

Kinmel Bay Active Travel and Green Infrastructure: Potential project at Parc Hanes

Aim: to bring together several local and national government initiatives to utilising Welsh Government owned land in Kinmel Bay for active travel routes, green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement, the wellbeing of future generations, to improve the environment and create a better place.

Introduction: Taking a walk during lockdown TKBTC saw that Wales Government owned Parc Hanes fields within the residential area were being offered for grazing tenancy. The land is currently inaccessible to the public; comprises mainly improved grassland for grazing with low biodiversity value. It could be an area of outstanding use to the community, providing inclusive access, various ecological habitats, community growing areas and improved active travel options for non-motorised users.



The grazing land contrasts with a small community woodland already developed in Kinmel Bay.

Plots 1, 4, 5 & 6 Park Avenue, Kinnel Bay

Plot 1

Plot 4

Plot 5

Plot 6

0 25 50 100

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Parc Hanes Grazing Land within the residential area

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Overview and context. Globally our environment has deteriorated for many years resulting in climate change as the extreme priority. Less visible is the impact on biodiversity (loss of species). The vast areas of land given to grazing has us living in a “green desert” where the inaccessible fields around us contain little by way of diverse plant or wildlife species; it looks good from a distance. As a beekeeper I see this in the loss season round flowering plants with consequential loss of pollinating insects with consequential negative impact on plant, insects, wildlife, and climate change mitigation.

Even less immediately visible is the recognised important benefit on human health and wellbeing for future generations from living inclusively within a healthy diverse natural environment. Healthy inclusive living with our environment will not cost the earth but not managing and protecting our environment will.

Benefits of recovering the Parc Hanes land for nature and communities.



Male Robin feeds small insects to egg carrying female in spring

The Parc Hanes land has railway, road and field boundaries and sits between densely populated residential estates. As an opening position the land could follow the successful Chester Avenue Woodland model on the Towyn edge of Kinmel Bay a successful multi-agency community project planted some 13yrs ago and which TKBTC are currently improving in some areas following consultation.

Another example is the Quarry Line Path running through Towyn and Kinmel Bay serving as a cycling and walking natural place and wildlife corridor. In this Parc Hanes proposal case, the land could be designed and arranged for a woodland and wetland experience, indigenous tree, and plant species, supporting wide biodiversity with paths for inclusive access and personal space.

Active Travel and Access: The land is central to the settlement of Kinmel Bay close to many residential areas and easily accessible inclusively and from neighbouring places walking or cycling.



Approximate existing easy active travel routes (yellow) to the (black outline) natural space including a line over the rail bridge for reference / scale. Densely packed holiday parks have expanded since this image and are shown in white tint. Parc Hanes an oasis in the centre of dense housing.

Parc Hanes fields if developed for residential housing would simply overdevelop the centre, replicating numerous pre-Covid and Climate Change developments; here is a unique opportunity to fulfil Wales Government directives, policies, and social values.

Cyclists from Rhuddlan and St Asaph do travel along the Clwyd embankment and this could be enhanced as part of the needed Clwyd flood prevention. Towyn, Pensarn, Abergele cyclists ride along the prom to access Kinmel Bay and Parc Hanes is easily accessed from near and far.



Pont Ddraig provides cycle and pedestrian access to the land from East Rhyl as could the rail bridge

Residents of Denbighshire in East Rhyl do not have access to such a natural place, and they could easily “active-travel” to the Parc Hanes natural space. The establishment of such a natural place would also serve to focus future inclusive access for people of all abilities and mobility issues as well as being a hub for wildlife corridors.

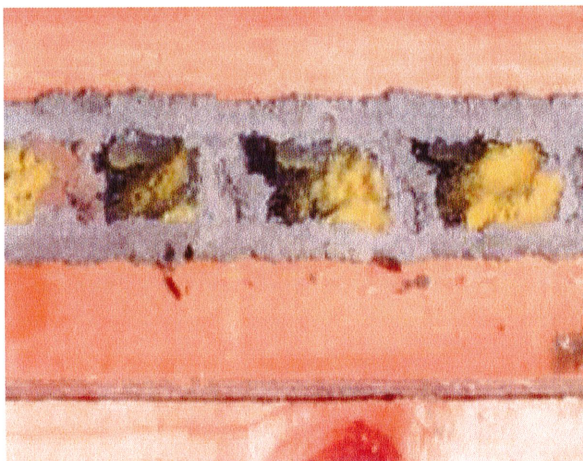


To the North and South of the Parc Hanes fields are residential estates, an oasis not accessible or useful to residents. As natural space Park Hanes could breathe new life into the area



Fenced ponds and a wooded boundary to the East

Biodiversity: In this place the natural area envisaged would quickly evolve to sustain a wide variety of largely indigenous trees, plants, and wildlife within the densely built area. The land could become the hub for a local wildlife corridor linking increasingly more widely and providing sustainable habitat for bees, butterflies, beetles, amphibians etc., the plants they pollinate and the food chain they supply.



Mason bees lay eggs in cells containing pollen and nectar; seen here in a nest box. The larva here about 1mm long consumes pollen before hibernating to emerge next spring as a prolific pollinator.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iFH_VWzEGc&feature=youtu.be

We do not see many of the small invertebrates which have evolved over millions of years symbiotically with host plant species, but they start the food chain and pollinate flowers in balanced environments. The loss of biodiversity is a matter of the greatest concern. Biodiversity sustains numerous ecosystems and habitats in the natural spaces, and we all know how important such places are to human wellbeing, now and for the future.

Wales has a low level of woodland and low levels of biodiversity, we live in a “Green Desert” where grazing to a large degree has removed many species of plants and wildlife leaving fields green and distant landscapes beautiful but without ecosystems, habitat and season-round forage for pollinating insects like bees.

Climate change adaptation: Planting trees and establishing balanced green areas significantly helps with carbon capture and greenhouse gas emission targets and management. The woodland environment also provides shade for plants and people in increasingly hot weather and retains soil conditions.

We are experiencing more intense rainfall and flooding in low-lying coastal areas, as well as hotter, drier summers. The projections also foresee more extremely warm days together with milder, wetter winters. The people most likely to be affected by these transitions live in our most deprived communities. Green Infrastructure can make a substantial contribution towards adapting to, and mitigating, climate change.

The Parc Hanes project would assist flood risk mitigation from the increasingly heavy winter rain by absorbing / holding rainwater within the natural space between existing estates.

Communities: All ages and abilities can benefit from the natural space environment which through active travel would expand existing links with neighbouring communities. People across council boundary areas already actively travel, in this proposal a vital addition to coastal destinations is proposed where the woodland / wetland of Parc Hanes would complement the coast and dunes to make more of a total-Kinmel Bay natural experience. Space for community growing areas could be encouraged. The parc Hanes natural space would be a huge wellbeing benefit, inclusive to all ages and abilities to immediate the many close residents, seasonal visitors, and neighbour communities.

Education: The natural space development creates an opportunity for all ages to learn and experience nature in a safe environment. The area is visited annually by staff and students from Chester University studying flood risk hazard management and communities; our local foundation and primary school children would find the habitat structured to curriculum content.

Flood mitigation: The area of land in question forms a flood mitigation zone between large residential areas which were constructed before SUDS drainage conditions applied. This natural space allows the increasingly heavy and prolonged winter rain to soak and flow away naturally. As a planted natural space area, the process of flood protection will continue and beneficially increase with plant absorption.

Towyn and Kinmel Bay are areas with a history of flooding and face future risk. If the land were developed for even to a higher level of property level flood resilience some homes are occupied by people who would require evacuation in an emergency and not only would the area be overdeveloped but evacuation and access by emergency services would be more difficult in an emergency especially considering the simultaneous movement of many vehicles onto the limited exit routes.

Green Infrastructure: With the Parc Hanes land situated centrally in an area of dense population comes a unique opportunity to introduce living space in line with the GI agenda.

Bringing the land into natural space as outlined in this proposal recognises the importance of Wales Gov and local authority recognised GI as a framework to improve urban and climatic challenges by building with nature.

The main components of this approach include stormwater management, climate adaptation, less heat stress, more biodiversity, better air quality, clean water and healthy soils, as well as increased quality of life through recreation and providing shade and shelter in and around towns. Green infrastructure also serves to provide an ecological framework for social, economic, and environmental health of the surroundings.

Conwy CBC are currently working with consultants and NRW to prepare a county-wide Green Infrastructure Analysis (GIA) which will inform the Replacement LDP, which is currently being prepared. The GIA will include a case study specifically covering the Towyn and Kinmel Bay area with the aim to help rejuvenate the area. It is otherwise becoming strangled by development concentrated to the centre limiting prosperity, wellbeing, and health. There is space outside the centre for any future residential development which would free the Parc Hanes area for natural space in keeping with the GI.

Holistic Ecology: This Parc Hanes area of land is deprived in vital land habitat but we as a community are rich in coastal nature with important bird species and marine habitat.



Snow Bunting at Kinmel Bay shore

The Parc Hanes project qualifies independently as a vital development but when viewed together with existing elements including the natural coast and dunes environment this proposal adds substantially to the total natural amenity within the accessible area to the benefit of wider communities. It should be noted that while the space concerned is close to residential areas there is limited road access so the natural space would attract only those who want to specifically visit the place.

Reduce pollution levels in our air and reduce noise pollution: Instead of developing this land in the centre with more houses by the railway and more cars and roads etc the natural space would absorb much of the train noise and provide oxygenated air and woodland fragrance in the heart of the residential community.

Wales Government Policy Compliance: To make natural use of the Parc Hanes land for communities complies with many current Wales Government policies, strategies, and Acts. Notably the Environment Act and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act with their biodiversity elements. The outlined use complies with climate change mitigation and we create more woodland as is required. To be sustainable a project needs to be socially acceptable, environmentally friendly, and economically viable. In this proposal the social and environmental priorities are clear and evident. This document outlines recent examples of other projects where combinations of funding have been sourced.

There are simply endless and timeless benefits and opportunities to transform the environment and develop vibrant communities arising from this proposal. Alternatively, the land sits idle, sterile, and inaccessible in the centre of our community or is over-developed for further concentrating a larger population to the town centre.

If the Parc Hanes land were built new roads would be needed and the existing roads including St Asaph Avenue and Foryd Road would be placed under further pressure. The economic pressure as has been proven, requires maximum density with little natural space, more parking, pollution, and pressure on services. Building on the land has adverse implications for SUDS, emergency evacuation, and all the benefits listed above would be lost.

There is not enough employment opportunity in Kinmel Bay for existing residents so those additional not working from home would have to travel, as is the existing pattern and those residing within the area would not have the vital space for wellbeing.

If the land were built upon these communities would miss a great opportunity to re-align as a garden town and the environment in terms of biodiversity, habitat and ecology would silently suffer another blow to conservation.

Examples Projects and sources of funds.

Cardiff project: A detailed feasibility study carried out in 2013 calculated an annual financial benefit of £381,760, including savings in water management, through ecosystem services, and from increased health and wellbeing. This was instrumental in securing scheme funding of £2.5million from project partners Cardiff Council, Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water, and Natural Resources Wales. Funding was also secured from the Landfill Communities Fund, a scheme allowing landfill operators to contribute towards eligible local projects. <https://greenergrangetown.wordpress.com/>

Belfast project: Total project funding was £40million – £23.6million from the Big Lottery Fund helped to release £4million from Belfast City Council, £3.7million from Northern Ireland's Department for Communities, and £8.7million from Northern Ireland's Department for Infrastructure. The National Prevention Research Initiative provided £1.1million for the PARC (Physical Activity and the Rejuvenation of Connswater) before-and-after evaluation study. www.connswatergreenway.co.uk

Scotland Hospital: Original project investment was just £300,000, or 0.1% of the overall hospital cost. Forestry and Land Scotland and NHS Forth Valley made contributions. This levered in £200,000 funding from a 'Woods in and Around Towns' grant.

<https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2018-02/Green%20Ways%20to%20Health%20-%20Forth%20Valley%20Royal%20Hospital%20Case%20Study.pdf>

Proposal: Clearly here is a unique opportunity to improve the local and wider environment for future generations; all measures and benefits accrue from Wales Government strategies and require WG support.

If Wales Government, who own the land were prepared to explore making the land available for use as described above then together an exciting and significant programme could progress to reality.

It would then be necessary to form a multi-agency management group to design and manage the project and to evolve a funding programme.

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