



Janet Finch-Saunders AC/AM

Aelod Cynulliad dros Aberconwy

Assembly Member for Aberconwy



Mark Drakeford AM,
First Minister,
Welsh Government
By Email

22 July 2019
Ref: MJ/JF357

Private and Confidential
Re: Snowdonia National Park Authority

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Dear First Minister,

I am writing with regards to the contribution I made during Business Statements on 9 July 2019.

During my speech I raised the plight of Snowdonia National Park Authority.

As you will see from reading the transcript, I explained that the Authority is facing a half a million cut in funding by your Welsh Government. This equates to an 11% reduction, taking the Authority to a level of money lower than 2001.

I emphasised the seriousness of the situation in the Senedd. For example, I mentioned the facts that should this cut be pursued by your Welsh Government, it will result in paths on Snowdon not being repaired; closure of all three information centres; the end of the Sherpa bus (which creates an invaluable link between the six main routes that travel up Snowdon, as well as the main car parks, villages and tourist attractions); closure of public toilets; loss of staff; and serious questions about the financial robustness of the Authority.

Clearly, this is one of the greatest threats the continued operation and our world famous National Park has seen. It follows that it will come as no surprise to you that I am bitterly disappointed with Rebecca Evans AM, Minister for Finance and Trefnydd's response.

[Cont...]

Mi wnaiff Janet Finch-Saunders cadw unrhyw wybodaeth bersonol yn gwbl gyfrinachol, ac fel arfer mi fydd rhaid iddi rannu'r wybodaeth 'efo aelodau o staff i'w galluogi nhw i ddelio 'efo'r awdurdodau perthnasol er mwyn eich helpu a'ch cynorthwyo chi. Efallai mi fydd angen i rywun ysgrifennu atoch er mwyn darparu'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf o bwys. Gadwch wybod i ni os nad oes diddordeb gennych mewn cael eich cysylltu at y diben hwn.

Janet Finch-Saunders will treat in confidence any personal information which you may pass on to her, and she will normally allow her staff to see it, so that they can consult with relevant authorities in order to help and advise you. We may wish to write to you from time to time to keep you informed on issues which you may find of interest. Please let us know if you do not wish to be contacted for this purpose.

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[Cont...]

The Minister replied to my request for a statement on the funding of the Authority, and an investigation into the impact of the loss of finance on its ability to deliver on priorities by making not a single helpful point. From reading the transcript you will see that she chose to list some of the other areas which are under pressure and blame the UK Government for the funding issues encountered here. Whilst I appreciate that there will continue to be much debate about our UK Government's careful management of taxpayers' money, your Minister's response was inappropriate, and completely overlooked the striking facts I had presented about Snowdonia National Park Authority.

Undoubtedly, the impression the Minister for Finance has given me is that she has no intention of reviewing the proposed cut to the Authority. Indeed, her response showed a complete lack of sympathy for the seriousness of situation there.

Given the above, I have chosen to write to yourself with the hope that you will show a thorough interest in the case and appreciate the severity of the potential consequences of this further reduction in funding. It follows that I would be grateful if you could kindly review the proposed cut, and explain how, when the Authority is facing the possibility of closing services essential to locals and the experience of the 6 million people who enjoy the Park annually, it is possible for the Authority to achieve your Welsh Government's priorities for national parks in Wales.

These are detailed in *Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks*. For example, they include:
'To encourage, provide for and manage responsible outdoor recreation opportunities is an important role for AONBs and a key remit for Park Authorities. Efforts need to focus on working towards the provision of fit for purpose places and facilities which are consistent in standard with the spectacular landscapes they serve'.

Clearly, the fact that the proposed cut will likely result in the closure of public toilets, cessation of repairs to footpaths, closure of all three information centres, and the end of the Sherpa bus, actually proves that without reasonable funding being provided by you, your priorities for national parks will not be achieved. This must be avoided, so I look forward to hearing from and working with you as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely

Janet



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