

For The Western Telegraph

STATEMENT ON THE FORMAL APOLOGY TO NEWPORT TOWN COUNCIL
FROM MR TEGRYN JONES, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, PCNPA, REGARDING BETTWS NEWYDD

Whilst BNOG welcomes a formal apology being given to Newport Town Council this does not go far enough

No apology was made for Officers' insistence that the 2006 scheme approved by the National Park was in compliance with policy throughout more than 4 years of the planning process although this is now known to be wrong

The PCNPA Monitoring Officer's report lists mistake after mistake made by the planners, yet no-one has been brought to account. BNOG does not agree with Mr Jones that the failure at Bettws Newydd was one of process alone. As Mr Jones has stated himself, the previous processes normally worked well. Why was this case different?

BNOG holds that this was because there was serious maladministration that cannot be explained away by inadequacies in processes and systems and we are highlighting to the Authority what we see as major examples of this.

In 2007 the development at Bettws Newydd was not being carried out according to the plans approved for planning purposes, yet Officers told not only the Developer, but also Newport Town Council, the Development Management Committee and complainants that it was. The unauthorised development should have required a fresh application to be made, which was highly unlikely to have been approved, but this did not happen.

In addition, a verbal agreement made between the Developer and a planner on floor levels in 2006, even before planning permission was granted and in breach of a planning condition, was subsequently withheld from Newport Town Council, the Development Management Committee, the public and the Authority's own expensive consultants until virtually the last moment in 2010. When revealed, it was a major factor in the Inspector allowing the Appeal. Had it been known earlier, much of the £77,421 of taxpayers' money spent by the PCNPA on this case might have been saved, and BNOG's own legal costs reduced.

Had Officers acted correctly when complaints were first raised by the public the building would look very different today. Instead, the eyesore that is Bettws Newydd will stand in perpetuity, a reminder that Public Sector planners are rarely brought to account for their mistakes.

More action is necessary. We are requesting that outstanding matters are referred to the Standards Committee of the National Park for consideration of appropriate disciplinary action against those responsible.

Reg Atkinson Chairperson Bettws Newydd Opposition Group

The Old Mill Newport SA42 0PL 01239 82088

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