

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## **DATGANIADAU O DDIDDORDEB**

Mae gofyn i aelodau o'r panel, arsyllwyr a phartion perthnasol eraill ddatgan unrhyw ddiddordebau sydd ganddynt **ymlaen llaw** mewn perthynas â'r eitemau Panel Adolygu Dylunio Bydd unrhyw ddatganiadau o'r fath yn cael eu cofnodi yma ac yng nghofnodion canolog Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru.

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare ***in advance*** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCfW's central records.

### **Statws adolygu/Review status**

### **Cyfrinachol/Confidential**

Dyddiad cyfarfod/meeting date	April 25th 2012
Dyddiad cyhoeddi/issue date	May 3rd 2012
Lleoliad y cynllun/scheme location	Gethin Woodland Park, Merthyr Tydfil
Disgrifiad y cynllun/scheme description	Mountain Bike park and visitor centre
Statws cynllunio/planning status	Cyn gwneud cais/ pre-application
Datganiadau o ddiddordeb/declaration of interests	Mark Hallett, Commissioner of DCfW is currently employing Gardiner and Theobald as project managers on Porth Teigr.

### **Adran 1/part 1**

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

Bike Park Wales is a company set up to deliver this project and has expertise in designing and building mountain bike trails. Unlike other mountain bike centres in Wales, which are run by local authorities and/or the Forestry Commission, this is a commercial venture.

The proposed visitor centre will house a bike shop, cafe, information point, offices, workshops and stores. The single storey building has an open plan layout and external decking serving the cafe and shop. Security has been an important issue in the design, given the isolated position and high value stock.

The local authority see this proposal as an opportunity to create a distinctive quality building which becomes a destination in its own right. In their view the building is as important as the trails and their aspiration is for a landmark development which can attract national and international support.

**Crynodeb o'r prif bwyntiau a gododd o'r drafodaeth, i'w darllen ochr yn ochr ag Adran 2 yr adroddiad hwn.**

**Summary of key points arising from discussion, to be read in conjunction with Part 2 of this report.**

The Panel was very supportive of the principle of establishing a mountain bike centre in this location, and the ambition for a scheme of sufficiently high quality that would attract visitors from a wide area and achieve commercial success. However, we think that the current proposal is not an adequate response to the brief and the site and requires fundamental revisions. In summary:

- The relationship between the building and the site, including a sensitive landscape response and the potential for energy independence, should be the starting point for developing the building design.
- Reducing the energy demand to a minimum, and then providing what is needed from on-site renewable sources, would deliver long term financial savings and could be an additional selling point.
- The overall experience of the visitor from arrival, through different interactions with the site and the building, to departure, should be used to inform the building's layout and orientation.
- The building could be made much simpler and more functional within the budget, and unnecessary expenditure avoided, while providing all necessary functions such as accessible WCs and showers.
- Links with public transport connections and existing cycle ways should be enhanced.
- The engagement of a landscape architect is urgently needed to achieve a sensitive integration of the building and associated parking within the landscape setting.

**Adran 2/part 2**

**Trafodaeth ac Ymateb y Panel yn Llawn  
Discussion and panel response in full**

The Panel agreed that the visitor centre building should be an essential part of the destination experience, as has been the case with other successful mountain bike centres in Wales. The client, Bike Park Wales, views the building as a functional support to the principal activity of providing trails. The site was initially identified for this use by the Forestry Commission and became the preferred site with the least constraints.

The Panel was pleased to note the good public transport links with the site and thought these should be strengthened. In particular the pedestrian/cycle link with

Abercanaid station and the Taff Trail should be completed and integrated with the scheme. While we accepted that this is outside the remit of this particular project, we understand that Sustrans are looking to improve this link and we would expect the local authority to support this and help resolve issues of land ownership.

The Panel fully supported the proposed use and the brief, and agreed that the building should be functional and robust. However, we think that there is currently a lack of ambition demonstrated in the indicative design material and this could be a missed opportunity to deliver the kind of internationally attractive facility that is envisaged. Considerations of functionality, sustainability and integration with the landscape should have been the starting point for developing the built form, structure and layout.

The arrival experience and how people move to and through the building should be given more careful consideration. For example, on approaching the building from the car park, the elevation which will be seen first is a narrow gable end with small toilet windows. The main entrance to the building should be made far more legible and inviting. Essential functions such as WCs should be directly accessible from the outside, without having to go through the cafe. We thought that the future WC and shower block should be included in the project from the beginning, and that mountain bikers would expect showers to be provided as a basic necessity.

The Panel thought that the budget of approximately £0.5m was adequate to deliver a well designed building with all the necessary functions. We noted that the long structural spans shown on the drawings will be expensive to deliver, as will the curved form which appears to have no apparent functional justification. Savings could be made to deliver a simpler, better functioning building, allowing more resources to be directed towards a sympathetic landscape scheme and improving the building's relationship with the site.

Given that the site is off grid and the costs of a grid connection would be significant, the Panel strongly recommended the team to explore the option of creating a building which was self-sufficient in energy. This would involve driving down the energy demand by investing in the fabric of the building envelope and ensuring high levels of insulation, good air tightness standards, and efficient glazing systems. All external doors should be lobbied to prevent excessive heat loss. Once the energy demand has been minimised in this way, renewable sources for heat and energy, such as biomass, should be considered. Such a building would offer an additional marketing advantage and could become a valuable educational resource.

The Panel thought that a sensitive response to the existing landscape context and topography was not sufficiently demonstrated. We were told that a landscape architect will be engaged to work on the project and that tree felling will be minimised with an aim to retain dominant hardwoods. Car parking will be sensitively integrated with pockets of parking provided within the tree cover. However, the exact way in which 200 parking spaces will be accommodated without major landscape impact has still to be shown and justified.

The client confirmed that ticket sales for use of the trails and for the 'uplift facility' were the primary source of income for the whole project. Although the focus was on downhill trails, cross-country trails and single track uphill trails would also be provided.

**Mae Panel Adolygu Dylunio Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru a'r staff yn croesawu rhagor o ymgynghoriad, a bydd yn hapus i ddarparu rhagor o adborth am yr adroddiad yma a/neu lle bo'n briodol, dderbyn cyflwyniadau pellach. Diolch am ymgynghori â'r Comisiwn a chadwch mewn cysylltiad â ni os gwelwch yn dda ynglŷn â hynt eich prosiect. A fyddech gystal â'n hysbysu o ddatblygiad eich prosiect. Diolch yn fawr am ymgynghori â'r Comisiwn.**

**The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel welcomes further consultation and we will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Please keep us informed of the progress of your project. Thank you for consulting the Commission.**

DCfW is a non-statutory consultee, a private limited company and wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. The comment recorded in this report, arising from formal Design Review through our Design Review Service, is provided in the public interest for the consideration of local planning authorities as a material consideration, and other users of the Design Review Service. It is not and should not be considered 'advice' and no third party is bound or required to act upon it. The Design Review Service is delivered in line with DCfW's published protocols, code of conduct and complaints procedure, which should be read and considered by users of the service.

***Mae copi iath Gymraeg o'r adroddiad hwn ar gael ar ofyn.  
A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.***

#### **Atodiad 1/appendix 1 Mynychwyr/attendees**

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr Agent/Client/Developer	Bike Park Wales (Rowan Sorrell)
Pensaer/Dylunydd Trefol Architectural/Urban Designer	Munro Associates Architects (Phil Oliver)
Ymgynghorwyr/Consultants	n/a
Trydydd Parti/Third Party	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/Planning Authority	Merthyr Tydfil CBC (David Cross)
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/	

Design Review Panel  
Cadeirydd/Chair  
Swydog/Officer  
Prif Banelydd/Lead Panellist

John Punter  
Cindy Harris  
Ben Sibert  
Jonathan Adams  
Michael Griffiths

Sylwedyddion/Observers

Simon Power DCfW