

## Tourism and Recreation

- 6.32 Tourism has been a traditional industry in Snowdonia and the surrounding seaside resorts for at least two centuries. People have been coming to the area to enjoy the unspoilt character of the landscape and scenery and the distinctiveness of the area's Welsh identity. Whilst Snowdonia's mountains have long been popular for climbing and hill walking a variety of other activities have also increased in popularity. The forests, coasts and inland waters of Snowdonia also attract significant numbers of people to take part in recreational activities including paddle sports, canoeing, white water rafting, sailing, golf, cycling, angling and other recreational events. Adventure tourism is a growing market which is leading to an increased number of visitors to the area by providing a different product to the more traditional activities carried out within National Parks. Whilst the Authority recognises the potential for increased use of the natural resources of the area for recreational purposes it does not believe that the integrity of these resources and the 'Special Qualities' of the National Park should be compromised by the development of recreational facilities, which are of an inappropriate nature or scale. The biodiversity of the National Park also attracts local visitors resulting in economic benefits.
- 6.33 Through tourism it is possible to achieve one of the statutory purposes of the National Park; that is to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the 'Special Qualities' of the National Park. The Authority aims to encourage sustainable tourism and ecotourism, maximising economic and employment benefits while safeguarding the environment as well as the interest of the local communities. Sustainable tourism is any form of development, management or tourist activity which ensures the long-term protection and preservation of natural, cultural and social resources and contributes in a positive and equitable manner to the economic development and well-being of individuals living, working or staying in protected areas<sup>43</sup>. Ecotourism is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education"<sup>44</sup>. Both ecotourism and sustainable tourism support the aims and objectives of the Local Development Plan.
- 6.34 Tourism within Snowdonia National Park relies heavily on the natural environment; its landscapes and coast are the foundation of tourism. The natural environment must be protected to ensure that it can be used to draw tourists for years to come. Tourism development should therefore not damage the integrity of the natural environment or have a negative impact on the quiet enjoyment of the National Park. This also includes development that would have an adverse effect on any statutory designated nature conservation sites. Because proposals for tourism and recreation developments are often located in the open countryside, outside settlements, the ability of the landscape to accommodate a particular type of development needs to be carefully examined. The appropriateness of the development and its potential landscape and visual effects on a particular Landscape Character Area will therefore be considered in relation to the development guidelines in the Supplementary Planning Guidance documents on the Landscapes of Eryri and Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment

<sup>43</sup> Sustainable Tourism definition from the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism

<sup>44</sup> The International Ecotourism Society



Canolfan Tryweryn ©Visit Wales

## Strategic Policy: I Tourism (I)

In order to create and retain sustainable or eco-tourism within the National Park and extend the visitor period while protecting and enhancing the landscape of the National Park and its special qualities the Authority will:

- i. Support tourism and recreation development that is based on the principles of sustainable tourism.
- ii. Identify and promote areas of the National Park that attract visitors while ensuring that the 'Special Qualities' of the National Park are not affected.
- iii. Promote sustainable modes of transport for visitors to and from the National Park.
- iv. Support the accommodation industry by encouraging the improvement of the sustainability and quality of existing visitor accommodation.
- v. Encourage proposals which will promote the opportunity for the public understanding and enjoyment of the 'Special Qualities' of the National Park including proposals that will assist disabled people.

### Tourist Facilities

- 6.35 New developments will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse effects on the character of Snowdonia's 'Special Qualities'; developments must also be located near a main road and therefore place no extra pressures on minor rural roads which may be unsuitable and should not cause a significant increase in car borne traffic. The public right of way network, recreational routes, leisure networks and open country are regarded as important tourism facilities as well as serving the needs of local communities.
- 6.36 Facilities should, where practicable, service residents and visitors' needs in tandem, for example leisure centres, which are used throughout the year by residents and by tourists alike – this improves the facilities' economic viability and acceptability. New visitor-orientated services should not be introduced at the expense of year round services which cater for local needs. Some large tourism proposals could be classified as major development therefore such a proposal would need to be considered in the context of Strategic Policy B and all proposals should take account of Development Policy 1.



## Development Policy 21 : Tourism and Recreation (21)

Within the National Park existing tourist attractions will be protected and enhanced through adopting the principles of sustainable or eco-tourism. New tourist attractions and the enhancement of current attractions will be supported where:

- i. It can be accessed by various modes of transport, specifically sustainable modes of transport such as, walking, cycling and public transport.
- ii. It is located close to the main road network and does not cause an unacceptable increase in traffic in the vicinity.
- iii. The development would not have an adverse impact on the 'Special Qualities' of the National Park.
- iv. It promotes opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the 'Special Qualities' of the National Park, while not detracting from the quiet enjoyment, experience of visitors and the quality of life of the local residents.
- v. The facility is designed or modified to improve accessibility for all, in particular disabled people.
- vi. It does not have an adverse impact on the views to and from the National Park and does not generate a significant increase in noise or light pollution which could adversely affect the integrity of the Snowdonia Dark Skies Reserve.
- vii. Current facilities will be improved or conversion of a vacant or underused building is proposed.

### Tourist Accommodation

- 6.37 The Authority will prioritise proposals to improve the quality of existing serviced accommodation, in preference to new build tourist accommodation. This approach would not only avoid the limited amount of land available within settlements being developed for tourism purposes, but would also enable the character of traditional buildings to be conserved. New build serviced accommodation will be permitted within and adjacent to the main built up areas of settlements, however within housing development boundaries, if there is an identified need for affordable housing, priority will be given to housing. The Authority will encourage the provision of accommodation and facilities for disabled visitors.
- 6.38 The National Park needs to maintain a good range of quality accommodation for visitors. In some settlements, especially in the coastal areas, the local economies are heavily dependent on the availability of the serviced accommodation sector. The conversion of serviced accommodation to self-catering or non-tourist uses which precludes it from being re-used in future as serviced accommodation will be resisted. Change of use will be considered more favourable however to meet a recognised local need for affordable housing.

## Development Policy 28 : New Build Serviced Accommodation (28)

New build serviced accommodation will be permitted within or adjacent to the main built up area of local service centres, service settlements, and secondary settlements providing the following criteria are met:

- i. The proposal is not on a site which is required for local affordable housing need
- ii. The scale and design of the development is compatible with its setting.

The change of use of serviced accommodation to the non-serviced sector, or its conversion to other non- tourist uses which would prevent its subsequent re conversion back to serviced tourist accommodation, will not be permitted within the National Park unless to meet a recognised need for affordable housing.

## Static Caravans and Chalets

- 6.39 It is recognised that caravan and chalet sites provide an important addition to the range of accommodation that is on offer to meet the varying needs of the visitors to the Park. A high number of large static caravan sites are located within the National Park, most of which are along the western coastal plain. Many of these sites would be considered unsuitable today due to their scale, openness and lack of screening. Given the existing numbers of static caravans and chalets in the National Park, the Authority does not consider that there is sufficient justification for any further static caravan and chalet sites due to their effect on the landscape and on the 'Special Qualities' of the National Park. Such proposals will therefore not be permitted. The National Park Authority has issued two Supplementary Planning Documents, The Landscapes and Seascapes of Eryri, which identifies 25 discrete Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and The Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment. This document builds on the former and looks at the potential impacts of wind turbine development, telecommunications masts and static caravan and chalet sites on the LCAs. Both these documents will be material planning considerations and will be used to aid decision-making on planning applications.
- 6.40 Applications to upgrade facilities on a site such as improving toilet blocks, internal landscaping and layout will be generally supported if they improve the overall environment and appearance of the site and its overall visual impact on the landscape. In some cases, the Authority will consider an enlargement of a site, but without an increase in caravan or chalet numbers, if it can again be demonstrated that there would be clear benefits in reducing the impact on the surrounding landscape. This might be achieved by reducing overall density, moving pitches to less prominent locations and more and better landscaping on site boundaries. The National Park Authority will not look favourably on extending site boundaries if this is as a result of replacing units with larger caravans or chalets resulting in loss of amenity space. The extent of any physical site enlargement should be kept to a minimum and clearly related to the overall environmental improvements proposed. The Authority will support the replacement of static caravans with appropriately designed chalets if there is an overall improvement to the site and there is no unacceptable impact on the landscape. The Authority also has a visitor accommodation SPG which provides additional supporting information for these policies.

### Development Policy 22: Chalet and Static Caravan Sites (22)

Within the National Park new static caravan or chalet sites, or extensions to existing sites, which involve an increase in the number of static units will not be permitted.

The redevelopment of sites which may include improving or extending facilities within existing site boundaries, reducing densities or other beneficial environmental improvements will be supported, if there is an overall improvement to the site and its setting in the landscape.

Exceptionally, static and chalet site areas may be enlarged, but without increasing pitches, where this would achieve clear overall environmental improvement, both to the site and its setting in the surrounding landscape.

The replacement of static units with chalets or alternative accommodation units will be permitted where there is an overall improvement to the site and there is no unacceptable environmental or landscape impact.

Proposals for the change of use of a static caravan or chalet from tourist use to residential use will not be permitted.

## Touring Caravans and Camping Sites

- 6.41 Given the existing numbers of touring caravan and camping sites in the Park, the Authority does not consider there is sufficient justification for any further sites within the Park due to their effect on the landscape and ‘Special Qualities’ of the National Park. Such a proposal will therefore not be permitted. The Authority may support the extension or upgrading of existing touring caravan and camping sites including an increase in the number of pitches but only where they are well screened and where there is an overall landscape improvement. They will need to be of a scale and form that is compatible with the setting and capacity of the area in which they are proposed.
- 6.42 The replacement of camping pitches with touring pitches or static pitches will not be permitted, in order to maintain a range of accommodation provision within the National Park and to reduce environmental impact.

### Development Policy 23: Touring and Camping Sites (23)

Within the National Park no new touring or camping sites will be permitted.

The extension or upgrading of existing touring caravan and camping sites, will be permitted providing all of the following criteria are satisfied:

- i. The site is already well screened from public vantage points, and / or there would be a reduction of its impact on the surrounding landscape.
- ii. The scale and layout of the extension or upgrading is appropriate within the landscape.
- iii. The proposal protects and where appropriate enhances natural heritage interests.
- iv. The proposal will significantly improve the internal landscaping of a site and increase the quality of the existing facilities, or develop new high quality facilities.
- v. The proposal is in keeping with the size of the existing site.

The replacement of camping pitches with other non-camping pitches will not be permitted.

### Alternative Low Impact Holiday Accommodation

- 6.43 In recent years there has been an increase in the range of self-catering temporary / mobile accommodation on the market. These include, pods, yurts, tepees, shepherd’s huts and wooden tents. They have become increasingly popular and ‘glamping’ is now another type of holiday experience. The Authority recognises the contribution these new forms of self-catering accommodation can make in providing a wider range of accommodation on offer within the National Park and also provide wider benefits to the local economy. These types of low impact accommodation are generally less intrusive in the landscape than the more traditional static and touring caravan.

- 6.44 Due to the sensitivity of the landscape of the National Park and to avoid the proliferation of sites only proposals that are part of an agricultural diversification scheme or are ancillary to a new or existing tourist attraction will be acceptable. The types of tourist attraction will be outlined in the Visitor Accommodation SPG.
- 6.45 Primary Consideration will need to be given to the landscape and therefore any new sites will need to be small scale and in an unobtrusive location. An unobtrusive location is one which is well screened by existing landscape features and/or where the units can be readily assimilated into the landscape without the need for unnecessary man-made features such as hardstanding and fencing. Views of the site from public vantage points will be critical in assessing the suitability of any given site.
- 6.46 In addition to this the accommodation structures will need to be temporary and capable of being moved when no longer in use. In order to ensure minimum impact on the landscape the use of hardstandings should only be where they are necessary. Further guidance on the size of site deemed acceptable will be provided in the Authority's Visitor Accommodation SPG.
- 6.47 In order to ensure that these temporary structures are being used exclusively for holiday purposes and do not become full time, permanent dwellings the structures should provide basic holiday accommodation. They should only provide basic facilities for sleeping, seating and eating without installation of water services or provision of drainage facilities for WC, showers and washing. This ensures that such structures do not generate a level of permanence that could increase the level of landscape impact and site restoration should removal of the structures be required, for example should the use cease. The Authority will require a detailed strategy outlining how the land will be returned to its original condition and use if the proposed use ceases, further information will be contained in the Visitor Accommodation SPG about what is required.
- 6.48 Additional facilities, such as showers or WC (if not already present) should be provided separately from the accommodation through the conversion or extension of an existing building(s). If no suitable buildings are available, the need for additional facilities needs to be clearly demonstrated by the applicant and commensurate with the scale of the development.
- 6.49 The Authority will require that evidence provided to support any proposal which is part of an agricultural diversification scheme, conforms to the requirements set out in Technical Advice Note 6 and Development Policy 20. Further information is also outlined in the Authority's Farm Diversification SPG.
- 6.50 If the proposal is to support an existing visitor attraction, then a business plan will need to be provided for the enterprise to show that the visitor attraction will not solely be reliant on the alternative accommodation and the tourist attraction is still viable and will still continue to function ensuring that the site does not become solely an alternative accommodation site.
- 6.51 A condition will be attached to the permission which will state that should the existing visitor attraction cease then the alternative accommodation units will have to be removed.
- 6.52 Proposals will only be permitted for short-term self-catering holiday accommodation and this will be secured by a condition. The condition will limit the occupant to no more than 28 days in one calendar year and require a list of occupants to be kept and presented by the Authority on request. Permitted development rights will be removed as part of any planning permission to ensure that additional paraphernalia is not added which may not be in line with the aims of the policy.