

**Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 – Section 6
The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty
Report 2020 – 2022**



[Photos: Top left, clockwise: coir log dams to help slow water flows as part of peatland restoration in the Black Mountains, launch of the Wales' first dragonfly hotspot at Llangorse Lake, Site of Importance for Nature Conservation field surveying, building bat houses as part of Local Nature Partnership Project in The Amman Valley), veteran tree measuring with the Education Team, Local Nature Partnership wildflower seed harvesting with National Park Wardens]

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Report
January 2020 - December 2022

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Introduction and Context

This report highlights some of the ways in which the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) has met its obligations under the Section 6 Biodiversity Duty. It follows on from BBNPA's first Section 6 Report (in 2019).

This reporting period has been a challenging one for the Authority, which has now emerged from a period of organisational change and uncertainty, coupled with the challenges of a global pandemic and a cyber-incident. Nonetheless the Authority has continued to play a significant role in the Welsh response to the universal decline in biodiversity and embedding biodiversity across its activities. This has been delivered across the Authority's many roles, including as a major landowner, active member of a variety of biodiversity-based partnerships and initiatives, and as a Local Planning Authority. Biodiversity conservation and nature recovery are a central part of BBNPA's functions.

Appendix 1 (available upon request) provides examples of actions taken in support of the Section 6 duty. These have been provided by Officers from across the Authority. Many of the actions align with several of the All-Wales Nature Recovery Objectives. Selected examples are described in more detail below.

Context

The Brecon Beacons National Park is one of a family of fifteen National Parks in the UK. The Brecon Beacons received formal designation in 1957 and it covers 520 square miles. The border extends from the rural heartland of Mid Wales in the north to the post-industrial ex-mining communities of the South Wales Valleys at its southern fringes. From east to west the Park spans from the borders to the fringes of Llandeilo.

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is the body which is charged by law to look after the rich and special landscapes of the National Park. It has two statutory special purposes. These are:

- *To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.*
- *To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.*

The law also states that in carrying out these purposes the Authority must also seek:

- *To foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.*

The National Park is home to about 33,000 people. Around 14% of the Park is owned by the BBNPA, the remainder being in private and various forms of State ownership. This high level of Authority landownership (compared with other UK National Park Authorities) represents both some unique opportunities and challenges.

BBNPA operates in the context of Wales' forward thinking environmental legislation framework and is governed by a series of plans and policies. It is subject to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WBFGA). The Authority continues to engage with the Public Service Boards

(PSBs) within its area, in relation to its Planning functions. It has also been actively engaging with the Powys PSB for example, on climate change.

The Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) principles are core to much of BBNPA's activities. The actions within the Park's Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) were prioritised based on their synergy with SMNR principles and the consensus of Local Nature Partnership (LNP) members. The Authority continues to engage with Natural Resources Wales in the Area Statement (AS) process. However, with multiple AS within the Park, different approaches being taken by each and with some AS more active than others, the NPA would welcome greater support to enable AS input to be provided in a more centralised, streamlined way.

BBNPA has recently led on a review of its statutory National Park Management Plan (NPMP).¹ Named *Future Bannau*, it was adopted in December 2022 and it defines a 25-year vision of the future of the National Park.

Future Bannau is necessarily ambitious; set in the context of the urgent global biodiversity and climate crises. It embeds nature recovery at its core and has been developed with a range of Partners and Stakeholders and relies upon collective action to secure a more sustainable future. It represents a shift from previous plans and places a focus on the objectives of the National Park designation as a holistic system under extreme stress. Inspiration is drawn from a widely adopted model called 'The Doughnut' to illustrate the extent to which the Park is exceeding safe environmental and social operating levels, and thus the scale of shift required to be successful in implementing the Authority's purposes and duty.

Future Bannau takes a mission-based approach; focussing on five key interconnected missions (centred on climate, nature, water, people, place). "Specialist topic" Action Plans offer additional detail and focus. The Park's Nature Recovery Action Plan (Wales' first local NRAP, launched in 2019 and adopted by BBNPA) continues to act as the Authority's primary action plan for nature recovery and biodiversity conservation, as a key component of Future Bannau. The Brecon Beacons National Park NRAP has been used as a model by other Welsh regions writing their own NRAPs.

Joined-up and more active monitoring across the Authority's plans, activities and responsibilities remains an area where there is more work to do. As part of the next phase of Future Bannau, work is underway to align planning and reporting mechanisms across the Authority. The ambition being an integrated planning and reporting approach for the NPMP, WBFGA, Section 6, NRAP and Corporate Plan.

BBNPA Section 6 Plan and Well Being of Future Generations Plan

The Section 6 Biodiversity Duty is linked to BBNPA's delivery of the Well Being of Future Generation Act goals (including the Resilient Wales goal) and the five ways of working through the NPMP (Future Bannau). The mission statements form BBNPA's Wellbeing Objectives for the period 2023-2028, and demonstrate how the geographic area of the Park will contribute to the delivery of the 7 wellbeing goals through the five ways of working.

Alongside BBNPA's Corporate Plan, Future Bannau fulfils the function of both the Section 6 Biodiversity Plan and Well-Being Plan which are required of the Authority by Welsh legislation.

¹ As required by Section 66 (l) of the 1995 Environment Act.

Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues

Highlights & Key Outcomes

BBNPA is considered one of Wales' leading practitioners in **upland peatland restoration**. Its expansive peatland restoration programme and the Park's role with peatland conservation in Wales continues to be a highlight. Work has included:

- The completion of a BBNPA Peatland Strategy, in consultation with Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Dwr Cymru and Swansea University.
- Assisting NRW to complete the National Peatlands Action Programme. Membership of the National Peatland Practitioners Working Group (chaired by NRW) and the Peatland Monitoring Working Group.
- The completion of the Wales Peatlands Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS) project (in which the NPA was a steering Group and project delivery partner). This was Wales' second largest SMS project (after the Black Mountains Land Use Partnership SMS in which the NPA took a lead role).
- Peatland restoration and upland path restoration works have taken place on multiple sites across the Park, involving various techniques. The protection and restoration of an estimated 1,000 ha of upland peatland in the BBNPA has been delivered, funded through NRW's Strategic Allocation Fund, Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places scheme and other grants.
- The appointment of a Peatlands Project Officer.
- The development of a BBNPA version of the Peatlands Rapid Assessment methodology and establishment of an upland peatland survey volunteer group. Field surveys are underway to ground truth existing peatland extent and depth maps for the Park.

The National Park will spend over a million pounds in the next three years on peat restoration works, and this figure is set to increase in recognition of the importance Welsh Government has placed on conserving peatlands.

BBNPA is a core Partner within the **Brecon Beacons Local Nature Partnership (BBLNP)**. On behalf of BBLNP the Authority commissioned the development of a suite of **Ecological Resilience and Connectivity Mapping** in 2019. Delivered by a collaboration of two Welsh LERCs this evidence gathering exercise utilised available information to develop and apply NRW's 'CuRVe methodology²' at a more local scale and take a first step forward in trying to capture on a map what ecological resilience "looks like." The launch event was attended by over 50 partners and field-experts. The maps are hosted on an online data portal for BBLNP Partners, and the ambition is that it is a living tool, to be tested by Partners, updated, and revised as new information becomes available.

Thanks to WG Local Places for Nature (LP4N) Revenue and £150k Capital funding (April 2020 – March 2023) the Authority has been able to host a LNP Projects Officer, who has coordinated a suite of **local nature recovery projects**. This has included working with five local communities to establish Local Community Nature Recovery Sites and currently, a pilot native wildflower seed harvesting project. This forms part of longer-term goals to establish greater availability of local provenance plants for BBNP projects and schemes. BBNPA's involvement in the LP4N programme and associated LNP Cymru Partnership is seen as vital for capacity building, awareness raising and implementation of nature recovery goals in line with the Park's Nature Recovery Action Plan. As we hit year 3 of the Park's NRAP, the Authority will be working with LNP Partners in the coming months to undertake a full review of actions and progress to date.

² Current Relative Value of ecosystem resilience

Much of the Authority's work delivers both **positive outcomes for biodiversity and well-being benefits for people**. For example:

- The Education team have engaged with over 8,000 children on key biodiversity messages, including production of games and activities available on-line during the pandemic, sessions with local schools and teaching staff to advise on biodiversity in school grounds and a live Climate Action online session to over 100 schools exploring the benefits of healthy peat in our uplands. As well as hosting an Earth Day "Invest in our planet" themed celebration day for Youth Emergency Service cadets at the National Park Visitor Centre, attended by over 70 cadets who engaged in various conservation works in the wildlife garden and grounds.
- The inspirational "Beaches 2 Beacons Project" has seen the Education and Communities Team join forces with Neath Port Talbot Council's children-in-care team. The project has supported children aged 11-16 years (who might not otherwise spend time outdoors) to engage with nature through a variety of activity days and completion of a John Muir Award.
- The creation of a new Youth Warden Scheme also offers a new, exciting and adventurous outdoors programme for young people aged 15-18 years. 12 Youth Wardens meet once a month during the academic year engaging in activities such as wildlife surveys, tree planting and path maintenance and working towards a John Muir Award.

Looking ahead to 2023: BBNPA is a key Partner within the £9 million Four Rivers for LIFE programme, led by NRW and covering a wide range of biodiversity enhancement measures. BBNPA will be involved at both a governance and delivery level within the River Usk component, including an Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) programme which benefits from the in-house INNS expertise which the Park has established.

BBNPA is also a part of the All-Wales Curlew Recovery Partnership, looking to secure funding for curlew recovery in the recently identified Usk Important Curlew Area (ICA) and other ICAs across Wales. The Authority is also part of the Welsh Parks Traditional Boundaries Project (WG Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places funded) and recently successfully launched its first round of local landowner grants for traditional boundary works in the National Park.

The timing of the Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Report, alongside the adoption of the new National Park Management Plan provides a great opportunity to further strengthen and embed biodiversity and nature recovery within the NPA's core strategic document, and thus the work of the Authority.

Issues

The Authority has faced some significant organisational and governance challenges during the last reporting period. However, with an action plan in place to address these, a 'new' forward thinking Authority is emerging.

The aforementioned National Park Management Plan review provides an account of some of the external challenges which are faced by the National Park. Not least the major global biodiversity and climate crises in which we all now operate. Growing visitor pressure at key sites, catchment nutrient management and upland wildfires are just a few examples of some of the other pressures the National Park faces. Working with Partners to agree a vision for the Park in the form of Future Bannau, provides an opportunity to move forwards in addressing these challenges. The role of the National Park in helping address these pressures is further strengthened by the recommendations and opportunities arising from Welsh Government's Biodiversity Deep Dive.

Securing a compatible funding portfolio, and the Authority and Partners working together, will of course be key to realising the vision of Future Bannau and delivering on WG's ambitions for National Parks.

It should be acknowledged that this report would benefit from more empirical evidence. As the Authority continues to ensure biodiversity is embedded within all aspects of its function (and reflected across all its plans), future reports should become more focussed in terms of measurable outcomes. It has been the Authority’s ambition to agree appropriate nature recovery measures and indicators (with clear baselines). This will help better demonstrate how the Authority’s activities are amassing and contributing towards nature recovery goals. With a revised National Park Management Plan to guide the way, the Authority is now in a stronger position to realise this ambition.

Action Report

NRAP Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels.

Actions to embed biodiversity action across your organisation’s functions.

Examples	Measures and/or indicators monitored
<p>National Park Management Plan (Future Bannau)</p> <p>BBNPA’s statutory management plan has been reviewed and was adopted in December 2022. Consultation input from stakeholders identified nature recovery as a key area of action for the National Park, working in partnership with statutory bodies, NGOs and community groups. To that end, the emergent plan embeds nature recovery at its core, with a recognition that many of the issues facing the Park and wider society can be addressed by taking a nature-based model of action, creating holistic outcomes that benefit all.</p> <p>The emergent plan has five core interrelated missions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate: Reach Net-Zero greenhouse gas emissions across the National Park by 2035 • Water: Clean, safe, resilient, plentiful water resources and water environments by 2030 • Nature: Nature positive Brecon Beacons National Park by 2030 • People: Living, working, visiting safely, equitably and sustainably • Place: Thriving, prosperous and sustainable places now and forever <p>The Nature Mission is of particular pertinence here. It is further broken down into three key areas of focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Habitat recovery: with the ambition that by 2028 all major habitats in the National Park, including grassland, native woodland, upland heathland, and peatland, will be on a pathway to net biodiversity gain; – Species conservation: with the ambition that by 2028 all flagship species, that are emblematic of the National Park or specific habitats, increase in numbers and extent; and 	<p>Revised National Park Management Plan Adopted December 2022.</p>

<p>– Ecosystem management: with the ambition that by 2028 all ecosystem functions and ecosystems generated by the park are enhanced.</p> <p>The Authority’s role in mission delivery utilises our skills and data to understand this complexity, to use this information and knowledge to work in partnership with all those who own and manage the land of the BBNP (including ourselves) to protect, repair and regenerate our key habitats, species and ecosystems. The Authority will explore and channel the emerging economic and social drivers for environmental change to support farmers, landowners, and communities to establish new ways of working that support thriving communities whilst repairing and restoring our essential ecosystems.</p> <p>To that end we will focus on the following five key activities for the next five years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will embed nature recovery in all our activities within the BBNPA, building on our role of conservation and protection to become beacons for nature repair and recovery in all that we do. • We will be exemplars through prioritising the protection and recovery of our own land for nature recovery and target our support in priority protected species, habitats and ecosystems within the park e.g., SSSIs and SACs. • We will use our data and that of our partners and the research to develop our Nature Recovery Action Plan to identify the key species, habitats and ecosystems of the BBNP that we must prioritise to protect and restore, including the expansion of our Invasive Non-Native Species programme. • We will establish partnerships with landowners and the agricultural sector to explore and establish regenerative farming and land management that also supports our rural economy and prepares us for the future. • We will work in partnership to share best practice tools and strategies, supporting everyone to understand how they can actively contribute towards nature recovery. <p>Future Bannau, supported by the BBNP Nature Recovery Action Plan (and alongside the Authority’s Corporate Plan) constitute the Authority’s Section 6 Plan. Together they help embed biodiversity and nature recovery across the Park’s activities and decision-making functions.</p>	
<p>Welsh Government Biodiversity Deep Dive and diversity-related consultations</p> <p>BBNPA was represented within the core Biodiversity Deep Dive team, as well as the Designated Landscapes and Land Management Sub-Groups.</p> <p>Policy staff and other officers regularly provide comments (including on biodiversity) to official responses to various consultations (e.g., Welsh Government Sustainable Farming Scheme, NRW, etc.). This can be as part of a joint National Parks Wales response, or individual BBNPA response, depending upon the consultation.</p>	<p>BBNPA representation in Biodiversity Deep Dive process.</p> <p>Senior Ecologist assisted with the launch of Deep Dive recommendations at Wales Biodiversity Conference October 2022.</p>

<p>Local Development Plan (LDP)</p> <p>The LDP will be a key tool for the delivery of the new National Park Management Plan. With Future Bannau having now been adopted, the process to consider a revision of the current LDP will be initiated.</p>	
<p>Changes to staff with core biodiversity element to their roles³</p> <p>Permanent posts: across the last period a Senior Ecologist (Nature Recovery) has been secured following a period of vacancy. The Authority also has a Senior Ecologist (Peatlands, Rivers and Wetlands, Research 0.8 FTE), 2 part-time Ecologists (1 FTE). An additional Planning Ecologist has been appointed in addition to one existing Planning Ecologist.</p> <p>Additional fixed term/project funded posts include: Peatlands Officer, Canal and Rivers Well-being Officer, Local Nature Partnership Implementation Officer/Projects role, INNS Co-ordinator (0.8 FTE) and INNS Officer.</p>	<p>Comparative increase this period in Ecology focussed staff (due to fixed term/project funding).</p>
<p>Business as usual</p> <p>In connection with its two primary purposes, the whole BBNPA team is focussed directly or indirectly on delivering nature recovery action as a major part of business as usual. In light of pressures of resource, staff change, and governance in recent years, there has been limited ability to highlight and routinely evidence how the many actions are amassing and contributing to higher level nature recovery goals.</p>	
<p><i>Actions to raise awareness across the organisation.</i></p>	
<p>Examples</p>	<p>Measures and/or indicators monitored</p>
<p>Staff and Member biodiversity training/awareness raising</p> <p>Examples of staff training include a series of expert workshops in 2021/22, facilitated by the Local Environmental Records Centre for Powys and the Brecon Beacons (BIS) and featuring meadow invertebrates, pondlife, mammals, mini beasts and pollinators. Staff were also encouraged to participate in the public BBNP “Wildlife Awareness” programme of events (below). Democratic services proactively attended a selection of these as a team.</p> <p>The pandemic restricted face to face Member Development Sessions, however a programme is now under way for the new Member cohort, with plans for nature recovery focussed sessions.</p> <p>Plans are also underway for lunchtime topical training sessions, centred around the themes in Future Bannau and including a session on biodiversity and the Section 6 Duty. These will be recorded to create a library available to staff and Members.</p>	<p>6 biodiversity sessions delivered by BIS, for NPA staff, volunteers and supporters. Including upland wildlife training session (+30 staff and volunteer attendees).</p> <p>4 biodiversity related training sessions for Planning Officers (including INNS training day).</p>

³ Role are Full Time, unless otherwise stated.

BBNP Wildlife Awareness Events

A series of public wildlife themed training sessions were coordinated by BIS (July 2020 – November 2022) on behalf of BBNPA and run by local experts and Partners. These were adapted to take place on-line during the pandemic, where large audiences (50+) were attracted. The programme was funded thanks to CLIF bar funding and WG monies to support NRAP delivery. The events focussed on a variety of wildlife groups (including moths, adders and veteran trees) and raising awareness of nature recovery and the importance of biological recording.



Photo: Limestone plant training session

28 public sessions delivered and over 600 learners engaged. Online sessions (17) available on YouTube.

BBNPA communications, internal & external facing newsletters

The BBNPA Communications Team have continued to support key messaging around nature recovery and work being undertaken across the Authority. For example, through regular social media posts, TV features, support for Wales Nature Week and specific theme-based campaigns. The NPA's current '52 Weeks of Brilliance' campaign has recently featured peatlands work and the BBNP pine marten trail camera project. Newsletters produced by teams across the Authority (e.g., Communities Newsletter, Tourism Times Newsletter) have included biodiversity features, whilst internal e-news and staff meetings have supported updates on nature recovery related initiatives and news.

Copies of newsletters, press releases, social media data monitored by Comms Team.

NRAP Objective 2: Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management

Including:

Actions taken to safeguard principal species and habitats.

Actions to contribute to the management of protected sites and species, including Local Wildlife Sites/Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs).

Examples

Measures and/or indicators monitored

Planning

The Authority continues to provide first class planning and wildlife advice to Development Management and Enforcement Officers. Ecological comments are provided on approx. 350-500 planning applications per year. The majority of planning applications include requirement for biodiversity enhancement measures to be delivered when the development is implemented.

The requirement for Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRA) screening and Appropriate Assessments of applications has been overseen by Planning Ecology. Following new evidence about the environmental impact of phosphate in watercourses and the subsequent adoption of tighter water quality targets by NRW, there has been a significant increase in the number of HRAs in the period 2021-22.

Development Management and Enforcement Officers have also received a suite of training on biodiversity and environmental legislation.

350-500 planning applications responded to per year.
From 2021, c.100 HRAs completed per year (a rise on the c.10 or less per year in previous years).

Review of Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)

A review of the Authority's SINC criteria was conducted in line with policy and legislative changes. The review included the development of habitat indicator species lists and designation thresholds (tailored to BBNP whilst taking account of the Section 7 Habitats and Species lists).

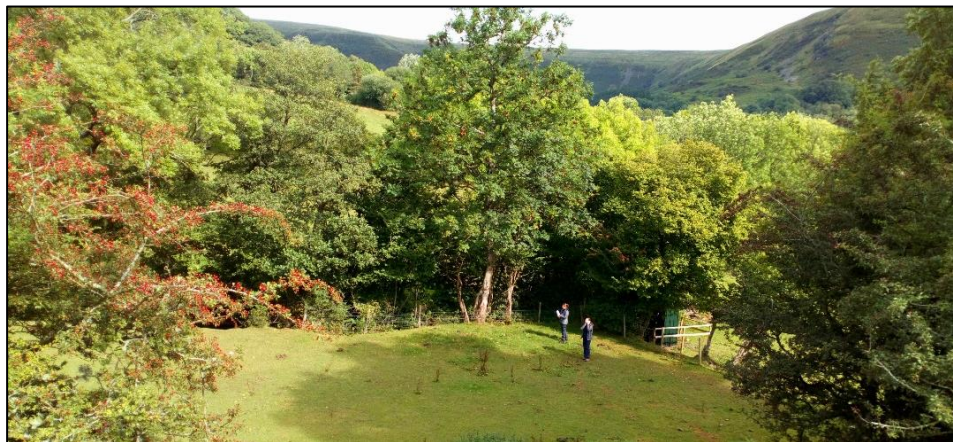


Photo: SINC survey in Llanthony Valley

Revised BBNPA SINC guidance published.
36 SINCs visited, all qualifying under the revised criteria. 15 new SINCs adopted as by NPA.

Usk Important Curlew Area/Curlew Recovery Project

BBNPA has been instrumental in the establishment of the Usk Important Curlew Area (ICA). Curlew territory surveys were undertaken in 2022 alongside some development and awareness raising work with local landowners. Working as part of the all-Wales Curlew Recovery Partnership, a project is being developed to identify curlew losses and the potential for recovery in the Usk ICA. Funding is actively being sought for work to include surveys, landowner engagement and habitat restoration.



Photo: Curlew landowner engagement session

20 curlew project partners engaged with.

Funding bid for Curlew Connections submitted (all-Wales partnership).

BBNPA owned land and Protected Sites

Many of the NRAP objectives within this report are delivered across the land which the Authority owns and/or involve Protected Sites - taking place at different scales and thanks to different funding programmes, partnerships and initiatives. Examples include:

- Southern shores of Llangorse Lake - cyclical lowland habitat management to improve the condition of the SSSI and SAC features. Site Management Steering Group in place to oversee management.
- Extensive upland peatland recovery works across key upland SSSIs (see Objective 3, below).
- Catchment scale partnerships - The Authority is a member of Dwr Cymru's Mega-catchment Steering Group and assisting with the development of The Central Beacons Project. Focussing on integrated land management it is currently in a consultation phase with other landowners and graziers' associations.
- Meithrin Mynydd Project Area (Mynydd Ddu SSSI and Western Great Forest) – Working alongside NRW and graziers, BBNPA is continuing to develop ideas for a new agri-environment project.
- Craig y nos Country Park - Ecological appraisal and site management plan commissioned.

NRAP Objective 3: Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation

Actions to create or contribute to Resilient Ecological Networks, for example restoring or creating habitats, improving the management and/or diversity or areas of habitat.

Examples

Measures and/or indicators monitored

Upland Access and Peatland Restoration works

The Authority continues to lead and innovate in an expansive programme of works, to support the restoration degraded upland habitats at a variety of key sites. Despite curtailments due to the covid pandemic, significant Access and Peatland restoration projects were completed. These were funded through a variety of sources. The last period has seen the completion of both Wales' 2nd largest SMS Project (the Wales Peatlands Project in which the NPA was a delivery partner and steering group member), and Wales largest SMS project (the Black Mountains Land Use Partnership).



Photo: Peatland restoration at Pen Trumau – laying coir matting on top of heather brash

Protection and enhancement of an estimated 1,000 ha of upland peatland funded by NRW's strategic Allocation Fund, SLSP and SMS and other grants.

Peatland Officer appointed.

Peatland Restoration Strategy for BBNP in place.

Assisted NRW to complete National Peatlands Action Programme.

Active member of national peatlands practitioners working group and peatland monitoring working group.

See Table 1 for details of specific site-based peatland works.

Table 1: Examples of Upland Access and Peatland restoration works 2020-22

Measure	Project cost	Funding source
2020-21		

4.8km of path repairs on Ffwyddog ridge (SSSI)	£170,000	Welsh Government
2.2km of path repairs on Carn Pica (inc 250m stone pitching) (SSSI)	£40,000	WG
1km of path repairs on Twmpa (SSSI)	£7,000	NRW
0.5km path repairs on Offa's Dyke (SSSI)	£6,800	NRW
7km of peat hags reprofiled and sphagnum moss planted on Waun Fach (SSSI).	£30,000	Welsh Peatlands Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS)
30km of peat hags and sphagnum moss planted on Waun Rydd and Craig y Fan Ddu (SSSI)	£113,000	Welsh Peatlands SMS & NRW
2021-22		
500m of sustainable path created across badly eroding wet heath at Rhos Dirion with aim of minimising further peat bog erosion (Black Mountains) (SSSI)	£31,000	WG Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP)
1100m of sustainable path across actively eroding wet heath/blanket bog on the Bloreng (SSSI), a very popular path with walkers.	£73,700	WG SLSP
Pen Allt Mawr sustainable upland path works. The path is adjacent to blanket bog of much of its length and a 500m crosses bog. The path had become badly braided and actively eroding due to recreational pressure.	£99,300	WG SLSP
Craig y Fan Ddu – provision of a sustainable path across 1950m and resurfacing a further 1400m of path in this very popular area with walkers. Designed to complement bog restoration works which were undertaken.	£85,000	WG SLSP & BBNPA legacy funding
Neuadd Path - 300m of path resurfaced on this very popular path. This follows good recovery of the wet heath adjacent to the path following an initial upgrade some years ago.	£6,500	BBNPA legacy funding
Rhiw Cwnstab - Resurfacing of 600m of popular path in the Black Mountains. Follows good recovery of adjacent wet heath following initial upgrade some years ago.	£18,700	BBNPA legacy funding

<p>Southern scar habitat restoration - Located on the Hatterrall Ridge in the Black Mountains (SSSI) the bare peat and mineral soil "scar" results from a wildfire in the 1970s. Works extended previous works to revegetate the bare ground. Works over a 3ha area.</p>	<p>£42,300</p>	<p>WG SLSP</p>	
<p>Waun Fach area Bog restoration (SSSI) - Continued peatland restoration at this key site, including new timber dams, rubble stone dams, path resurfacing and sphagnum moss planting.</p>	<p>£19,700</p>	<p>WG SLSP and BBNPA legacy funding</p>	
<p>Pen Trumau (Black Mountains) (SSSI) - Follows on from previous works on this key site (via the Woollen line initiative) where a wildlife in the 1970s left significant areas of bare peat and mineral soils. Works extended over 2.5ha employing a variety of techniques including low stone dams, wool dams, laying geo-jute and coir covered by heather brash.</p>	<p>£86,500</p>	<p>WG SLSP and BBNPA legacy</p>	
<p>Craig y Fan Ddu peat restoration - Extending from previous years works including reprofiling peat hags and forming small pools to slow water flows and dam creation.</p>	<p>£52,870</p>	<p>WG SLSP</p>	
<p>Waun Wen bog restoration - Extensive area of blanket bog subject to wildfires over the past few years. Various restoration techniques were employed. However, following works the area was subject to another wildfire.</p>	<p>£24,640</p>	<p>WG SLSP</p>	
<p>TOTAL:</p>	<p>£907,010</p>		
<p>Amman Valley Nature Recovery Project</p> <p>BBLNP acted as lead applicant in a successful bid to the Welsh Government Challenge Fund, in partnership with the Initiative for Nature Conservation Cymru (INCC), Carmarthenshire and RCT Local Nature Partnerships. The locally driven project focussed on putting in place infrastructure and measures to monitor nature recovery (e.g., botanical baseline survey, bird and bat box installation, bat monitoring equipment) and undertaking habitat restoration works (Rhos pasture and orchard), establishing a demonstration site and engaging the local community with the project and the natural assets of the Amman valley.</p> <p>The project built upon a local-scale partnership based in the Amman Valley. It sets a good foundation for the delivery of further nature recovery works as the partnership further matures; driven by the ambition and</p>			<p>£123k Challenge Fund Award.</p> <p>WG project KPIs.</p> <p>Project Report – <i>Amman Valley Nature Recovery: An exemplar of Nature Recovery Action through Local Involvement and Partnership Working in the Brecon Beacons National Park.</i></p>

vision of INCC which is aligned with that of the Park’s overarching Nature Recovery Acton Plan.

Although not a direct delivery agent, the NPA’s role as lead applicant and “purse keeper” proved important to the project partnership’s ability to deliver nature recovery at a pragmatic and locally relevant scale. This “very local” level project development, ownership and delivery model could be one used elsewhere in the Park.



Photo: Cattle on site, as part of grassland restoration initiative (infrastructure to enable cattle on site funded by WG Challenge Fund)

NRAP Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

Including:

Actions to address key pressures.

Use of biodiverse and native nature-based solutions wherever possible.

Examples

Measures and/or indicators monitored

INNS Programme

Leading on from the successful *Invaders of the National Park* pilot project (2018-20), BBNPA’s INNS programme has maintained pace and demonstrates the sustained effort required to secure long standing control of INNS. Work has majored on the systematic control of Japanese knotweed in the Upper Usk (SSSI, SAC), alongside Himalayan balsam control on the two major catchments: the Usk and Tawe. Talking to landowners and farmers, work has taken place to identify, treat and monitor key locations and involving both contractors and volunteers.

Japanese knotweed treatment along 20km Upper River Usk (both banks).
18 Himalayan balsam volunteer work groups in Usk & Tawe catchments.

Advice and treatment of a variety of other INNS has also taken place at sites across the Park, working with Partners and volunteers and including trialling biocontrol of *Crassula helmsii* on a pond on Mynydd Illtyd. With funding from Welsh Government and NRW the release of a mite that lives and feeds exclusively on *Crassula helmsii* was undertaken by scientists from CABI (Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International) in July, with monitoring ongoing.

The team has also provided INNS training days for community groups and BBNPA Planning Team.



Photo: *Crassula* mite release, Mynydd Illtyd (with the Centre for Agriculture & Bioscience International)

Removal of first ever American skunk cabbage recorded in the wild in BBNP.

70 attendees on INNS training sessions.

Usk Catchment Partnership

BBNPA has hosted and supported the establishment of an Usk Catchment Partnership in 2022, with the aim of bringing together relevant organisations to conserve and improve the health of the water environment. This was needed to address the deterioration in river water quality (particularly associated with phosphates) and will include a specific role for the development and implementation of a Nutrient Management Plan. Other measures for improving water quality and managing the impacts of climate change, such as natural flood management options, will also be pursued.

Partnership Terms of Reference agreed.

NRAP Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

Including actions:

To improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring.

To share evidence accessibly.

Examples

Measures and/or indicators monitored

Service Level Agreement with BIS

The Authority committed to a 3-year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with BIS Local Environmental Records Centre and continues to support its ongoing activities to promote biological recording. The Authority is represented on the Wales LERCs steering group and BIS data continues to be used to inform planning decisions. This service is especially important for assisting the Planning service in making sound ecological decisions.

3-year SLA with BIS agreed: 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2024
(replacing the former 1-year SLAs)

Research Partnerships

The Authority continues to consolidate active partnerships with research institutes and explore new opportunities. During the period, numerous research projects (undergraduate, post-graduate and doctoral), focussing on species and habitat-based distributions and ecological function have been completed or are underway.

In May 2022, an integrated research workshop was hosted to revise the BBNPA research programme, focusing on nature recovery, climate change, social inclusion and research issues.

Research workshop attended by 90+ delegates.
Updated BBNPA research programme.
KESS studentship supported (fire risk modelling)



Photo: Brecon Beacons Research Partnership, May 2022

Brecon Beacons Local Nature Partnership Nature Recovery Tool

A suite of ecological resilience and connectivity mapping was launched in 2021 for use by the Local Nature Partnership. It is hosted on an online data portal (The BBLNP Nature Recovery Tool) along with other

Local Nature Partnership Nature Recovery Mapping Tool launched.

ecological GIS-based maps and was delivered by a collaboration between two Welsh LERCs, overseen by a steering group. The evidence gathering exercise utilised available information to develop and apply NRW's "CuRVe methodology" at a more "local" scale.

Project report.
Launch event attended by 50+ Partners.

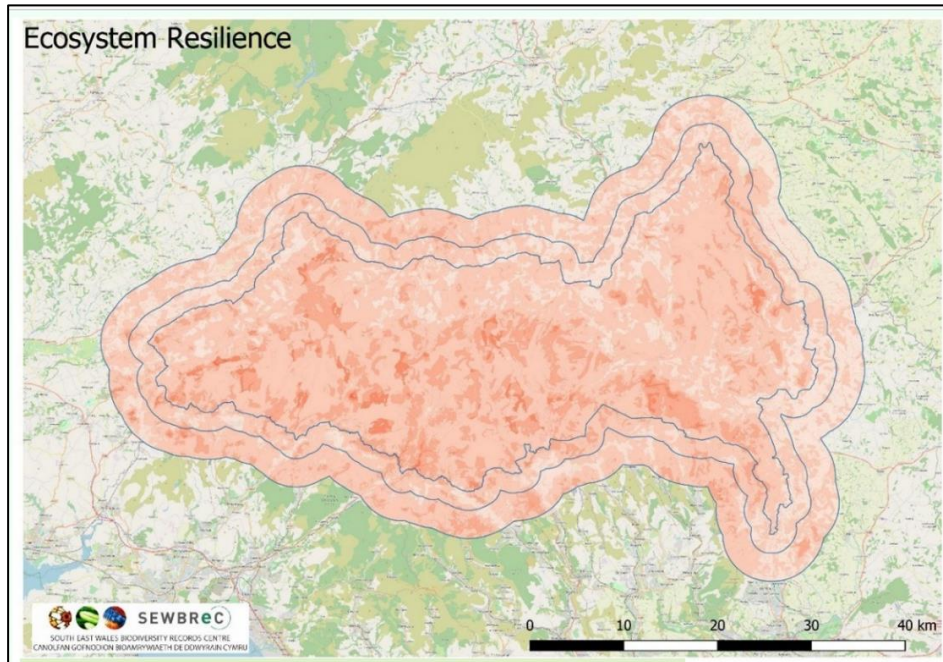


Photo: Overall Ecosystem Resilience map (available on online BBLNP Nature Recovery Tool)

Data and evidence building

Data and evidence building continues to be a key area of thinking and development for BBNPA. Ways of utilising the best available information to inform its work programmes continue to be explored; including remote sensing and drone technology, working with other Welsh designated landscapes as part of the Designated Landscapes Data and Monitoring Group, and supporting the development of new GIS-based decision support tools.

BBNPA has been assisting Environment Systems and Aberystwyth University to develop the Living Wales platform and Earth track survey app. It also commissioned with the NRW the development of a pilot decision support tool for fire prediction monitoring on Mynydd Du.

Moving forwards, consolidating its GIS capabilities may provide a way to manage ecological data more comprehensively, and track and monitor ecological and other outcomes for the Park as a whole.

Mynydd du pilot decision support tool for fire prediction modelling.
Landscape character assessment commissioned.
Ecology staff training for Earth track survey app.
GIS Support Officer appointed within Ecology Team.

NRAP Objective 6: Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery	
<i>Ensure governance for biodiversity within BBNPA.</i>	
Examples	Measures and/or indicators monitored
<p>A BBNPA Chief Executive, Executive Board and Authority Members are all in place and responsible for ensuring biodiversity action is planned and taken across the Authority.</p> <p>The Park's National Park Management Plan (Future Bannau), Local Nature Recovery Action Plan and Corporate Planning process, will together guide nature recovery within the Park.</p>	Executive board and plans in place.
<i>Provide capacity for biodiversity.</i>	
Examples	Measures and/or indicators monitored
BBNPA have both specialist Planning Ecologist and non-Planning Ecologists whose expertise can be drawn upon both internally and externally. <i>See NRAP Objective 1 for more details.</i>	<i>See NRAP Objective 1</i>
Volunteers are a crucial part of the BBNPA team, and volunteer participation in biodiversity projects is encouraged and supported by the NPA, led by a Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteers have amassed many hours of work over the last period supporting works including upland path and peatland restoration, peatland condition surveys and supporting the INNS programme (including 91 volunteer days this period at Cwm Bwchel assisting Himalayan balsam control).	<i>Volunteer hours – NPA Volunteer Coordinator working on new way to record these.</i>
<p>Inter disciplinary support and compliance is promoted and supported across the Authority's remit. For example, as part of the Park's draft Historic Environment Action Plan, objectives and ambitions have been included which promote an understanding of the links between cultural and natural ecosystems.</p> <p>Biodiversity action is enabled by many teams across the Park, working alongside the Ecology Team and whose resource, knowledge and "on the ground" local relationships are crucial to delivering nature recovery goals. The Warden service is routinely involved with practical habitat works (with a focus on the BBNPA estate) and works closely with local communities and educational groups. Equally the Communities, Education, Heritage, Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark teams and Visitor Services support biodiversity messaging and deliver various initiatives which have a biodiversity component at their core.</p>	<p>Grazing Plan produced to dually benefit the biodiversity and historic environment of Garn Goch Hillfort and Common.</p> <p>Historic Environment Plan inclusive of biodiversity measures.</p> <p>Veteran Tree Volunteer Survey group established.</p> <p><i>See Highlights section of report</i></p>



Photo: National Park Youth Ambassadors



Photo: Natural art with the Education Team – a cased Caddis fly creation

and Appendix 1 for further details.

Support biodiversity action through funding and/or partnerships.


Examples

Measures and/or indicators monitored

Brecon Beacons Local Nature Partnership

The Authority is a core part of the Local Nature Partnership and hosts a Local Nature Partnership Projects Officer (currently funded through WG Local Places for Nature Funding), who supports the work of the Local Nature Partnership (and its 25+ members) in delivering NRAP goals. The Authority engages with and supports multiple local and national environmental Partners and other stakeholders across its activities and projects.

Active Local Nature Partnership with 25+ members.
Multiple engagement sessions with partners and

 <p><i>Photo: Brecon Beacons Local Nature Partnership film contributors</i></p>	<p>stakeholders as part of Future Beacons development.</p> <p>BBLNP short film launched, e-mail newsletters.</p>
<p>Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)</p> <p>The Sustainable Development Fund directly supports biodiversity-based projects and supports local communities to take action for biodiversity. Funded projects have included training volunteers to establish a butterfly monitoring transect as part of habitat management on The Allt, support for Himalayan balsam control in the East of the Park at Cwm Bwchel, Pine Marten Restoration, tree planting on the Sawdde, Bat roost maintenance with the Vincent Wildlife Trust and community projects in Talybont and the Amman Valley.</p>	<p>10 SDF grants have provided, totalling over £54k to projects with a biodiversity focus.</p>
<p>Community Nature Recovery Grants (CNRG)</p> <p>Thanks to LNP Cymru Projects funding, this small grant scheme was established in 2021/22. Grants of up to £250 were available to local nature recovery projects and has provided a valuable engagement tool and means of supporting local action. The grant has continued into 2022/23 thanks to other funding.</p>	<p>14 grants awarded 2021/22 to a diversity of projects (totalling £7k).</p> <p>Joint SDF and CNRG fundraising Q&A online session delivered.</p>
<p>Review of s6 duty</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Highlight here key issues regarding the operation of the s6 duty in your organisation, and the change this has engendered in delivery of biodiversity action, which should then be reflected in your section 6 plan</i> • <i>If the review is not taking place at this point, the report should note how and when this will be conducted and how the review will be incorporated into the s6 plan.</i> 	

The review of the Section 6 duty will be undertaken as part of the NPA's Corporate Plan and Future Bannau action planning process. The Authority's ambition is to establish an integrated reporting and review mechanism for the NPMP, WBFGA, Section 6/NRAP and Corporate Plan.

Since the last report, a joined-up monitoring and evidence gathering system (working across the Authority's plans and activities) remains an area where there is work to do. The development of the new National Park Management Plan provides an opportunity to align planning, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms across the Authority's work (alongside the development of measurable outcomes and clear indicators). This will enhance future Section 6 reports and help to more routinely demonstrate how the many biodiversity activities are amassing and impacting on nature recovery goals, within the National Park.

Appendix 1 – Examples of biodiversity related actions undertaken by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, 2020-2022

Available upon request.