



The Usk Valley from Tor y Foel

# Guiding Principles

This chapter presents a series of guiding principles that have been fundamental to the development of the vision, aims, strategic objectives and actions included in this Plan. These are the central threads running throughout the Management Plan that bind it together. These guiding principles should be reflected in the delivery of the outcomes detailed herein. They address the delivery process just as much as they do the proposed outcomes.

## 6.1. Sustainability

Actions taken to meet humanity's needs today should not compromise the needs of future generations. Sustainability is about respecting the limits of the planet's natural resources, its environment and its biodiversity whilst having regard for social and economic concerns. The two statutory purposes for which National Parks are designated - conserving and enhancing their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public - are inextricably linked to the principle of sustainability. But, this relationship does not make the task of putting sustainability into practice in today's global society any less challenging.

Broad-scale drivers of change such as global population growth, climate change, fossil fuel depletion, water pollution and acid deposition exacerbate regional and local concerns. Closer to home the important issues include changing agricultural policies and practices, social inclusion, farm diversification, affordable housing, alternative energy options and disabled access to the countryside. Goals, objectives and actions, must be designed to operate at the scale most likely to address each problem. Broad-scale issues such as climate change require international action but can be addressed within the Park via landscape-scale actions. Upland and common land management techniques designed to deal with the predicted effects of climate change will be most effective, but they will require collaboration among multiple stakeholders to ensure their success. Local issues such as

affordable housing may be better addressed on a site-by-site approach involving local communities, Housing Authorities and relevant non-profit organisations. Biodiversity must be considered on landscape or larger scales, involving National Park networks and the collaborative efforts of multiple agencies and organisations.

The Brecon Beacons National Park must be managed in such a way that promotes the essence of this idea of sustainability. Sustainability is essential in order to provide future generations with a National Park that can, at the very least, be enjoyed and utilised as it is today. To achieve this, the various needs of those enjoying, living and working in the Park must be integrated with the requirements of the National Park's special environments and resources.

A sustainable transition into the future means the National Park Management Plan will be in keeping with this sustainability concept. To facilitate this, the Management Plan is subject to appraisal in order to assess potential social, economic and environmental impacts resulting from proposed aims, goals, policies and actions. Every attempt is made to ensure the correct balance exists between pressures and needs, conservation and enhancement and opportunities and enjoyment.

## 6.2. Community Engagement

Of course, the Park cannot be managed sustainably without active involvement from local people. Indeed, Category V protected area management principles (see Annex 4) state that "*management must be undertaken with and through local people, and mainly for and by them.*"<sup>15</sup> Reference to local people here includes the wider community in and around the Park as well as others who have a keen interest in it. The BBNPA and

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15. Phillips, A. 2002. The World Conservation Union Management Guidelines for IUCN Category V Protected Areas: Protected Landscapes/Seascapes No. 9. World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cardiff University, UK.

## *“Breathing space close to home for those who live in the Park and for those in the industrial valleys”*

other statutory or governing bodies have an obligation to facilitate local involvement in shaping management decisions. Likewise, local people have a responsibility to be actively involved in the management process, in other words to take responsibility for the Park. All stakeholders play an important role in delivering Park objectives.

This cooperative approach to managing the Brecon Beacons National Park is reliant upon:

- Informed stakeholders who are interested in the Park and wish to build their capacity to engage in decision making;
- Providing opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in shaping management decisions and making them aware of these opportunities (e.g., area advisory forums);
- Keeping stakeholders informed of progress made against the Plan;
- Working with a representative cross-section of stakeholders;
- Continued encouragement and support to get local communities actively engaged in initiatives in the Park’s management and/or for the benefit of the wider community; and
- Open, transparent and accountable procedures based on democratic principles.

This document is a product of these principles in action.

### **6.3. Social Inclusion**

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) envisions that the three Welsh National Parks will be enjoyed and cherished by a full cross section of society. This requires the relevant NPAs and their partners to engage more effectively with the socially and physically disadvantaged, ethnic minorities, urban communities, children and other groups which have not



**Disabled ramblers excursion on Mynydd Illtyd**

traditionally enjoyed the Parks. Naturally though, the BBNPA and its partners will show no bias towards any particular group and does not wish to disadvantage one party to the benefit of another.

In 2005 the three Welsh National Park Authorities agreed to a strategy for furthering social inclusion in all aspects of their work. The strategy recognizes that NPAs can promote social inclusion only within the context of their statutory purposes and duty, and that detailed action plans will vary among parks. With these qualifications in mind, the strategy outlines three key aims that each NPA can embrace to promote social inclusion in the exercise of their purposes, duty and delivery of services. These are to:

- Adopt a cross-cutting theme across all NPA activities that recognises the complex and multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion (i.e., groups or individuals that may be excluded from opportunities by a range of interlinked factors, including economic, perceptual and/or physical factors), and seeks to promote social inclusion in all the NPA’s work;
- Foster the economic and social well-being of local communities and seek to reduce social exclusion due to poverty, lack of employment, lack of services, poor health, disability, lack of education, psychological and cultural barriers or other disadvantage and work specifically with excluded groups and with partner organisations to these ends; and

- Broaden access for the wider community of people of Wales, the UK and beyond, who may be excluded from the understanding or enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks as a result of the barriers listed above.

Further to these aims, WAG emphasises an additional three points for the NPAs to consider in the context of social inclusion:

1. That the Parks are there for everyone to enjoy. Whilst the Assembly Government wants the NPAs to reach out to a wider cross section of society, this should be undertaken on the basis that people from all walks of life should be encouraged and made to feel welcome in these special areas.
2. That the Parks' special conservation and other features mean that visitor numbers will need to be effectively managed. Not all parts of the Parks may therefore be equally accessible - or appropriate for recreational activities - throughout the year. The joint NPA/Visit Wales initiative on sustainable tourism can play a part here.
3. That, as noted in the vision, each of the Parks is close to important urban communities and has significant potential to enrich lives.<sup>16</sup>

These aspirations for social inclusion are reflected in the vision statement for Brecon Beacons National Park, and, consequently, social inclusion is one of the guiding principles underpinning the policies emanating from this Management Plan.

#### 6.4. Cohesive Partnerships

Sustainable management of the National Park involves a comprehensive understanding of a wide range of natural and cultural factors as well as an understanding of the inter-

<sup>16</sup> WAG. 2007. Policy Statement for the National Parks and National Park Authorities in Wales.



Guided walks for partially sighted

relationships between them. No single entity, can become expert in all facets of Park management; nor can any one agency or organisation act alone without affecting the actions of others. The demands associated with policy agendas continue to increase, whereas the resources (time, money and personnel) necessary to meet rising demands do not. Consequently, partnership working is essential for effective, long-term management of the National Park.

To ensure that the Park is managed sustainably and to facilitate delivery of the Park's statutory purposes and duty, its stakeholders must maintain close and effective partnerships. Section 62 (2) of the Environment Act 1995 places a general duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to the statutory purposes of the UK National Parks in taking decisions or in carrying out work within or near to the Park. The BBNPA's relevant partners include any Minister of the Crown, any public body, any statutory undertaker and any person holding public office. This duty highlights the importance of maintaining partnerships between these bodies. Whilst the BBNPA already delivers much of its work in partnership with these interests, WAG is keen for the effective application of the Section 62(2) duty to help underpin even stronger partnership working - recognising that the Park is a significant asset for Wales and the UK and not the sole responsibility of any one statutory body.



Lay-by near Storey Arms



View near Crai

## 6.5. Integrated Management

Traditionally, conservation and protected areas management have been carried out in a fragmented or isolated manner. In the past, wildlife management often has been focused on species conservation without due regard to landscape and ecosystem processes. Woodlands and wetlands have not been considered as vital components of agriculture. Interpretation and education have been seen merely as “add-ons” to resource conservation and planning services rather than integral to holistic resource management.

This disjointed approach to conservation and resource management is not sustainable. All the components of the natural and cultural environments are interdependent. Soil erosion in the BBNP uplands not only affects the immediate environment but also influences water quality and quantity in the South Wales Valleys, for example. Scenarios such as this have even greater implications for the Park and its surroundings in light of climate change predictions.

The good news is that things are changing. The EU's Water Framework Directive requires European countries to take an integrated approach to river basin management, for example.

This system is more in tune with natural drivers of change, and can be used to consider issues in addition to water, promoting active partnerships across political boundaries. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places public bodies, including the BBNPA, under a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. For the National Park, this duty extends beyond nature conservation to include planning services, tourism, outdoor recreation, community well-being and other focal areas. Likewise, WAG is taking steps to support integrated management through the old Tir Gofal and Tir Cynnal agri-environment schemes and the new Glastir agri-environment scheme, assisting the Park in achieving its overall conservation aims. Other international, national and regional policies and plans are following suit.

Even these agri-environment schemes are only a part of the solution. The Park's principal landowners and managers are farmers; therefore, viable, sustainable farming must be considered more holistically. Farming is integral to the long-term maintenance of the Park's special qualities and needs to be recognised and supported as a keystone in the long-term sustainability of the Park.

Local implementation of integrated management strategies can prove challenging, particularly since the political and economic infrastructure do not encourage this mindset and indeed are inconsistent in the long term. Integration requires that partners work together more closely, think more holistically, manage across political boundaries to take account of functional components of the landscape (e.g., catchments) and foster active community participation in local resource issues. These ambitions can best be achieved through the implementation, research and monitoring of well-designed demonstration projects. This approach allows the BBNPA, its partners and local communities to experiment with innovative solutions to practical problems in a controlled fashion - solutions that help local communities meet their energy needs, adapt to climate change, develop sustainably and simultaneously enhance biodiversity, for instance. In so doing, the Brecon Beacons National Park will lead the way by example whilst satisfying WAG's keen interest to have the Welsh National Parks explore and exemplify best management practices for Wales.

The Park's natural and cultural resources also extend beyond its administrative boundaries, for example through the flow of drinking water in rivers to communities downstream from the Park. Consequently, integrated management also implies reaching beyond the Park's borders to include communities and resources that affect or are affected by Park management. Consideration of the Park's "catchment" will ensure sustainable management of these resources and continued provision of benefits to the wider community.

The BBNPA is working closely with partners to facilitate integrated management of the Park and its resources. This Plan is designed to promote these endeavours.

## 6.6. Regeneration

The regeneration of communities, whether urban or rural, is central to wider economic, environmental and social



Farmed landscape, Central Beacons

development. This plan is designed to promote the principles of regeneration, with many of the different sections contributing strategies and policies that support regeneration compatible with the National Park designation.

The regeneration of an area does not apply solely to aesthetics. There is a genuine need to build communities that are economically competitive, socially inclusive and where people want to live, invest and enjoy their leisure. A key factor in achieving sustainable communities in the Brecon Beacons is the distinctiveness of the area, and the strong "sense of place" of individual settlements. The physical regeneration of the built and natural environment in these settlements can generate community and business confidence required to help the local economy function effectively, and in turn retain and attract people and investment. Regeneration of an

*“A cultural landscape where history, people, culture and activity are obviously linked”*



Brecon & District Male Choir



A community meeting



Brecon Food Festival

area needs a long term, coordinated plan. Such investment also requires the support of the local community to be fully effective. This, in turn, requires effective partnerships and support networks to enable local capacity building, helping local people to develop skills and build confidence. The aim is on improving not only the physical appearance but the community spirit and sense of place to make settlements sustainable in the future.

Rural regeneration has distinctive characteristics. Rural areas often suffer from the loss of local services, including the closure of schools, hospitals, post offices, shops and pubs, and the loss of public transport. Sometimes this is associated with changes to the age and social mix of village residents. Rural regeneration may aim to improve rural settlements by reducing migration through enhancing the access of local communities to services and facilities. Regeneration does not have to be large scale. Small projects in towns and villages are often effective when combined with physical regeneration of buildings, public spaces, and community facilities and the conservation of local distinctiveness. Such small-scale projects can combine physical regeneration with community engagement, social inclusion and local enterprise initiatives.

Communities, including town and community councils and voluntary organisations, have a large part to play in regeneration. They can prioritise how resources are used locally as well as help create a sense of place by promoting locally distinctive events. This all adds to an area's appeal and enriches the community. Community groups can also encourage business initiatives which help greatly with the regeneration of an area by creating jobs, with any outsourcing often done locally keeping money in the area. Communities may also choose to apply to grant schemes sponsored by government departments and other agencies to fund local regeneration projects. Ultimately, many options are available to local communities that will enhance the local sense of place and their well-being. This Plan helps build a solid foundation for doing so.



Talgarth

Local regeneration projects can deliver many of the themes in this plan:

- Regeneration can help settlements become more sustainable; by local capacity building and increasing their appeal, new residents are likely to be attracted to the area, and out-migration of existing residents can be reduced;
- The BBNPA has a duty to those living in the Park and not just those visiting; regeneration has a large part to play in social inclusion, helping those living in the Park to access services and facilities;
- Regeneration schemes are rarely achieved through one agency or body acting alone; it takes a number of agencies working together combining their resources to produce successful outcomes.

Regeneration schemes utilising these principles are currently being developed in and around the National Park. For example, the Heads of the Valleys area, including the communities in the south of the Brecon Beacons, is designated by the Welsh

Assembly Government as a Strategic Regeneration Area. In addition, the Wales Spatial Plan, in setting a strategic context for development and regeneration activity, recognises Brecon as a primary key settlement to be developed and as a tourism focus, while Crickhowell, Hay-on-Wye and Talgarth are also identified as key settlements. Regeneration proposals for any area need to align the various regionally agreed priorities with the needs of the local communities. With their wide range of powers and responsibilities, Unitary Authorities will normally be expected to play a leading role in larger initiatives. The BBNPA also plays a valuable role, reflecting the Park's purposes, duty and special qualities. For example, the Authority already funds small community based projects through the Sustainable Development Fund. There is also a role for the Local Development Plan with its integrated policies which balance new housing allocations, affordable housing and employment land requirements. It includes policies for the use of planning obligations which can contribute to environmental, social and sustainable economic initiatives as long as they are compatible with the National Park designation.