

Note: This letter, sent to Jane Davidson by one of our supporters, is just one example of the more than 30 letters that we have been copied on in support of the “call-in” application regarding Bettws Newydd.

Newport
Pembs
SA42 0XX

Jane Davidson AM
Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing
Welsh Assembly Government
5th Floor, Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay, CF99 1NA

18 May, 2009

Dear Ms. Davidson,

Re: Bettws Newydd, Newport, Pembs – a desecration of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

As a property owner in Newport and lifelong lover of North Pembrokeshire, I write to implore you to have the Welsh Assembly Government call in for review a recent decision by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Development Management Committee. This wrongly gave consent to their Planning Application 08/361 for a huge and ostentatious new house to replace a previous small, unobtrusive, single-storey dwelling in Newport, Pembs., called Bettws Newydd (the “monstrous carbuncle” to borrow a well-known phrase). I’m sure you are familiar with this, from the press coverage and the letters you’ll already have received from many other members of the local opposition to this hideous and intrusive structure. If it’s allowed to remain, it will make a complete mockery of the arrangements intended to protect this wonderful part of the Principality.

You are reputedly a committed environmentalist, lover and protector of our nature and landscape. Well, if ever there was a need for a white (or green) knight to right a dreadful wrong, this is it! Hopefully, you are that knight. This is a matter of the highest national importance. The National Park structures, bodies and procedures are meant to protect and preserve the beautiful places with which we have been blessed, for current and future generations. In this case, there is an imminent risk of their failing abjectly to do so.

I’m not going to describe in great detail in this letter the development or the specific reasons so many of us are sure that the PCPNA DMC has failed to apply its own rules and regulations. You will no doubt have had many long and well-argued and supported submissions from other members of the opposition to the monstrous carbuncle. And be sure that for everyone who will have written to you, there are dozens of others who feel just as strongly. If you and your officials take the time and trouble to look at the “before” and “after” plans and photos of the thing and its impact on the entire look of Newport Bay, none of you can possibly disagree that:

- far from preserving the special landscape of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, it is a direct and significant affront to its character and hence in manifest and flagrant conflict with National Park policies
- the PCNPA’s own rules created to meet these policies explicitly require that permission for any rebuilt house will not be granted, unless it would be “no more visually intrusive” than the building which it replaces, and anybody who maintains that Bettys Newydd (sadly now clearly visible over several miles of the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path) complies with this requirement, needs their head or motives examining
- the monstrous carbuncle is totally out of character with the architecture of the Newport Parrog Conservation Area it adjoins, (the preservation of the setting of which led a WAG Planning Inspector to confirm a decision by the PCNPA to refuse consent in the next field but one for the development of just a garage/boathouse – and so they seem very inconsistent in their decision-making).

This development has caused a significant public stir and aroused near-universal opposition including from well beyond the locality. My and other opponents' experience in dealing with the PCNPA has been totally unsatisfactory. Its DMC has now decided, with considerable embarrassment and obvious unease, that the original approval they gave for the monstrous carbuncle was "totally within the rules" and "in accordance with their policies and procedures" or words to that effect. Where else have we heard formulae like this in the press recently?

The point is not whether they followed the exact letter of rules or procedures. It is that the fundamental purpose of such rules and procedures is to protect the National Park from the visual and environmental damage which the construction of this enormous, horrible and intrusive new house has caused. In this case, it is blindingly obvious that either the system itself, or the judgments and decisions of the people operating it, or both, have manifestly failed in this purpose, and inflicted serious harm on the National Park. You have the opportunity to reverse the failure, first by calling in the decision and, when it has been found to be wrong, using your powers to force the demolition of this excrescence of a structure. Please be good and brave!

Yours sincerely,