

Snowdonia National Park Authority Annual Governance Statement 2021-22



This statement meets the requirement to produce a Statement of Internal Control pursuant to Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2005 (as amended in 2010)

1. Introduction

Snowdonia National Park Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

Snowdonia National Park Authority is subject to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Act places a duty on the Authority to set Well-being Objectives that directly contribute to achieving the 7 Well-being Goals as set out in the Act, namely:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

Furthermore, Snowdonia National Park Authority must meet its duties in accordance with a 'statutory sustainability principle', which means that the Authority must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In discharging this overall responsibility, Snowdonia National Park Authority is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk and adequate and effective financial management.

Snowdonia National Park Authority has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/Solace Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. This statement explains how the Authority has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2005 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control.

The Code of Corporate Governance has been reviewed and updated this year by a Task and Finish Group set up specifically to review the Authority's governance arrangements to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. The new Code of Corporate Governance was formally adopted by the Authority in April 2022.

2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Snowdonia National Park Authority's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

3. The Governance Framework

The Governance Framework comprises the seven principles of good governance:

- **Principle 1:** Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
- **Principle 2:** Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- **Principle 3:** Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
- **Principle 4:** Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
- **Principle 5:** Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
- **Principle 6:** Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
- **Principle 7:** Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

Snowdonia National Park Authority develops and implements its strategic corporate planning through the adoption of the:

- Cynllun Eryri (Snowdonia National Park Management Plan);
- Eryri Local Development Plan;
- Well-being Statement and Well-being Objectives; and
- Corporate Work Programme.

These 4 documents represent the cornerstone for the Authority's work in fulfilling its primary purposes as defined in the Environment Act 1995 and in implementing its vision.

Governance Structure

The Authority's governance structure comprises of 4 main committees:

- Snowdonia National Park Authority has 18 appointed Members and during 2021/22 had 7 scheduled meetings.
- The Performance and Resources Committee was held 3 times during 2021/22. As part of its remit it undertakes audit committee functions in accordance with CIPFA requirements.
- The Planning and Access Committee was held 8 times during 2021/22. This committee is responsible for carrying out the Authority's statutory planning functions.
- The Authority's Standards Committee was held once during 2021/22. Membership of the committee, whose remit it is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members, comprises of 3 Authority Members and 3 independent members.

The Authority's Standing Orders (published on the website) gives a detailed account of the arrangements for each committee. For every committee, the agenda, minutes and associated reports and background papers are all published on the Authority's website.

Management Team

The Authority's management structure includes the Chief Executive (who is also the 'National Park Officer' and the Head of Paid Service) and two Directors. The Authority's Management Team meet fortnightly, with the Head of Finance and the Head of Personnel in attendance.

Standards

The Authority has an established Code of Conduct for Members, which includes a section that specifically refers to interests and a Members' Register of Interest. The Code of Conduct for staff is the national standard code of conduct for public authority employees.

The Authority has adopted the following policies and procedures for maintaining high standards of conduct for both staff and Members, and to ensure accountability to the public:

- Complaints Procedure – based on the best practice model complaints procedure produced by the Public Service Ombudsman;

- Whistle Blowing Policy – to enable staff to raise serious concerns with the confidence in knowing that they will be thoroughly and fairly investigated, without fear of reprisals;
- Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy – contains measures designed to frustrate any attempted fraudulent or corrupt act, and the steps to be taken if such an act occurs; and a
- Scheme of Delegation – outlines how the full Authority’s functions are carried out through delegation to its committees and sub-committees.

Risk Management

A Risk Management Policy and Strategy is in place. The risk identification process is co-ordinated by the Head of Administration and Customer Care, with input from the Management Team and Heads of Service. The Risk Register and mitigation measures is reviewed and updated quarterly.

Internal Audit

The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and governance arrangements is informed by the work of the Internal Auditors, undertaken by Cyngor Gwynedd. The Internal Audit service is provided in accordance with CIPFA’s Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK. The Internal Audit Manager prepares an annual report that summarises the results of internal audit work during the year.

External Audit

Audit Wales act as the Authority’s external auditor, and accordingly report on the Authority’s financial management and performance. In addition, Audit Wales gives an opinion on the adequacy of internal audit work.

Monitoring Officer

The Director of Corporate Services has been nominated as the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer has the specific duty to ensure that the Authority’s Officers and appointed Members maintain the highest standard of conduct in all they do. The Monitoring Officer advises on constitutional procedure and the legality of the Authority’s actions.

Financial Management

The Authority’s financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirement of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010). The Chief Finance Officer (who is Cyngor Gwynedd’s Chief Finance Officer) is the officer responsible for the administration of financial affairs as required under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

4. Significant Governance Issues and Actions Undertaken During the Year

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets a core duty on the Authority to set well-being objectives that maximise its contribution to achieving the 7 well-being goals set out in the Act. The Authority's well-being objectives should be objectives for change over the long term.

A Well-being Statement for the Authority was developed over the course of 18 months and sets out new Well-being Objectives which describes how they will help the Authority achieve the seven wellbeing goals for Wales. The Well-being Statement and Well-being Objectives were adopted as strategic documents by the Authority during the Performance and Resources Committee on the 23rd of March, 2021.

The Well-being Objectives concentrate on three key areas of work - Resilient Environments, Resilient Communities and Resilient Ways of Working - and have been aligned with five sub themes to provide focus, as set out below.

Resilient Environments

1. Improving recreation management and any negative effects of recreation.
2. Responding to the challenges of Climate Change.
3. Improving the management and understanding of Cultural Heritage.
4. Addressing the challenges and opportunities of post Brexit land management scenarios.
5. Addressing the decline in nature.

Resilient Communities

1. Maintaining and increasing the quality of life of residents.
2. Supporting young people.
3. Promoting sustainable tourism to add value to local communities.
4. Promoting and actively supporting the Welsh language.
5. Developing a local economy which supports both the designation and the management of Snowdonia as a National Park.

Resilient Ways of Working

1. Developing a skilled workforce.
2. Developing and promoting best practice.
3. Effective partnership working.
4. Modernising governance arrangements.
5. Maintaining and improve the understanding and support of local communities to the work of the National Park.

Any actions that the Authority takes in achieving the well-being objectives will need to be made in a sustainable way. Sustainable development involves five key requirements namely:

1. Long Term – the importance of balancing short term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to meet long term needs, especially where things done to meet short term needs may have detrimental long term effects.

2. Integration – how our well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, how the well-being objectives may impact upon each other or upon other public bodies' well-being objectives, in particular where steps taken by us may contribute to meeting one objective but may be detrimental to meeting another.
3. Involvement – the importance of involving other persons with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and of ensuring those persons reflect the diversity of the population of Wales or the geographical area of the Authority.
4. Collaboration – acting in collaboration with any person (or how different parts of the Authority acting together) could assist the Authority to meet its well-being objectives, or assist another body to meet its objectives.
5. Prevention – to take account of how deploying resources to prevent problems occurring, or getting worse may contribute to meeting the Authority's well-being objectives, or another body's objectives.

The Corporate Work Programme for 2021/22 was presented for approval by the Members at the Authority meeting on the 28th of April 2021. The Programme sets out the projects, initiatives and specific actions that will fulfil the Authority's Well-being Objectives and Service Priorities.

Progress against the Programme has been reported to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 24th of November 2021 and on the 23rd of March 2022. The full annual report on the Corporate Work Programme is due to be reported to the Performance and Resources Committee in July 2022.

A significant review of the Authority's governance procedures and practices has taken place during 2021/22, as this area was chosen as one of the scrutiny topics by the Authority.

The remit of the Reviewing Governance Task and Finish Group (as set out in the Terms of Reference) included a focus on some of the proposals for improvement as set out in the Audit Wales report on Resilient and Sustainable Services which related to governance.

In addition, Welsh Government had requested that the Authority review certain governance matters following a letter to the Minister expressing concerns. The issues raised provided an opportunity for the Authority to review and improve its governance systems and as a result build on the culture of open dialogue and constructive challenge to senior leaders as they make difficult decisions around service provision and the use of resources.

One of the key outcomes from the Reviewing Governance Task and Finish Group was a revision and update of the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance. The new Code has been formally adopted by the Authority in its meeting on the 27th of April 2022.

Other key outcomes are set out in this Statement under the appropriate headings.

5. Effectiveness of the Governance Framework

Snowdonia National Park Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the senior managers within the Authority, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. The review is based on the seven principles from the Code of Corporate Governance.

Principle 1: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

<p>Code of Corporate Governance</p>	<p>Governance was identified as one of the topic areas to scrutinise in depth during 2021/22, and as a result a Reviewing Governance Task and Finish Group was established. The group met 4 times between November 21 and February 22.</p> <p>The Code of Corporate Governance was reviewed in depth and redrafted by the Group, to ensure that it remains a cornerstone of effective governance for the future.</p> <p>The draft revised Code of Governance was discussed in detail at the Members Working Group on the 6th of April 2022, before being submitted for final approval and adoption by the Authority at the end of April 2022.</p>
<p>Standards Committee</p>	<p>The Standards Committee had a full day on the 3rd of September 2021.</p> <p>During the morning, the Standards Committee held an Appeal Hearing in accordance with the Authority’s Grievance Procedure. The appeal was ultimately dismissed.</p> <p>The afternoon session considered the usual business of the Standards Committee. During this meeting, it considered a number of matters including a Grant of Dispensation to Members of both Gwynedd Council and Conwy County Borough Council.</p> <p>Members also reviewed the Ombudsman’s Annual Report for 2020/21, and were advised of the developments applicable to this Authority. The Annual Complaints Monitoring Report was also submitted to the Standards Committee, for information.</p>

<p>Whistle Blowing Policy</p>	<p>The last detailed review of the Policy was undertaken by the Standards Committee in September 2016, with subsequent changes approved at the Authority meeting in December 2016.</p> <p>During 2021/22, no reports or concerns were raised in relation to any Member or Officer of the Authority under the Whistle Blowing Policy.</p>
<p>Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy</p>	<p>During 2021/22, no complaints of alleged fraud or corruption were made regarding any Member or Officer of the Authority, and Internal Auditors did not identify any areas of concern through their auditing work.</p>
<p>Model Code of Conduct</p>	<p>During 2021/22, no amendments or revisions were made to the Model Code of Conduct.</p>
<p>Complaints – Officers</p>	<p>During 2021/22, the Authority received a total of 15 formal complaints.</p> <p>The Authority was not subject to a formal investigation of alleged maladministration by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales during 2021/22.</p> <p>However, a complaint was made to the Welsh Language Commissioner that the Authority was in breach of its Welsh Language Standards, by failing to provide a fully bilingual on-line pre-booking service for the Pen y Pass car park. The service was provided by an external provider Just Park.</p> <p>The Commissioner instigated an investigation and concluded that the Authority had failed to comply with 3 specific standards, namely standards 50, 52 and 56. The Authority developed an Action Plan which was agreed by the Commissioner to ensure full compliance with these standards by Easter 2022.</p>
<p>Complaints - Members</p>	<p>During 2021/22, the Authority’s Monitoring Officer did not receive any formal complaints relating to the Members, and no complaints were submitted directly by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.</p>

<p>Complaints – Other</p>	<p>During the year a complaint was submitted directly to Welsh Government concerning various governance and administration issues within the Authority.</p> <p>The Authority responded to the allegations and supplied relevant information. Recommended actions were given to the Authority to strengthen governance in specific areas, which the Authority has accepted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to the Standing Orders relating to Contracts (specific changes detailed under Standing Orders relating to Contracts heading). • Bidding for Welsh Government Funding – review decision making process to meet submission deadlines in some circumstances. This was discussed and agreed by Members at the Performance and Resources Committee on the 23rd of March 2022. • Level of reserves to be standing item at all meetings between SNPA and Welsh Government. • Diversity - progress against the Authority’s Strategic Equality Plan will be reviewed at monitoring meetings between SNPA and Welsh Government.
<p>Standing Orders</p>	<p>The Standing Orders were last reviewed and amended by the Authority on the 26th of April 2017, following receipt of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2017.</p> <p>No matters were raised relating to the implementation of the Standing Orders during 2021/22.</p>
<p>Standing Orders relating to Contracts</p>	<p>The Authority has accepted Welsh Government’s recommendations to ensure that the Authority’s processes relating to contracts are sufficiently transparent, namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The threshold for publication of details of contracts awarded to be set at £1,000. 2. To review the processes for reviewing and recording details of contracts where Members, staff, families and friends have directly benefit from the awarding of contracts. This will now be extended to all staff, in addition to the current requirement on the heads of service and the management team. 3. When awarding contracts, the general principles set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 should be implemented, even where the value of a contract would not trigger the 2015 Regulations requirements.

	<p>A new draft version of the Standing Orders relating to Contracts has been produced which incorporates the above recommendations and ensures compliance with all new regulations relating to the withdrawal from the European Union. Further work is required on the draft before it can be presented to the Members for adoption in 2022/23.</p>
<p>Scheme of Delegation</p>	<p>The Scheme of Delegation was last revised and amended by the Authority in its meeting on the 13th of December 2017.</p> <p>As part of the remit of the Reviewing Governance Task and Finish Group, consideration was given to how the Authority had approached decision making during various stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, and whether there were any learning points to be incorporated for the future.</p> <p>Whilst it was acknowledged that there is a need to differentiate how the Authority needs to operate in times of national crisis and in ordinary times; it was interesting to note that the dynamic working practices implemented during the first stage of the pandemic were enabled under the current Officer Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>The Group concluded that the current Officer Scheme of Delegation continued to be fit for purpose, and therefore no recommendation for changes were given.</p>
<p>Members' Register of Interests</p>	<p>The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 places a requirement on the Authority to publish the current Members' Register of Interests on the Authority's website.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of each Authority Member to keep their record of personal interests up to date and to report on any changes in a timely manner. Nonetheless, the Member Services Officer sends each Member a copy of their current record after each AGM of the Authority, and requests that they be reviewed and updated if required.</p> <p>During 2021/22, confirmation was given to Welsh Government that the Register is up to date and publicly available and that arrangements are in place to ensure compliance is maintained.</p>

Principle 2: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

<p>Strategic Equality Plan</p>	<p>The Annual Report on the Strategic Equality Plan was presented to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 24th of November 2021.</p> <p>The Authority's progress on its action plan for reaching its Equality Objectives was reported, along with the Equality Impact Assessments undertaken during the year, equal pay monitoring data and staff equality data.</p> <p>The Socio-economic Duty came into force in Wales on the 31st of March 2021. Consideration must now be given to how the Authority's strategic decisions can improve inequality of outcome for people who suffer socio-economic disadvantage. A new impact assessment template has been developed in partnership with other north Wales public sector bodies to ensure we can fully embrace our new responsibilities.</p>
<p>Direct Consultation</p>	<p>As various Covid-19 restrictions remained in place throughout the year, the Authority continued to use various online solutions to enable direct communication, consultation and engagement, as its primary means of contact.</p> <p>During 2021/22 the Authority continued to engage with local communities and stakeholders through a range of means, from traditional written consultations and online questionnaires to webinars and online meetings and workshops. When restrictions allowed, in-person consultation events took place in Covid secure spaces.</p> <p>Whilst Fforwm Eryri, the Annual Agriculture Liaison Group, North and South Access Forums to name but a few, have continue to take place virtually, discussions on how to proceed in future have commenced. What has become clear is that many see great advantages to holding on-line meetings and wish to continue, whilst others see disadvantages of not meeting in person and a wish to resume in-person meetings. The coming year will see some in-person meetings resume, some meetings will employ hybrid solutions whilst some remain entirely on-line.</p>

	<p>Outside of the normal direct consultations on the Authority's business that has taken place this year, engagement and consultation has also taken place with local communities to enable information to be shared and to give people an opportunity to give their views over numerous challenges the National Park Authority and its communities have faced due to the increased visitor numbers.</p>
<p>Communication and Engagement Strategy</p>	<p>Communication and engagement is an essential element in everything the Authority does. It is also something that can always be improved upon, and the Authority's Strategy reflects this.</p> <p>Fast paced technological advancements and the continuing growth in social media platforms and participation levels, means that the Authority needs to be fully focused on engaging effectively through the correct channels at the correct time with a wide range of audiences.</p> <p>The Authority's new Communication and Engagement Strategy was formally adopted by the Authority on the 9th of June 2021.</p> <p>The annual report on the strategy was presented to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 23rd of March 2022. The report included data for the performance indicators set out in the strategy.</p> <p>The Content and Brand Manager has been working with the appointed contracted Creo in developing the design phase of the new website for the Authority during the year.</p> <p>The new website was launched in April 2022.</p>

<p>Freedom of Information</p>	<p>The Authority has adopted the Information Commissioner's Model Publication Scheme and has published a guide to information, both of which are available on the website.</p> <p>During 2021, 33 requests were received of which 30 received all the information requested (91%). Of the other 3 requests, 2 were refused or partially refused as the information requested did not exist or the authority did not hold the information, and 1 request was partially refused as it contained third party personal data, which was redacted from the released information.</p> <p>No complaints were submitted to the Information Commissioner with regard to any information request.</p>
<p>Committee Agendas and Associated Reports</p>	<p>The Authority's Committee agendas and associated reports are published on the website at least 3 clear working days before each meeting.</p> <p>An archive of past Committee meetings agendas and associated papers is also available on the website.</p>

Principle 3: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

<p>Cynllun Yr Wyddfa Partnership Plan</p>	<p>Although no formal update report on the Snowdon Plan was presented to Members during 2021/22, three newsletters providing an update on the work of the Partnership were issued and a discussion on the parking and transport element took place on the 22nd of January 2021 and the 20th of October 20 2021 at the Member Working Groups.</p> <p>Since launching the scheme in 2018 many of the initial projects have been completed and the Partnership intends to review the Plan during 2023 with the launch of a revised version - five years since the original Plan was created.</p>
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	<p>One of the Plan's priorities is to implement the Snowdonia and Ogwen Parking and Transport Strategy. Many of the initial elements have been implemented with support from Transport for Wales. There is a delay in relation to Pen Y Pass and the recently approved planning application to install a barrier which would improve the efficiency of the pre-order system, as concerns have been raised by the landowner.</p> <p>A bespoke area plan for Nant Gwynant was written during the year, in conjunction with the relevant partners in the area.</p> <p>The Snowdonia Ambassador program has gone from strength to strength with over 700 qualified and approximately 200 re-qualified during the year.</p> <p>Funding has been secured to appoint an officer to lead on the rubbish-free Snowdon operation with a view to advertising the post this year.</p> <p>The Snowdon Paths app is due to be launched in its new form as the app has recently been updated to reflect the accessibility act for public bodies.</p>
<p>Cynllun Eryri (Snowdonia National Park Partnership Plan)</p>	<p>Cynllun Eryri – the new National Park Partnership Plan for 2020 – 25, was formally adopted by the Authority at its Annual General Meeting on the 23rd of September 2020.</p> <p>Fforwm Eryri's Terms of Reference have been amended to accommodate remote partnership meetings, and is now specified as the preferred mode of operation for at least 3 out of the 4 annual meetings.</p> <p>In the summer of 2021, work commenced on producing the first Annual Monitoring Report for Cynllun Eryri, with the information and data collected covering the period from September 2020 to December 2021.</p> <p>Each Outcome will be assessed in relation to the Measurements of Success as agreed by all Partners in the original Action Plan of Cynllun Eryri and reported on in the report.</p> <p>At the end of March 2022, the report was in the process of being finalised and approved by Fforwm Eryri, after which it will be presented to the Authority.</p>

<p>Eryri Local Development Plan 2016-2031</p>	<p>The revised Eryri Local Development Plan 2016-2031 (LDP) was adopted on the 6th of February 2019.</p> <p>The second Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) was presented to the Planning and Access Committee on the 20th of October 2021, and it covered the period April 2020 to the end of March 2021. The AMR is submitted to the Welsh Government by the 31st of October each year.</p> <p>The Monitoring Report noted that early indications point towards necessary future changes to the Eryri LDP due to the consequences of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, changes in national policy such as the publication of the Future Wales National Plan 2040 as well as the performance of certain aspects of the Plan.</p>
<p>Corporate Work Programme 2021-22</p>	<p>As the Authority now has an adopted Well-being Statement which includes its Well-being Objectives for a five-year period from 2021-26; there will therefore be no need for an annual review.</p> <p>The agreed actions in the Corporate Work Programme will now be sufficient to enable the Authority to assess its progress in attaining the Well-being Objectives and there will accordingly be no need for a separate report on Performance Indicators. The Corporate Work Programme for 2021/22 was adopted by the Authority on the 28th of April 2021.</p> <p>Members were provided with regular updates on the progress made in meeting the Well-being Objectives, outlined in the Corporate Work Program 2021/22.</p> <p>Progress on the first two quarters of the financial year was reported to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 24th of November 2021 and a third quarter progress report was provided on the 23rd of March 2022.</p> <p>Members welcomed the new layout, noting it was more concise and easier to understand.</p>

Principle 4: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

<p>Budget Strategy 2021/22</p>	<p>The Authority’s revenue budget for 2021/22 was confirmed in the Chief Finance Officer’s report to the Authority on the 3rd of February 2021. The report also confirmed the levy on constituent authorities.</p> <p>An update on the Budget was presented to the Authority on the 8th of December 2021 and to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 23rd of March 2022.</p> <p>The March report outlined the financial assistance received to mitigate some of the effects due to Covid-19, which have included a Welsh Government support grant, rate relief and rebates from staff salaries through the furlough scheme.</p> <p>Following an increase in the National Park grant of 10% for 2021/22, it was reported that the Authority still has a surplus of £476,251, which has now been earmarked for specific purposes, including improving the Authority’s resilience, increasing the Authority’s capacity, de-carbonisation agenda and capital commitments.</p>
<p>Mid Term Financial Plan 2022/23 – 2025/26</p>	<p>In its meeting on the 9th of February 2022, the Chief Executive presented the revised Medium Term Financial Plan for 2022/23 – 2025/26 to the Authority, which outlines a range of financial situations that could face the Authority over the next four years. The Plan outlines a model of the financial resources required by the Authority for the service levels it hopes to provide in the mid term.</p> <p>The Plan confirmed that the income targets for 2022/23 have been maintained on the same level as 2021/22. It was also reported that the core National Park Grant settlement will likely remain at the same level over the next 3 years, and although there is no provision for inflation, this at least gives some certainty with regards the Authority’s financial situation.</p> <p>Any additional money received through specific grants (other than core grants) brings with it additional administrative work, therefore consideration needs to be given to the additional work pressure on some of the Authority’s services.</p>

<p>Performance Management</p>	<p>As part of the Reviewing Governance Task and Finish Group, the mechanism for reviewing performance in relation to the Authority's Well-being Statement and the Corporate Work Programme has now been set out formally.</p> <p>It confirms that the Performance and Resources Committee will scrutinise performance on the actions contained in the Corporate Work Programme which gives an insight into progress on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Also, an annual report to be prepared and considered by the Authority following the year's end to assess overall performance on attaining the Authority's Well-being Objectives.</p>
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Principle 5: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

<p>Members' Role Descriptions</p>	<p>As part of the remit of the Reviewing Governance Task and Finish Group, the current role descriptions for Authority Members were reviewed.</p> <p>Changes were made to strengthen the emphasis of the role of members in setting a strategic direction and ambition for the Authority, providing an overarching introduction including the purpose of National Parks and the role of the Authority in delivering on these purposes, and strengthening the section on personal and role development.</p> <p>The new role descriptions for Members and for the Chair and Vice Chair were adopted by the Authority on the 27th of April 2022.</p>
<p>Members' Attendance</p>	<p>All meetings continued to be held on-line during the year, as new waves of Covid-19 emerged and restrictions were tightened at various points.</p> <p>The online platform Zoom for holding committee and other meetings is now well embedded across the Authority and is working well.</p> <p>Members' attendance at meetings during 2021/22 was 85%, compared to 90% in 2020/21 and 81% in 2019/20.</p>

	<p>Work is underway by the Authority’s IT service to identify an appropriate platform for conducting hybrid meetings in the next year and to recommend an appropriate venue that could accommodate this.</p> <p>If the Authority proceeds down this route, there will likely be additional training needs for Chairs and Vice Chairs of committees and meetings, to ensure that meetings are managed effectively to enable everyone to participate fully.</p>
<p>Member Training</p>	<p>As noted above, Covid-19 restrictions were in place for most of 2021/22, and therefore very few face to face training opportunities were available for Members.</p> <p>However, on the 25th of March 2022, the first in-person Member Development Day was held for 2 years.</p> <p>In 2021/22, member attendance at training events was 75% (69% in 2020/21).</p> <p>As part of the work of the Reviewing Governance Task and Finish Group, a recommendation has been put forward to develop a Member Development Strategy. Initial work will be focused on the expected change to Members following local government elections on the 5th of May 2022. It is proposed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a collective skills assessment is conducted, which will be mandatory for all new Members to complete; • the internal induction sessions are reviewed and improved; • everyone appointed Chair or Vice-Chair to be offered training on chairing meetings; and • consideration be given to having a mentor for each new Member appointed in May 2022.
<p>Staff Performance Appraisals and Training</p>	<p>Learning and development needs are identified in annual performance appraisal reviews and a training plan is produced by the Head of Personnel, which outlines training priorities for the year ahead.</p>

	<p>Concern has been raised over the last couple of years at the Performance and Resources Committee meetings that the percentage of staff appraised continued to be low, and in 2020/21 had dropped to an unprecedented 32%. Due to the lack of personnel resources, data is not currently available for the percentage appraised in 2021/22.</p> <p>However, in a staff survey undertaken in 2021/22, 87% of staff agreed that they have opportunities to develop their skills (81.5% in 2020/21).</p>
<p>Human Resources Strategy</p>	<p>Staff sickness absences was 11.5 days in 2019/20, but this had dropped significantly to 3 days in 2020/21. It is thought that a combination of most staff working from home and restricted social contacts due to lockdowns, has significantly reduced contagious illnesses, which has led to reduced staff sickness absence as a result.</p> <p>However, further personnel data is not currently available, as the Annual Updating Report on implementing the Authority's HR Strategy has not been presented to the Performance and Resources Committee during 2021/22. This is due to the Head of Personnel retiring on the 30th of June 2021, and the subsequent failure to appoint to the post.</p> <p>It is clear that the Human Resources Strategy needs to be revised and updated as a matter of priority. Recruitment and retention are increasing risks for the Authority as is succession planning.</p> <p>A new Head of Personnel has been appointed and is due to commence in post on the 13th of June 2022. It is hoped that the Head of Personnel will in due course be able to revise the strategy and produce an action plan to address these issues.</p>
<p>Authority Resilience: Staff Terms and Conditions</p>	<p>The Audit Wales report on the Resilience of the Authority identified the Authority's capacity to meet current and emerging challenges and matters relating to the retention and recruitment of staff as issues to be addressed.</p> <p>Members discussed these issues in detail and commissioned a report, which concluded that the Authority's pay structure was not competitive, compared to other public sector employers.</p>

	<p>Members also recommended that acknowledging bilingualism should be included within the review of the Authority's pay structure. Members considered that the ability to be bilingual was essential in enabling the Authority to provide its services, there is a business case to recognise such in its pay structure.</p> <p>After consultation with staff and Unions, approval was given by the Authority on the 9th of April 2022 for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustment in the Authority's pay bands by two pay points (upwards) on the pay spine. • An additional day's leave on Saint David's Day from 2022 onwards. • The retention of the last pay point in any pay band subject to attaining an agreed standard in English and Welsh.
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Principle 6: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

<p>Financial Statements</p>	<p>The draft Statement of Accounts was not completed within the extended timeline of 31st of August 2021. They were certified (subject to audit) by the Authority's Chief Finance Officer and presented to the Authority on the 13th of October 2021.</p> <p>Prior to this, Members had approved the Outturn Report for 2020/21 at an Authority special meeting on the 30th of June 2021.</p> <p>The Statement of Accounts was audited by Audit Wales, and the final version (post-audit) of the Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 along with the Final Letter of Representation was presented to Members at a special Authority meeting on the 24th of November 2021 for approval in accordance with The Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018.</p> <p>At the same meeting, the Audit Wales presented its annual ISA260 report to the Authority. The Auditor confirmed that he would be presenting an unqualified opinion on the Authority's financial statements and related notes.</p>
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<p>Risk Management</p>	<p>The Risk Register is reviewed and updated quarterly by the Heads of Service and Management Team.</p> <p>Identified risks as noted in the Risk Register are allocated as a responsibility to named officers and target dates are set for mitigation. The Risk Register is reviewed by Members at each Performance and Resources Committee and any removal of risks from the Register is ratified annually at an Authority meeting.</p>
<p>External Audit</p>	<p>At the Authority meeting on the 28th of April 2021, Audit Wales presented its report setting out its findings following its Review of Resilient and Sustainable Services. Full details of the findings are set out under Section 6 (Significant Governance Issues) in this Statement.</p> <p>At the same meeting, Audit Wales presented their Audit Plan for 2021/22. The Audit Plan had incorporated the possible effects of Covid-19 on the work of the Authority as well as on Audit Wales' ability to carry out its work.</p> <p>The Audit Plan set out revised arrangements for the Audit of Financial Statements, which would be dependent on when the Authority could complete the accounts. It also set out the intention of carrying out a performance audit which would reflect the risks and opportunities highlighted in the 2019/20 review of involvement and the 2020/21 review of corporate resilience.</p> <p>Further to this, at the Authority meeting on the 8th of December 2021, Audit Wales issued a Certificate to confirm that following an audit of the Authority's Assessment of its performance for 2020/21, the Authority had discharged its duty under section 15 (2) (8) and (9) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.</p> <p>At the Authority meeting on the 9th of February 2022, Audit Wales presented an Annual Audit Summary of the work undertaken during 2021. The report noted that the Auditor General gave an unqualified true and fair opinion on the Authority's financial statements on the 29th of November 2021, in advance of the statutory deadline.</p> <p>It was also reported that the Authority's Annual Governance Statement and Narrative Report were prepared in line with the CIPFA Code and relevant guidance.</p>

	<p>The Auditor General noted that progress had been made in improving the quality of the draft statements presented for audit on the 27th of July 2021. There remains scope for further improvement some discrepancies between the financial statements and supporting working papers had been identified.</p> <p>At the Authority meeting on the 28th of April 2022, Audit Wales presented their Audit Plan for 2022. The report sets out the audit risks and proposed audit response to be undertake during the year. The report also notes that the performance audit is yet to confirmed. The audit fees was also confirmed.</p>
<p>Internal Audit</p>	<p>The Internal Audit Manager reports on the previous financial year’s work to the Performance and Resources Committee in July.</p> <p>There were four internal audits scheduled to be undertaken during 2021/22, namely Well-being of Future Generations, Tendering Arrangements, Absence Management, and Business Continuity Plans.</p> <p>Both audits on the Tendering Arrangements and Business Continuity Plans were given a “Restricted” rating - although rules are in place, there is a need to improve compliance with the rules and / or introduce new controls to reduce the risks to which the service is exposed.</p> <p>As a result of the ratings given, specific action points and a timetable for completion were agreed by relevant officers to address the weaknesses identified.</p> <p>The audit on Wellbeing of Future Generations was given a “Satisfactory” rating – there are controls in place to achieve the objectives but there are aspects where the arrangements can be tightened to further mitigate the risks.</p> <p>Managing Sickness Absence and Staff Well-being was given a “High” rating - assurance of propriety can be expressed as the internal controls in place can be relied upon to achieve objectives.</p>

<p>Health and Safety</p>	<p>The Health and Safety Group meets quarterly to monitor health and safety issues within the Authority.</p> <p>The Annual Health and Safety Report presented to the Performance and Resources Committee details the training courses undertaken during the year and the incidents / accidents that were recorded.</p> <p>It was reported that it is usual to compare year on year data on incidents that were recorded, which also includes reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive under the 'Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)'. However, data from the 2020/21 is not representative due to several factors including home working and the suspension of business at Plas Tan y Bwlch.</p> <p>Concern was raised at the lack of comparable data, and it was agreed that the Head of Personnel would circulate further data as requested.</p>
<p>Information Centres</p>	<p>The Authority has 3 Information Centres in Betws y Coed, Beddgelert and Aberdyfi, which are managed by the Centres Commercial Manager, whose main objective is to ensure that the Centres are commercially viable / self-financing.</p> <p>The Information Centres Annual Report was presented to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 24th of November 2021. The report provided an overview of the 2021/22 year to date, and the actions to be taken in 2022/23.</p> <p>It was reported that the limit on numbers due to Covid restrictions and a reduction in opening hours were factors that have negatively affected visitor numbers. In addition, staff recruitment and retention levels are causing problems.</p> <p>The report outlined detailed visitor numbers and spend per head data at each of the Centres.</p>
<p>Borrowing and Investment Strategies / Treasury Management</p>	<p>The Annual Report providing the actual Treasury Management (borrowing and investment) of the Authority during 2020/21, was presented to the Authority meeting on the 9th of June 2021.</p>

	<p>During 2020/21, the Authority's activity remained within the limits that were originally set. There has been no borrowing.</p> <p>In 2020/21, the total interest received from investments was £11,113. Interest received from car loans of £1,194 increases the total to £12,307 against a budget of £23,000.</p> <p>The bank and building society interest sum of £11,113 for 2020/21 is much lower than the corresponding amount of £48,077 in 2019/20. The main reason being that interest rates have generally fallen due to the effects of the pandemic, and the Authority having stopped depositing in 95 day notice accounts on the basis of professional advice.</p> <p>An oral Interim Treasury Management report was given to the Authority on the 8th of December 2021. The Chief Finance Officer advised that the Authority's funds and investments continued to be secure and that interest rates continued to be very low.</p> <p>The Chief Finance Officer presented the Capital Strategy for 2022/23 at the Authority meeting on the 9th of February 2022.</p> <p>The report gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of National Park services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.</p> <p>The report confirms that the Authority commences 2022/2 debt free. Members approved no change in the authorised borrowing limit and the operational boundary, and approved both the Capital Borrowing Strategy and Investment Strategy for 2022/23, and noted the content with regard to the Prudential Code.</p>
<p>Plas Tan y Bwlch Study Centre</p>	<p>At the Special Authority meeting held on the 23rd of October 2020, Members resolved to continue operating Plas Tan y Bwlch as a B&B in the short to medium term; to proceed with staff restructuring; to continue the dialogue with a range of possible future partners; and to report on progress to each meeting of the Performance and Resources Committee.</p>

	<p>The risks of failing to reach the income generating target for Plas Tan y Bwlch was increased to High on the Authority's Risk Register in March 2022. Details are outlined under section 6 of this statement.</p> <p>The Chief Executive has previously advised Members at the Performance and Resources Committee on the 24th of November 2021, that the future of Plas Tan y Bwlch will need to be considered at the end of the 2022 season.</p>
Yr Ysgwrn	<p>Yr Ysgwrn's Annual Report was presented to the Authority on the 28th of April 2022.</p> <p>The report confirms that Yr Ysgwrn had a £7,000 overspend at the end of the 2021/22 financial year due to reduced income, the cost of commissioning the Yr Ysgwrn Curriculum and property management costs due to various technical problems with the alarm and biomass boiler.</p> <p>The report also sets out the proposed site plans for the forthcoming year and acknowledges that the budget targets are challenging. Visitor numbers and corresponding income trends are not clear due to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>

Principle 7: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

Pay Policy Statement	<p>Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 places a requirement on Local Authorities to prepare pay policy statements. Whilst National Park Authorities are exempt from this requirement, it has been considered good practice to adopt such a statement, and accordingly this is done annually by the Head of Personnel.</p> <p>The Authority's Pay Policy Report for 2021/22 and Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 was presented to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 23rd of March 2022, ensuring transparency in staff remuneration at the Authority.</p>
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	<p>At the time of reporting, the Pay Award for 2021/22 had only recently been agreed, which means back pay from April 2021 had been paid to all staff in March 2022 salaries.</p>
<p>Annual Report and Improvement Plan 2020/21</p>	<p>The Annual Report and Improvement Plan for 2020/21 was presented to the Authority meeting on the 13th of October 2021, before being published on the website and distributed to the Authority's main centres, public libraries etc., within the National Park.</p> <p>It contains the Chairman's Annual Report for the year, which sets out what was achieved, not achieved and any problems that were encountered.</p> <p>It also contains details of the Authority's Service Priorities and the Authority's Objectives set on an annual basis that feed into and show how it is intended to take the National Park forward in order to attain the Authority's vision; a summary evaluation of progress made in attaining the Authority's Objectives, the key work activities for 2020/21, and performance management (including performance indicator results for the year).</p> <p>The Director of Corporate Services advised Members that following the adoption of the Well-being Statement 2021 – 2026, the process had now changed, and that this was the final time the Annual Report would be submitted in the current format under the Local Government Measure.</p>
<p>Broadcasting Committees</p>	<p>As part of the remit of the Reviewing Governance Task and Finish Group, consideration was given to how committee meetings should be held in future as well as moving forward with broadcasting committees.</p> <p>Recommendations made by the Task & Finish Group were discussed at the Members Working Group on the 6th of April 2022, before being submitted for final approval and adoption by the Authority at the end of April 2022. These were:</p> <p>Future Authority and Planning and Access Committees to be transmitted live on the website. Recordings of the Performance and Resources Committee to be uploaded after the meeting for public access.</p>

	<p>Move forward with arrangements without translating English contributions.</p> <p>Introduce a system of pre-registration for the public.</p> <p>Staff to investigate the best location for hybrid committees and make a recommendation to the Authority in due course.</p>
<p>Member Scrutiny</p>	<p>During 2021/22, a report was received by the Performance and Resources Committee on the 14th of July 2021 regarding the Task & Finish Group’s progress on the scrutiny of Snowdonia’s Carbon Account (established in 2020/21); and a report was received by the Authority on the 13th of October 2021 on the progress of the Task & Finish Group to scrutinise the protection of Welsh Place Names.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group on Reviewing Governance also reported their recommendations to the Members Working Group on the 6th of April 2022. Part of the group’s remit was looking at Strategic Scrutiny. A number of recommendations were made, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Future Task and Finish Groups to have Terms of Reference agreed at the outset which identifies a final reporting date, to ensure the groups remain focused. 2. Appointing Members on Task and Finish Groups should be reviewed. People with expertise or interest in the subjects should be appointed. 3. Delay setting the 2022/23 scrutiny topics until the Final Remit Letter is received from the Minister, and subject to this, support the following areas for future Task and Finish Groups, namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions on Climate Change • Actions on the Wildlife and Nature Emergency • Contingency Planning and how we deal with Future Events

6. Significant Governance Issues and Actions Proposed for 2022/23

Audit Wales: Resilient and Sustainable Services

During 2020-21 a review of corporate resilience was commenced remotely, with examination and audit of relevant documents and by issuing a survey to Members and staff to gather their views.

Reporting on the outcome in April 2021, Audit Wales concluded that “the Authority responded well in the pandemic but the challenges it faced have highlighted a need to improve its resilience and sustainability in the longer term”.

Proposals for Improvement

The table below sets out the proposals for improvement identified by Audit Wales whilst undertaking the review. During 2021/22, the Authority worked at implementing these proposals, the outcomes of which have been reported under the specific headings within this Statement. Some work is ongoing and will be progressed further in 2022/23.

PFI1	To support resilience the Authority should consolidate and appraise its new ways of working in relation to governance, business continuity and remote working.
PFI2	To maximise the impact of grant funded projects the Authority should develop a framework to appraise their potential contribution to progressing Cynllun Eryri and to ensure appropriate legacy planning takes place.
PFI3	To support greater resilience the Authority should consider how and when to expose officers to new experiences in wider services and teams to build skills, knowledge and capacity.

Audit Wales: A Review of how the Authority is Promoting Sustainable Tourism

The audit has been undertaken but the outcome report of this review is yet to be published by Wales Audit.

The Authority's Risk Profile

The three highest risks to the Authority as updated in March 2022, is as follows:

Risk	Result	Action Identified / Progress to date
Income Generating Target (Plas Tan y Bwlch).	Failure to keep within the Authority's budget.	<p>At the Authority meeting on 23rd October 2020 the decision was taken to continue operating Plas Tan y Bwlch as a B&B type business in the short to medium term and to proceed with staff restructuring as outlined in the report. This decision means that the risk to the Authority has reduced somewhat. However, there is still risk to the Authority, although both the likely effect and impact have reduced somewhat.</p> <p>Following the process of re-opening the economy, Plas has had a busy season operating as outlined above. We recently reported to the Plas Board. As with the rest of the sector, we have suffered from staff shortages in places and the uncertainty of Covid. At present we are in the process of calculating the income to date for the year but we are aware that there have been cost overruns on staff as well as fuel costs for running and heating Plas. These additional costs will not be offset by income generation and have the potential to have a minor impact on the Authority's accounts.</p>
Risk (publicity) as a result of the Traffic Scheme / Snowdonia Green Key Policy	Mismanagement leading to lack of credibility in the Authority and its partners.	<p>Development of the Snowdon Plan has established a better relationship between the individual elements relating to management on Snowdon, including the Sherpa service.</p> <p>A sub-group to Cynllun Yr Wyddfa has been formed to review the Sherpa service and transport / parking issues in the area. A traffic management study for Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) and Ogwen has been commissioned and received. The partners have considered the report's</p>

		<p>recommendations with Welsh Government. A public consultation with the communities has taken place. Transport for Wales are considering a regional approach for such matters and the formation of Corporate Joint Committees which have specific responsibility for transport may provide further opportunities.</p> <p>Unprecedented numbers of UK day visitors are expected again this summer as lockdown eases, which will cause problems for local communities. Although a partnership approach is taken, the public perception of responsibility will fall on the Authority. A number of mitigation measures have been put in place with partners for the 2021 season and will be continued for the 2022 season.</p>
<p>Aspects of financial risk associated with LIFE Celtic Rainforest project including non-compliance with procurement rules or spending on ineligible costs resulting in the grant not being awarded, or fluctuation in the Euro / pound exchange rate.</p>	<p>SNPA and other partners required to self finance aspects of project expenditure to date.</p>	<p>Second mid-term report to EC (and associated grant claim) due end of April 2022. Project has reached the spend threshold for submitting the claim on time.</p> <p>Official feedback from the Commission to the first mid-term report largely positive, with no major concerns raised. Minor concerns to be addressed alongside Project monitor in time for next mid-term report.</p> <p>The project successfully reached the spending threshold required to enable the £2m from Welsh Government to be claimed. Welsh Government's financial contribution has now come to an end.</p>

7. Opinion

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the matters referred to in part 6 to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.



EMYR WILLIAMS
SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK
AUTHORITY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DATE: 15.06.2022



ANNWEN HUGHES
SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK
AUTHORITY CHAIR

DATE : 15.06.2022