



**Bryniau Clwyd a  
Dyffryn Dyfrdwy**  
Clwydian Range  
and Dee Valley

Ardal o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**Held on:** 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024

**Lead Member / Officer:** Ceri Lloyd

**Report Author:** Ceri Lloyd

**Title:** *Shaping tourism for the future - working in partnership to deliver sustainable tourism*  
**Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2028**

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**1. What is the report about?**

This report is the proposed Vision and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism within the AONB.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

This strategy outlines a long-term vision for sustainable tourism within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB.

This vision recognises;

- the increasing number of people participating in outdoor recreation which is placing increasing pressure on fragile and precious ecosystems
- the global and regional challenges arising from climate and nature emergencies
- the challenges facing the industry arising from the cost of living crisis and tourism trends post-Covid 19
- the proposed National Park status for an area including the CRDV AONB.

A decision is required on the Sustainable Tourism Vision and Action Plan for the AONB.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

Members are requested to adopt the Sustainable Tourism Vision and Action Plan for the AONB which covers 2023-2028.

**4. Report details.**

The new Sustainable Tourism Vision and Action Plan can be seen in appendix 1.

**5. How does it contribute to the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB Management Plans Priorities?**

This strategy seeks to define a pathway to achieving this vision for sustainable tourism that aligns with the four key themes of the AONB Management Plan 2020-2025; Nature, Landscape and Heritage, Adapting to a Changing Climate, Recreation, Health and Wellbeing, and the Rural Economy.

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

Funding was secured to write the strategy. It is in the remit of some AONB officers to deliver elements of the action plan in officer time. Partner organisations are also expected to deliver elements of the action plan. External funding will also be sought for more complex actions such as the Sustainable Development Fund, Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable places fund, Brilliant Basics etc. There are no direct implications on other services areas.

**7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

N/A

**8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

The strategy work has been steered by the Sustainable Tourism Working Group which is made up of representatives of the sector including tourism teams from each local authority, business groups and individual sector representation. Two workshops were held with the working group on;

- Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023
- Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023

The draft work was also presented at the Denbighshire Tourism Forum on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

The costs of implementing a Sustainable Tourism Vision and Action Plan for the AONB which covers 2023-2028 are outlined in section 6 of the report.

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

While an increase in visitor numbers brings revenue, it also significantly adds pressure to the AONB in the following areas:

- Traffic: congestion and parking
- Environment: erosion, creation of unofficial pathways
- Staff and Resources: litter, maintenance, user conflict, dogs off leads

Failure to put in place a Sustainable Tourism Action Plan will undermine efforts to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. The strategy looks to find

ways of balancing the impact of increasing visitors with sustaining the special qualities of the landscape they have come to see.

## **11. Power to make the Decision**

The Legal basis lies in Section 101 (5) of the Local Government Act of 1972 and the Local Government Act 2000, where Local Authorities can enter arrangements to 'discharge functions jointly with one or more Local Authorities by means of a Joint Committee.'



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## Appendix 1

### **Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Shaping tourism for the future - working in partnership to deliver sustainable tourism**

This strategy outlines a long-term vision for sustainable tourism within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB.

This vision recognises;

- the increasing number of people participating in outdoor recreation which is placing increasing pressure on fragile and precious ecosystems
- the global and regional challenges arising from climate and nature emergencies
- the challenges facing the industry arising from the cost of living crisis and tourism trends post-Covid 19
- the proposed National Park status for an area including the CRDV AONB.

This strategy seeks to define a pathway to achieving this vision for sustainable tourism that aligns with the four key themes of the AONB Management Plan 2020-2025; Nature, Landscape and Heritage, Adapting to a Changing Climate, Recreation, Health and Wellbeing, and the Rural Economy.

This sustainable tourism strategy for the CRDV AONB sets comprehensive long-term goals that will require procedural and management changes, along with research, learning and behavioural change. There is significant work to be done if they are to be achieved. The challenges cannot be met by the AONB alone but will require a collaborative approach from the public, private and third sector.

The CRDV AONB Sustainable Tourism Action Plan (2023-2028) represents the beginning of the journey to achieving the vision. The activities outlined in the Action Plan represent a challenging but pragmatic start.

This Vision . . .

...recognises that the communities/culture, landscape and environment of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB are central to the tourism offer of the region and defines how the management and delivery of tourism can promote and provide experiences of the uniqueness and beauty of the area whilst also protecting and enhancing its special qualities.

As organisations involved in the management and delivery of tourism within the AONB and as partners in the development and delivery of this strategy, we are committed to delivering a high-quality experience for our visitors which is underpinned by strong sustainability principles framed by the climate and nature emergencies.

We will ensure that the offer is holistically managed by a strong partnership committed to working together to meet our sustainability objectives.

**As signatories to this long-term vision for sustainable tourism within the AONB, we will:**

1. Communicate clearly to our visitors the value of our landscapes and biodiversity and our commitment to caring for our natural environment. When educating and engaging visitors with our natural environment we will present a clear expectation of how they should behave responsibly during their visit.
2. Consult with and engage communities to;
  - identify and address tourism-related issues
  - identify and act on opportunities to protect and promote cultural heritage and language
  - support and deliver projects that protect, restore and enhance biodiversity throughout the AONB with a focus on AONB-managed sites and protected species.
3. Support local businesses within thriving communities, focusing on;
  - the challenges faced by micro-businesses such as skills, staffing and fuel costs
  - opportunities to develop new products that engage visitors with the natural environment and culture of the AONB
  - embedding resilience and adapting to climate change, recognising and minimising risks from changing weather patterns and extreme weather events and responding creatively to business opportunities.
4. Support the tourism sector to meet strong low carbon, nature recovery objectives by;
  - better understanding the carbon footprint of visitors to the region and supporting and delivering carbon reduction projects
  - lobbying to ensure that low carbon, nature recovery objectives are central to public sector decision-making with regard to tourism development in the region.
5. Reduce tourism-related waste; with specific aims of eliminating single-use plastic and reducing food waste within the regional tourism industry.

6. Support the tourism sector to facilitate access to the countryside for all by identifying and overcoming barriers for under-represented groups.
7. Measure and monitor our progress towards meeting our objectives and keep communities and visitors updated on our progress.

This strategy seeks to define and deliver a collective vision for sustainable tourism within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB region; by working in partnership to implement this action plan we will protect and regenerate our landscapes and ensure everyone can enjoy them in the future.



**Strategy Signatories:**



## CRDV AONB Sustainable Tourism Action Plan 2023-20210

### 1. BIODIVERSITY

**Goal - to establish tourism in the region as nature-positive; protecting, restoring and enhancing biodiversity and educating visitors about the ecology of the region.**

- Develop and implement mechanisms to reduce disturbance of key species and recreational impacts on the environment.
- Review the tourism marketing/promotion of the region to ensure it is recognised as an eco-tourism destination.
- Review AONB website content to ensure that details of the ecology and biodiversity are adequately covered, especially with regard to individual site information.
- Develop a free digital guide to the ecology of the region disseminated by tourism businesses via booking guides, newsletters etc.

### 2. Communities and culture (including the Welsh language)

**Goal - to ensure all tourism policies and activities are conducted with respect for the artistic, archaeological and cultural heritage, which they should protect and pass on to future generations.**

- Engage communities in a debate as to how the development of sustainable tourism can be a positive driver for change within communities.
- Increase the number of people completing the Wales Ambassador Scheme; Denbighshire and Flintshire courses; strengthen the content of the sustainability module and review the number of people who have completed this module as part of these courses.
- Strengthen cultural tourism through the development of activities and stories that engage visitors with experiences encompassing the Welsh language, arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions.

### 3. Business support

**Goal - to support all businesses to help them meet their sustainability goals.**

- Work with tourism groups to engage Welsh Government on local issues and priorities for sustainable tourism development and lobby for policies that support a sustainable tourism industry in the region.
- Support tourism groups as a means of engaging their members with the delivery of sustainable tourism in the AONB.
- Develop a Hospitality Business Sustainability Toolkit - bespoke for the region, using the best of free tools and resources.
- Provide businesses with access to a suite of images, video and print for them to use in their own websites, guest packs etc.
- Produce materials for businesses, to help them encourage their visitors to make sustainable choices during their stay. For example, posters and videos that they can use on their social media channels and websites.
- Undertake a feasibility study to gauge the potential for a regional brand/quality mark.

### 4. Visitor management

**Goal - to ensure that visitors have the knowledge and opportunity to visit the AONB in an environmentally, culturally and economically sustainable way.**

- Improve visitor management and facilities at key sites to reduce the impacts of recreation. These impacts will be considered with regard to the ongoing pressure of climate change.
- Work with businesses to enable them to better communicate with visitors as to where to go and what to do during their stay, in a way that encourages responsible recreation.
- Seek to ensure that national and regional marketing initiatives focus on sites, areas and activities that have the necessary capacity and infrastructure.
- Influence visitor choice on how to get to the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley and how to travel around focusing on prioritising low-carbon transport options and reducing car miles where appropriate.

## 5. Communicating with visitors

**Goal - All visitors to be aware of the high-value landscape, environment and culture of the region and understand what we are doing to protect and enhance the AONB. In addition, all visitors to be aware of how to ensure their visit is sustainable.**

- Be creative in the promotion of the responsible recreation behaviours enshrined in the Countryside Code. Explore how messages can be made more relevant to specific audiences and target specific behaviours, such as littering.
- Review AONB website content to ensure it provides detailed information about where to go, what to do, where to park etc. Also, to ensure it provides detailed information on how to have a sustainable visit and responsible recreation messages; this information to be accessible and relevant for all audiences.
- Develop opportunities for businesses to use their location in the AONB to build sustainable growth through branding, product development and targeted marketing.
- Showcase and prioritise best practices from committed responsible, low-carbon businesses and destination visitors.
- Share evidence as to how this Vision and Action Plan contributes to globally responsible tourism.
- Support businesses to improve their website content by producing content and digital assets such as '20 Things to do' pdfs.
- Develop the AONB website as the central online visitor-facing information resource for the region.

## 6. Carbon footprint

**Goal - To reduce the carbon footprint per visitor to net zero by 2050 at the latest.**

- All signatories to the CRDV AONB Sustainable Tourism Vision to become signatories of Tourism Declares and the Glasgow Declaration.
- The CRDV Sustainable Tourism Partnership to become a Race to Zero Cymru partner

- Develop a better understanding of how the carbon load per visitor is split through all stages of the visitor journey. Investigate appropriate data to benchmark the carbon footprint of visitors.
- Develop a better understanding of the carbon footprint of tourism businesses. Pilot project working with a small number of businesses to carbon footprint their offer using a range of free online tools.
- Develop and implement a business-led Climate Action Plan that engages all businesses in opportunities to lower their carbon footprint; supporting businesses to develop and implement carbon reduction plans using existing and freely available resources such as the guide for hospitality businesses produced by the Carbon Trust .
- Work together to support and develop low-carbon transport options; such as strategically and conveniently located electric charging points, and improved public transport services.

## 7. Waste

**Goal - to set and meet stringent targets for waste reduction by 2030, including a 50% reduction in food waste and an 80% reduction in single-use plastic.**

- Learn from the Plastic Free Snowdon project to establish Plastic Free CRDV AONB with the aim of eliminating the sale/use of single-use plastic on any publicly owned site and by tourism businesses. Supporting and building on the initiatives ongoing in Ruthin and Llangollen.
- Support hospitality and catering to businesses to commit to embedding the principles of Target, Measure, Act - work with WRAP - trialling interventions to tackle food waste at a business level.
- Review waste management infrastructure/services at AONB sites. Where bins are not appropriate review what and how information is provided to visitors about how to dispose of their waste responsibly.
- Provide guidance to businesses on external lighting in order to promote greater sustainability, and reduce light pollution and ecological harm.
- Significantly reduce the water footprint of tourism businesses by supporting businesses to undertake DIY Water Audits for businesses. Develop a pilot project to support a small number of accommodation businesses to calculate their water usage per guest night.

## 8. Mitigation and adaptation

**Goal - to engage all tourism stakeholders in an iterative process of implementing and evaluating adaptation strategies as climate conditions continue to evolve over time.**

- Inform and support businesses to embed climate resilience within their activities through the development of a guide for tourism business owners explaining how climate change affects their business and providing a checklist for planning and adapting for climate change impacts.

## 9. Monitoring and evaluation

**Goal - to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan and evaluate its effectiveness in meeting the stated goals. To include ongoing assessment of the barriers to implementation.**

- Review signatories to this Vision and Action Plan to ensure the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders, including conservation and landowning organisations.
- Monitor implementation of the Action Plan: Progress reviews to be undertaken in 2024 and 2028 in order to evaluate the implementation of the Action Plan. This review should include an honest assessment of the barriers to implementation and include recommendations as to how these can be overcome to ensure that the draft strategy is delivered successfully.
- Monitor and assess tourism's economic, social and environmental impacts. Including the identification of key performance indicators and the gathering of baseline data to enable benchmarking of progress.
- Improve and maintain data on visitors to enable evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented actions; including modes of transport, activities, length of stay, environmental awareness etc.
- Conduct surveys to assess the attitudes of visitors and local residents towards sustainable and responsible behaviours.