

SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Introduction and Context

Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA) is a National Park Authority. All three National Parks in Wales share two statutory purposes. These are to:

- conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area
- promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public.

Welsh National Park Authorities are also required by law, in pursuing these purposes, to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities.

Snowdonia National Park is 823 square miles in size and the home to 25,702 people, 33.2% of which are over the age of 60, with ≈59% of residents Welsh speaking. 70% of the National Park is in private ownership. The remainder is in various forms of State ownership. The National Park Authority owns ≈0.45% of the Park area.

SNPA is subject to the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) Act. SNPA is a partner on the north-west Wales Public Service Board (PSB), and sits on the PSB's Climate Change sub-group. SNPA is currently leading the co-production of the Snowdonia National Park Management Plan (covering the period 2020-2025). The Section 6 Duty is linked to the SNPA's delivery of the WFG Act goals (including the Resilient Wales goal) and the 5 ways of working through the SNPA Management Plan. Amongst other purposes, this Management Plan fulfills the function of the statutory Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Plan and Well-being Plan required of the NPA by Welsh legislation. The sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) principles are core to much of the SNPA's operations. SNPA is fully engaged with NRW's Area Statement Process e.g. attending and inputting into multiple co-production workshops and consultation events. It is anticipated that the contents of the north-west Wales and the Marine Area Statements will be broadly consistent with the SNPA Management Plan when they are published.

The vision for the Park was adopted by the Authority in December 2009 following extensive external consultation with the public and our key stakeholders. The vision for the Park (in the Park Management Plan and Annual Report and Improvement Plan for 2018-19) is set out in part below:

By 2035 Snowdonia will continue to be a protected and evolving landscape, safeguarded and enhanced to provide a rich and varied natural environment; providing social, economic and well-being benefits nationally and internationally. National Park purposes will be delivered through a diverse and prospering economy adapted to the challenges of climate change and founded on natural resources – its landscape qualities, opportunities for learning and enjoyment, cultural and natural heritage. With thriving bilingual and inclusive communities, partnership working will have demonstrated that more can be achieved through working together.

Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

Highlights

The position of SNPA as the lead beneficiary on the Celtic Rainforests Wales LIFE Project 2018-2025 (<https://celticrainforests.wales>) and as an associated beneficiary on the LIFE Dee River 2020-2025 and LIFE Raised Bogs 2018-2023

(<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/our-projects/nature-projects/new-life-for-welsh-raised-bogs/?lang=en>) projects is undoubtedly a highlight. The NRW-managed Sands Of LIFE project is currently underway which includes two dune sites in Snowdonia – SNPA is an active stakeholder.

SNPA are the lead partner on the Heritage Lottery Fund 'Carneddau Landscape Partnership' 2020-2025. This is a £4M co-produced project with multiple work-streams, many of which are biodiversity orientated.

SNPA are the lead partner delivering the Welsh Government-funded Welsh Peatlands SMS Project (£1M) 2018-2020, the Uwch Gwyrfa SMS Project, and the Afon Eden SMS Project. These projects instigate nature recovery on a meaningful scale in Wales. SNPA are a partner in the SMS Coed Cymru and SMS Fferm Ifan projects.

SNPA's position as a partner in the Welsh Government-funded LNP (Local Nature Partnership) Cymru project 2020-2022 is seen as vital for capacity-building, data growth, advocacy and implementation with respect to S6/biodiversity enhancement in Snowdonia. The Snowdon Partnership and its resultant place based plan (Cynllun Yr Wyddfa) and Fforwm Eryri - created to co-produce the new National Park Partnership Plan (Cynllun Eryri) - ensures that members from all sectors in the area are fully engaged in the decision making process for all aspects of conservation within the National Park.

Key outcomes

The greater emphasis in Wales on the Section 6 Biodiversity Duty generally means that more Authority members, senior managers, staff and partners are aware of the Duty and the importance of being able to demonstrate meaningful compliance. The timing of the introduction of the new Section 6 duty in parallel with the process of truly co-producing the latest SNPA Management Plan (Cynllun Eryri) has been an opportunity to fully integrate biodiversity and well-being into the SNPA's foremost strategic document.

Issues

Disincentives nationally need to be greater to prevent people impacting the decline in biodiversity by short-circuiting proper procedure e.g. pre-development/pre-application site clearance.

It is a recurring puzzle why applications for Buildings Regulations consent for certain operations e.g. re-roofing do not seem to undergo Habitat Regulations Assessments by the relevant competent authorities.

Additional measures should be taken where appropriate when procuring through various methodologies that allow biodiversity or nature-based weighting to be applied. These should be tailored individually to suit each circumstance for maximum effect.

The Dark Sky North Wales 'Prosiect Nos' project has been excellent in terms of engaging the communities of north Wales with the multiple benefits of dark skies. However, there is a need for an initiative to facilitate replacement of the least 'Dark Sky compliant' luminaires in the area on a transformative scale.

Action Report		
NRAP Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels:		
Action carried out to:	Examples:	Measures and/or indicators monitored:
Embed biodiversity action across the organisation's functions	<p>The SNPA's primary statutory purpose includes conserving and enhancing the wildlife of the area. Biodiversity is intrinsic to the Special Qualities of the National Park and is therefore a core feature of all projects outlined in the new National Park Management Plan (Cynllun Eryri) to be launched in May 2020. The SNPA has been co-producing its National Park Management Plan through an extensive series of consultations (final consultation in January/February 2020), expert panel events, workshops, roadshows, surveys, Fforwm Eryri meetings and on-line consultations (SNPA website, consultation video, Facebook and Twitter).</p> <p>SNPA's adopted Eryri Local Development Plan 2016 – 2031 includes Strategic Policy D: Natural Environment. Part of the policy is that proposals should not adversely affect the National Park's biodiversity resources including designated sites from an international through to a local level, as well as wider biodiversity resources e.g. habitats and species outside designated sites.</p> <p>A myriad of problems have been intensifying specifically on Snowdon as the most visited mountain in the UK. SNPA led the co-production of The Snowdon Partnership Plan 2018-2023 - see https://www.snowdonpartnership.co.uk/read-me</p> <p>SNPA policy staff and other officers as appropriate regularly provide comments (including on biodiversity) to official responses to various consultations (e.g. Welsh Government, NRW etc.). This can be as part of a joint National Parks Wales response, or individual SNPA response – depending upon the consultation.</p> <p>Given its two primary purposes, the whole authority is geared towards delivering biodiversity action as a major component of business as usual.</p>	<p>The SNPA Management Plan includes a raft of monitoring arrangements and measures of success which are reported upon annually to the Authority. The State of the Park Report is produced every 5 years.</p> <p>Monitoring indicators are included in Section 5 and Appendix 1 (Table 1) of the SNPA's Eryri LDP Annual Monitoring Report e.g. >20km hedges planted 2016-2019.</p> <p>'How we'll keep track of progress' (p.50) of The Snowdon Partnership Plan details plan indicators.</p> <p>Number of consultation responses, and the nature of the comments with respect to biodiversity.</p>

<p>Raise awareness of biodiversity and its importance across the organisation</p>	<p>SNPA staff members regularly provide training and input to SNPA Authority Members on biodiversity issues (e.g. Member's training/seminars and visits to SNPA properties and project sites, Member Climate Change Adaptation workshop, Planning Committee). External expertise is available to Members when necessary (e.g. North Wales Wildlife Trust presentation to SNPA Members in May 2019 on beaver ecology and an update on the application for a license for a beaver release on the Dyfi estuary).</p> <p>Internal newsletters and regular updates at staff meetings and circular emails also update staff, Authority members and our wide range of Partners.</p> <p>Social media is used effectively to increase awareness on the work of the National Park and about biodiversity issues on a regular basis.</p> <p>Our external newspaper is published once a year, with a roundup of the work of the Park which also includes expert sections on biodiversity and updates on all of the projects in which we are involved.</p> <p>SNPA invest a significant amount of time awareness-raising about the importance of biodiversity amongst the decision-makers of the future. SNPA employ a full-time primary education officer based at the National Park's Outdoor Education Centre at Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog. An external contractor is employed to deliver some secondary education work. SNPA organise a number of biodiversity courses every year at Plas Tan y Bwlch (PTYB). The work of the SNPA Wardening Service (≤10 Wardens, varying seasonally) involves day to day work explaining the importance of biodiversity to local communities and visitors alike.</p>	<p>SNPA staff regularly contribute to PTYB courses (e.g. University College London 4-day MSc. Conservation residential). For the past three years SNPA staff have been giving guest lectures to Bangor University Natural Sciences freshers and sign-posting to opportunities to get involved with biodiversity.</p>
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NRAP Objective 2: Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management.		
Safeguard principal species and habitats	<p><u>Freshwater Pearl Mussel (FWPM) and Salmonids</u> SNPA play an active role on the Wales FWPM Review Group. SNPA lead the farmer cluster (18 tenants/landowners) SMS Afon Eden project undertaking numerous actions to improve the condition of the Afon Eden SAC for its component species/features (e.g. salmon, FWPMs, otter). SNPA is an associated beneficiary on the LIFE Dee River 2020-2025 project.</p> <p><u>Gylfinir Cymru</u> SNPA are a member of the Wales Curlew Group 'Gylfinir Cymru'. Partners such as the RSPB and NT are involved with the UK-wide Curlew Habitat Management Trial in the Ysbyty Ifan area. Next steps for SNPA include developing a proposal for monitoring breeding curlew numbers and productivity in other areas of Snowdonia e.g. Cors Goch, Trawsfynydd.</p> <p><u>Marsh fritillary</u> Capital works have been funded to erect fencing to enable introduction of grazing by native breed cattle on a Molinia-dominated and under-grazed part of the Llwyniarth SSSI that is adjacent to one of the best marsh fritillary sites in north Wales. 6ha of afforested raised bog connecting these two sites have been restored by felling to waste. Advice has been sought from marsh fritillary experts regarding best methods of establishing the <i>Succisa</i> foodplant.</p> <p><u>Bats</u> A number of bat enhancement measures have been facilitated by SNPA e.g. securing and providing funding to partners for hibernation and maternity roost enhancements.</p> <p><u>Planning</u> The letter from Welsh Government's Planning Directorate to Local Authority Chief Planning Officers regarding Biodiversity and Enhancement dated 23rd October 2019 has been very welcome. This letter clarifies that in light of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and Planning Policy Wales 10, that where biodiversity enhancement is not proposed as part of an application, significant weight will be given to its absence, and unless other significant material considerations indicate otherwise it will be necessary to refuse permission. Biodiversity training has been provided to the local housing association with resultant early collaboration on subsequent projects. Biodiversity training is routinely incorporated into the Authority's annual meeting with Planning Agents.</p>	<p>See project indicators e.g. 90ha of regenerating conifers cleared from Brynteg wet woodland. Tender awarded for 1.4km of boulder replacement in Afon Eden.</p> <p>Research indicates that stable Curlew populations need to be producing ≥ 0.5 chicks/pair/year. Current productivity in Snowdonia is unknown.</p> <p>Light cattle grazing introduced on 3.7ha of the Llwyniarth SSSI.</p> <p>Numbers of bats using roosts pre and post-intervention.</p> <p>Monitoring indicators are included in Section 5 and Appendix 1 (Table 1) of the SNPA's Eryri LDP Annual Monitoring Report.</p>

NRAP Objective 3: Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation		
Restore & create habitats and resilient ecological networks	<p>Examples of restoration of degraded ecosystems</p> <p><u>Llanymawddwy</u> £18k was levered in from NRW's 'Natural Flood Risk Management / Habitat Creation' fund to block 7.1km of ditches in deep peat on a 92ha former forestry site on the Berwyn in January 2019.</p> <p><u>Snowdonia Upland Peatlands</u> This £82k project was delivered by SNPA during the period 2018-19 (part-funded through NRW's SMNR 'Open Call' funding round). Activities were focused on the Migneint-Arenig-Dduallt (M-A-D) and Berwyn SACs, and neighbouring peatlands. Activities included installing infrastructure (e.g. cattle grid) to enable cattle grazing on <i>Nardus</i> and <i>Juncus squarrosus</i> dominated peatlands, clearing regenerating sitka spruce and lodgepole pine from blanket bogs, eradicating <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>, and raising awareness of the importance of peatlands (e.g. walk for Cymdeithas Edward Llwyd, talk at Cyfoeth Ein Corsydd Dinas Mawddwy launch, field research with Glynllifon College students).</p> <p><u>Welsh Peatlands SMS Project</u> This Welsh Peatland Action Group pan-Wales SMS Project is lead by SNPA. Activities are varied e.g. Peatland Code agreements developed, training, education, monitoring, research, afforested blanket bog and raised bog restoration, peat hagg re-profiling – see e.g. www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMUUiuA9Ijs & www.youtube.com/watch?v=78McNjDZbWY & www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/projects/welsh-peatlands-project-sustainable-management-scheme-0</p> <p><u>HLF Carneddau Landscape Partnership</u> This £4M project was developed and co-produced 2017-19, with funding secured from the HLF for the implementation phase (2020-2025). A number of biodiversity work themes and packages are an integral part of this project. Project strands include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cylchdaith y Carneddau • Grazed uplands • Lidar citizen science • Meadows • Skylines (including montane heath) • The water cycle: peat and rivers • Trees, woodland and hedgerows <p>Engagement, Communication and Grants are Whole Scheme Activities. See www.snowdonia.gov.wales/looking-after/carneddau-partnership</p>	<p>Gauging weir data is available if required to compare hydrographs before & after blocking.</p> <p>Scattered <i>R. ponticum</i> eradicated from 326ha within and adjacent to M-A-D and Berwyn SACs. Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine regen cleared from 361ha of the M-A-D and Berwyn SACs and neighbouring land. Light summer cattle grazing introduced to 90ha of Berwyn SAC.</p> <p>See project indicators outlined in bid e.g. ≤5 Peatland Code agreements.</p> <p>See project indicators outlined in bid.</p>

NRAP Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats		
Tackle negative factors: e.g. reduce pollution, use nature-based solutions, address invasive species	<p><u>Mynydd Hen Gapel Rhododendron Project</u> This £99k project was delivered by SNPA during the period 2018-19 (part-funded through NRW's SMNR 'Open Call' funding round). The main focus was on removing a strategically important block of mature <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> that was seeding into a mosaic of semi-natural habitats in an otherwise relatively un-infested part of Nantgwynant where Rhododendron has been treated intensively in the past.</p>	85ha of a major remaining <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> seed source controlled in Nantgwynant.
	<p><u>Celtic Rainforests Wales LIFE Project</u> This £7.5M project aims to improve the condition of 5 SACs in western Wales with the 'Celtic Rainforest' habitat-type and its constituent species. See https://celticrainforests.wales</p>	See project indicators.
	<p><u>Uwch Gwyrfa SMS Project</u> This innovative project works to transform the Uwch Gwyrfa Common and its habitats (e.g. heath, acid grassland, lake, flushes & mires) by reconnecting it with local communities. It aims to enable graziers to address under-grazing issues by working better together to graze the Common to improve biodiversity and benefit the local rural economy.</p>	See project indicators.
	<p><u>Dee Invasive Nont-Native Species Project</u> SNPA are a partner in this project. Provisional e-DNA results suggest there could be signal crayfish on the upper Dee. SNPA wardens are involved with checking the crayfish monitoring stations located in the upper Dee catchment – these did not record signal crayfish in 2019. SNPA wardens are responsible for co-ordinating the ongoing (10 years +) Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed control programme in the catchment of Llyn Tegid and its tributaries, which is at the top of the Dee catchment.</p>	See www.dinns.org.uk/en/
	<p><u>National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative-funded Rhododendron control, PAWS restoration and traditional boundary restoration.</u> Two projects (worth £200k each) have been funded in Dyffryn Ffestiniog to enable SNPA to improve habitat connectivity to encourage wildlife, safeguard ancient woodlands and manage invasive non-native species such as <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>, Japanese knotweed and bamboo. A further project (worth £200k) is ongoing to restore degraded and fragmented traditional boundaries (e.g. hedgerows)</p>	25ha clear-felled PAWS site re-stocked with native broadleaved trees. 200ha of land (ffridd, native broadleaf and commercial woodlands) where Rhododendron is being controlled.

NRAP Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring		
Improve the use of evidence in decision making	<p>SNPA have an annual Service Level Agreement with Cofnod (the North Wales Environmental Information Service) and routinely use Cofnod data for decision making e.g. policy and planning decisions, project planning. SNPA staff who routinely work outdoors have been encouraged and trained to submit all biological records online to Cofnod. SNPA work closely with Cofnod to mobilise data from various sources e.g. biological survey reports accompanying planning applications.</p> <p>SNPA are collaborating with and providing funding for two KESS studentships at Aberystwyth University conducting research into the environmental effects of <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>.</p> <p>SNPA are a partner in the Environment & Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling Programme (ERAMMP). ERAMMP aims to deliver a programme of monitoring and modelling which collects data across the Welsh landscape and links any changes to their impacts on a wide range of benefits including biodiversity. SNPA employ the Welsh Designated Landscapes ERAMMP Officer.</p> <p>SNPA are addressing an evidence gap by developing a research proposal in collaboration with Bangor University investigating the movements and diet of feral goats in the Eryri SAC utilising DNA meta-barcoding techniques.</p> <p>SNPA are a local hub for the collation of otter corpses that feed into the Cardiff University Otter Project and the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent database of otter mortality locations. The Otter Project runs a long-term environmental surveillance scheme, using otters found dead to investigate contaminants, disease, and population biology across the UK.</p> <p>One SNPA member of staff is licensed to undertake bat roost and breeding barn owl survey and monitoring visits – the results of which are input into Cofnod, reported to NRW licensing, and feed into NRW's Article 17 reporting. SNPA is a hub for local awareness-raising of the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme (PBMS).</p> <p>SNPA have purchased a drone for a number of data-collection and monitoring purposes and trained staff in autumn 2019 to become qualified drone operators. An example of an application was using ditch and elevation data on a degraded raised bog to work out where drain blocking and bunding would be most effective at raising water tables.</p>	<p>Planning monitoring indicators are included in Section 5 and Appendix 1 (Table 1) of the SNPA's Eryri LDP Annual Monitoring Report. Data from a wide range of sources is collated during the production of the 5-yearly State of the Park Report.</p> <p>Minimum of four papers published from KESS projects.</p> <p>See https://erammp.wales</p> <p>Scientific paper(s) published upon the completion of the research.</p> <p>See www.cardiff.ac.uk/otter-project. No. of otter RTA blackspots where mitigation measures have been implemented.</p> <p>NRW's Article 17 reporting. Bird corpse data feeds into PBMS - https://pbms.ceh.ac.uk</p> <p>Five SNPA staff are qualified drone operators.</p>

NRAP Objective 6: Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery		
Ensure governance for biodiversity within SNPA	The SNPA Chief Executive and Authority Members are ultimately responsible for ensuring biodiversity action is taken across the Authority.	The Section 6 duty is monitored and reviewed as outlined in Cynllun Eryri. S6 compliance will be reported on from 2020 onwards in the annual SNPA Governance Statement.
Provide capacity for biodiversity	SNPA have a Senior Ecologist (Planning) and a Senior Ecologist (Projects). The recently created post of Volunteering and Well-being Co-ordinator is new on the SNPA staffing structure, enabling better co-ordination of volunteering and biodiversity enhancement opportunities. The SNPA Warden service are routinely involved with involving local communities and educational groups in cross-cutting biodiversity action. The majority of SNPA projects have biodiversity elements at their core. Close ties are maintained with all community councils in Snowdonia through regular correspondence and meetings, which leads to opportunities to work together to promote biodiversity. SNPA chair and provide the secretariat for the annual Snowdonia Wildlife Forum biodiversity networking and support event. The UK National Parks family provide Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in the form of annual 3-day meetings/training for National Park Ecologists, Agri-liaison/Natural Resource Officers etc.	See www.eryri.llyw.cymru/ for a flavor of activities
Support biodiversity action through funding and/or partnerships	<p>SNPA are a partner in the Welsh Government-funded 'Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being' Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Project 2019-2022. This project funds a 0.6FTE LNP Cymru project co-ordinator hosted by SNPA. SNPA have made this a full-time post until March 2022 by adding 0.4FTE for wider biodiversity/S6 enhancement work in Snowdonia. LNP Cymru project provides £7k per annum for direct biodiversity work by stakeholders, topped up by a further £10k across the three-year project by SNPA.</p> <p>As a member of the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau (PLAS) Special Area of Conservation Relevant Authorities Group and the PLAS Liaison Group, SNPA chair both Groups and are fully committed to the work of the Groups. SNPA provide £3,100 annually towards the cost of employing the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC Officer.</p> <p>Partnerships created through Cynllun Yr Wyddfa and Cynllun Eryri deliver on project goals alongside a wide range of organisations, businesses and community groups throughout the National Park.</p>	<p>SNPA LNP Cymru Biodiversity Co-ordinator appointed in November 2019 to deliver LNP Cymru project objectives and wider biodiversity work in Snowdonia.</p> <p>Improving management and engagement with the PLAS SAC e.g. trialing helical anchors at Porthdinllaen to reduce scouring of seagrass beds.</p>

Review of S6 duty

What has worked well? What have the barriers been? What will you change?

- Adoption of S6 duties has been unproblematic for the Authority in its day to day running as it aligns with the primary purposes of the National Park. It has strengthened the approach that is adopted by other Local Authorities adjoining the Park boundary in taking greater consideration for biodiversity, and some NGO's and other Government Agencies have greater understanding of biodiversity. It has to some extent bolstered the standing and appreciation of National Park purposes.
- The draw-back of being at the forefront of biodiversity is the demand placed on the Authority resources by external bodies and organizations to "partner" with them on projects or work programs due to our specialist knowledge. Under-resourced, it is difficult to deliver for everyone and subsequently there are missed opportunities.

How and when will the S6 duty be monitored and the S6 plan reviewed?

- It is proposed to build in the S6 requirements into the mechanism utilized for reporting on the State of the Park Report and the National Park Management Plan. This reduces resources required to coordinate reports and will serve to fully embed S6 Duties into the work program of the Authority and the scrutiny of its Members.