



The value of a **NEW NATIONAL PARK IN WALES**

CAMPAIGN for
NATIONAL PARKS

YMGYRCH y
PARCIAU CENEDLAETHOL

 Llangollen

FOREWORD

The creation of a new National Park in North East Wales provides an important and timely opportunity to build on all that is best about the existing Designated Landscapes in Wales. The first to be designated in Wales for over 60 years, this new National Park should be an exemplar for nature, climate and people, maximising on the benefits of designation whilst also applying best practice from other National Parks across England, Scotland and Wales.

This report is produced by Campaign for National Parks with the aim of presenting valuable background reading and research on a range of key topics which those with an interest in the new proposals may want to understand in more detail. From housing to farming, the environment and the economy, we have compiled evidence across topics which demonstrate the impact and benefits that a new National Park could have in Wales.

This new National Park can build on the existing model of National Parks whilst recognising the challenges of today and the opportunities to do some things differently that sets the standard for future designations. Delivering this ambition will only be possible if the right supporting framework is in place and the end of this report includes a joint statement signed by 18 different organisations in support of an ambitious new National Park.

For more information on this briefing please contact Gareth1@cnp.uk or 07719940185. Further detail can be found at www.cnp.org.uk/about/our-work/new-national-parks

RHAGAIR

Mae creu Parc Cenedlaethol newydd yng Ngogledd Ddwyrain Cymru yn rhoi cyfle pwysig ac amserol i adeiladu ar bopeth sydd orau am y Tirweddau Dynodedig presennol yng Nghymru. Y cyntaf i'w ddynodi yng Nghymru ers dros 60 mlynedd, dylai'r Parc Cenedlaethol newydd hwn fod yn batrwm i fyd natur, hinsawdd a phobl, gan fanteisio i'r eithaf ar fanteision dynodiad tra hefyd yn cymhwyso arfer gorau o Barciau Cenedlaethol eraill ledled Cymru, Lloegr a'r Alban.

Cynhyrchir yr adroddiad hwn gan Ymgyrch y Parc Cenedlaethol gyda'r nod o gyflwyno darllen cefndirol gwerthfawr ac ymchwil ar ystod o bynciau allweddol y gallai'r rhai sydd â diddordeb yn y cynigion newydd fod eisiau eu deall yn fwy manwl. O dai i ffermio, yr amgylchedd a'r economi, rydym wedi casglu tystiolaeth ar draws pynciau sy'n dangos yr effaith a'r buddion y gallai Parc Cenedlaethol newydd eu cael yng Nghymru.

Gall y Parc Cenedlaethol newydd hwn adeiladu ar y model presennol o Barciau Cenedlaethol tra'n cydnabod heriau heddiw a'r cyfleoedd i wneud rhai pethau'n wahanol sy'n gosod y safon ar gyfer dynodiadau'r dyfodol. Dim ond os yw'r fframwaith cefnogi cywir yn ei le y bydd yn bosibl gwireddu'r uchelgais hwn ac mae diwedd yr adroddiad hwn yn cynnwys datganiad ar y cyd wedi'i lofnodi gan 18 o sefydliadau gwahanol i gefnogi Parc Cenedlaethol newydd uchelgeisiol.

I gael rhagor o wybodaeth am y papur briffio hwn, cysylltwch â Garethl@cnp.uk neu 07719940185. Ceir rhagor o fanylion yn www.cnp.org.uk/about/our-work/new-national-parks/



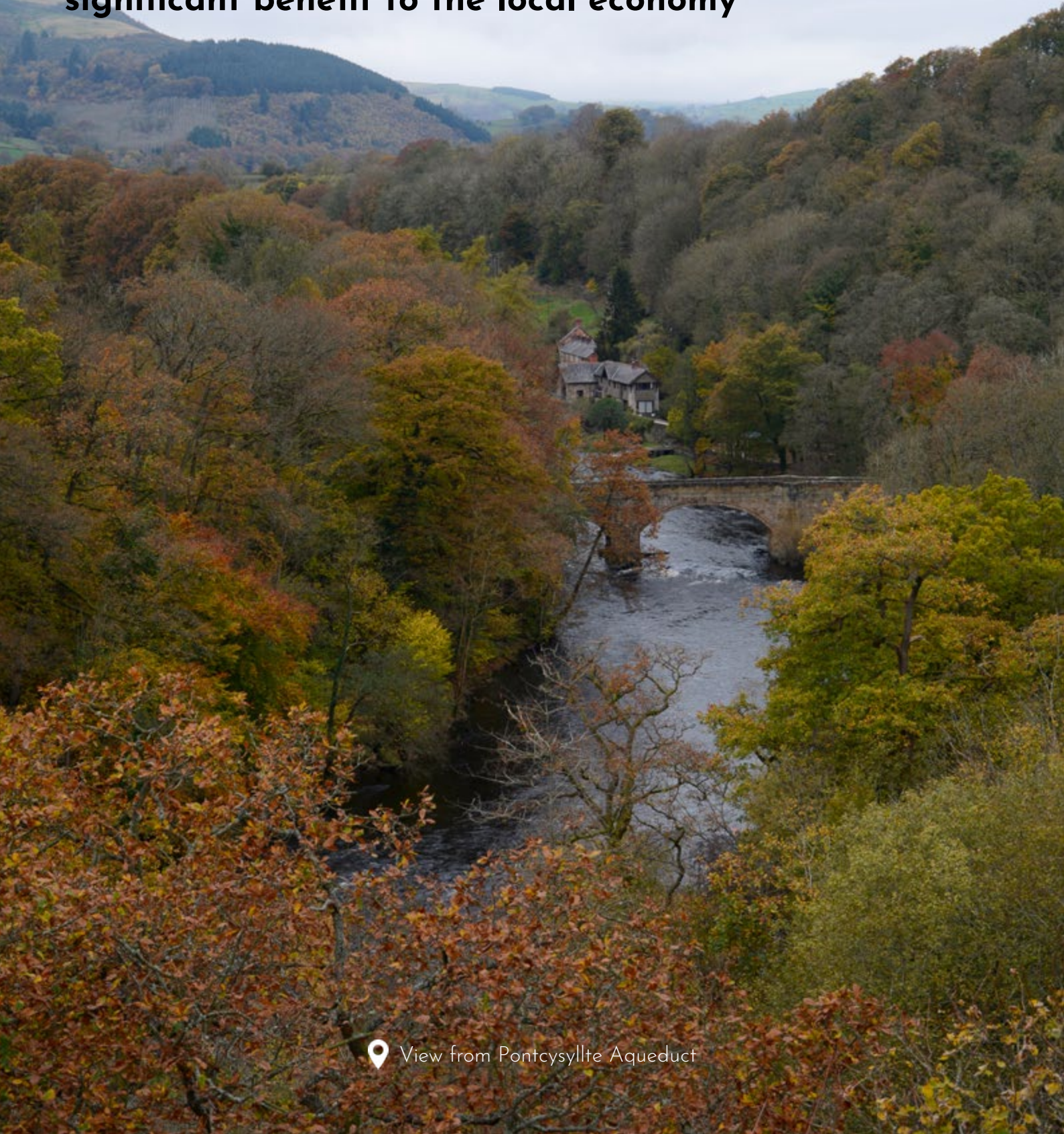
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ECONOMY

The new National Park will bring significant benefit to the local economy



View from Pontcysyllte Aqueduct

Investing in National Parks provides a healthy return on investment, bringing net economic benefits through employment, tourism and savings on public health and wellbeing. [The Valuing Wales' National Parks Report](#) (September 2013) showed that Welsh National Parks “account for over half a billion pounds of Wales' Gross Value Added (GVA), representing 1.2% of the Welsh economy”.¹

In the 2024/2025 financial year, the existing three National Park Authorities (NPAs) received £10.48m in core grant funding from Welsh Government which represents just over £3 per person in Wales.² On top of this they receive £2.9m in additional Welsh Government grants and £3.5m in local authority levies. In comparison, the current core grant for the Clwydian Range and Dee valley totals £150k. With additional grant funding this rises to £450k. Across all five National Landscapes, funding totals £1.9m compared to the £16.88m funding pot for the three National Parks. This represents a significant increase in resource which recognises the purposes and size of these landscapes, and the funding required to run them.

Studies suggest that this could generate a seven-fold return on investment. For example, York University produced a study in 2018 which estimated that for every £1 invested, the North York Moors National Park generates approximately £7.21 of health and well-being benefits for volunteers and visitors.³

National Park Authorities (NPA) in Wales recruit and coordinate over 15,000 hours of volunteering activity each year with a

value in the region of £175,000⁴ when last assessed. A report from NEF consulting in 2018 found that six sites within the existing National Landscape helped people relax, escape stress and find personal peace, producing a wellbeing value of £8.8m.⁵

Economic spending from tourism also has a notable impact on the local economy. 12 million visitors each year spend an estimated £1bn on goods and services in Welsh National Parks⁶ and promotion of the area could also mean an increase in all-year-round destination tourism.⁷ The six sites in the NEF report contributed an estimated £24.1m in direct expenditure by visitors, accounting for an estimated 19% of tourist expenditure in rural Denbighshire. These sites also supported 449 FTE jobs.⁸

The Welsh National Parks are some of the most popular destinations in the country, and creation of a fourth will help raise the profile and put this corner of Wales on the map, increasing opportunities for economic development, jobs and volunteering.

In pursuing their statutory purposes, NPAs have a duty to improve the economic and social well-being of local communities living in a National Park and this can manifest itself in a number of different ways. For example the NPA may be able to apply for and distribute funding pots, coordinate regional schemes or support projects which develop sustainable rural economies, community cohesion and businesses which are able to multiply their effects.⁹ Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Fund is one opportunity which NPAs have in the past supported and helped administer. Over

£50,000 has been awarded to local carbon reduction projects through Pembrokeshire Coast NPA's SDF since 2020 and since 2000 over 200 projects have been supported.¹⁰ In 2016/17 Bannau Brycheiniog were able to support 12 different grants worth over £64,000 in a single year.¹¹

Having a National Park also opens up opportunities for the NPA to have a stake in developing economic strategies which benefit local business and enterprise in the area. For example, Eryri National Park Authority are currently represented on the [North Wales Economic Ambition Board](#) and engage in their corporate joint committees which have responsibilities for “enhancing and promoting the economic well-being of the area”. This is achieved through the development of their Regional Transport Plan and Strategic Development Plan. Similarly, in Bannau Brycheiniog, the NPA's involvement in the Public Service Board means that they can promote the economic and well-being interests of businesses and communities within the Park.¹²

National Parks provide a range of added value benefits for local businesses who might be able to benefit from the international recognition of their area in the marketing and promotion of products or services. Designation can attract sustainable businesses which align with the sustainable development principles of the National Park and they can also draw in a diversity of new businesses that are not limited by geography but are inspired by the landscape or the communities within the Park.

In Wales you can look towards [Car-y-Mor](#) in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park as Wales' first regenerative seaweed and shellfish farm, or [Penderyn Distillery](#) producing the first commercially available whisky in Bannau Brycheiniog, as two examples of sustainable business thriving in our National Parks.

Farms and food producers can also benefit from the unique marketing opportunities presented by National Park designation. Cooperatives like [Our Food 1200](#) promote the role that producers in National Parks have in developing sustainable food, local economic activity and food security in our National Parks. In England examples like the [New Forest Marque](#) demonstrate possibilities to jointly promote and celebrate products from the National Park area.

With increased economic activity within the National Park there will spillover effects for areas surrounding the National Park. A so called ‘Halo effect’ can result in the tourism and recreational sector benefiting from visitors staying beyond the boundaries of the National Park itself where they may be more or different choices.¹³

Other value added benefits from National Parks exist in the environmental value of the land in National Parks that can sequester carbon through peat and woodland. The Valuing National Parks in Wales report valued these at around £24.4m and £97.2m respectively, whilst the economic activity and jobs associated with protection of the environment supported 10,738 jobs directly within the National Park boundaries at the time of the report.¹⁴

ENVIRONMENT

**A new National Park will
protect and enhance nature**



Red Kite

Wales is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world with declining species, threatened habitats and the effects of flooding, fires and drought being felt across rural and urban communities.¹⁵

National Parks, which cover approximately 15% of land in Wales, hold some of the most valuable natural resources, priority habitats and critically endangered species in Wales. Their health is fundamental to the recovery of nature and climate resilience in Wales and the UK. Our National Park [Health Check](#) shows that only 6% of land within National Parks in England and Wales are managed effectively for nature, but the problems facing nature in National Parks are in spite of National Park status – not because of it. We have no doubt that without the existing legal protections in place, and actions by NPAs and others, things could be much, much worse.

As noted in the State of Nature Report 2023, systemic changes are needed to tackle the nature emergency across the UK, which also applies to National Parks. Our Health Check offers some reforms specifically for National Parks to accelerate and prioritise nature recovery in these places, including making it absolutely clear that National Parks are nature designations as well as landscape designations.

Designated for their special qualities, natural beauty and opportunities for the conservation of wildlife, National Parks and Landscapes have the highest level of landscape conservation and protection as part of an internationally recognised

system of protected areas defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Without this level of protection and recognition, these landscapes would be in a much worse state than they are today, and establishing new National Park areas affords new parts of Wales the chance to benefit from coordinated action and increased resources to tackle the greatest sustainable development challenges in our rural landscapes.

Whilst many areas still have a long way to go toward contributing to 30x30 and net zero targets, National Parks contain the vital eco-system services our nation's health and wellbeing relies on. For example, the Parks of Wales contain a number of strategically important reservoirs which are the origin of a supply of water valued at £6.7m annually.¹⁶

The upland landscapes commonly contained in National Parks can protect water resources and mitigate flooding downstream by trapping more water on the land through wetland and peatland restoration, strategic tree planting schemes and river catchment management plans. The [Usk Catchment Partnership](#) in Bannau Brycheiniog is one example of where the National Park Authority (NPA) has enabled partners to come together and form a strategic plan for, not only managing the quality of the water, but protect the river from erosion and ensure flooding resilience for communities downstream.

The *Valuing Wales' National Parks* report highlights the economic value of protecting the environment and the complementary relationship between conservation and economic wellbeing: "the quality of the environment is a source of competitive advantage to Wales." It goes on to determine the value of sequestering carbon to the Welsh economy, estimating that: "the value of carbon sequestered through peat and woodland within the National Parks is [...] between £24.4m and £97.2m."

Wales' three National Parks contain 40% of the total peatland present in Wales.¹⁷ Collectively they have the potential to hold 29,431,000 tonnes of carbon content – the equivalent of three times Wales' total CO₂ annual emissions – but in 2019 the Welsh Government estimated that over 70% of Welsh peatlands were degraded.

The new National Park would increase the total area of peatland covered by National Parks and with the right level of support from NPAs and associated partners leveraging green finance and grants, there is a significant role to be played by National Parks in restoring these vital habitats.

Some notable projects in Welsh National Parks include [Celtic Rainforest Wales](#)

coordinated from Eryri National Park, [Connecting the Coast](#) led by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority and peatland restoration work funded by Welsh Government in [Bannau Brycheiniog](#).

The proposed area of search offers huge potential for protecting a wide variety of biodiversity, creating specific species recovery plans and restoring habitats to encourage the return of lost species. The Gronant Dunes in the north of the area of search includes rare plants such as sea holly, sea spurge and pyramidal orchid. It is also home to one of Britain's most productive little tern colonies, comprising more than 6% of the British population. The Gronant Dunes is one area of the current evaluation area that is at threat of not being included. Maintaining this important coastal habitat is vitally important for the ambition of the National Park.¹⁸

In the Berwyn Range and around Lake Vyrnwy pine martins, Pied Flycatchers, Wood Warblers and Redstarts live. A number of protection sites also exist for Curlew across the area, whilst native red grouse are also an important species which need enhanced protection.

VISITORS AND RECREATION

A new National Park will help manage visitors and boost overall health and wellbeing

The second purpose of National Parks is to “promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks,” so it is reasonable to assume that through the wider promotion and celebration of the area, a new National Park will over time result in more people coming to visit the area. This provides both challenges and opportunities for people living and working in the area.

National Parks were first created in the post-war era of the 1950s as a way of promoting the benefits of accessing the countryside and the vital importance of enshrining everyone’s ability to access nature in law. 75 years on since the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 was introduced and this is as important as ever to our nation’s health and wellbeing. The creation of a new National Park Authority (NPA) will be key in managing everyone’s ability to access the countryside whilst ensuring that this is managed as effectively as possible.

Natural Resources Wales’ *Forces for Change* report acknowledges that National Park designation could introduce new pressures and challenges for the area such as road congestion, parking issues, littering, toileting and increased erosion of access route.¹⁹ However, many of these impacts are already evident in the area, and an increased concentration of resources in the area could help alleviate visitor challenges in under pressure areas, making sure that popular sites are resilient for the future. As the report goes on to recognise, National Park

designation can bring in longer-term funding and investment in the area, providing ‘a mechanism to help manage visitor impacts.’²⁰

Covid-19 certainly demonstrated the importance of having local rangers and National Park staff located in National Parks and National Landscapes. These additional resources were vital for advising visitors on responsible behaviour, gathering evidence and managing the impact of visitors.

The pandemic also highlighted the importance of these spaces for our health. National Parks have previously been described as ‘Wellbeing Factories’,²¹ providing access to open spaces and a wide range of activities beneficial to our health and mental wellbeing. York University produced a study in 2018 which estimated that for every £1 invested, the North York Moors National Park generates approximately £7.21 of health and well-being benefits for volunteers and visitors.²²

2018’s [Valued and Resilient](#) document from Welsh Government clearly lays out how Designated Landscapes “offer significant opportunity for growing tourism sustainably”, harnessing proactive engagement with tourism businesses and efforts to: “focus on working towards the provision of fit for purpose places and facilities.” The report goes on to stress that National Park Authorities (NPAs) should: “seek to improve travel planning for visitor attractions and increase the use of demand responsive transport.”

Although the vast majority of people observe the Countryside Code when accessing the countryside, there will always be a small minority who do not. This is the case both inside and outside National Parks. The benefit of having an NPA is that resources can be made available to engage with the minority that don't through education, signposting and staffing of key sites. As outlined in the Landscapes Review in 2018, good destination management rather than restrictions can help foster pride and respect for a place.²³

Some beauty spots within the current area of search and existing National Landscape (such as Moel Famau and Horseshoe Pass) already experience high levels of traffic and parking stress. And whilst the existing National Landscape Partnership Board is able to coordinate resources in collaboration with the appropriate Local Authority, budgets for National Landscapes are much lower than NPAs. Designating the area as a National Park will instead bring new strategic opportunities and boosted levels of resources to help manage such impacts through improved infrastructure.

In new areas which are not currently designated, an NPA could help manage activities which damage the landscape (such as off-road motorbiking) through engagement, advice and evidence gathering. An NPA could also work with landowners and strategic partners to repair rights of

way or make them more accessible for socially excluded groups who may not have previously felt welcomed.

NPA work in the area encourages visitors' respect for the environment as well as local communities. With large urban bases in England not too far away, there could be multiple benefits from managing recreation more closely. A [Recreation Strategy](#) has been successfully implemented in Eryri National Park which has led to specific plans for honeypot sites such as Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon). A plan for tackling visitor pressures on Wales's highest peak resulted in enhanced visitor communications, a high frequency bus network, a park and ride service and stronger parking restrictions.

An NPA is able to work in partnership with local communities and stakeholders to address concerns and influence strategic improvements to visitor infrastructure. On a wider scale the UK National Parks Partnership have recently committed to a [regenerative tourism vision](#) for National Parks which goes beyond merely minimising the impacts and promotes tourism which makes 'a net positive contribution to our National Parks'²⁴, championing activity that helps 'reduce carbon emissions and increases nature-recovery, whilst also contributing to the 'enhancement and regeneration of the places and communities in which it operates.'

FARMING

**New opportunities for farming
businesses in National Parks**



Thriving farming businesses are vital for the health of National Parks. They have played an integral role in shaping the Welsh landscape and the special qualities of National Parks for many generations. Farming communities produce food, timber and other resources whilst protecting the Welsh language and the cultural and historic traditions of Wales.

National Parks in Wales are working landscapes and that's why National Park Authorities (NPA) have a corresponding social and economic duty to: 'seek to further the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park in pursuit of their statutory purposes'. This can present a range of opportunities and benefits for farmers, from marketing opportunities to farm diversification and opportunities to access new sources of funding.

It will be a vital function of any newly established NPA that they seek to provide additional support to land managers²⁵ within their boundary. To allow land managers to meet the purposes of the National Park whilst also maintaining thriving local communities and businesses. NPAs can also argue for better rural development programmes at a national level and distribute and apply for new grant funding pots which may not be available to farmers outside of a National Park boundary.

As the recent [Farming Benefits of National Parks](#) report highlights, the aim of National Parks is to 'reconcile farming objectives with other local and national interests [...] National Parks do not seek to prevent land use change, but rather manage and guide it

in ways which support National Park aims.'²⁶ Crucially, National Parks can reconcile farming objectives through accessing and setting up additional funds to help rural businesses thrive.

Whether that be through Government-backed funding pots, private green finance, lottery grants or the work of [Tirweddau Cymru](#) or [National Park Partnerships LLP](#), National Parks can create human and financial resources for farmers to access, breaking down some of the workload farmers deal with when applying for the complex maze of grants and agri-environment schemes. NPAs have the ability to draw down new sources of funding and distribute this to land managers in a sustainable way which furthers the purposes of the National Park.

NPAs have a proven record of administering government-funded schemes and bringing stakeholders together on a landscape scale. For example, Welsh Government's Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS), the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) fund and others have been accessed, promoted and administered by NPAs.²⁷

One example is the traditional field boundaries programme led by Eryri National Park. The popular fund supports farmers and land managers to keep these important features of our landscapes managed and maintained, enabling the restoration of traditional stone and hedgerow field boundaries with various benefits for farmers, biodiversity, carbon

Similarly, the Connecting the Coast scheme

in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park helped create wildlife habitats and coastal corridors, with field margins and corners close to the coast being transformed into biodiversity havens.

The development of the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) potentially provides new opportunities for farmers within National Parks to access support and funding for multi-year projects through collaborative and optional layers. If realised, these layers of the SFS could specifically target funding for farmers in National Parks to go further and faster in sustainable, nature-friendly farming practices.

National Park Authority staff also play an important role in ensuring that recreation activities are well managed and do not impinge on land management priorities. Whether this is through the employment of rangers, or the investment in paths, signage and car parks, visitor pressures can be managed by NPAs in partnership with stakeholders, dedicated staff and recreational strategies which ease pressures on farmers.

The international recognition of an area can also bring financial benefits through the promotion and recognition of farmed products and local produce within a National Park. Aligning with the National Park brand can bring another layer of quality assurance to products which have been created in an internationally protected area focused on sustainable development. This could realise a high price for premium products. The Valuing Wales' National Parks report

pinpoints a few businesses which have benefitted in this way.

*"Capestone Organic Poultry in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park noted that being located in the National Park provides a 'point of difference' for their businesses. They note: 'One of our key selling points is our location. Without a doubt, the majority of our customers make a specific reference to our location. We are extremely proud of our location and promote it wherever possible. It gives our story and product provenance.'"*²⁸

Farm diversification is also a benefit for those located within a National Park and willing to take advantage of an increased visitor base. Farming businesses can take advantage of new interest in the area by selling produce directly to visitors in farm shops or cafés, setting up glamping and campsites, offering self-catering, bed and breakfast accommodation or other amenity services.

National Park Authorities take a proactive approach to planning applications, often working with land managers and farmers to ensure that proposed developments are in keeping with the park and its purposes. The Valuing National Wales' National Park report recognises that planning applications are approved at the same rate as those outside. Planning protections in National Parks can sometimes result in some limitations on farm developments but such protections help to maintain the high quality environment that attracts visitors to the area, and so helps support a thriving local economy.

HOUSING

The new National Park will protect homes for local communities



📍 River Dee in Carrog

Research into the impact of designation of the two Scottish National Parks found that while there was a small increase in house prices compared to other attractive rural areas immediately after their establishment, this was only short-lived, and over the first 10 years after designation, house prices in National Parks actually increased by slightly less than those in attractive rural areas elsewhere (11% compared to 13%)²⁹. This suggests that factors other than National Park designation are having a bigger impact on house prices.

Countryside homes with beautiful views already attract a price premium. For example, a survey by Nationwide in 2022³⁰ identified a 13% premium on properties in National Landscapes (AONBs) and suggested that houses in National Parks were on average 25% more expensive than elsewhere in the UK. The same survey found that the highest prices for both National Parks and AONBs were in the South-East of England, reflecting the higher prices overall in this region.

However, by using UK average house prices as a comparison, these surveys are failing to account for the factors that are having an impact on house prices in attractive rural areas, whether or not they are in National Parks. Increased opportunities for remote and flexible working, retirees moving out of urban areas and the desire for second homes all contribute to the demand for housing in rural areas (data from Nationwide³¹ showed that prices in rural areas grew twice as rural areas in the years leading up to and following the pandemic). These factors will be having an impact in this area even before it is designated as a National

Park, particularly as much of it is already designated as a National Landscape.

The high-quality environment in the area makes it a desirable location for people seeking second homes and the number of second homes registered in Denbighshire increased by over 70% between 2017-18 and 2021-22³². While there are high levels of second homes in many parts of the Welsh National Parks, this issue is not exclusive to these areas, with some of the highest levels of second home ownership in communities within National Landscapes, such as Aberdaron in the Llŷn National Landscape.

Stronger planning protections already apply in much of the area as National Landscapes benefit from the same level of planning protection as National Parks³³. The creation of a single planning authority in the form of a National Park Authority will ensure that a more strategic approach can be taken to delivering the housing that is really needed in the area, ensuring that local people have priority when new housing is built.

For example, Eryri National Park Authority (NPA) uses legal agreements, known as S106 agreements, to ensure that priority is given to local people in housing need, not only when new affordable housing is built, but also when those properties are sold on in future. The NPA is also taking action to address the high levels of second homes in parts of Eryri and consulted earlier this year on plans to introduce a requirement for planning permission in order to convert a permanent home to a second home. Controls on second homes are clearly needed across Wales and National Parks should be constituted to do so with the appropriate powers and support.

PLANNING

National Park designation will bring new opportunities for planning in the area



Both National Parks and National Landscapes (AONBs) benefit from the highest status of protection in planning terms and development proposals in these areas must be carefully assessed to ensure that they are not damaging the special qualities for which the area is designated. Special considerations also apply to major development proposals such as wind farms, mines and road infrastructure projects which are only allowed in these areas in exceptional circumstances.

While much of the area proposed for designation is already a National Landscape and thus benefits from these additional protections, becoming a National Park will provide new opportunities for planning which are not available to National Landscapes as well as ensuring that areas which are not currently designated benefit from these additional protections too. One of the most important differences is the creation of a National Park Authority as the single local planning authority responsible for both plan-making and planning decisions across the whole of the area. As National Park Authority boards include a mix of nationally and locally appointed members, those responsible for making planning decisions in the area will be able to take account of both the local and national needs and ambitions for the National Park, thus delivering many benefits for nature, people and climate.

National Park Authorities were first established under the Environment Act 1995 following the Edwards' Review of English and Welsh National Park Authorities which concluded that having fully independent bodies responsible for planning would enable a clarity of vision and self-confidence; a higher profile; and officer advice which was always focused on National Park activities. This model has stood the test of time and more recent research for Welsh Government¹ has demonstrated the importance of planning to the boundary of National Parks, as opposed to planning within National Landscapes which is to local authority boundaries, in order to achieve the statutory purposes. This is because the National Park Authorities are able to adopt a consistent approach across the whole of the National Park area regardless of local authority boundaries resulting in a clearer focus on the National Park purposes and better alignment between the Local Plan and the National Park management plan.

National Park Authorities also use their planning powers to influence travel patterns and the opportunities for delivering new housing in their area. They do not, however, have direct responsibility for building houses or planning and delivering transport within their areas so they work collaboratively with the constituent local authorities in their area to deliver improved transport and housing. But the fact that they are independent

authorities and are free from other local authority responsibilities means National Park Authorities can assemble specialist staff dedicated to the delivery of the planning function in their area in line with the National Park purposes and the associated socio-economic duty. This specialist staff resource also ensures National Park Authorities are able to work with applicants to inform, and where necessary improve, planning applications before they are submitted, meaning that they are more likely to be suitable for approval.

As the local economy in many National Parks relies heavily on tourism and many visitors are specifically attracted to these areas by the natural beauty of the landscape, the planning system plays a vital role in enabling appropriate development and preventing damaging development. These are living, working landscapes and the additional planning protections they are afforded ensure that the benefits these areas provide are not compromised by insensitive change or developments which undermine their special qualities. There is no evidence that this additional protection has acted as a barrier to economic growth in these areas.



Plas Newydd House

JOINT STATEMENT

Joint Statement on proposals for a new National Park in North East Wales



Berwyn Range © John Roberts, Friends
of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley

The creation of a new National Park in North East Wales provides an important and timely opportunity to build on all that is best about the existing Designated Landscapes in Wales and maximise the benefits of designation.

Campaign for National Parks and the Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes, along with the range of listed supporters below, believe that this new National Park, the first to be designated in Wales for over 60 years, should be an exemplar for nature, climate and people.

The Valued and Resilient report, in combination with the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations and subsequent action plan for Designated Landscapes, has clearly set out a direction of travel to “unlock the potential” of our National Parks. We now need to move further in taking forward the recommendations of the Marsden Report, and the Welsh Government’s proposals to place an enhanced biodiversity duty on public bodies, including National Park Authorities, to contribute to the delivery of statutory nature recovery targets.

This new National Park can build on the existing model of National Parks, whilst recognising the challenges of today and the opportunities to do some things differently that sets the standard for future designations. Delivering this ambition will only be possible if the right supporting framework is in place which we believe should include:

- **Ecologically coherent boundaries** which consider the full network of interdependent ecosystem services and habitats present within the landscape. For example, avoiding dividing protected sites, nature reserves and wide expanses of important habitat (rivers,

peatland for example) to ensure that a unified management approach can be maintained.

- **Increased funding:** A commitment to new and ongoing funding at a level which will enable the new National Park to achieve its full potential whilst ensuring that there are no detrimental impacts on the existing Designated Landscapes in Wales. This should include a commitment to long-term and sustained funding for (i) programmes to support habitat and species recovery such as peatland restoration; the creation, regeneration and sustainable management of woodlands and hedgerows; and the ‘renaturalisation’ of water courses. And (ii) services which support visitor engagement and access, including rangers and improved public transport.
- **Modernised governance arrangements** which ensure that those involved in making decisions about the new National Park are representative of both the local population and the wider population of Wales and have the necessary skills. Measures such as fixed terms, maximum lengths of service, compulsory training, role descriptions and appraisal for all members should be introduced to ensure all members take full account of the specific responsibilities of their NPA role when making decisions.
- **A single planning authority:** A dedicated National Park Authority (NPA) with responsibility for both plan-making and planning decisions across the whole of the newly designated area. This is critical in ensuring the functional coherence of the new National Park in delivering social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Decision-making which delivers on the Management Plan must be strategically driven and consistent across the whole area.

- **The right supporting framework:** Both the Local Development Plan and the Management Plan should provide a strong supporting framework for nature recovery, the protection of natural beauty and increased recreational opportunities. This should include identifying areas of the Park where the emphasis is on creating space for wildlife, and other areas where there will be strong support for sustainable transport and other measures aimed at making it easier for people to visit.
- **Proper scrutiny:** As part of updated management plan guidance, Natural Resources Wales should implement an effective system of monitoring National Park Management Plan delivery which ensures that action is taken where a lack of progress is identified.
- **Full implementation of the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations for Designated Landscapes:** Including evidence and mapping tools to baseline nature recovery, and consideration in the next Senedd term of updated statutory purposes. Amended purposes should provide a clear remit to promote nature recovery and increase the opportunities for all parts of society to visit, and enjoy, the newly designated area.
- **New duties and powers:** Including new duties for all relevant bodies to deliver updated purposes and to contribute to the development and implementation of a strong and effective Management Plan. Also, this should include the implementation of unfilled commitments to introduce legislation committing National Park Authorities to pursue the sustainable management of natural resources in the exercise of their functions.
- **Maintaining economic and social resilience for local communities.**

The new National Park will be an area where people live and work. Our recommendations on new and reinvigorated purposes for the designated area need to be seen in this context, and the small towns, villages and communities within it must be supported to retain resilience and sustainability.

- **Targeted agri-environment and land management support** which utilise the experience of National Park Authorities and maximise the opportunities for nature recovery and improvements to landscape character, increasing local skills in specialist habitat land management and traditional rural skills such as walling and hedgerow laying, and ending damaging land management practices such as burning on peatland.
- **An emphasis on species recovery:** A programme of support which focuses on reintroducing lost species and reversing the decline of vulnerable ones. This should include work to develop community support for reintroductions through understanding and addressing the concerns of local people and promoting the benefits of this type of change.
- **A renewed focus on mental and physical well-being** through social prescribing and initiatives which enable disadvantaged or diverse communities much greater access to the landscape (such as a night under the stars or outdoor learning experience). This should include more support for public transport to allow people to visit more easily.
- **Enhanced opportunities to understand and enjoy the special qualities** of the area with new and improved rights of way that are accessible to all as well as better promotion and protection of access land and cultural heritage.

Whilst we recognise that some of the above will require legislative changes in the longer term, every effort should be made within the existing National Parks framework to achieve as much progress as possible without delaying this designation.

This position statement has been prepared by Campaign for National Parks and the Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes and supported by the listed organisations below. We look forward to seeing the designation being taken forward, and we will seek to engage constructively wherever possible within the process.

Joint signatories to the above statement:



ENDNOTES

¹ https://www.nationalparkswales.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/18674/Valuing-Wales-National-Parks-.pdf

² Based on 2021 census data. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdsestimateswales/census2021>

³ https://pure-research.york.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/59139637/NYMNPA_SROI_report_2018.pdf

⁴ Pg 5: https://www.nationalparkswales.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/18674/Valuing-Wales-National-Parks-.pdf

⁵ <https://www.nefconsulting.com/our-work/clients/clywydian-range-and-dee-valley-aonb/>

⁶ Pg.5: https://www.nationalparkswales.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/18674/Valuing-Wales-National-Parks-.pdf

⁷ Chapter 8.6: https://ymgyngghori.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/north-east-gogledd-ddwyrain/waless-national-park-proposal-public-consultation/user_uploads/luc---forces-for-change_final.pdf

⁸ <https://www.nefconsulting.com/our-work/clients/clywydian-range-and-dee-valley-aonb/>

⁹ Pg. 16: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a797eed40f0b63d72fc64f9/pb13533-national-park-authorities.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.pembrokeshirecoast.wales/news/park-authority-committee-tours-successful-carbon-reduction-projects/>

¹¹ <https://beacons-npa.gov.uk/the-authority/press-and-news/archive/2017-2/march-2017/applications-are-now-open-for-the-sustainable-development-fund-in-the-brecon-beacons-national-park/>

¹² <https://beacons-npa.gov.uk/the-authority/press-and-news/archive/february-2023/powys-public-service-board-well-being-plan-consultation-launched/>

¹³ Pg 18: https://www.nationalparkswales.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/18674/Valuing-Wales-National-Parks-.pdf The National Parks have an area of influence that goes well beyond Park boundaries. As with broader economic activity, the tourism and recreation sector is subject to a 'Halo effect' as benefits spillover beyond the National Park boundaries.

¹⁴ Pg 54: https://www.nationalparkswales.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/18674/Valuing-Wales-National-Parks-.pdf

¹⁵ <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/news-and-blogs/news/experts-call-for-urgent-action-to-save-welsh-nature-as-new-report-reveals-devastating-decline-in-species/?lang=en>

¹⁶ Page 5: https://www.nationalparkswales.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/18674/Valuing-Wales-National-Parks-.pdf

¹⁷ <https://www.cnp.org.uk/health-check-report/>

¹⁸ <https://historypoints.org/index.php?page=gronant-dunes>

¹⁹ Section 8.7: https://ymgynggori.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/north-east-gogledd-ddwyrain/waless-national-park-proposal-public-consultation/user_uploads/luc---forces-for-change_final.pdf

²⁰ Section 8.6: https://ymgynggori.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/north-east-gogledd-ddwyrain/waless-national-park-proposal-public-consultation/user_uploads/luc---forces-for-change_final.pdf

²¹ Pg. 54: https://www.nationalparkswales.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/18674/Valuing-Wales-National-Parks-.pdf

²² Pg. 37, chapter 7: https://pure-research.york.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/59139637/NYMNPA_SROI_report_2018.pdf;

²³ Pg. 94: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d8a19a3e5274a083d3b78bd/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.nationalparks.uk/app/uploads/2024/08/Regenerative-Tourism-in-UK-National-Parks-FINAL.pdf>

²⁵ <https://beacons-npa.gov.uk/environment/farming-in-the-brecon-beacons/support-for-farmers-and-landowners/>

²⁶ Pg. 4: <https://www.scotlink.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Farming-Benefits-of-National-Parks-final-version.pdf>

²⁷ <https://beacons-npa.gov.uk/the-authority/who-we-are/aims-and-purposes/>

²⁸ pg 18. https://www.nationalparkswales.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/18674/Valuing-Wales-National-Parks-.pdf

²⁹ Housing prices in UK National Parks with special reference to Scotland, Graham Barrow, December 2017 (unpublished)

³⁰ Since publication a 2024 report has been released and reported on, but it is not yet available publically online via Nationwide, so we are keeping reference to the 22 report. The 2024 results remain consistent with previous reports. <https://www.nationwidehousepriceindex.co.uk/reports/national-parks-and-areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-boost-house-prices-by-up-to-25-percent>

³¹ <https://www.nationwidehousepriceindex.co.uk/reports/rural-areas-have-seen-biggest-rises-in-house-prices#:~:text=Between%20December%202016%20and%20December,23%25%20over%20the%20same%20period.>

³² <https://www.gov.wales/research-second-homes-evidence-review-summary-html>

³³ The details of these are in paragraphs 6.3.5-6.3.10 of Planning Policy Wales: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-07/planning-policy-wales-edition-12.pdf>