Llanidloes made it difficult to visualise how such a feature could be made to fit.

Now that the construction work is complete, L.L.A.N.I. Ltd is revisiting the original gateway design ideas in this area and the potential funding streams that will enable the development of an eye catching feature that attracts interest in Llanidloes and, again, complements the growing reputation of the town as artistic centre. At the same time, the company is seeking to agree a new system of tourism signage with the relevant authorities for both the town of Llanidloes and on arrival within the greater 'Arwystli' area, as part of our ongoing promotion of the Llanidloes tourism offer.

### **2.2.3 Footbridge & Riverside Park Improvements**

Through negotiation with a local developer, L.L.A.N.I. Ltd has obtained funding to establish a footbridge over the Severn from the Gro car park to the Riverside Park area. In addition, the company is seeking to make groundwork improvements to the park. L.L.A.N.I. Ltd hopes to soon be able to apply for planning permission for the bridge, which, along with improvements to the park, will greatly enhance the facilities on offer to Llanidloes residents and visitors alike. Additional funding has been secured from Potter's Waste Management under the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme, and we hope to introduce further public art into the development of this area of the town.

## **2.3 Building Sustainable Communities**

### **2.3.1 Community Facilities**

The various feasibility studies into the Idloes Project for the redevelopment of the Llanidloes Community Centre have yet to result in a fully rounded project that can deliver sustainable community facilities in the long term. At present, a number of options are potentially possible, ranging from the development of new facilities integrated into the fabric of the Town Hall, to a refurbishment of the now closed Community Centre. L.L.A.N.I. Ltd has been instrumental in the development and assessment of the various options and in putting together a Community Buildings Steering Group, made up of representatives from the Town Council and local voluntary associations. The role of the Steering Group is to consult widely on the requirement for facilities in the town and to develop the structures and funding package that can take forward the most sustainable option.

The issue of whether the original donation of the land on which the current Community Centre is built constituted a charitable gift has complicated the development of this project. Having recognised the charitable nature of the gift, the Town Council has now charged the Steering Group with the task of regularising the arrangements by which the Centre is held for the benefit of the local community. This requires the development of a governing document and the appointment of trustees to an unincorporated association that will then take over the management of the centre, and the liability for it. L.L.A.N.I. Ltd is currently charged by the Steering Group with leading on the negotiations with the Charity Commission on the governing document, and the company is also about to launch a consultation exercise which will seek to discover whether, a year after the closure of the old community centre, there is still a need for community facilities in the town.

### **2.3.3 Childcare Development**

L.L.A.N.I. Ltd continues to demonstrate its commitment to the search for a solution to the childcare needs of Llanidloes. Further to the setting up of the Jungle Club after school and holiday clubs in 2006, the company has been successful in obtaining the funding to employ a Childcare Development officer to develop a business plan for a full day care nursery that can cater for the needs of the many parents in the area who currently find it difficult to balance the needs of work and family. In May, the company appointed Alex Wilson Mills to the post.

In addition to her work on full day care nursery provision, Alex also oversees the operation of the Jungle Club and is responsible for its progress towards full registration with the CSSIW. In addition to Alex's efforts, the development of the club would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of a number of local volunteers, who have given generously of their time and enthusiasm in both renovating the venue of the club and in its day to day management. Their efforts are to be applauded.

### **2.3.3 Winds of Change**

The new Tan 8 planning guidance on new wind farm developments in Wales opens up the possibility of large amounts of income going to local communities situated in the vicinity of the wind turbines. This is particularly the case in the area around Llanidloes where several new wind farms are planned and many existing farms may be upgraded. As an organisation with a proven track record of managing large sums of public money and delivering projects, L.L.A.N.I. Ltd feels it is ideally placed to act as an agent to ensure that income from wind turbines is translated into developing, administering and delivering projects on the ground in the upper Severn Valley.

The company is therefore seeking to promote the necessary dialogue between wind farm developers, the local planning authority charged with delivering the Tan 8 requirements through section 106 agreements, and local communities through its role as the secretariat to the local community forum, in order to ensure that the full potential of the income from the new wind farm developments is realised.

### **2.3.4 Entrust**

As with the wind farm developments in the area, the presence of a large landfill site in the vicinity of Llanidloes presents potential financial benefits to the local community through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme. To access funding from this scheme, organisations need to register as Environmental Bodies (EBs) with the scheme's regulator, Entrust. As a registered EB, and with its proven experience of project management, L.L.A.N.I. Ltd is perfectly placed to act as an agent for local groups who would not otherwise have access to this funding. In addition to the Riverside Park improvements mentioned above, the company has recently registered a further project with Entrust that will assist with the establishing a community meeting room within St Michael's Church, Trefeglwys as part of a larger scheme of renovation for the church. The company is also seeking to register a project for the development of new facilities at St Idloes Golf Club.

### **3. The Future for L.L.A.N.I. Ltd**

L.L.A.N.I. Ltd is now firmly established as a lead partner in the work of protecting and enhancing the economic vitality of the Llanidloes area. Working in conjunction with the statutory agencies and local partners, the Company sees itself as a catalyst promoting change and improvement across a wide range of local issues.

But the funding situation for regeneration organisations such as L.L.A.N.I. Ltd has changed markedly since the setting up of the company in 2002. The funding bodies we have relied on in the past have new priorities and it is clear that unless the company can develop income streams from trading to replace a large measure of its current grant dependency, there will be no long term security for the organisation – if any future at all. Given the benefits that have accrued to the Llanidloes area from the activities of the company to date, this would be both a shame and would set back community based initiatives in the area just as local capacity is being developed.

The company has been involved in many projects in the first five years of its existence and already operates the Jungle Club and the Information Centre on a social enterprise business footing. It is currently investigating the potential for developing income streams from the further development of the other projects it has been involved with in the past on a social enterprise / trading footing. A long list of potential ideas for business development has been compiled, based on perceived market opportunities and motivational fit with the social aims of the company, but much work needs to be done to narrow down this list and conduct the sort of research and business planning required to enable the company to arrive at a decision on which of the many potential opportunities should be pursued. Implementation will require further work, including negotiation with potential partners and the investigation of potential funding streams where investment capital is required.

Such research and development takes time, when L.L.A.N.I. Ltd is already committed to a full programme of project delivery during the current financial year. The future for the company is challenging and it will need all the support it can get if it is to be able to manage this time of transition. It is not alone in facing a difficult funding environment, the whole of the voluntary sector is feeling the squeeze and it is only by working ever more closely together and developing better coordination and cooperation that we will achieve the sort of self sustaining development that the community of Llanidloes both requires and has the ability to achieve.

## **Appendix – Members of LLANI Ltd 2006-2007**

### **Directors:**

Richard Beale

James Dalis Davies

Eamonn Forde (Chair)

John Griffiths

Nia Griffiths (Secretary)

Stuart Hobbs

Alan Horine

Colin Powell

Neil Reeves

Pam Smith

### **Members:**

Puiyon Jervis

Tim Morgan

Helen Rees

Karen Swann

Julia Toy

### **Employees:**

Ellen Blair

Play Leader (Jungle Club)

Richard Dix

Development Officer

Claire Jones

Marketing Officer

Sharon Jones

Tourism Support Officer

Nick Venti

Project Development Officer

Donna Williams

Play Assistant (Jungle Club)

Alex Wilson Mills

Childcare development Officer

All members of the board of directors can be contacted via the Project Officer in the following ways:

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