

Chair Report 2022-23

National Park Authority

Chair Report - Annwen Hughes

Financial Year 2022/23

It is with great pleasure and a sense of accomplishment that I present to you the Chair Report for the National Park Authority, detailing our activities, achievements, and challenges throughout the financial year 2022/23. As the custodian of one of the most magnificent and ecologically diverse landscapes in the world, we continue to embrace our responsibility to preserve, enhance, and share the unique beauty and cultural heritage of Eryri.

Over the past year, our collective efforts have been marked by both triumphs and significant strides in addressing the multifaceted demands of conservation, community engagement, and sustainable development. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the initiatives we have undertaken, the partnerships we have fostered, and the positive impacts we have generated within the park and its surrounding regions.

In the face of evolving environmental and social challenges, our commitment to adaptive management strategies remains resolute. We have worked tirelessly to strike a balance between safeguarding the park's delicate ecosystems and accommodating the aspirations of the communities that call this enchanting landscape their home. This is a testament to the collaborative spirit of our dedicated staff, trustees, volunteers, and the invaluable input from local residents and businesses.

I must emphasise the significance of partnerships that have been forged and strengthened over the past year. Our relationships with governmental bodies, non-profit organisations, educational institutions, and the private sector have been instrumental in amplifying the impact of our initiatives. The amalgamation of expertise and resources has enabled us to tackle complex challenges with renewed vigour and innovative solutions.

In conclusion, this Chairman's Report serves as a testament to the dedication and passion that pulse through the heart of Eryri. As we reflect on the accomplishments of the 2022/23 financial year, let us also look forward with optimism and resolve. Our commitment to preserving the ecological integrity, cultural heritage, and socio-economic vitality of Eryri remains unwavering, as we continue to write the next chapter of this remarkable journey.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who have contributed to the success of the National Park Authority in the past year, and I eagerly anticipate the exciting opportunities that lie ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Annwen Hughes

Chair, the National Park Authority

Improving recreation management

For our 2022 Summer Season Communications Campaign, we implemented a collaborative effort with the two other Welsh National Park Authorities, aimed at enhancing awareness of Eryri's unique attributes while promoting responsible visitor behaviour. This campaign not only succeeded in celebrating our National Park's special qualities but also in imparting the importance of adhering to the countryside code. Through innovative digital outreach, engaging content, and strategic communication, we reached a wide spectrum of audiences, effectively influencing positive visiting behaviour. Moreover, our united front allowed us to address the pressing issue of unlawful fly-camping, conveying a strong stance against such practices. Over the course of the campaign we received over 20 million engagements between our press work and digital media accounts.

An upgrade to the Betws y Coed information centre has been met with enthusiasm. The introduction of a state-of-the-art interactive sandbox marks a step forward in our efforts to educate and engage the public about the geological wonders of our landscapes. This innovative feature allows visitors to physically mould sand, witnessing firsthand the transformative processes that have shaped Eryri's breathtaking terrain. Through real-time projections and informative displays and interpretation, the interactive sandbox provides an immersive and captivating experience, making geology accessible and engaging for all ages.

The success of our monthly guided walks led by our dedicated wardens, continues to offer a diverse range of recreational opportunities for individuals of all ages and abilities. These promoted routes not only showcase the unparalleled beauty of Eryri but also ensure accessibility and inclusivity for everyone. From leisurely strolls to more challenging hikes, our wardens adeptly cater to varying preferences and fitness levels, fostering a deeper connection between our communities and the natural wonders of the National Park. These endeavours exemplify our ongoing commitment to promoting outdoor engagement and fostering a lifelong appreciation for Eryri.

In the year under review, we made significant strides in the Plastic Free Yr Wyddfa initiative. The project's scope was defined, encompassing the designated zone of operation. Clear criteria, guiding principles, and a comprehensive 2023 campaign schedule were established, paving the way for upcoming trials. We engaged with key stakeholders, introducing the project's ambitions to Fforwm Eryri and Partneriaeth Yr Wyddfa. Valuable insights were gathered through consultations with local landowners and farmers, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities of replacing single-use plastics. Collaborative efforts with local businesses resulted in adjustments to the Plastic Free Yr Wyddfa Business Scheme framework, a crucial step in the project's evolution. We also collaborated with Ysgol Dolbadarn to craft compelling branding assets for the project.

Work has been completed successfully on the Bwlch Maesgwm path, a pivotal segment of the Cylchdaith Yr Wyddfa circuit. This achievement is monumental as the path, connecting Rhyd Ddu with Llanberis, now stands as an all-access route on the mountain. This accomplishment not only enhances connectivity within our National Park but also underscores our commitment to providing inclusive and accessible experiences for all visitors. The path's completion marks a significant step forward in promoting responsible outdoor engagement while preserving the natural beauty of Eryri.

I'm pleased to highlight the remarkable success of our website, which garnered nearly 3 million page views. This substantial online engagement underscores the growing interest and appreciation for Eryri National Park. Our website has become a gateway to the park's diverse offerings, providing valuable information to a wide audience. This digital platform has not only fostered greater public

awareness but has also served as an educational resource, promoting responsible visitation, environmental stewardship, and cultural enrichment.

Responding to the challenges of climate change

Energy efficiency and the reduction of our carbon footprint within Authority owned buildings have taken centre stage in our new Asset Management Plan. This strategic shift aligns seamlessly with Wales Prosperity for All – A Low Carbon Public Estate targets. By making sustainability a core focus, we are not only reducing our environmental impact but also setting an example for responsible management.

Electric Vehicle charging units have been installed in select Authority car parks. This initiative reflects our commitment to sustainable transport and reducing emissions within the Eryri National Park. Looking ahead, we have ambitious plans to further expand this provision in the coming year. By facilitating EV charging infrastructure, we not only encourage environmentally conscious travel but also position Eryri as a welcoming destination for a new era of green mobility.

Improving the management and understanding of cultural heritage

Yr Ysgwrn successfully secured financial support for a dynamic program of activities and events from both the Welsh Federation of Museums and Galleries and the Welsh Government through the Summer of Fun program. This funding has allowed the centre to offer engaging experiences to our visitors of all ages adding significant value and experiences to their time at Yr Ysgwrn. The income data reinforces the positive impact of these events, demonstrating higher revenue on days when activities take place. The quality of our program remains paramount in maintaining this level of activity and ensuring that Eryri's heritage and culture continue to thrive. Looking ahead, Yr Ysgwrn eagerly anticipate welcoming the unique Lost Words exhibition in partnership with Amgueddfa Cymru next year.

Addressing the challenges and opportunities of post Brexit land management

Our commitment to maintaining a close working relationship with land managers, farmers and farming unions has proven essential in navigating the implications of Brexit on land management within the National Park. This collaborative approach ensures that the Authority remains informed about the evolving landscape of regulations and policies post-Brexit. By fostering open communication and knowledge exchange, we strive to adapt and align our strategies to the changing needs and challenges faced by those who steward our lands. This ongoing partnership underscores our dedication to proactive and informed decision-making, safeguarding Eryri's agricultural integrity in a post-Brexit era.

Addressing the decline in nature

Addressing the decline in nature remains a paramount concern. Through peatland restoration work, our team is rehabilitating vital ecosystems, bolstering biodiversity, and sequestering carbon. Concurrently, our trees team's tree planting initiatives are rejuvenating landscapes, enhancing habitats, and combating climate change. Additionally, our leading work in the Celtic Rainforests LIFE

Project underscores our commitment to preserving unique habitats. These collective efforts affirm our dedication to halting the decline in nature within Eryri, ensuring a healthier, more resilient environment for all its inhabitants.

Maintaining and increasing the quality of our communities

The implementation of the Authority's Volunteer Strategy has been instrumental in our efforts to enrich the Eryri National Park experience. Collaborating closely with our partners such as Cymdeithas Eryri, The National Trust and The Outdoor Partnership on the Caru Eryri scheme, we successfully broadened the spectrum of volunteer opportunities throughout the area. The Caru Eryri team carried out important visitor management work along the busiest routes in Eryri providing on the ground support to the Warden service by advising the public and keeping footpaths and car parks clear of litter. Patrol routes included the Llanberis, Watkin, Rhyd Ddu and Ranger paths, Llyn Dinas and Aberglaslyn, Capel Curig, Ogwen and Llyn Tegid. Regular shifts were scheduled every Friday, Saturday, Sunday, with footpath maintenance on Wednesdays.

Yr Wyddfa Volunteer Wardens have made an extremely positive difference once again in terms of patrolling the paths. This year there has been a warden presence on Yr Wyddfa on 77 days. 36 Voluntary Wardens have volunteered and put in a total of 272 shifts. This amounts to 1600+ volunteer hours, filling around 300 bags of litter, and being of assistance to over 3000 people.

In 2022 for the first time, Volunteer Wardens were also recruited to assist the Wardens on Cader Idris. 11 new volunteers were recruited especially for this role. They completed a total of 35 shifts, which amounts to 220 volunteer hours.

The creation of a series of 8 videos highlighting our most popular all-access trails has proven significant in enhancing public understanding and utilisation of these valuable resources. These videos serve as informative guides, offering insights into the unique features and natural wonders along these trails. By providing engaging visual content, we've not only promoted accessibility but also encouraged individuals to explore and appreciate Eryri's diverse landscapes. These videos exemplify our commitment to education and inclusivity, ensuring that the advantages of these trails are readily accessible to all.

Supporting young people

Over the year we successfully relaunched the Young Rangers scheme. This initiative not only offers young individuals the opportunity to actively engage with their surroundings but also equips them with a deeper understanding of the National Park's diverse qualities. Through hands-on activities, educational experiences, and immersive learning, participants gain a firsthand appreciation of our natural, cultural, and recreational assets. The scheme's revival marks a significant investment in the future, empowering our youth with the knowledge and enthusiasm needed to become dedicated stewards of Eryri's unique landscape and heritage.

Promoting sustainable tourism

The pursuit of implementing recommendations derived from the transport and parking review in the Yr Wyddfa and Ogwen areas reflects our commitment to proactive sustainable management.

Through collaborative efforts with partners, significant headway is being made. The success of the Pen y Pass pre-book system during peak seasons, eliminating cars from clearways, is commendable. Moreover, the added support from Transport for Wales, Gwynedd Council, and the Authority is propelling the Sherpa'r Wyddfa service to new heights, ensuring an exceptional experience for the 2023 peak visitor season. These accomplishments showcase our dedication to sustainable solutions and enhanced visitor experiences, positioning Eryri as a model for responsible parking and transport management.

Promoting the Welsh language

A pivotal decision was made by the Authority to exclusively employ the Welsh terms "Eryri" and "Yr Wyddfa" when referring to the English names Snowdonia and the iconic peak, Snowdon. This choice is pivotal in our commitment to safeguarding the Welsh language and preserving the vibrant local culture. By embracing these authentic traditions, we amplify the region's linguistic and historical heritage, whilst showcasing our unique identity on an international scale. Our dedication to only using Eryri and Yr Wyddfa underscores our role as custodians of the region's cultural legacy, ensuring that these treasured elements remain integral to the fabric of our past, present, and future.

Our ongoing efforts to safeguard and promote the use of Welsh place names within the National Park are taking shape through the development of a comprehensive place names guide. This guide will serve as a valuable resource, ensuring consistency and authenticity in the use of place names and reinforce our commitment to maintaining the cultural tapestry of Eryri.

Developing the local economy

Collaboration with the Eryri Mynyddoedd & Mor team from Cyngor Gwynedd has been instrumental in our ongoing efforts to boost the local economy. Initiatives like the Plastic Free Business Scheme and the Eryri Ambassador Scheme exemplify our commitment to sustainable tourism. These programs not only enhance the visitor experience but also bolster local businesses and promote responsible practices.

Effective partnership working

Recommencing face-to-face Local Access Forums, both in the north and south of the park, marks a significant step toward enhancing collaboration and understanding between landowners and recreational users within Eryri. In the wake of the pandemic, these forums have rekindled essential dialogue, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for the Park's stewardship. They have proven to be invaluable platforms for addressing concerns, sharing insights, and forging productive partnerships. This reinstatement reaffirms our commitment to inclusive and cooperative management practices that benefit all stakeholders in Eryri.

The Eryri Ambassador Programme has achieved a remarkable milestone, with over 700 participants actively engaging in this initiative. The program's success is indicative of our commitment to empowering individuals with knowledge about the area's unique special qualities. As ambassadors, these individuals become invaluable advocates, spreading our messages to a wider audience, and playing a pivotal role in nurturing a deeper understanding and appreciation of the National Park.

The Carneddau Landscape Partnership has provided significant results. Archaeological work and the preservation of cultural heritage through place name research have been integral components of our endeavours. We've made substantial progress in uncovering the historical richness of this region, bringing ancient stories to life. These initiatives not only enrich our understanding of the Carneddau Mountains but also reinforce our dedication to safeguarding their natural and cultural significance of the area.

Understanding our local communities

Collaboration has been the cornerstone of our efforts in addressing the post-COVID visitor pressures in areas such as Nant Gwynant. Working hand in hand with the National Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Cyngor Gwynedd, and local councillors, we have crafted a comprehensive place plan. This plan outlines a sustainable and balanced approach to managing visitor influx, preserving the natural beauty of Nant Gwynant, and ensuring the well-being of both residents and visitors.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the 2022-23 report reflects the Authority's unwavering commitment to preserving, enhancing, and responsibly sharing this remarkable natural treasure. Despite unprecedented challenges, our collaborative efforts have seen impressive results, seen in the successful joint campaigns and substantial visitor engagement.

As we look ahead, we are poised to build upon these achievements, continuing to foster sustainable tourism, protect the park's ecological integrity, and create an enduring legacy for generations to come.

Our gratitude extends to our dedicated team of staff, members, partners, and the public for their ongoing support and shared dedication to Eryri's enduring beauty and significance. Together, we shape a future where conservation and enjoyment harmoniously coexist within the National Park.