

The Socio-economic Benefits of New National Park Designations in Scotland



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A paper describing the positive socio-economic impacts that new National Park designations could have on specific rural areas in Scotland.

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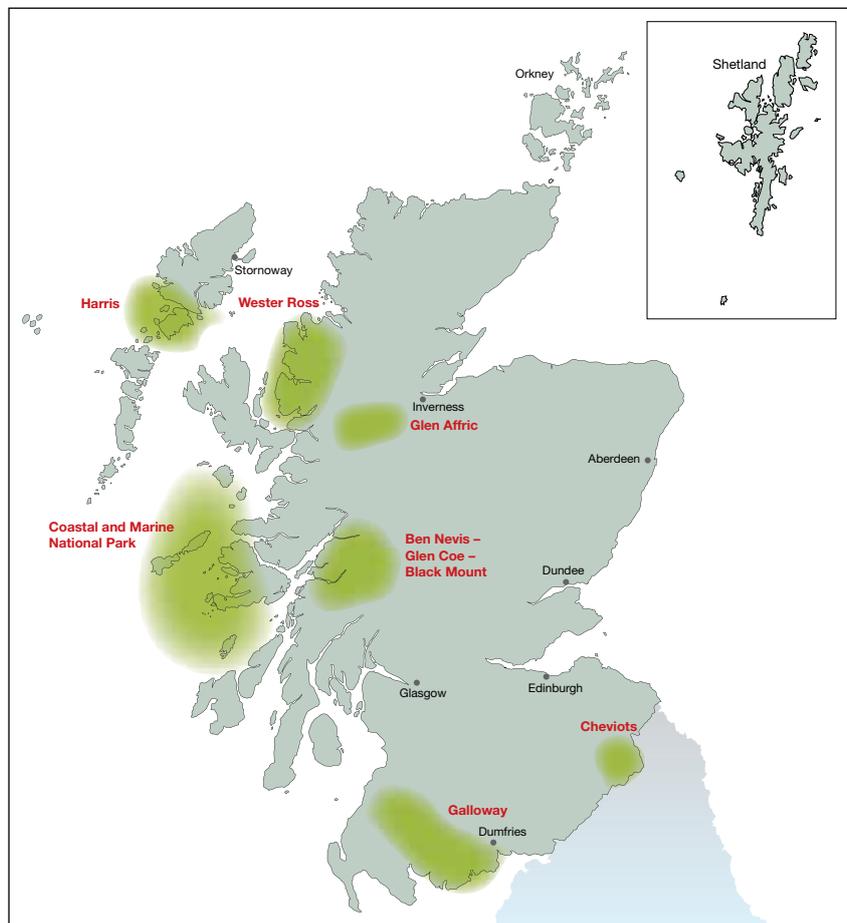
1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper discusses the positive socio-economic impacts that new National Park designations could have on specific rural areas in Scotland. It refers to research in the rest of the UK, in Norway, Poland, New Zealand and North America, where a variety of studies have taken place regarding the socio-economic impacts of National Parks on their local areas. The draft of this paper was prepared for the Scottish Campaign for National Parks (SCNP) and the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS) by Graham Barrow, who is a Trustee of the SCNP.
- 1.2 Internationally the contribution that some National Parks can make to rural economic development has been increasingly recognised. Conservation of the environment and heritage remains the key objective of National Park designation and the subsequent park planning and management, but socio-economic benefits have been increasingly recognised as important to justify park designation in certain situations. National Parks in many countries are now seen as a good way to encourage rural sustainable development and management.
- 1.3 Scotland at present has two large National Parks covering some 8% of its land area. These were designated in two areas where pressures from recreation and tourism were high and where the planning and management of those pressures were seen as a priority.
- 1.4 The SCNP and the APRS believes that the designation of further National Parks in Scotland, in the remoter and less well known parts of the country in particular, would have a positive effect on their local economies and social infrastructure, as well as helping to conserve their valuable landscapes and habitats.
- 1.5 National Parks are a varied designation and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) definition recognises some 6 categories of National Parks and protected areas in the world. National Parks in Scotland and in the rest of the UK are IUCN Category V – Protected Landscapes and Seascapes. This is the type of extensive National Park which fits best with much of Europe and where the existing grazing, woodland and sporting uses of the land and other economic activities are well established, sometimes over many centuries.
- 1.6 IUCN Category V Protected Landscapes should have an approved landscape and nature conservation plan, but can also accommodate a range of economic activities. The main objective in such areas is to safeguard the distinct and valuable ecological, biological, cultural, or scenic character. In these areas the communities both within and adjacent to the protected area interact with it, contributing to the area's sustainable management and engaging with its natural and cultural heritage. Landscapes and seascapes in this category will have a balance between people and nature and will sustain activities such as traditional agricultural and forestry activity on conditions that ensure the continued protection or ecological restoration of the area.
- 1.7 Category V is one of the most flexible categories of the IUCN classification of protected areas. As a result, protected landscapes and seascapes can accommodate new development, such as sustainable recreation and tourism infrastructure, at the same time as maintaining the historical management practices that help to sustain the valued rural, aquatic and marine biodiversity. Sustainable development with positive socio-economic impacts is compatible with National Parks classified as Category V IUCN protected landscapes.

2. Remoter Rural Areas in Scotland

- 2.1 Many of Scotland's remoter rural areas struggle to retain population and services and to develop new economic activity, although in recent years there has been a stabilisation or modest growth of population in some rural areas such as on Skye for example. Many of these remoter rural areas do not have a high public profile and have relatively under-developed tourism economies, such as parts of Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders, many Hebridean Islands and the far north and west of mainland Scotland. Most of the population of the UK and Europe are not familiar with these areas and have certainly to date not considered visiting them.
- 2.2 The cost of living in these areas is often higher than in the more accessible parts of Scotland, wages are lower and the out-migration of young people for education and work is well established. But the landscape and environmental resources of these areas is potentially their greatest asset. The challenge has been about how to realise this value in a sustainable way that creates new jobs and grows the economy. Sometimes just a handful of new jobs can help to transform such areas and retain vital services.
- 2.3 The rural areas of deprivation in Scotland are located primarily, although not exclusively, in the western parts of the country including South Ayrshire, much of Dumfries and Galloway, many of the Hebridean islands and parts of the far north.
- 2.4 SCNP and APRS believe that new National Parks can play a significant role in helping to regenerate some of these areas, with their high levels of rural deprivation. New National Parks in these areas will bring impetus to tourism and business promotion and attract the attention of the Scottish, UK and international audiences.

National Parks recommended by SCNP and APRS 2013



Map reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey, licence number 100053751.
* For layout purposes the Shetland Islands are not shown in the correct geographical position.

3. The Positive Impacts

3.1 New National Park designations in Scotland can potentially bring a range of positive socio-economic benefits to their local areas and these can be described under four main headings:

Enhanced Profile for the Area

- A stimulation to the “brand” of the area with increased press and media coverage
- Businesses using the new branding of the National Park for their promotion
- Increased interest in the area for small life-style businesses and potentially as a place to live and for retirement

Recreation and Tourism

- Increased numbers of visitors attracted by the National Park label and the associated tourism promotion
- Enhanced facilities for visitors
- Increased visitor spending supporting existing shops, businesses and attracting new services

Attracting New Businesses and Capital

- New businesses and investment attracted to National Parks and their surroundings

The Direct and Indirect Employment by the Park Authority

- Direct job creation through the public sector funding for the park staff and the park authority budget
- Further employment stimulated by the activities of the park in countryside and heritage management, marketing and interpretation
- The attraction of further external funding for projects, led by the National Park team, such as funds from the European Union, the Heritage Lottery Fund and from the private sector.

3.2 Other indirect benefits from the work of National Park Authorities can also be of significant long term socio-economic benefit, such as programmes to encourage more healthy outdoor activity (reducing costs for the health services) and agricultural improvement programmes increasing farm outputs or improving collective marketing of produce. These indirect benefits are not dealt with in this paper.

ENHANCED PROFILE OF THE NATIONAL PARK AREA

3.3 A new National Park, or a well established older park, can bring significant benefit to an area through its “brand”, which communicates high environmental quality and a sense that visitors are welcome. This can have an impact not just on the recreation and tourism profile but also in making the area attractive for the location of businesses and as a place to live. Branding has benefited accommodation providers and local produce and craft schemes in National Parks. There is also evidence that the National Park brand can affect property prices bringing wealth to an area, but this may need the provision of local affordable housing so as to not exclude local people from the housing market.

3.4 An example of how to use the “brand” of the National Park is shown by our own Cairngorms National Park.



After developing a Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan in 2005 the Cairngorms brand (illustrated above) was created to provide not only a strong identity for the National Park, but also as a tool to help embed park values. The logo recognises high standards of quality and environmental management, providing greater marketing advantage for those businesses, groups or organisations eligible to use the brand. At the same time, if businesses see the brand as providing marketing advantage, those that do not currently meet the criteria for brand use will be more likely to pursue the accreditation that is required to use it. The Cairngorms NPA retains ownership of the logo with the decisions on implementation and use being taken by a committee referring to a broad framework agreed by the Board. The Brand Development Group comprises representatives from the Cairngorms National Park Authority board, an active community member who reports back to the Association of Cairngorms Communities, the Cairngorms Business Partnership and other public sector bodies including VisitScotland. Some 78 local Businesses were Brand Charter holders by May 2014.

- 3.5 The Yorkshire Dales National Park in England has been also using its name to help local businesses, with a family of five logos (two illustrated below).



- 3.6 The following shows how the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority views its logo...

“We believe that being part of a National Park is very special. The Yorkshire Dales National Park logo – the well-known Swaledale ram’s head – provides a strong identity for this beautiful area. The logo promotes the location, provides a sense of place, and is a strong brand which is recognised nationally.

The National Park Authority is keen that businesses and communities use the National Park logo to highlight their association with the area and so has developed five eye-catching versions, based on the established ram’s head design.

We hope that people proud to work or operate within the area will be inspired to use these locator logos and help us build on the strong, recognisable brand which celebrates this unique place, as well as helping local businesses strengthen their own product.”

- 3.7 National Parks attract the attention of the media. Press articles, radio, TV and internet/social media coverage increases with National Park designation. This has a positive impact for the area’s tourism and for potentially attracting new businesses.
- 3.8 National Parks can also attract people to the area to live and for retirement and this can inject much needed capital and spending in to an area, although as noted above, we are aware that rising house prices can be an issue for some local people and that this can be addressed through affordable housing initiatives by the Park Authority.

RECREATION AND TOURISM

- 3.9 National Parks have been shown to attract visitors and to help grow the tourism economy. In the “Developing World” many new parks, such as game reserves in Africa, are designated with the aim of attracting tourists very much in mind. But National Parks in Europe and North America, also have a beneficial impact on visitor numbers, even if their original designation was more driven by the need to conserve the areas landscapes and habitats than to boost the economy.

- 3.10 In the United States for example a recent study of their well established National Park system has shown that National Park visitors contributed \$26.5 billion to the nation’s economy and supported almost 240,000 jobs in 2013. According to a peer-reviewed report released recently by National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis it was stated that...

“National Parks are often the primary economic engines of many park gateway communities. While park rangers provide interpretation of the iconic natural, cultural and historic landscapes, nearby communities provide our visitors with services that support hundreds of thousands of mostly local jobs.”

“The big picture of National Parks and their importance to the economy is clear. Every tax dollar invested in the National Park Service returns \$10 to the U.S. economy because of visitor spending in gateway communities near the 401 parks of the National Park System.”

- 3.11 In the 2012 visitor survey for Visit Scotland the top factor that attracted people to Scotland on holiday was the scenery/landscape – mentioned by some 55% of those interviewed. This was by far the most important attraction for tourists to Scotland and illustrates how orientated to the countryside Scotland’s tourists are and how they will seek out attractive areas of countryside and coast.
- 3.12 National Park Authorities can help to assemble and promote a cross-sectoral portfolio of tourist attractions and a number of National Parks in the UK now employ tourism development officers bringing together natural, cultural and outdoor activity attractions and events in their area and helping to extend the tourist season.
- 3.13 For this reason we believe that new National Park designations in some of the remoter rural areas will help Scotland’s tourist industry and will stimulate recreation and tourism related developments in and close to the parks. These developments would of course need to be well planned and managed to protect the environment.
- 3.14 Areas such as Dumfries and Galloway, the Borders, the remoter Hebridean islands and the far north and west of Scotland could all benefit from a growth in their visitor numbers and a larger tourism economy. New National Parks in these areas could be a key to that growth.

ATTRACTING NEW BUSINESSES AND CAPITAL

- 3.15 National Parks and their environs are attractive places to locate certain types of businesses and they fare better than other areas of countryside in attracting new business start-ups.
- 3.16 According to a recent report on “Valuing the English National Parks” in 2013 it was noted that there are 22,500 businesses located in the 10 English National Parks. The report quotes that...

“a number of studies relating to individual National Parks indicated that over 50% of businesses surveyed felt that their business was directly or indirectly dependent on a high quality landscape and environment, and positively impacted by the National Park designation, with this figure rising for tourism-related businesses. Many businesses in towns and cities located

close to, but outside, National Parks stated that they were also dependent on and positively influenced by National Parks. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that businesses in National Parks are suffering from undue planning restrictions compared to elsewhere, with a significant majority of planning applications in National Parks being approved by NPAs (89%, compared to 87% for England as a whole).”

- 3.17 *A survey of businesses in Northumberland by the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle University in 2009 has shown the importance of the Northumberland National Park as a stimulus to business location. When asked about the reasons for the location of their business start-ups, twice as many of the businesses in the National Park (compared with Action Areas elsewhere in Northumberland or with the North East of England as a whole) stated that a “change to the life-work balance” was a very important factor – 54%, (compared to 18% outside the Park) and 42% stated “to exploit a market opportunity” was also very important. The most important factors in choosing to locate their business in the National Park had been the beauty and/or quietness of the area (33%) and the fact that the Park was a tourist area (22%).*
- 3.18 The Cairngorms National Park Authority carries out a regular annual survey of over 400 businesses in the National Park – the Cairngorms Business Barometer. Using a rating scale from 1 to 10, where 1 was ‘not at all influential’ and 10 was ‘very influential’, businesses were asked to rate the influence of the National Park in terms of attracting first and repeat customers and in relation to its perceived impact on their business operations and profitability. For the past 4 years businesses have given an average rating of over 6 for the positive influence of the National Park in attracting first time customers.

THE EMPLOYMENT CREATED BY THE PARK AUTHORITY

- 3.19 All the National Parks in the UK employ staff and most require formal qualifications. Educated and qualified people are therefore attracted to the area to fill these vacancies. At the time of writing the English and Welsh National Parks, for example, had vacancies for countryside rangers, planners, archaeologists, education staff, sustainable development specialists and for geographical information systems officers. In the remoter rural parts of Scotland these are the types of jobs that can hold or attract back young qualified professionals that can help to revitalise rural communities.
- 3.20 National Parks such as the Northumberland National Park in England employ around 60 fte staff, whilst Fiordland National Park in New Zealand employs 57 fte. The direct spending and multiplier effect of this spending makes a considerable contribution to the economies of their local areas. We are not suggesting that any new National Parks in Scotland need necessarily employ this many people.
- 3.21 The Park Authorities generate local work in the countryside management and interpretation fields in particular, so local businesses, including farmers and crofters, can become involved in activities such as wall repair, footpath construction, woodland management, signs and displays and activities concerned with explaining the special character of the area to visitors. National Parks also play an important role with sustainable tourism development and promotion.
- 3.22 Park Authorities are also keen to attract further funding to their area and local businesses can benefit from this funding for projects such as those supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, by European Funding and by grants and sponsorship from charitable trusts and the private sector. The HLF funded Landscape Partnerships such as the “Moors for the Future” project in the Peak District National Park in England illustrate what can be achieved and this project has attracted over £3 million to the park and has been led by the National Park Authority. In 2014/15 almost £10million (mainly from the Lottery but also from various other funding sources) will come into the Cairngorms National Park to deliver conservation and access projects, with their related employment benefits, over the next 3-4 years.

At the time of writing the English and Welsh National Parks, for example, had vacancies for countryside rangers, planners, archaeologists, education staff, sustainable development specialists...



National Parks also play an important role with sustainable tourism development and promotion



4. Size of New National Parks in Scotland

- 4.1 As has been noted in the introduction to this paper, the two existing National Parks in Scotland are very large areas and are IUCN Category V parks. In some other countries National Parks are much smaller and can be Category I or II protected areas – more like our National Nature Reserves. This poses the question about how large any new National Park in Scotland would have to be to bring significant positive economic impact to its local area.
- 4.2 None of the areas suggested in the SCNP/APRS joint publication “Unfinished Business – A National Parks Strategy for Scotland” (2013) are as large as the existing two National Parks and they would probably not require the same management, staffing and planning arrangements as the existing two parks. But we believe that they are of sufficient size to develop a strong brand image, to attract people for outdoor recreation, to be the target for holidaymakers and provide areas of country and coast which could attract people to stay for some time. All have small settlements in or near them which could benefit from having a new National Park declared in their area.
- 4.3 It should also be noted that a Coastal and Marine National Park such as that proposed for the Mull, Coll and Tiree area and for Harris would have a similar positive economic impact on those islands, as has been achieved by many Marine National Parks elsewhere in the world. For example, new marine parks in Australia have been shown to have significant positive impacts on their local economies.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 This short paper makes the case that National Park designations have much to offer some of the remoter rural areas of Scotland and in considering future National Parks in Scotland the potential positive socio-economic impacts should be taken in to account.
- 5.2 In an Appendix to this paper we look at four international case studies, in Norway, New Zealand, Wales and Poland, where National Parks have been shown to have brought a clear socio-economic benefit to their local rural areas.
- 5.3 In the “Unfinished Business” Strategy for National Parks in Scotland we suggested seven potential locations for new National Parks that could be established over a period of time. Without exception we believe that new National Parks in these places will benefit their local economies and be a stimulus to the small local settlements in or near these new parks.
- 5.4 We are not suggesting that National Parks in Scotland should be chosen primarily on rural development grounds and we continue to strongly support the fundamental landscape and environmental conservation objectives of National Parks. But it is clear to the SCNP and the APRS that new National Parks in Scotland could be exemplars of sustainable management and development and that the designation of additional National Parks should be progressed and this would benefit the economy of their local countryside and coastal areas.

Some experience from elsewhere

NORWAY



Norway has 37 National Parks on its mainland covering some 31,000 sq kms (8% of its land area).

National Parks in Norway are stricter than in many other countries, and nearly all motorised vehicles are prohibited. The freedom to roam applies, thus hiking, skiing and camping throughout the park are permitted, as long as due care is taken. Roads, accommodation and national park centres are located outside the National Parks. The positive economic impacts of the parks are thus felt in the adjacent communities. The parks are under the management of the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management and the local county governor.

A study “Recreation and Tourism - socio-cultural and socio-economic impacts on protected areas in Norway” by Knut Bjørn Stokke, Kristian Bjørnstad, Morten Clemetsen, Jan Vidar Haukeland in 2011 reported that:

1. National Parks have a great appeal to foreign tourists in Norway

A survey among German, Danish and Dutch motor tourists in the summer of 2008 demonstrated that 50% of the respondents maintained that the National Parks have a ‘very great appeal’ and 28% said that the Parks had (to a larger or smaller degree) influenced their decision to visit the country

2. The economic impact is significant

A study in the Nord Gudbrandsdalen National Park area in southern Norway, revealed that 25% of Norwegian tourists’ expenditure in the area could be directly attributed to the NP status of the local mountains and 40% of foreign tourists’ expenditure is explained by the NP status

3. Local residents acknowledge the significance of NP tourism

It was showed in the same survey that 90 per cent of the local people deemed the importance of NP tourism as ‘rather’ or ‘very high’ for income/ jobs in their local communities and 80 per cent saw the importance of NP tourism as ‘rather’ or ‘very high’ for the level of services/ infrastructure in their local communities.

Some experience from elsewhere

NEW ZEALAND



New Zealand has 14 National Parks covering more than 30,000 sq kms (12% of the land area). National Parks are important for New Zealand's tourism industry. In the late 1990s 55% of overseas tourists visited at least one national park, and their needs were a major focus for the Department of Conservation. Tracks were maintained to a high standard – especially the eight that have been designated 'Great Walks'. In 2000 the New Zealand National Parks and Conservation Foundation was set up to seek corporate funding for conservation projects in National Parks and Reserves.

Fiordland is New Zealand's largest National Park and is located on South Island - a long way from major centres of population. A study in 2006, funded by the New Zealand Conservation Board, showed conclusively that it made a vital contribution to the sub regional economy. Some of the main results of the research are summarised in points 1 to 5.

1. The existence of Fiordland National Park and its management by the Department of Conservation (DOC), at an annual cost of \$8.8 million, provides a range of conservation benefits for New Zealand. It also supports extensive commercial activity in the Park and surrounding region of Southland and Queenstown Lakes.

2. The Park attracts around 33,000 overnight visitors and 560,000 day visitors per year with about 80 per cent of these from overseas. On average, day visitors to the Park say that they spend 1.3 nights more in the Queenstown Lakes District – Southland Region (including the Park) than they would in the absence of the Park. Overnight visitors to the Park spend an additional 3.8 nights in the region.

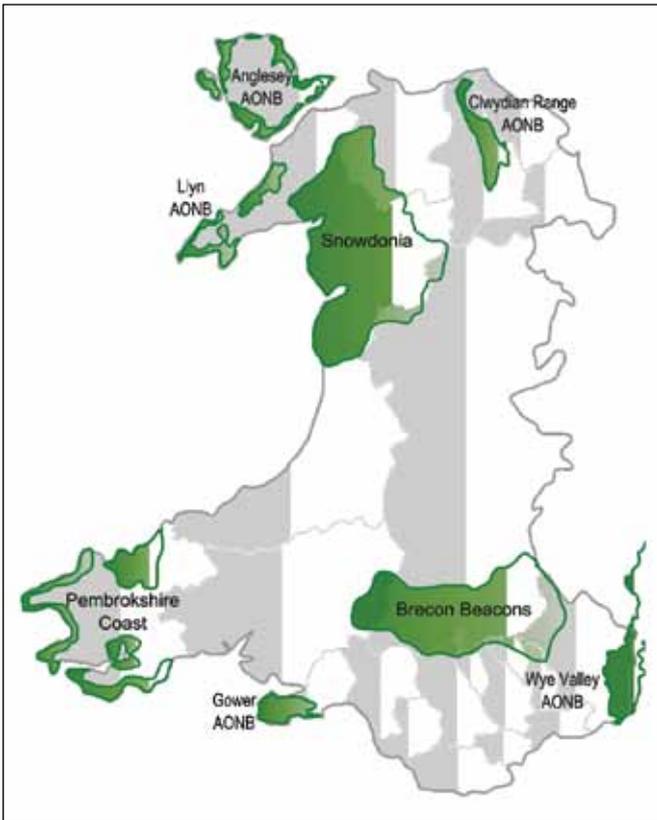
3. The spending of visitors during their additional stay in the region plus the spending by DOC in managing the Park generate direct and flow-on (multiplier) economic activity in the region. As a result of the Park, total regional economic output in 2005 increased by \$196 million beyond what it would otherwise have been. Associated with this increased output was regional income (value added) of \$78 million, including \$55 million of household income and 1,600 jobs.

4. Ten per cent of overseas visitors to the Park said that in the absence of the Park they would stay a shorter time in NZ and a further 12 per cent said that they would not come to New Zealand at all. Foreign overnight visitors to the Park said that they would stay an average of 2.8 nights less in New Zealand while foreign day visitors to the Park said that they would stay an average of 1.6 nights less in New Zealand.

5. The spending of visitors during their additional stay in New Zealand generates direct and flow-on (multiplier) economic activity in the region. As a result of the Park, total national economic output in 2005 increased by \$228 million beyond what it would otherwise have been. Associated with this increased output was national income (value added) of \$103million, including \$68 million of household income and 1,755 jobs.

Some experience from elsewhere

WALES



Wales has 8 National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty covering some 5,000 sq kms (24% of the land area). A 2013 study of the value of the Welsh National Parks for a group of Welsh government agencies showed how important they were to the Welsh economy. Some of the main findings about their economic impacts are shown below:

1. Wales' National Parks account for over half a billion pounds of Wales' Gross Value Added, representing 1.2% of the Welsh economy.
2. Nearly 30,000 people are employed within the park boundaries. Of the jobs provided within the Park, 38% are linked to the environment.
3. The Parks receive 12 million visitors each year spending an estimated £1bn on goods and services.
4. The Parks are home to eight of the 50 most visited attractions in Wales.
5. National Parks in Wales attract a high proportion of staying visitors, averaging 2.26 tourist days per visitor.
6. The National Park economies are proving relatively resilient in the face of recent economic turbulence with higher levels of employment in 2012 compared to 2006.
7. The National Park Authorities receive funding of around £15m per annum, representing less than £5 per person in Wales.
8. The Park Authorities lever in additional income so that the National Park Grant and Levy represent only 65% of total income and expenditure.

Some experience from elsewhere

POLAND



Poland is a very large East European country and has 23 National Parks covering some 3,145 km², although this represents only 1% of its land area. Most National Parks are divided into strictly and partially protected zones. Additionally, they are usually surrounded by a protective buffer zone. They are managed under the Polish Nature Conservation Act (2004) and must have a minimum size of 1000ha., although most are much larger than this and a number are of between 100 and 600 sq kms. In UK terms they could be described as large nature reserves.

In a recent research paper Zawilińska and Mikab (2013) have looked at the management and socio economic impact of the National Parks by sending questionnaires to local government officials to get their perspectives. Quoting from their paper "National Parks and Local Development in Poland – a Municipal Perspective" they noted that:

"Representatives of 29% of municipalities declared that the park was of 'significant' importance to the general development of the municipality; in 16% of municipalities, its importance was described as 'very significant'. Only in 7% of cases it was considered 'marginal'. The influence of a national park on the socio-economic situation of commune was assessed as rather positive. Nonetheless, it is worth emphasising that benefits of the functioning of a park are, in respondents' opinion, currently greater than in the past. The growth of benefits is anticipated in the future."

"Benefits resulting from the existence of national parks are noted primarily in the field of tourism. In as many as 44% of the municipalities, the existence of a park was regarded as significantly positive for development of tourism, in 53% the influence was rated as rather positive."

"Additionally, a quarter of respondents noted the park's role in promoting the Community".

GOT A QUESTION? – GET IN TOUCH

If you would like further information on the activities of the Scottish Campaign for National Parks

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