

**P-04-607 Call for the welsh government to purchase Garth Celyn –  
Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 07.09.15**

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

MEETING 22nd SEPTEMBER 2015

P-04-607 GARTH CELYN

I have read the letter from Ken Skates dated 6 July, and also correspondence on the subject from CADW.

I should like to point out that Ken Skates, Deputy Minister for Culture and Tourism has been invited to visit Pen y Bryn, Garth Celyn, Abergwyngregyn, and see for himself the potential that this unique and special site has to offer. To date, he has declined to accept the offer, and his comments, though polite, show that he has failed to understand what Garth Celyn means to people who truly care about Welsh history, and the Flagship project that with help and encouragement from the Welsh Assembly Government, this could become.

A 'new touchscreen display' in the Public Toilet adjacent to the carpark in the village, does little to fulfil the wishes of the people who signed this Petition.

The director of CADW has written to myself and others stating that members of staff visited Garth Celyn last year in response to an Application by the owner. I am informed by Ms Gibson that she made no such Application, and that no one from CADW has been through the door since 1994.

The whole matter needs to be brought under a public spotlight, and the substantial amounts of public money spent on two futile excavations of what experts believe to be a barn / workshop in the village, the 'touchscreen display' and the rest needs thorough independent scrutiny.

Garth Celyn has been ignored and marginalised for reasons many of us sadly understand only too well.

Documentary and building evidence, combined with longstanding local tradition, has proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the promontory overlooking the village alongside the river on the valley bottom, was the site of the home of the Princes of Gwynedd prior to the Edwardian conquest.

We want to celebrate that fact by creating a garden of remembrance – a place where we can celebrate and share our heritage. We want to keep the buildings on the site open for school visits and the rest. Each year students studying the play 'Siwan' by Saunders Lewis have come here to gain an experience that no amount of 'touchscreen displays' can provide. People want to experience the real thing.

Public walking trails in the valley are commendable, but where apart from Garth Celyn itself, can people appreciate the meaning of the place that was the thirteenth century Welsh royal home? Does CADW want people to glimpse something through the trees on the hillside that they will be prevented from entering?

This is our last chance to do something positive. And we need to act now. The property will be auctioned in November unless the Welsh Assembly Government sees the Light as we have pleaded for months. If the Assembly provides the funding to purchase the property in the first place, interested people can then at that stage work with the various public local and national bodies, charities and Heritage Lottery Fund to take this project forward for public benefit. Ownership of the property has to happen FIRST before that can take place.

This is not a political football. Work together and make it happen for all our benefit. Wales needs this, and what a wonderful project for us to be able to share.

all the best

kevin Bates

### **Unsolicited correspondence received from interested party**

To the Members of the Petitions Committee

22nd September 2015

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO BUY GARTH CELYN– THE HOME OF THE PRINCES OF GWYNEDD**

On behalf of many others, I should like to thank the Members of the Petitions Committee for their work in highlighting this issue.

We understand that Ken Skates, in his role as Minister for Culture and Tourism, has not accepted the offer to visit the site and make his own judgement.

Ask yourself this with an open mind.

1. If you were the Prince of Wales, with family, ministers, advisers and guests, would you chose to live on a strategic promontory overlooking the Menai Strait, the Lafan Sands walkway to Anglesey, the port of Llanfaes on the opposite shore and your demesne farmland. Or on the valley floor in the centre of the bustling village, between the mill and the noisy smithy where the community and travellers come to draw water from the river? One place is safe, secure, sunlit and offers privacy. The other just the opposite. So there you have it. Garth Celyn has been reused for over 4000 years for that very reason.

2. There are the clear remains of early medieval structures on Garth Celyn. What is below ground has never been fully explored and analysed, but that does not matter at this stage. The documentary evidence is perfectly clear- Garth Celyn was the home of the Prince of Wales and his ancestors prior to 1283.

Huw Edwards in the BBC 'Story of Wales' described it as "In all likelihood the most important site in the history of Wales". Having studied the documentary evidence alongside Paul Remfry and other scholars we have reached the same conclusion.

Gwynfor Evans said that Garth Celyn "...holds the Soul of the Nation." " I respect Gwynfor's view on this and much else. The late John Davies described Garth Celyn as "the one time capital of independent Wales."

3. Saunders Lewis explored the site in the early 1950s and rightly set his play 'Siwan' here. That play is studied in schools throughout Wales.

Thomas Parry set his play 'Llywelyn Fawr' here. Edith Pargeter set her novels 'The Bothers of Gwynedd' and 'The Green Branch' here. Sharon Penman set her novels 'Here Be Dragons' and 'The Reckoning' here. Barbara Erskine set her novel 'Child of the Phoenix' here. Need I go on? If Ken Skates and his advisors cannot see the literary potential alone in Garth Celyn, they are missing the key that offers visitors to the area something really special. Those novels are read worldwide, and have put north Wales on a map for many people who would not have considered visiting otherwise. Add history, culture and landscape into that literary mix and you have a powerful draw.

4. Students from all parts of Wales have visited Garth Celyn over the years years and their letters show what that visit has meant to them. To deny students this opportunity would not be helpful.

5. Tourists visit Chester and Shrewsbury, but they need something that draws them to come further. Garth Celyn , alongside the A55 with easy access, offers so much potential in so many ways.

6. We are not asking for CADW to take Garth Celyn into care. We continue to ask that the Welsh Assembly Government buy this landholding and then place it into the hands of independent Trustees. Those Trustees can then, and only then, apply for grants to take the project forward. As we are well aware, the purchase of Garth Celyn has to happen first. We ask the Welsh Assembly Government to see this as a local, National and international project for the greater public good and benefit. Garth Celyn is Our Heritage, something so many of us treasure.

7. The idea of installing a touchscreen display in the public toilet in the village does little to respect the memory of the men and women who made such a heroic stand to keep Wales independent. Their memory deserves better. Stand outside that public toilet, and look up. When you do, all becomes clear.

We ask that you dont sit back and let Garth Celyn go to public auction. Find the way to take this forward.

Dr John C. Davies.

Conwy