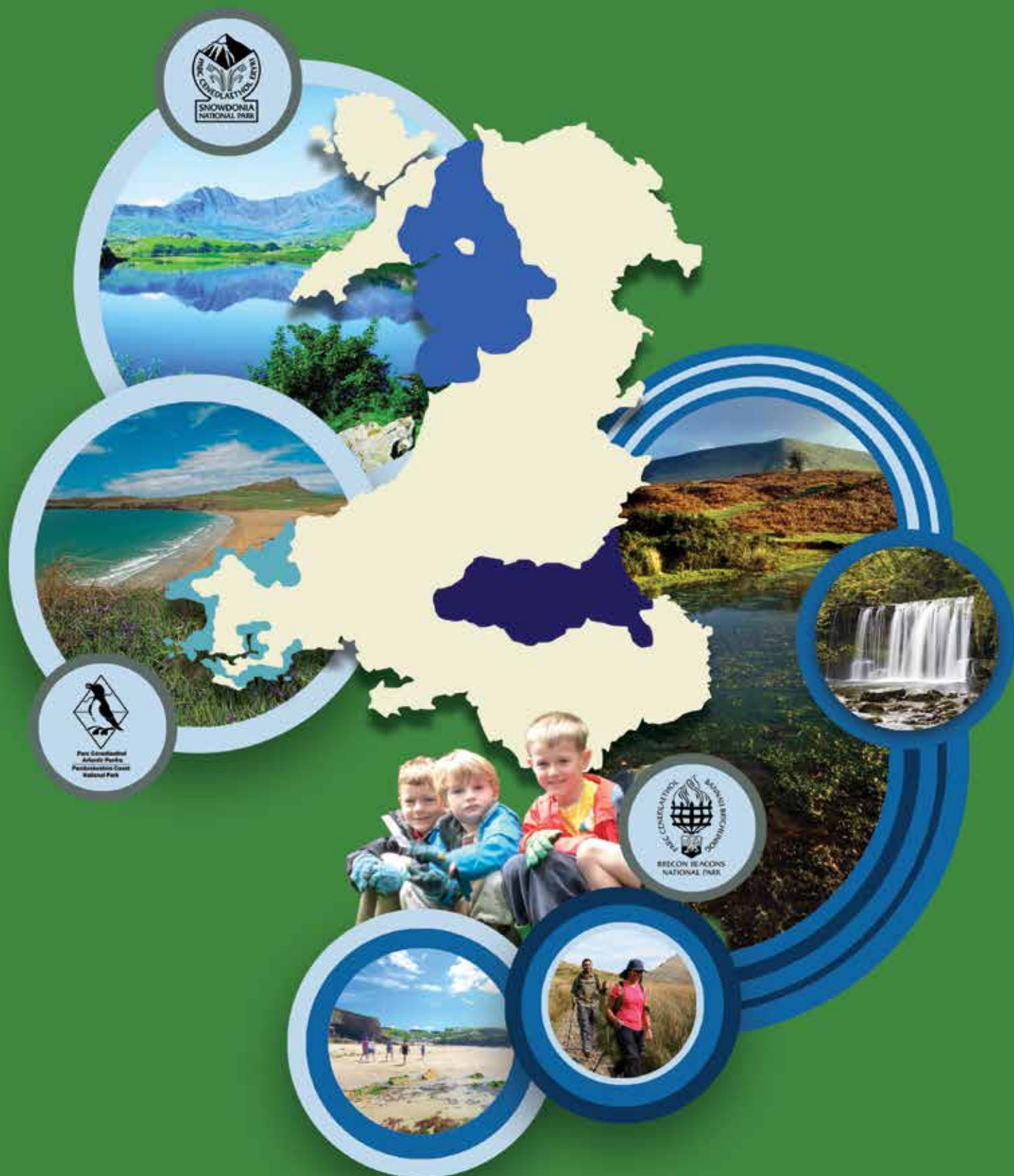


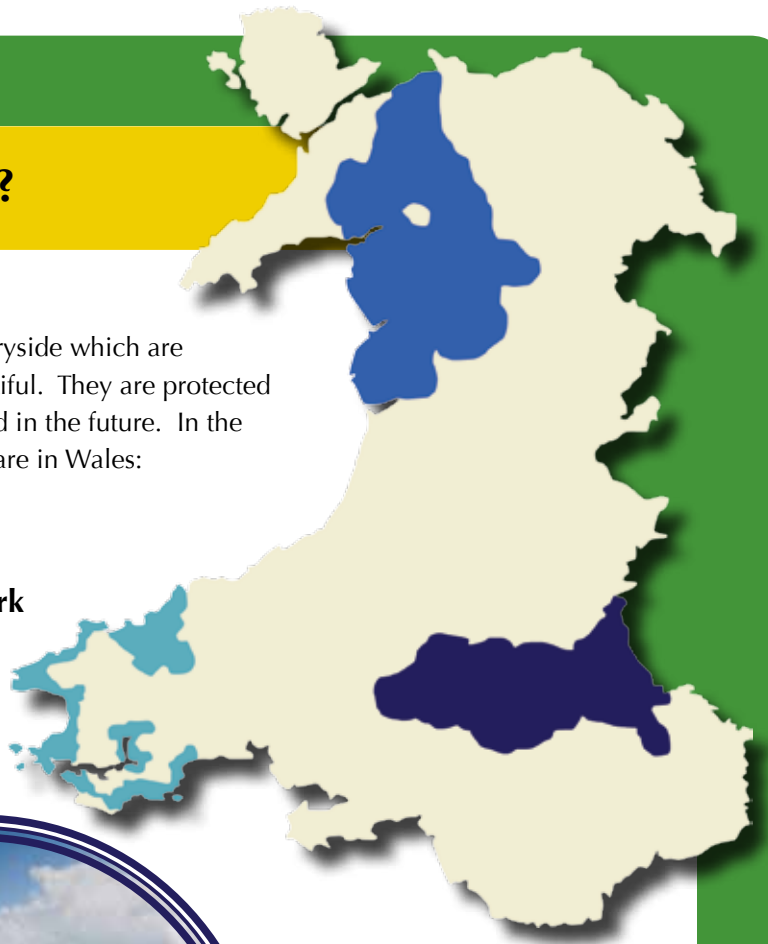
National Parks in Wales



What are National Parks?

National Parks are the areas of British countryside which are considered to be the most special and beautiful. They are protected so that people can enjoy them both now and in the future. In the UK there are 15 National Parks, 3 of which are in Wales:

- **Snowdonia National Park**
- **Brecon Beacons National Park**
- **Pembrokeshire Coast National Park**



The Welsh National Parks contain spectacular and beautiful scenery. Although they are relatively wild, they have been shaped through the centuries by the people who have lived and worked in them. They are rich in natural and cultural heritage, with a wealth of wildlife, geological, historical and archaeological sites.

Unlike in some other countries, the British National Parks are not publicly owned. People live and work in the National Parks. The farms, villages and towns are protected along with the landscape and wildlife. National Parks welcome visitors and provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy and learn about their special qualities.



What are National Parks?

Each National Park has an organisation, the National Park Authority, which looks after the landscape and wildlife and helps people enjoy and learn about the area.

The two purposes of National Park Authorities are laid out by law:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the public.

When National Parks carry out these purposes they also have the duty to:

- Seek to foster the economic and social well being of local communities within the National Parks.



Managing a National Park is challenging. It needs the right balance between environment and people. National Park Authorities need to conserve wildlife and habitats, but also encourage people to enjoy and learn from the countryside. This can cause conflicts.

National Park Authorities are also the local planning authorities for the area. In 2010-11, Brecon Beacons National Park decided on 523 planning applications, Snowdonia 477 and Pembrokeshire Coast 526.



Protected Areas

A protected area is a location with a clear boundary. The landscape inside is protected. Some areas have international designations and others, including the National Parks, have national designations.

International Designations

Some sites are protected through European Union law, for example Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), while others have been designated by international organisations such as UNESCO e.g. Fforest Fawr Geopark in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

National Designations

Nationally protected areas include National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and Heritage Coasts, which are stretches of outstanding unspoilt coastline. Nearly half of Wales' coastline is designated Heritage Coast. The National Parks are the highest level of nationally designated area. Within them there are other smaller sites of national importance such as:

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

which contain important wildlife or require a high degree of protection.

National Nature Reserves

which are very important sites where wildlife management and protection are considered vital.

Marine Nature Reserves

which are areas of coastal waters protected because of their marine life and habitats.

Fforest Fawr Geopark

Wales' First European Geopark

Fforest Fawr Geopark coincides with the western half of the Brecon Beacons National Park and is a great place to start your exploration of the Earth's remarkable history. Fforest Fawr Geopark is Wales' first member of the European Geoparks Network and UNESCO Global Geoparks Networks.

