

Rediscovering our valleys

The Valleys is an area rich with natural assets and community spirit, but this has been consistently overshadowed by its industrial heritage and the deprivation that this left behind. The Valleys Regional Park initiative, set up by the Valleys Taskforce, celebrates the Valleys' vast and beautiful landscape by combining nature with community spirit and economic development. Using the natural landscape to educate people about climate issues, while ensuring livelihoods are maintained and skills are taught across the area, the project has helped those on the ground in Wales think long-term, collaborate with stakeholders and involve communities to get the most out of the unique and valuable Welsh landscape.

Contributes towards:



A Prosperous Wales:

- Investment for local Welsh areas and businesses
- Renewable energy infrastructure investment



A More Equal Wales:

- Universal and free access to greenspace
- Areas and play parks accessible to all people, regardless of their physical and sensory abilities



A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language:

- People connecting with heritage sites and local landscapes

Valleys as a place for exercise, work, and relaxation, as well as a place for culture, arts heritage and education

The Valleys landscape underpins a resilient local economy, supporting businesses, community enterprise, and the development of skills and learning



A Resilient Wales:

- Protecting and restoring habitats, wildlife, and biodiversity
- Educating communities of the damage to local and global biodiversity



A Healthier Wales:

- Encouraging a more active lifestyle through active travel
- Improving physical and mental well-being through nature



A Wales of Cohesive Communities:

- Community members contributing to decision-making
- Involving communities in activities
- Volunteering opportunities, allowing community members to give back

Valleys Regional Park Goals



The Future Generations Commissioner's advice:

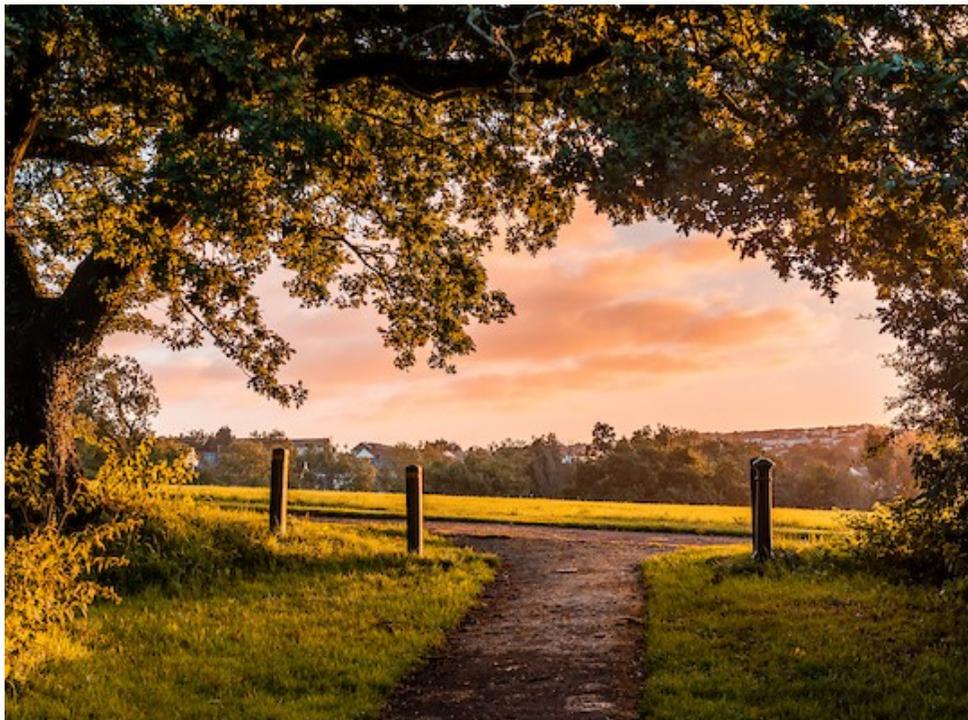
- This work aligns well with many of the steps in the [Journey to a Resilient Wales](#) and the [Journey to a Wales of Cohesive Communities](#).
- The Future Generations Report 2020 recommends that public bodies and organisations:
 - Make connections between supporting local economies and prosperity, seeing how this also connects to supporting fair and local procurement, skills, local materials, and resource efficiency.
 - Demonstrate how planning and infrastructure decisions jointly benefit people and nature.
 - Empower communities to manage land (including publicly owned land) for projects that use nature based solutions to restore local biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems.



Examples

Discovery Gateways

- 12 sites received Welsh Government funding to maximise natural and cultural assets
- Valuable assets during COVID-19, as 96% of people felt that green space helped their mental and physical health during lockdown
- Bryngarw Country Park proposal includes plans for PV solar panels on buildings
- Multidisciplinary team of 4 with backgrounds in policy, creative and cultural work, ecology and health have taken over from the Taskforce to ensure the VRP's development



Examples

Guardians

- Aims to connect people with landscape
- 7 full time Guardians provided by Groundwork with a range of expertise in fields such as practical conservation, sustainability, and health
- Offer lots of ways to engage with natural environment:
 - Environmental volunteering, practical conservation work and creating community gardens to boost biodiversity and help create a Resilient Wales
 - Well-being walks to ensure a Healthier Wales where physical well-being is prioritised and pressure on public health services is prevented
- Seeking funding to extend the Guardian scheme for another two years



Approach

Challenge

Connecting people in the Valleys with natural landscape.

Prevention

- Environmental education and skills to prevent ecological degradation
- Active travel links and access to green space to prevent ill mental and physical health

> **A Healthier and More Equal Wales**

Collaboration

- Valleys Regional Park collaboration between 13 Local Authorities and Welsh Government
- Multidisciplinary team of 4 with backgrounds in policy, creative and cultural work, ecology and health

> **A Resilient and More Equal Wales of Cohesive Communities**

What next?

- Guardian programme in progress and high chance to continue in the future
- Looking to provide remote working hubs during and beyond the pandemic
- Looking to connect people with nature in their everyday lives as new ways of working continue to emerge

Long Term

- Educating young people and adults to the dangers of climate change and providing the skills to produce long-term solutions
- Creating strong and eco-literate communities that care for each other and for nature

> **A Resilient, Prosperous Wales of Cohesive Communities**

Involvement

- Environmental volunteering programmes - developing skills for green future
- Public services working with local communities to develop delivery plans

> **A Resilient and More Equal Wales of Cohesive Communities**

Integration

- Integrating decarbonisation, carbon literacy, well-being and the economy
- Using nature-based solutions to address societal problems with 82% of people saying local green space allowed them to continue exercise routines in lockdown and 54% saying green space allowed them to start new exercise routines

> **A Prosperous, Resilient, More Equal and Resilient Wales**

