

**A response from Campaign for National Parks to *Taking Forward Wales's Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*
September 2017**

1. Campaign for National Parks is the independent national voice for the 13 National Parks in England and Wales. Our mission is to inspire everyone to enjoy and look after National Parks – the nation's green treasures. We have been campaigning for over 80 years to ensure that our National Parks are beautiful, inspirational places that are relevant, valued and protected for all.
2. Campaign for National Parks brings together a wide variety of people and organisations to address issues affecting National Parks and take action to keep these beautiful places safe. We draw on a large pool of experts among our members, many of whom are actively involved in designated landscapes and their communities, across Wales and England and further afield. We also work closely with the Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes.
3. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this important consultation and have focused our comments on chapter 3 on designated landscapes as this is where we have the most relevant experience. We welcome the Welsh Government's desire for designated landscapes to play a full role in the sustainable management of natural resources and we are keen to help develop a way of doing this which does not detract from any of the significant benefits that designated landscapes currently provide.
4. Campaign for National Parks believes that National Parks should be maintained as distinctive and unique tracts of countryside, which are adaptable and resilient to future pressures such as climate change. Any proposed changes to the purposes or governance of designated landscapes must provide an appropriate balance between the use and protection of natural resources if there is to be a secure and sustainable future for Wales's National Parks.
5. We have focused our comments on National Parks as that is our remit. They are iconic landscapes and have a world-wide resonance that should be retained at all costs. However, we do not want to see any reduction in the protection of Welsh Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and we strongly advocate that the opportunity should be taken to increase protection for National Parks and AONBs. Both have a really important contribution to make to the health and wealth of Wales.

Section a: Overarching comments

6. We provide specific comments on each of the proposals in chapter 3 in section b of our response, below, but we also want to take this opportunity to highlight some important overarching points.
7. The existing National Park structures and governance arrangements make them ideally placed to deliver the new approach set out in the *Environment (Wales) Act 2016* and the *Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*. Their strategic planning arrangements recognise humans as an integral component of landscape management and there are strong parallels between the management guidelines for National Parks (as category V protected landscapes) provided by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature

(IUCN)¹ and the 12 principles of the ecosystems approach published by the Convention on Biological Diversity².

Building on existing processes

8. The National Park Management Plans, which National Park Authorities (NPAs) already produce, should be used as the basis for natural resource management planning within their area. These Management Plans are strongly evidence based and are developed in partnership with local stakeholders. There is an opportunity to build on these existing partnerships and arrangements and to extend the engagement to involve all stakeholders, including those outside the area. This would be the best way of involving a range of partners in some of the difficult decisions that need to be made. For example, to decide which ecosystem services need to be delivered in a particular location.
9. In 2011, the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology identified a National Park Authority area as being an appropriate size at which ecosystem service management decisions should be taken³. We believe there is huge potential not only for Management Plans to form the basis for natural resource management planning within the areas they already cover, but for this work to be developed further so that it informs the development of natural resource management planning in areas beyond the National Park boundaries. We welcome the hub type approach to working beyond boundaries that is set out in the *Future Landscapes* report. This would be very cost-effective as it would build on the relevant expertise that already exists in NPAs as well as delivering economies of scale. NPAs are well-placed to offer advice and experience and share good practice on natural resource management with areas outside their boundaries.
10. Management Plans already address the challenges involved in delivering multiple benefits from the same landscape, for example, ensuring that a forest is managed in such a way that it delivers opportunities for recreation, carbon storage and retention of nutrients and not just timber production. This means that NPAs are well-placed to deliver sustainable management of natural resources and to ensure that the use of some natural resources in the short-term does not compromise the ability to deliver a wide range of services in the longer-term.
11. A further advantage of building on the Management Plan is that there is already a relationship between it and other statutory plans such as the Local Development Plan. This will ensure that natural resource management is integrated with other relevant policy and legislative frameworks, particularly with regard to spatial planning.

Greater collaboration

12. We also welcome the proposals in the *Future Landscapes* report aimed at encouraging designated landscapes to share resources and collaborate more effectively on delivery. We feel there are merits in the concept of a 'family of designated landscapes'. This would allow different members to share information and talents, to act collaboratively and to co-operate whilst retaining their individuality. There is already a great deal of sharing of expertise and knowledge between National Parks and AONBs in Wales and between Welsh, other UK and European designated landscapes (through Europarc for example), but there is potential to facilitate collaboration further, and to more actively encourage and enhance it.
13. There are also increasing opportunities for co-operation with other partners in the health, business and community sectors. NPAs excel at establishing and maintaining cross-cutting

¹<https://www.iucn.org/content/guidelines-management-planning-protected-areas>

² <http://www.cbd.int/ecosystem/principles.shtml>

³ http://www.parliament.uk/documents/post/postpn_377-ecosystem-approach.pdf

partnerships and promoting innovation and, given sufficient resources, will undoubtedly be able to build on this in the future, finding common ground and sharing objectives and resources.

14. It will not be for NPAs alone to ensure that National Parks can play a successful role in natural resource management planning. It is essential to ensure that local communities, private businesses and the third sector are involved effectively too. The involvement of other parties is likely to be most effective where the NPA's role is one of facilitation and achieving added value by helping other people and organisations to take the lead where appropriate. There are excellent examples of where this is already happening, such as the Green Valleys initiative in the Brecon Beacons⁴.
15. It will be particularly important to involve farmers and land managers given the role that agriculture and woodland management have in shaping landscapes and influencing the management of natural resources. The most effective way of doing this would be for NPAs to have responsibility for setting priorities for agri-environment schemes in their area and providing expert advice to farmers. This would allow NPAs to deliver locally-tailored funding schemes in line with the vision for their area set out in the Management Plan. The Welsh Government should introduce this as part of the new arrangements that will need to be developed to replace the Common Agricultural Policy as the UK withdraws from the European Union. NPAs should also be provided with sufficient resources to allow them to undertake this significant role effectively.

Valuing the benefits

16. The way that we value the different types of benefits provided by National Parks varies and it is much harder to place a value on some than others. For example, there is a market for timber but not for spiritual well-being. Many of the public services provided are currently under-valued compared to the private services such as the production of food and timber whose values are largely defined by market forces. The existence of the National Park statutory purposes and the development of Management Plans ensures that these different types of services are better integrated and that those which are harder to value are not compromised by those which are valued more highly by the market. NPAs already take account of social, economic and cultural considerations in their decision-making as well as environmental ones.
17. It is also important to remember that National Parks are national assets which play a key role in raising the profile of Wales internationally due to their importance as cultural and tourist destinations. We were very worried to hear of the concerns raised by the members of the IUCN assessment panel⁵ about the potential risk to the international status of Wales's designated landscapes. The international status of the Welsh National Parks is a result of the long history and experience of prioritising conservation objectives within their boundaries whilst they continue to be vibrant, lived-in, working landscapes – they are regarded as worldwide pioneers in this field. Any loss of this status is likely to have a significant impact on the value of National Parks to the Welsh economy.
18. Research published in 2013⁶ found that the three National Parks are a significant part of the Welsh economy. Overall, the National Park economies account for £557 million of Gross Value Added (GVA), and their environments directly support 10,738 jobs within their boundaries plus a further 2,033 jobs across Wales. The same research also found that the

⁴ <http://www.thegreenvalleys.org/>

⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-40754816>

⁶ http://www.nationalparkswales.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/389727/Valuing-Wales-National-Parks-.pdf

three Parks receive 12 million visitors per annum who spend an estimated £1 billion on goods and services each year. Not only does the high quality environment in these areas make a significant contribution to the economy but it also contributes to a wide range of other objectives by acting as a source of health, well-being and spiritual inspiration. This ranges from tackling climate change and improving biodiversity to enhancing cultural heritage and encouraging physical activity by promoting access to recreational networks. Providing National Parks with a key role in the sustainable management of natural resources will ensure that they are able to continue delivering these and other benefits.

19. It is essential that any changes introduced do not weaken the protection afforded to National Parks and that their special status continues to be acknowledged. The consumers of the services provided by Wales's National Parks are not just those living and working in them, but the wider population of Wales and neighbouring counties of England who benefit from services such as improved water quality as well as the visitors from all over the world who benefit from the spiritual and recreational services provided.

Section b: Comments on the proposals in chapter 3

Proposal 6 – aligning the statutory purposes of designated landscapes more clearly with the sustainable management of natural resources

20. We believe that the existing statutory purposes have stood the test of time well and have been an important element in ensuring that National Parks have remained beautiful, inspirational places that provide multiple public benefits and are valued and protected for all to enjoy. We recognise the Welsh Government's desire to ensure the purposes reflect the enhanced role that National Parks can play in the sustainable management of natural resources in Wales.
21. As already stated, we believe the existing National Park structures and governance arrangements make them ideally placed to deliver the new approach set out in the *Environment (Wales) Act 2016* and the *Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*. But further clarity is needed on what, if any, evolution is required to support the implementation of both Acts. The National Natural Resources Policy was published in August and NRW continues to work to develop Area Statements with the aim of full Wales coverage by 2019. We believe that consideration should be given to testing the implementation of Area Statements in the first instance, to inform whether and if so, how, National Park purposes may need to be changed.
22. We do not believe that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the purposes of designated landscapes need to be amended. However, if the Welsh Government does decide to pursue this idea, it is essential that there is full consultation on the specific purposes being proposed before any legislative changes are introduced. We know, for example, the Marsden Report made a recommendation about how the purposes could be reworded. We would also suggest consideration is given to new purposes as follows:

To conserve and enhance the natural beauty⁷, wildlife, tranquillity, landscape, and cultural heritage of the area;

⁷ Following the Meyrick case in the New Forest National Park, the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006* re-defined 'natural beauty' to include wildlife and cultural heritage, and clarified that natural beauty may consist of, or include, land used for agriculture or woodlands, or used as a park, or an area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape. n

To safeguard ecosystem services (natural provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural services), while enabling sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;

To promote physical and mental well-being through encouraging greater contact with, and enjoyment and understanding of, the natural beauty, wildlife, tranquillity, landscape and cultural heritage of the area;

To promote sustainable forms of economic and community development which support the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife, tranquillity, landscape and cultural heritage of the area.

And if it appears that there is a conflict between any of the four park purposes, then greater weight must be given to the first of these purposes.

23. We are very concerned at the suggestion in the consultation document that the proposed changes to the statutory purposes would remove the need for the Sandford Principle. We do not understand how it is possible to come to this conclusion before considering what revised purposes might look like but, more importantly, we do not agree that the Sandford Principle would be unnecessary. This simple principle has been central to the protection of our National Parks for decades by ensuring that priority is given to the conservation of National Parks where there are irreconcilable differences between the two purposes. Without the Sandford Principle or an appropriately adapted version of it, there is a real risk that economic interests will be given priority over the conservation of National Parks, particularly if the purposes are to be updated to place a greater emphasis on natural resource management.
24. When AMs debated the *Future Landscapes* report on 6 June, we were really pleased to hear so many of them speak up in support of the Sandford Principle and the importance of maintaining this key part of their protection. We also welcomed the assurance that the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs gave that the Sandford Principle, or an iteration of it, would be at the heart of the future protection and enhancement of Welsh National Parks. We are, therefore, very disappointed that it is now suggested that this important Principle is no longer needed.

Proposal 7 – Giving greater weight in decision making to the identified special qualities of the areas

25. We are supportive of the principle of giving greater weight to the identified special qualities of National Parks. However, we are not entirely clear what is intended by this proposal and particularly the idea of “establishing a formal relationship between special qualities of a designated area and the partnerships, powers and policies that drive its sustainable management”.
26. We are concerned that the way in which some of the text on page 31 is written could lead to misunderstandings as it appears to equate special qualities with natural resources. For example: “They are areas with a wide range of valuable characteristics and services, such as nature, water supply, food and carbon storage.” This list completely fails to consider characteristics such as tranquility and sweeping views which more commonly form part of the special qualities. It is important that there is clear understanding of what is meant by special qualities before proposing any changes relating to them.
27. Many of the benefits which National Parks provide, including tourism and rural economic growth, would be lost if anything were to detract from the special qualities for which these areas are valued. National Parks will only be able to deliver the sustainable management of natural resources effectively if their special qualities continue to be supported and

enhanced. All activities in National Parks should reinforce and support the special qualities of these important areas and the communities that support and manage them.

Proposal 8 – Enabling governance arrangements to evolve to reflect local circumstances

28. We support the principles for the governance of designated landscapes in Wales set out on page 32 of the consultation document. If the governance principles are delivered in an integrated way across designated areas it would help ensure they deliver multiple benefits for Wales and local communities. However, the consultation document does not adequately explain why the focus is now on the proposed introduction of a wider range of local delivery models for designated landscapes. We believe that there are other changes that could more helpfully be introduced in order to strengthen the governance arrangements of National Parks, as set out below.
29. We also welcome the commitment in the document to focusing on ensuring the existing NPA boards are providing effective leadership rather than increasing the cost and complexity of administration by introducing direct elections. We believe that more could be done to improve the local accountability of NPAs without the need for direct elections.
30. Currently in Wales, two thirds of the members of each NPA are nominated by local authorities in the area and one-third are appointed by Welsh Government. However, there is no requirement that the local authority appoints members whose wards are within the National Park. In England, a proportion of NPA members are appointed by the Secretary of State after they are elected by Parish Councils in the National Park. These people are representatives of the local communities in the National Park, not just their own parish and this system means that local people are always represented in the running of the National Park.
31. There is a need to improve the local accountability of NPAs in Wales. The simplest way to do this would be to adopt the recommendation of the Williams Commission and require local authorities to appoint members who represent wards which are at least partially within the Park and which reflect a geographical spread across the Park. This may require allowing local authorities to depart from the political balance rule but they should only be allowed to do so in order to appoint representatives from within the Park as it is important that NPAs do not become politically imbalanced. Alternatively, consideration could be given to allocating some of the local authority appointed places on NPA boards to representatives from town and community councils within the Park who would be appointed on the same basis that Parish Council representatives are appointed in England.

Proposal 9 – Refreshing the way new areas can be recognised for their special qualities and their sustainable management

32. We welcome Welsh Government's commitment to explore ways in which new areas might be recognised for their special qualities and their sustainable management. However, we do not believe that this should be a priority at present. It would be better to focus on introducing an effective way of ensuring that the existing designated landscapes can play a full role in the sustainable management of natural resources before deciding how to take this proposal forward. As the response from the Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes highlights, there are a wide range of issues that will need to be addressed before this proposal can be implemented.

Other potential legislative changes

33. We would also like to make a suggestion in response to **question 14** which asks whether any other legislative provisions are needed. Current legislation requires that in 'exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect land' within National Parks, a

'relevant authority shall have regard to' the statutory purposes of National Parks. This requirement is in Section 11A(2) of the *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949* as amended by the Section 62(2) of the *Environment Act 1995* and is often referred to as 'the S62 duty'. The definition of relevant authority includes any public body and the duty applies to all decisions and activities that may affect land within a National Park and not just those that relate to planning, countryside and related environmental matters. The duty also applies to activities undertaken outside National Park boundaries which may affect land within them.

34. In theory, this duty should help protect National Parks against damaging proposals, including those just outside their boundaries. However, it is clear that this duty does not currently provide sufficient protection. Last year Campaign for National Parks, in partnership with Campaign to Protect Rural England and National Trust, commissioned Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) to undertake research⁸ about planning policy related to major development in the English and Welsh National Parks. This identified a number of cases where the duty to have regard to National Park purposes was not well understood or satisfactorily implemented. There appears to be some confusion over the weight that adjacent local planning authorities should apply to the adverse impacts on a neighbouring National Park of major development in the surrounding area. We believe strongly that the duty should be strengthened by replacing the 'have regard to' duty with 'have a duty to further national park purposes'.
35. We are also concerned that the duty is not always monitored and enforced effectively and that there is a low level of awareness of it among some of the organisations to which it should apply. In addition to strengthening the duty we would like to see improvements to the way in which it is promoted, monitored and enforced. We propose that all relevant organisations should be involved in the preparation of Management Plans and should be required to produce statements setting out how they will fulfill the S62 duty. These statements should then be included in the Management Plans. This will ensure that relevant organisations give greater priority to delivering the purposes as they will need to be very clear about the processes and systems they have in place for ensuring they are meeting the duty. Including the statements in Management Plans will also mean that they are publicly available and make it easier for NPAs, National Park Societies and other partners to hold relevant organisations to account.
36. A further way of involving all the relevant partners effectively is to establish some form of advisory group or partnership board. The Peak District National Park has established an advisory group⁹ to review progress on the delivery of its Management Plan and champion specific issues. This brings together representatives from a range of different organisations with responsibility for delivering aspects of the Plan and has an independent chair.
37. In Exmoor, a Partnership Plan¹⁰ has been produced jointly by the National Park Authority and its partners setting out how they will work together to achieve National Park purposes over a five year period. This has been accompanied by the creation of a Partnership Panel and Strategic Overview Groups that are led by other partners (not the NPA) and which are each allocated specific responsibility for monitoring and reporting on progress on particular objectives in the Plan.

⁸ Full details of the research findings are available here: <http://www.cnp.org.uk/SHU-planning-research>

⁹ <http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/microsites/nppmp/about-the-plan/advisory-group>

¹⁰ http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/260857/PP-Full-version1.pdf

Section c: Concluding remarks

38. Much of the consultation document is focused on potential changes to legislation that may be needed in order to implement the sustainable management of natural resources. However, we question whether legislative changes will always be necessary in order to ensure that designated landscapes contribute fully to the new approach. There is much that could be achieved by building on existing processes before any changes to legislation should be considered. This also has the advantage of allowing changes to be introduced more quickly.
39. There is a lack of detail and clarity about many of the proposals in chapter 3 and it is not always easy to understand exactly what is being proposed in some cases. For example, the discussion on possible changes to the statutory purposes of National Parks does not provide any details on what the proposed new purposes might be. It is essential that there is further, detailed consultation on any specific changes that are taken forward following this consultation. It is important that any future consultation allows more opportunity for the public to engage in the debate about possible changes to areas which were created for the benefit of the nation. This should include ensuring that consultation documents are written in a way which is accessible to non-specialist audiences.
40. It is clear that National Parks can play a central role in the sustainable management of natural resources but if they are to be able to do this successfully, it is vital that the protection afforded to designated landscapes is not eroded, or undermined.

For further information about any aspect of this response, please contact Ruth Bradshaw, Policy and Research Manager (email:ruthb@cnp.org.uk, tel: 020 7981 0896).