

# An agenda for Wales' Protected Landscapes

Campaign  
for the  
Protection  
of Rural  
Wales



# Places and people – the importance of Welsh landscapes

*The quality and diversity of Wales' landscapes affects us all. For a small nation, Wales has an extremely varied, distinctive and fine collection of them, each providing the setting for our lives, crucial life support services, a durable anchor for our natural and cultural heritage, and a compass for our national sense of pride and personal well being.*

*Without a range of diverse and well managed landscapes, our ability to regulate the climate, opportunities to maintain supplies of healthy food and freshwater and the retention of our genetic diversity would all be threatened. Likewise without landscapes of high quality and wide open spaces which provide opportunities for challenges or personal pleasure or refuges from the demands of daily life, our physical and mental "well being" would be all the poorer. Responsible management of those resources and qualities which give our landscapes their diversity is in every way the ultimate front-line public service. Without a healthy environment, neither our economy nor our society would exist.*

*Whilst there is growing awareness of the contribution that landscapes make to our prosperity, the quality and meaning of people's lives and society's well being, this still*

*goes unrecognised or is taken for granted. What is undeniable however is the benefits our landscapes provide are ultimately dependent on the care and respect we give them and effort we invest in maintaining their condition.*

*Despite the increased relevance of landscapes of to our daily lives, it is all too easy to assume that they can look after themselves. This is not so and vigilance is needed to prevent any change be it gradual or sudden, leading to the erosion of those characteristic qualities we value. Letting landscapes evolve as the incidental outcome of decisions taken for different purposes, or only intervening in the public interest to prevent damage which is likely to be severe is inappropriate.*

*It is for this reason that the **Wales Landscape Partnership** has been established to promote increased recognition and a better understanding of the value of our landscapes and the contribution they make as a meeting grounds for our collective health, economic prosperity, wildlife, rural diversification, community well being, enjoyment, recreation and education.*

*With our landscapes facing so many competing demands, we believe there is a need to stimulate a new agenda which ensures that change in the*

*landscape is more deliberately guided so that we do not lose what we value, nor squander what we need or care for.*

*The UK Government's ratification of the European Landscape Convention provides the opportunity to do this and for Wales to show that landscape care has been positively embraced and is neither taken for granted nor happening haphazardly. To do this requires our existing approaches to landscape planning and stewardship to be re-examined and where weaknesses exist to strengthen them through clear policy and positive leadership from the Welsh Assembly Government and other key public bodies. In particular we need to ensure that the range and quality of those benefits which Wales' finest landscapes, our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide are being adequately safeguarded.*

*In recognising the European Landscape Convention's overarching principle that "All Landscapes matter", the following initial statement therefore outlines the particular role that we believe Wales' Protected Landscapes should play as our national landscape icons and how they can contribute positively to Wales' effort to demonstrate the reality of sustainable development.*



# An agenda for Wales' Protected Landscapes

**Our Protected Landscapes are special places which deserve special protection and care.**

Wales' Protected Landscapes, our three National Parks and five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, are some of the most beautiful and cherished landscapes in Britain. They are living and working environments which have a special relevance for those who use them and the many to whom they mean so much. They are also places of inspiration, learning and challenge, motivating millions of people from all walks of life to understand and enjoy contact with nature and reconnect with their heritage. Collectively they are a strategic national resource. Our three National Parks alone support nearly 12,000 jobs, produce a total income of £177million and generate £205million GDP<sup>1</sup>. Not only do our Protected Landscapes make a significant contribution to Wales' economic prosperity, they also provide vital heritage anchors and immeasurable storehouses for our nation's treasured scenery, its precious wildlife and the many dimensions of rural ways of living. Their compelling sense of identity, make all these areas powerful symbols of our national pride; places of motivation, inheritance, excitement, pleasure and profit. The collective contribution our Protected Landscapes make to the nation's well being is immense.

Each Protected Landscape is a spectacular place in its own right, its individual character forged over time, to a large degree by the collective endeavours of the makers of these distinctive landscapes; the farmers, foresters, land owners, rural families and those who have acted as the guardians of their natural beauty. They all have something in common; their special qualities; those inalienable characteristics and values which make them distinctively different and set them apart from their surrounding landscapes.

Our Protected Landscapes are therefore more than just pretty places; they are areas where the highest levels of care are targeted at the positive and sustainable stewardship of the relationship between man and the environment. Correspondingly these areas have become invaluable because of the wide range of public benefits they provide and their ability to bring people and organisations from all walks of life together, to promote sustainable solutions to the environmental, cultural and economic challenges we face.

Collectively, our Protected Landscapes are nothing less than "*Outdoor factories of well being*" manufacturing a constant range of benefits which help sustain our everyday prosperity, health and welfare.

## **What role should our Protected Landscapes play in the future?**

As the world and Wales' rural environment change, our Protected Landscapes face particular challenges. As the impacts of globalisation and climate change, the demand for alternative forms of energy and food production, agricultural reforms and development pressures, all continue to grow; our Protected Landscapes must help lead the way in planning and implementing sustainable responses. Those responsible for these areas must therefore address and respond positively to these challenges and the increased competition which will arise for the use of the limited space within their boundaries. Whilst positive landscape change and activities which promote public well being should

<sup>1</sup> Valuing our Environment: Economic Impact of National Parks of Wales: National Trust 2006



AHNE Bryniau Clwyd  
Clwydian Range AONB



be encouraged, priority must always be given to maintaining the integrity of those qualities which make Protected Landscapes special. The range of benefits they provide must not be compromised by insensitive change, unsympathetic land use or irresponsible development.

The challenge facing our Protected Landscapes is for them to evolve and become safeguarded places which are more resilient, adaptable and managed in a measured, sustainable and responsible way. They should be places recognised and supported as:

- **Robust environmental shock absorbers.** Where priority is given to safeguarding and conserving biodiversity, clean water, carbon in peat, soils and woodlands.
- **One Planet spaces.** Where the backdrop of their high quality landscapes inspire low carbon lifestyles, construction based on progressive design and low impact building techniques, sustainable travel patterns and responsible local renewable energy generation; all of which collectively ensure their transition to areas with a low carbon footprint.
- **Promoters of rural distinctiveness.** Where the quality of the environment and ways of living create prosperity and opportunities for self supporting local economies to prosper. Where strong social networks, innovative partnerships and collaborative action provide an effective way of overcoming the challenges of living in rural areas.
- **Factories of public well being.** Outdoor arenas of enjoyment and inspiration where the benefits of contact with the natural world, physical activity and appropriate unobtrusive leisure experiences are promoted because of the health and personal benefits they provide to all sectors of society in an inclusive and appealing manner.
- **Refuges of peace and quiet.** Places where people can find, experience and enjoy solitude.

- **Places where the defining associations between** adjacent areas of land and sea are managed seamlessly and in an integrated and inclusive manner.
- **Ambassadors of the European Landscape Convention,** at the centre of the debate about public well-being and demonstrating the virtues of well managed landscapes and the benefits of public investment in them.

#### Wales' Protected Landscapes can achieve these ambitions so long as:

- they are pivotal to our spatial thinking
- the full range of public benefits they provide are properly recognised and embedded in all national policy,
- positive and collaboratively commitments exists by all organisations, local people and communities of interest for their protection and sensitive stewardship.
- their statutory framework and governance arrangements are fit for purpose and those responsible for them have the proper brief, appropriate powers and adequate resources to do their work effectively.
- the network of these special places includes all of Wales' most important landscapes and seascapes and not just a selection of them.

Even though our Protected Landscapes cannot deliver all the environmental goods and services or well being that Wales needs, they have a major role in demonstrating how economic and social prosperity can be achieved through sustainable and creative resource management. Similarly as positive landscape management beyond their boundaries create new areas with qualities of equivalent national importance; every opportunity should also be taken to add these areas to the family of nationally important landscapes.



## What needs to happen to realise these ambitions?

### Prior to 2011 the Welsh Assembly Government should

1. Ensure that the role, benefits and spatial importance of Wales' Protected Landscapes are expressed more comprehensively in all its strategic policy. Recognition of the benefits of well managed Protected Landscapes should be a common thread which links the aims of the Wales Environment Strategy with those of the Wales Spatial Plan
2. Establish a clear role for Protected Landscapes to deliver the ambitions of forthcoming Natural Environment Framework, Glastir and the Networked Environment Region initiatives through the implementation of specific measures and targeted programmes tailored to enhance the special qualities and character of each of these areas.
3. Publish an updated Policy statement on the *"The role and value of a national network of Protected Landscapes in Wales"* be they on land or at sea, indicating how Wales' Protected Landscapes can successfully contribute to the delivery of the Assembly's Sustainable Development agenda.
4. Introduce an unambiguous obligation on all public bodies and agencies when discharging their *"Duty of responsibility and care"* in Protected Landscapes, that the relevance of their activities is fully and appropriately assessed and their subsequent responses are implemented in a manner which are proportional to the impact their actions might cause.
5. Report on the range and significance of the services and public benefits that Wales' Protected Landscapes contribute to the delivery of the Assembly's One Wales Agenda, its Sustainable Development Scheme and the European Landscape Convention
6. Satisfy itself that the existing collection of Wales' land based Protected Landscapes properly reflects a complete range of those Welsh landscapes of national importance.
7. Require CCW to identify any Seascapes (including Heritage coasts) or Marine areas which are nationally important and merit inclusion within a comprehensive national network of Protected Landscape.
8. Ensure that the current governance arrangements for all Protected Landscapes in Wales are adequate for the roles expected of them in the future.

**By or before 2012, the Countryside Council for Wales should**

1. Publish a statement setting out its intentions to extend the boundaries of any existing Protected Landscapes in Wales and the scope for designating any additional ones.
2. Identify a network of Protected Seascapes and indicate how the boundaries of any existing coastal Protected Landscapes should be amended to reflect the relationships that any of them have with their adjoining marine areas.
3. Review the scope of their current guidance on the preparation of Protected Landscape Management Plans, to ensure that it adequately reflects the anticipated future role of these areas.
4. Ensure that future programmes of public investment delivered through the programme of "Networked Environment Regions" or other publicly funded stewardship initiatives, increase the resilience and versatility of the green infrastructure of each Protected Landscape and its connectivity with surrounding areas.



**By 2015 each Protected Landscape Authority should demonstrate how**

1. The overall "State of the Protected Landscape" has improved and the condition and resilience of its special qualities, biodiversity, carbon and water resources have been enhanced.
2. The mitigation of climate change is being addressed and the ecological and carbon footprint of the area reduced as a result of collaborative initiatives with stakeholders.
3. Appropriate access opportunities to land and water have been increased for all no matter what their ability
4. Through positive management, spaces with a tranquil character and where a sense of solitude still prevails, have been maintained and where possible increased.
5. Support for Protected Landscapes has increased as a result of the citizen centred approaches having been embraced in the delivery of local and public well being.

Wales' best landscapes should always be protected



Sunset over  
the Mawddach