



The case for Gronant Dunes & Talacre

This paper presents the case for the inclusion of Gronant Dunes & Talacre Evaluation Area (EA1) within the North East Wales National Park boundary. Below, we have provided a collection of arguments and evidence that point towards the need for Gronant Dunes & Talacre to be included in the new National Park, by virtue of its outstanding natural beauty and exceptional recreation provision.

Open-air recreation

Gronant Dunes & Talacre provide an opportunity to include a notable section of the Wales Coast Path, which is both a valuable contributor to public health & wellbeing and a symbolic connector to two of our three existing Welsh National Parks which contain a coastal element.

Coastal paths are [known contributors to local rural economies](#). Gronant Dunes & Talacre offers some unique flat topography within the overall proposed boundary, which allows for large sections of the path to be suitable for mobility scooters, wheelchairs, push chairs and people with additional mobility needs. The ample amount of flat access, made further accessible by it being freely available and open all year round, would make a notable contribution to the overall physical accessibility of the new National Park. The local path network provides further connections between the coast and the current proposed National Park boundary through its direct links to the Offa's Dyke Path and Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape. It also connects to important transport links such as Prestatyn train station and the A548, which provide gateway access points to the National Park.

[Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 5](#) and the [North Wales Coastal Route](#) also pass through Gronant Dunes & Talacre. Well-connected cycle routes support greater enjoyment of our designated landscapes via active transport, which helps tackle barriers of vehicle access whilst promoting a reduction in carbon emissions and the associated health benefits of spending time in nature.

We welcome the positive assessment of "high" in the Gillespie report for the recreational provision and the associated opportunities for the enjoyment of Gronant Dunes & Talacre. Whilst the report noted that the popularity of Talacre beach in the summer can have a negative impact on relative tranquillity, the vast expanse of 7km of uninterrupted



beach ensures there is ample space for both beach and water-based recreation and areas of tranquillity even in the busier summer periods.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

According to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, Gronant Dunes & Talacre falls within the overall [top 25% of most deprived areas in Wales](#). Other nearby coastal communities include Rhyl, which is [home to the most deprived area in Wales](#). In recognition of Public Bodies' commitments to establishing a "Healthier" and "More Equal" Wales, these underserved coastal communities deserve to receive the [well-known benefits of National Park status](#). In a previous [Wales-based study](#), it was revealed that spending time in, and being involved with a National Park, has particularly positive impacts on the health and well-being of those from marginalised communities. National Park designation represents an important opportunity to revive and rejuvenate the economy of communities who have historically seen an under-investment in their local area.

There is already support for EDI in the National Parks Wales and Landscapes Wales 2020 Landscapes for Everyone [collective statement](#), which states: *"while it is important for all sectors of society to experience these designated landscapes, particular focus should be given to children and young families from deprived areas. Action must be taken to help to tackle the inequalities that exist in health, education and economic outcomes amongst the poorest in society."* Similar commitments have been made by NRW, through [work undertaken in the Outdoor Access and Recreation Team](#). The new designation in North East Wales provides an exceptional opportunity for Public Bodies to demonstrate their commitment to upholding the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the collective commitment to Landscapes for Everyone, by improving the reach and attraction of a National Park to a wider audience.

Just as the natural environment of Gronant Dunes & Talacre represents an ecologically rich mosaic of habitats, the urban environment of Gronant Dunes & Talacre represents a socio-cultural mosaic of human interaction with our coast, enabling access and recreational opportunities unique to this landscape. For example, the presence of caravan parks, the A548 coastal road, and a car park at Point of Ayr allow for the diversification of audiences who can appreciate the National Park by making use of the infrastructure which is available to support visitors.

Inclusion in the National Park would ensure that any further development of infrastructure in this area can be carefully managed to avoid damage to the natural



environment and its special qualities; something that would be less possible if it were outside the boundary.

Diversification and connectedness to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape

Inclusion of the coastline offers ecological diversity to the overall National Park, through the provision of habitat variety that is unique to the coastal region; shingle and sandy beach, sand dune, saltmarsh and reedbeds. The inclusion of the coast also offers cultural variety through features such as the iconic Grade II-listed Point of Ayr lighthouse, a unique coastal heritage landmark situated in North East Wales.

There are far reaching views, unobstructed by existing development, across mainland Wales's northernmost point and the only intact dune system habitat in North East Wales – an [iconic, yet rapidly declining natural and nationally-important habitat](#). These views extend outwards to a vast expanse of ocean, featuring the Liverpool Bay SPA and Dee Estuary SAC designated sites; a strong visible connector between the northern perimeters of the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, and the coast and sea. These expansive views afford a sense of tranquillity and high scenic quality to visitors of Prestatyn Hills; a quality that would be significantly reduced without the coastal and marine presence.

Public Bodies have a Duty under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to apply the Ways of Working. [NRW already recognise the legislative imperative](#) created by this Act and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to undertake [integrated catchment management in Wales](#), linking land, coast and sea. The inclusion of the coast within the new designation offers an opportunity to improve the alignment of coastal and inland management plans, supporting NRW implementation of the Ways of Working. The coastal inclusion, influenced by the adjacent Dee Estuary SAC, provides a key link with the River Dee's prominent inclusion within the North East Wales National Park. Safeguarding the land and coastal connection affords an exceptional opportunity to further explore a potential marine inclusion in the future, building upon the pre-existing designations of Liverpool Bay SPA and the Dee Estuary SAC.

Natural beauty

Gronant Dunes & Talacre boast a comprehensive network of nationally and internationally important conservation designations, including SSSI, RAMSAR, SPA and SAC status. We welcome the positive assessment of "high" in the Gillespie report on the



contribution that Gronant Dunes & Talacre makes to the natural beauty of the proposed National Park.

Gronant Dunes & Talacre is renowned as a [*“perfect spot to watch thousands of birds roost at high tide.”*](#) Home to the only breeding Little Tern colony in Wales, the Denbighshire County Council’s Little Tern Report 2024 records that viewing points attracted over 1,000 visitors in 2024 alone and inspired community members to contribute 867 voluntary hours to the colony’s conservation. The National Park designation presents an opportunity to provide much-needed further support in safeguarding Wales’ only breeding Little Tern colony, which between 2023 – 2024, experienced a 21.7% decline in breeding pairs. In addition to Little Terns, [*“the dune slacks now provide habitat for species such as breeding Cetti’s Warblers, wintering Marsh Harrier and Short-eared Owls, plus a huge Starling roost, in the region of 200,000 birds.”*](#)

Gronant Dunes & Talacre is the main habitat in Wales for the rare Natterjack Toad, and an important home to the protected sand lizard. As the Little Tern Group further [*summarises*](#); *“The site is a fantastic place for Orchids in summer with five species including swathes of Pyramidal Orchids carpeting the rolling dunes. Other wildflowers include Sea Holly, Sea-lavender, Sea Purslane, Sea-spurrey and hundreds of other species. Lepidoptera are well represented with a colony of the rare Sandhill Rustic and the Dark Green Fritillary making their homes here.”*

In addition to Natural Beauty, Gronant Dunes & Talacre offer a significant natural contribution to climate change resilience and adaptation. The expansive dune system offered by Gronant Dunes & Talacre provides one of the only remaining examples in North East Wales of nature-based solutions to the impacts of climate change on our coast. This sand dune system in conjunction with the adjacent saltmarsh provide a natural flood defence and buffer to increased storm frequency and intensity. Saltmarsh and neighbouring peatland lock away valuable amounts of carbon from our atmosphere. Their intertidal and dynamic nature allow for constant changes in the landscape, enhancing their natural beauty and providing a sense of awe.

Whilst the Flat Open Lowland Farmland units have been identified as ‘moderate’ landscape quality, we argue this as a minor hindrance to the designation of EA1. In the past few weeks, the North Wales Little Tern Group have reported about 350 Pink-footed Geese, 200 Black -tailed Godwits, Curlew and Lapwing feeding on this site.

The National Park designation would provide new opportunities to work with



landowners to improve the quality of the working farmed landscape, raising the standard to the evident natural beauty demonstrated across the rest of the area. We have already seen evidence of collaborative improvements to, for example, hedgerows, [in other Welsh National Parks](#). Farming along Wales' coastline represents a feature to be valued, rather than a feature that inhibits the appreciation of natural beauty. Applying a narrow approach to natural beauty risks the fragmentation of an area which still demonstrates high levels of natural beauty and should thus be included in the National Park designation.

Concluding statement

On the 75th Anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, this is an exciting opportunity to develop an exemplar new National Park for the UK. We want to see a new National Park which delivers for people, nature and the climate. This National Park would afford international recognition for an area of high scenic, cultural and environmental value. We want this coastal area in particular to be protected for what it has delivered and what it can offer for future generations.

This collective recognises the ecological, environmental, social, cultural and economic value of Gronant Dunes & Talacre's inclusion within the proposed North East Wales National Park boundary. Based on the evidence and case for support above, we recommend to NRW that it be reintroduced.

Signed

