

Mick Bates
Chair
Sustainability Committee
National Assembly for Wales

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Annwyl Mr Bates

Access to Inland water

The Society welcomes the committee's inquiry into access to inland water.

Cymdeithas Eryri Snowdonia Society, established over 40 years ago and now with over 2500 members, is a registered charity which seeks to protect the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage of Snowdonia for the benefit of those who live in or visit the National Park, and for future generations. Our members are people who have first-hand knowledge of Snowdonia, and either live in the National Park or visit it regularly. The Society is a minor landowner, but has no navigable water on its property.

The National Parks of Wales cover a significant proportion of the total landmass of Wales. They were created by Parliament in order to, *inter alia*, *promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities ...by the public*. The CROW Act has made a significant positive contribution of access rights for walkers and climbers and the Society feels that a statutory right of non-motorised access to Welsh rivers, canals and lakes for recreational or educational purposes would be a logical extension of this policy. It would also sit well with the statutory purposes of National Parks. Our only reservation would be that a legal right of access to water should not be available where it can be demonstrated that environmental harm would take place. We have seen some evidence of tension between angling and canoeing interests but we believe that it is possible for them to co-operate to achieve a workable solution. We would hope that responsible access codes would provide some leadership in this matter and feature good practice guidelines for both groups.

Regular participation in active recreation activities such as paddling has a clear benefit for the health and well being of individuals taking part. The key industry of Snowdonia is tourism and outdoor activities are a key component of this activity. The Society believes that this activity can be grown here with consequent benefits for employment without damaging the environment or significantly interfering with angling.

The committee may wish to study the operation of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. We believe that any such legislation in Wales should place an obligation on Welsh Ministers to produce and maintain a Code of Responsible Water Access, setting out clearly the obligations of persons wishing to exercise their right of access.

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