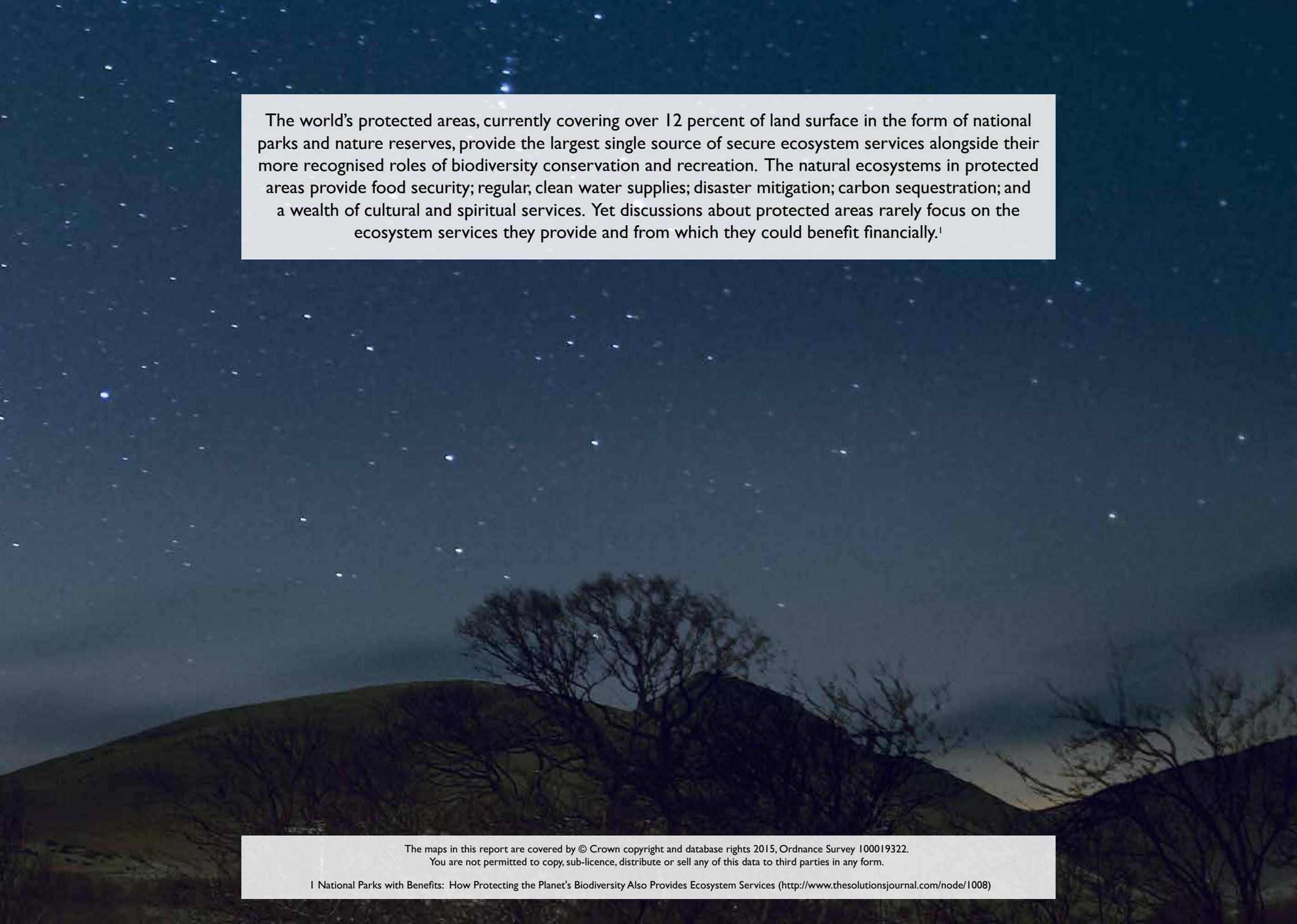




**Brecon Beacons National Park
State of the Park Report 2014**





The world's protected areas, currently covering over 12 percent of land surface in the form of national parks and nature reserves, provide the largest single source of secure ecosystem services alongside their more recognised roles of biodiversity conservation and recreation. The natural ecosystems in protected areas provide food security; regular, clean water supplies; disaster mitigation; carbon sequestration; and a wealth of cultural and spiritual services. Yet discussions about protected areas rarely focus on the ecosystem services they provide and from which they could benefit financially.¹

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¹ National Parks with Benefits: How Protecting the Planet's Biodiversity Also Provides Ecosystem Services (<http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/1008>)

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1st Purpose

Theme 1: Managing park landscapes to maximise conservation and public benefits		
Indicator 1	Indicator 2	Indicator 3
Landscape Character Assessment	Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings at risk	Condition of Regionally Important Geodiversity sites

2nd Purpose

Theme 3: Providing everyone with opportunities for outdoor access and recreation		
Indicator 7	Indicator 8	Indicator 9
% of Rights of Way that are easy to use	Upland erosion on paths	Visitor satisfaction

Duty

Theme 5: Building and maintaining sustainable communities, towns and villages		
Indicator 13	Indicator 14	Indicator 15
Flood risk, river levels and climate change	Health and wellbeing	Communities with a village plan and open space assessment

Theme 2: Conserving and enhancing biodiversity

Indicator 4	Indicator 5	Indicator 6
Condition of biological Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Water quality	Phase I habitat data

Theme 4: Raising awareness and understanding of the park

Indicator 10	Indicator 11	Indicator 12
Number of outdoor education centres	Number of settlements benefitting from interpretation and/or information panels	Ratio of staying visitors/day visitors

Theme 6: Sustainable economic development

Indicator 16	Indicator 17	Indicator 18
Affordable housing provision	Economic activity	Employment by type of industry



Introduction

The purpose of the State of the Park Report (SOPR) is to provide a picture of the overall health of the Brecon Beacons National Park and report on the progress in delivering the 2010-2015 National Park Management Plan. Like the Management Plan, it is a report for the National Park and the people who live, work and visit the Park, as well as for the work of the National Park Authority. Six themes emerged from the Management Plan consultation process to develop and prioritise actions. These have been incorporated as corporate goals by the authority. They develop the 2 Statutory Purposes and Duty of the Authority and are more closely aligned with the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the management principles for Category V Protected Areas.

Just as important as knowing the current condition of a given National Park resource or parameter is the ability to discern long and short term trends and therefore an important goal is to determine whether the National Park is, in crude terms, getting better or worse. Contained within this report are data sets supplied by various levels of government, business and different types of research.

Some of the future indicators and sub-indicators will be derived from university research, and the National Park Authority has entered into research prospectus agreements with academic bodies which we hope will be fruitful in providing indicators for future iterations of this report. These on-going monitoring projects will enable future updates to be produced while developing methods suitable for providing State of the Park Report data.

This State of the Park Report uses indicators structured in line with the six themes of the Management Plan, which have been derived from the Park Authority's Purposes and Duty. This is shown in Table Intro I:

Theme 1: Managing Park Landscapes to Maximise Conservation and Public Benefits	1st Purpose
Theme 2: Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity	
Theme 3: Provide Opportunities for Outdoor Access and Recreation	2nd Purpose
Theme 4: Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park	
Theme 5: Building and Maintaining Sustainable Communities, Towns and Villages	Duty
Theme 6: Sustainable Economic Development	

Table Intro I: Management Plan Themes and Purpose/Duty

Three headline indicators have been chosen per Management Plan theme, providing a total of 18 headline indicators covering the First and Second Purpose, and Duty of the National Park Authority. This aligns the Management Plan more closely with the 12 Category V Protected Area Principles² (appendix 1) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the current Management Plan.

The report is constantly evolving and the addition of indicators or sub-indicators in future iterations will make for a richer and more detailed understanding of the health of the Park within the six Management Plan themes.

Table Intro 2 below identifies the condition of each theme based on the data derived from the indicators in this report. The scoring system currently ranges between Poor, Fair, Good and Excellent. Therefore if the majority of indicators within a theme demonstrate a positive trend, the score will be either good or excellent, depending on how positive the trend is within the indicators. The same applies if a negative trend is shown – the score will be poor, and if a similar trend is shown the score will be fair. This provides crude information on the overall state of a given Management Plan theme. More information is given through specific indicators/sub-indicators.

The scoring system is currently quite subjective and it is our intention that future iterations of the State of the Park Report will develop a scoring system which is more scientific and consistent across each of the indicators.

Management Plan Theme	Condition
Theme 1: Managing Park Landscapes to Maximise Conservation and Public Benefits	Good
Theme 2: Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity	Good
Theme 3: Provide Opportunities for Outdoor Access and Recreation	Good
Theme 4: Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park	Fair
Theme 5: Building and Maintaining Sustainable Communities, Towns and Villages	Good
Theme 6: Sustainable Economic Development	Fair

Table Intro 2: Management Plan Theme and Condition

It is proposed to publish updates of the report at least once every three years, the next report will be in 2017. Not every indicator will be updated within this time frame as some indicators are subject to more periodic reviews than others.

² A protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. (IUCN Definition 2008)

About the Park

The Brecon Beacons National Park contains some of the most spectacular and distinctive upland landform in southern Britain. Despite its name, the National Park is much more than the just the Brecon Beacons and includes Y Mynyddoedd Duon (The Black Mountains), Y Mynydd Du (The Black Mountain) and Fforest Fawr (the Great Forest).

The Park covers 520 square miles (1346 square kilometres) and lies between rural Mid Wales and the industrial South Wales Valleys. It is a diverse landscape, where sweeping uplands contrast with green valleys, dramatic waterfalls, ancient woodland, caves, forests and reservoirs. The bulk of the Park is underlain by Old Red Sandstone rocks of Devonian age.

The Park was glaciated during the last Ice Age and the value of the Park's Earth science heritage has been acknowledged by the European/UNESCO Geopark Network who granted Geopark status to the Fforest Fawr Geopark in October 2005. The Geopark includes the whole of the western half of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It became the first Geopark in Wales, and the first Geopark in any UK National Park.

In 2013 the quality of the night skies above the National Park was recognised by the International Dark Sky Association when it was granted the accolade of becoming the fifth Dark Sky Reserve in the world. This status indicates a lack of light pollution and a high percentage of clear skies. The application for the status was made through a partnership between the National Park Authority and the Brecon Beacons Park Society (an independent membership group and charitable organisation). Many tourism businesses across the Park have embraced and benefitted from the concept and offer stargazing packages and information to their guests.

The National Park has many rich habitats for wildlife but no part of the Park is unaffected by the intervention of mankind. Most of the land within the National Park is agricultural including hedged fields and the upland commons (the remaining being predominantly a combination of reservoirs, lakes and woodland). The history of human influence can be seen everywhere, from Neolithic long cairns, Iron Age hillforts, Roman roads and Norman castles, to disused quarries and ironworks, managed woods and forest plantations, former railways, a canal and reservoirs, as well as the many farmsteads, villages and small market towns.





The Park is home to more than 33,000 people and has a strong Welsh heritage and rich economic, social and cultural life. The largest settlement is the cathedral town of Brecon with a population of 8,250 (Census 2011), a 4.4% increase from 2001 data (7,904). Brecon is a busy market town which is an important administrative centre for Powys County Council and the Ministry of Defence as well as the National Park Authority.

Approximately 4.1 million visitors every year³ come to the Brecon Beacons National Park to enjoy this unforgettable landscape. The mountains, uplands and valleys are all excellent walking country, and other activities include horse riding, cycling and mountain biking and water-based activities. There are major tourist attractions and festivals and celebrations of locally produced food. Many also come for simple forms of enjoyment including contemplation, sightseeing, gentle strolls and simply enjoying the view.

³ <http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/the-authority/working-in-partnership/tourism-new/visitor-management-plan-draft>





Land Ownership

Most land in the National Park is privately owned by estate owners, farmers and householders, who therefore manage the majority of the landscape as well. There are several large public and charitable landowners too. The National Park Authority itself owns 14% of the land, mainly upland common land purchased with the help of grants to conserve it for the benefit of the public, this land has historic grazing rights attached and many of those with land bordering the commons have the right to put stock on the uplands.

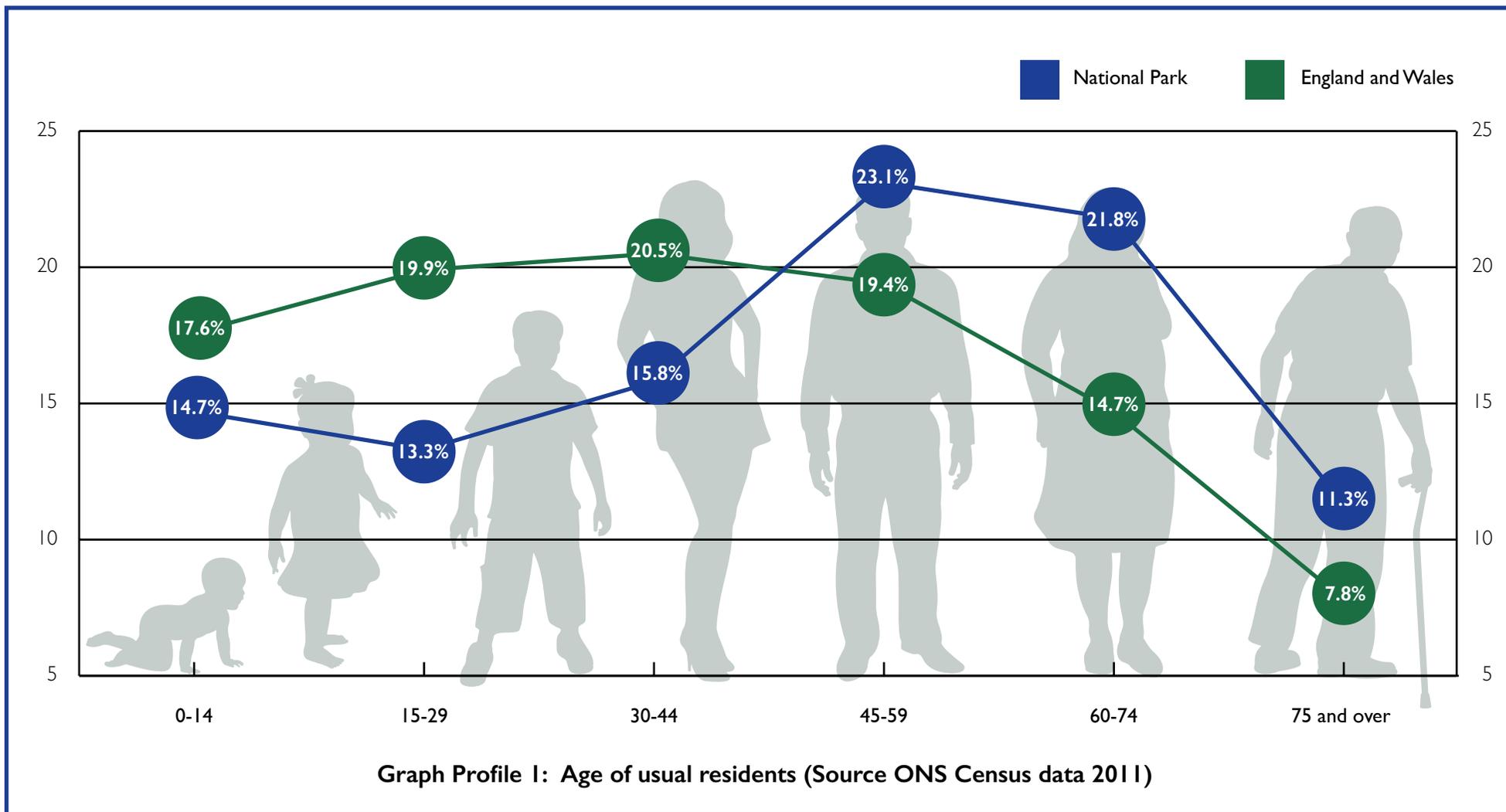
© Philip Veale - Talybont Reservoir

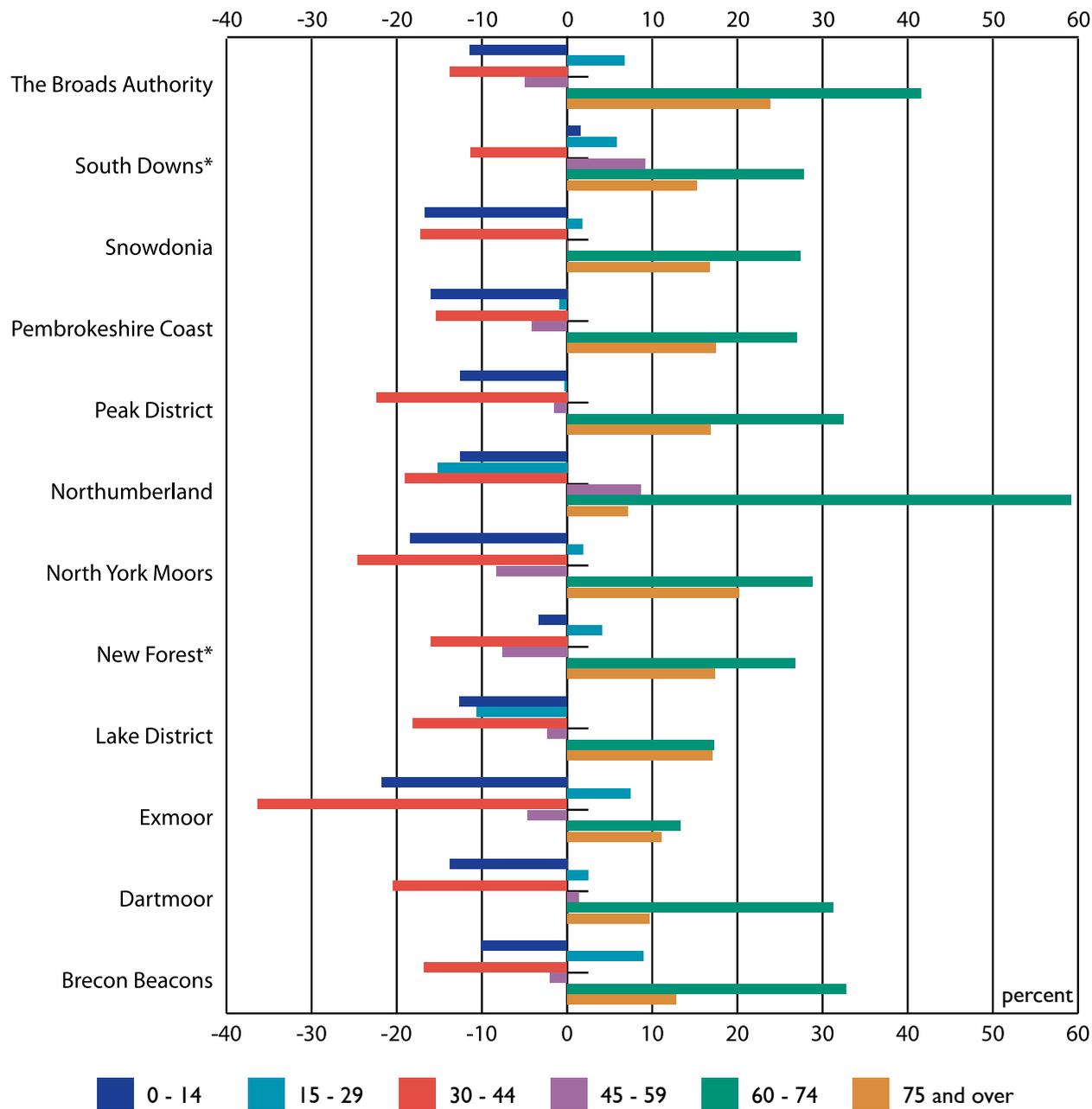
Park Profile

Demography

Graph Profile I below shows that in 2011 National Parks in England and Wales had a smaller proportion of their total population in the under 45 year age groups, and a greater proportion in the over 45 year age groups than for England and Wales.

These figures are indicating an older population age structure for the resident population in national parks than nationally with a median age of 50 years, 11 years higher than the national median age at 39. (Census – Office for National Statistics).





Graph Profile 2: Percentage change in size of usual resident population by age
(Source ONS Census data 2011)

Graph Profile 2 shows that over the period 2001 to 2011, only one National Park in England and Wales had an increase in the 0 to 14 year age group. Brecon Beacons National Park had the largest percentage increase of 15 to 29 year-olds (at 9.0 per cent).

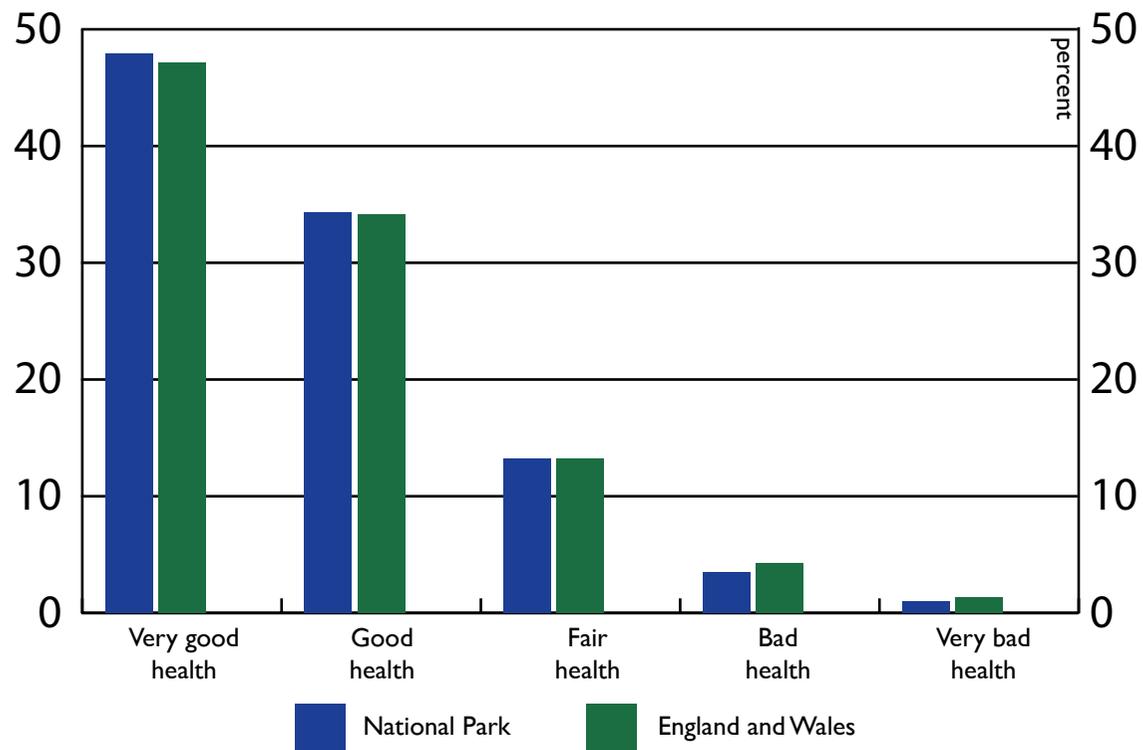
Brecon Beacons National Park population is projected to increase from 32,700 in 2008 to around 33,300 in 2023, an increase of 2.0 per cent. The projected increase in population in National Parks in Wales is driven by in-migration from other parts of Wales and the UK.

The number of deaths is projected to exceed the number of births (negative natural change) throughout the projection period and in each National Park. This is due to the older age profiles of the populations in National Parks compared to other areas. All the National Parks in Wales are projected to see significant increases in the population aged 65 and over and a decrease in the population aged under 65.⁴

Usual residents⁵ were asked as part of the Census (2011) to assess their general state of health on a five point scale: very good, good, fair, bad or very bad.

Graph Profile 3 shows that the majority of national park residents, 82%, described themselves as being in good, or very good health. This percentage is slightly higher than for England and Wales overall. Given that the national parks have an older age structure than nationally, and that generally, health deteriorates with age, this indicates that people residing in national parks perceive themselves as in better health than do those living in the rest of the country. (Census - Office for National Statistics).

* The 2001 population estimates for New Forest and South Downs were generated using the National Park to 2001 Census. Output Areas Best Fit Lookup and were calculated using the breakdown of the population by sex as these areas were not designated as national parks in 2001.



Graph Profile 3: General Health (Source ONS Census data 2011)

Table Profile I below shows a comparison between house prices in the National Park and Powys County between 2011 and 2012. The review of house prices in National Parks was undertaken by Lloyds Bank in 2012⁶. It tracked house price movements in 12 National Parks across England and Wales and was based on data from the Land Registry. It shows that the average price for homes located in the Brecon Beacons National Park is 8% higher than the average price for the rest of the County (down 10% on the corresponding figure for 2011).

	Average national park price (£)	Average county price (£)	Difference
2011	210,356	177,962	+18 %
2012	193,658	178,860	+8 %

Table Profile I: Brecon Beacons National Parks Premium to County House Prices

4 <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/population-projections-national-parks/?lang=en>
 5 A person's place of usual residence is generally the address in the UK at which they spend the majority of time. For most people this will be their permanent or family home (Final Population Definitions for the 2011 Census – October 2009).
 6 http://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/globalassets/documents/media/press-releases/lloyds-bank/2012/0408_parks.pdf
 © Philip Veale - Brecon Beacons

The Authority



- Income, Other Income
- Income, Other Grants
- Income, Countryside Sales, Fees and Charges
- Income, Planning Fees
- Income, Constituent Authority Levies
- Income, National Park Grant

Profile 1: National Park Authority Income (2012/2013)



- Expenditure Promoting Understanding & Enjoyment
- Expenditure Planning Policy & Communities
- Expenditure Development Control
- Expenditure, Conservation of Historic & Cultural Environment
- Expenditure, Conservation of the Natural Environment
- Expenditure, Democratic Representation & Management
- Expenditure, Rangers, Estates & Volunteers
- Expenditure Recreation & Park Management

Profile 2: National Park Authority Expenditure (2012/2013)

The Brecon Beacons National Park as a geographical area falls within the administrative areas of 9 of Wales' 22 Unitary Authorities. The National Park Authority is the planning and rights of way authority for the National Park area, while the constituent Unitary Authorities retain responsibility for all other local government services within 'their' areas of the Park. The National Park Authority therefore works in close partnership with these authorities and all those who have populations within the geographical boundaries of the National Park appoint members to serve on the Authority.

Profile 1 and Profile 2 show a financial summary of the National Park Authority's income and expenditure in 2012/2013.

In pursuit of its purposes and duties the National Park Authority works with a variety of communities and people both resident and working in the National Park and Visitors to the area. The National Park has a warden team which looks after the Authority's own land and the rights of way across the Park. The wardens are often the most visible staff to the public and perform a variety of services including working with other land owners and farmers, with school groups and visitors. Those servicing communities with more Welsh language speakers offer their service in Welsh. The Authority provides four visitor centres in partnership with other organisations and Councils. It has an Education outreach service working in schools in both English and Welsh language.

The tourism team work in partnership with businesses which engage with Visitors – their work includes a partnership with the local tourism organisation to produce a website promoting local businesses. It includes training programmes intended to help tourism businesses to improve their marketing and to work as sustainably as they can. It also includes a popular Ambassador training scheme to enable individuals to learn more about various aspects of the National Park and to offer their visitors a more knowledgeable reception.

In 2012/13, the National Park Authority benefited from over 10,000 hours of volunteer time. Volunteers do invaluable work across the National Park on a variety of activities including working with wardens on the ground and at the Visitor Centres and Craig-y-Nos Country Park.

Volunteering is mutually beneficial. There are also significant benefits for the volunteers themselves. These can include health benefits, learning and discovering new skills, developing social networks with like-minded people, or simply the feeling of 'giving something back' to their community often leading to an increased sense of well-being.

As the Planning Authority for the National Park the Authority's Development Management team has made substantial improvements in its service and over the last 12 months has successfully moved from the bottom of the Welsh Government's league table to the upper quartile. The Authority has developed its resource for Heritage. The Authority's Policy and Strategy Department have produced and consulted upon a new Local Development Plan (a statutory device which the Authority uses to guide development decisions), which was adopted by the Authority in December 2013.