

A young girl with long brown hair, wearing a purple dress with white polka dots and yellow leggings, is walking barefoot on a rocky riverbank. She is holding a small object in her right hand. The background shows a river and greenery under a cloudy sky.

The environment of the Brecon Beacons will be recognised and utilised for the many benefits it can bring to human mental & physical health and general well-being.

Wellbeing and health are immutably linked. Health, defined by the World Health Organisation is a *state of complete wellbeing*, whereas wellbeing, moves beyond physical or mental health to encompass concepts of feeling satisfied with life.

Many studies have linked contact with nature with positive impacts on health and wellbeing, such as reduced stress, greater levels of personal fulfilment and lowered incidence of cardiovascular disease. The National Park in this context provides multiple opportunities for people to interact with 'natural' environments away from urban trappings such as noise and air pollution. The Park therefore provides an arena of multiple possibilities to impart lasting health and wellbeing benefits to visitors and residents alike.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING



Why this is important

UK National Parks were established at the close of the second world war as part of sweeping social reforms aimed at building back the nation after the hardship of war. Free to access outdoor recreation in inspiring landscapes was seen as a critical component of a healthy nation, alongside the national health service, the welfare state and paid holiday.

Our foundations may be 70 years old, but the need to support the nation's health and wellbeing is now more than ever firmly on the agenda of government and policy makers and embedded within Wales' unique legislative framework. This plan is being written during the summer of 2021 as the nation moves out of 'lockdown', restrictions of movement ease, and visitors return to the Park in huge numbers, driven by a need to reconnect with nature. As the nation moves towards the first steps of recovery, we believe that National Parks in general, and the Brecon Beacons in particular could play a key role in providing healing for all those who faced countless hardships during the pandemic.

How the policy will be implemented

We want to ensure that those visitors who come to the National Park looking for healing are able to do so. We also want to make sure that all those in need can be made aware of the benefits the environment of the Park could bring them. Meeting these twin objectives will require a collaborative approach working with a range of stakeholders around a bold plan to create a Natural Health Service within the Park.

The Natural Health Service will be a flagship project, across the combined PSBs that cover the Park. The aim will be to build a brand under which a range of activities, events and publications will be developed to showcase how the natural and historic landscape of the Park could be utilised by groups and individuals to benefit health and wellbeing.

Key to disseminating brand Natural Health Service will be trained Ambassador Health Professionals. Building on the highly successful ambassador programme developed by BBNPA a tailored programme aimed at health professionals will be developed and delivered with the aim of creating 'peer to peer' advocates of utilising nature for therapeutic purposes.

What success looks like

The Brecon Beacons Natural Health Service network of activities, events and self-guided walks is a recognised and trusted brand used to highlight the health and wellbeing benefits of the Park to residents and visitors. The information is easy to find online and on the ground. Health professionals use this information network to source relevant activities to create social prescriptions for outdoor activity. Local communities seek to build their own Natural Health Service programmes within their Place Plans

How we will measure progress

By engaging with the PSBs and other services providers that cover the Park we can gather evidence relating to our residents' general health and wellbeing, incidents of social prescribing, and occurrences of formalised outdoor activity for health benefits.

We would recognise progress within this data as an increase in the number of social prescriptions utilising the Park to treat physical and mental health complaints year on year.

We would also see progress through the uptake of the Natural Health Service Brand across the Park