

**Pen Y Cae** is a small 18th Century farm building perched high above the tree line in Grwyne Fawr valley, about 10 miles away from Abergavenny. It was used as an off-grid outdoor education venue in the 1980s and 90s. It now needs some renovation. We are seeking views from people who might use this



venue, so that we can conduct this renovation to suit the maximum number of potential users. As overnight accommodation it would be suitable for a maximum of 12 people, for day time use it could be a dry base for outdoor activities provided to a larger number of users.



**So far**, with support from community volunteers, youth, arts and outdoor activity groups and schools, we have secured permission from Natural Resources Wales to redevelop the building. We have cleaned it and held three consultation events to develop some plans. The first children and parent to visit Pen y Cae at our open day said:

*It's like walking into a living museum, like St Fagan's but still in the original place. Sleeping here would be really fab!*

*The stone stairwell feels like a secret – make it more secret; the little cupboard upstairs, put something inside it that is interesting.*

Over the sessions that followed, others commented that:

*It is solid and strong and has a great fireplace.*

*It's such a place for adventure.*

*Can't imagine there is anywhere else like this*

*There is no sound or intrusion from the modern world, no rumble of traffic, no distractions.*

*You can sit and listen.*

*Helps keep you attuned without interference*

*It tunes you in to a sense of place – Tir, Hiraeth*

We now need your help to fine tune these plans, and to estimate how much your organisation would use the building. **To help**, please read about the current condition and Imagined Uses of Pen Y Cae, then fill in the survey at the end.

Tell us your organisation or profession and your contact details. Read the description of our plans and give your opinion about the different options. If you can, we would really like it if you would involve people you are working with (adults and children) in giving their answers to these questions too.

## Current condition

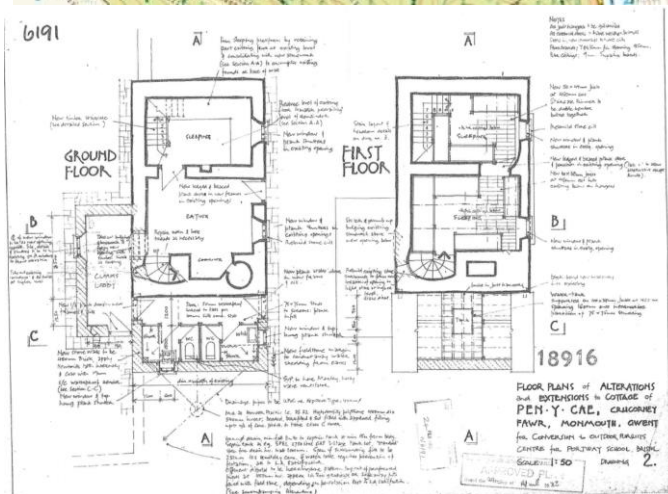
Pen y Cae is a stone building



It is accessible by vehicle via a NRW owned track and from Pont Cadwgan car park by foot.



It is made up of four rooms, toilet/shower rooms. And a kitchen space.



Room 1, accessed from the main entrance door, has a large open fireplace (with back boiler) and a spiral stone staircase leading up to room 3. This room has previously been used, with benches or chairs, as a cosy space to sit by the fire.



Room 2, accessed from Room 1, has a wooden staircase to stone 'dairy benches' which have most recently been used, as seating and as bed space. This room has also been used with a table in it as an activity space.



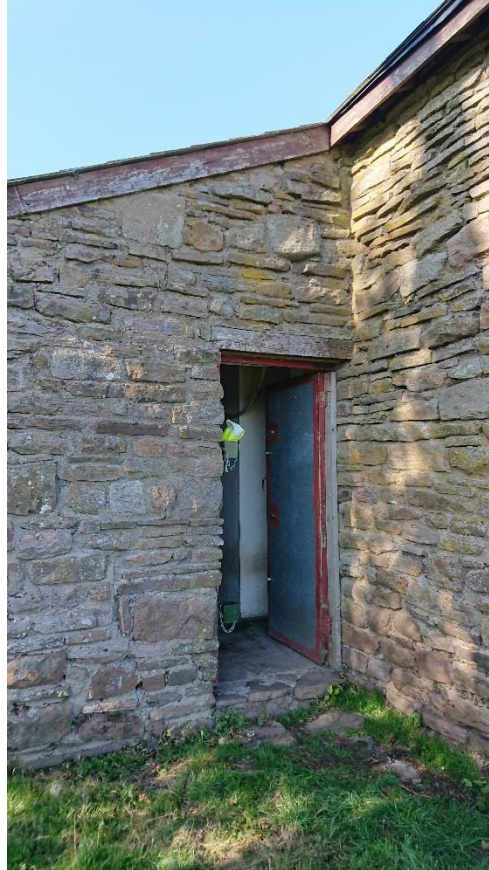
Room 3 is a low-ceilinged room above Room 1, accessed by the stone stairs. It has most recently been used as a workshop space with cushions on the floor. At a squeeze, it could sleep 6 in bunk beds. It has a (potentially lockable) doorway to Room 4.



Room 4 is a low-ceilinged open landing above Room 2. At a squeeze, it could sleep 6 in bunk beds. Currently it is an airy space, potentially warmed by the open fire. It has a (potentially lockable) doorway to Room 3.



The kitchen, accessed from Room 1 or the back door, has a spring water supply and a waste pipe. It previously had a sink, Rayburn and basic kitchen units.



There are three very basic toilet/shower rooms. A former toilet/shower room has been used for storage and drying. Above the bathrooms there is a large storage space, which previously contained the hot water tank.



Outside there are two lean-to areas that have been used for storing wood and outdoor equipment

## Imagined Uses

This sense of living history and adventure strikes to the heart of what is wonderfully unique about Pen y Cae. Other participants were struck by the combination of its facilities and location:

*Can't believe it has a shower, in the middle of nowhere*

*Lots of toilets!*

*It's a cosy space in a quite exposed location*

*'The view is magnificent' 'Spectacular views'*

The relative isolation and lack of facilities were also significant features:

*Its off-grid, so an opportunity to be away from it all.*

*Cooking on an open fire would be an exciting novelty.*

*Darkness of the sky*

*Solitude*

*A paradise of nature*

*Survival*

*Refuge*

It differs from other similar sites (Gwyrne Fawr Bothy, Dan y Coed) in that:

*It is bigger and more remote*

Participants writing about Pen y Cae summed it up in this way:

*A cloister, a haven, high on a hill. A natural place for contemplation. An anchor. A guardian.*

*Building a capacity which enables you to reflect, it is a place to lose yourself and to find yourself. Locate yourself. In the custodianship of this hafod.*

*It bares evidence of human habitation for milenia. A place where we insist on living. Out of randomness comes purpose.*

People described the place as feeling:

*Relaxed, exciting, free, scary, peaceful. Wet and rainy in some weather! Contemplative.*

*Connected with a long history and continuity.*

Participants also noted the dynamism of the landscape and the excitement of being part of shaping what Pen y Cae could become. A few people felt that it lacked life, but it was in good nick and useable already for some people!

## What could people do here?

Consultation participants were full of ideas:

*Cycle or walk in and stay overnight*

*Teachers, DofE, BTCV, Scouts/Guide/Cubs/Brownies etc could bring groups*

*Alternative stag/hen nights for people who want adventures*

They noted outdoor, play and wellbeing activities that related to unique isolated location (that may need to be led by qualified instructors):

*Experiencing countryside for the first time*

*Orienteering, mountain climbing, waling, map reading, foraging, mountain biking, team building, lazer tag, bivouacking, bushcraft, paragliding, star gazing, forest school, proper field studies, archery, ancillary woodcrafts, adventure journeying, exploring forest, den building, birdwatching, making fires,*

*Hide and seek, tree climbing, geocache, treasure hunts, tree swing*

*Meditation, yoga, retreats, off-grid detox, place of contemplation and spirituality, just sitting,*

It was also felt that the site would inspire arts-based activities and learning. Participants named:

*Storytelling, creative activities, sing, dance, artists in residence, literature, painting, sculpture workshops with felling waste.*

*Understanding the living and working landscape, how it works now and the history of the whole area*

*Gaining traditional skills*

*Living archeology – living off grid*

*Use of natural pigments*

*Wild tots*

### Who could and should benefit from these opportunities?

Participants felt that the site should be made available to diverse groups that included both adults and children and people who were from the valley itself, Abergavenny, Crickhowell, Monmouthshire and indeed from across the UK and beyond. This might include local walking groups, and everybody. But there was a consistent interest in making the venue available to people who had experienced disadvantage, including:

*Small groups of people who have issues*

*Mental health groups*

*Urban communities*

*Youth groups from the town*

*Injured service men and women*

*People in need of peace and meditation*

There were also some repeated suggestions that corporate clients (or people who are posh) who are interested in helping the environment or who could subsidise the venue to make it cheaper for others to use. There was a suggestion that on school term weekdays it should be reserved for school groups.

### What are the challenges and benefits?

Some teachers would find it challenging to be in such isolated and basic conditions with children. Benefits were anticipated for both people using the venue and people locally who could offer services. For users it was thought that:

*People will know they are allowed and will get guidance on how to be in isolated areas, so that they can do more of this independently in the future*

The anticipated impact for these individuals was seen as increased confidence; stress relief; In addition, if links are established to local providers and community resources, the potential for local economic benefit was also seen, namely:

*Potential support for employment in outdoor leisure industries*

*Use of local shops*

Suggested local people to connect to included:

*Greenwood makers*

*Off-grid farm Caerphilly*

## Developing our Renovation plans

The outcome of the consultations we have held so far are that Pen y Cae should be kept as an off-grid building, renovated in a simple style that retains what one child described as a feeling that you are walking round a building at St Fagan's but it's still up on a hill. But we are aiming to make Pen Y Cae as comfortable and fulfilling as possible for as many user groups as possible. Please answer the questions to tell us what you need in order to start using it, and what you would need (if anything) in order to use it more in the future.

## About your organisation

Organisation name:
Contact details:
How would you use Pen y Cae? ( <i>tick one or both</i> )    Daytime use <input type="checkbox"/> Overnight use <input type="checkbox"/>
Age range of potential users:

## Your Needs

*These are options for the sorts of equipment and furnishings that could be provided to enable people to use and stay at Pen y Cae.*

*Please let us know your requirements, it will help us understand your **minimum requirements** and any needs that could be provided for if we secure funding.*

		Not needed for us to start using it	Minimum basic need	This would increase our comfort and use	This would decrease our use	This would have no impact
<b>Seating</b>	Benches or chairs to seat 12 people					
	Table for 6 people to sit around					
	Tables for 12 people to sit around					
	Floor cushions					
	Foam Mats for stone benches (Rm 2)					
<b>Sleeping</b>	Space (eg to put mats on the floor that we bring with us)					
	Space and 12 roll-out camping mattresses					
	8 Fold out camp-beds (for room 3 & 4)					
	10 Bunk beds (room 3 & 4)					
	10 Bunk beds and mattresses					
	2 Fold-out camp beds (for downstairs)					
<b>Heat and Light</b>	Open fire in living room					
	Wood-fuelled stove in the kitchen					
	Hot water for washing up					
	Hot water for showers					

		Not needed for us to start using it	Minimum basic need	This would increase our comfort and use	This would decrease our use	This would have no impact
	A supply of wood					
	A supply of kindling					
	A supply of paper					
	A supply of firelighters & matches					
	A fire already lit in the wood stove					
	A two ringed gas burner and gas supply					
	A gas cooker (four burners and oven)					
	2 toilets and showers					
<b>WCs &amp; Shower</b>	3 toilets					
	4 toilets					
	3 showers					
	4 showers					
	Toilet rolls					
	Sink					
<b>Kitchen</b>	Plates, mugs, cutlery for 12					
	Pans and kettles for Rayburn/cooker					
	Pans and kettles for open fire					
	Mixing bowls, knives, utensils etc					
	Washing up liquid, tea-towels, soap, cleaning materials					
	Cupboards and sealable boxes for food storage					
	Space for <b>storing</b> wet boots and coats					
<b>Storage</b>	Space for <b>drying</b> wet boots and coats					
	Storage pegs for personal items					
	Storage cubes for personal items					
	Flat areas – bramble/tree free					
<b>Outside Space</b>	Fire circle (logs)					
	Firepit					
	Barbeque					
	Pop-up tarp					
	Outside table and chairs					
<b>Arriving and Leaving</b>	Online booking system					
	Security code to access keys					
	Vehicle access via track					
	Rubbish removal service					
<b>Other ideas</b>	Cleaning Service					



## Your expected use of Pen y Cae

How many days of the year do you think your organisation would use:		
A <b>well-equipped</b> Pen y Cae, with comfortable levels of heating, lighting and sanitation?	Costing £100 a day	_____ days
	Costing £50 a day	_____ days
	Costing £30 a day	_____ days
A <b>basic</b> Pen y Cae, with basic heating and sanitation but <b>no</b> lighting?	Costing £100 a day	_____ days
	Costing £50 a day	_____ days
	Costing £30 a day	_____ days
A <b>current</b> Pen y Cae, with no provision of sanitation and only an open fire?	Costing £100 a day	_____ days
	Costing £50 a day	_____ days
	Costing £30 a day	_____ days
	Costing £20 a day	_____ days
	Costing £10 a day	_____ days

## Your involvement with Pen y Cae

How many people were involved in answering this survey?	
How many of them were aged under 18?	

Now that you have told us about your needs, we'd like to know how you want to continue to be involved.

- YES**
- Join volunteer planning group
- Join volunteer maintenance group
- Join volunteer funding group
- Join potential user mailing list
- Join potential volunteer mailing list

## Trial activities at Pen y Cae

Would you be interested to trial activities using Pen y Cae as a base, with water and a toilet reinstated, sometime between April -July 2020?

If so, tell us about what you would plan, when and what you would need from us.

Please return the survey to [ian.mabberley@btconnect.com](mailto:ian.mabberley@btconnect.com), chair of the Pen y Cae working group, **by March 20<sup>th</sup> 2020.**