

# **SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**



## **CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY APRIL 2012**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Welsh Government has stated that it aims to eliminate child poverty by the year 2020. Since its establishment it has stressed that the reduction of child poverty is a fundamental element of its social justice agenda as well as being one of its key principles in implementing the United Nations' Convention on Children's Rights.
- 1.2 To assist in this challenge the Children and Families Bill (Wales) was introduced which places a new duty on every public body in Wales to publish a Child Poverty Strategy, with the aim to:
- i) To reduce the number of families living in workless households.
  - ii) To improve the skills of parents/carers and young people living in low-income households so they can secure well-paid employment.
  - iii) To reduce inequalities that exists in health, education and economic outcomes of children and families by improving the outcomes of the poorest.
- 1.3 Snowdonia National Park Authority welcomes the opportunity to be included in this duty and is pleased that the Welsh Government recognises that National Parks also have a role to play in its aspiration to eradicate childhood poverty.

This Strategy will further develop many of the aims and objectives as stated in the National Park's Management and Local Development Plans. The Authority is aware that child poverty does not exist in a vacuum; this Strategy will sit side by side with the Educational Strategy, the Authority's Strategic Equality Plan and the Social Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan that the three Welsh National Parks have worked together to produce - which now includes the aim of contributing to the eradication of child poverty.

1.4 We have also consulted with both Gwynedd and Conwy Councils and have benefited from the consultations that they have undertaken with children and young children over the past year. The Authority acknowledges that it will achieve more in alleviating child poverty by working in partnership.

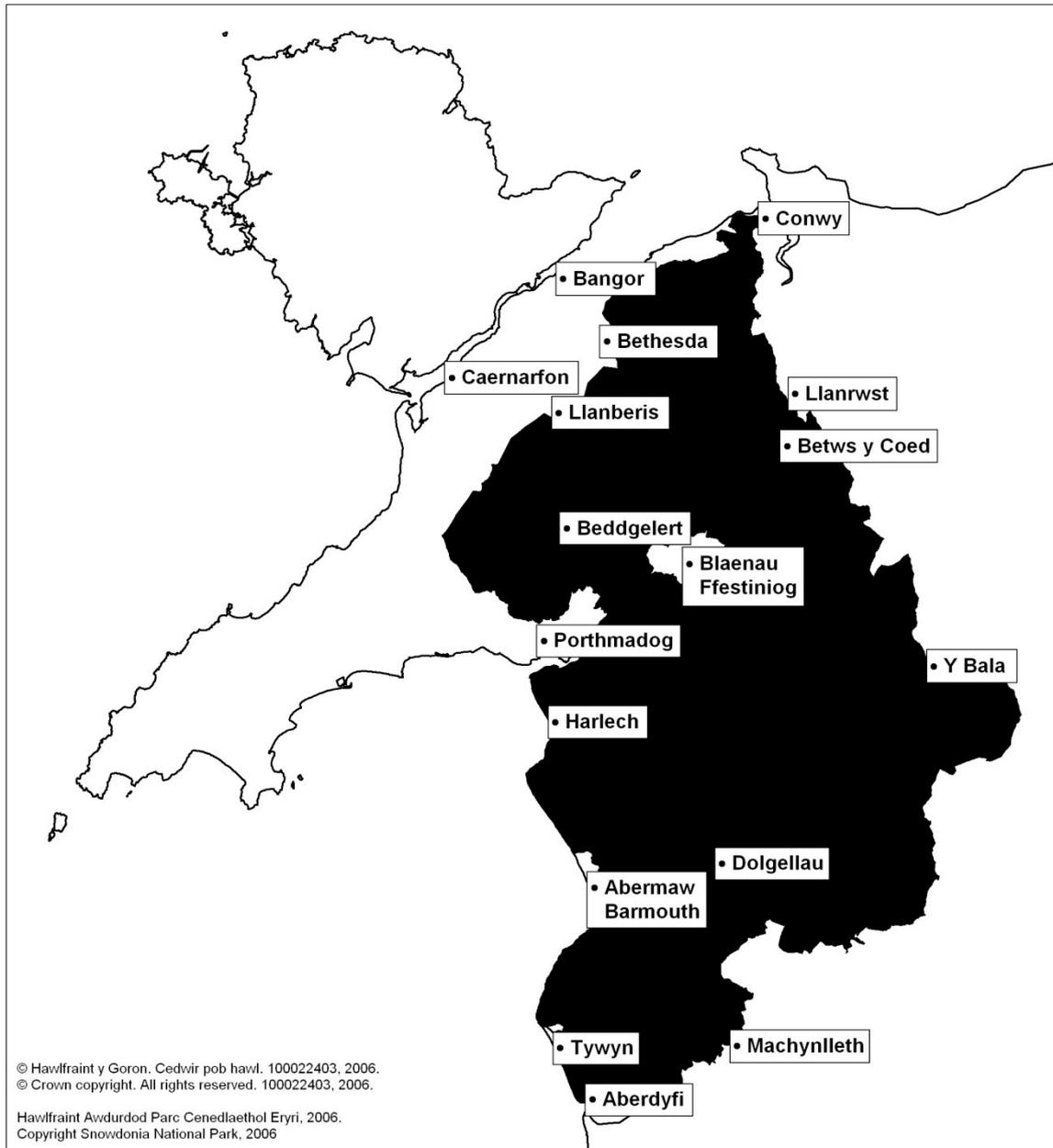
## 2. **The Purposes of National Park Authorities**

2.1 National Parks are not owned by government, they are lived-in working landscapes with special natural and cultural qualities, which are recognised and protected by their statutory designations.

2.2 The management of National Parks is led by their statutory purposes. Section 61 of the 1995 Environment Act redefined National Park purposes as:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities (by the public)  
In fulfilling these purposes National Park Authorities should also;
- Seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local Communities.

### 3. Profile of Snowdonia National Park and evidence of need.



3.1 Designated as a National Park in 1951, Snowdonia National Park is the largest and the first to be designated in Wales. Snowdonia National Park covers an area of 2175 square kilometres from the mountains to the sea. History and culture are an integral part of Snowdonia, 65% of its residents speak Welsh. In all there are more than 90 summits over 600 metres and 15

over 900 metres. There are also well over a hundred large lakes. Due to the unique landscapes and habitats there are more National Nature Reserves in Snowdonia than in any other National Park in Britain. Recent studies indicate that, collectively, the National Parks of Wales support some 12,000 jobs and generate £177 million to their regional economies. Snowdonia National Park provides around a third of this economic output at around £60million per annum. Employment directly related to the National Park's high quality environment is estimated to be 4,000 jobs.

- 3.2 80% of the Park is located within Gwynedd County Council with the remaining 20% lying within Conwy Borough County Council's boundaries.
- 3.3 The 2001 Census showed a population of 25,482, with a small increase to 25,745 in the Mid-2006 Population Estimates for National Parks. These relatively small changes in total population mask a much more significant structural change in population highlighting the outward migration of young people leaving the area for higher education and employment opportunities. Snowdonia's population is geographically dispersed; there are only two towns with more than 1,500 in population – Dolgellau and Y Bala. Other places such as Harlech, Aberdyfi, and Trawsfynydd have between 650 and 1250 residents.
- 3.4 Snowdonia has a relatively low wage economy with tourism, agriculture and the public sector being the main employment sectors. The current economic recession, together with cuts in public spending it likely to have a significant impact here. The high prices of property combined with low family incomes means that access to accommodation is difficult for many people.
- 3.5 In recent years there has been a substantial change in the population structure which could have significant implications for future economic and community wellbeing. Since the 1991 census there has been a significant reduction in the 20-29 age groups from 12% in 1991 to 8.9% in 2001 highlighting the outward migration of young people leaving the area for higher education, employment opportunities and due to the lack of affordable

housing. High house prices, the changing age and social structure of Snowdonia's population may threaten the wellbeing of communities and the viability of local schools, businesses and local services and facilities. Although house prices are currently falling, the gap between house prices and affordability in Snowdonia is likely to remain considerable. Newly forming households cannot afford to live in the local area.

- 3.6 The Authority acknowledges that its resident population does not provide the complete picture and that Snowdonia's designation as a National Park means that its purposes and duties extend to the population at its periphery and well beyond its boundaries.

#### 4. **Evidence of need**

- 4.1 Poverty is the main threat to children and families well being. Being raised in poverty can affect every aspect of a child's development, socially, educationally and personally.

- 4.2 There are many definitions of poverty. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) states that deprivation is a wider concept than poverty. Poverty is usually considered to be a lack of money, whereas deprivation includes a lack of the opportunities and resources to which we might expect to have access in our society, for example, good health, protection from crime, a clean and safe environment. Multiple deprivations therefore refer to the different types of deprivation that might occur. Eight types of deprivation are included in the Index. These are employment, income, education, health community safety, geographical access to services, housing and physical environment. Over half of Gwynedd's households (64.2) have a household income of less than £30,000 – which is lower than the average household income for Wales. In terms of very low income households 11% of households in Gwynedd have a household income of less than £10,000 per annum. Near the Park's boundary are several areas that are currently designated as Communities First areas these include in Gwynedd - Barmouth; Bowydd and

Rhiw, Blaenau Ffestiniog; Talysarn and Nantlle; Peblig, Caernarfon; Marchog, Bangor; and South Pwllheli. And in Conwy, Tudno and Mostyn, Llandudno and Glyn and Rhiw, Colwyn Bay.

According to the information available in the 2008 WIMD the following areas are included within the 10% most deprived in Wales.; in Conwy Glyn 2; Tudno 2; Abergele Pensarn; Rhiw 3; in Gwynedd – Peblig; Marchog1 and Marchog 2.

- 4.3 It is also important to remember that not all deprived people live in the most deprived areas. According to WIMD around 4 out of 5 people in income benefits households live outside these areas.
- 4.4. This is especially true in the countryside – where often poor households live cheek by jowl with affluent households. Numerous studies have undertaken on poverty and deprivation in rural areas. In Families Not Areas Suffer Rural Disadvantage (2008) Children in Wales claim that families in rural areas are particularly vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. They have to overcome additional barriers to ensure their rights and entitlements are met.
- a. One of the main reasons that children, young people and families face social exclusion and isolation in rural areas is the lack of public transport.
  - b. The charity Save the Children state that families will save on food in order to run a car as it is considered as essential as the food bill. Surveys often give the impression that car ownership is associated with a lack of deprivation whereas this in reality masks the fact that many people make big sacrifices in other parts of their lives in order to be able to afford to run a car. Ownership of a car does not necessarily translate to having access to a car as often the wage earner often uses the car to travel to work, leaving the other parent at home with young children with no transport to access services. Fuel in rural areas is often much more expensive than in urban areas. Access to any service such hospitals, welfare services; council, leisure and supermarket all depend on access

to a car. In Gwynedd the nearest general hospital is 40 miles distance for some families.

- c. Nearly a quarter of households in Wales experience fuel poverty, resulting in 320,000 households having to spend 10 per cent or more of their income on energy to heat their homes adequately. This may result in a choice between heating their homes and eating properly. Once again, rural families face additional barriers – most cannot take advantage of mains gas. The impact of fuel poverty goes beyond financial consequences. Living in fuel poverty can affect people's health, increasing the risk of common ailments such as colds, flu and respiratory infections including bronchitis. There are also indirect effects; stress in children and adults and long-term depression and anxiety, social exclusion, health and life chances of families and individuals and educational attainment.

- 4.5 The relationship between poverty and disability is often described as a vicious circle. Disabled children are amongst those most at risk to suffer poverty – and poor children are more likely to become disabled than children from better off families. In a paper, published in the journal BMC Paediatrics, researchers found that households with a disabled child were £50 a week worse off than those without. As already mentioned there is firm evidence to show that persistent poverty during childhood can have a significant impact on life opportunities, it can also affect childhood experiences. The Welsh Health Survey 2009 shows a close association between poor mental health and socio-economic group. There is also evidence that households where one of the inhabitants is disabled – either a child or one of the parents – are more likely to suffer poverty of opportunity.

Since it produced its first Disability Equality Scheme in 2006 the Authority has striven to adopt the Social Model of Disability.

The Social Model establishes that everyone is equal and demonstrates that it is society which erects barriers that prevent disabled people participating and

restricts their opportunities. Whilst impairment usually can't be changed, with the right policies barriers can be removed.

## **5. The vision for Snowdonia National Park**

5.1 Poor families' main problem is lack of money, and for the majority of people obtaining employment is the only way out of poverty. The Authority acknowledges that as a relatively small public body employing around 150 equivalent full time staff, its ability to offer direct employment is limited. Nevertheless the Authority, working in partnership has an important role in promoting a sustainable economy in Snowdonia. It also has a role to play in helping to alleviate the effect of poverty on families and to facilitate opportunities for disadvantaged families to enjoy Snowdonia's special qualities. This intention is incorporated in the vision for the National Park which is included in the Management Plan.

5.2 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.

Communities will have adopted innovative solutions in a changing World – a low carbon economy will have strengthened residents' link with the environment, providing a better standard of living and ensuring Snowdonia's reputation as an internationally renowned National Park and one of the nation's breathing spaces.

In seeking to achieve the vision, the National Park and its partners will need to facilitate:

- a varied and robust economy will be founded on environmental goods and services. These goods and services will include agriculture and agricultural produce, sustainable tourism and recreation, carbon sequestration, appropriately scaled power generation, building conservation and new opportunities for learning and understanding.
- the provision of appropriate employment, retaining vibrant communities with a more stable demography. This will include a sustainable supply of housing at an affordable price to meet local needs.
- Recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. These activities will not harm the special qualities of the National Park and effective management will provide opportunities for all those wishing to improve their health and wellbeing.

## **6. Snowdonia National Park's Commitment to tackle childhood poverty**

### **6.1 Employment**

- a. Within the Local Development Plan, Strategic Policy H: A Sustainable Rural Economy demonstrates Snowdonia National Park Authority's commitment to support Eryri's economy;  
In order to create and retain a sustainable rural economy the National Park Authority will:
  - i. Support new employment development in the local service centres, service settlements and secondary settlements. The nature and scale of the development must be commensurate with the settlement's size and function.
  - ii. Promote the re-use of underused or redundant land or buildings for economic or employment purposes.

- iii. Support the agricultural sector and opportunities for rural diversification that do not negatively impact on the 'Special Qualities' of the National Park.
  - iv. Support tourism and recreation activity which maximise local economic benefits, minimise environmental impact and safeguard the 'Special Qualities' of the National Park.
  - v. Encourage proposals which would provide appropriate supportive infrastructures to sustain and promote the local economy.
  - vi. Support live-work units and home working.
- b. As an employer, the Authority is committed to improving its staff's life/work balance. A flexi system is operational and with the line manager's permission, technological advances mean that it is possible to work from home.
  - c. There are opportunities for school pupils and students to have work experience in various departments.
  - d. The Authority works in partnership with various agencies and projects that facilitate improving skills and access to work. Currently it is expected to become part of the 'Taith i Waith' scheme – which facilitate return to work for people with mental health issues.
  - e. It is proposed that the Warden and Access Service will look at various ways of offering working/ voluntary opportunities for young people that are not in education employment or training/ excluded pupils.
  - f. The Conservation and Agriculture Service already organises some training in countryside skills (e.g. hedge laying) and gives priority to young people. In progress is a Lottery grant application to improve the landscape and heritage of Snowdonia. This will allow the Authority of offer more training opportunities in building and countryside skills.

## **6.2 Access to the countryside for health and well-being.**

- a. Various studies have shown the benefit that access to the countryside has on people's health and well-being (de Vries et al, 2003 Mitchell and Popham; 2007). It is suggested that this could be especially important for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. (Ward Thompson et

al; 2006) and that activities should be tailored to fit the needs of various groups. (e.g. Humphreys and Rueseski; 2007). (Children in the Outdoors a Literature Review - Sustainable Development Research Centre).

- b. According to an 'Active Gwynedd' questionnaire by the Research and Information Unit 2011- all the responders were asked what would help/ encourage them to be more physically active – these were the most common replies- more/ better information on what was available(32.7%) and activities nearer to where they lived /in their communities (30.6%).
- c. The Park Management Plan states that ensuring that there are leisure and learning opportunities available for everybody is at the core of the Plan. It goes on to say that no one should be denied the opportunity to enjoy or learn about Snowdonia's special qualities due to physical or social barriers. To this end all the relevant partners should work to make Snowdonia more accessible to all and give support where necessary, together with the necessary infrastructure.
- d. The Authority currently organises monthly walks for people with sight impairments and people with mental health issues. It is proposed that this will be extended to include other disadvantaged groups including families with children or young people with sight impairments.
- e. Bwrlwm Eryri delivers cultural and heritage projects throughout the Park. The Bwrlwm Eryri Officer leads on these projects working closely with other services within the Authority and with a number of partners in the community and in the third sector. The Bwrlwm Eryri venture has succeeded in creating a number of creative projects for groups and individuals from a variety of backgrounds, with a number of children and young people experiencing this for the first time.
- f. The Warden Service also works in partnership to organise walks including rambles for wheelchair users.
- g. The Authority's website includes information on the opportunities there are to be enjoyed in Snowdonia. There is also an access for all section which includes information for disabled people and families with young children. In the near future there will be more information on trails that are accessible with buggies.

- h. Since the start of this year (2012), the Authority became part of the Mosaic project (Mosaic is a Campaign for National Parks project which aims to build sustainable links between black and ethnic minority groups and National Parks). By working with the Mosaic officer it will be possible to ensure that opportunities to enjoy the special qualities of Snowdonia National Park are offered to disadvantaged families from black and ethnic minority groups.

### 6.3 Affordable Housing and Fuel Poverty

The Authority does not have a statutory responsibility for housing; however, as a Planning Authority it does have the power to help ensure that more affordable houses are constructed – to meet local needs. It is estimated that 415 affordable houses will be built in the next 15 years – during the life of the Local Development Plan. The Authority, in partnership also funds two Rural Housing Enabling Officers - one for Conwy and the other in Gwynedd. The role of the officers is to:

- Operate as independent brokers on behalf of the local communities with regard to housing.
- Help communities to organise local housing needs survey
- Assist communities to find solutions that meet local housing needs.

The role of the Authority in alleviating fuel poverty is limited. For the future, internally it is developing a hydro electric power scheme at Plas Tan y Bwlch to provide power for the study centre. It is also developing a hydro scheme at Ogwen Cottage to power the Warden Centre and tourist facilities. Both projects will be used as exemplar demonstration schemes which will contribute to the Authority's commitment to enlightening the public in terms of alternative power production that could ameliorate fuel poverty issues. Externally it is proposed to further concentrate our CAE\* (sustainable development fund) grant scheme on community carbon reduction as well as publicise the Authority's activities as exemplars, this again will help indirectly to reduce fuel poverty.

**\*CAE is a Sustainable Development fund of £200,000 per annum which is administered by Snowdonia National Park Authority on behalf of the Welsh Government. The overall aim of the grant is: through partnership, to develop and test ways of achieving a more sustainable way of living in a countryside of great natural beauty and diversity, in which the local characteristics of culture, wildlife, landscape, land use and community are conserved and enhanced.**

#### **6.4 Education**

- a. For generations Snowdonia has been used as an open air classroom. This tradition continues to develop. The Authority's education service is lead by the provision organised through Plas Tan y Bwlch Education Centre. Here schools and colleges are offered experiences based on the National Curriculum, and delivered by qualified and experienced officers. The work at Plas Tan y Bwlch targets schools not only within the boundaries of the National Park but also outside the area. This includes visits to schools (especially primary schools) to introduce the principles and importance of the National Park to pupils that often have not had any previous contact with the Park. Some of these schools then visit the Plas for a residential stay.
- b. For some years now pupils from Tŷ Meirion, Ysgol y Gader (a unit for pupils with specific educational needs) have visited Plas Tan y Bwlch for an overnight stay. This visit is particularly welcomed by the families as very often it is the first opportunity the young people have to stay away from home. Following discussions with Gwynedd Council Officers the Authority will look to work in partnership with their pioneering project – 'Families First' – to offer a unique experience for families identified under the scheme to have the opportunity to enjoy and learn about Snowdonia's special qualities.

#### **6.5 Mainstreaming Social Inclusion within the Authority**

One of the main challenges will be to ensure that social inclusion and child poverty issues are embedded in the Authority's work. The three National Parks in Wales will work together to ensure that there are opportunities for Members and officers to receive training and share experiences in Social

Inclusion and Child Poverty. The Authority will ensure that it has a mechanism that makes sure that social inclusion is integral to all key work areas.

The Strategy will be monitored annually and reviewed every two years.

## 6.1 Employment

Action / project	Timescale	Responsible Officer
As part of the Improving Snowdonia's Landscape Project (A Heritage Lottery grant bid) offer training in countryside skills e.g. building work/ dry stone walling etc.	March 2014	Head of Conservation and Agriculture Head of Cultural Heritage
Offer work experience to local school pupils and students	Ongoing	Head of Administration Heads of Service
In partnership (e.g. Keep Wales Tidy) offer work experience /volunteering opportunity to young people that are not in education employment or training (NEET); Pupils that have been excluded from schools.	March 2014	Head of Warden and Access Heads of Service
Further develop work policies that are family friendly	Ongoing	Head of Personnel
Working with the 'Taith i Waith' project – offer work experience to people with Mental Health Issues.	March 2014	Head of Personnel Heads of Service

## 6.2 Access to the countryside for health and well-being

Action / project	Timescale	Responsible Officer
Improve access for disabled people and young families to leisure opportunities and enjoyment in Snowdonia by increasing the length of barrier free paths and associated infrastructure.	Ongoing	Director of Land Management
Organise monthly walks for people with sight impairment.	Ongoing	Community Officer
In partnership with Hafal, organise monthly walks for people with mental health issues.	Ongoing	Community Officer
Working in partnership, organise walks for young people who have sight impairment and include their families.	March 2014	Community Officer
Through the MOSAIC scheme – promote access to people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to leisure and enjoyment opportunities and a better understanding to the National Park's special qualities.	March 2014	Director of Planning and Heritage
Working in partnership, organise walks for all, including wheelchair users.	Ongoing	Head of Warden and Access Community Officer
Work with Gwynedd and Conwy Children and Young People's Partnership to offer opportunities for disadvantaged families to enjoy the special qualities of the National Park.	March 2014	Head of Education and Communication Head of Warden and access Community Officer
Expand on the Snowdonia for All section on the website to include more information on paths that are accessible to families with buggies	March 2014	Head of Education and Communication
Promote / steer the CAE grant scheme to support inclusive local projects	March 2014	Sustainability and Community Officer

### 6.3 Housing and Fuel Poverty

Action / project	Timescale	Responsible Officer
Contribute to funding of Rural Housing Officers in both Gwynedd and Conwy	March 2014	Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage
Deliver local affordable housing – Over Local Development Plan (15 years) estimated 415 affordable houses will be built	March 2014	Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage
Appoint an Eco System and Climate Change Officer to further the Authority's remit on Carbon Reduction and associated fuel poverty	March 2014	Director of Land Management
Promote the use of micro power generation and community renewable energy schemes on an appropriate scale	March 2014	Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage Director of Land Management
Promote research that is aimed at improving energy effectiveness in traditional buildings in keeping with their special character.	March 2014	Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage Director of Land Management
Improve the effectiveness of energy through good and sustainable design. In part, this will be possible by means of the Sustainable Design Guide	March 2014	Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage Sustainability and Community Officer
Promote the CAE grant scheme to community carbon reduction projects	March 2014	

#### 6.4 Education

Action / project	Timescale	Responsible Officer
Ensure a worthwhile outdoor / classromm experience, or in for primary or secondary schools, by creating opportunities for children and young people from all backgrounds to enjoy environmental, leisure or adventure activities.	March 2014	Head of Education and Communication
Develop a programme of creative projects with community, speciality or minority groups to ensure that children and young people get an opportunity to take part in creative and linguistic activities and come to better understand the special qualities of the National Park.	March 2014	Head of Education and Communication

#### 6.5 Mainstreaming Social Inclusion within the Authority.

Action / project	Timescale	Responsible Officer
Work with the other Welsh National Parks to ensure that there are training opportunities for Members and Officers in Social Inclusion and Child Poverty	March 2014	Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage
Embed the Child Poverty Strategy in the Authority's Corporate Work Plan	March 2014	Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage
Organise Disability Equality Forum twice yearly	Ongoing	Community Officer
Report to the Management Team on a quarterly basis on developments within the social inclusion agenda.	March 2014	Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage
Monitor the Child Poverty Strategy annually and review	March 2014	Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage

every 2 years		
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