

Snowdonia National Park Authority Annual Governance Statement 2022-23



This statement meets the requirement to produce a Statement of Internal Control pursuant to Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2005 (as amended in 2010)

1. Introduction

Snowdonia National Park Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

Snowdonia National Park Authority is subject to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Act places a duty on the Authority to set Well-being Objectives that directly contribute to achieving the 7 Well-being Goals as set out in the Act, namely:

- 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

Furthermore, Snowdonia National Park Authority must meet its duties in accordance with a 'statutory sustainability principle', which means that the Authority must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In discharging this overall responsibility, Snowdonia National Park Authority is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk and adequate and effective financial management.

Snowdonia National Park Authority has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/Solace Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. This statement explains how the Authority has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of regulation 5(2) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control.

The Code of Corporate Governance was reviewed and updated, as part of a larger review of the Authority's governance arrangements in 2021/22. The new Code of Corporate Governance was formally adopted by the Authority in April 2022.

2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Snowdonia National Park Authority's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

3. The Governance Framework

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

Snowdonia National Park Authority develops and implements its strategic corporate planning through the adoption of:

- Cynllun Eryri (Snowdonia National Park Management Plan);
- Eryri Local Development Plan;
- Well-being Statement and Well-being Objectives; and
- Corporate Work Programme.

These 4 documents represent the cornerstone for the Authority's work in fulfilling its primary purposes as defined in the Environment Act 1995 and in implementing its vision.

Governance Structure

The Authority's governance structure comprises of 4 main committees:

- Snowdonia National Park Authority has 18 appointed Members and during 2022/23 had 5 scheduled meetings.
- The Performance and Resources Committee was held 3 times during 2022/23. As part of its remit it undertakes audit committee functions in accordance with CIPFA requirements.
- The Planning and Access Committee was held 7 times during 2022/23. This committee is responsible for carrying out the Authority's statutory planning functions.
- The Authority's Standards Committee was held twice during 2022/23. Membership of the committee, whose remit it is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members, comprises of 3 Authority Members and 3 independent members.

The Authority's Standing Orders (published on the website) gives a detailed account of the arrangements for each committee. For every committee, the agenda, minutes and associated reports and background papers are all published on the Authority's website.

Management Team

The Authority's management structure includes the Chief Executive (who is also the 'National Park Officer' and the Head of Paid Service) and two Directors. The Authority's Management Team meet fortnightly, with the Head of Finance and the Head of Human Resources in attendance.

Standards

The Authority has an established Code of Conduct for Members, which includes a section that specifically refers to interests and a Members' Register of Interest. The Code of Conduct for staff is the national standard code of conduct for public authority employees.

The Authority has adopted the following policies and procedures for maintaining high standards of conduct for both staff and Members, and to ensure accountability to the public:

- Complaints Procedure – based on the best practice model complaints procedure produced by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales;

- Whistle Blowing Policy – to enable staff to raise serious concerns with the confidence in knowing that they will be thoroughly and fairly investigated, without fear of reprisals;
- Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy – contains measures designed to frustrate any attempted fraudulent or corrupt act, and the steps to be taken if such an act occurs; and a
- Scheme of Delegation – outlines how the full Authority’s functions are carried out through delegation to its committees and sub-committees.

Risk Management

A Risk Management Policy and Strategy is in place. The risk identification process is co-ordinated by the Head of Administration and Customer Care, with input from the Management Team and Heads of Service. The Risk Register and mitigation measures is reviewed and updated quarterly.

Internal Audit

The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and governance arrangements is informed by the work of the Internal Auditors, undertaken by Cyngor Gwynedd. The Internal Audit service is provided in accordance with CIPFA’s Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK. The Internal Audit Manager prepares an annual report that summarises the results of internal audit work during the year.

External Audit

Audit Wales act as the Authority’s external auditor, and accordingly report on the Authority’s financial management and performance. In addition, Audit Wales gives an opinion on the adequacy of internal audit work.

Monitoring Officer

The Director of Corporate Services has been nominated as the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer has the specific duty to ensure that the Authority’s Officers and appointed Members maintain the highest standard of conduct in all they do. The Monitoring Officer advises on constitutional procedure and the legality of the Authority’s actions.

Financial Management

The Authority’s financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirement of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016). The Chief Finance Officer (who is Cyngor Gwynedd’s Chief Finance Officer) is the officer responsible for the administration of financial affairs as required under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

4. Significant Governance Issues and Actions Undertaken During the Year

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets a core duty on the Authority to set well-being objectives that maximise its contribution to achieving the 7 well-being goals set out in the Act. The Authority's well-being objectives should be objectives for change over the long term.

The Authority's Well-being Statement for 2021-26 sets out Well-being Objectives which describes how they will help the Authority achieve the seven wellbeing goals for Wales.

The Well-being Objectives concentrate on three key areas of work - Resilient Environments, Resilient Communities and Resilient Ways of Working - and have been aligned with five sub themes to provide focus, as set out below.

Resilient Environments

1. Improving recreation management and any negative effects of recreation.
2. Responding to the challenges of Climate Change.
3. Improving the management and understanding of Cultural Heritage.
4. Addressing the challenges and opportunities of post Brexit land management scenarios.
5. Addressing the decline in nature.

Resilient Communities

1. Maintaining and increasing the quality of life of residents.
2. Supporting young people.
3. Promoting sustainable tourism to add value to local communities.
4. Promoting and actively supporting the Welsh language.
5. Developing a local economy which supports both the designation and the management of Eryri as a National Park.

Resilient Ways of Working

1. Developing a skilled workforce.
2. Developing and promoting best practice.
3. Effective partnership working.
4. Modernising governance arrangements.
5. Maintaining and improve the understanding and support of local communities to the work of the National Park.

Any actions that the Authority takes in achieving the well-being objectives will need to be made in a sustainable way. Sustainable development involves five key requirements namely:

1. Long Term – the importance of balancing short term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to meet long term needs, especially where things done to meet short term needs may have detrimental long term effects.
2. Integration – how our well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, how the well-being objectives may impact upon each other or upon other public bodies' well-being objectives, in particular where steps

taken by us may contribute to meeting one objective but may be detrimental to meeting another.

3. Involvement – the importance of involving other persons with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and of ensuring those persons reflect the diversity of the population of Wales or the geographical area of the Authority.
4. Collaboration – acting in collaboration with any person (or how different parts of the Authority acting together) could assist the Authority to meet its well-being objectives, or assist another body to meet its objectives.
5. Prevention – to take account of how deploying resources to prevent problems occurring, or getting worse may contribute to meeting the Authority’s well-being objectives, or another body’s objectives.

The Corporate Work Programme for 2022/23 was presented for approval as a working document by the Members at the Authority meeting on the 15th of June 2022. The Programme sets out the projects, initiatives and specific actions that will fulfil the Authority’s Well-being Objectives and Service Priorities.

Progress against the Programme has been reported to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 30th of November 2022. It is expected that the full annual report on the Corporate Work Programme be reported to the Performance and Resources Committee in July 2023.

5. Effectiveness of the Governance Framework

Snowdonia National Park Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the senior managers within the Authority, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. The review is based on the seven principles from the Code of Corporate Governance.

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

<p>Code of Corporate Governance</p>	<p>Governance was scrutinised in depth during 2021/22 by a Task and Finish Group of Officers and Members which was established especially for this purpose.</p> <p>The Code of Corporate Governance was reviewed in depth and redrafted by the Group, to ensure that it remains a cornerstone of effective governance for the future.</p> <p>The revised Code of Governance was formally adopted by the Authority in its meeting on the 27th of April 2022.</p>
<p>Standards Committee</p>	<p>The Standards Committee met twice during the year.</p> <p>From May 2022 the remit of the Standards Committee included an additional statutory duty to prepare an annual report to the Authority on how the committee’s functions have been discharged and provide an overview of conduct matters generally within the Authority.</p> <p>The first meeting held on the 1st of April 2022 was primarily dedicated to agreeing the Annual Report, which was later presented to the Authority in its Annual General Meeting held on the 15th of June 2022.</p> <p>The second meeting of Standards Committee which was held on the 2nd of September 2022, considered the Committee’s usual business, which included the nomination of Members for the Single Status Grading Appeals Panel, Grant of Dispensations and the consideration of the Authority’s Annual Complaints Monitoring Report as well as the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report.</p>
<p>Whistle Blowing Policy</p>	<p>During 2022/23, no reports or concerns were raised in relation to any Member or Officer of the Authority under the Whistle Blowing Policy.</p>
<p>Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy</p>	<p>During 2022/23, no complaints of alleged fraud or corruption were made regarding any Member or Officer of the Authority, and Internal Auditors did not identify any areas of concern through their auditing work.</p>

Model Code of Conduct	During 2022/23, no amendments or revisions were made to the Model Code of Conduct.
Complaints – Officers	<p>During 2022/23, the Authority received a total of 7 formal complaints.</p> <p>Two of these complaints were later referred to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales, who declined to investigate further.</p> <p>The Authority was therefore not subject to a formal investigation of alleged maladministration by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales during 2022/23.</p>
Complaints - Members	During 2022/23, the Authority’s Monitoring Officer did not receive any formal complaints relating to the Members, and no complaints were submitted directly to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.
Standing Orders	<p>The Authority’s Standing Orders were reviewed as part of the remit of the Reviewing Governance Task and Finish Group during 2021/22.</p> <p>The review concluded that the Authority continues with its current committee structure but that the Authority should in future consider an amendment giving the Performance and Resources committee the right to make final decisions on financial and other reports (unless Authority approval is specifically required).</p>
Standing Orders relating to Contracts	<p>A new revised version of the Standing Orders relating to Contracts was presented to the Authority for adoption in its meeting on the 16th of November 2022.</p> <p>The revision incorporates the previously accepted recommendations given by Welsh Government and ensures compliance with all new regulations relating to the withdrawal from the European Union. It also provides a foundation for the Authority to incorporate environmental considerations into its green procurement policy.</p>

<p>Scheme of Delegation</p>	<p>The Scheme of Delegation was reviewed as part of the remit of the Reviewing Governance Task and Finish Group during 2021/22.</p> <p>The Group concluded that the current Officer Scheme of Delegation continued to be fit for purpose, and therefore no recommendation for changes were given.</p>
<p>Members' Register of Interests</p>	<p>The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 places a requirement on the Authority to publish the current Members' Register of Interests on the Authority's website.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of each Authority Member to keep their record of personal interests up to date and to report on any changes in a timely manner. Nonetheless, the Member Services Officer sends each Member a copy of their current record after each AGM of the Authority, and requests that they be reviewed and updated if required.</p>

Principle 2: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

<p>Strategic Equality Plan</p>	<p>The Annual Report on the Strategic Equality Plan was presented to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 30th of November 2022.</p> <p>The Authority's progress on its action plan for reaching its Equality Objectives was reported, along with the Equality Impact Assessments undertaken during the year, equal pay monitoring data and staff equality data.</p>
<p>Direct Consultation</p>	<p>During 2022/23 the Authority continued to engage with local communities and stakeholders through a range of means, from traditional written consultations and online questionnaires to webinars, online meetings as well as face-to-face meetings, workshops and consultation surgeries.</p> <p>As all remaining Covid-19 restrictions were removed during the year, greater flexibility in the number and types of consultation and engagement methods are now available for the Authority. This enables us to reach more people by providing more accessible ways of engaging.</p> <p>Hybrid meetings and consultation events are proving particularly popular, as they allow access to both people who</p>

	<p>prefer face-to-face engagement as well as people who prefer or find it more practical to engage online.</p> <p>The technology which enables this is still very new to the Authority and to some members of the public. However, with practice and more usage, experiences will improve over time.</p>
<p>Communication and Engagement Strategy</p>	<p>Communication and engagement is an essential element in everything the Authority does. It is also something that can always be improved upon, and the Authority's Strategy reflects this.</p> <p>Fast paced technological advancements and the continuing growth in social media platforms and participation levels, means that the Authority needs to be fully focused on engaging effectively through the correct channels at the correct time with a wide range of audiences.</p> <p>The second annual report on the strategy was presented to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 22nd of March 2023. The report included data for the performance indicators set out in the strategy.</p> <p>Discussions around the future of social media and how the Authority benefited during lockdown in particular, through efficient communication took place during consideration of the annual report. It was confirmed that social media channels were continuing to have an important role in engaging and communicating on sustainable transport measures in place around Yr Wyddfa etc. However, it was confirmed that staff were moving away from the TikTok platform, after recent security concerns were flagged by the UK Government.</p>
<p>Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations Requests</p>	<p>The Authority has adopted the Information Commissioner's Model Publication Scheme and has published a guide to information, both of which are available on the website.</p> <p>During 2022, 30 requests were received of which 21 received all the information requested (70%). Of the other 9 requests, 3 were refused or partially refused as the information requested did not exist or the authority did not hold the information, 2 requests were partially refused as the information would have identified members of the public who reported possible breaches of planning control, 1 request was partially refused as it contained third party personal data, 1 request was refused as it contained commercially sensitive information, and 1 request was partially refused as it was for the Authority's response to a pre-planning application advice</p>

	<p>request, which had not resulted in a planning application. It is the Authority's policy to keep these confidential until such time as a planning application is submitted, and accordingly is classed as exempt under Regulation 12(5)(f) of the Environment Information Regulations 2004.</p> <p>The Authority was previously challenged on this in 2020, and the Information Commissioner upheld the Authority's decision.</p> <p>No complaints were submitted during the year to the Information Commissioner with regard to any information request.</p>
<p>Committee Agendas and Associated Reports</p>	<p>The Authority's Committee agendas and associated reports are published on the website at least 3 clear working days before each meeting.</p> <p>An archive of past Committee meetings agendas and associated papers is also available on the website.</p>

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

<p>Cynllun Yr Wyddfa Partnership Plan</p>	<p>Although no formal update report on Cynllun Yr Wyddfa was presented to Members during 2022, three newsletters providing an update on the work of the Partnership were issued and a discussion on the parking and transport element took place on the at the October 2022 Members Working Group.</p> <p>Since launching the Plan in 2018 many of the initial projects have been completed and the Partnership intends to review the Plan during 2024 with the launch of a revised version - five years since the original Plan was created. Examples of the projects which have been completed include: Llwybrau'r Wyddfa Walks Ap; Online Ambassador Programme; Nant Peris bus stop and information board; Creating and actioning a Communication Plan; Improved interpretation of the Yr Wyddfa region; and a Litter project.</p> <p>One of the Plan's priorities is to implement the Yr Wyddfa and Ogwen Parking and Transport Strategy. Many of the initial elements have been implemented with support from Transport for Wales, and work on this vital element continues apace.</p> <p>In October 2022, the Authority appointed the Yr Wyddfa Ddi-blastig – Plastic Free Officer – for 2 years. This ambitious project embarks on a 'Plastic Free Path' together with visitors, businesses and schools, and learning from each other to protect the mountain. The goal is to reduce the volume of single-use plastics sold, used, and discarded on and around Wales' busiest mountain. The hope is to eliminate all unnecessary plastics from the waste-stream in the future. Learnings from this pilot will be used to implement similar projects across the National Park area.</p>
<p>Cynllun Eryri (Eryri National Park Partnership Plan)</p>	<p>Cynllun Eryri was adopted by the National Park Authority as its statutory (Partnership) Management Plan in October 2020 and officially launched in November 2020. The second annual report of progress capturing input from all Partners from November 2021 until the end of 2022 is currently in draft form.</p> <p>2021-22 continued to be challenging for all Partners. The emergence from periods of lock down due to the Covid-</p>

	<p>19 pandemic highlighted new issues, as well as hastened innovative ways of working. Nevertheless, through the gathering of information for the annual report, it is clear that outstanding examples of work towards Cynllun Eryri's goals being progressed exist across the region.</p> <p>In its second year of implementation, significant progress has been made on the Action Plan of Cynllun Eryri. There are currently no Outcomes which have been assessed as <i>Not progressed and/or at risk</i>. It is therefore fair to conclude that progress has been achieved in all areas of the Action Plan of Cynllun Eryri in the year from 2021-22.</p> <p>The draft Annual Report for 2022 will be discussed at the Fforwm Eryri meeting on 16th May 2023 and it is hoped that it will be presented to Authority members in the AGM on 14th June 2023 for adoption.</p>
<p>Eryri Local Development Plan 2016-2031</p>	<p>The revised Eryri Local Development Plan 2016-2031 (LDP) was adopted on the 6th of February 2019.</p> <p>The third Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) was presented to the Planning and Access Committee on the 19th of October 2022, and it covered the period April 2021 to the end of March 2022. The AMR is submitted to the Welsh Government by the 31st of October each year.</p> <p>In addition to approving the Annual Monitoring Report 2021-22, the Committee approved the need to undertake a review of the adopted Eryri Local Development Plan 2016-2031, as a result of the Annual Monitoring Report evidence, significant national and local contextual changes, and the publication of Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (the National Development Framework) along with other changes in national policy.</p> <p>Confirmation was also given on the next steps for undertaking the review of the adopted Eryri Local Development Plan 2016-2031, through the preparation of a Review Report and to report the findings to the Welsh Government.</p>

<p>Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Visitor Economy</p>	<p>In its meeting on the 8th of February 2023, the Authority formally adopted the Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Visitor Economy in Gwynedd and Eryri (2035).</p> <p>Snowdonia National Park Authority and Cyngor Gwynedd are the only two public authorities in the UK to have such a strategy.</p> <p>The principles within the Strategy have been developed and accepted through extensive consultation, which included Members of the Authority.</p> <p>The Plan cannot be implemented by the two partners alone, it depends on a broad and new Partnership in order to realise the vision. One of the first actions will be the establishment of the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership, which will bring partners together for the first time to formally discuss the area for the future.</p>
<p>Corporate Work Programme 2021-22</p>	<p>As the Authority now has an adopted Well-being Statement which includes its Well-being Objectives for a five-year period from 2021-26; there will therefore be no need for an annual review.</p> <p>The agreed actions in the Corporate Work Programme will now be sufficient to enable the Authority to assess its progress in attaining the Well-being Objectives and there will accordingly be no need for a separate report on Performance Indicators. The Corporate Work Programme for 2022/23 was adopted by the Authority on the 15th of June 2022.</p> <p>Members were provided with updates on the progress made in meeting the Well-being Objectives, outlined in the Corporate Work Programme for 2022/23.</p> <p>Progress on the first two quarters of the financial year was reported to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 30th of November 2022. The third and fourth quarter progress report will be presented for consideration in July 2023.</p>

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

<p>Budget Strategy 2022/23</p>	<p>The Authority’s revenue budget for 2022/23 was confirmed in the Chief Finance Officer’s report to the Authority on the 9th of February 2022. The report also confirmed the levy on constituent authorities.</p> <p>An update on the Budget was presented to the Authority on the 16th of November 2022 and to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 22nd of March 2023.</p> <p>The report outlined the projected year-end revenue position of a net expenditure balance of £19,345 below the budget level. Despite the significant overspend in some service areas, there is an overall underspend because of unfilled job posts during the year which have contributed to cover the overspend in other service areas.</p> <p>In addition, the original provision of 4% for salary increases was insufficient resulting in a requirement for an additional £84k. During 2021/22, two increments were awarded to each job post within the Authority apart from the Directors and the Chief Executive. The Authority has since decided to award an equivalent increase to the Director posts which will be dated from April 2022. A decision is yet to be made whether to award a similar increase to the Chief Executive.</p>
<p>Mid Term Financial Plan 2023/24 – 2026/27</p>	<p>In its meeting on the 26th of April 2023, the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance presented the revised Medium Term Financial Plan for 2023/24 – 2026/27 to the Authority, which outlines a range of financial situations that could face the Authority over the next four years. The Plan outlines a model of the financial resources required by the Authority for the service levels it hopes to provide in the mid term.</p> <p>The Plan confirmed that the income targets for 2023/24 have been maintained on the same level as 2021/22 except for Plas Tan y Bwlch. It was also reported that the core National Park Grant settlement will remain at the same level over the next 3 years, without any provision for inflation.</p> <p>The Plan also notes that the general inflation figure was increased from its historic amount of £10,000 to £15,000</p>

	<p>by 2022/23, with a further increase to £30,000 in the original budget for 2023/24. Recent developments suggest that the effect of inflation could be approximately 10% for 2023/24 before decreasing in following years.</p> <p>Any additional money received through specific grants (other than core grants) brings with it additional administrative work that stretches current staff resources. Therefore, consideration needs to be given to the implication of this additional work pressure on some of the Authority's services by evaluating the value of the grants against the additional staff requirements.</p>
<p>Performance Management</p>	<p>The mechanism for reviewing performance in relation to the Authority's Well-being Statement and the Corporate Work Programme was set out formally in 2021/22.</p> <p>The Performance and Resources Committee will scrutinise performance on the actions contained in the Corporate Work Programme which gives an insight into progress on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>The Annual Report for 2021/22 which was approved for adoption and publication by the Authority in its meeting on the 12th of October 2022, reported on Year 1 progress in achieving the Authority's Well-being Objectives.</p>

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

<p>Members’ Role Descriptions</p>	<p>Revised role descriptions for Members and for the Chair and Vice Chair were adopted by the Authority on the 27th of April 2022.</p> <p>Changes were made to strengthen the emphasis of the role of members in setting a strategic direction and ambition for the Authority, providing an overarching introduction including the purpose of National Parks and the role of the Authority in delivering on these purposes, and strengthening the section on personal and role development.</p>
<p>Members’ Attendance</p>	<p>The online platform Zoom for holding committee and other meetings is now well embedded across the Authority and is working well.</p> <p>During the year, the Authority invested in equipment for enabling hybrid meetings, which will now become commonplace across public authorities.</p> <p>After a couple of training sessions with both staff and Members, the first official hybrid committee meeting held was the Performance and Resources Committee on the 30th of November 2022.</p> <p>Members of the public can observe the committees in person at Plas Tan y Bwlch or can register in advance for access via Zoom.</p> <p>Members’ attendance at meetings during 2022/23 was 82%, compared to 82% in 2021/22 and 88% in 2020/21.</p>
<p>Member Training</p>	<p>In 2022/23, member attendance at training events was 70% (75% in 2021/22).</p> <p>During the year, one Member Development Day was held on the 14th of October 2022. The day included a tour around Yr Ysgwrn and a discussion around future developments, a guided walk around the Woodland in Ganllwyd after an introduction to the LIFE Celtic Rainforest Project, and a guided walk in Dyffryn Ardudwy with Wardens to discuss path developments in the area.</p>

<p>Staff Performance Appraisals and Training</p>	<p>Learning and development needs are identified in annual performance appraisal reviews, which outlines training priorities for the year ahead.</p> <p>Concern has previously been raised at the Performance and Resources Committee meetings that the percentage of staff appraised continued to be low, and in 2020/21 had dropped to an unprecedented 32%. Data from 2022/23 indicates that 37% of staff have been appraised although the true figure may be higher. A new monitoring system has now been put into place to collect reliable data on this for the 2023/24 financial year.</p>
<p>Human Resources Strategy</p>	<p>Staff sickness absences was 11.5 days in 2019/20, but this had dropped significantly to 3 days in 2020/21. It is thought that a combination of most staff working from home and restricted social contacts due to lockdowns, has significantly reduced contagious illnesses, which has led to reduced staff sickness absence as a result.</p> <p>In 2022/23 average staff sickness absence was 6.95 days.</p> <p>However, further personnel data is not currently available, as the Annual Updating Report on implementing the Authority's HR Strategy has not been presented to the Performance and Resources Committee during 2021/22 and 2022/23. This is due to the Head of Personnel retiring on the 30th of June 2021, and the subsequent failure to appoint to the post at that time.</p> <p>A new Head of Human Resources was appointed and commenced in post on the 13th of June 2022. Since this time, a substantial percentage of the Head's time has been spent on managing staff and resources at Plas Tan y Bwlch due to key staff being on sickness absence.</p> <p>At the end of March 2023, the equivalent of 4 additional days staffing resources has been given to the service on a permanent basis, to both increase long-term resilience and to be able to have sufficient resources to undertake all aspects of the service's responsibilities, which have been neglected over the last few years. This will include work on revising and updating the Human Resources Strategy.</p> <p>Although the Strategy itself has not been updated, work has already been done on revamping and improving key priority areas within the Strategy to address staff</p>

	<p>recruitment and retention issues. For example, the Authority's Induction training for new staff has been updated and improved, and work has commenced around permanent flexible and hybrid working arrangements for staff.</p>
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Principle 6: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

<p>Financial Statements</p>	<p>The draft Statement of Accounts was not completed within the extended timeline of 31st of August 2022. They were presented to the Authority on the 12th of October 2022.</p> <p>Prior to this, Members had approved the Outturn Report for 2021/22 at the Performance and Resources Committee on the 13th of July 2022.</p> <p>Audit Wales commenced an audit of the Statement of Accounts on the 19th of September 2022. The intended timetable as set out in accordance with the regulations, was that the Appointed Auditor would complete the audit and present the Final Letter of Representation to Members at an Authority meeting before the 30th of November 2022, for approval in accordance with The Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018.</p> <p>However, difficulties had arisen due to the need to re-evaluate the Authority's assets every 5 years. The work has been done by external valuers and further details are still awaited. An Audit Wales representative attended the Authority meeting on the 8th of February 2023 and gave an update to this effect.</p> <p>At the time of reporting this process was still underway, which means that the Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 have yet to be formally certified and approved.</p>

<p>Risk Management</p>	<p>The Risk Register is reviewed and updated quarterly by the Heads of Service and Management Team.</p> <p>Identified risks as noted in the Risk Register are allocated as a responsibility to named officers and target dates are set for mitigation. The Risk Register is reviewed by Members at each Performance and Resources Committee and any removal of risks from the Register is ratified annually at an Authority meeting.</p>
<p>External Audit</p>	<p>At the Authority meeting on the 27th of April 2022, Audit Wales presented their Audit Plan for 2022. The report sets out the audit risks and proposed audit response to be undertake during the year. The report also notes that the performance audit was yet to confirmed at that time. The audit fees were also confirmed.</p> <p>At the Authority meeting on the 15th of June 2022, Audit Wales presented its report setting out its findings following its Review of Sustainable Tourism in Eryri National Park. Full details of the findings and recommendations are set out under Section 6 (Significant Governance Issues) in this Statement.</p> <p>At the start of 2023, Audit Wales commenced a review on governance within National Park Authorities in Wales, which will include effective scrutiny, partnerships, supporting recovery and resilience, the appointment of members and maximising their contribution through balancing national and local issues. This review is ongoing.</p> <p>At the time of reporting, the Annual Audit Summary was yet to be given by Audit Wales. This is due to the Statement of Accounts not having been formally certified and approved.</p>
<p>Internal Audit</p>	<p>The Internal Audit Manager reports on the previous financial year's work to the Performance and Resources Committee in July.</p> <p>There were three internal audits scheduled to be undertaken during 2022/23, namely Mandatory Training, Claiming Travelling Costs and Banking Reconciliations. Due to a conflict of interest regarding staff changes in the Finance Service, the Banking Reconciliation audit was postponed and an audit on the Carneddau Community Fund was done in its place.</p>

	<p>Both audits on Claiming Travelling Costs and the Carneddau Community Fund were rated as “High” - assurance of propriety can be expressed as the internal controls in place can be relied upon to achieve objectives.</p> <p>The audit on Mandatory Training was given a “Satisfactory” rating – there are controls in place to achieve the objectives but there are aspects where the arrangements can be tightened to further mitigate the risks.</p> <p>As a result of this, one recommendation was given for tightening arrangements for mandator training.</p>
<p>Health and Safety</p>	<p>The Health and Safety Group meets quarterly to monitor health and safety issues within the Authority.</p> <p>The Annual Health and Safety Report presented to the Performance and Resources Committee usually details the training courses undertaken during the year and the incidents / accidents that were recorded.</p> <p>It was reported that it is usual to compare year on year data on incidents that were recorded, which also includes reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive under the ‘Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)’. However, data from the 2021/22 was not representative due to several factors including home working and that the position of Head of Human Resources had been vacant for over a year. This had resulted in insufficient assurance that the data collected during 2021/22 was complete, and therefore was not included in the report.</p> <p>Concern was raised at the lack of comparable data for the second year running.</p>
<p>Information Centres</p>	<p>The Authority has 3 Information Centres in Betws y Coed, Beddgelert and Aberdyfi, which are managed by the Sustainable Tourism Manager, whose main objective is to ensure that the Centres are commercially viable / self-financing.</p> <p>The Information Centres Annual Report was presented to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 30th of November 2022. The report provided an overview of</p>

	<p>the 2022/23 year to date, and the actions to be taken in 2023/24.</p> <p>The report outlined detailed visitor numbers and spend per head data at each of the Centres. The report also highlights a number of challenges experienced during the season with staffing levels due to recruitment difficulties.</p>
<p>Borrowing and Investment Strategies / Treasury Management</p>	<p>The Annual Report providing the actual Treasury Management (borrowing and investment) of the Authority during 2021/22, was presented to the Authority meeting on the 15th of June 2022.</p> <p>During 2021/22, the Authority's activity remained within the limits that were originally set. There has been no borrowing.</p> <p>In 2021/22, the total interest received from investments was £10,846. Interest received from car loans of £710 increases the total to £11,556 against a budget of £8,000.</p> <p>The bank and building society interest sum of £10,846 for 2021/22 is comparable to the corresponding amount of £11,113 in 2020/21. Despite rising inflation, interest rates have remained low during the year.</p> <p>An oral Interim Treasury Management report was given to the Authority on the 16th of November 2022. The Chief Finance Officer advised that the Authority's funds and investments continued to be secure and that interest income was expected to be £12K higher than projected in the 2022/23 budget.</p> <p>The Chief Finance Officer presented the Capital Strategy for 2023/24 at the Authority meeting on the 8th of February 2023.</p> <p>The report gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of National Park services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.</p> <p>The report confirms that the Authority commences 2023/24 debt free. Members approved no change in the authorised borrowing limit and the operational boundary, and approved both the Capital Borrowing Strategy and</p>

	<p>Investment Strategy for 2023/24, and noted the content with regard to the Prudential Code.</p>
Plas Tan y Bwlch Study Centre	<p>Plas Tan y Bwlch continues to evolve its business model and has welcomed back many courses and course participants, whilst continuing to take advantage of the B&B and events market. The Plas Tan y Bwlch Board meet quarterly and minutes are placed on the Performance and Resources Committee agenda.</p> <p>The risks of failing to reach the income generating target for Plas Tan y Bwlch was increased to High on the Authority's Risk Register in March 2022. The risk level was further raised in March 2023, with an increased score. Details are outlined under section 6 of this statement.</p> <p>Securing the long-term future of Plas Tan y Bwlch is currently classed as medium risk on the Authority's Risk Register. A report was considered by Members at their Working Group on the 19th of April 2023, giving an update on the current financial situation and outlining issues to consider with regards the future of the business.</p> <p>It was resolved at this meeting to await a future report detailing the options from the Plas Tan y Bwlch Board in Autumn 2023.</p>
Yr Ysgwrn	<p>Yr Ysgwrn's Annual Report was presented to the Authority on the 27th of April 2022.</p> <p>The report confirms that Yr Ysgwrn had a £7,000 overspend at the end of the 2021/22 financial year due to reduced income, the cost of commissioning the Yr Ysgwrn Curriculum and property management costs due to various technical problems with the alarm and biomass boiler.</p> <p>The report also sets out the proposed site plans for the forthcoming year and acknowledges that the budget targets are challenging. Visitor numbers and corresponding income trends are not clear due to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>In March 2023, the Risk Register continues to rate the risk of Yr Ysgwrn failing to reach its income generating target as High.</p>

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

<p>Pay Policy Statement</p>	<p>Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 places a requirement on Local Authorities to prepare pay policy statements. Whilst National Park Authorities are exempt from this requirement, it has been considered good practice to adopt such a statement, and accordingly this is done annually by the Head of Human Resources.</p> <p>The Authority's Pay Policy Report for 2021/22 and Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 was presented to the Performance and Resources Committee on the 23rd of March 2022, ensuring transparency in staff remuneration at the Authority.</p> <p>The Authority's Pay Policy Report for 2022/23 and Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 was not presented to the Performance and Resources Committee in March 2023 as is the usual practice, and is now expected to be presented at the next Performance and Resources Committee in July 2023.</p>
<p>Annual Report and Improvement Plan 2021/22</p>	<p>The Annual Report and Improvement Plan for 2021/22 was presented to the Authority meeting on the 12th of October 2022, before being published on the website and distributed to the Authority's main centres, public libraries etc., within the National Park.</p> <p>It contains the Chairman's Annual Report for the year, which sets out what was achieved, not achieved and any problems that were encountered.</p> <p>It also contains details of the Authority's Service Priorities and the Authority's Objectives set on an annual basis that feed into and show how it is intended to take the National Park forward in order to attain the Authority's vision; a summary evaluation of progress made in attaining the Authority's Objectives, the key work activities for 2021/22, and performance management (including performance indicator results for the year).</p>

<p>Hybrid Committees and Broadcasting</p>	<p>Towards the end of 2022, the Authority commenced hybrid Committee meetings. Members and Officers have the choice to attend in-person at Plas Tan y Bwlch or join online through Zoom.</p> <p>The Authority meetings and the Planning and Access Committee are also webcast live on to the Authority's YouTube channel, as well as a recording of the meeting being able to be viewed at any time. Members of the public therefore can either attend the Committee meetings in-person or can access remotely.</p> <p>This not only improves access for Members and Officers but also access, transparency and reporting of the Authority's business for members of the public.</p>
<p>Member Scrutiny</p>	<p>At the Performance and Resources Committee on the 20th of November 2022, a report to consider further scrutiny areas for 2023-24 was presented to Members.</p> <p>The Chief Executive advised that the Management Team, after considering the current pressures on staff, recommended that the Authority should not commit to a further programme of strategic scrutiny at present.</p> <p>It was confirmed that Scrutiny work already underway on Carbon and Place Names would continue.</p>
<p>Grant Funding</p>	<p>Most project based work in the Authority is funded through external grant funding.</p> <p>Following correspondence with the Ministers Office on the complexities of delivering short term grants and the need to ensure member involvement in the approval of projects/programmes, Members discussed and adopted a process for developing and approving projects in the Performance and Resources Committee on the 23rd of March 2022.</p> <p>Audit Wales have previously highlighted the pressures that supporting delivery through grant sources places on an organisation. Measures have been put in place to address some of the matters identified. A Project Tool Kit was adopted (approved by members Working Group 22.05.19 and since amended in 28.01.22. to include the Welsh Language Policy on Awarding Grants), and is being utilised by officers to assess the impact of any project on the Authority.</p>

	Grant Funding updates are given to Members through the Performance and Resources Committee every six months.
<p>Place Names Task and Finish Group</p>	<p>In November 2020, the Place Names Task and Finish Group was established by the Authority's Performance and Resources Committee with the following terms of reference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To develop a policy framework to enable SNPA to protect and standardize the use of place names in Eryri National Park by the Authority, its partners and stakeholders. ➤ Raise awareness among different audiences of the importance of place names in Eryri / Snowdonia; and as a source that strengthens links with the environment, history and heritage of the area. ➤ To define success, a work programme and which partners can collaborate. <p>In a report to the Authority on the 16th of November 2022, Members were informed that the role of the Task and Finish Group has now evolved into more long-term elements of work as a Place Names Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>At that meeting, Members resolved to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt the Place Names Principles as a guide for the Authority's use of place names. 2. Approve the use of the names <i>Yr Wyddfa</i> and <i>Eryri</i> in the Welsh and English languages, giving officers the discretion to use the terms, <i>Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon)</i> and <i>Eryri (Snowdonia)</i> in English, should the context require this for education and engagement purposes.

6. Significant Governance Issues and Actions Proposed for 2022/23

Audit Wales: Sustainable Tourism

During 2021/22 a review was conducted by Audit Wales in an attempt to answer the question of whether the Authority is doing all it can to effectively manage sustainable tourism in the National Park.

The review was undertaken during the period October 2021 and February 2022. Reporting on the outcome in June 2022, Audit Wales concluded that “the Authority has well established partnerships to address sustainable tourism, but its vision is not yet clearly defined, which means it difficult to demonstrate impact”.

Proposals for Improvement

The table below sets out the proposals for improvement identified by Audit Wales whilst undertaking the review. During 2022/23, the Authority worked at implementing these proposals, the outcomes of which have been reported under the specific headings within this Statement and have been incorporated into the Corporate Work Programme for the year.

Specifically, following the Authority’s adoption of the Strategic Plan for a Sustainable Visitor Economy in Gwynedd and Eryri (2035), work has commenced on producing an Action Plan which will include holistic measurements on the impacts of tourism (R1 and R2). However, it is important to note that implementing this Strategic Plan will require significant capacity and resource commitment over the coming years, which is an identified risk and a potential barrier of success.

Specific projects within Cynllun Eryri already involve working closely with tourism businesses to both promote and deliver various sustainable tourism practices such as Yr Wyddfa Di-blastig project (R3), the progress of which are outlined in the Cynllun Eryri Annual Report.

R1	Given the limited clarity of key outcomes defined around sustainable tourism, and the consequent weaknesses in its ability to demonstrate impact, we recommend that the Authority: Build on the positive collaboration with Cyngor Gwynedd to establish clear outcomes and specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives to shape its work on sustainable tourism.
R2	Given the limited clarity of key outcomes defined around sustainable tourism, and the consequent weaknesses in its ability to demonstrate impact, we recommend that the Authority: Review its current suite of performance indicators across key partnership activity related to sustainable tourism and establishes meaningful, outcome-focused measures to better demonstrate impact.

R3	<p>Given the important role of the Authority in addressing the impact of tourism on the natural environment and the need to influence behaviour, we recommend that the Authority:</p> <p>Work with tourist businesses to promote the concept of sustainable tourism and identifies what and how they can contribute to help deliver the Authority's ambitions.</p>
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The Authority's Risk Profile

The three highest risks to the Authority as updated in March 2023, is as follows:

Risk	Result	Action Identified / Progress to date
Insufficient core budget funding.	Cut in Services.	<p>There has been no increase in the level of Welsh Government funding for the National Park Grant for 2023/24, despite inflation increases of around 10%, a level not seen since the 1980s.</p> <p>Welsh Government projections suggest no change to the Grant by 2024/25, although that could change due to political pressure. Officers and Members of the Authority will try to influence the Government to finance our unavoidable inflationary costs, through a contribution from some specific grants, if not in the core grant.</p> <p>Also, SNPA has retained reserve flexibility and a prudent level of funds to be able to balance the 2023/24 budget without implementing emergency cuts. Therefore, although the anticipated financial challenge is now clear, we are able to limit the impact on the Authority's services this year, but significant savings will be required by 2024/25, with a detrimental effect, unless the Government increases' the grant.</p>
Income Generating Target (Plas Tan y Bwlch).	Failure to keep within the Authority's budget.	Following the pandemic and the numerous lockdowns Plas Tan y Bwlch has been operating a hybrid business model that consists of attempting to make the most of the tourist trade by offering a B&B package to visitors, undertaking special events such as

		<p>conferences and weddings whilst welcoming back some of what could be described as the previous core users of Plas Tan y Bwlch.</p> <p>Overall, this has met with mixed results. Whilst income has increased from year to year so unfortunately has the overall costs, particularly when one considers the inflationary pressures facing Plas Tan y Bwlch. With the financial pressures facing the Authority in general there is a growing need to address the deficit. The Plas Tan y Bwlch Board undertakes regular meetings to discuss the deficit and consider future options.</p>
<p>Yr Ysgwrn fails to generate sufficient income to meet the budget.</p>	<p>Yr Ysgwrn relies on a higher subsidy from the Authority and/or uses financial reserves which have been saved following previous prosperous years. In the end, this will mean Yr Ysgwrn will not be sustainable.</p>	<p>Yr Ysgwrn ended the financial year with an overspend on the budget. The overspend was due to a combination of reduced income due to fewer groups visiting as a result of the continuing impact of Covid-19 and a significant increase in most running costs. Maintaining Yr Ysgwrn within budget is an ongoing challenge in the light of the cost of living crisis impairing visitor spend and soaring running costs.</p> <p>Costs are regularly reviewed however the current climate of increasing costs is unprecedented for Yr Ysgwrn, with very little room to manoeuvre within the budget. Most costs, such as heating, telephone and electricity are fixed and necessary for accreditation standards.</p> <p>Substantial grant support was received in 2022/23 in order to support activity and education work and that helped to maintain a standard and appealing program for families and schools. The legacy of this investment will have a positive impact on 2023/24 programming and officers will continue to proactively seek and apply for funding to support all elements of activity in order to sustain and develop audiences and income.</p>

7. Opinion

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the matters referred to in part 6 to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.



EMYR WILLIAMS

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE
SNOWDONIA NATIONAL
PARK AUTHORITY**

DATE: 14.06.2023

ANNWEN HUGHES

**CHAIR
SNOWDONIA NATIONAL
PARK AUTHORITY**

DATE : 14.06.2023