

[National Assembly for Wales](#)
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Evidence from The National Association Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty –
TOU 14

Response to the National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise and Business Committee Inquiry into Tourism

The NAAONB is a voluntary body whose membership includes all but one of the AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards in England and Wales, as well as many of the local authorities with statutory responsibility for AONBs, and a number of voluntary bodies and individuals with an interest in the future of these iconic landscapes.

A number of Welsh AONB partnerships¹ may respond individually to this consultation and the comments of the NAAONB should be seen as supportive and supplementary to these.

Thank you for the opportunity to input to this National Assembly for Wales' Inquiry.

1. General points

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are distinctive landscapes of outstanding quality and value. The landscapes themselves are strategic national assets, and the partnerships that govern the AONB designation are in a prime position to advance Sustainable Tourism in Wales.

2. Activity in Welsh AONBs

¹ AONB partnerships, with a lower case p, is the generic term used by the NAAONB to refer to AONB Partnerships, Conservation Boards and any other organisation recognised as the lead governance body for an AONB.

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Many of the Welsh AONB Partnerships are very active in promoting and enabling Sustainable Tourism. For example

- the Clwydian Range AONB Partnership was awarded the Europarc Charter for Sustainable Tourism in 2009,
- the Gower AONB Partnership is an active member of their local Destination Management Partnership,
- the Wye Valley AONB Partnership is a key partner in the Offa's Country Sustainable Tourism Programme and instrumental in the Walking with Offa Project. This year there has been the inaugural Wye Valley River Festival which proved very popular,
- the Anglesey AONB Partnership has held a workshop for accommodation providers to which they have given information on how they can benefit from being in the AONB and how they could contribute to sustainability.

3. Visitor numbers in Welsh AONBs

There are no comprehensive accounts of visitor numbers and spend in Welsh AONBs, but evidence from individual AONB Partnerships is enlightening:

- tourism in the Wye Valley AONB (based on 2011 STEAM data) generates per annum £130M of expenditure employing nearly 2,250 FTEs servicing 2.2M tourist days / 1.4M tourists, and
- the figures in the Anglesey AONB Partnership's "State of the AONB" report show that visitor spending has doubled since 2007 to £55.7 million and that visitors to the AONB have increased by 42%. This information linked to employment shows an increase of 45% since 2007.

4. Strategic Approach

Central to the Welsh AONB Partnerships' work on promotion and facilitation of Sustainable Tourism in their AONBs, is the development of a strategic approach. Many of the AONB Partnerships have Tourism Strategies and Action Plans that are closely linked to their Management Plans. It is critical that this approach is encouraged.

5. Sources of support and funding

Support and funding for these activities has not only come from the Welsh AONB Partnerships and limited Core Budgets, but also from a range of other bodies. For example

- Visit Wales are an important supporter and meet with the AONB Partnerships regularly, and
- earlier this year, funding was secured through a bidding process which was led by Snowdonia National Park Authority with input from the three AONB Partnerships in North Wales. This funding allowed the Protected Landscapes to collectively develop their marketing and sustainable tourism product development.

Additional support has come from The Arts Council, the Rural Development Programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

6. Future requirements

If the Welsh AONB Partnerships are to continue to successfully promote and deliver Sustainable Tourism, they would hope to see a number of key activities:

- effective engagement from Visit Wales with respect to understanding and promoting the importance of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other Protected Landscapes in making Wales a great destination for Sustainable Tourism,
- the continued support for Sustainable Tourism from the Rural Development Programme, and
- maintenance of organisations and agencies that act as valuable advocates for Sustainable Tourism in AONBs such as Capital Region Tourism.

Strategically, the NAAONB would like to see a nationally stated commitment to furthering Sustainable Tourism in the Welsh AONBs. We would be keen to work with the National Assembly for Wales to develop a framework and action plan for the promotion of sustainable tourism in the Welsh AONBs.

NAAONB
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