

ERYRI NATIONAL PARK

OUTDOOR RECREATION POSITION STATEMENT

2024-2029



■ Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri
■ Eryri National Park



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Introduction

Purpose of the Eryri National Park Outdoor Recreation Position Statement

The iconic landscape of Eryri with its nine mountain ranges and 73 miles of coastline offers extensive opportunities for recreation, leisure and learning for people of all ages and abilities. This statement outlines the position of the Eryri National Park Authority (ENPA) relating to access and outdoor recreation within the varied landscapes of Eryri for the next five years. This statement identifies how the Authority can work to deliver sustainable outdoor recreation and contribute to the relevant outcomes of the National Park Management Plan (Cynllun Eryri).

The statement considers the strategic management of outdoor recreation, recognising the need to be responsive to the review of the National Park Management Plan scheduled for 2025. In addition, the Authority must be flexible and able to adapt to the significant changes and trends in participation in outdoor recreation post-COVID19 and the growing appreciation of the value of outdoor recreation to the health and well-being of local communities and visitors.

The position of the Authority concerning outdoor recreation and access aligns with current Welsh Government policies, including its key role in delivering the health and well-being agenda as defined by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Policy statements are presented for individual activities and cross-cutting themes are identified. The positive aspects of outdoor recreation in an iconic landscape are recognised along with the need to manage potential issues such as traffic management, impacts on biodiversity from localised habitat degradation and environmental disturbance, conflicts with other land uses, conflicts between user groups and with local communities, and the dilution of Eryri's sense of place.

The Authority does not work in isolation but through strong partnerships with the many organisations involved in looking after Eryri for future generations. This statement is relevant to all communities and stakeholders who deliver, manage, promote or are affected by outdoor recreation. It defines a position from which management actions can be agreed and implemented jointly with partners.



Scope

In this statement, outdoor recreation is defined as ‘any leisure activity which takes place outside, through which people can exercise, explore, and become familiar with natural and cultural environments.

Within Eryri, certain areas are used more intensely for recreation, most notably Yr Wyddfa, the Ogwen Valley (Carneddau and Glyderau) and the Conwy Valley. Consequently, the villages of northern Eryri such as Capel Curig, Betws y Coed, Beddgelert, Llanberis, Nant Peris and Rhyd Ddu are increasingly busy. Other areas in the south and east of the National Park are also popular such as Cader Idris, Harlech, Dyffryn Ardudwy, Aberdyfi, Dolgellau and Llyn Tegid, Y Bala.

By clearly stating the Authority’s position on access and outdoor recreation activities across Eryri, this statement outlines a generic approach to sustainable recreation management. In some of the more popular areas, the pressures arising from outdoor recreation are significant. In these areas, the Authority works with and will continue to work with, partner organisations to ensure people can appreciate and enjoy Eryri with minimal impact on its special qualities.

Whilst the strategy focuses on the area of the National Park, the Authority acknowledges the importance of areas outside the National Park boundary including nearby towns, three adjacent Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Harlech Castle and the Slate Landscape of North West Wales, and parts of the UNESCO Dyfi Biosphere. We will work with other local authorities and stakeholders on cross-boundary issues when required.



Strategic Context

This plan will be delivered in the context of several organisational and local/national strategies as well as legislation including:

- Cynllun Eryri 2020
- SNPA Wellbeing Objectives and Corporate Work Programme
- Cyngor Gwynedd and Eryri Visitor Economy Strategy
- Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP) – Gwynedd and Conwy Councils
- Cyngor Gwynedd & Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035
- Cyngor Gwynedd & Anglesey Well-being Plan 2023-2028
- Conwy & Denbighshire Local Well-being Plan 2023-2028
- Natural Resources Wales Corporate Plan & Area Statements
- Well-being & Future Generations Act (2015)
- Highways Act 1980
- Countryside Act 1968
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Countryside & Rights of Way Act (Wales) 2000
- Environment Act 1995
- Equality Act 2010
- National Parks Act 1949
- UNESCO Dyfi Biosphere Reserve



Background

National Park status

Eryri National Park was designated in 1951 following the Hobhouse Report (1947) which was the basis for the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Eryri National Park was the first to be established in Wales and is the most extensive, covering 2,132 square km (823 square miles) from Conwy in the north to Aberdyfi in the south.

Eryri is comprised of a diverse mix of landscapes many of which are highly valued for their natural beauty and tranquillity. The National Park is renowned for its vast mountainous backdrops but also offers beautiful and unspoilt valleys and coastal settings. There are very few places in the world where it is possible to experience all of these environments within such a short distance of each other.

The statutory purposes of the National Park Authority, as set out in law under Section 61 of the Environment Act 1995 are to:

1. Protect and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
2. Promote opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the National Parks.

In carrying out these purposes, the Authority is also required to support the economic and social well-being of the National Park's local communities.

When these purposes conflict with each other, then the Sandford Principle should be used to give more weight to the conservation of the environment.

The Sandford Principle.

If there is a conflict between protecting the environment and people enjoying the environment, that cannot be resolved by management, then protecting the environment must always take priority.

Special Qualities

The special qualities are the defining characteristics of a National Park. They set out what makes the area special and unique. The combination of the nine special qualities of Eryri is the core of its designation as a National Park and defines what gives it its unique sense of place.

The nine special qualities of Eryri are:

1. **Diverse landscapes:** The diversity of high-quality landscapes and coastal areas within a small geographic area - ranging from coast to rolling uplands to the rugged mountains for which Eryri is famed.
2. **Community cohesion:** A robust sense of community identity cohesion, continuity and inclusivity combine to give a strong 'sense of place and belonging' within Eryri.
3. **Vibrancy of the Welsh language:** Most obvious in Eryri as it continues to be the choice of language in many social and professional environments. It is evident in local place names, the wildlife and history therein and is therefore intrinsic to the uniqueness of our cultural and natural heritage.
4. **Inspiration for the Arts:** Eryri is a place which has inspired some of the nation's most notable culture, folklore, art, literature and music, an influence which continues to the present day.
5. **Tranquillity and solitude:** The opportunity for people to understand and enjoy the National Park actively, whilst maintaining areas of silence, tranquillity and solitude, thus promoting aspects of health, well-being, and personal reflection.
6. **Extensive recreation:** Opportunities for recreation, leisure and learning for people of all ages and abilities.
7. **Historic landscapes:** The changing relationship between people and nature over time has produced landscapes of great beauty and variety in Eryri; a national asset that is essential both to our identity and to our individual 'sense of place' and wellbeing.
8. **Renowned geology:** Complex, varied, and renowned geology, which has been vital in influencing the disciplines of geology and geography internationally.
9. **Internationally important species and habitats:** There are 17 National Nature Reserves in Eryri; more than in any other National Park in England and Wales; and 56 Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The tremendous biodiversity reflects the varied landscape, geology, climate, and land management. The richness of plants and animals is fundamental to the history, culture, language, economy, and ongoing well-being of all people who live in and visit the area.

Outdoor recreation is dependent on, contributes to, or impacts each of the nine special qualities. This position statement focuses on special quality 6 and how outdoor recreation can be sustainably managed to the benefit of all.

Relationship to other plans and policies

This position statement is intended to complement several plans.

The Eryri National Park Authority® has three strategic plans:

- The National Park Management Plan (Cynllun Eryri 2020-25): a partnership document that outlines a shared vision for the area.
- The Local Development Plan: sets standards and policies for development within Eryri National Park. The LDP lists factors to consider when evaluating planning applications and granting planning permissions.
- Eryri Well-being Statement 2021-2026: sets out the National Park Authority's revised well-being objectives, describes how they will help achieve the seven well-being goals for Wales and establishes the rationale and the steps that will be taken to achieve them.

The Eryri National Park Management Plan and the Local Development Plan have a shared vision which has been agreed upon through wide consultation with many partner communities and organisations, as follows:

Exceptional Eryri

A culturally rich National Park with a thriving green economy, world-class visitor experience and a major contributor to the well-being of our nation. By 2045 Eryri will continue to be a protected and evolving landscape, safeguarded, and enhanced to provide a rich, varied and resilient natural and historic environment, providing wellbeing benefits nationally and internationally.

This position statement outlines how the sustainable management of outdoor recreation contributes to the delivery of this vision.

The Cyngor Gwynedd and Eryri National Park Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035 identifies the following sustainable visitor economy principles:

1. Celebrate, respect, and protect our communities, language, culture and heritage.
2. Maintain and respect our environment.
3. Ensure that the advantages to Gwynedd and Eryri communities outweigh any disadvantages.

Through this statement, the Authority demonstrates its commitment to the management of outdoor recreation to ensure that it meets these principles.



Recreation in Eryri

Access

For generations, Eryri has been a world-renowned recreational venue for a variety of outdoor activities. The benefits to people's health and well-being from exploring and exercising in the exceptional landscapes of Eryri are appreciated by both local communities and visitors alike.

The National Park provides accessibility to the public through its mountain, woodlands, and coastal landscapes, via an extensive network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW), CROW Access Land and other routes. These features facilitate access to other recreational activities within the National Park, for example, cycling, horse riding, water sports, climbing and picnicking, and also, between settlements. Use of this network of footpaths etc varies with locality and season.

In Eryri there are:

- 2,742.6 km of Public Rights of Way
- 42 km permissive paths
- 268 km bridleways
- 50 km restricted byways
- 25 km byways
- 22.3 km of wheelchair-accessible paths
- 74 miles of the All Wales Coastal Path



The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) introduced a new right for people to walk freely over 'access land' (i.e. areas of open country and registered common land) in England and Wales, including mapped areas of mountain, moor, heath and down (collectively defined as 'open country') and registered common land, much of which was previously off-limits. Section 16 of the Act provides for a voluntary dedication scheme, allowing landowners to dedicate statutory access to any other categories of land in perpetuity. Through this mechanism, since 1999, proposals have been made by the then Forestry Commission (now Natural Resources Wales) to dedicate public rights of access to the majority of freehold National Assembly-owned woodland.

In Eryri, large areas of land were traditionally accessible to the public through access agreements between landowners and the National Park Authority. The CROW Act extended public access significantly across the National Park, with the designation of 'open country,' 'Registered Common Land' and also forests.

Types of access land within Eryri by area are as follows:

- Open Country: 84,697ha
- Registered Common Land with access: 21,958ha.
- Forestry Commission Land with access: 20,987ha
- Total access secured under the CRoW Act: 127,642ha.
- Percentage of National Park area with CRoW access: 59.86%

The National Park Authority is not the statutory highways authority for Public Rights of Way. This duty lies with both Cyngor Gwynedd and Conwy Borough County Council within their respective areas. However, the Authority undertakes considerable work on their behalf under limited management agreements. The Authority has responsibility for matters pertaining to CRoW access land and manages CRoW restrictions and exclusions and some longer-distance routes within that access land.

Over the past 60 years, as a result of increased leisure time and improved accessibility from centres of population, particularly in the northwest and the midlands of England, Eryri has become increasingly popular for an ever-widening range of recreational activities. Today Eryri has a reputation as one of the UK's premier adventure destinations. The most recent visitor monitoring figures (2019) for the mountainous areas indicate that over 560,000 thousand people visited Yr Wyddfa, 140,000 visited the Ogwen Valley and 75,000 visited Cader Idris.

The outdoor recreation offer in Eryri

Eryri National Park benefits from a good recreation infrastructure utilised by many outdoor education centres and outdoor activity businesses that make a significant contribution to the regional and local economy. These organisations and businesses attract both domestic and international visitors.

The tourism offer includes places for example:

- National Mountain Centre, Plas y Brenin
- Glan-Ilyn Outdoor Activity Centre, Bala
- Trawsfynydd Lake Angling Centre
- National White Water Centre, Tryweryn
- Aberdyfi Outward Bound Centre
- Zip World Centres; Betws y Coed, Penrhyn Quarry, Llechwedd
- Go Below, Betws y Coed
- Coed Y Brenin Mountain Biking Centre, Dolgellau
- The National Water Sports Centre for Wales, located at Plas Menai but uses sites within Eryri.

Significant areas of land are managed for public benefit by the Eryri National Park Authority, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the National Trust and the Woodland Trust. The region hosts many local outdoor activity clubs and associations including those for canoeing and kayaking, cycling, fell running, orienteering, swimming, walking, climbing, angling, paragliding, and caving.

In addition to the more active opportunities within Eryri, it is a popular location for those wishing to learn and enjoy the culture and history of the region. The National Park's landscape, language, history, traditions, culture, and historic environment combine to provide a unique sense of place enjoyed and appreciated by millions of people each year. Countless artists have gained and continue to gain inspiration from the landscape of Eryri. During the nineteenth century, the area was visited by leading scientists such as Adam Sedgwick, Charles Darwin, and James Hutton, who were all influential in developing our understanding of our natural and physical environment. The study of Eryri's biodiversity, geomorphology and geology are still very popular leisure, recreational and educational activities.

Eryri is home to the National Slate Museum, Llanberis, Yr Ysgwrn, Trawsfynydd and six heritage steam railways. In addition, there are two UNESCO World Heritage sites in Eryri, Harlech Castle and the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales, as well as numerous sites managed by Cadw - the Welsh Government's historic environment service.



Balancing outdoor recreation with the special qualities of Eryri

The economic benefits of recreation to the region and the health benefits to both local communities and visitors are significant, however, increasing numbers of users in specific areas can impact upon the special qualities of the National Park. For example, high numbers of people can detract from the tranquillity and solitude of the experience, can impact the viability of the agricultural economy and can be detrimental to biodiversity. In addition, high numbers of people in some locations can create unease between user groups, local communities, and landowners.

The modern cultural landscape continues to be moulded by local farming communities proud of their association with this exceptional area. Recreation management and development must have regard for agriculture and the landscape's productive functionality and its role in shaping Eryri. Conversely, land management sectors should be aware of the wider social, economic, health and well-being benefits that the recreation sector can bring to the local and visiting public, which is the role of the Authority and its second statutory purpose.

Recreation pressure is particularly focused in the uplands of northern Eryri, primarily Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) and the Ogwen Valley. Villages such as Betws y Coed and Beddgelert can suffer from acute traffic congestion, particularly during the summer months.

This statement seeks to balance people's recreational needs with the need to conserve and enhance Eryri's special qualities for future generations.

Keeping people safe

Public safety is an important issue for the Authority and its partners. Many outdoor recreation activities carry a degree of risk and people need to know how to plan for the environment and conditions they are heading into so that they can make informed decisions to manage their safety and that of their companions. The changing demographic of participants, increased footfall to honey pot sites and pin drop locations thanks to social media content all necessitate the need to promote safety messages to new audiences, especially those whose knowledge and experience of outdoor recreation activities and the landscapes in which they occur is limited. Access to engaging, accurate and appropriate 'good practice safety messaging is essential to reduce the number of avoidable incidents and relieve the pressure on emergency services, including the volunteers of the Mountain Rescue and RNLI teams.

The Authority will continue to support and promote initiatives and safety codes that help people make more informed decisions about their safety. We will work with voluntary groups such as the Mountain Rescue Teams and initiatives such as the AdventureSmart Strategy for safe participation in outdoor recreation to ensure the messaging is consistent and up-to-date.



Management of outdoor recreation within the National Park

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as:

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities

The National Park Authority adheres to this definition and the UNWTO's principles for sustainable tourism which were recently adopted by the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2025.

The Authority's vision for outdoor recreation is as follows:

- Eryri National Park will continue to be a renowned, high-quality destination that provides a wide range of recreation opportunities, catering for all levels of experience and expertise.
- The National Park's diverse landscape will continue to inspire and provide a range of experiences for local people and visitors alike, becoming an exemplary and ambitious destination celebrated for sustainable, innovative, and effective recreation development.
- Sustainability will permeate the sector demonstrating commitment to carbon reduction and respect for the natural environment, the agricultural sector, our cultural heritage, and the Welsh language, by exceeding legislative requirements.
- Recreation opportunities shall be available to all, irrespective of age, ability and social or ethnic background, with the needs and expectations understood and catered for wherever possible.
- Recreation will play its part in helping the National Park Authority and its partners in making Eryri a good place to live, enjoy, work, visit and invest in for the future.

Whilst the Authority understands that recreation can make a significant and positive contribution to the local and regional economy the Authority's emphasis will be on sustainable recreational management, where recreation will at best enhance Eryri's special qualities and at worst be neutral in impact.



The Authority will:

- Seek to ensure that recreational activities occur only where appropriate and that impacts are managed and mitigated to ensure they are not detrimental to the special qualities.
- Seek to ensure that the carbon footprint of outdoor recreation is reduced by encouraging more use of sustainable transport methods, i.e. shared transport and the use of public transport services and will promote the sourcing of goods and services as locally as possible. It will exemplify good practice in encouraging reductions in energy use and focus on waste and plastic reduction.
- seek to maximise outdoor recreation's positive economic and social impacts for the benefit of those living and working locally and where its positive contribution can be valued by local communities and businesses.
- work with its partners, so that through discussion, cooperation, and the promotion of good practice, such as the Countryside Code it can give appropriate advice and also mediate when and where required between user groups, individuals, and other stakeholders, to ensure that activities are appropriate and sustainable.

Outdoor recreation: Meeting the outcomes of the National Park Management Plan (2020-2025)

This section details the actions required to meet the outcomes of the National Park Management Plan (Cynllun Eryri 2020-25) relating to outdoor recreation. *Please note that the Action Plan will be revised in 2025 so the following wording will change in light of that revision:*

Sustainable Tourism

Welcoming visitors to our beautiful part of the world has been our lifeblood for centuries. Nevertheless, recent increases in visitors to the National Park are having a significant impact on the environment in popular areas such as Yr Wyddfa, the Ogwen valley and Llyn Tegid. This includes path erosion, cairn proliferation, litter, traffic and parking problems, and overcrowding.

Outcome A1 - Any negative impacts of recreation activities on the National Park are being reduced.

The Authority and its Partners will take action to meet this outcome as follows:

1. Review research into the capacity of areas to cope with the recreational demand, commissioning new research if required, including aspects such as erosion, habitat degradation and sustainable transport and parking. Any new recreational developments must ensure that they are appropriate and can mitigate against any adverse effects that increasing use or a wider range of activities which may occur in the longer term.
2. Where there is a proven adverse effect then the Authority will promote mediation, encourage dialogue, and sponsor good practice including the use of recognised codes produced by National Governing Bodies, the North Wales Outdoor Environmental Charter, and the National Park Event Guidance. These will guide and assist individuals, user groups, conservation, and land managers to plan accordingly and to achieve positive outcomes from recreational activity management.
3. Improve communication, interpretation, and site management to reduce instances of habitat or wildlife disturbance by providing information specifically targeted at the recreational sector on why sites are protected and how people can adjust or moderate their activities accordingly whilst enjoying the outdoors.
4. Improve interpretation/signage to discourage inappropriate recreation activities and to encourage responsible recreation, minimising impacts on the environment, tranquillity, and traditional land management practices.
5. Address any negative impacts of recreation on biodiversity and landscapes, especially in areas of high use with mitigation measures detailed in the local action plans.
6. Provide guidance and advice on best practice for those organising and taking part in events, including advising on suitable dates, routes, the use of sustainable transport, litter minimisation and control, mountain safety and post-event management and provide other relevant stakeholder information (within the constraints of data protection). We will work closely with events teams of both Cyngor Gwynedd and Conwy County Borough Council when required.



7. Discourage any events which are proven or likely to be illegal or are detrimental to Eryri's local communities, special qualities, biodiversity, and habitats, or to other people's enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park.
8. High-volume activities in tranquil areas will not be favoured, thereby protecting the special quality of tranquillity and solitude.
9. Work with other authorities to enforce relevant legislative powers to reduce the negative effects of irresponsible illegal off-road vehicular recreation on the special qualities of the area and work with formal stakeholders within this sector to promote good practice on legally available routes.
10. Deliver appropriate actions in tandem with the Tourist Destination Management Plans for Gwynedd and Conwy.
11. Maintain existing working partnerships and agreements, seeking to work with stakeholders to promote sustainable practices.
12. Ensure partners recognise Eryri's Special Qualities in publicity material whilst acknowledging the area's fragility from potential over-development and the need for promoting safe and responsible use.
13. Explore ways of enhancing the environment through recreation: train the trainer programmes for outdoor instructors, citizen science programmes, and 'give back' environmental projects.



Climate Change

Climate change models predict that Yr Wyddfa will experience higher instances of drought and heat in the summer, mirrored by more extreme rainfall and stormier, milder winters. These changes may alter the National Park's ability to sustain some of its special qualities.

Outcome A3 - We are prepared for the impacts of climate change and are reducing our carbon footprint.

The Authority and its Partners will take action to meet this outcome as follows:

14. Manage the effects of extreme weather events upon upland and other promoted routes and build/repair/maintain these to be as resilient as possible for the future.
15. Encourage all recreational users to reduce their dependency on cars and to consider alternative public transport services and shared car use when visiting the area. Future use of private transport in the local area will be heavily influenced by recommendations made in parking and transport reviews taking place under the Eryri Partnership Plan and its subsequent objectives and actions.
16. Work with other stakeholders to encourage outdoor recreation businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and increase their resilience to changes in the climate.
17. Work with other stakeholders to monitor the vulnerability of key sites to the pressures from recreation in light of the changing climate.



Cultural heritage and the historic environment

The cultural heritage and identity of Eryri are as notable as the landscapes and biodiversity. Our cultural heritage has evolved over centuries of human interaction with the land by way of farming, quarrying, and mining as well as its intangible associations through legends, stories, and distinctive names.

Outcome A6 - Eryri is a leading example in Wales of how to care for and champion cultural heritage and the historic environment.

The Authority and its Partners will take action to meet this outcome as follows:

18. Develop the concept of 'cultural gateways' to improve access to cultural recreation by supporting cultural attractions in key locations and for specific themes e.g., industrial heritage, archaeology, and Welsh culture.
19. Support events and festivals that celebrate the National Park's special qualities by providing publicity and advice.
20. Support regional strategies and projects that highlight Eryri's inspirational qualities and promote relevant associated recreational activity.
21. Highlight the value of the sense of place and improve consideration and understanding of the area's uniqueness and intangible cultural heritage, including the Welsh language, within the recreation sector. For example, by providing guides, outdoor instructors and accommodation providers with advice and training on aspects of cultural and linguistic heritage. Support and deliver improvements to the physical linkages between heritage sites and attractions by improving or providing new access points, trails, and information where appropriate.
22. Emphasis will be placed on the use of original local Welsh place names to promote awareness of their origins and highlight their importance, significance and meaning within Welsh culture.



Well-being

Outcome B1 - The National Park is having a positive impact on well-being.

Wales has already implemented a ground-breaking piece of legislation to drive the way we do things, which is focused on people's well-being as a whole. National Parks in particular provide opportunities for improving people's physical and mental health.

The Authority and its Partners will take action to meet this outcome as follows:

23. Develop and promote trails/organised walks and other projects that increase awareness among local communities and highlight the health and wellbeing benefits to be found within their local environment.
24. Promote Eryri as a destination for healthy recreation activity both nationally and internationally by working with the tourism and health sectors.
25. Build upon the successes of the Leisure Networks initiative and seek to increase their use and support promoted circular routes in communities throughout the National Park when opportunities arise, and resources are available.
26. Increase opportunities and support for volunteers by providing logistical support and assisting in identifying priorities and developing work programmes.
27. Continue to develop a high-quality multiuser network.
28. Continue to seek new CRoW `access land` routes and work with landowners to provide access/ egress points where such routes present themselves.

Access

The population of Eryri is on average healthier and more active than the population of Wales as a whole; however, it is clear that some people are being deprived of opportunities to enjoy and learn about Eryri's special qualities because of physical impairment or social disadvantage. We aim to improve and promote the accessibility of routes within the National Park so that all people are able to enjoy and appreciate what makes Eryri exceptional.

Outcome B2 - Residents and visitors can access a variety of routes in the National Park aimed to improve physical and mental health.

The Authority and its Partners will take action to meet this outcome as follows:

29. Continue to improve access and maintain upland footpaths, especially on those routes and Public Rights of Way where our service level agreements allow, access to open access land and the suite of promoted routes throughout the National Park.
30. Provide an infrastructure (PRoW furniture, car parks and visitor facilities) appropriate to the needs of a wide range of recreation user groups and improve the distribution of recreation opportunities throughout Eryri.
31. Seek to increase the length of multiuser and less restrictive paths (such as miles without stiles), potentially using redundant track beds, upgrading existing trails, and removing barriers where opportunities present themselves and if sufficient resources are available to encourage and enable greater participation.
32. Identify the needs of specific recreation groups to ensure that new or upgraded routes and infrastructure are built to the proper standard, particularly those routes highlighted as all ability and/or accessible routes for disabled people or less abled with an adherence to the least restrictive option as a fundamental principle wherever conditions allow.
33. Identify potential long-distance and circular family-friendly community routes that add value to existing trails.
34. Improve connectivity and standard of the bridleway network when resources and opportunities allow.
35. Develop a more sustainable approach for any new and innovative recreational activities that may develop in Eryri whilst protecting its special qualities. This may be influenced by future legislative changes made by the Welsh Government, for example, `shared user routes` on Public Rights of Way or future changes to allowable activities within CRoW access land.
36. Through their day-to-day work and Service Level Agreements, the National Park Authority, Cyngor Gwynedd and Conwy Borough County Council will work to improve the condition and signage of the National Parks suite of promoted Leisure Network routes and upland footpaths.
37. Implement Rights of Ways Improvement Plans (ROWIPs) for Cyngor Gwynedd and Conwy Borough County Council, considering communities adjoining the National Park boundary.
38. Continue to monitor visitor numbers in areas of high use to enable properly informed decisions to be made in terms of recreational management and any future developments. This information will be made public on an annual basis.



39. Provide a series of facilitated events to encourage opportunities for all to enjoy and experience Eryri's special qualities.
40. Seek additional resources, targeted by evidence and research, to provide proactive support and encouragement for people from disadvantaged areas to enjoy and experience Eryri's Special Qualities.
41. Ensure recreation destinations provide appropriate, affordable, and fully accessible facilities and services for all users by encouraging, supporting, and advising potential providers in this sector.
42. Regularly review and report on the effectiveness of the current provision for disabled users.
43. Encourage the organisers of elite events to provide 'taster' sessions to encourage new participants including those from within local communities.
44. Identify sites at which access to inland waters can be improved for disabled and less abled people through cooperation with key stakeholders; additional legislative changes may help facilitate this.
45. Encourage and increase community and farmer/landowner participation in managing recreation facilities and services by working within existing partnerships.
46. Work in partnership with stakeholders including the disability access groups.
47. Work with the Local Access Forums (northern and southern) when considering new initiatives and seek their guidance and advice when required. Their role is also crucial in responding to and advising the Authority on the various national Welsh Government and other consultations concerning access and recreation.



Information and Understanding

Eryri is the third most well-known National Park Authority in the UK, and visitors are increasing by 2.4% every year. Nevertheless, there exists a general confusion over Yr Wyddfa and Eryri, and visitors' understanding of the outstanding cultural and historic special qualities of the park is limited.

Outcome B3 - Our special qualities are widely recognised.

The Authority and its Partners will take action to meet this outcome as follows:

48. Develop interactive web-based maps of recreation opportunities and cultural sites across the National Park including Apps and Smartphone interfaces.
49. Provide information for outdoor recreation activities through the Authority's website, Apps, web-based maps for promoted routes, on social media platforms, and dissemination via relevant third-party linkages. This information will include safety information, good practice guides, codes of conduct and advice from National Governing Bodies.
50. Improve trails to access land and routes historic and cultural sites when opportunities present themselves.
51. Support centres of excellence within and close to the National Park boundary to provide exemplary examples of how outdoor recreation can foster understanding and stewardship of the culture and environment of the National Park.
52. Work in partnership to develop and implement destination management plans for key sites within Eryri to channel funding and resources as required by the Welsh Government.
53. Encourage recreation providers to offer complementary activities which broaden their appeal and encourage repeat visits, particularly for disabled, less abled, and socially excluded users.
54. Encourage joint marketing between recreation activity providers.
55. Work with regional Environmental Outdoor Charter Groups and National Governing Bodies to disseminate good practice and develop and promote codes of conduct for a range of recreational activities.



Infrastructure and Business

'Diversifying' is one of the hottest terms around in current business planning. Reconsidering how we all do things is essential for sustainability and to meet the needs of the modern world. Although the IT and online sectors are huge areas of growth, poor broadband and mobile phone connectivity can restrict opportunities for establishing and developing new business models in Eryri. This will be particularly relevant post-Brexit, and in the meantime ensuring that young people are more likely to leave the area for employment in modern workplaces.

Outcome C2 - Jobs and opportunities encourage people to settle in the area.

The Authority and its Partners will take action to meet this outcome as follows:

56. Provide businesses with information on how to engage more fully with the outdoor recreation sector with an emphasis on sustainable development.
57. Highlight the economic importance of recreation and improve and encourage consideration in spatial and economic planning.
58. Support programmes aimed at increasing training and skills levels for local young people and groups in the outdoor recreation sector.
59. Encourage outdoor activity providers to engage with the Ambassadors Scheme and 'train the trainer' events organised by the Environmental Outdoor Charter Groups.
60. Work with existing partnerships to consider the merits of visitor payback schemes in Eryri to help protect and improve infrastructure and facilities.
61. Develop and support trails which add value to existing/in-development routes, for example, the All-Wales Coastal Path, Taith Ardudwy, the Slate Trail, and Cylchdaith Yr Wyddfa.
62. Encourage and promote circular walks around villages and smaller settlements. Smaller-scale developments of this type can contribute significantly to the economy of local communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has stimulated particular interest in locally available community routes within the National Park.
63. Work within strategic plans to reduce the seasonality of outdoor recreation activity by promoting sustainable 'out of season' events and Eryri as a 'year-round' destination.
64. Focus future development in areas able to accommodate growth in terms of visitor capacity, access, public transport, and landscape considerations in line with the Local Development Plan.
65. Support initiatives/projects which support local employment within the sector, such as the Outdoor Partnership and the Small Woods Association.

Outdoor Recreation Activity Statements

This section details the Authority's position statements for individual outdoor recreation activities.

Walking

Walking is the single most popular recreational activity in Eryri, and the National Park offers walking opportunities of varying degrees of ease or difficulty to suit all users including visitors and local communities. Walking is a significant economic driver within the local and regional economy, is important to health and well-being and is appealing to those seeking peace and tranquillity - from the challenge of summiting Yr Wyddfa to the ease of the Mawddach Trail or by using other community links, all routes are equally important.

The network includes 2,742.6 km of Public Rights of Way and other paths within access land; over 66% of the National Park area is designated as access land. The Authority continues to promote a suite of routes including circulars and linear routes and will continue to explore options to add new routes.

The hills and mountains of Eryri are a significant attraction for walkers and the number of participants continues to grow year on year. In 2019, Yr Wyddfa was climbed by almost 560,000 people using its six principal paths¹, whilst over 140,000 were recorded in the Ogwen Valley including Cwm Idwal and 75,000 walked up Cader Idris. Sustainably managing the pressure in these more popular areas is vital to ensure their protection.

The National Park hosts several sections of longer-distance routes such as Taith Mary Jones, the North Wales Path, the Pilgrims Way, the Eryri Way, Taith Arduwy Walk, the Carneddau Circular, the Slate Trail, and the Cambrian Way. Both the Macmillan Cross Britain Way and the Dee Way also begin or end their trails in Eryri.

Seventy-four miles of the Wales Coast Path lie within the Eryri, extending from Llandecwyn in the north to Machynlleth in the south. The Authority will continue to support the Wales Coast Path team, Gwynedd Council and Conwy Borough County Council in this Welsh Government initiative.

There are numerous forest walks either in National Park-owned woodlands or in woodlands owned and managed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Woodland Trust Wales and the National Trust.

The National Park undertakes significant levels of footpath maintenance on the more popular and promoted upland paths and will continue to do so as resources allow. One of the biggest challenges is to ensure that routes remain sustainable, necessitating that when upgraded they are built to a high standard and can withstand factors arising from climate change and increasing footfall. The Authority shares good practice regarding maintenance and footpath works with landowners and other partners such as the National Trust.

¹ Source ENPA Annual Visitor Monitoring Report



The Authority in conjunction, with the Highways Authorities, will continue to work constructively with landowners to improve route infrastructure, follow the `Miles without Stiles` philosophy, and remove barriers such as ladder stiles which will be replaced with gates or stepovers as and when opportunities arise. In some locations especially in the uplands, this may not be practicable, however, all cases will be assessed on the least restrictive option criteria. This will make the network more accessible to as many users as possible.

The National Park will continue to develop the Cylchdaith Eryri-Snowdon Circular Initiative. This is a variable route around the periphery of Yr Wyddfa using some sections of public footpath, access land and existing bridleways (available to cycles). This initiative is supported by the Welsh Government.

Open access land is an opportunity where additional walking experiences may be further explored. Currently the number of access land `through routes` is limited. Where useful routes are identified, the Authority works with landowners and others to increase the number of these routes and improve their connectivity.

Opportunities will also be explored for the creation of longer-distance routes using old redundant railway track beds when resources are available. This will require close working with the local authorities and other stakeholders.

Walking in the uplands can be challenging at any time of year and even lowland and coastal walks have inherent risk. The Authority will work with partners such as the Mountain Rescue Teams and safety initiatives such as the AdventureSmart strategy for outdoor recreation to promote safety messaging at every opportunity through the website, field staff and volunteers.



Dog walking

Dog walking is one of the most important ways that many local people and visitors exercise in the countryside and engage with the environment. It is good for people's mental health and physical well-being; however, this activity can bring unwanted consequences. The Authority is keen to ensure that dog owners take their responsibilities seriously while in the countryside. This includes clearing up after their dog, knowing how to stay safe around livestock, not allowing their dog(s) to disturb livestock or wildlife (particularly overwintering populations and ground-nesting birds in the spring), and not allowing them to interfere with other land management activities such as livestock gathering.

The Authority will work with stakeholders to positively influence the public at every opportunity, to promote and encourage good practice relating to the responsible exercising of dogs in the countryside by providing relevant public information on social media platforms and at National Park-managed sites.

The Authority will support and promote NRW's suite of Countryside Codes including the dog walking code and any other useful public information. The Authority will always encourage dog owners to have their dog on a lead in the vicinity of livestock regardless of whether they are within access land or on a Public Right of Way. This message must be balanced by the important safety message; 'drop the lead if chased by cattle so that you can both head to safety'.



Rock climbing, scrambling & bouldering

Eryri is a world-renowned centre for rock climbing, bouldering, and scrambling. The natural features and rocky nature of the terrain in the National Park attract UK and international climbers. There are rock climbs and scrambles of all standards, from easier novice routes to some of the most technically challenging rock climbs in the world. Bouldering, which is un-roped climbing on low boulders, using large mats or pads to protect from falls, has also seen a significant increase in recent years.

The ease of access to some of the finest climbing venues puts Eryri among the most popular climbing locations in the UK. The opportunity for climbing in Eryri has resulted in the area being closely linked to the sports' history and has been at the forefront of its development globally. The area was important during the early days of mountaineering. Sir John Hunt and his team undertook their initial training on the slopes of Yr Wyddfa and the Glyderau, before the first successful ascent of Everest in 1953.

The most popular climbing destinations are the Yr Wyddfa massif, Llanberis Pass, the Glyderau, Ogwen Valley, and the more remote Carneddau peaks. In the south of the park, rock faces on Cader Idris and Craig Yr Aderyn are also popular, while the low-lying cliffs at Tremadog are popular especially when the weather is less favourable in the higher mountains.

A significant amount of activity is organised through climbing clubs and designated providers such as outdoor centres, but the area is also popular with individual climbers. There are voluntary agreements in place between the conservation bodies, land managers and owners and the British Mountaineering Council (BMC), the national body for mountaineering, rock climbing and hill walking, to protect the unique and special flora or fauna of the Park. The Authority will continue to support these initiatives where they apply. The specific agreements for individual sites can be found by searching the BMC's Regional Access Database <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD/>

The Authority will continue to liaise closely with the BMC and other stakeholders over issues of mutual concern and in the promotion of good practice.



Cycling

Eryri is a popular destination throughout the year for all types of cycling including road cycling and cycle touring. Eryri is served by six National Cycle Network routes and the Ffordd Brailsford Way circuit. It also offers low-grade off-road trail cycling such as the Mawddach Trail and Lon Gwyrfa. The excellent centres and routes attract cycling clubs, local cyclists, and visitors from further afield.

The Authority supports cycling initiatives, particularly family-orientated routes, and active travel links between local communities, this aligns with the Welsh Government's policies to improve health and wellbeing and the need to reduce the number of cars in the National Park. The popularity of cycling has grown post-COVID-19 and the Authority is ready to play a key role in future strategic recreational planning and provision for cycling initiatives. The Authority will seek to encourage and develop new routes, particularly those linking local communities when and where opportunities present themselves and if adequate resources are available.



Mountain biking

During the past two decades, mountain biking and gravel riding have grown in popularity and Eryri has become one of Britain's premier destinations. This growth has been accommodated in mountain biking venues owned and managed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the most well-known being Coed y Brenin near Dolgellau, Penmachno (Dolen Machno and Dolen Eryri) and Betws y Coed (Gwydir Mawr/ Fach, formally known as the Marin Trail), and the Llwybr Traws Eryri long-distance cycle route. Other routes around Beddgelert and the Dyfi Valley forest blocks are also popular. This public sector offer is now complemented by privately sponsored trails such as the Antur 'Stiniog bike park based in Blaenau Ffestiniog and the Dyfi Bike Park, near Machynlleth.

In some areas, there is potential to improve connectivity by upgrading sections to create longer-distance routes using existing tracks. The Authority will seek to be as proactive as possible within this sector as resources allow.

The development of purpose-built facilities has reduced the potential for conflict between mountain bikers and other user groups in the countryside particularly on Public Rights of Way (bridleways) providing opportunities for both novices and experts and also creating local business opportunities. Some mountain biking away from the centres has the potential to cause footpath erosion and conflict with other path users on bridleways and byways. Therefore, any future route improvements or developments must be built to sustainable standards and not require significant maintenance in the long term particularly given the extreme patterns of weather due to climate change.

There is active collaboration with the sector specifically the Snowdon Voluntary Cycling Agreement. The Authority has well-established and successful links to the sector and national cycling organisations. Where issues arise, the Authority will act with stakeholders to agree on sustainable management solutions if necessary and encourage the use of the sector code of conduct.

Under current legislation, cycles (regardless of their type) are allowed on bridleways under the Countryside Act 1968. However, if legislative changes occur, for example, for the joint use of some additional Public Rights of Way or within CRoW access land, within the coming years then this is likely to change the type and degree of use in some areas. Therefore, the Authority will be prepared to adapt to such changes to meet user expectations.



Electric bikes

Electric bikes (e-bikes) are motor-assisted cycles, and most must be pedalled to activate the motor assistance. There are additional rules for e-bikes including a minimum age of 14 and they cannot be electro/mechanically assisted for a speed more than 15mph. E-bikes are growing rapidly in popularity.

E-bikes are allowed on any routes where normal cycles are allowed, such as bridleways, cycleways, byways, restricted byways, unclassified roads, and roads.

E-bikes present a low-carbon alternative to the car. Where appropriate the Authority will support their responsible use, particularly when the use of cars between communities can be reduced. In addition, they can be beneficial to other users for example enabling the less able to access the countryside.

The Authority will provide users with relevant information and advice on the legal use of e-bikes (based on the criteria required under the Road Traffic and Highways Act). As e-bikes become more affordable, particularly e-mountain bikes there may be a need to be proactive to discourage `off-piste` mountain cycling activities. The Authority will monitor this activity to ensure that only those legally available routes are used and promoted and to actively discourage inappropriate activities.



Accessible Eryri

Eryri must be accessible to all if it is to play an important role in improving people`s health and well-being. The Authority always seeks to be inclusive irrespective of people`s race, age and abilities including the disabled, less abled, and socially excluded groups.

There are several fully developed and popular all-ability or multi-user routes such as Lon Gwyrfa, the Mawddach trail, Dol Idris, Foel Ispri and others. The Authority will work with its partners to further develop this network and upgrade others (particularly those that link communities) when and where opportunities and resources become available. All will be designed using the `least restrictive option` philosophy. The Authority will work to make information relating to sites and their qualities readily available to enable users to make route choices that are relevant to their needs.

The Authority will continue to work closely with the disabilities sector, the Local Access Forums, local authorities and other stakeholders and seek their advice and guidance on projects.

Future developments will also include more sensory adaptations in some areas to appeal to a wider spectrum of users such as the blind or hard of hearing. We will also actively seek and engage with socially excluded groups and work with public sector organisations and relevant agencies to further this.

Relevant information for all-ability and other accessible routes will be regularly updated on partner websites and Apps. Those pages will also include up-to-date information on special needs accommodation, the location of toilets, disabled car parking and the nearest `changing room` facilities.

The Authority currently provides two electric Trumper-type vehicles and an electric four-wheel off-road buggy type of vehicle on request. These have proved very popular with a wide variety of users with varying degrees of disabilities and this service will be maintained and enhanced when and where resources allow.

The Authority will review and audit its provision biannually. Any changes to new or upgraded developments will be put in the public domain as soon as available.



Water sports

Eryri has a long coastline and many lakes, estuaries, rivers, and streams. Water sports such as canoeing, sailing, paddle boarding, windsurfing, kayaking and wild swimming are becoming increasingly popular with more people taking part in these activities regularly, bringing benefits to people's health and well-being. Opportunities for activities on inland water are confined to a limited number of locations, which is compounded by the lack of clarity in the legislation regarding access to water. The Authority and Local Access Forums are fully supportive of any proposed changes to legislation that would enable additional access to inland waters in a responsible and controlled manner and which is not detrimental to land management, infrastructure, or biodiversity.

Whilst there are some exemplars for access to inland water within the National Park such as Llyn Tegid, the National White Water Centre, Tryweryn and the arrangements on the upper Conwy, Llyn Gwynant and the middle Glaslyn river (courtesy of the National Trust) these are few. The Authority has been proactive in this area, and it is eager to work with all stakeholders, including users and landowners, to see if such arrangements can be developed more widely where opportunities arise. However, such arrangements will only be supported using best practice such as agreed water levels, agreed access and egress points, appropriate signage (to include information guidance on any specific site use or limitations), advice relating to biosecurity and conservation, and parking provision wherever possible. If legislative changes occur in the future which expand access to inland water, the Authority will be prepared and proactive in this sector.

Gorge walking, coastering and canyoning are provider-led activities taking place at a limited number of sites, offered by many outdoor education centres and a number of commercial outdoor activity providers. Many of these sites are environmentally sensitive with environmental designations. With the rapid growth in participation in the sport over the past fifteen years, the number of gorges used as venues for guided gorge walking has increased and the levels of activity in some gorges, in particular, have increased significantly. There has been an additional perceived increase in informal recreation activity in northwest Wales gorges since COVID-19. This activity is an opportunity for providers to encourage and develop environmental awareness around these sites and the National Park supports initiatives of this kind.

The Authority is fully supportive of the North Wales Gorge Walking Code of Conduct developed by Snowdonia-Active and funded by Natural Resources Wales. In the case of any local difficulties, the Authority will work with other stakeholders and statutory bodies to help resolve any issues. The National Park will not support these activities where they are proven to be detrimental to the National Park's special qualities. The placing of permanent fixings in rivers and falls will not be supported.

The Authority will not support any motorised water sports activities other than activities that are directly related to the use of rescue craft or those where prior arrangements exist.



Angling

Angling is a popular recreational activity in Eryri, with considerable activity on the coast and on lakes and rivers, some of which are managed and stocked to cater for anglers.

Similar to other activities, angling is popular among residents and visitors alike with local fishing clubs, associations and societies heavily involved in its management. Due to the requirement for a high-quality environment, the fishing sector is active in improving local habitats and relevant publications highlight the importance of conserving and enhancing the environment for the future of the sport.

There are opportunities for angling for people with disabilities in various locations around the National Park and the Authority will work with partners to increase this capacity where opportunities present themselves. The National Park will continue to support such initiatives and promote this information on our website.

The Authority will work with the various associations when and where required to ensure equitable and balanced representation of their views and to mediate and resolve local issues.

If legislative changes occur in the future concerning access to inland waters, then the Authority will be ready to assist and offer advice to users and landowners alike on how to take initiatives forward and encourage best practice for access and shared use where necessary, based on our existing access to water pilot schemes.



Mountain running

Eryri hosts several fell and mountain races, many of these events take place along Public Rights of Way and open access land. Well-managed events can bring significant benefits.

The potential impacts from mountain running are similar to those associated with mountain walking, although the number of participants is far fewer. Impacts include path erosion, the requirement for additional car parking spaces and localised disturbance to local communities.

The Authority will support these activities as long as they are planned well in advance, do not damage the environment, do not disrupt land management or local communities and are sustainable. Organisers of larger events should demonstrate that they have undertaken adequate consultation with landowners and other stakeholders and that they adhere to the requirements and advice contained within the National Park's Events Guidance and the relevant National Governing Body codes of conduct. In addition, the Authority expects activity organisers to be aware of environmental constraints and avoid designated sites if advised to do so. The Authority will only work with organisers who consistently demonstrate organisational competence and adhere to good practice.

The Authority will work closely with their counterparts in Gwynedd Council, Conwy Borough County Council, National Resources Wales (where required) and other land managers such as the National Trust, the Woodland Trust, and private landowners to ensure best practice and consistency in this sector.

Orienteering

Orienteering is an endurance running activity where a map and compass are used to navigate a series of fixed points. Orienteering events have several courses spread over an area. There are nationally recognised guidelines and codes of conduct for orienteering. The Authority would expect that all organisers plan well in advance and consult with stakeholders, including landowners and statutory bodies, to avoid issues or difficulties, especially any activities that take place within designated areas.



Triathlons

Triathlons (and quadrathlons and duathlons) combine outdoor endurance activities, swimming, running, and cycling (and kayaking for Quadrathlon), in formalised race distances for competition as well as ad hoc distances for participation. These are increasingly popular with locally based clubs and competitors and those from farther afield (especially now as an Olympic event) and they attract high numbers of competitors of all ages including junior competitions. The Authority expects event organisers to demonstrate good practice and to undertake appropriate preparation well in advance of the event date, this is especially important where public roads are used and start times are spread out.

The Authority works closely with both Gwynedd Council and Conwy Borough County Council events teams to ensure that the various requirements are met and that issues such as road or path closures are not disruptive to local communities or the general public.





Organised events

Due to its reputation, landscape, and high-quality environment, Eryri hosts many recreational events and races each year. Figures show that the number of events taking place in Eryri has increased in recent years.

These fall into two categories; charitable events that benefit both local and national charities and which form the majority of such activities, and a smaller number of commercial events which tend to have higher numbers of participants. Many of these events are well organised and benefit the health and well-being of participants, whilst also benefiting the local economy.

Organisers are expected to adhere to Eryri National Park Authority and Local Authorities' requirements and guidance for successful and sustainable event management. This guidance requires: -

- events to be planned well in advance
- events to be held in suitable locations
- adequate stakeholder engagement
- promotion of sustainable modes of transport
- adequate control of litter/waste (including organic waste)
- identifiable and bi-lingual signage
- adequate consideration of safety
- event to be held at suitable times of year to avoid clashes with other users.



The Authority actively encourages organisers to consider spreading these activities over a longer season to relieve the pressure over the `peak months` and over weekends in particular.

Other smaller group-based events are also popular such as the UK Three Peaks Challenge and the Welsh Three Peaks Challenge and many of these are also charitable events. Regardless of their size, the Authority seeks assurances from these event organisers that they have considered the recommendations contained within the National Park Events Guidelines for successful and sustainable event management.

Through the Three Peaks Partnership (Lake District National Park Authority, the Nevis Partnership and Eryri National Park Authority) best practices will be promoted based on the guidelines and the Codes of Conduct recommended by the Institute of Fundraising and its specific guidelines on Three Peaks Challenges. The Authority will not support organisations that fail to meet these requirements.

Yr Wyddfa hosts a significant number of events each year. Therefore, new larger, charitable, or commercial events of over 250 participants proposed during peak times on Yr Wyddfa (June – September) must demonstrate that they can fulfil the requirements for good event management and do not clash with established events.

From January 2021 all event organisers for events over 50 participants are asked to participate in a new joint application scheme – a joint initiative between Gwynedd Council and the Authority, thereby providing information on planned events in any given year.

The Authority will continue to work with both Gwynedd Council and Conwy Borough County Council Events teams, their respective Safety Advisory Groups (SAG), local communities and stakeholders to ensure good communication and good (and sustainable) practice.



Outdoor education centres

Organised group activities are invaluable in furthering knowledge and understanding of the National Park whilst offering opportunities for personal and group development. This is important for younger people by enabling them to engage with their natural environment (a fundamental purpose of the National Park) while also meeting the needs of many parts of the National Curriculum.

The National Park affords a wide array of opportunities not only for young people but also for adults wanting to acquire proficiency in outdoor skills as part of their personal development, and there are many high-quality centres of excellence in outdoor sector training located in Eryri. The National Park strives to maintain a close relationship with these centres and is also fully supportive of The Outdoor Partnership.

There are opportunities for centres to extend their appeal to new markets and encourage wider participation, particularly from harder-to-reach or socially excluded groups and the National Park encourages and supports such initiatives.

Equestrian

Eryri has 268 km (171) routes classed as bridlevays, however, they do not form a park-wide network and parking provision for horse boxes/trailers is limited. Individual riders make up the greater user group with a small number of organised groups. There is only one commercial trekking operator within the National Park at this time.

Currently, the network is of low quality and is badly fragmented and the Authority will seek to work with national user groups such as the British Horse Society (BHS), the Byways and Bridlevays Trust and local user groups to identify and improve existing networks and create new safer linkages using the existing bridlevay network where resources allow. The Authority will ensure that relevant standards are met wherever practicable. Improvements to the bridlevay network could prompt a growth in equestrian activity for individuals or groups across the National Park. The Authority must be ready to act in response to any future legislative changes proposed by the Welsh Government for more multiuser routes within the Public Rights of Way network or CRoW access land if adequate resources are provided.



Air sports (non-motorised)

Several locations within Eryri are used as launch sites for paragliding and hang gliding with most users being members of organised associations or clubs. These sports are self-regulating, and clubs have existing private arrangements with landowners. Currently, there is no legislation allowing para or hang gliding on CRoW access land. If legislative changes occur in the future, the Authority will work with stakeholders to promote best practice, help facilitate and advise on this activity, and recognise and formalise locations in a way that does not impinge on land management or agricultural activities.





Motorised off-road activities

Off-road 4x4 and motorbike activities occur in some areas of the National Park. These activities can impact tranquillity and have the potential to cause habitat destruction and erosion. It is important to acknowledge that the Authority has no duties to maintain these off-roading routes; this duty lies with the respective highways departments within Conwy Borough County Council and Gwynedd Council. However, the Authority works closely with the Councils and other stakeholders to resolve issues and conflicts where they arise and to ensure that such routes are sustainable.

There are two primary issues associated with off-roading.

Firstly, where users are allowed to exercise their legal rights using the `Unclassified County Roads (UCRs) network within the National Park, it is important to the Authority that these routes remain sustainable. In recent times the Authority has been working closely with the Green Lane Association (GLASS), Land Access & Recreation Association (LARA), the Parc Eryri Green Lane Volunteer Group (PEGLVG) and the Trail Riders Federation (TRF) to support best practice guidance. The Authority is also supportive and appreciative of the efforts of these formal groups to raise funds for maintenance and to promote one-way systems. The Authority will continue to work with these groups to ensure responsible and sustainable use of these routes.

Secondly, there are areas where there is considerable 'illegal off-roading' where users do not use any recognised legally accessible routes. This activity is restricted to those using motorcycles and can be highly damaging to landscapes and the special qualities of the National Park. This is a recurrent problem for the Authority and local authorities, and the Authority continues to work with landowners, the Police, local authorities, and other stakeholders such as Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to curtail this activity wherever it occurs and particularly where the Special Qualities of the NP are threatened.



Drones

The use of drones for commercial purposes and by private individuals is expanding rapidly. Their use now requires a Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) registration and licence, and the requirements for this activity are set within strict guidelines. The Authority strives to ensure that these activities do not become problematic or antisocial and that they do not interfere with people's sense of peace, tranquillity, and adventure within the National Park. Neither should they interfere with land management activities, particularly disturbance to livestock.

Users are encouraged to pay particular attention to any areas such as National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or those with other designations which may include sites or protected species with significant conservation value.

Consents are required to fly drones over land in the ownership or management of Eryri National Park Authority, the National Trust, the Woodland Trust, Natural Resources Wales and other private land.

Commercial or film operators need to contact the aforementioned organisations and/or landowners to seek the relevant consent. The Authority will continue to give relevant and up-to-date advice to users via our social media platforms and respond to enquiries when necessary.



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Wild camping

Within the National Park, wild camping can only be undertaken with landowner consent, this includes areas of `access land`. The Authority cannot give consent for wild camping on other people's land and under the General Data Protection (GDPR) regulations, the Authority cannot pass on landowners' details without their consent.

Following the lifting of the COVID-19 restrictions, significant problems occurred as a result of people 'fly camping', including littering, poor roadside parking, open fires and damage to designated areas. Subsequently, the Authority continues to receive high numbers of complaints from landowners and the general public. Therefore, the Authority encourages people to use formal campsites and to book early.

When consent for wild camping is given the Authority encourages people to follow the Countryside Code and the Wild Camping Code and adhere to the 'leave no trace' philosophy.

Camper vans and motor homes.

Touring in camper vans and motor homes has increased in recent years and is popular with domestic and international visitors.

The Authority will work with stakeholders such as Gwynedd Council and Conwy Borough County Council to encourage good practice, discourage irresponsible parking and off-road camping and will seek to ensure that this activity remains legal and sustainable with minimal disruption to local communities.

The Authority will promote the National Park Guide to Campervan and Motorhome Users pamphlet, provide an up-to-date formal overnight sites location map, maintain website content and provide information for less formal sites and overnight parking areas that may be provided by the local authorities such as Gwynedd Council's `Arosfan` sites.



Other activities

Other activities take place within Eryri such as geo-caching and caving. These tend to be highly localised and have less impact due to the lower number of people participating. The Authority will monitor these activities and will bring together the stakeholders and seek to resolve issues if they occur. The Authority expects all such activities to be carried out responsibly and sustainably, and participants to follow the relevant codes of conduct, where applicable.

There are several activity attractions in and around Eryri, such as zip wires and high ropes courses. These tend to be based in former quarries, are widely promoted and attract high volumes of customers. They play a pivotal role in providing additional visitor experiences and activities in the region, have the potential to relieve pressure in other core areas, and are also important economic drivers.





Cultural & Environmental Recreation Activity Statements

Key cultural and environmental recreation activities based on the National Park's special qualities are also considered within this statement because of their interactions with Eryri's landscape and environment.

Driving & coach tours

Eryri's landscape and cultural heritage is a draw for driving and coach tours. These journeys tend to stick to popular routes, taking in the most iconic views and attractions. Driving and coach tours provide economic opportunities for local businesses but can also contribute to congestion and illegal car parking in some areas, impacting the landscape and local communities.

The Authority will continue to promote the use of park-and-ride public transport services to reduce the overall number of cars in the area, as well as implement the recommendations of the Yr Wyddfa and Ogwen Parking and Transport Strategy undertaken by the Yr Wyddfa Partnership.

Wildlife watching

Eryri's varied landscape supports unique biodiversity and is, therefore, a popular year-round destination for wildlife watchers, particularly bird watchers. Much of this activity is informal and unmanaged, apart from a few larger reserves which have visitor centres such as Cwm Idwal National Nature Reserve. There are several specific bird-watching sites on the periphery of the National Park, namely the RSPB reserves at Llyn Vyrnwy, Conwy and Ynys Hir site near Machynlleth.

Some habitats and species are more sensitive to disturbance than others, particularly in the bird nesting season or for coastal overwintering birds and the Authority will work with stakeholders to manage disturbance to areas of high conservation value.



Heritage sites & visitor attractions

Throughout the National Park, there are many sites of cultural, historical, and archaeological significance; some of which provide visitor facilities, whilst others

are more minimal and remote. These sites provide a focus for visitors and are largely well managed with minimal impacts upon the special qualities. However, over-development of such sites can lead to landscape impacts and local traffic problems. The National Park will continue to monitor and work in partnership with stakeholders on all such sites within and adjoining the National Park boundary and will promote them where appropriate.



Events and festivals

Several events and festivals held in Eryri feature and promote its cultural heritage and environment, for example, arts festivals, eisteddfodau, walking festivals and several county/agricultural shows. Such events can lead to localised impacts such as traffic congestion. The Authority supports such activities if they can demonstrate that they are well-organised and sustainable and will continue to work closely with the events teams of Gwynedd Council and Conwy Borough County Council to ensure their success.



Study

Eryri is popular with a wide spectrum of educational groups from school children to post-graduate education. Traditional study topics include glaciated landscapes and environmental studies. Increasingly, topics such as transport, agriculture and social-economic topics including tourism and outdoor recreation are becoming popular.

Many groups stay in the outdoor education study centres located around the National Park. Some popular study sites, such as Cwm Idwal require additional management measures to cater for the high footfall from education groups and the Authority works in partnership with stakeholders to ensure that these sites are managed sustainably.

Study tours and educational groups bring a wide variety of benefits, fulfilling requirements for the National Curriculum and specific outdoor sector training elements and furthering understanding and enjoyment of the National Park in line with the key purposes of the National Park.



Art & photography

The landscapes, communities and wildlife of Eryri inspire artists and photographers as they have done for generations and these activities strengthen the understanding of the special qualities of the National Park.

Some areas are particularly popular, for example, the Mach Loop, between Dolgellau and Machynlleth which is popular with photographers wanting to capture low-flying aircraft.

The Authority monitors such activities to ensure they are not damaging or detrimental to the special qualities of the National Park.





Dark skies

Eryri National Park is the second area in Wales to be designated as an International Dark Sky Reserve (one of twelve worldwide). On a clear night in Eryri, you can see the Milky Way, all the major constellations, nebulas (bright clouds of gas and dust), shooting stars and comets.

The Authority collaborates with local communities and the relevant local authorities in maintaining the quality of dark skies in Eryri and improving the quality of the night sky experience by better managing lighting and encouraging businesses and householders to use appropriate external lighting around their properties.

The Authority works to provide opportunities for local business owners to benefit from this designation. Several sites are being developed to enable people to experience the night sky within the National Park and the Authority promotes such activities through the Dark Skies Partnership.



Implementation, Monitoring & Review

Implementation

The achievement of sustainable outdoor recreation in Eryri requires cooperation and joint working by the Authority and the many stakeholders involved in outdoor recreation and land management.

Eryri benefits from several effective partnerships, such as the Northern and Southern Eryri Local Access Forums, the Outdoor Partnership, and the Yr Wyddfa Partnership. The outdoor recreation sector is also well represented by organisations such as Snowdonia-Active. In addition, Eryri is serviced by the North Wales and Mid Wales Tourism Partnerships and other tourism groups. Cultural interests are represented by several local history and cultural organisations, tourism trade associations and CADW.

The Authority will collaborate with partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors, landowners, and local community councils and will work with established partnerships relating to countryside access, sustainable transport initiatives, tourism, and economic development.

Cyngor Gwynedd and Conwy Borough County Council are key delivery partners, particularly through their roles as highway authorities with overall responsibility for producing the Rights of Ways Improvement Plans (ROWIPs). The Authority has statutory responsibility for CRoW access land and will continue to work with the Local Access Forums on access issues and policies across the park.

Eryri and the wider region will benefit from a cohesive and strategic approach to the development and management of outdoor recreation, allowing for appropriate and sustainable growth within the sector. Partnership working will also improve service delivery and give greater value for money.

Monitoring

The Authority will monitor progress against the actions outlined in this statement. Progress will be reported in the annual National Park Management Plan updates. Key actions will also be included in the annual Corporate Work Program which sets out the Authority's corporate well-being objectives.

Review

The Eryri National Park Outdoor Recreation Position Statement will be reviewed every five years; this review will follow revisions made to the National Park Management Plan and State of the Park Report. By reviewing the content every five years the Authority ensures that the Strategy can be flexible and can respond to new and emerging trends in addition to national changes to legislation and policy relating to access.

Sources of Information

General

Countryside Code

www.countrysidecode.org

<https://naturalresources.wales/days-out/the-countryside-codes/the-countryside-code-advice-for-countryside-visitors/?lang=en>

<https://naturalresources.wales/days-out/the-countryside-codes/?lang=en>

North Wales Environmental Charter

<https://www.snowdonia-active.org/north-wales-environmental-outdoor-charter/>

Rock climbing, scrambling, bouldering

British Mountaineering Council Regional Access Database

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD/>

Drones

www.caa.co.uk/Consumers/Unmanned-aircraft-and-drones/

www.dronesafe.uk/drone-code/

Gorge Walking

North Wales Gorge Walking Code of Conduct - <https://www.snowdonia-active.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/gorge-code-eng-1.pdf>

Motorised off-road activities.

<https://www.glass-uk.org/about/our-code-of-conduct.html>

Orienteering

https://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/images/uploaded/downloads/governance_policies.pdf