Brecon Beacons National Park-Mountain Environment and Tourism Case Study

- UK has 14 National Parks
- Each National Park has an organisation called a National Park Authority to help look after it
- The National Parks are mostly private land
- The objective of a National Park is to ‘conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the public
- Managing a National Park is a balancing act between conservation and the economy
- If there is a conflict between these two purposes, conservation takes priority
- In carrying out these aims, National Park Authorities are also required to seek foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park
- People who live and work in National Parks need the support of the 3.8 million people visiting it each year
- If visitors use local services and buy local produce during their visit, it helps local businesses survive in a sustainable way
- Established in 1957
- Area 519 sq miles
- Highest point Pen Y Fan
- Main settlements include: Brecon, Abergavenny, Crickhowell, Gilwern and Hay
- 3.8 million visits per year
- Around 40% of visitors are from Wales, around 1/5 from SE Wales
- The average number of nights spent in the region was 4
- Key attractions include: Hay bookshop, Brecon canal, Cathedral and local mountains, churches and castles
- 6 in 10 respondents quoted ‘scenery’ as one of the influences on their decision to visit the region, with almost 3 in 10 saying it was their main influence
- Other important influences were peace and quiet, quick and easy to get to and plenty of things to do
- Support for tourism was: the Welsh Assembly Government’s Physical Regeneration Fund – this has resulted in substantial repairs to historic buildings in Brecon and the enhancement of Crickhowell High Street; Rights of Way Improvement plan – this has allowed easier access for disabled people to the national parks walks (improvement of tracks, paths and gates); Green tourism – the National Parks Authority has promoted the greening of local businesses; Beacons bus – a new service to help tourists access the park on Sundays and bank holidays
- Walkers damage paths in two ways:
  - Soles of walking boots damage vegetation and churn the top soil. This in turn results in more areas exposed to weathering
  - Walkers compact the top soil, reducing pore space and therefore limiting the absorption of water by the soil. This leads to puddles (which walkers avoid, thus widening tracks) and ‘gullying’ (paths channel water)