

Social Impact Assessment

Gwynedd Visitor Levy

1. Introduction and Context

Cyngor Gwynedd is considering introducing a Visitor Levy on overnight stays in eligible visitor accommodation in accordance with the Visitor Accommodation (Register and Levy) Etc. (Wales) Act 2025, with a view to supporting a sustainable visitor economy and ensuring that the benefits of tourism are shared more fairly between visitors and local communities.

This assessment focuses on **the potential social impact** on people, communities and protected groups in Gwynedd, taking into account the benefits, risks and mitigation measures.

2. Objectives of the Assessment

The aim of the Social Impact Assessment is:

- To assess the potential impact of the Visitor Levy on local communities, social well-being and equitable access to services
- To identify positive and negative impacts on different groups, including protected groups
- To recommend mitigation measures to reduce any potential negative impacts
- To ensure that the principles of equity, inclusion and the well-being of future generations are central to the decision

3. Description of the Visitor Levy

It is proposed that the Levy will:

- Be charged per person, per night on overnight stays in registered accommodation
- Have different rates for types of accommodation (e.g. hostels and campsites) and certain exemptions such as:
 - Long-term stays
 - Emergency accommodation

- Refund provisions for disabled people travelling with a carer
- The income will be reinvested locally on the basis of priorities agreed through the Gwynedd Visitor Levy Forum Partnership.

4. Social Baseline

Gwynedd is a county:

- With communities of strong Welsh identity, language and culture
- That experiences significant seasonal pressures in some areas due to high levels of visits
- Where tourism contributes positively to employment, but can also:
 - Increase pressures on local services
 - Impact on housing affordability and community cohesion
 - Create tensions between the needs of visitors and residents
- 997 Gwynedd residents responded to the Gwynedd Residents' Questionnaire: Views on Tourism in 2025, noting the following responses relevant to social elements:
 - 69.5% live in a community that is frequently visited by tourists
 - 74.1% believe that tourism has more positive consequences than negative consequences on their community
 - 85.7% believe there is a positive influence on the local economy
 - 83.2% believe there is a positive influence on employment
 - 67.1% believe there is a positive influence on community vitality
 - 59.9% believe there is a positive influence on the quality of life
 - 21.2% believe there is a neutral influence on the quality of life
 - 39.4% believe there is a positive influence on the Welsh language and culture
 - 35% believe there is a neutral influence on the Welsh language and culture
- Among the 380 who believed there was a negative influence on their community, these were the main issues:
 - 67.1% - Traffic Issues
 - 63.9% - Parking Issues
 - 53.8% - Loss of available housing in communities in favour of short-term accommodation

- 50.5% - house price increases
- 48.5% - crowds of people
- 38.3% - losing the authenticity of your area, weakening its local identity, language and way of life
- 27.5% - an increase in the cost of living
- 28.8% - safety issues, disrespectful behaviour
- 21.7% - noise
- 21.9% - light pollution

As part of the development of Ardal Ni Plans 10 out of 13 Areas noted that sustainable tourism is a priority in their areas.

5. Potential Positive Social Impacts

5.1 Benefit for Local Communities

- Creating a dedicated source of income to invest in:
 - Community infrastructure
 - Public spaces, town centres and villages
 - Cultural and community activities

5.2 Improved Community Well-being

- Reinvesting the income can help:
 - Manage visitor pressures
 - Improve the quality of life of residents in popular areas
 - Support local initiatives that strengthen social cohesion

5.3 Supporting the Welsh Language and Local Culture

- The potential to target investment in:
 - Cultural enterprises
 - Community events
 - Infrastructure that strengthens social use of the Welsh language

6. Potential Negative Social Impacts and Risks

6.1 Equity and Inclusion

- The Levy could:
 - Disproportionately affect lower-income visitors or budget travellers

- Create concerns about the affordability of holidays, particularly for families or certain groups (a risk also identified by the Welsh Government)

6.2 Impact on Small Businesses

- Small or community accommodation businesses:
 - They could be concerned about the impact on demand if visitors choose not to visit Gwynedd
 - Communication support and consistency may be required to clarify the purpose of the Levy

6.3 Community Perception

- Without clear communication, there could be a risk:
 - For the Levy to be seen as a "tourism tax" rather than a community investment mechanism

7. Impact on Protected Groups

- **Disabled People:** Refund provisions reduce potential negative impacts
- **Young People:** Investing in local services and facilities can create an indirect benefit
- **Older People:** Better infrastructure and public spaces can support well-being
- **Low Income Groups:** The risk of a negative impact on affordability requires ongoing monitoring

8. Mitigation and Consolidation Measures

The following measures are proposed:

- Rigorous and ongoing community consultation on investment priorities
- Clear communication that the Levy income is:
 - Being kept locally
 - Being invested for the benefit of communities and well-being
- Regular monitoring of social impact in reviewing the Levy
- Creating a Gwynedd Levy Partnership Forum to ensure community participation

9. Conclusion

In general, the adoption of a Visitor Levy in Gwynedd can have a significant positive social impact, provided that:

- The principles of equity and inclusion are central
- The income is clearly targeted towards community benefit
- The Council continues to engage meaningfully with communities, businesses and stakeholders

With the appropriate mitigation measures, the Levy offers an opportunity to strengthen community cohesion and ensure a visitor economy that works better for the people of Gwynedd.

This Social Impact Assessment will be updated following the formal consultation to reflect views and any relevant points raised.