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Research on the situation regarding motorhomes in Gwynedd

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The latest growth in the ownership of motorhomes in the UK has not proceeded without comment or impact here in Gwynedd as motorhome visits become more and more evident in our towns, villages and rural areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has also contributed to the situation as the British population face travel restrictions and stay-cations.

With this, better control of motorhome visits has been the subject of discussion in our communities in Gwynedd. The purpose of this report and research is to gather and provide information to contribute and create a better understanding of the current situation, both locally and nationally. The report looks at:

- The local situation and provision in Gwynedd
- The current situation and provision in the UK
- The international situation and provision in other countries
- Looks at the requirements and the trends of motorhome users in order to ascertain views, frequency and how users utilise their vehicles and the type of places where they stay.
- The views of Gwynedd residents and communities
- Findings and ideas in terms of improving the control of motorhomes in Gwynedd

Introduction

During the last few years there has been a significant increase in the number of motorhomes registered in Britain by the DVLA. The growth commenced in approximately 2010, and the number registered doubled between 2012 and 2017. By June 2020, there were 357,000 registered motor vehicles in the UK, with 68,000 stated as SORN - possibly due to COVID19. Approximately 14,000 - 15,000 new vehicles are registered annually. The National Caravan Council noted an increase of 71% in the sale of motor vehicles between 2019 and 2020 with COVID-19 and the ability to be self-contained driving this increase.

There is also a need to consider the significant increase and popularity in converting vans into motorhomes. Over recent years thousands of general 'panel' vans have been converted into self-contained motor vehicles. Currently, the DVLA recognises the majority of the converted vehicles as a 'van with windows'. Although many of the vans are self-contained and are insured as campervans vans of this type are not considered by the DVLA as motorhome vehicles as their external appearance is similar to a general van.

The trends in growth are not unique to the UK only with countries such as Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands having seen similar growth. In 2017, there were over 1.5 million motor vehicles used throughout Europe.

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed significantly in driving the increase in the sales and hiring of motorhomes. The regulations and overseas holiday travel restrictions have increased the demand for the British 'Staycation'. In these times, many motorhome owners see this as a safer mode of travel and to have a holiday. Due to the current situation, tourism surveys forecast an increase of approximately 21% in visits to destinations in the UK in 2021 (Visit Britain).

Generally, there is a perception in the UK that visits from motorhome users do not bring a great deal of economic benefit to a destination as they fill up with food from supermarkets etc. prior to travelling to the area. Although this may be true about some, evidence of recent research by the national group CAMPRA (CAMPAIGN FOR REAL AIRES UK) and in areas where travelling in motorhomes is popular, report tendencies that are a little different. Research in 2019 on motorhome visits to the highlands of Scotland (North Coast 500) shows that visitors in motor homes spent 33% of their holiday expenditure on accommodation with the remaining 67% on items such as food and drink, attractions and local shopping. Reports from local companies hiring motor homes also indicate that their vehicles were often returned without the oven and cooking equipment having been used and this suggests that these visitors often eat out in cafés, public houses or local restaurants.

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1. Current situation in Gwynedd

The increase in visits by motorhome owners has not gone without comment here in Gwynedd and concerns have arisen in a number of communities across the county as an increasing number of motorhome owners decide to stay in 'public' locations and on land where there is no legal right to sleep in a vehicle overnight.

Gwynedd STEAM 2019 figures indicate that 7.8 million visitors visit the county annually and contribute £1.35 billion to the local economy. In the Gwynedd accommodation survey - Gwynedd Council 2018/19, it was calculated that there are 366 caravan and camping sites in Gwynedd that could provide a service for motorhomes. In 2011, there were 340 caravan and camping sites. On average, there were 59 pitches for each camping site.

The following table shows the split in the types of sites and holiday parks that were calculated in the caravan and camping category.

1.1 Gwynedd accommodation survey - Gwynedd Council 2018/19

Type	Number	% of total accommodation	% of the caravan and camping category
Camping Park	47	1.2	12.8
Holiday Park	107	2.7	29.2
Holiday and Touring Park	9	0.2	2.5
Holiday and Camping Park	26	0.7	7.1
Camping and Touring Park	95	2.4	26.0
Holiday, Touring and Camping Park	25	0.6	6.8
Total Caravan and Camping	366	9.2	100.0

On one hand it appears that there is quite a substantial provision to satisfy camping needs in Gwynedd. However, it has to be noted that a large number of caravan and camping sites now operate by selling seasonal pitches to caravan owners and this means a substantial reduction in the number of touring/daily or overnight pitches that are available.

1.2 Joint Local Development Plan Policies (JLDP) - Anglesey & Gwynedd

The Anglesey and Gwynedd JLDP (2011-26) is the main consideration when determining planning applications in Gwynedd (this does not include the Snowdonia National Park Authority area) and the JLDP includes planning policies for developments by the tourism sector. As a motorhome falls within the legal definition of a caravan, the policies for the development of touring caravan sites are the ones that are relevant to motorhomes. See below the definition of a caravan in The Caravan Sites and Development Control Act 1960: *“any structure designed or adapted for human habitation which is capable of being moved from one place to another (whether by being towed, or by being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer) and any motor vehicle so designed or*

adapted but does not include any railway rolling stock or any tent”

Noting the above, there are no separate policies for motorhomes, however, there is probably also a need to ask if the Act (1960) is now fit for purpose in terms of the needs of the tourism sector and the control thereof.

Policy TWR5 (appendix 1) states that proposals for new touring caravan, camping or temporary alternative camping sites, extensions to existing sites or additional pitches will be granted provided they conform to specific criteria. The principles of the criteria are set out below:

- Development is of a high quality and is sited in an unobtrusive location
- Avoids excessive areas of hard standing
- Have limited physical connection to the ground
- Facilities be located within an existing building or the need for additional facilities needs to be clearly demonstrated and commensurate with the scale of the development.
- That the site is close to the main highway network
- That the site is used for touring purposes only

1.3 Snowdonia National Park Authority's (SNPA) Local Development Plan (LDP) Policies

For the same reason as explained above, developments dealing with motorhomes are considered against the relevant policies for touring caravans.

Policies 22 and 23 (appendix 2) of the Snowdonia National Park LDP do not permit the development of new caravan sites within the national park's boundaries. Policy 23 permits the extension or upgrading of existing touring caravan and camping sites providing all specific criteria are satisfied. The principles of the criteria are set out below

- The site is already well screened from public vantage points
- The scale and layout of the extension is appropriate within the landscape
- The proposal will significantly improve the internal landscaping of a site and increase the quality of the existing facilities
- The proposal is in keeping with the size of the existing site.

1.4 Permitted development rights

New regulations have come into force from 30 April 2021. The Welsh Government has relaxed the planning control for temporary specific development by making amendments to the Town and Country Planning Order (Permitted General Development) 1995 (TCPO). The aim of the relaxation was to assist businesses to re-open and support efforts to create safe circumstances. Currently, the temporary use of additional land is limited to 28 days, the new rules will give an additional 28 days, however, this is specifically for camping with tents. Development is not permitted if the land use is as a caravan site.

1.5 The use of public land, car parks and other land for motorhomes

The need or otherwise for planning permission to use the land (e.g. public car parks, other lands etc.) for motorhomes to stay overnight is a consideration of fact and degree, in order to come to a conclusion if there has been a material change of use to the land / property. As a result of receiving legal counsel opinion on this matter, and emphasising the need to assess each case individually in terms of fact and degree, there are strong grounds to come to the conclusion that land use (e.g. public car parks, other lands etc.) for motorhomes to stay overnight generally means a material change of use requiring planning permission. It also follows that the use would require a site licence under the provision of The Caravan Sites and Development Control Act 1960. In addition, if the use involves a public car park where an order is in operation, there would also be a need to revise the order requirements. Again, each case will need to be assessed individually and on its own merits.

There will be a need to deal with any planning application for the change of use of land for motorhomes use to stay overnight, in accordance with the Local Development Plans noted above, as well as any relevant planning considerations. As part of the research a matrix has been developed (See Appendix 3) to assist and consider if a site (e.g. car park) can be acceptable in planning terms for overnight use by motorhomes.

1.6 Review of Parking/Traffic Legislation

Current situation:

- The Council has a wide range of car parks throughout the County that offer safe and affordable parking. Motorhomes are welcome to park in our car parks where we have no height restrictions installed.
- Motorhomes are required to adhere to the parking restrictions by ensuring that they park in a location that is suitable for the vehicle's size, to avoid dangers to pedestrians or to prevent the flow of traffic.
- Overnight stays are not permitted in any vehicle.

Existing powers:

- The Council has powers to issue a Penalty Charge Notice to motorists who park illegally under the Traffic Management Act 2004, usually where there are restrictions e.g. yellow lines, signage exists or within pay and display car parks. Parking restrictions are based on legal orders.
- A clause 'no overnight camping' is part of the legal order in some locations, however, to ensure the validity of the Penalty Charge Notices if we went to appeal, we would require firm evidence that the owners had slept in the vehicle. We have lost appeals in the past as motorists claimed that they had only parked their vehicles in a car park overnight and they had slept in a relation or friend's house.
- The Council does not currently have powers to penalise motorists who park vehicles overnight in roadside locations.
- The Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 permits Local Authorities to present restrictions via a Traffic Regulation Order (Permanent), or a Temporary or Experimental Traffic Regulation Order. It is possible to set a variety of restrictions such as yellow lines or restrictions to prevent parking (between specific times) in areas that prove popular with motorhomes, nonetheless, local residents who use these locations themselves can oppose the proposals.

- The Legal Department is looking into the possibilities of re-establishing bye-laws that existed on lay-bys adjacent to a road, to enable them to take enforcement steps against those who use them to park their motorhomes overnight, to move on. However, firm evidence is required that the owners had slept in the vehicle in order to ensure the validity of the Penalty Charge Notice.
- The Environment Department and the Economy Department have already erected 'No overnight camping' signs in many locations where complaints have been received, and on the whole this has proved successful.

The Departments will continue to monitor this.

2. Gwynedd Caravan and Camping Sites Research, April 2021

As part of this report Gwynedd Council's Tourism, Marketing and Events Service, conducted on-line research with caravan and camping site owners in Gwynedd. The purpose of the research was to find out more about the county's camping provision and local views on the situation.

153 questionnaires were received. 41 questionnaires had been fully completed. The following analysis is based on the 41 fully completed questionnaires. Responses were received from a cross-section of businesses across Gwynedd including Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd.

Results:

Is your camping site associated with a club?

Type of licence	Number
No (Local Government Licence)	27
Yes. The Camping and Caravanning Club	5
Yes. Caravan and Motorhome Club	4
Yes. Other clubs	5

In a normal year, during which months are you open?

Month	Number of camping sites open
January	2
February	4
March	17
April	41
May	41
June	41
July	41
August	41
September	25

October	24
November	9
December	8

How many available touring pitches do you have?

An average of 14 touring pitches are available

Note the touring pitch price per night (Use 2020 or 2021 prices) To be consistent, you should base the price on 1 pitch, 2 adults and 2 children during the main season.

Pitch	Average price
Pitch price, including electricity	£24.25
Pitch price without electricity	£20.05

During a normal year estimate the percentage of touring pitches that are used every month? (Number of touring pitches used by a tent, caravan or motorhomes.

Month	Average pitches used
January	10%
February	20%
March	37%
April	45%
May	74%
June	76%
July	89%
August	94%
September	57%
October	45%
November	10%
December	5%

Over the past five years have you experienced an increase in the number of motorhome visits?

Increase?	Number
No	3
Yes	38

Do you implement a minimum stay policy of 2 nights or more?

Booking?	Number
No. We take a 1 night stay	28
Yes. Sometimes e.g. during the season	13
Yes All the time	0

From your experience, did you welcome more motorhomes to your camping site in 2020?

Increase in 2020	Percentage
No. We welcomed fewer.	30.4%
The situation was like any other year	4.3%
Yes. There was a small increase	30.4%
Yes. There was a large increase	34.8%

A number of observations were received from caravan and camping owners:

“Camper vans that park in layby or beach carparks should be clamped or pay a fee to the council for they are the people who have to clear up after them”

"There should be legislation against such a thing and a fine. There is no need for this to happen in an area that has too many caravan and camping sites. There are no toilet facilities in these places but this does not stop them from going to the toilet in public places and to endanger public health!"

“It's not often that we have to turn campervans away (only during bank Holidays usually) as a campervan owner myself I can see the need for some aire type facilities especially when arriving late into an area but it should probably be limited to single night stays, wild camping on the other hand should be legislated against due to the increasing number of campervaners who care little about the area or the local population by littering and fouling lay byes and beaches.”

“Aire type facilities”

“The beach at Dinas Dinlle is quite often flooded with camper vans and campers during the summer months predominantly at the weekends and yet signs are there prohibiting overnight camping. Some are tidy and leave no mess whilst others use it as a local dustbin. Possible measures would be to monitor this and move on the parties. I understand this probably has it's issues. Possibly limit height to vehicles using it but again I feel you would cause issues for locals using it to exercise their horses, surfers visiting etc. Maybe a specific area can be created for this. I believe the same problem exists along the foryd foreshore and parking areas. Aire type facilities would be a consideration but would only work if the legislation was but in place to stop overnight parking and did not put existing parks into competition.”

2.1 Main findings:

- Seasonal provision is mainly available between April and October
- The average touring pitches available are 14. The figure is much lower than the average 59 pitches calculated via visitor accommodation research and this suggests that a large number of pitches are used on the basis of seasonal agreements and are not available for daily and overnight use.
- The occupancy level is high during the main season May - September.
- Increase in the number of motorhome visits experienced with 38 out of 41 over the last 5 years.
- Approximately 60% had experienced an increase in the number of visits from motorhomes in 2020.

3. Research into motorhome owners

There is no doubt that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the popularity of motorhomes. Staycations and the ability to be self-contained and self-sufficient have driven the appeal. However, like any other industry, it is developments and technology that have contributed most towards the increase in their popularity over the last 10 years.

The concept of motorhomes was developed in the 1960s as companies such as Volkswagen launched their iconic campervan motorhomes. At the time, such vehicles enabled their owners to sleep and cook within the vehicle.

By now, the provision available in motorhomes is very different and since the end of the 1990s the vehicles have been developed to be totally self-contained. This type of motorhome (sleeping a family) can be self-contained for approximately 4 days and this means that during this period they would not need a power supply, a facility to empty any waste or a water supply. In such a vehicle there are standard cooking equipment, beds, bathroom and a shower, on board electric power supply, gas and heating equipment.



As part of this report, Gwynedd Council's Tourism, Marketing and Events Service, conducted on-line research to target the owners of motorhomes. The purpose of the research was to find out more about the travel trends of owners. Owners were targeted via social media networks.

Research statistics of motorhome owners, April 2021

12,500 questionnaires, with 8,833 fully completed were received. For the purpose of this research, only the fully completed questionnaires were used.

In which country do you live?

Country	Percentage %
Wales	19.7
England	73.6
Scotland	4.4
Ireland	1.0
Rest of Europe	1.3

What type of vehicle do you own?

Type of vehicle	Percentage %
Motorhome	62.7
Campervan	34.9
Other	2.4

Is the vehicle?

Type of construction	Percentage %
Coach Built	57.9
Campervan Professional	27.1
Self-Build	15.0

Do you belong to a club?

Club	Percentage %
Caravan and Camping Club	33.7
Caravan and Motorhome Club	33.5
Other	11.3
No	21.5

How often do you holiday in the UK using your vehicle?

Number of times	Percentage %
1 to 4	19.9
5 to 9	37.4
10 +	42.7

Have you ever travelled to Gwynedd (Eryri/Snowdonia and Pen Llŷn) with your vehicle?

Have you travelled to Gwynedd?	Percentage %
Yes	62.1
No	36.8

Unsure	1.1
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When you go on holiday in your vehicle, on average how many nights do you stay away from home?

Average nights away	Percentage %
1 to 3 nights	33.1
4 to 6 nights	33.9
7 +	33.0

What time of year do you go on holiday in your vehicle?

Time of year	Percentage %
Throughout the year. 12 months.	64.3
Part of the year	35.7

Normally, how many nights do you stay in the same place?

Number of nights	Percentage %
1 night	23.3
2 nights	39.0
3 nights	23.5
4+ nights	14.2

Where do you stay? Which of the following best describes your stay pattern?

Description	Percentage %
We always stay in a recognised camping site	18.3
We stay in a recognised camping site and do wild camping	68.9
Wild camping only	7.4
Other	5.5

If you do 'wild camping' what are your reasons for this?

Reason	Percentage %
It's free / saves costs	12.2
Location. We want to stay as close as possible to where we want to visit e.g. town or attraction	27.7
Our vehicle is self-contained and suitable for wild camping - we do not need services e.g. electricity supply etc.	30.4
We usually do 'wild camping' as a 'stopover'.	18.5

Camping sites are often full and therefore we have to do 'wild camping'	7.4
Other	3.8

In Europe 'aires' or specific places are provided to sleep overnight in motorhomes. If there was an 'aire' available in Gwynedd would you consider using it?

Would you stay in an aire?	Percentage %
No. We would stay in a recognised camping site.	3.2
No. We would do 'wild camping'	4.6
Yes. We would stay in an 'aire'.	92.2

If an 'aire' facility was available to you What type of services would you like to see provided?

Type of service	List according to popularity (Multi choice)
Fresh water	7,909
Toilet waste disposal site	7,650
Litter bins	7,243
Hard standing	3,485
With lighting	1,933
Electricity. 240v battery charging facility	1,925
Other	965

**Other – information point, wifi

How much would you be willing to pay to stay in an 'aire' facility? (For consistency base your price on - No 240v electricity but include fresh water supply, toilet waste disposal site, hard standing, litter bins) Note the price to the nearest £. **Average £10.**

Comments - As well as the 12,500 responses to the on-line questionnaire approximately 300 emails were received from owners stating their ideas and experiences of travelling in motorhomes.

“just completed your aires questionnaire and want to thank you for considering the problem that motorhome owners have. Motorhomes are not caravans and are designed to remain mobile. In most cases we only need an overnight stop off.”

“We are regular visitors to Powys, where overnight stays are allowed and welcomed on several of their car parks. Back in September we spend a week touring this way in Powys, visiting the towns, markets and spending in local shops.”

"I think the motorhome owner is misunderstood in our requirements. Being self-contained with toilet, shower, cooking, solar power etc. we need very little. Just a safe parking spot, somewhere to empty a toilet cassette and that can be as simple as an open sewer drain or dedicated toilet bowl plus Fresh water if available. Mains electric is never a real requirement for most, in fact this is the issue that incurs the largest cost in supply and maintenance."

"I must say how refreshing it is to see a council that is 'forward thinking', rather than just legislating against wild camping it really is welcoming to see Gwynedd embracing this as an opportunity to benefit local communities."

"May I take this opportunity to Thank you for taking the time and trouble to looking into the wild camping situation in the uk."

"Thank you for giving us this opportunity to share our views. Since retiring three years ago we purchased a motorhome, hoping to explore the continent and more of the UK. In that time (before coronavirus) we have been to the North of Scotland, and to the South of France twice. The contrast between facilities here and on the continent are grim - at many motorway service areas in France, there are free stopover facilities for motorhomes, and Aires at most towns and villages. In the UK, all we find are restriction notices and height barriers. Our motorhome is self-contained, we carry all our waste with us until we find disposal facilities. Although we have cooking facilities, it is a compact van with not a huge amount of storage space, so we do tend to eat out a lot. We also carry bikes to explore the locality wherever we stop. We therefore spend money in the local economy when we travel, and although we are pensioners, this still adds up to a reasonable sum. If we could find overnight facilities with water and waste disposal, we would happily pay say £10 per night, eat at the local pub, and move on in the morning."

"I've just filled the questionnaire regarding the possibility of having 'aires' in Gwynedd. A great idea in my opinion. We are a family of 5 with a motorhome and we enjoy a family holiday as often as possible. Summer holidays in France and we only use 'aires' when we are travelling to campsites. We also often drive to Germany for skiing holidays and stay in 'aires' on the way."

"First find a site which is large enough, suits the local council and residents. Ensure that it is close enough to shops, pubs etc for local businesses to benefit from the substantial money that these affluent people will spend. Put a limit of 2 or 3 days on their stay to avoid long term stays. Install ticket machines and charge £10 - £12 a night depending on location. Many vans will also use the Aire for daytime visiting, so the benefit to local businesses is substantial. Then most importantly put height bars on any other car parks in the locality and strictly enforce a no camper van parking rule in the area. In this way you can control where these vehicles can stop."

3.1 Main research findings into motorhome owners:

- Regular travellers. 80% travel between 5 and 10 times a year.
- 95% are self-contained vehicles.
- 52% stay in one place for 1 or 2 nights only.
- 65% use their vehicles throughout the year.
- 92.2% note that they would use a provision similar to an 'Aire' if they were available.
- Fresh water, able to dispose of toilet waste and litter waste - these were the three main needs when travelling on holiday in motorhomes. Electricity provision was last on the list.
- When on holiday 68.9% used a mix of stays in camping sites and wild camping.

Following recent research by CAMBRA, the table below summarises the main differences between visitors who travel with a tent/caravan and visitors who travel in motorhomes.

	Tent / Caravan	Motorhomes
Where	Usually a caravan or camping site that is some miles outside a town/village.	In towns or villages - ideally within a walking distance to local services such as a shop, restaurants etc.
When	April - October Main season and weekends	Throughout the year
How	Use a car to get to the caravan and camping site. Use a car to travel around the destination.	The motorhome is the only vehicle. Depend on a bicycle, walking and public transport.
Stay	Long weekends, 5, 7 or 14 day holidays.	24 – 48 hours
Services needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • Shower • Electricity • Large pitches • Number of services at the site e.g. shop and bar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh water • Toilet waste • Refuse waste
Interests	“Setting up a ‘pitch’ and enjoying the facilities the site has to offer with occasional trips into the local area.”	“Dining out at local restaurants and cafes; exploring town centres and local attractions on foot or by cycle”
Food tendencies	“Take food to cook, buy from campsite shop, occasional takeaways or visits to cafes or restaurants, BBQs”	“Take a small amount of basic food for trip then buy from local businesses or eat out at cafes/restaurants/pubs or buy takeaways to eat in motorcaravan.”

4. Provision for motorhomes

Hand in hand with the growth in the popularity of motorhome travel, several local authorities across the UK have now developed and provide purposeful places to allow motorhomes to park, stay and to sleep overnight. Several have adapted or provided car parks and others have developed full 'aire' facilities. (There is further reference and explanation in this report about 'Aires').

There is no consistency from area to area and although there are some local authorities who have developed specific plans for motorhomes the majority continue to treat motorhomes in accordance with the policies of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.

It appears that there have been arguments and challenges recently from groups such as CAMPRA as there is some confusion regarding local policies and the law regarding sleeping in a self-contained vehicle and that this will prevent the market from developing in the UK. To this end the UK is unique. In the rest of Europe, sleeping in motorhomes is seen as 'parking' and not 'camping', countries such as France and Germany differentiate between the activities of motorhomes and caravans/tents. In the UK, 'camping' in legislation is legal under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. This Act was issued in 1960. A number of national groups are lobbying to revise this to reflect what is happening on the continent and to include the development of provisions for the 'roaming' and self-contained nature of motorhomes.

Some local authorities have developed by-laws and provisions such as 'aires' that can be found in France. Locations such as Donaghadee (GI), Canterbury Park and Ride, Helmsley, Skipton, Hawick, Craven Council, Lochore Country Park (Fife), Forestry Commission Scotland, Ardglass Harbour, to name but a few, have developed facilities in response to local needs.

As part of this research we know when we examined motorhome forums and Facebook groups that these facilities are used and welcomed by motorhome owners.

4.1 Wales

The situation in Wales is mixed. Powys County Council allows overnight parking in many of their car parks for one night in seven, and it is understood that the system that has been in place since the 1990s as part of the order is in operation for the relevant car parks. Carmarthenshire and Monmouthshire are looking into and investigating options. During 2020, temporary traffic restriction notices were used at Newgale by Pembrokeshire County Council to prevent caravans and motor caravans from parking in lay-bys. This was in response to safety concerns regarding caravans and motorhomes parking overnight. During summer last year there was an effort to stop camping in car parks by undertaking early morning enforcement patrols.

Visit Wales is in the process of implementing a 10 year plan to develop 3 national touring routes under the banner of The Wales Way - The North Wales Way, The Coastal Way and The Cambrian Way - the three include parts of Gwynedd.

4.2 Scotland

According to a number of motorhome groups, such as CAMBRA, Scotland is recognised as the best country in the UK in terms of infrastructure and provision for motorhomes. Although there have been negative reports recently in the press regarding the number of visitors who visit the NC500, local communities along the way recognise the need to get to grips with these problems and have developed locations to serve motorhomes. The Highlands County Council has been working jointly with landowners such as farmers with land to develop and provide simple facilities for short breaks, to bring economic benefits to local businesses.

Other popular areas such as the Isle of Tiree and the Trossachs Forest Park have also commenced looking at trialling the use of local car parks to satisfy motorhome requirements. A number of touring routes have been developed in Scotland specifically to target motorhome tourists. The NC500 touring route is recognised as one of the best in the world, while other routes such as the North East 250 encompasses the area to the East of Inverness. Heart 200 includes the central belt and the South West Coastal 300 includes the Dumfries and Galloway area. These touring routes attract motorhomes throughout the year.

The public and private sector have facilities that have been developed. The community in Caerlaverlock have developed overnight 'stay' assets for motorhomes. These have been provided by local landowners and community groups, with encouragement from the local authority and the Scottish national government. Fife Council has provided sites at Lochore Country Park near Lochgelly, and the Loch Lomond area have also commenced trialling an 'aires' scheme to satisfy the area's needs.

Scottish law permits wild camping with a tent in rural areas as long as the person who is camping does not leave anything behind. However, this law is not relevant to motorhomes, despite this, sleeping in motorhomes is generally tolerated.

4.3 England

England does not have a national strategy for motorhomes, however, a number of local authorities and public and private organisations do provide facilities. One of the best examples can be found in Canterbury. Recently, Exmouth Town Council has developed an 'aire' site on the outskirts of the town with a park and ride service. Craven Council allows motorhomes to park overnight in three of their car parks - Skipton, Settle and Ingleton. In Skipton and Settle there is a maximum stay permission of three nights, in Ingleton, up to seven nights are allowed. There are no facilities and the cost for overnight parking is £5 a night, together with the usual day payments. Car parks are also used for the purpose of 'overnight parking' at Helmsley. The Yorkshire Moors National Park is currently conducting trials, and allow overnight parking at Sutton Bank, Chop Gate and Thornton Le Dale. Northumbrian Water allows overnight parking in three of its sites at the Visitor Centres of Kielder Forest - Tower Knowe and Kielder and Elf Kirk View. In addition, they allow overnight parking at their other water reservoir sites such as Derwent and Fontburn.

In response to similar challenges to those experienced in Gwynedd, the Lake District is preparing a number of new activities in 2021 to improve the control of motorhomes in the area. These activities include:

- Developing the Guide 'How to visit Cumbria in a motorhome' including rules to disperse clusters of vans.

- Erect standard signs regarding overnight stays.
- Tighten rules in car parks with no overnight parking / or staying in vehicles signs.
- Create a list and promote locations where it is acceptable for motorhomes to park overnight.
- Contact motorhome websites e.g. Park4night to amend information and to encourage compliance with national and local regulations.

As well as the above, the Lake District has been using Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders in areas where illegal parking has become a significant issue.

The www.britstops.com <<http://www.britstops.com>> website is a network of locations that provide and are suitable for motorhomes across Britain. The locations allow free parking for one night. It is not possible to book in advance and there are no facilities, however, it is possible to park for one night. A motorhome without facilities cannot stay overnight. The following map displays the types of businesses that welcome motorcaravans and their locations. A sample of the information can be seen below.

Each entry is easy to understand

Colour corresponds to the region on the map

Name/address of venue, telephone number, contact and website

Pub? Farm shop? Vineyard?

Number of the dot on the regional map

Number of places available

Phone ahead? No

Large motorhomes? No

Dogs allowed? Yes

Litter disposal? Yes

Fresh water? Yes

Grey waste? Yes

Electricity? No

Free wifi? Yes

Black waste? No

Dates closed for stopovers

Information on the host, produce and the local area

Clear written directions to the host

Important or useful information

SW3 The Red Lion
Main Street
Anytown
Cornwall
TR13 9QQ
01234 123456
Steve & Mandy
www.redlionpub.co.uk

Closed Mon & 25 Dec

Family-run pub with a warm and welcoming feel and fine ales. Varied menu using locally-sourced produce when available (OAP half portions too). Booking recommended for Sunday lunch. Village store in pub!

On the A123 approx. 4 miles west of Anytown. Follow brown tourist signs for The Red Lion, and we are opposite the church.

Single track lane to the car park
Chemin à voie unique au parking
Einspurige Zufahrt zum Parkplatz

Key to symbols:

- Litter
- Fresh water
- Grey water
- Hook up
- Free WiFi
- Black water
- Greyed out = not available



4.4 The Situation in Europe

The situation in Europe appears to be quite different, where there is a wide provision of facilities for motorhomes. In France, Germany and Italy facilities called Aire (France), Stellplatz (Germany) or Sostas (Italy) can be found in nearly all the main towns and villages.

What are Aire / Stellplatz or Sosta?

The concept of 'Aire' was developed for the first time in France when the country's government introduced them in communities on the grounds of economic development opportunities.

Put simply, an 'Aire' is a designated overnight parking area to be used by self-contained motorhomes. Across Europe they are provided by the local authority, the Mayor in France, communities or private landowners. 'Aires' can be found in a variety of locations, but in keeping with the French government's original vision, they are usually located in villages or towns or very close to community facilities. The intention is to encourage visitors who are travelling in motorhomes to stay in a town or village and to offer an element of economic benefit to the local community and have better control over the sector. Often camping sites offer two types of service on the same site, one for camping activities and one for overnight parking and sleeping in motorhomes.

There are obvious differences in policy. The governments of European countries differentiate between 'camping' and sleeping in motorhomes. The main reason for this is that they interpret motorhomes as self-contained units, namely that the vehicles include water tanks, power, gas, heating, toilet etc. as well as the fact that the nature of travel / holiday in such vehicles entails moving from place to place more regularly, often daily. 'Camping' activities, namely, things such as a barbecue, tables and chairs outside etc. are not permitted in an 'aire'.

Different facilities can be found in an Aire / Stellplatz or Sosta. Some only offer a parking space. In the majority there are essential facilities such as drinking water tap, toilet waste point and grey waste water point and litter bins. Some also offer electricity facilities to enable vehicles to charge their batteries.



A great number of motorhome owners from Britain choose to travel to Europe because of the wide network of facilities that are available.

This video by Nigel and Sonia Wignall from Conwy is a summary of how the 'aires' and 'stellplatz' systems work in France and Germany. <https://youtu.be/kuLbiMk1lvo>

Over the Irish sea the Irish Republic has developed a formal strategy for motorhome tourism. In 2014, Fáilte Ireland launched the 'Wild Atlantic Way' a 2,500km route along the country's western coast. Since its launch it has developed to be one of the main travel destinations for motorhome visitors and has received international recognition. A number of local authorities saw this as an opportunity and several areas have developed motorhome facilities. Waterford Council, County Cork Council and Donegal Council have provided several 'aire' facilities for motorhomes. The Portumna marina 'aire' site (in the photograph) has won several prizes of excellence for its facilities. You can stay there for 10 euros a night and it is in the centre of the village.



4.5 New Zealand

Operational policies and parking network systems for motorhomes in New Zealand are recognised by many as the best in the world. 'Freedom Camp' is a network of designated sites where motorhomes can stay overnight, these are usually provided free of charge by Local Authorities. In order to be able to stay overnight in a Freedom Camp site it is essential for the motorhomes to be certified as a self-contained vehicle with the capacity to hold a sufficient amount of water (12L of water per person a day), provides a toilet (when the bed has been made up - not a toilet that is kept under the bed or in a cupboard) and litter for a minimum of 3 days. It is essential for motorhomes to have a self-contained test and this will then last for 4 years. There is more information about the self-contained criteria to be found here:

<https://www.freedomcamping.org/plan-your-trip/self-containment-certification/>

5. Gwynedd residents and communities research

As part of the consultation research was undertaken to seek the views of Gwynedd residents and communities regarding the situation with motorhomes locally. On-line research was undertaken for a period of 6 weeks between 20/07 and 31/08 2021.

4,868 questionnaires were completed, 2,169 full questionnaires. The following analysis is based on the 2,169 of full responses. Responses were received from a cross-section of residents across Gwynedd including Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd.

Results:

Number of full responses	2,169	
<i>Are motorhomes a problem in your area?</i>		
	No.	%
Not answered	66	3.0%
No, not a problem in my community	715	33.0%
Yes at times e.g. the summer, weekends	999	46.1%
Yes, it is a consistent problem in my community	389	17.9%
	2,169	100.0%
<i>Some other local authorities in popular tourist destinations in the UK have started to develop plans to improve the control of motorhomes. One of the most common interventions is the development of 'aires' which are very common in European countries. In your opinion what type of intervention should be considered to improve control and the experiences of motorhome visitors? (Tick if relevant)</i>		
	No.	% (out of 2,169)
Do nothing. There is no need to do more to improve the control of motorhomes in Gwynedd	50	2.3%
More camping sites. Increasing capacity	559	25.8%
Open camping sites throughout the year	663	30.6%
Stricter legislation and enforcement	838	38.6%
Trial new ideas e.g. a series of 'aires' in more urban sites using the Council's existing car parks or private businesses.	1,599	73.7%
Other	162	7.5%
<i>From the research with motorhome owners it appears that the vast majority are keen to stay overnight in more urban locations to be close to services such as shops, restaurants etc. On average, they also tend to stay for 2 nights before moving on. Would you be happy to see a trial conducted of the use made of car parks in more urban locations and to permit overnight parking for a specific period e.g. 48 hours?</i>		
	No.	%
Yes, this seems to be a good idea to trial	1,500	69.2%
I'm not sure	136	6.3%
No, I don't think that this is a suitable idea	512	23.6%
Not answered	21	1.0%
	2,169	100.0%

Location of some who answered	No.	%
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Gwynedd	1,735	80.0%
Outside Gwynedd	243	11.2%
Not answered	191	8.8%
	2,169	100.0%

Of the 2,169 responses received, 1,432 observations were made. For the purpose of the research we have categorised the comments into specific headings. The following table summarises the comments received to the question 'additional comments'. It is worth noting that 20 comments were received specifically regarding the difficulties at Tonfannau near Tywyn.

Comments of all (Gwynedd, Outside Gwynedd and not answered)	No.	% who agree with the comment
Purposeful 'aires' with facilities are a good idea (2 nights maximum)	453	31.6%
Local council/ businesses to charge a fee for overnight parking in their car parks/use of toilets, bins and water.	449	31.4%
Need to penalise those who park illegally / more wardens / laws and signs	336	23.5%
They create an obstruction in the car parks / at the roadside / narrow lanes - no space for residents and day visitors to park	293	20.5%
Mess /Litter /human waste left - negative impact on the environment	257	17.9%
Everything should be done to promote the use of motorhomes as any other tourist type to promote the local economy.	119	8.3%
Motorhome owners should be able to afford paying for parking in legal places	117	8.2%
A need to provide parking places/'aires' in rural locations as well, not only in towns.	73	5.1%
Illegal parking - no contribution to the local economy	70	4.9%
Motor vehicles parking illegally causing ill-feeling between Gwynedd residents and visitors	59	4.1%
Specific parking/camping places have to be provided before proceeding to penalise	58	4.1%
Something needs to be done to sort out this problem.	56	3.9%
Not possible to turn up at camping sites now either because they are full / will not accept you for one night	45	3.1%
The solution is not to increase the caravan/camping sites as the motor vehicles do not require the facilities	38	2.7%
Their use should not be encouraged in Gwynedd	31	2.2%
Motor vehicles are less of a problem than second /holiday homes in the area	26	1.8%
Motor vehicles should not be treated in the same manner as vehicles that have been transformed into a motorhome	25	1.7%
The height restriction barriers in car parks should be removed	22	1.5%
Gwynedd is busily turning into a visitors play area	21	1.5%
There should be signs to show how to go to the toilet in the wild /disposal of	19	1.3%

waste		
They should be allowed to park at roadsides /car parks	18	1.3%
There should be a system where owners have to register to get a permit if they are self-sufficient.	17	1.2%
A 'visitors' tax' should be charged	14	1.0%

For the purpose of this research we also present the observations of 1,167 out of 1,735 who commented and also noted in the questionnaire that they were residents living in Gwynedd. There are a few differences in the percentages, as noted in the table.

Living in Gwynedd (1,167 out of 1,735 commented)

Comments of those who noted that they resided in Gwynedd	No.	% who agree with the comment
Local council/ businesses to charge a fee for overnight parking in their car parks/use of toilets, bins and water	367	31.4%
Purposeful 'aires' with facilities are a good idea (2 nights maximum)	328	28.1%
Need to penalise those who park illegally / more wardens / laws and signs	300	25.7%
They create an obstruction in the car parks / at the roadside / narrow lanes - no space for residents and day visitors to park	264	22.6%
Mess /Litter /human waste left - negative impact on the environment	225	19.3%
Motorhome owners should be able to afford paying for parking in legal places	105	9.0%
Everything should be done to promote the use of motorhomes as any other type of tourist to promote the local economy.	86	7.4%
Illegal parking - no contribution to the local economy	62	5.3%
A need to provide parking places/'aires' in rural locations as well, not only in towns.	58	5.0%
Purposeful parking/camping places have to be provided before proceeding to penalise	54	4.6%
Motor vehicles parking illegally causing ill-feeling between Gwynedd residents and visitors	53	4.5%
There is a need to do something to sort out this problem.	51	4.4%
Not possible to turn up at camping sites now either because they are full / will not accept you for one night	29	2.5%
The solution is not to increase the caravan/camping sites as the motor vehicles do not require the facilities	26	2.2%
Their use should not be encouraged in Gwynedd	24	2.1%
Motor vehicles are less of a problem than second /holiday homes in the area	24	2.1%
Motor vehicles should not be treated in the same manner as vehicles that have been transformed into a motorhome	23	2.0%
Gwynedd is busily turning into a visitors play area	18	1.5%
The height restriction barriers in car parks should be removed	18	1.5%
A 'visitors' tax' should be charged	14	1.2%
There should be a system whereby owners have to register to get a permit if they are self-contained.	14	1.2%
There should be signs to show how to go to the toilet in the wild /disposal of waste	13	1.1%
They should be allowed to park at roadsides /car parks	12	1.0%

5.1 Main findings of Gwynedd residents and communities

- A high percentage of local residents note that there are problems in their area due to motorhomes.

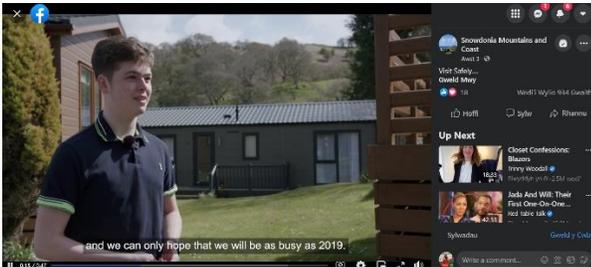
46.1% noted at times e.g. the summer, weekends and 17.9% noted that it was a problem throughout the year.

- The majority of local residents state that trialling new ideas e.g. a series of 'aires' in more urban sites using the Council's existing car parks or private businesses would be the most suitable solution (1,599 in support 73.7%)
- 69.2% state that they would be happy to see the trialling of the use made of car parks in more urban locations and to permit overnight parking for a specific period e.g. 48 hours.

6. The Situation in Gwynedd 2021

The level of visitors across all accommodation sectors in 2021 have been totally unprecedented here in Gwynedd. A situation that is being driven by restrictions on overseas travel and general popularity of the area amongst visitors in Britain. Visits by these motorhomes to Gwynedd have also seen incredible levels that have had a huge impact on the services of local authorities and communities across the county. Gwynedd Council and the SNP Authority have maximised services and activities to get to grips with problems locally. The additional activities include:

- Maximise the level of wardens
- Increase the level and frequency of services e.g. refuse collection
- Additional signage in problematic locations
- Multi-purpose marketing and communication campaigns (encouraging the use of recognised sites and not to wild camp)
- Complaints system



<https://www.facebook.com/visitingsnowdonia/videos/1440705772955454>



<https://www.facebook.com/visitingsnowdonia/photos/10159487745689374>



Despite efforts 'wild camping' continues to happen and a large number of complaints have been received by Gwynedd Council and the SNP Authority. The main problematic locations include:

- Y Foryd
- Porth Neigwl
- Llanberis
- Dinas Dinlle
- Trefor
- Porth Ysgaden
- Dôl Idris
- Between Dolgellau and Bontddu
- Llyn Dinas
- Bala, particularly around Llyn Tegid and Bron Feuno
- Dyffryn Ardudwy
- Capel Curig / Llynau Mymbyr
- Cromlech and Nant Peris
- Dyffryn Ogwen
- Tywyn / Tonfannau
- Cricieth
- Pwllheli





(Photographs by SNPA)

7. Main findings and recommendations of the research into the situation regarding motorhomes in Gwynedd

Main findings:

- It appears that the motorhomes sector is a fairly new type of market that has developed more and more over the last few years, as the needs of the population change as well as the ability of the vehicles to be more self-contained and comfortable.
Growth since 2010.
- The pattern or the nature of how motorhome owners spend their holidays is different to the 'more traditional camping' with tendencies to travel from one place to the next and to stay for a day or two only at a site, before moving on. 52% noted that they stayed in one place for 1 or 2 nights only.
- It is not anticipated that there will be a reduction in the growth of the popularity and number of motorhomes on our roads. The trend is increasing and it is anticipated that there will be further growth as a result of COVID-19.
- It appears that the current provision available at caravan and camping sites in Gwynedd does not always satisfy the requirements and the travel patterns of motorhome owners. It seems that visitors in motorhomes want to stay in locations that are close to facilities e.g. restaurants, shops etc. They arrive at a location later after 18:00hrs and leave early.
- Motorhome owners tend to travel throughout the year. The majority of caravan and camping sites are open from April to October and at specific times and there is a suggestion especially during 2020 that there are capacity issues.
- A high number of motorhome visitors use a combination of caravan and parking sites / wild camping when on holiday. 92.2% noted that they would use a provision similar to an 'Aire' if they were available.
- There are obvious differences in policies in the UK and Europe.
- Some areas, particularly in Scotland, are developing a network of facilities to respond to the requirements.
- A high percentage of local residents note that there are problems in their area due to motorhomes.
- 46.1% noted at times e.g. the summer, weekends and 17.9% noted that it was a problem throughout the year.
- The majority of local residents support trialling new ideas e.g. a series of 'aires' in more urban sites using the Council's existing car parks or private businesses as the most suitable solution to the issues.
- 2021 has been a totally unprecedented year in terms of motorhome visits to Gwynedd.

8. Recommendations

On the grounds of the evidence that has derived from this work, it is considered that better control of the motorhome sector is needed in Gwynedd and the following recommendations should be considered:

8.1 Trial and facilitate the use

- Use public assets such as public car parks in appropriate destinations to trial 'overnight' parking provision for the purposes of motorhomes (this will of course be subject to the need for planning permission, site permit)
- Trial to look at the possibility of using existing car parks where simple adaptations can be made to provide basic services such as fresh water, emptying of toilets, grey water and litter. Recommend looking at approximately 6 across Gwynedd. These to operate as a Gwynedd 'Aires' network.
- Implement specific regulations e.g.:
 - Self-contained vehicles only and draft county guidance such as the example in New Zealand. Develop Gwynedd self-contained guidance with CAMPRA.
 - Vehicles that are not self-contained to use caravan and camping sites.
 - Set a clear guidance regarding the length of stay - recommend a maximum of 2 nights.
 - No 'camping' activities to be permitted e.g. bbq, awnings etc. County guidance to be developed.
 - Consider a fees structure for overnight stays between the hours of 18.00 and 8.00.
- Use the locations matrix such as the one in Appendix 3 to assist with identifying suitable sites and to assist to meet with the requirements of relevant planning policies. This is relevant to public and private lands.
- Trial for a period of 2 years
- Develop a digital method to show availability, payment and advance booking of parking sites.

8.2 Control and raising awareness

- Develop a 'Staying responsible' guidance for motorhome visitors. Such as the example in the Lake District.
- Promote and market suitable 'staying in camping sites' messages.
- Raise awareness and communicate messages encouraging use of traditional caravan and camping sites.
- policing / parking enforcement where the Council has power and evidence
- Consideration to use additional overnight parking restrictions in the areas identified as 'hot spots', however, this will have to be considered jointly with the recommendation to trial. There will also be a need to consider how practical it will be to enforce in terms of evidence and resources.
- Call upon the Welsh Government to review the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960, to ensure that it better meets with the requirements of the tourism sector today.

9. Acknowledgements - A number of messages thanking Gwynedd Council for taking steps to investigate this issue.

I would like to congratulate your Council for being forward thinking enough to consider the benefits of European style 'Aires' in Snowdonia. Mark / Jo Skerritt

I have just filled in your questionaire re provision of European style motorhome aires in Gwynedd. I must say how refreshing it is to see a council that is 'forward thinking' in welcoming all tourists who arrive in motorhomes. Mrs j t marshall

I congratulate you on your desire to embrace motorhomers..and let's face it...most motorhomers are retired and want to spend their kids inheritance...so hopefully we can spend it in Gwynedd.!! Mrs j t marshall

Just completed the questionnaire about aires. Very pleased to see that this idea is being seriously considered. It works well in Europe, and would be very welcome in the UK. Richard Hubard

I have just completed your survey on motorhome and campervan use, and want to thank you for taking the time to find out what van owners would like to see in the area. Jo Morris

It was a pleasure to see this type of attitude and research into the use of motorhomes and campervans in Gwynedd. Richard Evans

*** Many thanks to Nia Wyn Vaughan and Lowri Wyn Morton, Research and Information Unit, Gwynedd Council for their assistance in analysing the data collected.**