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# Economic Impact of National Parks and related issues

## 1 Introduction

Within the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) definition National Parks are Category II protected areas. These are defined as “large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities”.<sup>1</sup>

There are three types of nationally protected areas in the UK<sup>2</sup>:

- **National Parks:** England, Scotland and Wales
- **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB):** Northern Ireland
- **National Scenic Areas:** in Scotland

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/pa/pa\\_products/wcpa\\_categories/pa\\_categoryii/](http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/pa/pa_products/wcpa_categories/pa_categoryii/)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/learningabout/whatisanationalpark/factsandfigures.htm>

The distribution of National Parks and the land covered by these is as follows:

- **England:** 10 National Parks cover 9.3% of the land area
- **Wales:** 3 National Parks cover 19.9% of the land area
- **Scotland:** 2 National Parks cover 7.2% of the land area



**Figure 1 Map showing the UK's National Parks**

The first National Parks in the UK were designated in 1951 while the most recent designation was in 2010.

There are six National Parks in the Republic of Ireland:

- Ballycroy (northwest Mayo)
- The Burren National Park
- Connemara National Park
- Glenveagh National Park
- Killarney National Park
- Wicklow Mountains National Park

Figure 2 indicates the location of these national parks.



Figure 2 Location of the six national parks in Ireland

## 2 Economic Impact

In their report of 2006 Annett et al.<sup>3</sup> state that the positive economic impacts of national park designation lie chiefly in four areas:

- Expenditure associated with increased number of tourists, visitors and recreational users
- Direct government expenditure to establish the park and to support its ongoing operation
- Increased employment due to park operations and visitor services
- Effects on property values

### 2.1 Visitor Spend

Perhaps the most *direct* economic impact can be measured by the visitor spend at each of the parks. For the 15 National Parks in the UK this ranges from £83m for Exmoor to £659m for the Lake District. Table 1 provides a breakdown of this and other relevant information including government funding mentioned above.

<sup>3</sup> Annett, J.A., Joyce, J. and Scott, P. (2006) National Parks: Potential Impacts of National Park Designation in Northern Ireland

**Table 1 Breakdown of visitor spend and other relevant information for the UK's 15 National Parks<sup>4</sup>**

National Park name	Year of designation	Population	Scheduled ancient monuments	Conservation Areas	Visitors a year (million)	Visitor days a year (million)	Visitor spend a year (million)	Funding £million to nearest 100k (Central Government)
Brecon Beacons	1957	32,000			3.8	4.3	£143	4.5
Broads	1989	5,721	13	18	5.8	7.2	£296	4.3
Cairngorms	2003	17,000	60	4	1.48	3	£174	4.5
Dartmoor	1951	34,000	1208	23	2.5	3.3	£123	4.7
Exmoor	1954	10,600	208	16	1.4	2	£83	4.0
Lake District	1951	42,200	over 200	21	8.3	15.2	£659	7.0
Loch Lomond and the Trossachs	2002	15,600	60	7	2.1	4	£247	6.8
New Forest	2005	34,400	61	18	Not available	13.5	£123	4.0
Northumberland	1956	2,200	196, including 1 World Heritage Site	1 and 3 National Conservation Areas	1.7	2,415	£104	3.3
North York Moors	1952	25,000	846	42	6.3	9	£317	5.4
Peak District	1951	38,000	457	109	10.1	Not available	£97	8.3
Pembrokeshire Coast	1952	22,800		13	4.2	13.5	£500	4.8
Snowdonia	1951	25,482	359	14	4.27	10.4	£396	6.0

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/learningabout/whatisanationalpark/factsandfigures.htm>

National Park name	Year of designation	Population	Scheduled ancient monuments	Conservation Areas	Visitors a year (million)	Visitor days a year (million)	Visitor spend a year (million)	Funding £million to nearest 100k (Central Government)
South Downs	2010	120,000	741	165	Not available	39	Not available	Not available
Yorkshire Dales	1954	19,654	203	37	9.5	12.6	£400	5.4

### 2.1.1 Government Funding

All the National Parks are funded from central government. One obvious advantage therefore of national designation is the funding available to establish a National Park and subsequently to run it e.g. via the establishment of a National Park Authority. The level of funding depends upon a number of factors including how many people live in the National Park area, the number of visitors etc. In addition parks may also receive funding from other sources such as the European Union and from generating income themselves.

### 2.1.2 Increased Employment

The number of jobs that are created as a result of National Park designation can be classified as direct (the number of people on the Park's payroll) and indirect (jobs created generally as a result of the need to provide services to visitors to the Park and surrounding area).

### 2.1.3 Specific case study: Economic Impact of the three Welsh National Parks

A report in 2006<sup>5</sup> set out to establish the economic value of the three National Parks in Wales – Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP), Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP), and Snowdonia National Park (SNP). Table 2 presents the overall findings of this report.

<sup>5</sup> Valuing our Environment: Economic Impact of the National Parks of Wales  
[http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/voe\\_national\\_parks\\_summary\\_english.pdf](http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/voe_national_parks_summary_english.pdf)

**Table 2 Environmentally-linked economic activity in the three National Parks of Wales**

Indicator	BBNP	PCNP	SNP	Total
<b>Employment</b>				
Direct employment	2,718	3,762	3,775	<b>10,255</b>
Indirect employment in NP	153	61	66	<b>280</b>
Indirect employment outside NP	426	831	135	<b>1,392</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,279</b>	<b>4,653</b>	<b>3,975</b>	<b>11,926</b>
<b>Income (£ millions)</b>				
Direct income	40.17	51.41	55.17	<b>146.75</b>
Indirect income in NP	1.25	0.77	0.71	<b>2.74</b>
Indirect income outside NP	7.23	16.20	3.90	<b>27.33</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>48.65</b>	<b>68.39</b>	<b>59.78</b>	<b>176.82</b>
<b>GDP (£ millions)</b>				
Direct	48.70	65.30	62.75	<b>176.75</b>
Indirect	9.88	15.24	2.87	<b>27.99</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>58.58</b>	<b>80.54</b>	<b>65.62</b>	<b>204.74</b>

#### 2.1.4 Funding to individuals/communities

Besides providing direct and indirect employment and generating economic activity parks also provide funding to individuals and communities to assist in reaching the objectives of the park. For example, parks have a Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) which helps to fund projects which combine economic, social and environmental objectives.

##### **Examples:**

In 2010 – 2011 the SDF of the Lake District National Park received 23 applications and awarded to 20. The total amount awarded was over £200,000, varying from £250 to £45,000. The total worth of all projects was more than £900,000.

In 2010/11 the SDF of the Dartmoor National Park funded 34 projects totalling over £209, 000.

### 3 Accessibility

The concept of accessibility encompasses a range of issues. In the context of this paper this refers to accessibility to people with disabilities and landowners' concerns from a legal perspective.

#### 3.1 Accessible Activities

The publication, [\*A Guide to Accessible Activities in Britain's National Parks\*](#) highlights one accessible activity per National Park to give a *flavour* of the range of accessible activities available in the 15 National Parks. The Guide indicates that there are 'many others' available to choose from. The examples below give an idea of the activities available:

- Many of the activities referred to in the Guide are scenic walks. For example, the **Mawddach Trail in Snowdonia** is a 9 mile walk with accessible benches and picnic tables along the path. The gates are accessible to wheelchairs, pushbikes and pushchairs. There are accessible parking bays and two possible drop-off points with accessible toilets; two accessible parking bays are also available. In addition there is an audiotrail.
- In the **Lake District 'Miles without Stiles'** is a series of 39 routes accessible to people with limited mobility. Details on these are available in bound booklet. There are accessible toilets and accessible parking spaces. A special free bus operates around the grounds of the visitor centre for people with limited mobility.
- A different type of activity is to be found in the **Broads National Park**. This involves an accessible boardwalk with resting places, tapping edges and some Braille signs and a trip on a solar boat around Barton which is accessible via a ramp. In addition there are accessible WCs and designated parking bays for both the boat trip and boardwalk.
- **Mini-bus tours are available in Dartmoor**, offering elderly and disabled people a chance to visit sites on the high moors accompanied by a National Park Guide. These are offered from four locations and all vehicles are

accessible and equipped to carry wheelchairs. Carers/family members can also join the tour.

### 3.2 Access to Land – England/Wales

**National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949** – this legislation provided, among other things, the framework for the creation of the National Parks and addressed public rights of way and access to open land. It was subsequently amended by other legislation such as the **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)** under which the public can walk freely on mapped areas of mountain, moor, heath, downland and registered common land without having to stick to paths.

The responsibility for recording and maintaining rights of way is shared between local authorities, landowners and occupiers. The definition of local authorities in this context includes national park authorities.

#### 3.2.1 Access to Land – Scotland

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 sets out a presumption in favour of access and establishes statutory rights of non-motorised access to most areas of land and inland water for passage recreation, education and commercial activities. Access rights are to be exercised responsibly and there are reciprocal obligations on land managers to manage land in ways that are responsible to those exercising access rights.

Local authorities have been given powers to draw up plans for a core path network to give the public sufficient access through their area and enhanced powers to create this system. The local authority must also set up a local access forum to assist the local authority with their powers and duties in the Act. They also have enhanced powers to remove obstructions to access.

#### 3.2.2 Access to Land – Northern Ireland

The *Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983* is a key piece of legislation that places a duty on District Councils to

- *"to assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction or encroachment any public right of way, and compile and preserve maps and other records of public rights of way in their district".*

- Councils may also establish a public path.

The public have no general access to the countryside in NI but district councils have the power to establish access to open country by reaching agreement with the landowner or by Order.

The *Occupiers Liability Act (Northern Ireland) 1957* and the *Occupiers Liability (Northern Ireland) Order 1987* places a duty on the occupier of land (who may not be the owner) over the condition of the land. How this applies to certain categories of people is outlined below:

- **Visitors**

The occupier must take such care as is reasonable to ensure that visitors will be reasonably safe in any premises to which they are invited or permitted by the occupier. The occupier does not however have any obligation to anyone who accepts a risk e.g. engaging in an activity such as handgliding, walking over rough ground.

- **Trespassers**

Duty of care extends to trespassers if the occupier was aware (or should have been aware) of a danger on the land; knew or anticipated that a trespasser might go near the danger; and could have been expected to offer some protection from the danger.

- **Users of a Public Right of Way**

Because a person uses a Public Right of Way 'as a right' liability is determined under Common Law. The occupier does not have a duty of care to users of the Public Right of Way nor are they usually responsible for the condition of the safety of the Public Right of Way.

### 3.2.3 Northern Ireland - Landowner Issues

A study on access to the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty<sup>6</sup> noted several issues relating to access. In particular it referred to legal concerns of landowners relating to increased access to their land. The key points in relation to types of access are noted below:

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<sup>6</sup> Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Access Study (2007). The Countryside Access and Activities Network for Northern Ireland. [http://www.sportni.net/NR/rdonlyres/1C737C60-0268-4071-AD0C-198E7016165F/0/Mournes\\_Access\\_Study.pdf](http://www.sportni.net/NR/rdonlyres/1C737C60-0268-4071-AD0C-198E7016165F/0/Mournes_Access_Study.pdf)

- Access as of Right – public highways that can be used by anyone, as of right, at any time
- Access by Consent – access is dependent on consent or permission granted by the landowner and may be dependent on terms and conditions set by the landowner
- Access by Trespass – where the public access the land on a de facto basis but no permission or consent has been granted by the landowner

#### 4 Liability Insurance

All the National Parks have taken out both public and employers liability insurance. The levels at which these are set ranges from £5m to £25m. The figures for each of the National Parks in the UK are presented in table 3.

**Table 3 Levels of insurance for each of the 15 National Parks in the UK**

National Park Name	Public Liability Insurance Levels (£m)	Employers Liability Insurance Levels (£m)
Brecon Beacons	10	10
Broads	15	15
Cairngorms	Nil Response	*
Dartmoor	20	20
Exmoor	20	20
Lake District	25	10
Loch Lomond and the Trossachs	Nil Response	*
New Forest	10	20
Northumberland	10	10
North York Moors	5	10
Peak District	10	10
Pembrokeshire Coast	10	5
Snowdonia	10	25
South Downs	10	5
Yorkshire Dales	5	10

\*In relation to Employers' Liability Insurance, the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) (Amendment) Regulations 1998 (as amended by the Scotland Act 1998 (Consequential Modifications) (No 2) Order 1999) provides exemption for anybody which holds a certificate issued by the Scottish Ministers. Both National Parks hold such a certificate.<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that in addition to the above insurance cover there are likely to be other policies covering buildings, vehicles etc.

<sup>7</sup> Information received from the Natural Resources Division, Scottish Government