

Snowdonia National Park Authority



Code of Corporate Governance

Adopted April 2022

*Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg
This document is available in Welsh*

1. Introduction

The 1995 Environment Act specifies that the purposes of a National Park Authority are

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

The Act also states that in pursuing these purposes the Authority has a duty to seek to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities.

The National Park Authority is committed to the principles of good corporate governance in delivering its statutory purposes. Through the development, adoption and continued implementation and monitoring of a Code of Corporate Governance the Authority formally confirms its ongoing commitment and intentions.

The Code of Corporate Governance is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016).

The Code of Corporate Governance comprehensively describes the Authority's commitment to and understanding of corporate governance and outlines the arrangements that it has put in place to ensure ongoing effective implementation and monitoring.

The Code of Corporate Governance also makes provision for a joint commitment by Members and officers to the principles it contains, as well as a statement of assurance jointly signed by the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Executive. This helps to ensure that the principles of corporate governance are not only fully embedded and cascaded throughout the Authority, but that they have the full backing of all Members as well as the Chief Executive and the Management Team.

The Code of Corporate Governance incorporates the sustainable development principles and the goals set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015. Accordingly, our decision-making processes will ensure that we keep the following principles at the heart of planning and delivering our work in order to contribute to the Wellbeing Goals.

Sustainable Development Principles

- Long term
- Integration
- Collaboration
- Involvement
- Prevention

The Authority's adopted well-being goals, which are developed through thorough consultation and engagement, not only guide all business activities within the Authority,

but directly feed into the National Well-being Goals as set out in the Act.

National Wellbeing Goals

- A Prosperous Wales
- A Resilient Wales
- A Healthier Wales
- A More Equal Wales
- A Wales of Cohesive Communities
- A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language
- A Globally Responsible Wales

The Welsh Language

In accordance with the Welsh Language Measure 2011, the Welsh language has equal legal status with English and should not be treated less favourably. As well as protecting it, the Authority must produce a Welsh Language Promotion Strategy which sets out how it will promote the use of the language and increase the number of Welsh speakers in the area. Ensuring Eryri (Snowdonia) is a place where the Welsh language thrives is now seen in the context of the objectives of the Welsh Government's 2050 Welsh language strategy - its ambition to see one million people in Wales enjoying speaking and using the Welsh language by 2050.

Since its inception, the Authority has always been very active in its use and promotion of the Welsh language. As the primary language in many social and professional environments within Eryri (Snowdonia), Welsh has been identified as a very special quality of Snowdonia National Park which has been included in Cynllun Eryri (the National Park Management Plan) to ensure that it continues to be a vibrant part of our everyday life.

On a practical level, the Authority operates on the basis of equality in terms of the Welsh and English language. All aspects of the Authority's business and services are available fully in both languages, which is enabled by the majority of staff being fully bilingual. The Welsh language is ingrained fully into the culture and ethos of the organisation.

2. Why Adopt a Code of Corporate Governance?

Adopting a Code of Corporate Governance is another way in which the National Park Authority shows its recognition of the fact that an effective Authority relies upon establishing and maintaining the confidence of local people in both Members and Authority officials. Good corporate governance underpins credibility and confidence in the leadership and forms the foundation from which all Authority services are provided.

Adopting, monitoring and complying with a Code of Corporate Governance helps enhance the Authority's legitimacy and increases trust placed in the Authority by local people, visitors and stakeholders.

Strong, transparent and responsive governance enables the National Park Authority to put citizens first by pursuing its aims and priorities effectively, and by underpinning them with appropriate mechanisms for managing performance and risk. In order to

maintain citizens' confidence, these mechanisms must be sound and be seen to be sound.

Overall, adopting and committing to this Code of Corporate Governance puts in place a basis for an Authority wide commitment to the way in which it intends fulfilling its role in leading and representing the community, providing opportunities for all, ensuring that there is a strong customer focus in all the Authority does.

3. What is Corporate Governance?

The Authority has a key role in delivering its statutory purposes for the benefit of both its local community and the nation. An effective public authority relies on public confidence in the Members and Authority officers, and effective systems of Corporate Governance provide confidence in public services.

Corporate Governance is a phrase used to describe how organisations direct and control what they do, and good Corporate Governance requires public authorities to carry out their services in a way that demonstrates accountability, openness and honesty. For public authorities this also includes how a National Park Authority relates to the communities that it serves.

The National Park Authority sees Corporate Governance as doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems and processes, and also the culture and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and how it accounts to and engages with its stakeholders.

4. Why do we need a Code of Corporate Governance?

Corporate Governance is important because it is crucial in:

- Providing high quality public services

Nationally governance weaknesses have led to service failure and ineffective use of public resources. High performing organisations, on the other hand, have effective governance arrangements.

- Raising public trust

The public's trust is increased when the quality of services that they and their families experience is high, and when organisations are seen to be open and honest in communicating their performance, and in learning from their mistakes.

The Governance Framework comprises the seven principles of good governance:

Principle 1: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

Principle 2: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Principle 3: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

Principle 4: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Principle 5: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Principle 6: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

Principle 7: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

Each of these principles is an important part of the National Park Authority's Corporate Governance arrangements.

This Code describes how the Authority will meet and demonstrate its commitment to good Corporate Governance in relation to these seven Principles, how it will carry this out and who will monitor and review the governance arrangements.

Although this code is based on the 7 Principles of Good Governance as outlined above, there are other ethical principles and frameworks that are relevant to the work of the Authority and to the conduct of its Members' and officers.

The Ethical Standards Framework for Wales

Established by Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000 to promote and maintain high standards of ethical conduct by Members and officers of relevant authorities in Wales. The Framework consists of ten general principles of conduct for Members (which incorporates Lord Nolan's 'Seven Principles of Public Life').

The Review of Designated Landscapes Wales

The final report included a set of agreed good governance principles. They reflect the Welsh dimension of the sustainable management of natural resources principles from the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 goals and ways of working.

Appendix 1 shows how these two sets of principles interweave with the 7 Principles of Good Governance on which this Code is based.

5. The Authority's Corporate Governance Principles

Principle 1:

Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

High standards of conduct and effective governance can only be achieved if those who hold public office have the highest standards of behaviour and encourage others to do so.

The Authority will strive to adopt a culture of behaviour based on shared values, ethical principles and good conduct.

This will be achieved by adopting and keeping under review:

- A Code of Conduct for Members
- A Code of Conduct for Staff
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Standing Orders
- Scheme of Delegation
- Members' Register of Interests
- Corporate Formal Complaints Process
- Appraisals and Training

Principle 2:

Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

It is not sufficient for the Authority to do things in the right way we must also have to be seen to do things the right way. This requires full engagement with a diverse range of people, through a process which is planned and resourced in a way that is fair.

The Authority will achieve this by:

- Forming and maintaining mutually respectful relationships with other organisations.
- Working with other public sector partners to help customers and stakeholders understand our respective responsibilities and what we aim to achieve by working in partnership.
- Establishing and maintaining Fforwm Eryri partnership forum to bring together all those involved in Eryri's future, which will galvanise our approach to joint working.
- Engaging in consultation in a meaningful way and through mechanisms which seek to capture and embrace the views of all relevant parties.
- Implementing its Strategic Equality Plan.

- Implementing its Communication and Engagement Strategy.
- Implementing the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.
- Conducting its business in an open and transparent manner (including investigating how best to implement hybrid committee meetings which incorporates public access).

Principle 3:

Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

The Authority's processes and duty are set out by the Environment Act 1995. The Authority will ensure that it defines outcomes as follows:

- Produce a National Park Management Plan (Cynllun Eryri) in partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders and review every five years.
- Producing a Well-being Statement setting out well-being objectives and desired outcomes that incorporate the Sustainable Development Principles.
- Produce a Local Development Plan and review every five years.
- Reporting regularly on progress and outcomes.

Principle 4:

Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Informed decision making is a fundamental part of good corporate governance. It requires the Authority to be rigorous in the examination of performance.

The Authority will ensure the decision-making process includes a detailed risk assessment including:

- Financial, legal and human resources implications (authors of reports will be accountable if they are providing advice themselves).
- Equality and sustainability impact assessments.
- Risks and mitigating actions.

Regular and timely reviews are carried out by the Performance and Resources Committee on:

- Budget and project spend.
- Performance against the well-being objectives set out in the Well-being Statement.
- The Authority's Risk Register.

Principle 5:

Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Ensuring that Members and officers have the necessary skills to operate the organisation is an important aspect of governance.

The Authority will ensure that those responsible for the governance of the Authority have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to perform well.

The Authority will achieve this by:

- Implementing a Member Development Strategy.
- Developing understanding and leadership skills and capacity across the Authority.
- Implement effective succession planning to prepare for future personnel changes.
- Developing and maintaining the Appraisal process for Staff.
- Ensuring information and training is made available as appropriate to Members and officers, to enable them to carry out their roles.

Principle 6:

Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

The Authority will have a Risk Management Strategy and will operate a risk management system that assists the achievement of its corporate aims and priorities, protects the Authority's reputation and other assets and is compliant with statutory and regulatory obligations.

The Authority will ensure that the risk management system:

- Formally identifies and manages risks.
- Involves Members in the risk management process.
- Links risks to financial and other key internal controls.
- Incorporates service and business continuity planning.
- Reviews and, if necessary, updates its risk management processes at least annually.

The Authority complies with finance law and produces annual accounts in accordance with CIPFA guidelines. The Performance and Resources Committee agrees the Mid Term Financial Plan and monitors budgets on a quarterly basis. It also works closely with Internal and External Audit to ensure robust internal controls.

Principle 7:

Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

The Authority is committed to an open and transparent decision-making process. All Agendas, Minutes and Meeting Documents are published on the Authority's Website.

Currently, committee meetings are conducted virtually and broadcast on the Authority's YouTube channel after the event. As part of the review of future committee meetings, public access and live broadcasting options will be investigated and implemented.¹

The Authority works closely with Internal and External Audit to ensure that its processes comply with the law and good practice, and commits to implementing recommendations made as a result of audits.

6. Monitoring and Review

Good Corporate Governance requires:

- The active participation of Members and officers across the Authority.
- Development, implementation and continuous improvement of the Authority's Corporate Governance culture.
- Preparation, adoption and maintenance of an up-to-date Code of Corporate Governance, including arrangements for ensuring its implementation and ongoing application.
- Co-ordination and review of the Annual Governance Statement.
- Promotion of best practice in Corporate Governance throughout the Authority.

The Authority is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the Authority's Corporate Governance arrangements.

The Authority will ensure that these arrangements are kept under continual review by:

- The work of Internal and External Audit.
- Working with our stakeholders to ensure effective arrangements are in place for monitoring partnership working and projects.
- Reports prepared by managers with responsibility for aspects of this Code.
- Other review agencies and Inspectorates.

¹ Public access is not currently available to committee meetings, but this will be reviewed.

In addition, a specific and focused review will be undertaken every 4 years prior to local government elections, which lead to Gwynedd and Conwy County Borough Councils appointing Members on to the National Park Authority. This will enable the Authority to take advantage of the learning and experience gained over the local government cycle and implement any changes required prior to new Members being elected for a new term.

7. Annual Governance Statement

Each Year the Authority will publish an Annual Governance Statement, which will provide an overall assessment of the Authority's Corporate Governance arrangements and an appraisal of the key controls in place to manage the Authority's key governance risks.

The Statement will also provide details of where improvements need to be made.

The Annual Governance Statement will be reviewed by Management Team and approved by the Authority, prior to being signed by the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Executive.

The Annual Governance Statement will be published as part of the Authority's Annual Statement of Accounts and will be audited by our External Auditors.

Signed



Wyn Jones
Chair



Emyr Williams
Chief Executive

Appendix 1

How the Ethical Standards Framework and Designated Landscapes Governance Principles cross-reference with the Authority’s Governance Code Principles.

Principles of Good Governance	Ethical Standards Framework	Designated Landscapes Governance Principles
Principle 1: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	Honesty Integrity and Propriety Selflessness Duty to uphold the Law	Fairness and Rights Accountability and transparency
Principle 2: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	Honesty Openness Accountability Integrity and Propriety	Legitimacy Participation and voice Fairness and Rights Accountability and transparency
Principle 3: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	Stewardship Equality and Respect Objectivity in Decision Making Stewardship	Developing and implementing a strategic vision for the area
Principle 4: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	Objectivity in Decision Making Accountability Leadership	Effective performance management Accountability and transparency
Principle 5: Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	Leadership Objectivity in Decision Making Integrity and Propriety	Effective performance management
Principle 6: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	Accountability Objectivity in Decision Making Stewardship Duty to uphold the Law	Accountability and transparency Effective performance management
Principle 7: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability	Accountability Duty to Uphold the Law Integrity and Propriety	Accountability and transparency Legitimacy Effective performance management