



Llangors & Bwlch

Sustainable Tourism Action Plan and Strategy



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For the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
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Executive Summary

In January 2012, the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority commissioned Hidden Britain on behalf of the communities of Llangors & Bwlch to develop a joint sustainable tourism strategy for them as a destination as part of the Rural Alliances Programme.

The product of a review of the current situation, research and a series of consultation events this strategy sets out the direction for tourism as well as an action plan for its implementation and consideration of the organisation and structure behind the scenes.

Current Situation

Llangors & Bwlch between them have access to fairly strong and appealing tourism product and offer based around the natural assets and activities making the most of the landscape. However in terms of management, despite some effective product development work undertaken during the Collabor8 project, tourism is largely uncoordinated and fragmented in nature with little in terms of agreed direction or cohesion between the various stakeholders.

Whilst overall performance of the visitor economy has been acceptable, there is room for growth and improvement in the return gained from tourism. Further the Rural Alliances programme provides an opportunity to coordinate and bring together the aspirations and resources of the two destinations to build something greater than the sum of its parts. By doing so economic, social and other benefits can flow locally as the area builds its offer, status and manages them sustainably as a key visitor draw in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Vision for the destination

“By 2018, Llangors, Bwlch and the surrounding area will be recognised together as a year-round, destination within the Brecon Beacons National Park. It will be chosen for its outdoor activities, known for the quality of its natural environment and appreciated for its hidden heritage. Visitors will recommend and return for the quality of the experience, the warmth of the welcome and will actively contribute to sustaining and maintaining that quality.

Underpinning this experience, Llangors & Bwlch will be an exemplar of co-ordinated and focussed management at a community level, with those who live and work there taking an active, coordinated and decisive role, for tangible benefit to all within the destination. ”

Priority aims

- To increase the contribution from tourism to the local economy
- To maintain and support the current assets within the destination
- To build the profile and image of Llangors and Bwlch as a destination
- To improve and sustain a high quality visitor experience for all who come
- To deliver effective destination management

Key Audiences for the destination

→ **Young & Active**

A young audience driven by the activity they undertake, they value the fresh air and availability of both the activities and the support facilities and relaxation opportunities around them.

→ **Empty Nesters**

An older audience who also come for the activities and the outdoors, but have a wider cultural interest and are less seasonally sensitive.

→ **Families**

A staying audience, who undertake potentially softer activities as a family unit. They are more value sensitive than other audiences and limited seasonally to school holiday periods.

→ **Enablers & Influencers**

Not a visitor audience per se, but rather an extended network of facilitators who can help Llangors & Bwlch reach their audiences, including media, bloggers, booking agents, partners etc

→ **Overseas Tourers**

A short stay audience visiting the destination as part of a larger itinerary in the area. They value easy access to activities and experiences that provide a "taster" of the destination.

→ **Special Interest Groups**

Groups or individuals travelling for a specific interest and valuing access to support for their interest. Specifically including bird watchers, photographers and artists.

→ **Weekend Escapees**

A short stay audience looking for fun and relaxation as an escape from everyday life. They value the fresh air, sense of adventure but are not driven by the activity itself.

Priority Actions for Year one

- Development of a robust and viable partnership to lead on the strategy
- Engaging stakeholders within the destination to the process
- Sharing data and understanding
- Development of a consistent brand and identity to convey the offer to visitors
- Assessment and improvement of Llangors and Bwlch's Web presence as a first step of communication
- Development of themed itineraries to package and articulate the key aspects of the offer

Introduction

Background

This document is designed to provide a guiding framework that Llangors & Bwlch as a destination can draw on to jointly develop and manage their visitor and tourism activities. It provides the starting points, themes, vision and principle understanding of tourism in Llangors & Bwlch, and by doing so aims to identify the priorities for action and elaborate on what needs to be done in the short and medium term to ensure Llangors & Bwlch punches above their collective weight in terms of visitors and the visitor economy .

More specifically this document is intended to enable Llangors & Bwlch to:

1. Develop a common goal and vision
2. Understand the destinations and their offer.
3. Identify the areas of priority for action.
4. Build and develop resource to ensure the strategy becomes reality

Strategy all too often is a byword for weighty tomes that gather dust on shelves, the following pages will not comprise thousands of words for the sake of it, instead, it has been written and is intended to be a tool Llangors & Bwlch can and will actually use.

Why do we need to address tourism?

Simply put; tourism matters. Nationally Tourism is worth in the region of £97 billion to the UK economy. It also supports direct jobs, in-direct jobs and in the case of rural areas makes a significant contribution to the retention of services, viability of businesses, the conservation of tradition and heritage as well as keeping communities vibrant and enticing places to live and work.

Of course one of the big challenges is that this is a crowded market space and a seat at the table is not guaranteed by any means. There are some big challenges facing the smaller and off the beaten track destinations; visitors are increasingly deluged with choices and options, the larger honeypots shout louder, information is often scarce and the inherent characteristics of villages and rural communities mean they all too often offer exactly the same thing and struggle to gain attention.

Destination profile

This strategy focuses on the two communities of Llangors and Bwlch but also includes the surroundings villages and hamlets including; Llangasty, Tal-y-llyn and Pennorth.

Llangors lies 6 miles south of Brecon on the B4601 and hosts the largest natural lake in South Wales. Traditionally the area caters for outdoor sports enthusiasts, offering water sports on the Lake, hiking, walking and horse riding options in the surrounding mountains and footpaths and bike trails closer to the lake. Key attractions are the natural environment and wildlife, the lake with its Crannog and the historic buildings and churches in the surrounding area.

Bwlch, lies 4.3 miles south of Llangors on the saddle of a pass on the main A40 between Crickhowell and Brecon and 1 mile north of the River Usk. Bwlch is popular for hill walking, cycling and horseriding and through its participation in the Collabor8 project has developed the beginnings of an identity based around walking and access to the surrounding mountains and valleys. Key attractions are again the natural environment, local produce, the views and the opportunity to use Bwlch as a base for exploring the surrounding area.

Strategic Context

Llangors & Bwlch do not operate alone or in isolation, rather they are part of the wider Brecon Beacons National Park and tourism landscape. Therefore before considering the what, where, how and who of tourism locally there needs to be consideration of where Llangors and Bwlch fit and what other strategies, plans and priorities may impact on them.

Brecon Beacons National Park

The **Brecon Beacons Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2007-2016** gives the overall framework for the development and promotion of sustainable tourism within the National Park.

The core principles underlying the strategy are:

- Effective partnership working
- Year round growth
- Social inclusion
- Sustainability
- Geographical spread and local distinctiveness
- An integrated destination brand
- Balanced market appeal
- Community engagement

These principles have very much driven the development of this strategy for Llangors & Bwlch, both because of the need to tie in at a higher level to the wider National Park, but also because they represent the most effective way forward for a small destination. Trying to reinvent the wheel or go against the grain of what is happening in the National Park will not benefit Llangors & Bwlch in the long-run.

Rural Alliances

The Rural Alliances programme runs from 2011-2015 and builds on the cluster development instigated during the preceding Collabor8 programme. The programme is designed to support the development of long-term local ownership in tourism across the Brecon Beacons, supporting and fostering the cluster model to incorporate all interests locally within the host communities.

This offers a ripe opportunity to develop this approach in the twin destinations of Llangors & Bwlch, providing them with support, guidance and direct assistance as they embark on this road. This strategy is therefore designed to complement and deliver activity and tactics that will sustainably benefit the destination but also focuses on the method of delivery and management, in line with the development of a rural alliance.

Mid Wales

The **Mid Wales Regional Tourism Strategy** produced in 2011 provides a strategic direction for all partners engaged in tourism in the Mid-Wales region, including Powys. It focuses on how the varied range of partners can better work together across the mid Wales region, a consideration which needs to be carried through even at a local level. The key objectives of the plan are:

- To organise tourism resources in the most effective manner across the Region;
- To provide the appropriate infrastructure and high quality, sustainable, distinctive destinations, facilities and services, that will encourage more visitors to visit throughout the year, thereby encouraging growth in the visitor economy;
- To encourage more local people to follow and develop worthwhile careers in the tourism industry;
- To maximise opportunities for tourism development with and between different agencies.

Visit Wales

The **Tourism Strategy for Wales, Achieving our Potential** (2006-13) sets out five key challenges which have been integrated into this plan:

- Distinctive branding of destinations at all levels
- Higher quality – encouraging investment in staff and facilities to meet and exceed visitor expectations
- Easier access – both physically but also access to easy information eg on websites
- Better skills – and a motivated workforce
- Stronger partnership – of businesses and organisations to promote a sustainable and distinctive Welsh offer.

Process & Methodology

In order to create this strategy Hidden Britain worked closely with key stakeholders in Llangors & Bwlch as well as the BBNPA to ensure not only a useful and workable plan, but also that local needs and desires were placed clearly within the strategy from day one.

The overall process comprised the following stages:

- **Assessment of the current situation and identification of priorities**
- **Engagement with the communities, businesses and local interests**
- **Development of overarching strategy, priorities and actions for delivery**
- **Initial support to Llangors and Bwlch in implementing the strategy**



Research, workshops and analysis was undertaken between January and April 2013. Stakeholder engagement was built in at various stages of the process to ensure the strategy and subsequent action-plans were representative, and the process gained the buy-in of and ownership by the local communities with a view to developing a longer term "Rural Alliance" in the area.

Situational Analysis

Communications & marketing

- On a search information is relatively easy to find if you know what to look for
- Some great interpretative leaflets and publications are easily available
- Clear articulation of main activities and beginnings of targeting to certain market segments
- Llangors activities and activity businesses place well on search
- Some great imagery and video content on social media
- Confusion over the names in both destinations. There is a need to position a strong identity to back up the geographical naming convention.
- Current web presence is poor in both locations with information hard to come by and spread across many sites.
- Content on third party sites is poor or non-existent
- Lack of a coordinated or effective social media presence
- Little evidence of a clearly articulated reason to visit, why should visitors come?
- Lack of links, communication and cohesion between the various players
- No evidence of development of, or consistent usage of a visual style or identity

Visitor Experience

- Villages are generally clean & tidy, with clear efforts made to maintain appearance
- Good welcome and level of customer service
- Facilities and provision in general very good given the size of destinations in question. In particular facilities at the key attraction (Llangors Lake) are above expectation.
- Good info and interpretation provision throughout the destination
- Lack of clear and obvious places and reasons to park and stop in village centres
- Many of catering / activity options seasonal and with limited opening outside of summer
- Some signage and interpretation is confusing and/or poorly sited
- No public toilets or cash points within the village centres
- Difficult to access via public transport

Organisation and Delivery

- Tourism delivery is fragmented and uncoordinated with, currently, no real stakeholder group.
- There are no really big, well resourced private sector players.
- There are some identity conflicts between Bwlch and Llangors.
- The industry and local stakeholders are unclear where the leadership role lies and there is some reticence in taking on the role for fear of overburden of resources and costs. BUT there is enthusiasm to do something and make things happen which needs to be carefully harnessed.

Product Offer

- Accommodation offer is largely self-catering, biased towards week long stays. for shorter term visits options are limited with 2 bunkhouses, 2 campsites and 2 bed & breakfast options on offer.

- Attractions are divided into three key areas; the natural landscape, organised activities, and heritage attractions.
- The surrounding landscape offers numerous walking, riding and hill walking routes, both within the destination and connecting to others further afield. Several of these have been published as promoted routes (e.g. Bwlch with altitude, a walk around Llangors Lake). In addition The Beacons Way long distance footpath passes through Bwlch. whilst the Three Rivers Ride approaches the north-western edge of the village.
- There are seven dedicated tourism activity businesses in the Bwlch and Llangors area, offering a range of experiences from climbing to horse riding, rural crafts and sailing. Several cater for both groups and individuals.
- Heritage features in the form of The Crannog, historic churches, Blaenllynfi Castle, Treberfydd House and other historical and prehistorical sites.
- There are 8 different catering outlets throughout the area with 2 microbreweries.
- Local produce is available at the Welsh Venison Centre & farm Shop with local supplied available at the Lakeside Shop in Llangors and the Gate Shop in Bwlch.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Variety of easily accessible and organised activity options. → Outstanding landscape including a relatively unique feature for the area in the Lake → Series of existing promoted routes → Obvious and accessible heritage features → Microbreweries → Local produce offer (Venison Centre) → Range of accommodation geared toward active breaks → Quality of welcome and service → Proximity to key access route (A40) → Photogenic → Local enthusiasm for change and joint working → Niche interests catered for and supported by local knowledge → Peace and tranquillity with an almost spiritual aura → Unspoilt landscape and ability to watch wildlife in natural surroundings → Vantages & viewpoints → Year round opportunities (winter birds etc) → Dark skies (minimal light pollution) → Varying levels of challenge for activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Limited wet weather options → Limited offer and access in winter due to seasonal opening hours → Awareness poor outside immediate area → Low awareness amongst visitor services staff → Lack of mid-range and short-stay accommodation → Transport without a car is difficult both within and for access to → Many routes are weather dependant → Signage on key access routes is poor → Lack of local communication → Information on local product and offer is difficult to find → No clear identity or articulated reason to visit → Content on signposting third party marketing channels is poor → At present the destination is two separate entities that do not communicate as much as they could. → Some issues with availability of parking particularly in Bwlch - much easier to drive through than stop at → Poor or limited web presence

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Indoor options (climbing centre) → Facilities (shops, pubs, cafes, spa etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Some facility & service gaps → Limited retail of activity equipment → Patchy mobile internet connection
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Rural Alliances programme providing support and access to potential funding → Dark Skies status for BBNP → BBNPA destination brand initiative → BBNPA explorer function on website → Powys CC proactively pushing a destination based approach → Cluster working in vicinity generates opportunities → Community and local destination mindset being embedded in tourism development countrywide and through rest of UK → Proactive marketing by Visit Wales within the UK → Exploiting the staycation trend within the UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Apathy → Local politics and friction between Llangors & Bwlch → Dwindling momentum due to loose local tourism structures → Reduced public sector funding for tourism development and route maintenance → Recession and economic climate reducing visitor spending power and influencing decision-making → Poor weather and seasonality affecting business → NIMBYism → Loss of key businesses or lack of resource and cash flow amongst businesses

Strategic Direction

The value and importance of tourism to rural areas, communities and their visitor economies cannot be understated, more so for those lying within a designated landscape. Therefore this strategy must aim high, and look to leverage all of the assets and strengths across the destination to provide the growth to develop and sustain the local economies. However that drive for growth must also acknowledge and ensure minimal detriments to the wider population.

Behind all of this Llangors and Bwlch must strive to manage and implement tourism jointly, consistently and effectively in partnership with their key stakeholders and businesses.

Guiding Principles

This Strategy and the development of tourism in Llangors & Bwlch as a whole is guided by the following principles that underpin all the actions and objectives.

Responsible Tourism

The term "Responsible" is used in preference to "Sustainable" in terms of tourism, in order to build in the key notion of accountability and responsibility. All plans require action and all actions have impacts. By taking responsibility for and understanding these we aim to build a plan that minimises impacts, generates maximum benefit, gives a voice and power to local people and makes a positive contribution to Llangors & Bwlch, whilst still ensuring a quality experience for the visitor.

Shared action and benefit as a "Destination"

A key principal of the approach is that we consider Llangors & Bwlch as greater than the sum of their parts, as a destination rather than two villages or a collection of businesses and experiences, and that all the interests should work alongside one another for mutual benefit. In order to deliver a Destination strategy, there needs to be real and effective partnership working between and across everyone with a stake in tourism, and a willingness to act together to see change occur.

Destination Management

Developing tourism is about more than just promotion, the scope includes developing the local tourism structure, gaining insight into visitors and audiences as well as maintaining and enhancing the experience. Destination Management is the process that brings all these strands together in a cohesive way and ensures tourism truly benefits the destination. This strategy includes actions and consideration on all aspects of tourism, not simply making things look and sound nice.

Research and Market Intelligence

Good quality research and data is vital for any tourism strategy; to inform decision-making and investment choices and to measure the change and impacts of any work undertaken. It is vital that the actions contained within this strategy are based on and embedded in sound research and planning prior to implementation and that the measurement, evaluation and monitoring continues throughout its lifespan.

Vision

The first step in defining the strategy is articulating the end goal, what we wish the strategy to help us reach and achieve. Therefore the strategic vision for tourism in Llangors, Bwlch is:

“By 2018, Llangors, Bwlch and the surrounding area will be recognised together as a year-round, destination within the Brecon Beacons National Park. It will be chosen for its outdoor activities, known for the quality of its natural environment and appreciated for its hidden heritage. Visitors will recommend and return for the quality of the experience, the warmth of the welcome and will actively contribute to sustaining and maintaining that quality.

Underpinning this experience, Llangors & Bwlch will be an exemplar of co-ordinated and focussed management at a community level, with those who live and work there taking an active, coordinated and decisive role, for tangible benefit to all within the destination.”

Aims

In order to deliver the vision we require battle plans to dictate the overall direction, therefore the key priority aims for Llangors & Bwlch are:

1. **To increase the contribution from tourism to the local economy**
2. **To maintain and support the current assets within the destination**
3. **To build the profile and image of Llangors and Bwlch as a destination**
4. **To improve and sustain a high quality visitor experience for all who come**
5. **To deliver effective destination management**

Strategic Objectives

If the aims are the battle plans then the strategic objectives form the tactics we actually use in order to make the plans a reality. Because the aims are by definition broad there are several key objectives nested under each aim as follows:

1. **To increase the contribution from tourism to the local economy**
 - a. Increase the length of visitor stays in the area, be that for a full day, overnight or longer
 - b. Increase the spend per head from visitors at local businesses
 - c. Increase the volume of visitors outside of peak seasons
 - d. Increase the proportion of return visits
2. **To maintain and support the current assets within the destination**
 - a. To ensure conservation of the natural environment
 - b. To ensure preservation of local history, culture and customs
 - c. To support community facilities and local services

- d. To increase visitor interaction and interest in the assets and their preservation

3. To build the profile and image of Llangors & Bwlch as a destination

- a. Increase awareness and recognition of the area as a single destination
- b. To increase awareness and action amongst the key audiences
- c. To build awareness of the destination within the BBNP and at visitor hubs
- d. Develop a cohesive and consistent approach from all stakeholders
- e. Increase dispersal and uptake of activities within the destination
- f. Drive more advance and pre-planned bookings

4. To improve and sustain a high quality visitor experience

- a. Improve access to information and make it easier to visit
- b. Develop the product sympathetic to the needs of the community and the key audiences
- c. To provide distinctive experiences allowing visitors to enjoy and understand the very best qualities of the destination for levels of ability and interest
- d. To provide consistent quality in place, facilities, welcome and service

5. To deliver effective destination management

- a. To develop a viable and workable management model
- b. To increase and build local communication between stakeholders
- c. To build a solid and benchmarked research base
- d. To plan and source a sustainable funding or revenue stream
- e. To build stronger partnership with BBNPA and wider partners
- f. To increase the support available to and skills within the industry locally

Key Audiences

Whilst many destinations feel they can offer "something for everyone" in reality for a small destination with low visitor awareness and operating with limited resources this often translates into a generic approach that fails to be meaningful. Therefore Llangors and Bwlch need to target and focus their attention and work on several key audiences.

These audiences have been selected and prioritised based on a number of factors:

- Fit with the destination strengths, products and location
- Ability to reach and influence effectively
- Relevance to the strategic objectives of the destination
- Fit with the defined target audiences for the Brecon Beacons National Park as a whole
- Potential and scale of audience

Whilst all the identified audiences are key, some represent easier and more attractive targets than others, they are therefore segmented into primary and secondary tiers of priority. Second tier audiences are still key but may be smaller in scale or require most resources to reach effectively for the return they bring. It does not mean they should not be disregarded.

Fuller details of all the audiences are included on the audience map in appendix 2

Primary Target Audiences

Young and active

An audience defined by the activities they undertake. These activities provide the key driver for their visit and availability of activities and challenge within those activities dictate where they go. They are likely younger audiences, travelling either in groups or as couples without children, and generally on a long weekend or week long break. They value the fresh air, open spaces, support facilities on offer and the "down-time" options to relax post activity.

This audience correlates well with the "Outdoor Activist" grouping identified in the Brecon Beacons Tourism Marketing Strategy.

Empty Nesters

An audience comprising an older demographic with more disposable income and leisure time. They are looking for softer outdoor experiences, but also value the cultural and wider heritage options that interpret the experience. They are likely to visit on short breaks and will be mobile around the area in question and are not necessarily sensitive to seasonality. They value quality, distinctive experiences, service and value (but are not overly price conscious).

This audience correlates well with the "Freedom Seeker" and "Active Senior" groupings identified in the Brecon Beacons Tourism Marketing Strategy.

Families

An audience based around families looking for active holidays together. They will generally comprise children of school age or older and by definition limited to school holiday periods. They value safety, security and are looking for a range of activities they can undertake as a family unit. They will be budget conscious and also respond to availability of wet weather options and businesses and services that cater for their specific needs.

This audience correlates well with the "Families" grouping identified in the Brecon Beacons Tourism Marketing Strategy.

Influencers & Enablers

This audience are not visitors per se, rather they represent conduits to reach the key audience groupings and include journalists, media, bloggers and membership organisations amongst others. Given the need to raise awareness of the Llangors and Bwlch product this audience itself is extremely valuable to the destination. However they are looking for interesting, unique, different and essentially saleable ideas, stories and experiences to convey to their readerships. They will value hands on taster sessions, escorted and organised visits and a behind the scenes, rarefied perspective of the destination and its story.

Secondary Target Audiences

Overseas Tourers

An audience composed of non-UK residents visiting multiple sites or destinations within the UK as part of an itinerary. They are likely only a short stay audience but will be looking for easy access to the scenic beauty and a taste of the culture and activities on offer. They will value welcome, service, quality of local information and facilities that make it easy for them to access the experience.

This audience correlates well with the "Independent Overseas Tourers" grouping identified in the Brecon Beacons Tourism Marketing Strategy.

Special Interest Groups

This audience is less homogenous, in that it will define groupings that come together around a single point of interest. In the Llangors & Bwlch area this is likely to be; bird-watching, dark skies, artists, photographers primarily but may of course extend to others. They are driven by their interest and will construct an experience around the pursuit of it. Spend in terms of the interest itself is of less a concern although they will be more price sensitive to ancillary spend (food/accommodation etc). They value access to the experience and the ability to extend it and will look for service and support in how they do so.

This audience correlates well with the "Other special Interest" grouping identified in the Brecon Beacons Tourism Marketing Strategy.

Weekend Escapees

An audience based around a more local demographic to South Wales and the Midlands / South West seeking a escape from urban life for a weekend. This audience is still activity focussed but the primary drivers are fun and relaxation. They value softer activities often in a group environment and are likely to try a range as part of their visit. They have a lower amount of disposable income than other groupings but will spend on the experience itself and the "downtime" activities around the main experience with evening entertainment a prime focus.

Although the above audiences have been identified as the main targets with long term potential, this does not mean that other potential visitor markets should be ignored. In particular, Langors and Bwlch should continue to seek exposure through the marketing and work pursued and identified by the Brecon Beacons National Park as a whole.

Actions

This section takes the aims and strategic objectives of the strategy and identifies areas of action required to achieve each of them. To do so the actions focus around the 4 key priority areas as follows:

1. Delivering effective destination management
2. Maintenance and support of existing assets
3. Building profile and image
4. Improving and sustaining a high quality visitor experience

These are still broad areas, and further work has been done to distil down and specify the actions required to deliver these priorities and in turn contribute to the overall needs of Llangors & Bwlch as a destination. These actions are summarised in table 1 below and shown in detail in appendix 1.

1. Delivering effective destination management	
1.1	Development of a lead body to coordinate and provide overall management
1.2	Engage stakeholders within the destination
1.3	Internal workings & delivery of the strategy
1.4	Research & understanding
1.5	Skills & Knowledge Development
1.6	Product development for the destination

2. Maintain and sustain current assets	
2.1	Direct maintenance of assets
2.2	Education and engagement
2.3	Improved and wider use of assets

3. Building profile & image	
3.1	Brand & identity development
3.2	Destination marketing strategy
3.3	Marketing activity
3.4	Events
3.5	Experience Development

4. Improve the experience	
4.1	Information provision
4.2	Physical improvements
4.3	Other Infrastructure Developments

These actions are not intended to be an exhaustive list; rather they are a starting point addressing the main issues under each priority. It is envisaged that this list will change and evolve as Llangors and Bwlch take tourism forward.

However all activities both those specified now and those developed in the future must:

- Work towards achieving our aims and objectives
- Convey our offer and strengths
- Mitigate or circumvent any weaknesses or gaps in our offer and product
- Appeal to our target audiences and inspire them to act

The detailed implementation steps, ownership and timescales required to deliver the current actions can be found in the detailed delivery plan outlined in Appendix 1. It should be stressed that the actions placed therein have been designed to be as cost-effective as possible and include many small and achievable actions that may require time rather than large expense to deliver. It is therefore designed to be a realistic plan that makes the most of what is already occurring amongst the various parties within the destination.

Priority actions, those that need to be undertaken right now are discussed below in the "Taking it Forward" section.

Resources & Management

The delivery of the vision and action plan will depend on many factors but possibly the key one is the "who" and "how" of the process. At present the delivery and management of tourism is fragmented, and largely uncoordinated. Some partnership working and cooperation already exists as a legacy of the Collabor8 project in Bwlch and also in an organic manner in Llangors, but in order to deliver this strategy there needs to be a more robust and joined up movement in how tourism is directed, managed and delivered in the area.

Underpinning such a change are several key premises:

- Tourism must be delivered in partnership, especially between small operators
- Neither public nor private sector alone has or should have sole province on strategic direction and decision making nor on financing any activity
- The private sector needs to engage in both strategic direction and delivery
- Third and voluntary sectors should be actively encouraged to take part at all levels and should not be ignored
- Resources must be pooled to be truly effective.

Developing a Rural Alliance?

Developing a strong partnership approach to tourism (a Rural Alliance) may take time, and could take several forms, dependent on the will and the resources available locally. Two workable models are outlined below.

Model A



In this model the Community Council(s) function as the overarching management lead but receive input from businesses. The Community Council(s) then take decisions, plans the delivery programme and retains certain delivery areas for itself. Some areas are delegated or contracted out to private sector organisations or delivered in partnership with contributions raised on a "pay-to-play" basis.

This model is currently being pursued by several small destinations and communities across the country and represents a more traditional view where private sector input is obtained but the largesse of the running and decision-making are kept with the public sector.

Eden Valley Kent is the body responsible for developing and managing tourism across the Eden Valley in Kent, encompassing the town of Edenbridge and villages of Hever, Penshurst, Crockham Hill, Chiddingstone and Leigh. Eden Valley Kent is run by Edenbridge Town Council (the English equivalent of a Community Council) who provide officer resource and day-to-day running costs for the website, marketing and administration. The work of Eden Valley Kent is informed and directed by a twice yearly stakeholder forum where representatives from all interest groups across the valley have an opportunity to discuss and fed into how tourism develops locally. Edenbridge Town Council use the outcomes of the forum as a mandate for action over the next six months. For opportunities requiring investment the council either sources funding if available or asks for contributions from the forum members on a "pay-to-play" basis. The organisation has been operating successfully in this manner since 2005.¹

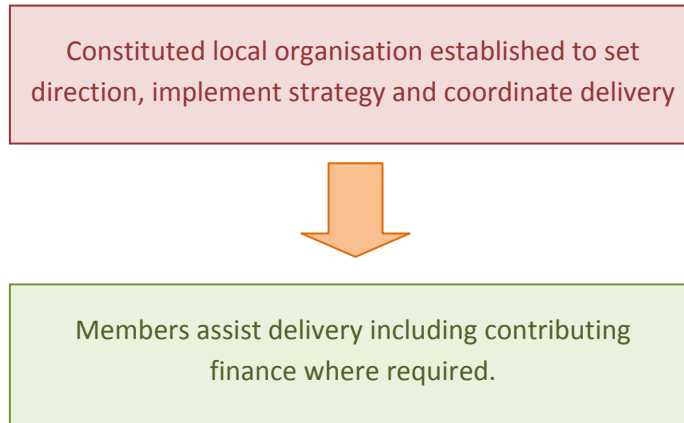
Rationale

Utilising an existing organisation has the multiple benefits of an established structure, an even-handed approach by default, the opportunity to formally include the development of tourism into its constitution as a key activity and the likely physical support from the officers or employees of the organisation.

However, we need to consider the issues of resource, politics, control and representation. Will an existing body be able to best serve the needs of the entire destination? Is the existing body well-placed to reach and engage with all the relevant stakeholders and ambassadors, or are there past tensions that could hinder progress? Does the existing body have capacity and desire to actually take on the leadership and management role? This is not to suggest the Community Councils cannot do so but it is not an approach for everyone and a honest debate should be had if this option is being considered.

Model B

¹ See www.edenvalleykent.org for more information



In this model responsibility is shared between all parties and a separate entity is developed and instituted to direct and manage the development of tourism in the destination. This entity can function on several governance models from a simple constituted group up to and including a social enterprise or Community Interest Company.

Here the Community Council(s) are equal members along with businesses, interest groups and other organisations , as well as interested individuals. Direction and management

This model is currently being pursued by several small destinations across the UK and represents a more realistic method of driving a public-private partnership forward where the businesses have a greater role in both delivery and decision making and the public sector a diminished but key role as a member and in providing secretariat support to ensure smooth running of the entity.

Chilham Tourism & Retailers Group was established in 2006 and is a constituted body led by local business but including Chilham Parish Council, Ashford Borough Council, The Kent Downs AONB unit, The Church and Village Hall Committee amongst its membership as well as individuals as members. The group is chaired and administered by local business representatives but works closely with the Parish Council (who do provide some administration support when needed). All members pay an annual fee of £15 per year which covers basic running costs of the website, reprint funds for the local promotional leaflet and a base pot for other marketing. The group meets bimonthly and holds an annual AGM which allows members a regular opportunity to feed into and plan strategy and direction. Larger projects are funded on a "pay-to-play" basis or grants are sourced where possible.²

Rationale

It is worth considering setting up a new organisation which will have the specific purpose, structure and stability to successfully work on behalf of all stakeholders. This option often avoids political or other outside factors impacting on delivery but does require commitment from a few key members to provide the time and resource needed to manage the entity. Finding and retaining new contributors is therefore key.

² See www.enjoychilham.org.uk for more

Which Model do we choose?

Either of the above options is certainly viable and has been shown to work with longevity in real world situations, however there are no hard and fast rules here as long as the solution is what will work best for Llangors & Bwlch.

There is nothing wrong with having a loose agreement between a few like-minded people to manage tourism. It makes everything simple, quick and easy. However, it does not always make for a stable and long-term platform, particularly where finances or major decisions are concerned and we would recommend that Llangors & Bwlch look at one of the mentioned models as a way of mitigating these issues.

These option and models do not of course have to be mutually exclusive. The best course of action may be for Model A in the short term to get things up and running quickly and then a transition to model B after the first year, once there is more clarity over roles, expectations and input.

The best advice we can give is "be what you need to be" but we would advise this discussion to be had as a priority before implementing too many of the actions outlined in the previous section.

Role of BBNPA

The key role of the BBNPA is to facilitate the ongoing process as the alliance develops, to be essentially the firm hand on the rudder steering the development as it begins building momentum and becomes established.

In the short term this means the BBNP will need to take more of a leading role around setting up the structure and engaging the right people. However with the right amount of community buy-in this leading role can be relinquished once the local group is established.

In the medium term the BBNPA will need to support the group, providing expertise, advice and guidance, but as a "critical friend" rather than a leader. This will also enable the team to ensure that the development of tourism in Llangors & Bwlch is complementary with the development of tourism amongst other clusters and in the national park as a whole.

Specifically, it is likely that BBNPA will need to be integral in the development (although not the direct deployment) of the strategy and several of the key actions where they overlap and integrate with their wider work.

In the longer term BBNPA can focus more on advocacy for the Llangors & Bwlch Alliance and encouraging membership, joint working and participation within relevant businesses and organisations at a wider level.

Should issues or conflicts arise then BBNPA probably needs to be there to assist, facilitate and support a resolution.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Indicators

Despite the absence of baseline data specific to the destination ascertaining impact of actions is a crucial part of implementing a strategy. However although monitoring and data collection should not be robust and as comprehensive as possible it should not be onerous or overly time consuming. With that in mind we suggest the following indicators which should be applied against the priority aims to understand change and impact.

Whilst most of the below measures will be looked at annually the data should be collected monthly to gain an indicator of trends and seasonality.

Increasing contribution of tourism to the local economy

- Estimates of visitor spend per head from local businesses
- Visitor numbers at attractions and main activity providers
- Occupancy levels at accommodation providers
- Numbers of repeat bookings.
- Business performance and satisfaction measures

Maintaining and sustaining existing assets

- Levels of litter at key sites and state of repair on key routes and facilities
- Number of complaints received relating to tourism and visitor activity
- Resident satisfaction with tourism levels and visitor impact
- Proportion of local members of green accreditation schemes

Building the profile and image of Llangors & Bwlch as a destination

- Visitor origin and motivation data
- Attendance at events
- Unique visitors and click-thrus on website
- Enquiries and take-up of publications at visitor centres
- Growth in social media networks
- Number of advance bookings taken by accommodation and activity providers

Improving and sustaining a high quality visitor experience

- Proportion of visitor satisfaction with their visit
- Proportion of positive online reviews and recommendations
- Take-up or usage of interpretation material
- Performance in mystery visit studies relative to previous

Effective Destination Management

- Number of stakeholders engaged with destination alliance
- Approval rating of destination level activities by stakeholders

- Number of business collecting and sharing data and research
- Funds raised or secured for tourism development purposes
- Number of stakeholders gaining or improving skills and knowledge

Monitoring

The indicators above may look like a lengthy list to obtain data for, but in reality they are often measures already being collected by businesses or other organisations, or which can be fairly easily collected in and of themselves. They involve a combination of surveys, collection of external data, observation and less formal and structured feedback.

Visitor Surveys

A comprehensive Visitor Survey is an ideal and indispensable tool for assessing visitor behaviour, motivation and characteristics. However they are also time consuming and often expensive to undertake, and analyse, especially for smaller areas. We suggest therefore undertaking them only every three to five years and seeking out additional resources (local colleges, or Universities, interns etc) to help spread the burden if the cost cannot be met within the destination. Either way it is imperative that surveys maintain consistent question wording and structure so comparisons can be made, both within Llangors and Bwlch but also with other destinations across the Brecon Beacons.

The following topic areas should be made key:

- Profile of visitors, origin and methods of access
- Motivation and key drivers to visit
- Places visited and activities undertaken
- Satisfaction levels with facilities and service
- Feedback on any problems encountered

Feedback and visitor books

Less formal and more qualitative visitor feedback can be obtained by simple customer satisfaction forms held at accommodation providers, activity venues and attractions or even anecdotal comments taken from visitor books. This information should be collated annually as part of the review.

BBNPA visitor centre data

Data and information captured at Point of Sale in the Brecon Beacons Visitor Centres should also be collated annually as part of the review process. If possible Llangors & Bwlch should push for specific criteria and data to be collected or broken down on their behalf (e.g. number of local leaflets taken, number of specific enquiries on the local area etc).

Business feedback and reporting

The primary collectors of information will be the front-line businesses as part of their day-to-day interaction with visitors, taking bookings and following-up with customers. A culture of sharing and data collection needs to be introduced and agreed on an agreed basis so business can collect and

report quarterly on performance and visitor behaviour. N.b. this may require businesses to ask for and obtain customer consent in order to share the data.

The following areas should be made key:

- Visitor numbers
- Occupancy rates
- Numbers of advance or repeat bookings
- Visitor origin (first five digits of postcode)
- Origin of enquiry (how did visitors hear about them)
- Any feedback or testimonials

Business and stakeholder surveys or forum

In addition to regular feedback, the views, perceptions and feelings of businesses and stakeholders should be gauged on an annual basis. This could be achieved by either a short online or self-completion survey, or through discussion at a structured networking event.

BBNPA warden reports

A good measure and assessment of the state of the natural environment in the local area will be to pick up reports and feedback available through the Brecon Beacons National Park Warden Service on at least a six-monthly basis but ideally more frequently.

Mystery visit assessments

To complement the above mystery visit studies should be undertaken preferably twice yearly to ascertain on the ground experience and quality and availability of visitor facilities. These studies can be simply undertaken by volunteers and will only take around 45 minutes to complete.

Product audit of local assets and facilities

Additional information on the state of the local product and facilities can be gleaned through the maintenance and twice yearly review of the product audit.

Community satisfaction surveys or consultation

It is important to pick up any changes in local reaction to tourism and to gauge the wants and needs of those who host tourism within their communities. Therefore a biannual satisfaction survey or consultation opportunity should be held. More frequent community feedback can be gained through complaints received, and inclusion of feedback mechanisms into community liaison and development work.

Website and online metrics

All online portals and websites should have adequate and robust analytical tools built in (e.g. freely available Google Analytics) and should as far as possible be standardised to allow like for like comparisons. usage data will be recorded in an ongoing manner but should be collated quarterly. Equally social media and review sites which will all have their own internal analytical tools should be monitored regularly and collated quarterly in the updates.

Strategy review

Annual action plans should be prepared based on this five year strategy and action plan. Actions undertaken should be recorded and reported regularly, this could take the form of short quarterly updates and an annual review which would sum up progress over the year and report annual measures against the key indicators.

The entire strategy should be reviewed on a two yearly basis. This review should include consultation with key businesses and other stakeholders in order to refine the strategic direction and take into account new priorities and objectives.

Timing Plan

A timing plan for monitoring and evaluation activity over the first two years is included at appendix 3.

Marketing Recommendations

The attached action plan at appendix 1 includes numerous marketing actions but overall the approach should be underpinned by a few key ideas which we recommend Llangors and Bwlch as a destination take forward.

The potential approach

The marketing programme needs to be based on a number of building blocks:

- A few key, high-level shared (brand) values and messages that form the core offer for all the experiences and audiences.

Example: Variety of the stunning natural landscapes, learning and taking part, exploring hidden heritage, an almost spiritual inspiration in welcoming surroundings, care and reverence for what makes our place special.

- A focus on a specific range of audiences and their characteristics, their wants and needs, and the hooks that the destination has that will appeal to them.

Example: Young & active audiences value the fresh air, open spaces, support facilities on offer and the "down-time" options to relax post activity. Llangors & Bwlch can offer vantages and view points, a range of options for open-air activity and a variety of challenges, a range of accommodation and businesses dedicated specifically to outdoor activity breaks, and microbreweries!

- The focus of the marketing needs to be experience led rather than geography led. It should be about specific reasons why a visitor should visit and what they can do, as opposed to where in the destination they are visiting.

Example: You can explore the lakeside or the hillside, watch red kites or feel like one yourself as you summit the Allt, sample local venison, or Llangors breweries' finest brews before curling up exhausted but invigorated at the end of the day in a cosy pub, comfy B&B or with like-minded adventurers in your own ensuite bunkhouse... All these messages are backed up by videos showing people having a great time experiencing it, testimonials from happy customers etc

- The destination needs a core set of marketing collateral / activity in place, i.e. a single website, social media, print and PR, reflecting the overarching brand values and tailored to the target audiences as a whole.

Example: Destination website, leaflet and social media convey the core values and experiences available, they talk about all the activities, the food, the attractions, the accommodation and the landscape. Content is designed to appeal to all the general wants and needs the target audiences collectively share.

- This continuous "conversation" of core marketing activity is then punctuated with targeted tactical "shouts" to the core audiences (e.g. specific press releases, social media, dedicated pages on website, promotional posters and flyers in local businesses etc)

Example: Bat walks for families! A specific experience targeted at a single audience and referenced specifically in press releases, on the website, through social media and on posters and flyers. However the content is written specifically to appeal to the target audience placed accordingly. Posters/flyers are placed specifically at known family attractions, short viral videos are created showing the creepy nature of a night time walk and kids having fun, specific media outlets where parents look for half term options are targeted etc...

- A tiered delivery programme so all interests in the destination can participate and contribute to the shared action.

Example: The destination level values and messages are set out in black and white and guidance is supplied so individual businesses can use this as an overarching framework for the own communications, saving them time (with already generated content/images and video) and providing context for their communication (e.g. why they have a special offer on for walkers over a bank holiday weekend is more powerful if the variety and challenge of routes locally is described and conveyed in a compelling way.

- Structured experiences giving visitors ideas and confidence in the quality of the potential visit and giving context to a visit beyond a simple list of things to do and try...

Example: "Looking to explore the heritage of the ancient kingdom of Brycheiniog? Well look no further, we've catalogued all the main sites and put them together as a great day out in the fresh air! You'll discover the Crannog (the only one of its type in Wales), the ruins of Tretower Castle, standing stones and ancient churches, all under open skies with fantastic views..."

Itinerary is then provided as a downloadable pdf offering a full days itinerary and options for food and accommodation.

- Implementation of measurements and metrics to track effectiveness of all activity

Example: All print publications feature QR (Quick Response) codes and web links to get more information. These Codes take the user to a specific landing page on the website that is not linked to the main navigation, therefore its likely only those with the leaflet will visit the page, and by looking at web stats, numbers of visitors taking action from usage of the leaflet can be tracked...

Specific tools needed

Of course these are only some simple recommendations to get started with but certain tools and medium will need to be used in order to effectively pursue joint marketing of the destination, which the action plan makes provision for developing:

- A single "front-door" destination website
- Destination level social media for visitors
- A single destination print publication
- Interpretive material such as self-guided walks and itineraries
- A community of businesses willing to interact and cross promote

Taking it forward...

The action plan will enable a lot of progress in developing tourism, however it also contains a lot of actions and potential areas of work therefore the following section highlights the areas in our opinion need to be addressed as a priority in order to ensure this approach is effective.

Partnership Development (Actions under section 1.1)

Description: Actions to develop the destination-led approach are detailed under priority 1 of the action plan. However these actions in particular are vital as developing a broad base of support and aspiration to work as destination is fundamental to this approach actually working. Of particular importance is identifying the body that will ultimately lead and coordinate the overall approach. Whoever that is likely to be, the decision should be taken as soon as possible and communicated widely. It is key that this body takes an inclusive approach to tourism in Llangors & Bwlch, the overriding principle must be to do what's best for the destination as a whole.

Engaging Stakeholders (Actions under section 1.2)

Description: Once the lead body is in place, the next key step is to engage all the tourism stakeholders of the town and bring them up to speed with the direction and priorities the approach is taking on. Only by having a common agreement will it be possible to marshal all the concerns to work in tandem and if possible we need to encourage businesses to take an active role in delivery so it is not all public sector and volunteers.

Sharing data and understanding (Action 1.4.4)

Description: To get a full picture of how the destination is performing and as accurate an understanding as possible on how visitors behave and what motivates them, a culture of collecting and sharing data should be developed amongst all visitor businesses. This should incorporate; visitor numbers, visitor origins, occupancy rates, visitor feedback etc. Ideally on a month by month basis so effects of seasonality can be judged and trends drawn.

Brand and Identity Development (Actions under 3.1)

Description: Distilling and identifying the key assets, values and benefits Llangors & Bwlch offer, developing a clear differentiating reason for people to come, clearly articulating the brand and developing the core messages, and developing a visual identity, essentially pulling together all the work done so far and compiling the tools necessary to communicate it. If there are experts available locally who can advise and develop these tools then it could be done on a shoestring, however this is a particularly vital piece of the jigsaw so professional help is recommended.

Assess and improve Llangors and Bwlch's Web presence (Action 3.3.1)

Description: Review and consider how best to serve visitors seeking information on the destination online, and also how to optimise the existing local web presence ensuring its enticing, usable and relevant for the visitor. This requires discussions with local website providers and likely designating one site as the "front door" with other sites clearly signing to it

and developing a culture where content is developed by multiple users and submitted for inclusion.

Themed Itineraries (Action 3.4.1)

Description: To identify the key themes for itineraries and create "chef's recommendations" for best to experience that aspect of Llangors & Bwlch, they would spell out what to do, make suggestions for places to visit, food and entertainment as well as providing transport and timing information. Based on ideas so far we would recommend developing broad categories such as heritage, nature and active and build suggestions for a half day, a full day and a weekend for each incorporating the best features of the destination. These categories would give the best scope for adding to the collection as time goes on as well as creating a consistent style and portfolio. How these are then communicated is open to discussion but they have most value either on the website or available at accommodation providers.