

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Management Plan (2020-2024)

Background Paper 3:
Outdoor recreation and learning

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
September 2018

About the UK's national parks

The purposes of UK National Park are set out in the Environment Act 1995. They are:

- (a) conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area
- (b) promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public

In the event of an irreconcilable conflict between the purposes, conservation has greater weight (the 'Sandford principle').

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority is charged with delivering the purposes in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and has a duty to seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of National Park communities in its pursuit of the purposes.

Management Plan 2020-2024

Each National Park Authority is required to prepare a five-yearly National Park Management Plan "which formulates its policy for the management of the relevant Park and for the carrying out of its functions in relation to that Park" (Environment Act 1995, section 66). The Environment Act 1995 gives relevant authorities a legal duty to have regard to Park purposes and to the Sandford Principle¹.

A number of background papers have been compiled in preparation for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Management Plan 2020-2024. They cover:

1. Landscape, seascape, tranquillity and dark skies
2. Well-being, equality and livelihoods
3. Outdoor recreation and learning
4. Nature conservation
5. Culture and heritage
6. Climate and energy
7. Natural resources
8. Legislation and policy

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 add further statutory backing to National Park purposes and the need for participation and collaboration to achieve them. However there is a two-way relationship between National Park purposes and the legislation. The topic areas are intended to reflect this complementarity, to demonstrate the alignment of National Park policy with Wales' well-being, climate, natural resource and ecosystem resilience goals, and to help identify opportunities to add value between national and local policy areas. The South-west and Marine area statements prepared by Natural Resources Wales will also be an important component of management.

¹ "In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes [...] and, if it appears that there is a conflict between those purposes, shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area comprised in the National Park." (Environment Act 1995, s.62)

The background papers set out the state of the National Park and provide a context for identifying opportunities and challenges that the Management Plan will need to address. The opportunities and challenges, and accompanying maps, are set out in an informal document for early engagement with partners and public.

The background papers are technical in nature. Where use of technical terms is unavoidable, they are explained in the text and/or in a glossary.

A place-based approach

While many natural resource issues are best considered at a landscape-scale, action locally should take account of local circumstances. It is proposed that the Management Plan 2020-2024 adopts a place-based approach to policy implementation, with five areas identified as follows:

- Preseli Hills and North Coast
- North-west Coast
- West Coast
- Daugleddau
- South Coast

Next steps

An outline timetable for Management Plan preparation was approved in the Authority's Corporate and Resources Plan 2018/19 (page 33). A more detailed timetable is given below. This was approved by the National Park Authority at its meeting of 20th June 2018.

Milestone	By whom/when
Draft preparation timetable, and methods of engagement	Leadership Team, external bodies. May 2018
Approve timetable and engagement proposals	National Park Authority. June 2018
Engage with key stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate evidence (outcomes, issues, policy impact) • Draft / revise Plan and associated assessments (see "Requirements for impact assessments" below) • Prepare an action planning framework 	July to December 2018
Member Workshops to discuss draft reports and assessments	Spring 2019
Authority approval of consultation draft documents (Management Plan, Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Regulations Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment)	National Park Authority June 2019
Translation and formatting	June/July 2019
Public consultation (12 weeks)	Park Direction Team August 2019 - October 2019
Report of consultations to Authority.	National Park Authority

Milestone	By whom/when
Authority approval of amended documents.	December 2019
Translation and formatting	Park Direction/Graphics Team December 2019/ January 2020
Feedback to consultees	December 2019
Publication of approved Management Plan and assessments; formal notification / adoption statements.	January 2020

Opportunities and challenges identified from this background paper

Managing and promoting sustainable outdoor recreation and education opportunities.

Increasing the breadth of participation and inclusion in outdoor recreation and education.

Increasing the frequency of local participation in recreation.

Managing recreation to minimise negative impacts.

Serving recreational opportunities by public transport or active travel.

See also background papers 2. Well-being, equality and livelihoods, 4. Nature conservation and 7. Natural resources.

1. Beaches

1.1 The coastal scenery and beach and inshore recreation are the basis of the tourism product of Pembrokeshire. There are more than 50 clearly identifiable beaches in the National Park; on most of them the foreshore is leased by the NPA from The Crown Estate, with beaches east of Giltar Point leased by Pembrokeshire County Council. Many of the beachheads are in public ownership and most beach management functions are provided by Pembrokeshire County Council, working closely with Natural Resources Wales, The National Trust, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the NPA and others.

1.2 Water quality at designated bathing water sites in Wales is assessed by Natural Resources Wales. From May to September, regular assessments measure current water quality, and at a number of sites daily pollution risk forecasts are issued. Annual ratings classify each site as excellent, good, sufficient or poor, based on measurements taken over a four year period.

Bathing Water Quality Classification Scale:

Excellent	★ ★ ★
Good	★ ★
Sufficient	★
Poor	—

Location / Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Abereddy	No classification	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Abermawr	No classification	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Amroth Central	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Barafundle	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Broad Haven (Central)	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★	★ ★
Broad Haven (South)	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Caerfai	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Castle Beach, Tenby	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Coppet Hall	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Dale	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Druidston Haven	No classification	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Freshwater East	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Freshwater West	No classification	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Little Haven	No classification	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★
Lydstep	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Manorbier	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★

Location Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Marloes Sands	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Newgale	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Newport North	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★	★ ★
Nolton Haven	No classification	★	★ ★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★	★	★ ★
Penally	No classification	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Poppit West	★ ★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Sandy Haven	No classification	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★	★	★ ★
Saundersfoot	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Tenby North	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Tenby South	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
West Angle	★ ★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Whitesands	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Wiseman's Bridge	No classification	★	★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★	★ ★ ★

2. Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey, Key Facts for Policy and Practice: Summary Report December 2016

2.1 Challenges identified by the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey include:

- Increasing the frequency of people's participation in outdoor recreation (linked to a decline in the number of local visits)
- Understanding older people's recreational activities and preferences, and barriers in order to target interventions and support participation. Of those who never take part in outdoor recreation, barriers are a combination of old age, disability and poor health.
- Supporting women with children – life-stages are a key factor in participation; visits by women with children are made with distinct motivations and accompanied by particular needs.
- Flexible provision for different activities – changes in activity preferences are dynamic and hard to predict, requiring recreation provision to be flexible and where possible to accommodate a diversity of activities on locally.
- Balancing health and economic benefit – health benefits are particularly associated with frequent, local participation, while spend is associated with days out or longer stays to the coast and hills.

3. National Park Wales - Together for Health and Wellbeing

3.1 Public health and social care sectors in Wales are moving to tackle some of the root causes of ill health and look to deliver health and social care beyond the traditional service models.

3.2 Evidence shows that accessing national parks can have a positive impact on health promotion generally and particular benefits for individuals living with and managing long term conditions such as heart disease, dementia, diabetes and mental health conditions.

3.3 In this context, the NPA plays two vital roles:

- Managing the National Park as a setting for activities promoting good health and well-being, including active benefits such as walking and ‘passive’ benefits like those derived from tranquillity and inspirational scenery.
- National parks support good quality environments and a flourishing, diverse ecosystem essential to maintaining clean air, drinking water and land.

3.4 Acting as National Parks Wales, Wales’ three national park authorities have set out the following priority actions for health and well-being:

- Raise awareness of the health and well-being benefits opportunities of National Parks.
- Continue to develop evidence-based policy and practice in relation to health and wellbeing and the natural environment and landscape features.
- Maximise opportunities for all people in Wales to access the health and well-being benefits of the natural environment and landscape features of National Parks.

3.5 National Parks Wales has adopted a set of five evidence-based messages aimed at improving the mental health and overall wellbeing of the whole population.²

Connect	Feeling close to and valued by other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world. Social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people of all ages.
Be Active	Regular physical activity is good for physical health on a wide range of factors and is proven to have a positive impact upon mental health including preventing dementia and depression. Physical activity is also a great way for people to connect with others.
Take notice	Being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances well-being and savouring ‘the moment’ can help to reaffirm people’s life priorities. Heightened awareness also enhances people’s self-understanding and allows them to make positive choices based on their own values and motivation.
Keep learning	Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life. Evidence shows that the opportunity to engage in work or educational activities particularly helps to lift people out of depression. The practice of setting goals,

² New Economics Foundation 2011: The 5 ways to well-being model

	which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing.
Give	Participation in social and community life has attracted a lot of attention in the field of wellbeing research. Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

4. Recreational Audit for Disabled Access in Pembrokeshire: Potential Solutions to Barriers Report (July 2017)

4.1 Recommendations include the following:

- Creating inclusive marketing materials and provide access to good quality imagery of disabled individuals taking part in activities.
- Creating a central resource on activities for varying abilities, easing the complexity of finding an appropriate activity and provider.
- Introduce participants to activities through bespoke taster sessions, with signposting to opportunities for regular participation.
- Creating a single place to provide suggestions for physical access improvements would be beneficial so they can be prioritised and easily referenced when needed.
- Obtaining specifically designed or modified equipment to provide high quality safe adventure outdoor recreation experiences and share this between activity providers.
- Providing training for staff to improve understanding of users' needs.

5. Outdoor learning

5.1 Physical activity outdoors helps improve people's health and wellbeing, and can reduce antisocial behaviour and health inequalities. Outdoor experiences also help people, especially children, to connect with the rest of nature and become more interested in the state of their environment.

5.2 Welsh Government aims to help more people enjoy outdoor recreation. While Pembrokeshire has the highest participation rate in outdoor recreation in Wales, two thirds of residents are underactive. Barriers to participation include time, disability, health complaints and age.

5.3 Young people are a particularly important audience. Evidence suggests that, irrespective of their performance in conventional learning settings, young people derive major benefits from outdoor learning and practical work, in terms of learning outcomes, health and wellbeing, and personal and social responsibility. Exposure to the natural environment, especially through active recreation and outdoor learning, can reduce stress and aggressive behaviour, increase attention span and improve mood and self-esteem.

5.4 However, there seems to be a progressive separation of children from the rest of nature, linked to screen-time, an impoverished environment (less attractive for exploration) and safety concerns. According to *Last Child in the Woods* (Louv, 2005) the roaming radius for children declined by 90% in thirty years. This has contributed to childhood weight issues, an increase in asthma, a decrease in cardiovascular fitness in children, nature deficit disorder and ‘the extinction of experience’.

5.5 Lack of contact with nature is also partly implicated in an increase in behavioural and emotional problems. 10% of UK children between 5 and 16 have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder - including a decline in emotional resilience and the ability to judge risk. The cost of physical inactivity to Wales has been estimated as £650m per year.

5.6 The NPA and partner organisations have been successful in working with primary schools, but a limitation on working with secondary schools is the availability of teachers during the day. This makes it more important to involve children through extra-curricular activities, giving scope to include young people who may fall outside the National Curriculum.

6. Public Rights of Way network

6.1 The core resource for recreational walking and access on foot to the countryside and coast is the Public Rights of Way network and the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail. The National Trail covers 316km around the coast of Pembrokeshire. The nature of the rest of the Rights of Way network in the National Park is summarised in the following table.

6.2 Public Rights of Way Network in the National Park 2017

Right of way type³	Total Network	Accessible Network	% Accessible
<i>Footpath</i>	583.68 km	439.46 km	67.1%
<i>Bridleway</i>	177.85 km	165.53 km	93%
<i>Byway open to all traffic</i>	7.23 km	7.23 km	100%
<i>Restricted Byway</i>	1.1 km	1.1 km	100%
Total	769.86 km	613.32 km	79.67%

N.B. Public rights of way network only (Permissive Paths & Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail not included).

6.3 There is also a network of off-road shared use paths⁴ for cyclists and pedestrians in Pembrokeshire that has developed significantly during the course of the first Rights of Way Improvement Plan, being reinforced by legislation such as the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Shared use paths improve the safety of the Public Rights of Way network because users are able to exit paths onto the shared use path rather than directly onto the highway or verge. Some sections of this network of shared use paths form part of the National Cycle Network.

6.4 In addition to Public Rights of Way and shared use paths for cyclists and pedestrians, there are also many permissive paths in Pembrokeshire. These can take two forms. The first arises where a landowner agrees to allow the public to pass along a defined route, which is not a Public Right of Way. The second is where a landowner allows higher rights to be exercised along a Public Right of Way than those legally attributed to the route. Some permissive paths have been created through the Glastir scheme.

6.5 There is a clear value to many permissive paths, as they provide additional links and circuits. In the National Park there are 117km of permissive paths which

³ Footpath. A public right of way over which there is a right to pass on foot only. This does not include pavements and footways which run adjacent to the highway.

Bridleway. A public right of way over which there is a right to pass on foot, bicycle and riding or leading a horse.

Byway Open to All Traffic. A public right of way open to all types of user, including horse drawn carriages and motor vehicles. They are, however, used mainly for the same purposes as footpaths and bridleways.

Restricted byway. A public right of way which has bridleway rights of passage together with non-motorised vehicular rights of passage (horse drawn carriages).

They were formerly classified as Roads Used as Public Paths.

⁴ Shared Use Path. A dedicated route shared by cyclists and pedestrians often alongside roads. In recent years these paths have extended into the countryside and have provided a safer means of access compared to a highway verge.

represents 10% of the network of Public Rights of Way. However, in the absence of a legally binding agreement, permission can be withdrawn at any time. For this reason, the National Park Authority and Pembrokeshire County Council believe that in general it is desirable to integrate such routes within the Public Rights of Way network and in the long-term seek dedication of such permissive paths as Public Rights of Way.

6.6 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced a new right of access on foot to certain areas of open country (primarily areas defined as mountain / moor / heath / down) and to Common Land. These areas are collectively termed 'Access Land'. Access Land covers about 3.7% of the National Park. The rights of way network already provides access to many of these areas. When integrated with the Public Rights of Way network, access land provides valuable additional opportunities for countryside walking.

6.7 Other access opportunities in countryside areas are provided by organisations that open their land to the public, such as the National Trust, and on managed sites such as country parks. Pembrokeshire's many beaches are also used for outdoor recreation, for instance walking and horse-riding. Some sections of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail run across beaches.

6.8 Minor roads and unclassified roads in rural areas provide useful, at times essential, links between different parts of the Public Rights of Way network. They are often (although not invariably) lightly trafficked and with a degree of caution can be used safely by walkers, cyclists and equestrians. The network of such roads in Pembrokeshire is extensive.

7. Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Pembrokeshire

7.1 Public Rights of Way play an important role in Pembrokeshire, enabling access and connectivity within and between both rural and urban areas.

7.2 Public Rights of Way are highways maintainable at public expense. Under the Highways Act 1980 Pembrokeshire County Council as Highway Authority has a statutory duty to maintain public rights of way which account for a large network of over 2,350 km distributed across the county.

7.3 Within the National Park area the management of most of the Public Rights of Way network is delegated to the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. Under the delegation agreement, the National Park Authority acts as agent for Pembrokeshire County Council and assumes maintenance responsibility for the rural element of the Public Rights of Way network of approximately 770km.

7.4 The most common classifications of public rights of way are public footpaths and bridleways. Public Rights of Way vary greatly in their character and use and range from promoted routes such as the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail and the Landsker Trail to "parish paths" that provide numerous walking opportunities within local communities to urban paths providing non-recreational access within the towns. The minimum standard of maintenance of each type of right of way will depend on the public right of access dictated by its classification. Therefore

footpaths should be maintained to a standard appropriate for pedestrian use, bridleways for equestrian traffic and byways for occasional vehicular use.

7.5 Pembrokeshire County Council and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority have jointly prepared a second Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Local authorities have a statutory obligation to prepare such a plan, which is the prime means by which local authorities identify, prioritise and plan for improvements to their local rights of way network. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan therefore aims to improve the network of public paths to meet the current and future needs of walkers, cyclists, horse riders and people with impaired mobility.

7.6 The Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2 assessments provide some useful information on the extent to which the current network meets the needs of existing users. The general conclusion seems to be that there is an improving network in Pembrokeshire, which is in most instances meeting the needs of users. However, there are several areas where there is clearly scope for further improvement and the provision for individual user groups is better in some cases than in others. For instance, there seem to be fewer opportunities for horse riders in comparison to walkers. Another key finding is that some residents do not make use of the network at all, often because they do not participate in any of the activities that the network facilitates because of lack of time, awareness, inclination or problems with transport.

7.7 The concerns raised by users include blocked and overgrown routes, a desire to see barriers (such as stiles) reduced, occurrence of litter and dog fouling, rutted and muddy paths, inadequate signage, a need for more information both online and in paper format, a scarcity of inland routes, a need for more routes catering for higher rights (such as horse riders) and a need for more routes suitable for those with impaired mobility.

7.8 The National Park Authority and Pembrokeshire County Council aspire to create a more inclusive network and this will require special attention to be given to broadening of opportunities for those with disabilities and carers. Very often, improvements to meet the needs of these users are beneficial to all network users.

8. Country Path User Survey 2015-16 (Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, January 2017)

8.1 The majority of respondents (74%) were visitors to the county of Pembrokeshire, with the remainder (26%) being residents. 55% of respondents were female and 45% male. The 2,959 respondents accounted for a total of 6,330 walkers (5,471 adults and 859 children). 49% of adults were walking in pairs and 38% walking alone.

8.2 Respondents tended to be from older age groups. 49% were aged between 46 and 65 years, and 19% aged 66 years and over (with little variation between residents and visitors).

8.3 Residents are frequent users of country paths, with 60% walking paths at least once or twice a week with an average distance of 5.3 miles. This indicates the value of the wider network of public rights of way that are distributed widely, often more accessible to settlements and could be part of a regular walk.

8.4 Respondents were asked to select up to three reasons for their walk. Across all respondents, by far the most popular reason for walking was reported as being “to enjoy the natural landscape”. Other reasons often cited included; “to explore the area”, “to see wildlife” and “to get away from it all”. Residents also ranked dog walking and health improvement highly among the reasons for walking.

8.5 In response to the question “Did today’s walk meet your expectations?” 98% responded positively.

8.6 Respondents were asked to rate seven attributes of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail and country paths. Key indicators of path condition such as gates and stiles, surface, control of vegetation and signposting were rated good or excellent by over 95% of respondents.

8.7 Respondents were asked what the National Park Authority could do to encourage them to walk in the countryside more often (selecting as many options as applied). Improved signage, and walk promotion were frequently mentioned.

9. Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail

9.1 The Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail is 186 miles (300km) in length with an additional 30 km of managed alternative routes at tidal crossings and military firing ranges. The National Park Authority manages the Coast Path with funding from Natural Resources Wales. The coast path is now part of the 870 mile Wales Coast Path. It is a constant feature of the Pembrokeshire coastline and one of the main ways that visitors can explore and enjoy the coastline of the national park. It is therefore an intrinsic part of the national park offer and an attraction in its own right. In terms of usage, on the basis of information provided by visitor surveys it is estimated that 1 million people use the Coast Path each year, generating an estimated annual income of between £8 and £20 million. There are also seven concealed user counters situated along the route with a total of 154,000 users recorded for 2017, showing a steady increase of 15% over the last four years. Usage tends to fall into a seasonal pattern in common with the wider tourism industry of Wales.

9.2 It has been described as a mountain walk along the coast, with some remote rugged stretches. 110km of the coast path passes 82 beaches and coves, through sites of Special Scientific Interest and many Scheduled Monuments.

9.3 As well as providing opportunities for long distance walking, the Coast Path offers over 60 distinct circuit walks incorporating the wider network of public rights of way that link to the Coast Path, many of these walks are promoted on the National Park Authority website. Research shows that the majority of users walk short sections of the Trail.

9.4 The Coast Path also has its own dedicated website hosted by the Park Authority, with footage of the entire route on Google Streetview providing useful information on planning a walk. The Coast Path has an international profile: in 2012, National Geographic magazine voted Pembrokeshire as being the second best coastal destination in the world and the Pembrokeshire Coast Path was used as the model for the establishment of the Wales Coast Path which was completed in 2012.

9.5 Gradually the number of stiles has been reduced from 540 to 31 and the goal is to remove all of them. This notable achievement to improve accessibility was made possible by the close working relationship between the National Park Authority and the many landowners and farmers along the coast. At the last count there were in excess of 180 separate land holdings along the Coast Path.

9.6 At 2017 there were 475 gates, 536 Signposts, 158 waymarker posts, 149 footbridges, 115 culverts and 273 runs of steps with a total of 3,779 steps.

9.7 The key priority is to maintain the route and strike a reasonable balance between the safety of the walker and the quality of their walking experience. A Safety Statement guides the approach to risk assessment and improvements for the benefit of visitor safety. There is, however, always scope for improvement, even with such a well-established route. Improvements include re-grading and widening of path surfaces to remove narrow ruts, replacement of stiles with gates, distance and destination signage and realignments where the route is prone to coastal erosion.

9.8 A costed Action Plan identifying desirable improvements is kept updated and a National Trail Quality Standards report is also submitted each year to monitor performance.

9.9 Much of the Trail runs through marginal coastal slopes that are not grazed and the path verges require cutting up to three times in a season in places. Regular cutting is essential in many places to prevent fast growing verges from closing in and obstructing the Coast Path. This is achieved by six warden teams simultaneously cutting the Coast Path across the National Park. This makes considerable demands on the time of the warden teams (22% of Park Delivery warden time is spent maintaining the Coast Path with vegetation cutting accounting for over half of this time). The north and west coast in particular have many bracken covered slopes where regrowth can be rapid in between cuts in the damp and humid weather conditions that usually prevail. Cutting serves to not only make the path accessible and convenient to walk but also helps to define the path surface for safety on narrow sections in close proximity to cliff edges. The National Park Authority continues to adapt the Trail so that it can be cut by self-propelled pedestrian mowers to improve efficiency, however, due to the nature of the terrain much of the Coast Path is still cut manually with brushcutters and strimmers. Contractors are used to a limited degree to supplement the warden teams but the recruitment of additional seasonal labour has always been crucial to ensuring the Coast Path remains passable in the main summer season. Seasonal wardens supplement existing teams enabling them to operate more efficiently.

9.10 Coastal erosion is a continuous challenge both in reacting to sudden storm events and monitoring “at risk” sections of the Coast Path and taking proactive action to realign the path before instability requires its closure and realignment of a route. A proactive programme of realignment is generally resource reliant and classed as an improvement where not considered urgent. Considerable staff time is taken up in securing agreements with the affected landowners and occupiers regarding compensation for land take, boundary alteration works and the appropriate documentation by a Public Path Creation Agreement. The last few winters have resulted in a number of unexpected coastal landslips where the Coast Path has fallen away or become undermined, necessitating a prompt response from staff. Preserving the continuity of the Coast Path is of course a priority but the recent number of incidents has placed extra demands on staff time. The vast majority of landowners co-operate readily in the reinstatement of the route and for this the National Park Authority is grateful.

9.11 It has been observed in recent years that the number of competitive running events is increasing, together with the size of events, with 600 competitors entering one recent event. Even overnight endurance events are now being staged. Principally our concerns are for the safety and enjoyment of other Coast Path walkers during the event, where narrow cliff edge sections are used and the impact on the path surface, which is generally maintained in its natural state. Proactive liaison with organisers on the management of events is the key to ensuring that the events do not have adverse impacts. The timing of events, selection of routes and the need to brief their competitors on the potential dangers and the fact that other

people will be walking the route, are all important considerations. Many events take place without consultation with the National Park Authority so liaison with event organisers remains an important role of the National Trail Officer if we are to ensure that such activities are sustainable in the long term.

10. Access Land

10.1 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 normally gives a public right of access to land mapped as 'open country' (mountain, moor, heath and down) or registered common land. These areas are known as 'open access land'.

11. Other recreation opportunities

11.1 The National Park offers world-class opportunities for coastal walking, climbing and watersports. People appreciate the landscape and beaches in particular and are generally very satisfied with their experience of the National Park and the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, with a high percentage of visitors returning again and again.

11.2 There is latent demand amongst adults resident in Wales for walking and off-road cycling, and strong interest in paddlesports, coasteering, camping, foraging and bushcraft amongst young people in Pembrokeshire.

11.3 The coastal strip, Daugleddau and Eastern and Western Cleddau rivers form a key recreational interface in the National Park and the NPA and partner organisations work to promote and manage water-related activities, subject to the achievement of management policies for wildlife, landscape and heritage conservation, through the Milford Haven Waterway Recreation Plan 2016-2020, which includes an overview of use, demand and facilities for Waterway zones.

11.4 There are excellent opportunities for open-water swimming, surfing, bodyboarding, kayaking/canoeing, windsports and for otherwise enjoying the water, exploring the coast and discovering wildlife, with benefits to people's health, wellbeing and personal development, as well as providing income to the region.

11.5 Tides and topography limit navigation in inshore waters for some craft, and military ranges constrain access to sea danger areas off the south coast. Harbour access outside the Haven is heavily tide-dependent and this, added to the exposed nature of much of the coast, tidal rips, and sea danger areas, limits the potential for expansion of coastal cruising. There has however been a recent major increase in paddling and rowing use which have the advantages of sustainability, affordability and, particularly in the case of rowing, a strong community element.

11.6 A large number of slipways exist around the coast and on the Milford Haven Waterway, in numerous ownerships; most slipways are unsupervised and free. While this makes them popular it can also make it more difficult to fund their maintenance and to manage inappropriate activities if necessary. Many launch sites are in village or remote locations with narrow road access unsuitable for larger vehicle/trailer combinations, while launching across small beaches can cause disruption and pose risks to other users.

11.7 Subject to tide and draught there is good upriver boat access on the Milford Haven Waterway to Haverfordwest and Canaston Bridge. While there are no rivers with navigation rights above the tidal limits in Pembrokeshire, opportunities for negotiated access may exist outside the National Park on the Eastern and Western Cleddau rivers. The only significant non-tidal rivers in the National Park are the Nevern and the Gwaun. Both are open for fishing use and offer riverside footpaths but potential for recreation on the water (subject to agreement) is limited to in-spate canoe use. Given the paddling opportunities on tidal stretches of the Waterway, non-tidal rivers are not a priority for negotiated access.

12. Recreational capacity

12.1 With the exception of relatively few locations, and a restricted range of (mainly motorised) activities, the National Park still has capacity for greater levels of recreational use, especially outside the summer holiday period.

12.2 The seasonality of tourism means that some opportunities are under-capacity off season, and over-used at other times. Activities which could in particular be accommodated in greater numbers with minimum additional management include walking, cycling, sea rowing, paddleboarding, canoeing, kayaking, sea-swimming, windsurfing, surfing, bodyboarding.

12.3 Competition for a limited recreational resource can bring different users into conflict. However, the negative impacts of recreation on the National Park special qualities, its communities or other users tend to be localised in space and in time. While they can present management challenges, they can also be solved, for example through voluntary agreements with user groups. However prevention is better than cure and awareness and promotion can help to stop issues developing.

12.4 More widely, there is concern over dog control issues and fouling. Littering is also a concern; litter on beaches is often seaborne and includes considerable quantities of netting and plastic particles. Other sites are littered above and below the tideline by lost angling gear and discarded bait.

12.5 There are wider impacts associated with recreation - for example increased traffic volumes may have site or area-specific implications but may also place an increased burden on infrastructure (e.g. water use and sewerage) and facilities.

12.6 The NPA's Recreation and Leisure Activities Supplementary Planning Guidance (December 2012) advises which recreational activities are likely to be considered appropriate for different recreational character areas within the National Park.

13. Potential recreational conflicts

13.1 As noted above, with the exception of a few locations and activities, the National Park has capacity for additional levels of recreational use, particularly

outside the summer holiday period. Where potential conflicts exist, these can often be resolved through voluntary and agreed Codes of Conduct.

13.2 While the seasonality of tourism means that some opportunities are under-capacity off season, they may be over-used at other times. Competition for a limited recreational resource can bring different users into conflict and may include the following:

Activity	Potential conflicts	Example locations
Beach horse-riding	Rights of way users, beach users	Druidston, plus some other west and south coast locations
Boat launching and beach parking	Other beach and inshore users	Freshwater East and St Brides Haven (launching); Newport (beach parking)
Coasteering	Angling, other coast users	Abereiddi, Stackpole Quay, Ceibwr
Diving	Angling, boating	Martin's Haven
Kite sports	Other beach and inshore users	Broad Haven, Whitesands
Mountain biking (on stretches of path registered as footpath)	Footpath walkers	Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail, inland footpaths
Off-road vehicles	Other users, habitat damage, wildlife disturbance	Common land and dunes
Paragliding	Grazing and horse riding	Common land and dunes
Powered watercraft	Beach and inshore users	Tenby, Lydstep Haven, Newport, Whitesands, Freshwater East
Snow activities	Other users, land managers, stock	Preseli Hills
Unauthorised camping and caravanning	Other users, habitat damage, wildlife disturbance	Various sites, e.g. Freshwater West, Angle.