

Harlech and Ardudwy  
Leisure Ltd June 2024

# Business Plan

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## Executive Summary

Harlech and Ardudwy Leisure (HAL) are a social enterprise run by a volunteer Board of Directors, all members of the local community. The Centre includes a swimming pool, climbing wall, café as well as parking and tennis facilities. The Covid-19 Pandemic had a significant impact on its ability to stay open and there have been some staffing issues although the Centre is gradually recovering customers. The Centre is a well-regarded and generally a highly rated community and tourist facility.

HAL's income is from a combination of grants and charitable funding as well as from direct sales. Whilst levels of total income have not altered dramatically from 2012 to 2024, fluctuating between £250,000 and £300,000, the ratio of grant and charitable funding to sales has changed over time. Sales have declined to the extent that grant and charitable income has risen from the historical level of around 35% to grant and charitable income per year to being 56% of HAL income in the last financial year

Over the most recent years of full operation the operating costs were circa £270,000 per annum. Of this, salaries were about £145,000, energy and water rates £55,000. Energy costs has risen, with energy and water up to £66,000 in 22-23. Whilst wages have generally reduced this was also a reflection of reduced level of service, a period of maternity leave and a shift towards more flexible contracts. A budget for salaries on a like for like basis would now be around £150,000. A full Profit and Loss is shown in an Appendix.

Breaking down budgeting into cost centres gives the organisation a much clearer idea of which parts of the business were performing or under-performing. Some training in this area has started but needs further development. This approach will benefit from further development as this business plan evolves. The breakdown shows that the climbing wall and café are critical income streams, with untapped potential and neither were functioning at the start of the business planning process. HAL would be down at least £80k on income in any year on this basis (The café has recently reopened). This lack of income is more significant than the loss of grant.

There is potential to secure additional capital investment through environmental grants to upgrade the efficiency of the building to reduce overheads. Case studies indicate that an investment could reduce costs by 50%. A 50% reduction in bills would allow the centre to be feasible. Work is ongoing to scope out the level of capital investment and savings required.

Harlech and Ardudwy Leisure, is proud to be run by the community, for the community. Like many community facilities there are numerous challenges to be faced. However, with a combination of fundraising, capital investment and self-generated sales income and the commitment to grow its partnerships and stakeholders relationships, it could achieve financial sustainability and continue to deliver a community service to local people and visitors to this part of North Wales for years to come.

## Introduction

Harlech and Ardudwy Leisure (HAL) is a social enterprise run by a volunteer Board of Directors. The organisation evolved from the community campaign in 2008 to save Harlech Pool and the consequent negotiations with Cyngor Gwynedd Council to adopt a model of community ownership. The Centre includes a swimming pool, climbing wall, café as well as parking and tennis facilities.

There have been some unprecedented challenges; the Covid-19 Pandemic had a significant impact on its ability to stay open and the numbers of customers declined. This did however provide an opportunity to undertake some essential repairs. The climbing wall is currently closed due the failure of part of the roof; investigations are being made into the costs and timescales of repairs. At the time of writing, the café had just re opened, consistent with early engagement with this business planning process which established the need to rebuild a sustainable level of income.

The aim of the Business Plan is to co-construct a viable and sustainable future for Harlech and Ardudwy Leisure with their partners. It is intended as a working document. The Plan recognises the experience of substantial pressure on resources, the considerable effort that has already been invested in the Centre by volunteers and staff and the potential or capacity for further investment. There are challenges ahead but there are opportunities if collaborations could be built upon and the right level of support secured.

The business plan has been written by a team of consultants led by John Anderson with Sian Peake-Jones and Arwel Jones in consultation with the local community, the HAL Board and other stakeholders. The plan draws on the consultants' knowledge and experience of social businesses and of local and regional government funding and operations and the Board's experience and knowledge. The business planning process involved a range of meetings and consultations with local stakeholders, representatives of Cyngor Gwynedd Council, as well as regular meetings with the Directors. The financial records of the Centre were analysed using historical data to look at the sustainability moving forward based on conservative estimates of what has been achieved to date rather than aspirational stretch targets that are more prone to failure.

Harlech and Ardudwy Leisure, is proud to be run by the community, for the community. Like many community facilities there are numerous challenges to be faced. However, with a combination of increased funding and income; a plan to manage its cost base and the commitment to grow its partnerships and stakeholders relationships, it could achieve financial sustainability and continue to deliver a community service to local people and visitors to this part of North Wales for years to come.

## The Strategic Context

In 2017 Cyngor Gwynedd Council, with the support of Welsh Government, commissioned a strategic guide for Harlech to deliver a clear set of robust proposals that identify how the public sector can facilitate and work collaboratively with private businesses and the community ..... “adding value to the town’s economic development whilst maximising the town’s sustainable economic potential”. The study identified a clear and joint vision for the regeneration of Harlech and the surrounding area, based on national, regional and local considerations, data analysis and trend forecasting. It also identified a model for co-operation between public, private and community organisations. Within this was a series of observations and recommendations that still remain relevant:

1. Community run social enterprise
2. Swimming pool – climbing wall – café
3. Resource for local schools to provide swimming lessons for coastal community
4. Popular wet weather facility
5. Relies on limited supply of volunteers
6. Lacks resources to develop further grant funding for improvements
7. Major works needed to improve visitor appeal – changing rooms and glazing
8. Potential for photo-voltaic panels on roof
9. Build corporate membership offers with guest houses and caravan sites
10. Develop current marketing to outdoor education centres, guided walks, taster events
11. Develop a ‘passport’ or ‘Harlech Card’ for residents and visitors that brings together other attractions, to generate subscriptions and regular income.

## The Gwynedd and Anglesey Well-being Plan 2023-2028

In pursuance of implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015, a Public Service Board has been created, which includes several key public sector agencies charged with taking a cohesive and integrated approach to issues including the following:

- a. Improving the health and well-being of children and young people
- b. Improving mental health and well-being
- c. Climate Change – supporting communities to reach net zero targets
- d. Future workforce planning that meets the needs of the community and the local economy.

These are aspects with which HAL has an interest and potential key role to play. As part of this initiative Cyngor Gwynedd Council has three well-being hubs based in Caernarfon, Dwyfor and Dolgellau, along with several projects located across the county. HAL should therefore make and maintain durable links with the Dolgellau hub in order to represent the interests of Dyffryn Ardudwy.

## Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan

One of its central principles is to celebrate, respect and protect our communities, language, culture and heritage by creating a visitor economy in the ownership of our communities with an emphasis on pride in one’s area, and work one which is world-leading in heritage, language, culture and the outdoors. Harlech, with its World Heritage Site castle, its vibrant Welsh

language community and world-class beach has an opportunity to be a beacon of this approach, with HAL as a key player in optimising visitor flow and management.

## Social value

HAL is a community-based facility that essentially provides a health and wellbeing service to meet the needs of local people and visitors to the area. The local provision of swimming skills and facilities is important to overall social value and the strategic context for decisions about the future of the Centre. In addition to providing essential survival skills in the water, swimming can provide a number of other high social value benefits. A 2023 report by Swim England demonstrated the high value of swimming by estimating that swimming there was generating social value of £2.4 billion a year. Societal objectives such as reducing the burden on the NHS and social care system, lowering levels of obesity, tackling inequalities and cutting carbon emissions were taken into consideration. It concluded that there needed to be a shared vision across all levels of government, the purpose of swimming pools and leisure centres should be reflected in pool contracts, and recognition of their immense value to communities and widening access to the water.

Swim Wales launched a campaign in 2023 to #SaveOurPools in recognition of the fact that a recent National Survey for Wales and School Sport Survey from Sports Wales showed swimming to be one of the most in-demand activities across the nation, with 61% of primary school children wanting more regular participation in aquatics. Swimming and aquatics was the second most commonly participated activity in Welsh communities, offering a unique opportunity for people of all ages abilities to take part. It concluded that without pools, this demand could not be serviced.

It has been recommended that Welsh Government provide a ring-fenced package of financial aid over and above the Final Local Government Settlement to ensure pools remain open and this is under review.

## Appraisal of the current situation at HAL

### Strengths

HAL offer a good quality pool facility, well regarded by those who use it, evidenced by good and excellent reviews from local residents and visitors. Those spoken to as part of this research were generally positive about the quality of the facilities.

There is a core team of qualified staff in post, and although keeping and training pool staff is a challenge, those who are in place have demonstrated their ability to be flexible and historically this has been managed effectively.

The Centre provides swimming lessons to schools, a regular source of income and has the ability to extend this offer to include a wider range of lessons and target groups.

A recent Lottery grant allowed the purchase of new inflatable obstacle courses for the pool, enabling fun activity sessions. These have had good take-up and offer a great leisure alternative to swimming and attraction for children. Parents are able to watch from the café.

The climbing wall is modern and of good quality, suitable for even experienced climbers and has also got very good reviews. Spin-off activities including canoeing sessions in the pool were very lucrative in previous years, although these have not been reinstated post-Covid. The climbing wall was recently closed due to problems with the roof, problems which are presently being investigated.

A good quality café environment and kitchen provides a bright and pleasant place to meet for users of the leisure facilities but is more generally accessible. It has been used as a community hub, for coffee mornings and meet-ups, parties and themed events. Again, reviews of the café were very good before recent closures and the new pizza oven has been especially popular as have the cooked breakfasts particularly for those using the campervan parking.

HAL has a unique location with stunning direct views of the castle and is also an excellent base for visitors with its proximity for exploring Eryri and accessing the beaches. The beach was recently voted the most beautiful beach in Wales, [thebeachguide.co.uk](http://thebeachguide.co.uk).

The activities provided and the community connections directly support the health and wellbeing of the local population. The Centre also contributes to the local offer to visitors to the area, supporting the local economy and the generation of local income.

## Weaknesses

Some of the challenges faced by the Centre are legacy issues, related to the way the organisation was set up. It moved from being part of the Local Authority with strong management and leadership structure to a community-based model with a volunteer board. It was perhaps unrealistic to expect a voluntary board to have the same level of capacity to take on all functions the centre previously had access to: HR, finance, buildings maintenance etc. These are functions that were needed occasionally, or intermittently, but remain vitally important. It is easy to see how some of the recent difficulties that have developed could have been prevented with access to the right professional advice at the right time.

Understandably, there is a level of undercapacity on the Board. To fulfil all the functions required of the Board from volunteers in the community is unrealistic. Mistakes from under capacity can have significant ramifications. In one example, an HR problem, led to an industrial tribunal, compensation was paid but the pressure of this experience on local volunteers, on an issue preventable with proper management support, led to resignations and vacancies that are difficult to fill. Difficulties with maintenance to the roof and lack of skill in procurement has led to roof failures and inability to seek remedy from contractors.

The model of funding, grants from Councils means the Centre is overly exposed to public sector funding cuts without any of the benefit or security of being affiliated with the public sector.

There is also an over reliance on a very limited number of dedicated volunteers who are giving many hours of time. There is sometimes confusion about demarcation of responsibilities between paid staff and volunteers and difficulties with coordination. Recent closures and staffing issues created a lack of continuity of service and some activities are only now re-opening.

As mentioned previously there are some problems with the structure of the building and plant that is reaching obsolescence. This is under investigation.



There are ongoing difficulties securing trained staff; this is a sector wide issue but is exasperated by the level of resources this takes up.

Income levels are also presently below the level of sustainable operation; this is explored further later in this business plan.

## Opportunities

Harlech is a popular summer holiday resort and the area is not otherwise well served with affordable indoor leisure facilities.

Marketing and advertising is very limited including on social media so the opportunity to increase sales through effective marketing is very much untapped. There is opportunity to develop the offer to low season visitors, the season for visitors to North Wales having extended considerably since lockdown. Market opportunities are changing with wealthier and younger retirees and digital nomads taking interests in activities such as themed events and groups including the successful local triathlon group

New volunteers with good suitable skills have been identified through this business planning process and have starting engaging with the organisation.

Case study comparators indicate that opportunities to reduce heating costs would be available with capital investment. Further research is taking place to scope out the extent of savings that could be made and the capital investment required.

The car parking and interest from campervan visitors could offer a boost to marketing, they are providing good current reviews on social media and a rapidly increasing source of income and could be incorporated successfully into a popular brand identify for that aspect of the Centre.

## Threats

The main threat to the Centre at the present time is the ability to operate at full capacity and the threats of reduction in third party funding.

The lack of support from some of the Community Councils is disappointing. . There has been some lack of willingness to engage in this business planning process by one elected member, perhaps reflecting a lack of support although the other member is very supportive. The level of support in the wider community remains good. It will be important that the community demand consultation before decisions are made and full transparency of decision-making when it affects the Centre.

There is potential that there may be a need for upgrade to plant equipment. The heating and pool are operational at the present time, but upgrades are being explored further.

There has been some reputational fall out, the lock-down closures, threats to public funding and negative press creates uncertainly. If customers are uncertain if the centre is open or closed having read negative reports they may elect to travel further afield. The Centre needs stability to function, to attract long term bookings and funding and to keep staff committed.

# Governance and Finance

## Overview

There is currently a limited number of members of the volunteer Board of Directors who run HAL. However, the Board are keen to recruit new directors especially those with skills in finance, marketing, and human resources. The last 12 months have been extremely challenging for the Board and its directors and there are more challenges that need to be addressed in the short term which will stretch the Board in terms of its commitment, capacity and indeed its skills and experience.

The last full operating year from which to base a budget for planning purposes was 2018- 2019 with reduced services in 2020-2023 due to the pandemic as well as some problems with café and roof structure affecting the use of the climbing wall. Financial estimates in this business plan use actual running costs over seven financial years from 2012-2023, adjusted using more recent actual costs where available or a 5% nominal inflationary estimate. This is taken as the most reliable indication of how much HAL costs to operate, and the potential it has for income generation. A full breakdown using headings in the existing accounts are attached.

Over the most recent years of full operation the operating costs were circa £270,000 per annum. Of this, salaries were about £145,000, energy and water rates £55,000. Energy costs has risen, with energy and water up to £66,000 in 22-23. Whilst wages have generally reduced this was also a reflection of reduced level of service, a period of maternity leave and a shift towards more flexible contracts. A budget for salaries on a like for like basis would now be around £150,000.

HAL is primarily a swimming pool facility and running a sustainable stand-alone swimming pool is a significant challenge. This is not a reflection of the viability or popularity of this particular pool but a characteristic of the high running costs, maintenance bills and restrictive staffing requirements associated with swimming pools.

## Financial management

The HAL financial data systems, SAGE accountancy system and LOLLY till system, have sophisticated functionality and can offer real time updates on financial performance. The capability at HAL is very good compared to many community-led businesses. The main challenge is not *availability* of information but the use of it . Responsibilities of financial management, reporting and decision making need to be clear so that there is a firm grasp of challenges and their implications as they arise. In this case inevitable unforeseen problems do not lead to crises and business-limiting actions such as the limited functioning of the café would be understood as self-defeating.

The main challenge for this type and scale of business is that it is dependent on the skills and experience of the people in post and this will change over time. Bookkeeping is currently provided by a sub-contractor rather than being in-house. Regular discussion of management reports and active decision making may involve some re-designation of responsibility or maybe some hands-on training. Having the financial oversight to make long term decisions and tightly monitor against a budget will enable HAL to take full advantage of the tools and management reports available.

## Income

HAL's income is from a combination of grants and charitable funding as well as from direct sales. Whilst levels of total income have not altered dramatically from 2012 to 2024, fluctuating between £250,000 and £300,000, the ratio of grant and charitable funding to sales has changed over time. Sales have declined to the extent that grant and charitable income has risen from the historical level of around 35% to grant and charitable income per year to being 56% of HAL income in the last financial year.

This was already a problem before the contemporary issue of concern i.e. the cessation of some of the funding through some of the Community Councils. Having been provided entirely by Cyngor Gwynedd Council until 2016, responsibility for a contribution of around £60,000 per annum was transferred over to Community Councils who raised these funds through a community precept. Several Community Councils have now notified HAL of their intent to withdraw this contribution. The total contribution is around £60,000 but over 50% of this is expected to remain in place. This is largely outside of the control of HAL but *is* within the level of fluctuation of grant income that HAL have managed and dealt with in previous years. HAL lost income from memberships when the Community Council grants were introduced and the reinstating of a membership approach, as well as raised prices for non-contributing area residents, should ideally be reintroduced to mitigate this loss.

Approximating levels of income based on historical accounts and estimate future capacity we estimate that income from grant and donations may drop to around £14,000 below previous levels.

	Typical in previous years	future
<b>Grants and donations</b>		
Community Council	£50,000	£30,000
Donations and fundraising	£10,000	£10,000
One- off grants	£5,000	£10,000
Partnerships	£5,000	£5,000
CGC	£6,000	£6,000
Memberships	£4,000	£5,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£80,000	£66,000

There has been a reduction in café sales of a far more significant amount than recently lost in grant: an aspect of operation that *is* within the control of HAL. Café income has been between £68,000 – £78,000 per year from 2012 – 2019 and was only £52,000 and £32,000 in the last two years, a loss of per year of around £46,000.

The climbing wall generated income of around £30,000 per year and is now closed due to the need to make roof repairs to a relatively modern roof that has had a failure due to poor quality installation. There is therefore potential to generate significant income in excess of that lost through grants.

More detail on each cost centre with recommendations follows later in the report.

## Staffing

Staff were transferred under TUPE arrangements from Cyngor Gwynedd Council. Over time these terms and conditions have been able to adjust from what was appropriate for a large local authority to something more suited to a community business and costs savings have also been made. Consequently staffing costs have not escalated significantly. The present arrangement of two contracted staff with additional staff employed on a casual basis is good for flexibility and cashflow and consistent with the seasonal nature of the businesses but presents challenges for ensuring staff are able to demonstrate commitment. This will need to be kept under review.

Ensuring training is up to date in safety-critical roles is a constant battle so a balance needs to be struck between investing in core staff and maintaining flexibility. Management capacity is limited and the manager is frequently multi-tasking on lower level work, particularly at busy times so investment in staff to work in the café and other areas would be of considerable benefit. Opportunities for volunteering in non-safety critical roles would have little impact on budget and given the presence of managerial staff on-site, staff cover of the café could be managed to have little additional impact; we would recommend circa £20,000 p.a.

Part of the period 2022- 2023 included a period of maternity pay that was directly reimbursed so caution should be used in attempting to set budgets from figure for the last financial year only.

Salaries currently seem historically high given the reduced level of functionality. It will be important to ensure the staff are able to deliver across all functions and it is understood that at the time of writing the café had been reopened for one week taking £1200 in takings.

## Overheads

The overheads shown below give the 2022/2023 year expenditure, adjusted for exceptional circumstances, and then given an uplift of 5% to adjust for inflation to create a budget.

	2023 adjusted for budget plus 5%			notes
Wages - casual	4864	5500	5775	usually higher
Wages - contract	109645	117416	123287	usually higher
NI	8900	8900	9345	
Pensions	1957	3000	3150	usually higher
Other wage costs	1472	1500	1575	n/a
Water	4248	4250	4463	
Rates	1189	1200	1260	
Insurance	4659	4700	4935	
Electricity	48515	49000	51450	Previous year far lower
Gas	23351	23500	24675	Previous year far lower
Office stationery	213	500	525	
Telephone	1404	1500	1575	
Computers	874	1000	1050	
Accountancy and legal	853	850	893	
Professional fees	6272	10000	10500	
General maintenance	3433	1500	1575	average of past 2 years
Bank costs	3351	3350	3518	
Loan		300	315	
			249864	

The table above shows how the allocation of costs to overhead are very high as a proportion of all expenditure. A reasonable budget for overheads would be £249,864 in 2024.

The main area where significant savings could be made is in gas and electricity if investment in alternative energy sources such as solar power and/or a heat exchange system could be made. It is anticipated, based on comparable projects that around £50,000 per annum or 50% savings could be created but the energy survey is still in progress and this will need to be confirmed.

## Cost Centres

Breaking down budgeting into cost centres would give the organisation a much clearer idea of which parts of the business were performing or under-performing. Some training in this area has started but needs further development. The following breakdown will benefit from further development as this business plan evolves.

## Swimming Pool

The main business of the organisation is the pool. This includes activities and swimming lessons. A pool is very expensive to run; the main costs are the room heating and heating and supply of water, chemicals, maintenance and the levels staff supervision, all highly regulated.

Direct income associated with the pool is as follows:

	2023	Adjusted	With + 5%	Notes
Public Swim	19188	19200	20160	Raise fees
Play sessions including with	14660	29320	30000	New inflatables already bringing

inflatables				£600 per week in holidays
Swimming Lessons (schools)	15710	16000	10000	Discuss with schools
Swimming Lessons (private)			10000	Full staffing - able to promote and differentiate
Private Pool Hire	0	0	1000	Introduce/ differentiate
Pool re-sales	799	1000	1050	Create display
Kayaking	0	0	3500	Reintroduce
Activities for special sessions	0	0	5000	Different activities
	£50,357		£80,710	

Total direct income potential at the adjusted rate is £80,710. This is a significant uplift from the last 4 years but is in line with £75756 and £75086 in 21/13 and 16/17 respectively. Kayak sessions brought in over £3500 in years 18/19 and 17/18.

The additional balance is a reflection of investment in large play inflatables and the lapse in activities for special groups such as aquafit, elderly or disability groups. Private pool hire for galas and events has also been added as an income line.

Swimming lesson income is presently low compared to other equivalent pools and past income.

### Swimming pool costs

	2023	adjusted	With 5%	
Pool Maintenance	5737	10000	10000	average of past 2 years
Training	571		1000	Expect uplift
Insurance	486		600	Expect uplift
Subtotal direct costs			11,600	
Contribution to overhead			£69,110	

The swimming pool is the anchor facility around which all the other activities are based so could not be removed from the business model without a fundamental rethink. At the time of

this financial analysis (April 2024) *only* the pool was functioning. If the café and climbing wall were functioning the costs would be reduced to a manageable level.

## The Café

As already mentioned there has also been a large reduction in cafe income. This income was between £68,000 – £78,000 per year from 2012 – 2019 whereas it was only £52,000 and £32,000 in the last two years, a loss of per year of around £46,000. Salaries are not attributed directly to the café or differentiated in the accounts but café stock expenses tended to be in the region of £23,000. With additional staffing, given there is already a manager in the centre, additional employment costs would not be excessive. There are quieter times when other staff could help out and volunteers may be well placed to assist in the café.

The pizza oven has proved very popular with visitors and locals and regular pizza sessions would bring in much needed revenue.

<b>Direct costs</b>	<b>Budget</b>	
Additional café staff	£23,000	
Stock	£25,000	
Subtotal direct costs	£48,000	
Income		£78,000
Contribution to overhead	£30,000	

A target income of £78,000, based on 2016-17 actuals, with no uplift, less £25,000 spent on stock and £23,000 budgeted for additional staffing would enable a contribution to running costs to the centre of around £30,000.

## The Climbing Wall

The climbing wall has historically been a lucrative aspect to the centre with climbing wall takings having risen to nearly £40,000 per year in 2018-19. The climbing wall will need a full condition survey but is a modern facility designed to attract beginners and established climbers.

Supervision of the climbing wall and training would need to be taken from the main salary budget. It is estimated that this would be circa £25,000 per year.

## Tennis and Parking

The tennis facility belongs to the Council but HAL have agreed to keep rackets and balls and may charge to rent these out. The potential to renovate the facilities and make proper use through the provision of tennis coaching could be explored further.

Parking has undergone a renaissance. The growth of campervan parking has doubled income from parking and these campers are interested in spending money at the café. The

development of new waste disposal facilities for campervans and reopening of the café would make the offer more attractive. It would not be unreasonable to double the income from these two sources given some social media attention to £10,000 per year. The Arosfan initiative introduced by Cyngor Gwynedd Council across several sites in the county has demonstrated its commitment to overnight campervan provision.

### Breakdown of contribution to overhead

	Overhead
Swimming pool	£69,110
Café	£30,000
Climbing Wall	£40,000
Grants	£66,000
Tennis and Parking	£10,000
	<hr/>
	£215,110
	<hr/>
Total present OH	£250,000
OH after capital investment in energy saving and roof repairs	£200,000

### Reducing overheads

Major outgoings are utilities and staff so significant reduction in utilities with say, solar panels or more efficient pumping systems ( details not yet provided from external consultants) could make huge difference to viability. Staffing needs to be far more sensible. There is the same number of staff now as when operating at full capacity.

More data is required on heat loss and retention for them to do their calculations. U values need to be established for the various building elements, floor, cladding, windows, roof. Electricity half hour usage will help to ascertain where and when electricity and gas presently being used. The heat loss from the pool at various external/outside temperatures over a precise timescale need to be shared with the external consultants. The opportunity and limitations of selling excess electricity back to the grid need to be ascertained and the cost-benefit analysis established.

The climbing wall and café are critical income streams, with untapped potential and neither is functioning effectively right now (although café reopened May 2024) so HAL would be down at least £80k on income in any year on this basis. This lack of income is more significant to any “going concern” business plan than the loss of grant.

Another potentially efficiency would be an electrochlorination system that uses salt rather than chlorine (in abundant supply and relatively cheap), water, and electricity to produce sodium hypochlorite (not classified as a hazardous chemical, although precautions still need to be taken when handling and storing), to disinfect the swimming pool. Using salt to produce



sodium hypochlorite instead of purchasing chlorine is beneficial in several ways : salt is safe, and employees do not have to be given expensive training on how to handle hazardous chemicals. It is also easy to store, has an infinite shelf life, and requires minimal packaging that can be easily recycled.

When pools are not in use, applying pool covers is a simple yet effective way of reducing operating costs by saving energy. Depending on how old and well insulated the building is, up to 1500 kWh per year can be saved. For the average UK semi-Olympic pool measuring 25m x 10m, operators could save approximately £27,000 in energy costs by using the right pool cover.

Retrofitting variable speed (or inverter) drives to existing circulation pumps reduces the flow rate and saves energy. For example, fitting a 10Kw drive to an existing circulation pump and using it for ten hours overnight would reduce the flow rate by approximately 20% and save 1800Kw per annum. This could represent a 50% saving on pump operating costs.

If a swimming pool consumed 24.1 MWh per annum, fitting circulation pump inverter drives could save 10.1 MWh per year, which means an annual electric energy saving of £1,520.

Around 85% of the life-cycle cost of a pump is due to the electricity consumed by the motor. However, upgrading circulation pumps to high-efficiency circulation pumps can save up to 50% on energy use and reduce CO2 emissions by 30%.

Regenerative media filters (RMFs) are a more efficient alternative to sand filtration. They produce up to 90% less wastewater, which significantly reduces the costs of sewer discharge and freshwater. They also lead to a 50% reduction in energy consumption. Another alternative to standard swimming pool filters is the long life, silicon carbide ceramic membrane filter.

Plate Heat Exchangers heat swimming pools and can replace outdated shell and tube calorifiers. Upgrading these is beneficial as Plate Heat Exchangers have high transfer coefficients, which means improved performance, optimum transfer of primary to secondary heat, and excellent thermal performance-to-size ratio. They are around 20% more efficient than older calorifiers.

These aspects need to be fully explored by technicians and incorporated into a capital investment plan for reduced costs of running the pool.

## Cost benefit

When considering costs here, and the extent to which HAL is financially viable, it is vital to emphasise that any costs must be considered in the context of wider benefit i.e. what is its health, wellbeing, and broader social value. It is not in doubt that the social value of this pool is very high. HAL provide their services *for* the benefit of the community, it is run *by* the community. The facilities offer considerable social and health benefit, providing exercise options suitable for the resident population, including those who are older, have limited mobility or health issues. It is a safe place for children and young people to exercise and socialise as well as for those who are unable to travel to other pools in an area where public transport is very limited. The social value has been recognised by the organisations who have provided grant funding and use the facility to provide services for vulnerable and excluded groups and this will continue to be the case.

Harlech is also a popular summer holiday resort and the area is not well served with affordable indoor leisure facilities. HAL not only contributes to the offer to tourists, boosting the vital visitor economy, but also generates income from those visitors to support a local facility.

## Marketing and communications

With limited capacity within the organization, time and energy spent on marketing, developing networks and communications has been very restricted. More work on understanding the market and developing sales has been identified as important moving forward and a substantial opportunity for sales growth. For HAL to move forward and develop its marketing and communication plan it still needs:

- a. Adequate funding
- b. Access to appropriate skills and knowledge
- c. Information and statistics on Centre use. A signing-in sheet asking permission for visitors to provide their email address or contact details may be helpful

## Customers

HAL attract a range of customers and partner organisations who can be characterised in many ways including, very simply, according to whether they are individuals or organisations, their usual residence, their age and the types of things they like to do. For example:

- Visitors: families and children, older people, active outdoorsy people, campervan users,:
- Residents: families, older people, children and young people
- Schools, clubs and local agencies (Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Police, Probation Service)

Each type of customer engages across each of the facilities in different ways so work is taking place to understand where more marketing effort could be prioritised to upsell. Some of this type of marketing can be very low in investment outlay but offer a great return. For example, opening up the café at the same time as the inflatable activity means families waiting can spend money in the café. The priority is to reestablish and boost the critical income streams as identified in the cost centre breakdowns: the café, the pool, the climbing wall, the tennis and parking. Lost income streams associated with partnership activities also needs refreshed attention.

HAL is looking to improve the level of information that it has on its customer and indeed broader stakeholder base. Data will be collected in the first instance from existing customers, collating data on which services they use and their attitude to using other functions in the Centre.

## Messaging & Identity

The messaging and identity of the Centre is important and it is agreed that this has become rather lost. Moving forward, the Board will agree the headline messaging, the branding and what HAL stands for. Key messages could include

1. HAL is a sports and community facility. It is a place where families can come together enjoy the facilities, have some light refreshments.

2. It is a health and wellbeing hub. HAL could introduce a monthly health and wellbeing drop in with partners i.e. a “swim, a cup of tea and chat”
3. “This is your facility”. Increase further the emphasis on the facility being for local people. This could be part of the key messaging in encouraging volunteers

In reviewing and formulating these key messages, HAL will eventually be looking to review its brand, its name and its logo. This will provide the organisation with a clear identity; encouraging customer buy-in and support future marketing and communication activities. This may form part of a relaunch, the opportunity to make a fresh start, generating awareness and publicity.

## Marketing collateral

HAL is undertaking a review of marketing collateral, the digital or printed material used to communicate or promote services. This will gauge relevance to future ideas associated with potential branding, messaging activities and events. Following this review HAL will explore the following – dependent upon the availability of budget:

1. To continue with the newsletter. Approach businesses (and supporters) if they would like to sponsor the newsletter - helping to reduce costs and increase the circulation of the current e-newsletter
2. Create a small leaflet to be distributed around the high street shops, cafes, tourist attractions and residences and caravan parks.
3. With perhaps support for Coleg Cambria, look at commissioning a video that could be used to promote the centre.
4. Explore the offer of a Student Placement from Bangor University.
5. A website refresh including more information
  - a. More about the Board and background to the organisation
  - b. Notes from monthly meetings
  - c. More information about volunteers. What roles are available?
  - d. Monthly Profile page – a director, a volunteer or a member of staff.
  - e. Some promotion around the comments page.

## Social Media

There has been limited social media activity over the last 12 months. In moving forward HAL recognises that it needs a mix of social media activities, as well as networking, greater awareness across the area through word of mouth and partnership building with local groups and county wide organisations. In developing its future social media activities, HAL will look to

1. Make it personal – in terms of language, informality
2. Keep it simple. ...key will be events, activities (dates, times, why come!)
3. Use social analytics for better audience understanding. With limited budget, this is especially useful to understand what engages, interests our target audiences
4. Incentives - looking to introduce a range of incentives to greater interaction on its social media platforms. This could include family pool tickets; meals at the café.

HAL will use social media to further develop its position as a community facility; but also an organisation that is at the heart of the local community, supportive of other Harlech community groups- reposting and sharing events. HAL will also explore how IT can support local businesses- perhaps a page on the website; or simply a repost of an activity, a job opportunity or development e.g. sharing posts of businesses’ anniversaries or other important milestones.

The organisation wants to make visitors and local people even more aware of the history of the pool, but also its future as a community facility focusing on health, wellbeing and location where people can have a cup of tea, a cake and a natter!

HAL also wants to create a reputation with an active social media presence; using humour, be entertaining and always engaging with its target audience through surveys, questions ensuring that it delivers services that meet their needs. A key tool in boosting social media presence will be email marketing. Email marketing remains one of the most effective ways how to market directly to a customer base.

## Partnerships

A key component of HAL's future marketing and communications plan, must be developing and strengthening its links with local and thematic (e.g. sports, health) groups and organisations. There is a recognition that these partnership-based activities need to improve; assessing what could be beneficial to each organisation in terms of delivering social value, attracting income and customers.

Key partners include Cyngor Gwynedd Council, the Community Councils, attractions such as Harlech Castle, associations such as Swim Wales, Byw'n lach, local community facilities such as the Old Library, local businesses including the high street shops and local accommodation providers and local schools, the health board and other agencies. Conversations have started as part of the business planning process and it is intended that these conversations and partnership building will continue. Opportunities will be explored as follows:

1. Investigation into which HAL services (and facilities) could be both complementary and of value to its stakeholders. Ranging from sponsorship signage to the joint visitor ticketing opportunities; facilities to support broader health and wellbeing objectives.
2. Action plans or memoranda of understanding with key public stakeholders e.g. Public Health; Byw'n lach, and Cyngor Gwynedd Council. These would be categorised in terms of income, resources and social and economic return on investment.
3. Sponsorship proposals for local businesses.
4. Identifying the most appropriate communication tool to exchange with stakeholders. This will obviously include the same "tools" used as those used to engage with customers and residents e.g. newsletter, social media, but could involve meetings and events.

The key themes and priorities that HAL will be focusing on in its pursuit to become a sustainable business that delivers value for local people and visitors are:

1. Create the case for investing in HAL – for grant funders, the Councils, stakeholders and local businesses.
2. Broaden its network of stakeholders - open/continue discussions with key stakeholders.
3. Review its customer base. Assess what information is available, and fill in the gaps. For example, introducing everything from a signing in sheet, short questionnaires, updating its customer contact base to an annual major online customer survey.

## Operations & Management

In order to deliver the various aspects of this plan a series of operational and management processes need greater clarity. A detailed operational plan, a working document has been prepared and shared with the Board that can be used to prioritise next steps. This enables the Board to focus on objectives, deliverables, staffing and resourcing requirements as well as specific timeframes.

There are a number of issues and resources that were identified as critical during the formulation of this business plan and the outline operational plan e.g. staff, the facilities, equipment and more broadly its processes and procedures. HAL (the Board and staff) needs to improve its overview of progress being made against objectives as well as finance and customer performance. The Operational Plan outlines some of these performance indicators; and Directors, staff and volunteers will have their own targets to ensure these broader objectives are achieved. HAL can use the plan to track progress, and identify areas of improvement.

### Staffing plan

Over the last few months, with the return of the Centre Manager from maternity leave and the re-opening of the café, the staffing levels have began to reach pre Covid levels. As outlined in the Finance section, the present arrangement of two contracted staff with additional staff employed on a casual basis is good for flexibility and cashflow and consistent with the seasonal nature of the businesses but presents challenges for ensuring staff are able to demonstrate commitment. This will need to be kept under review.

Perhaps more importantly, it is apparent that the manager is frequently multi-tasking, pulled into completing lower level work, particularly at busy times so investment in staff to work in the café and other areas would be of considerable benefit to enable the manager to do the management. This is particularly important given there are several tasks within the Operational Plan that require the centre manager's attention.

Support is required for marketing, sales and securing extra fundraising income. This requires a special skills-set and expertise. Currently, Board members have taken on this responsibility. This is not ideal or sustainable; the Board needs to explore how best to secure the necessary experience essential to achieve future income targets.

Opportunities for volunteering in non-safety critical roles would have little impact on budget and given the presence of managerial staff on-site, there is little doubt that additional volunteers would add benefit to the broader operation at the Centre. The business planning process identified further potential volunteers and the Board would have to discuss what those roles could be. Reception work, social media support and events organising may be appropriate roles.

The other key member of staff is the FTE Swimming Pool Supervisor. Quite rightly, their key responsibilities are centred on supervising lifeguards and managing essential health and safety within the swimming pool environment.

As it is HAL's objective to redevelop the centre as a main attraction within the community; and with the Café now open (and delivered by a caterer on a contractual basis) and the goal to reopen the Climbing Wall, the Board will need to review the staffing requirements in terms of time/hours and skills experience.

## Training and development

The other resource issue to address is training and development needs of both the current and future staff and indeed volunteers. Previously Board directors have recognised the value of

- a. Developing our current staff to take on extra duties such as current lifeguards enhancing their skills to become instructors and aqua fit instructors.
- b. Potentially looking at training staff to be able to work in all areas of the centre, this potentially reducing the number of staff required on shift and expertise within various areas on site.
- c. HAL could work with the local colleges to explore the possibility of catering students, admin apprenticeships and sports courses; or general maintenance related subjects.

As mentioned in the previous section, HAL should open up discussions with Byw'n lach and the County Council.

## Condition of the building

In conjunction with receiving funding to develop the Business Plan, HAL received funding to undertake an Energy Use and Generation Study and a Roof Condition Survey.

Further discussions are required with the engineering consultants to identify works that could be described as urgent and a priority. As a result of initial discussions on receipt of the reports, it is worth noting that

1. There is the need for a replacement roof that is above the climbing wall. The current cost estimate of replacement roof with improved structure and insulation is approximately £78000.
2. In follow up discussions with Viridean, the Energy Consultants, there appears to be misunderstanding with regards to brief that was given to the consultants. The Consultants have agreed that the heat loss through the building structure needs to be established so that the impact of improvements can be ascertained. A re-look at the report was agreed and this will consider energy reduction, insulation, revised configuration of heat pumps and hot water systems and the use of reduced electricity price tariffs.
3. In moving forward, the Board would like to bring together a Design Team of relevant Design and Engineering professionals, working together ensuring there is a joined up approach to all the structural issues related and future energy requirements and efficiencies. Some of the initial tasks include –
  - U values need to be established for the various building elements, floor, cladding, windows, roof.
  - The Cost of gas/KWh usage to be calculated.

- A further discussion with the Energy Consultants to create a summary energy requirements
- Discussion with Scottish Power to establish the impact on future energy requirements on the local electrical substation.

# Conclusions and next steps

## Summary

This business plan was based on a thorough review of the situation at HAL, it looked at past performance of the centre and the market conditions. The conclusions are that the Centre presently operates at a loss but has not always done so and has broken even over many years.

The difference between what has happened in the past, when it was sustainable, and now when it is making a loss can be summarised as:

1. Key functions, and income sources, have been closed (the café and climbing wall)
  - They have been closed due to the difficulties with the roof of the building (Climbing wall) and
  - Staffing and lock-down related issues (café) which have now been rectified
2. Grant income is reduced, but is not historically low
3. Utility bills have increased massively

## Short -term

The question for this business plan is whether the organisation has the capacity to respond to the challenges. The business plan identifies that there are some inherent issues with the community business model, a legacy of the handover from Cyngor Gwynedd Council. The main issue is lack of capacity to deal with specialist functions and to multiple crises. A period of closer partnership working with larger organisations in the same field might help overcome these problems without significant additional financial investment from the partner but with expertise that would cost HAL too much time and resource to secure. The cost benefit of this could be considered by CGC given that the centre would return to their ownership were HAL to fail and there are grants that would need to be repaid.

There is potential to secure additional capital investment through environmental grants to upgrade the efficiency of the building to reduce overheads. Case studies indicate that an investment could reduce costs by 50%. A 50% reduction in bills would allow the centre to be feasible. The availability of funding and cost benefit analysis was not available in time for the publication of this business plan. The extent of the investment and the extent to which this can be phased into manageable sections of work needs urgent attention and this has been requested. Again CGC may be well positioned to support HAL with this information moving forward.

All the capital investment, including the condition of the roof requires expert independent appraisal. The section of roof that is failing is a fairly new roof, with maintenance issues causing failures of drainage. HAL requires support to identify and properly cost the problem and set out a future maintenance plan. Repairs to this section would enable Climbing Wall to be repaired and reopen bringing in up to £40,000 per year in essential income so would be a high priority.



## Longer term

### **Review staffing and volunteer roles**

Identified in this report is the need to set out the role of the Board members and the Centre Manager more clearly using the Operational Plan. This will include looking at who does what. A revisit of the volunteer roles such as supporting fundraising activities, marketing, helping to raise the profile locally and general office administration and reception duties would be useful.

Board Members should be assigned individual roles e.g. operations, finances and marketing and communications. This immediately enhances governance capacity by making someone responsible for keeping the Board up to speed on developments and issues in their areas of responsibility.

Day to day responsibilities are important for financial stability. Budgeting and reporting against budgets is not part of regular discussion but the budget from this Business Plan is designed to allow input into Sage for ongoing monitoring. Purchasing of reasonable levels of supplies to maximise income, adjusting the weekly programme to maximise income at busy times and building of growth areas of the business, and monitoring expenses on standing order such as insurances and utilities. These can fluctuate dramatically and need constant monitoring. For example, an incidence of a water leak was only detected by an increase in monthly bill due to restrictions placed on accessing the water meter.

### **Secure fundraising support**

It is agreed that taking on fundraising support might include a student placement possibility with Bangor University, or a no-win-no-fee fundraiser who could assist with the Marketing and communications objectives. Listed below and in operational plans developed with the HAL board as a result of this business planning process are individual tasks and activities to strengthen HAL partnership working and links with key stakeholders.

### **Forge closer links with Cyngor Gwynedd Council and Byw'n Iach and BCUHB**

The other leisure centres in Gwynedd have recently reconstituted under a social enterprise model. This does provide a very strong argument for future parity and a closer working relationship with Cyngor Gwynedd Council. HAL propose to open discussions with the Council and Byw'n Iach to explore shared casual staff pool, joint training events, marketing or community development and grant application support. None of these areas/themes would have any direct cost to the council or partners but would allow HAL to make cost savings in those areas.

Various important income streams have been subject to austerity related cuts or changes in approach to delivery. Public Sector managed Young People services and Older People services may have changed personal and programmes but there are likely to be alternatives that can be investigated and funding secured. For instance, HAL previously had funds through Jobs Growth and apprenticeships, from business sponsorship and from the library service. There was also previously a grant from the police for youth work and other leisure centres in Gwynedd share a tranche of funding allocated for older people's fitness. HAL will look to revisit its historic funding streams and assess whether there is a replacement or the opportunity to investigate new partnership sources.

### **Drawing on strengths to build a better future**

An analysis of past performance provides a lot of evidence about the tried and tested approaches, as well as the pitfalls that should not be repeated without caution or caveat. This institutional knowledge will be critical for building a successful operation in the future. For example, kayaking in the pool brought in notable revenue, the climbing instructor at the time offered this as an additional activity. There used to be social evenings in the cafe, the music festival Rock Ardudwy, all of which were based on local knowledge, experience and collectively generated substantial income.

The Plan recommends that a senior officer/member of the County Council attend the Monthly Board Meetings, in the capacity of an observer or advisor.

Training for directors based on a future skills audit. The more they can be trained and provided with expert support and mentoring, the better the information flow and Board Members' effectiveness.

### **Review Vision**

It is clear that the directors are committed to creating a sustainable future for HAL. However, as suggested the Board undertake a review of its governance structure subject to agreement with

partners and at the same time review its *Purpose, Vision and Values* and decide whether they are still appropriate, fit for purpose and reflect the organization going forward.

For example, HAL's Mission is "To motivate and inspire people who live in and visit the Arudwy area to enjoy life and pursue a healthy lifestyle". Much of this statement still resonates with HAL and what they would like to achieve and deliver for local people. Its purpose states "To improve lives through sport, recreational activities, and community engagement." Does this statement reflect what the organisation would like to become e.g. a community facility, a wellbeing hub (linking into the Dolgellau wellbeing hub) and location where people are able to socialise.

HAL will look to approach *Sported UK* for advice and in developing its future governance structure, as well as engaging with other organisations that offer support and advice for everything from governance to marketing and operational management. They include Menter Mon; Reach Volunteering and Mantell Gwynedd

- <https://www.mentermon.com/en/pwy-di-pwy/> -
- <https://mantellgwynedd.com/eng/index.html> -
- <https://reachvolunteering.org.uk/>
- <https://sported.org.uk/>

### **Continue to recruit volunteers**

In parallel with revisiting its principles and mission statement, there should be another push for Board Members and more broadly volunteers. This will be a key focus in the coming months.

Some of the related tasks include –

- a. An article on the website, local press release requesting more volunteers.
- b. An approach to relevant individuals in key sectors and locations e.g. local housing associations, public health professionals
- c. Exploring the possibility of individuals from outside of current geographical catchment area
- d. Identify individuals who specifically have financial and communications knowledge and experience.
- e. Recruit a representative who has private sector construction and or development experience. This could include an individual who has recently retired.

## Appendix A - Profit and Loss

<b>HAL Budget (using existing P&amp;L headings - narrative in Bus Plan)</b>			
<i>*Grants and expenditure on energy saving to be determined</i>			
	Prev accounting year	Bus Plan - no investment	Bus Plan with energy saving investment (50% saving)
<b>Operating income</b>	Nov 22/23	Nov 24/25 onwards	Nov 24/25 onwards
Café	£32,203	£78,000	£78,000
Parking and Tennis	£5,916	£10,000	£10,000
Donations and Fundraising	£7,129	£10,000	£10,000
Public Swimming	£19,188	£20,000	£20,000
Pool Activities	£14,660	£20,000	£20,000
Swimming Lessons	£15,710	£20,000	£20,000
Competent Climbing	£4,824	£20,000	£20,000
Climbing Courses	£6,721	£20,000	£20,000
Pool Re-sales	£799	£1,070	£1,070
<b>Other income</b>			
Grants*	£81,745		
Memberships/partnerships	£0	£10,000	£10,000
Council Grants (Revenue)	£56,388	£36,000	£36,000
<b>Total Sales</b>	<b>£245,283</b>	<b>£245,070</b>	<b>£245,070</b>
<b>Direct Costs</b>			
Café Stock	£20,053	£25,000	£25,000
Chemicals Effluent Sampling	£2,683	£3,000	£3,000
Goods for re-sale pool	£630	£700	£700
Climbing Equipment	£110	£110	£110
Sales Commissions	£225	£0	£0
Misc	£10,938	£0	£0
<b>Total Direct Costs</b>	<b>£34,639</b>	<b>£28,810</b>	<b>£28,810</b>
<b>Indirect Costs</b>			
Wages (casual)	£4,864	£5,775	£5,775
Employee Wages and Salaries	£109,645	£123,287	£123,287
Employers NI	£8,900	£9,345	£9,345
Employer Pension	£1,957	£3,150	£3,150
Other wages (Mat leave etc)	£1,472	£0	£0
Water Rates	£4,248	£4,463	£4,463
General Rates	£1,189	£1,260	£1,260
Premises Insurance	£4,659	£4,935	£4,935
Electricity	£48,515	£51,450	£25,725
Gas	£23,351	£24,675	£12,338
Office Stationery	£213	£525	£525
Telephone and Fax	£1,398	£1,575	£1,575
Computers and software	£872	£1,050	£1,050
Mobile Charges	£6	£0	£0
Legal Fees	£13	£0	£0
Accountancy Fees	£840	£893	£893
Professional Fees	£6,272	£1,050	£1,050
Pool Maintenance	£5,736	£10,000	£10,000
Wall Maintenance	£509	£500	£500
Café Maintenance	£2,052	£500	£500
General Maintenance	£3,433	£1,575	£1,575
Bank Interest	£18	£18	£18
Bank Charges	£254	£250	£250
EPOS	£3,245	£3,250	£3,250
Training	£571	£1,000	£1,000
Insurance	£486	£600	£600
	<b>£234,718</b>	<b>£251,126</b>	<b>£213,064</b>
<b>NET PROFIT/LOSS</b>	<b>-£24,074</b>	<b>-£34,866</b>	<b>£3,197</b>

# Appendix B – Pestle Analysis

## HAL Business Plan

### PESTLE Analysis

<p><b>Political</b></p> <p>Difficult local relationships resulting from acrimonious employment tribunal          Different factions in the community          Strong local connections amongst board members but very locked in to the past relationships          Funding grants</p>	<p><b>Economic</b></p> <p>More people holidaying in UK due to cost of living          Difficult economic climate – local government funding very poor          Fuel prices escalated          Building costs escalated</p>
<p><b>Social</b></p> <p>Aging population          Unhealthy population          Young people enjoy outdoors, campervans          Children want guided and supervised recreation          Social value of swimming and leisure is very high</p>	<p><b>Legal</b></p> <p>Grants would need to be repaid          Building is owned by GCC          Requirement to be a going concern          Requirement to adhere to employment legislation          Requirement to adhere to Health and Safety legislation</p>
<p><b>Technological</b></p> <p>New technology for the pool          Ensure wifi works – this is a minimum expectation          Opportunity to work with data storage facilities</p>	<p><b>Environmental</b></p> <p>Climate change – need to reduce carbon          Pressures on national park          Need to minimise carbon footprint</p>