

Letter of response from the Snowdonia National Park, to the decision to urgently investigate the possibility of charging tourists who visit parts of the Park, particularly on and around Snowdon itself. (TRANSLATION FROM WELSH TO ENGLISH)

26 November 2020

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Y Cyng. D. Siencyn
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Dear Dyfrig,

There is no doubt that this matter has come to the fore following the incredible events that we have confronted during the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the results was an increased number of visitors to the area following the lockdown. In addition to this, anti-social behaviour was experienced in the most popular areas, in Snowdonia and further afield.

Legal matters:

At present, the current points of access to Snowdon are based on six Public Rights of Way, Open Access Land and Access Agreements:

1. There are three bridal ways (on foot, bike and horse) – Cwellyn Path, Rhyd Ddu and Llanberis and the remaining routes are Public Footpaths – Watkin Path, PYG Path and Miners Path.
2. In addition, Snowdon is almost entirely 'access land' that has been designated and mapped this way under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
3. A large percentage of this land is also subject to open access agreements on farm-land (1949 legislation) made by the old Gwynedd Council in cooperation with the Welsh Office during the 1980s. These agreements could not be withdrawn, and there is a payment to the landowners to reflect the potential damage to their land / animals due to human pressure.

Attempting to set tariffs would raise a number of points: Setting any kind of 'charging system' for access on Snowdon would set a precedent for Public Rights of Way and would be contrary to the ethos of the Highways Act. This would undoubtedly be subject to significant and severe legal challenge at a national level. This is arguably contrary to the

ethos of the National Parks Act and all the legislation that has been in place since the Second World War.

A practical question also arises, namely who should get the benefit out of any income that would be raised, e.g.

- Landowner - as it would be a way of getting value out of the asset,
- The farmer or tenant - who may be suffering from people pressure,
- Highways Authority - which has statutory responsibilities to maintain the paths,
- The National Park Authority - which manages most aspects of public use,
- Communities - seasonal impact due to people.

One thing is certain, there is a lack of resources to respond to the challenges that arise.

Operational implications:

Implementing any regulations on restrictions on access on the ground would be very difficult. The potential of at least two options for implementation would have to be explored. Gates and physical barriers on the ground where users pay to access the mountain. Obviously, it will be necessary to decide which mountains will be within this boundary. It can be complicated and expensive to set up. Another option would be invisible boundaries with an online payment system. Lower costs to set up but difficult to manage.

Any option of implementation would require an element of enforcement and control. In order to do this a staff resource would be required on the ground. This would have to result in the creation of a specific role as the role of Council staff and Authority Wardens at present focuses on developing the relationship we have with the public, landowners and partners rather than enforcement.

Tourism Tax – Past Work

Gwynedd Council's tourism team commissioned a substantial piece of work to look at options under the banner of 'Benefiting from Tourism', with input from officials from this Authority as well as other organizations. The study concluded that there are four main options for generating revenue: Visitor Giving Scheme (building on the Snowdonia Giving project), Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID), Tourism Tax and commercialisation of the area and offer in various ways. Each had their own strengths and weaknesses. Their revenue raising potential also varied. It was concluded that the most sustainable long-term solution was a Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) or a Tourism Tax. The report outlines that a tourism tax would require the need for powers granted by the Welsh Government to be exercised.

I hope that you find the above comments helpful in reporting back to the Council.

Your sincerely,

Emyr Williams
Chief Executive