

People and nature thriving together



Cyfoeth
Naturiol
Cymru
Natural
Resources
Wales

How we are managing access to
nature on the land in our care

2024 - 2030

Introduction

Our organisational vision is ‘nature and people thriving together’.

A healthy, happy and affluent society is one that is more likely to care for nature and take positive action for its future.

In our corporate plan, we set out where we are best placed to make a difference within the resources we have, but also where we will need to adapt how and where we work and innovate and collaborate to bring about a change that is fair, just and ensures nobody gets left behind.

This strategy focusses on outdoor recreation on the land in our care, where we can, and are best placed to, make a difference by enabling others to deliver nature connection and drive positive outcomes.

It will see a shift from using our resources to create opportunities for active recreation, to enabling more access to nature for those that need it to thrive, whilst supporting the sustainable management of natural resources and our well-being objectives.

This could include for example:

- Enabling third parties to step in and deliver intense tourism-based activity.
- Having higher quality every day, informal access in the right places that has even fewer barriers for a diverse range of users.
- Reforming our process for giving permissions to others to deliver events and activities that improve the mental health and physical well-being of our communities, whilst ensuring they are happening in the right place and at the right time.

To do this we will work collaboratively across our teams, with sector representatives, third parties, and through the Public Services Boards to optimise opportunities and build meaningful partnerships to drive the transformational change we need.

Through the strategy vision and priorities, we will support social and environmental justice and focus on equity and inclusion so that we can build a future where nature and people genuinely thrive together in a way that is sustainable for future generations.

Context

Our first corporate plan in 2014 set out a purpose to ensure that the environment and natural resources of Wales were sustainably maintained, enhanced, and used, now and in the future, using five ‘Good’ programmes (Good for knowledge, the environment, people, business, and the organisation).

An ‘Outdoor Recreation and Access Enabling Plan 2015 – 2020’ was created to support the ambitions in this plan, particularly around integrating recreation opportunities with other providers, maintaining liabilities, building on existing work and identifying new business opportunities.

Since then, the context for Wales and indeed the wider world has changed significantly. Not least the cost-of-living crisis, energy crisis, and climate and nature emergencies being declared. We have also felt the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic which saw a huge shift in the way people use outdoor spaces, and the drive to connect more with nature for health and well-being.

In 2023, we published a new corporate plan to 2030, Nature and People Thriving Together, building on the experience and learning over the last decade, and focusing on the nature, climate, and pollution emergencies.

Together with the corporate plan a new commercial strategy has been published, and recently reviewed, which sets a vision to generate income through sustainable commercial activity, so that we can do more for Wales’s environmental, social, economic, and cultural

well-being. More explicitly it strengthens our ability to proactively pursue more recreation activities being delivered by others on the land in our care.

We are currently reviewing what we stop, delay, or do differently, to deliver the corporate plan within the financial pressure and uncertainty all parts of the public sector are dealing with, and this includes recreation provision and access.

This strategy has been created collaboratively with staff and stakeholders through an extensive engagement process. It sets a strategic direction for outdoor recreation on freehold and leasehold land in our care, and the National Nature Reserves that we manage. It does not cover sites where we do not have direct management, or our flood assets.

As well as setting a vision and priorities for how outdoor recreation will be managed and promoted on the land in our care over the next 25 years, it also identifies areas of focus over the next five years to ensure that outdoor recreation is managed within resource limits whilst optimising the social and environmental benefits it can bring.

Outcomes and outputs



Who is the strategy for?

Although this strategy has been developed and published by us, with the primary aim to help our staff manage and make decisions about outdoor recreation, it is relevant to all those involved in managing and delivering outdoor recreation activity that impacts upon the land in our care.

What do we mean by outdoor recreation?

Outdoor recreation is generally defined as an activity that you do in the natural environment for fun, pleasure, or relaxation when you are not working.

For this strategy, the scope of outdoor recreation is defined under the following categories:

- **General outdoor activity** - such as watching wildlife, camping, picnicking
- **Creative activities** - such as art, photography and music
- **Health or relaxation** - such as walking, running, dog walking, horse riding, cycling, forest bathing
- **Active activities** - such as canoeing, rock climbing, and mountain biking
- **Commercially run events and activities**
- **Educational activities and programmes**
- **Volunteering**

The benefits of outdoor recreation

Well-managed and sustainable outdoor recreation can bring enormous benefits to the environment, society and the economy. These include:

Improving health and well-being

Physical inactivity, diet and obesity levels pose a significant burden of disease risk factors in Wales. Evidence compiled during the UK wide COVID-19 lockdown period shows that those living in urban environments, where access to green and blue space is limited, are experiencing the most impact on their physical and mental health.

Outdoor recreation, learning and volunteering opportunities all facilitate increased physical activity levels. In 2021 the health benefits from recreation in the UK was valued at £445 billion, and in Wales it was the service with the highest annual value of its ecosystem services.*

Engaging people to take action and become advocates for nature and climate

Although many people in Wales already enjoy, appreciate and understand the natural world, there are considerable challenges to connect people to nature. People who feel closer to nature are happier and more satisfied with life and are more likely to take actions that help wildlife and the environment.

Growing the local economy

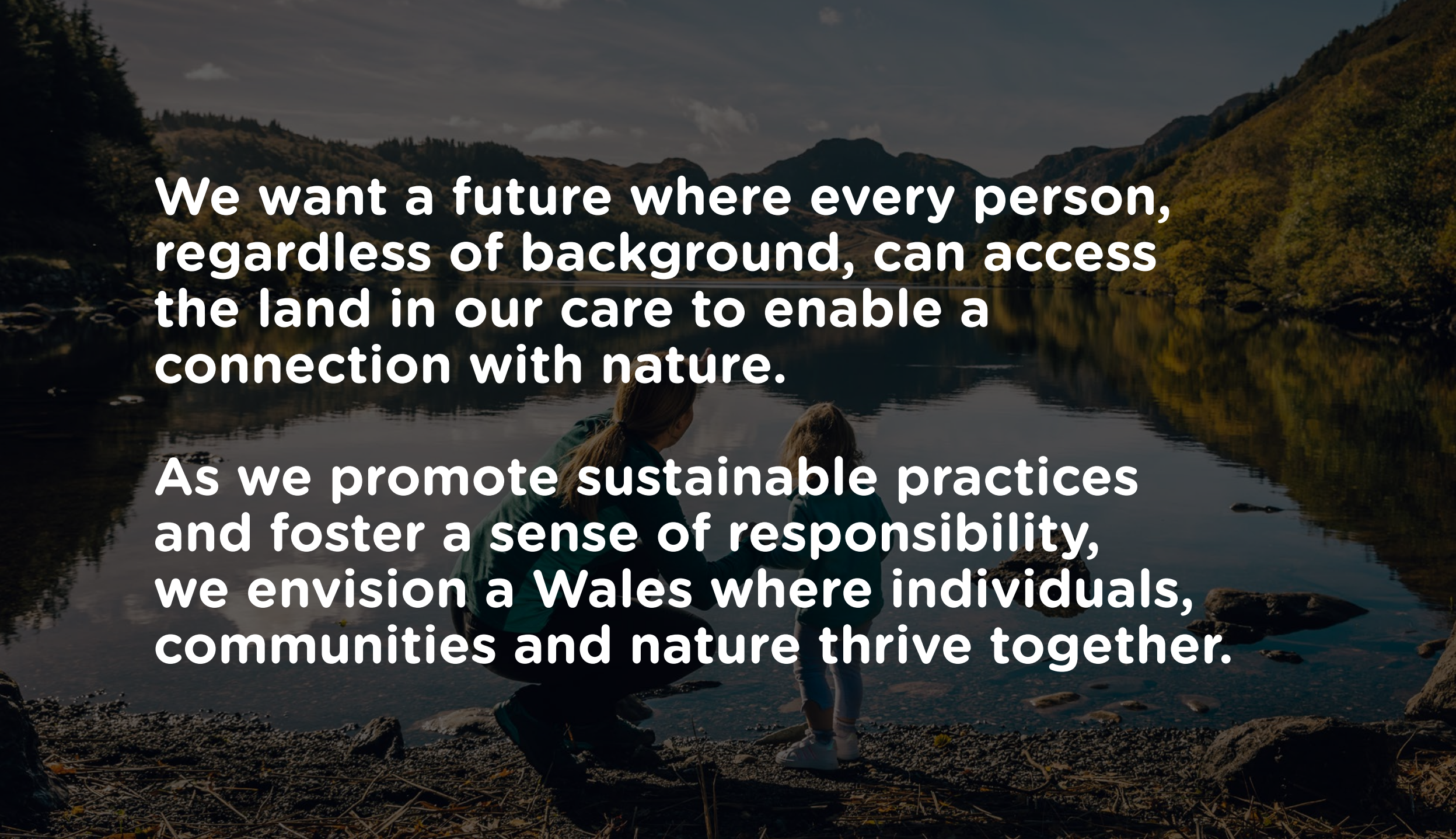
Whilst some activities are free at the point of delivery, recreation still has a considerable financial impact - and there is a significant degree of overlap between outdoor recreation and tourism.

Thousands of people are employed in the tourism and recreation industries, whose key resource is Wales's natural environment and the opportunities it provides for physical activity, enjoyment and relaxation. Tourism is a key contributor to, and driver of, the economy in Wales.

*Office for National Statistics - UK natural capital accounts 2023

Our vision



A woman and a child are seen from behind, crouching on a rocky shore next to a calm lake. The woman is wearing a dark green jacket and has her hair in a ponytail. The child is wearing a light-colored jacket and pants. The lake reflects the surrounding green hills and mountains under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

We want a future where every person, regardless of background, can access the land in our care to enable a connection with nature.

As we promote sustainable practices and foster a sense of responsibility, we envision a Wales where individuals, communities and nature thrive together.

We will do this by

Leading the way

As an exemplary land manager and statutory access advisor, we will lead the way in setting the highest standards for ourselves and others, acting as guardians of the environment, and ensuring that our actions are always in line with our values and within the resources we have available.

Protecting our special places

With a positive and bold approach, we aim to instil a connection with nature in everyone who visits our places, nurturing a shared responsibility to care for and protect it.

Access for all

Our commitment to accessibility and inclusivity will help everyone, regardless of background or ability, to experience the transformative power of nature.



Our principles

Living within our means

We must prioritise where we focus our efforts to maximise benefit from every pound we spend. Focussing on what we can do, and the difference we can make, to ensure that outdoor recreation is managed within resource limits whilst optimising the social and environmental benefits it can bring.

We will do this by:

- Looking for opportunities to increase effectiveness and maximise benefit
- Collaborating with partners to share resources and generate income
- Making bold evidence-based decisions about what we will provide and what we will not with reducing resources

Right activity in the right place

We must use evidence to make informed decisions in the best interest of nature and people, to ensure people get the opportunities to actively connect with nature to improve their well-being, but this is balanced with protecting nature's well-being too.

We will do this by:

- Using a zoning model to plan how we use our resources and protect our special places
- Delivering our statutory responsibilities for public access
- Using a broad range of evidence and data, internal and external, to make decisions and communicate the reasons for these

Enabling others to do more

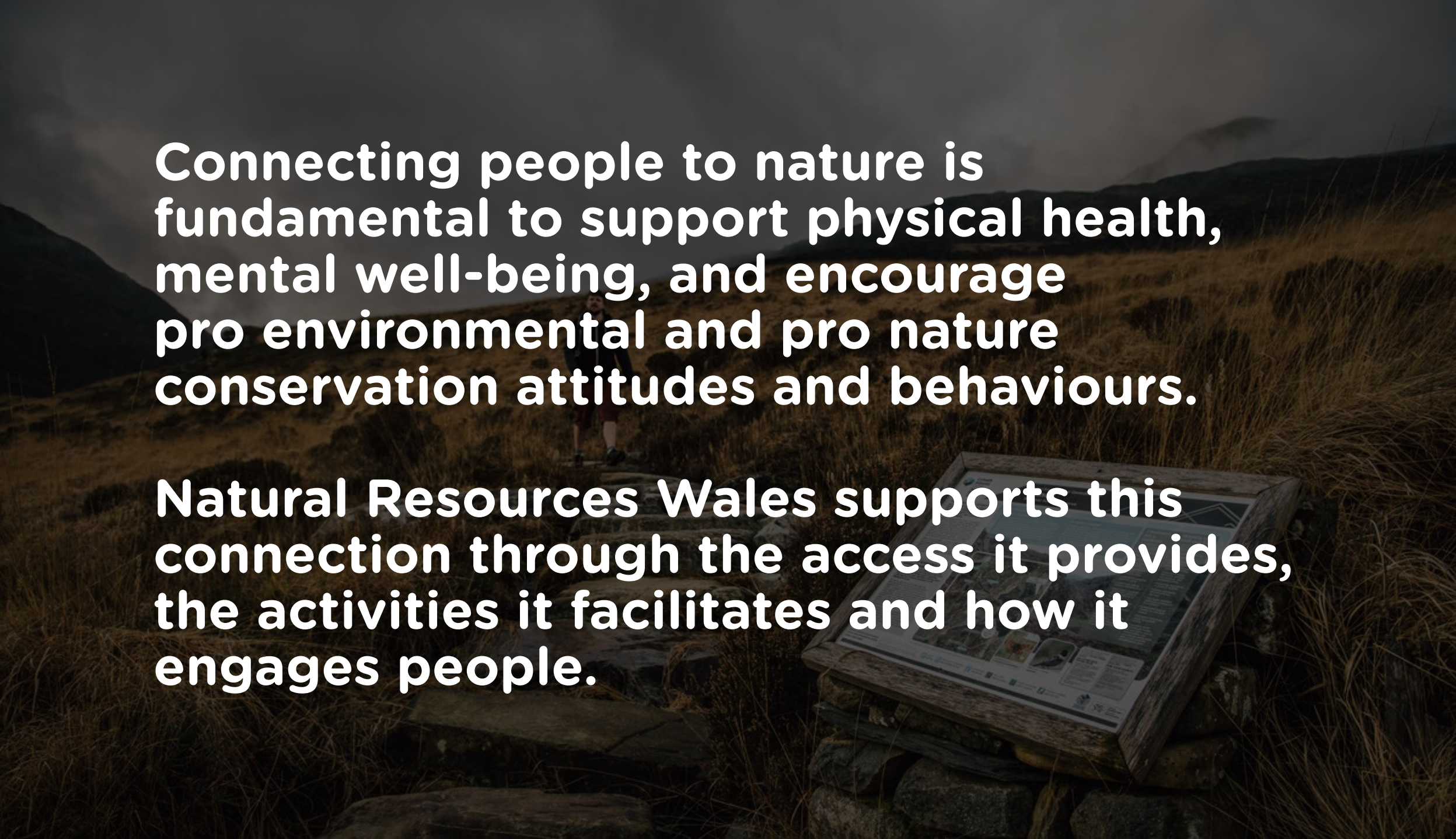
We want to make it as easy as possible for communities and other sectors to do more where we can't. If someone else can do a better job with less cost to us, then we should let them use their skills and expertise.

We will do this by:

- Streamlining our processes so that others can do more to help us manage the land in our care
- Working with communities to build capacity so that they can take on responsibility for local, everyday management of access
- Supporting projects and opportunities that can actively be delivered and managed by communities or other sectors (including managing legacy and liability)

Our priorities



A person is standing on a stone path in a grassy field. In the background, there are mountains under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn.

Connecting people to nature is fundamental to support physical health, mental well-being, and encourage pro environmental and pro nature conservation attitudes and behaviours.

Natural Resources Wales supports this connection through the access it provides, the activities it facilitates and how it engages people.

An informational sign is mounted on a stone base. The sign contains text and images, including a map and a photograph of a person. The sign is tilted slightly to the right.

Ways of working

To help define the activity in the areas of focus under each priority there are eight ways of working that have been evolved from the five ways of working from within the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the principles of the sustainable management of natural resources:

Access

We provide access that is safe and inclusive and prioritises using nature to improve well-being.

Prevention

We protect our landscapes and habitats better by having the right activity, in the right place, and at the right time.

Integration

We work effectively across our organisation to ensure our delivery is consistent and achieves our goals.

Evidence

We use data and information to increase our knowledge and insight to ensure we make evidence-based decisions.

Collaboration

We collaborate with partners and communities to share knowledge and expertise, and we develop guidance to support collective action.

Involvement

We involve people in decision making and create a sense of place that is reflective of the diversity of the area.

Awareness

We actively promote experiences that develop a closer relationship with nature and encourage pro environmental and pro nature conservation attitudes and behaviours.

Long-term

We ensure what we do is delivering the sustainable management of natural resources and embraces opportunity where we do not have the resource through developing new, and existing, innovative products and initiatives in partnership.

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Coetiroedd Dyffryn Gwy
Wye Valley Woodlands

Lower Wyndcliff

Coetiroedd Dyffryn Gwy
Cyrchfan Arlunwyr a Beirdd

Wye Valley Woodlands
Haunt of Painters and Poets



Priority 1

Provide inclusive, safe
and welcoming access

We will provide access based on the principles of equity and inclusion, and create a positive atmosphere that ensures a diverse range of people feel safe and welcomed

AREAS OF FOCUS

Access

Our waymarked trail network should aim to be fit for purpose, environmentally and financially sustainable, and provide an enjoyable experience for all

Integration

Deliver high quality infrastructure and facilities by applying clear internal standards and the Visitor Safety Group principles* consistently across the land in our care

Evidence

Use existing evidence and data to understand barriers to access, motivations, confidence, accessibility, awareness, and experience

Involvement

Involve users and representative bodies, particularly those who represent minority communities, to help us make sites safe and welcoming

Awareness

Provide more information about trail accessibility, using the right method for the audience that enables them to make decisions

* www.visitorsafety.group/principles/guiding-principles



Priority 2

Improve sustainable access

We will improve sustainable access and site connectivity to connect people with nature and encourage pro nature conservation behaviours

AREAS OF FOCUS

Access

Use a zoning model to identify areas that will be prioritised for local, everyday access

Evidence

Use spatial and demographic analysis of communities to inform which improvements to access would have the greatest impact

Collaboration

Work with partners to explore opportunities for sustainable travel and improved mechanisms to maintain public access such as the public rights of way network

Awareness

Work with partners to promote local, everyday access and encourage pro nature conservation behaviours



Priority 3

Create a sense
of place

We will design spaces in collaboration with others to engage people with the rich history, culture, nature, and heritage of Wales

AREAS OF FOCUS

Access

Use the 'five pathways to nature connection'* as a framework to design activities, trails, and initiatives to help people develop closer relationships with heritage and nature

Evidence

Work in partnership with the arts, culture, and heritage organisations to tell the story of our landscape

Collaboration

Involve the local community in designing spaces that work for them, reflect their diversity, and interpret their heritage

Awareness

Connect people with Welsh culture, historic and natural heritage through interpretation that is in the right place, innovative and evidence led

* www.findingnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/the-nature-connection-handbook.pdf



Priority 4

Balance people
and nature

We will aim to restore the balance between nature and people to ensure its legacy for generations to come

AREAS OF FOCUS

Prevention

Use a zoning model and the principles of sustainable management of natural resources to inform right activity, right place, right time

Integration

Use specialist staff knowledge, expertise and data to ensure we have everything we need to make evidenced based decisions

Evidence

Understand the impact of recreation on nature alongside the benefits to people, and use data to help us understand future trends and needs

Long-term

Ensure anything we deliver, or allow, has the sustainable management of natural resources at its core



Priority 5

Promote responsible behaviour

We will use an insight-led approach to influence visitor behaviour, including how to access the outdoors safely and promoting the responsibility of protecting and enhancing our natural resources

AREAS OF FOCUS

Evidence

Use research and data focused on human behaviour to design interventions and evaluate changes in behaviour

Collaboration

Work with others to understand the behaviour of visitors on the land in our care and how to influence this

Involvement

Involve the local community and user groups as ambassadors to promote safety and reduce user conflict

Awareness

Improve communications and interpretation to reduce the occurrence and impacts of negative visitor behaviour on the natural environment



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Gwarchodfa Natur Genedlaethol
a Choedwig Niwbwrch

Llyn Parc Mawr

Newborough National Nature Reserve
and Forest

LLYN PARC MAWR

Grŵp Coedwig Cymunedol
Community Woodland Group



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Government

Priority 6

Foster partnership
working

We will work in partnership with others to share expertise and resources, and explore opportunities to enhance our offer through third party delivery

AREAS OF FOCUS

Integration

Develop our organisational approach to partnership working to make it easier for others to engage with us

Collaboration

Implement better ways of collaborating with partners and third parties through formal agreements

Evidence

Use a variety of data sources and opportunities with partners to evaluate our offer and use this to support decision making

Long-term

Use a zoning model to identify where we develop our offer through third party delivery and commercial investment to make it viable all year-round



Priority 7

Facilitate health, well-being
and learning opportunities

We will facilitate activities and events led by others that improve the mental health and physical well-being of our communities, and increase understanding of nature

AREAS OF FOCUS

Evidence

Use data to ensure the events and activities we facilitate target a broad range of abilities, and contributes to improving either mental health, physical well-being and/or nature knowledge

Integration

Ensure activity we facilitate supports the strategy, Area Statements and Public Services Boards

Awareness

Promote the opportunities we have available to access nature for improving either mental health and physical well-being, and/or nature knowledge

Collaboration

Work with representative bodies, the public, private and third sector and improve processes to support the delivery of events and activities



Priority 8

Enable people to act

We will empower a diverse range of people to become more involved in managing access and nurture a shared responsibility to care for and protect it

AREAS OF FOCUS

Involvement

Provide better coordination and guidance for people that want to support our work through actively contributing to its management or making decisions about its future

Collaboration

Establish strong partnerships between communities, voluntary organisations, and representative bodies to develop opportunities for them to lead more volunteering on the land in our care

Awareness

Improve how we advertise and promote opportunities, including using existing partnerships and platforms

Long-term

Ensure new projects are evidence led and sustainable

Monitoring and reporting

Within six months of publication of this strategy we will produce a monitoring and reporting framework.

This will include:

- A set of outcomes and outputs to monitor the delivery of the strategy
- A reporting schedule and mechanism

Sources of data for outcomes will include (but not be limited to):

- People and Nature survey
- Office for National Statistics UK natural capital accounts
- Public Opinion of Forestry survey

In addition, outcomes in support of the Corporate Plan steps to take and the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals will also be monitored (see below table)

Sources of data for outputs will include (but not be limited to):

- SoNaRR
- Land Stewardship Evaluation framework

Strategy priority	Supports NRW Corporate Plan step to take	Supports WBoFGA goals
1 Provide inclusive, safe, and welcoming access	Ensuring social and environmental justice, equity and inclusion inform and strengthen our decision making for nature's recovery through the review of current mechanisms and development of guidance	Resilient More equal Cohesive communities Vibrant culture
2 Improve sustainable access	Ensuring local communities benefit from equitable access to green and blue spaces and act responsibly, through providing guidance and support, working collaboratively with strategic partners such as Visit Wales and local authorities	Resilient Globally responsible Cohesive communities
3 Create a sense of place	Inspiring people to take action, empowering and transforming their relationship with nature through working with creative industries and the cultural sector	Cohesive communities Vibrant culture
4 Balance nature and people	Securing the effective protection and management of at least 30 per cent of land, freshwater and sea for nature through identifying opportunities to enlarge and better connect the series of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Resilient Prosperous Globally responsible
5 Promote responsible behaviour	Involving different communities and sectors in our work, through applying behavioural insights to inform our approaches	Resilient Globally responsible
6 Foster partnership working	Identifying opportunities to optimise the collective action and impact of the public sector through using SoNaRR and Area Statements to work with the public service boards, public health and local authorities	Resilient More equal Cohesive communities
7 Facilitate health, well-being, and learning opportunities	Engaging with people to take action, creating opportunities for being in, learning about and becoming advocates for nature and climate, through working with the education, physical activity and health sectors	Healthier Vibrant culture More equal
8 Enable people to act	Ensuring a diverse range of people are taking action for nature through sharing the vision and outcomes from Nature and Us to expand our networks and increase involvement	Resilient Prosperous More equal Cohesive communities

Cynefin

the place where we feel we belong,
where the people and landscape around
us are familiar, and the sights and
sounds are reassuringly recognisable

Definition in the Curriculum for Wales



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