

13th May 2014

Enterprise and Business Committee Inquiry into Tourism

Submission from Ramblers Cymru

Introduction

1. The Ramblers works to help everyone enjoy the benefits of walking, and to protect the places where people walk. Working with our 115,000 members and 25,000 volunteers we are committed to encouraging and supporting walking, protecting footpaths and rights of way, and preserving the beauty of the countryside and other areas.
2. Ramblers Cymru has been instrumental in helping bring about the creation of the Wales Coast path, and in promoting walking through initiatives like our Big Welsh Walk, which in 2013 saw over 800 people participate in 43 walks. The 2014 Big Welsh Walk, which runs throughout May, has 276 organised walks and is on course to see thousands of people out walking and enjoying the Welsh outdoors.
3. In Wales 28 million walking related trips are made each year resulting in a £632 million direct spend by walkers. This accounts for 16% of the total tourism in Wales and before accounting for the success of the Welsh Coast path. (The Economic Impact of Walking and Hill Walking in Wales. Welsh Economy Research Unit, Cardiff University. 2011)
4. Our response to the Committee's call for evidence focusses on two key issues in the Terms of Reference:

The Success of Welsh Governments efforts to increase the quality of Wales's tourism offer

5. Given the wealth of Wales' natural assets, and the proven motivation of many visitors to Wales, the quality of Wales's tourism offer has to be considered alongside the wider debate about access to the outdoors. 42% of visitors cited enjoying our landscape, countryside and beaches as their main reason for visiting Wales.
6. Ramblers Cymru believe that the Welsh Government has an excellent opportunity to increase the quality of the Wales tourism offer if it were to take the bold step of widening access to the countryside and waterways of Wales. This view is supported by the recent publication of research commissioned by Visit Wales which concluded that "certain groups are discouraged from undertaking activities ...due to confusion and dispute over access to land and water." (The Economic Impact of Outdoor Activity Tourism in Wales; March 2014)

7. A review of access and outdoor recreation legislation was announced last year and a green paper had been expected in February 2014; however it has not materialised.
8. We ask the Committee to encourage Welsh Government to publish its green paper on access and to take a joined up approach across its policy agendas, considering how the quality of tourism can be enhanced by better access to the outdoors.

The extent to which the marketing and development of tourism in Wales makes the most of Wales's cultural , historical and natural assets.

9. If Wales's assets are to be fully utilised the Government should be considering whether a Scottish-style approach to open access would work in Wales and if there is merit in replacing Wales's Countryside Code with one similar to Scotland's Outdoor Access Code. Research has shown Scotland's open access legislation, its Code and accompanying awareness raising efforts to have been a big success, with walker's experiences and the public's understanding of its access responsibilities markedly improving.
10. The Ramblers will encourage the Welsh Government to learn from the positive outcomes in Scotland and make bold and confident moves towards better access for all in Wales.
11. Finally, Ramblers Cymru would like clarification on whether full use is made of the walking-related data available through the GB Tourism Survey. It is our understanding that the Survey offers insights into the reasons people come to Wales for activities such as walking compared to those that choose to go elsewhere. These insights would be valuable both to the government and tourism operators, but this information is not routinely made available.

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