

Delivering the Living Wales programme: realising the potential of National Parks - A Summary

Introduction

The Campaign for National Parks is the charity that campaigns to protect and promote National Parks in England and Wales as beautiful and inspirational places enjoyed and valued by all. Our work in Wales is informed by CNP Cymru, which includes representatives from each of the National Park Societies and other bodies such as CPRW and the National Association of AONBs. This document was created in consultation with CNP Cymru.

The Welsh Government is in the process of introducing a new approach to the management of Wales' natural resources, known as the Living Wales programme. Section 2 of this briefing sets out a vision for protected landscapes in Wales which is based on the one agreed by the Wales Landscape Partnership¹. Sections 3 and 4 of the document focus on the challenges and opportunities that this new approach provides for Wales' National Parks as summarised below. The briefing finishes with proposals for the way forward, particularly with regard to actions for Welsh Government.

The opportunities

- **The potential contribution of landscapes and seascapes to the new approach.** National Parks contain Wales' finest landscapes and two of them derive many of their special qualities from the seascapes adjacent to them. There is an opportunity to ensure that the resources of National Parks are used effectively to care for their landscapes and seascapes.
- **Providing greater protection for nationally important seascapes,** by making legislative changes to ensure that the land and sea dimensions of coastal National Parks are treated equally, for example, by extending their boundaries out to sea and giving the relevant National Park Authorities (NPAs) the duties and resources to manage these areas effectively.
- **Facilitating greater access to, and understanding of, the environment.** With the right enabling mechanisms and support available, the National Parks offer lots of opportunities for initiatives aimed at ensuring that under-represented groups of people can gain greater access to, and understanding of, the natural environment and the benefits this can bring.
- **Recognising the contribution that National Parks make to Wales' economy,** so that their value is more widely recognised and the importance of protecting them better understood.

¹ Wales Landscape Partnership, An agenda for Wales' Protected Landscapes

- **The role of NPAs as leaders in facilitating sustainable use of the natural environment**
 - a) **Through intensifying and extending partnership opportunities**, by building on the work already undertaken to prepare National Park Management Plans.
 - b) **Through an integrated approach to planning and management** working at a landscape scale approach rather than to traditional administrative boundaries.
 - c) **Through valuing ecosystem services**: NPAs are uniquely placed to develop a national approach towards valuation and to test and monitor the impact of the new approach.
 - d) **Through delivery of agri-environment schemes**: NPAs could play a key role in the management and delivery of the Glastir agri-environment scheme within their areas.
- **Recognising the role of National Parks in delivering wider objectives**, ranging from tackling climate change to promoting access to recreational networks, not only through the Living Wales programme, but by properly recognising and embedding the full range of public benefits that National Parks provide in other relevant Welsh Government policy.
- **The potential to deliver efficiency savings** by transferring the management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves within the National Parks to the NPAs.

The challenges

- **Ensuring existing critical environmental protection is not eroded** by unnecessary rationalisation of existing landscape designations.
- **Long-term protection vs. short-term goals**: ensuring that the protection and value of the National Parks are not eroded in pursuit of short term economic and societal goals.
- **A loss of funding for the work of the third sector** which plays a vital role in delivering environmental, recreational and sustainability objectives in National Parks in Wales and could make a significant contribution to the delivery of natural resource management.
- **Ensuring inappropriate development does not have a negative impact** and does not compromise the range of benefits that protected landscapes provide. This means it is crucial that NPAs maintain their planning powers.
- **Recognising the true value of the environment**. In National Parks, adverse changes to the stunning natural beauty of the landscapes, the feeling of wildness and escape, or the deep-rooted cultural heritage, are notoriously difficult to cost.
- **Ensuring that National Parks can continue to contribute to Wales' economy** and raising greater awareness of this contribution to ensure that the value of designation continues to be recognised and supported.
- **Ensuring political support for National Parks** and ensuring that their protection is not weakened by changes made in Westminster which could have a detrimental impact on the value of National Parks to the Welsh economy.

The Way Forward – Recommendations for Welsh Government

- Implement and fund a pilot of the proposed new approach to resource management in one of the National Parks in Wales.
- Confirm the role of NPAs as local planning authorities.
- Recognise the full range of public benefits that National Parks provide.

- Ensure that Natural Resources Wales has appropriate powers and resources to continue to protect and enhance the National Parks and to promote their statutory purposes.
- Implement the legislative changes required to extend the boundaries of the coastal National Parks into the adjacent marine areas and to provide the relevant NPAs with the necessary powers and resources to enable them to manage these areas effectively.
- Make clear to the UK Government that there is strong support within Wales for National Parks and that measures which potentially weaken their protection are not welcome.

This summary is available in both English and Welsh. The full briefing is available to download from our website: <http://www.cnp.org.uk/publications>