BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Telephone: (01874) 624437

Plas y Ffynnon
Cambrian Way
Brecon
Powys
LD3 7HP

Dear Member

A meeting of the **STRATEGY AND POLICY COMMITTEE** will be held in **THE MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM, PLAS Y FFYNNON, CAMBRIAN WAY, BRECON on 29TH APRIL 2005 at 10.00am**   when your attendance is requested.

Yours sincerely

CHRISTOPHER GLEDHILL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Cllr Mrs M Tunnicliffe	Cllr A Baynham
Cllr J Morris (Deputy Chairman)	Cllr G Thomas
Cllr P Ashton	Cllr P Hopkins
Cllr Mrs K Silk	Cllr M Reece
Cllr E T Morgan	Mr P Seaman
Cllr Mrs M Morris	Mrs I Evison
Cllr K Pathak	Mrs J Charlton
Cllr W Powell	Mrs M Taylor
Cllr E Williams	Mr J Suter
Cllr H Morgan	Mr M Thomas, MBE
Cllr A Breeze	Mrs P Thomas
Cllr A Carrington	Mr C Young

Fire Evacuation Advice

*In the event of a fire, please exit the building via the main staircase,
and assemble in the car park at Assembly Point 3*

Please note that this meeting will be followed by a meeting for all members with David Wilson from the Audit Office regarding the Planning Baseline Assessment. Communications - and that lunch will be provided .

AGENDA

1.0   CORRESPONDENCE

To receive and consider the attached schedule of correspondence and make any recommendations thereon. (Below).

2.0   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest from members relating to items on the agenda. Members' attention is drawn to the sheet attached to the attendance sheet and the need to record their declarations.

3.0   MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the meetings held on 21st January 2005 and to authorise the Chairman to sign them as a correct record (**Enclosure 1**).

4.0   PUBLIC SPEAKING

To give opportunity for members of the public to address the Committee in accordance with the Authority's Public Speaking Scheme.

5.0   SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: REVIEW OF STRATEGY *Richard Tyler*

To receive a presentation from the Sustainable Tourism and Recreation Officer on progress made under the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

a)   *Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications:*

b)   *Equality Issues:*

c)   *Sustainability Appraisal:*

d)   *Human Rights:*

e)   *Background Papers:*

6.0   WALKING/CYCLING STRATEGIES   *Peter Tyldesley/*
                                                                    Richard Tyler

6.1   Cycling Strategy 2001

This strategy envisioned that the Brecon Beacons would become the foremost cycling destination in South Wales. Four core thematic priorities are proposed for development plus a number of hard engineering route development priorities (mostly for partners to take forward).

Progress on the four themes has been:

- **Leisure Cycling (quiet country lanes)** Brecon Cycle Breaks project developed in 2003. Pack of routes published and sold through Information Centres. Accommodation and catering details included. Advertised and promoted with journalists in close partnership with Powys CC, Carmarthenshire CC (whose Twyi Valley Cycle Breaks project is largely in the National Park) and WTB. Brecon has been the best selling pack in Wales. More promotion is planned for 2005.

- **Family Cycling (off road)** Because of the off road nature of this product, it has not been possible to develop new routes ourselves. However Forestry Commission Wales has been active in this and continues to bring new routes forward. We see our role as supporting FCW and other partners in this theme and to promote the concept using their facilities.

- **Cycle Touring (point to point)**   This has received least attention as WTB particularly has not been promoting the concept, having analysed the value of the market further. However Sustrans has several long distance routes through the Park (including the Taff Trail//Lon Las Cymru) and both we and WTB have been promoting the use of these. An east-west route still seems feasible but awaits Sustrans developments.

- **Mountain Biking** A local partnership of public and private sector operators emerged in 2003 wanting to promote mountain biking in the area. Led by the NPA we developed a pack of 16 waymarked and researched routes, cleared by Area Managers and CCW for environmental sensitivities. A website was developed to promote this specific product (www.mtbbreconbeacons.com).

Progress on route development has been slower in view of the costs involved. Taff Trail West was investigated in some detail but match funding for Article 33 money proved difficult to find (project cost £700,000).   The riverside cycle route in Brecon developed by Powys CC does however contribute strongly towards this. The other major routes the partnership would like to promote are along the Upper

Swansea Valley and the Heads of the Valleys route but these are the responsibility of Sustrans and the Local Authorities involved.

All these cycling tourism products have been promoted via www.cyclebreconbeacons.com, an umbrella site developed specifically for this purpose as a satellite site from www.visitbreconbeacons.com.

Cycling has a bright future in the National Park. The tourism trade is beginning to take it seriously and several specialist cycling forms are springing up with NPA support and assistance. The key is to keep the momentum going, ensuring the different parts of the trade work together and letting visitors know about quite how good our cycling opportunities are.

Implications for RoWIP

Cycling only impacts on the RoWIP as far as off road cycling is concerned.
- Key mountain bike routes need to be identified and maintenance regimes developed.
- Existing and planned off road cycle routes need to be identified and planned for (family, touring and leisure routes as identified in the Strategy).

6.2   Walking Tourism Strategy

This strategy is in the final stages of development and will be brought to S&P in the near future. Its main thrust is to identify the key markets we need to plan for although they are more complex than the cycling markets. Many more people go walking whilst on holiday than go for a 'walking holiday' and this needs to be recognised in our access work as well as tourism information and marketing. In addition the use by walkers of public transport is becoming an increasingly important issue as is the deep involvement of local communities and the local tourism trade in walking development. Lastly we need to be aware of the economic development aspects of walking development so that we enable businesses to gain maximum advantage from walking whether they be accommodation operators or pubs and restaurants.

The key infrastructure implications of the above are:
- lowland routes are of key and increasing important (this is where the businesses are and where the less 'expert' walkers want to go – walking in an upland setting rather than over an upland landscape)
- that where we promote routes, whether ourselves or in partnership with commercial publishers, we make the maintenance of those routes and other key routes a high priority

6.3   Implications for RoWIP

The implications of the draft Walking Tourism Strategy needs further consideration by a range of officers and recommendations, particularly as to the implications for the RoWIP, brought to committee in due course.   The Tourism Strategy will inform rather than dictate the outcomes of the RoWIP which clearly has a wider brief and many more issues to resolve.

Work on the RoWIP has concentrated to date on the assessments that need to be made as part of the process. These consist of supply side assessments – a 100% condition survey of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network – and user assessments – surveys and questionnaires targeted at walking organisations, Community Councils and members of the public. As part of this process a Total Access Map has been produced, which brings together all the access opportunities within the Park on a single map. These access opportunities comprise the PROW network, Unclassified County Roads, permissive footpaths and bridleways under management agreements or Tir Gofal schemes, Open Access land and other Access land such as National Trust and Forestry Commission holdings.

The conclusion of the assessment phase of the work will be to analyse where the gaps are between user demand and the existing access opportunities. These gaps may take the form of "holes" in the network i.e. areas where there is demand but no routes exist, or where routes are not in sufficiently good condition to support the level of demand/use.

It is already clear that the existing delegation agreements with the Unitary Authorities will have to be reviewed. In 2004/5 the amount spent on PROW maintenance in the 3 largest constituent Authority areas compared to the sums received under the delegation agreements was as follows:

County	Amount Spent	Amount Received	Deficit
Powys	£45,000	£8,000	£37,000
Carmarthenshire	£6,000	£4,000	£ 2,000
Monmouthshire	£13,500	£8,000	£ 5,500

It is hoped that the RoWIP will identify those areas of the network that should be priorities for the allocation of resources for maintenance. Unless funding is significantly increased, it is possible that a 2-tier network could emerge with key routes, such as those around settlements and those promoted for recreation having a higher priority than those PROW that are not so well used. Under the delegated statutory responsibility for PROW, we cannot at present make this

distinction and have to respond to all PROW problems in the same way.

It is clear that the Walking Tourism Strategy will have an important role to play in this process of identifying priority routes.

a) *Financial, Staffing and Improvement Implications: No implications at this stage.*

b) *Equality Issues: No implications*

c) *Sustainability Appraisal: No implications*

d) *Human Rights: No implications*

e) *Background Papers: None*

Recommendation: To note the report

7.0 EUROPARC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CHARTER
Richard Tyler

This report will be forwarded to members before the meeting.

8.0 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE: AFFORDABLE HOUSING
Helen Noble/Rachel Willis

8.1 Introduction

Affordable housing in rural areas such as the Brecon Beacons National Park is coming very much to the fore and debate is taking place not only at a local and regional level but also at a national level. Many local planning authorities are taking this opportunity to look at their current mechanisms to develop policies that safeguard affordable housing in rural areas.

As members will be aware, we are currently working towards adopting a Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Members will also be aware that a significant amount of work has already been done on introducing a new policy to the UDP which will greatly strengthen our ability to negotiate for the provision of affordable housing on all sites, not just those which are allocated.

However, recent housing applications have highlighted the difficulties of policy implementation in this interim period before these emerging policies are formally adopted (currently anticipated to be end of 2006).

Therefore, it would appear to be appropriate for the National Park Authority to take a look at both existing adopted plan policies and also at the emerging policies from the UDP to see how we can manage this interim period in order to enhance our ability, as the local planning authority, to contribute to the provision of affordable housing.

8.2 Current Policy Mechanisms

Our current local development plan policy

This already allows negotiating on sites allocated in the Adopted Local Plan if "local need is proven by the evidence of an independent, verified local housing needs survey".

There is also the ability to allow affordable housing through the rural exceptions policy.

However the weakness of the adopted plan policy is that it provides no capacity to negotiate provision on non allocated sites. In light of the fact that the majority of sites in the National Park are small windfall and infill sites, this weakness becomes significant.

Our proposed new policy within the UDP

Introduces the ability to negotiate a **minimum** of 20% affordable housing on **all housing sites of 2 or more dwellings, where there is evidence of a proven need.**

Technical Advice Note 2 – Affordable Housing (TAN 2)

Establishes at a national level, the use of conditions and planning obligations as a legitimate means of achieving affordable housing.
.
A TAN is also a material consideration in the determination of an application.

A review of TAN2 is expected in May. Early indications are that this will significantly strengthen and support LPAs' role in negotiating affordable housing.

8.3 Possible Solutions to current policy gap

8.3.1 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG**)**

SPG is recognised as a useful tool in the provision of affordable housing. However, the guidance must be supplemental to an existing policy. Planning Policy Guidance and supporting case law is clear that

SPGs should not introduce new policies, thus circumventing the statutory Development Plan Process.

Given that the Adopted Local Plan period ends in 2006, Officers consider that an SPG supplementary to the UDP policy would be more effective. Otherwise we will be devoting significant time and resources to a document with a limited shelf life.

Serious consideration should therefore be given to whether the production of an SPG is the most prudent route at this stage in the UDP process. Consideration should be based on the following points:-

I. Resources in Strategy & Policy, which are already stretched, are currently dedicated to meeting the corporate objective of adopting the UDP by the end of 2006. If SPG is to be produced this will require the diversion of staff time and additional monies will need to be identified in the 06/07 budget to employ a specialised consultant.

II. Existing policy will be capable of implementation after the receipt of the inspector's report (anticipated June 2006). Production of SPG will take 6-8 months (Nov 2005/Jan 2006) and will itself require a consultation period. Even with an adopted SPG there will still be a considerable implementation gap.

III. It may be possible to implement the existing policy in advance of adoption. (See argument below) thus allowing earlier implementation of affordable policy than through a new SPG.

Given the arguments above, it would seem prudent to plan for the creation of SPG:-

a) based on UDP policy, and
b) to begin work after the Public Inquiry (Dec/Jan 2006), in order to make best use of Strategy & Policy's resources.

8.3.2. <u>Early implementation of existing mechanisms</u>

As the new UDP policy has moved through the Deposit stage to Pre-Inquiry Changes there has been a debate at a number of levels about the feasibility of implementing the emerging UDP policy prior to adoption in 2006.

However recent debate has provided the opportunity to conduct more detailed investigations into the practice of other local planning authorities and recent case law. This has resulted in greater clarity about the status of the emerging policy.

The information collected (which is set out below) has supported the view that the application of emerging USP policy prior to formal adoption is a feasible and appropriate solution.

Status of emerging policy

The extent to which emerging policy is capable of implementation is governed by a number of factors, including the existence of any objections to the policy. However the guidance is clear that "the nature of objections to the policy will also be an important consideration".

In light of the establishment in TAN2 of the principle of negotiation for affordable housing, no objections were received to the UDP policy that questioned the principle of negotiation, as clearly there is no scope to do this given that the principle has been accepted at a national level. Rather the objections are to the thresholds and levels of provision. These need not prejudice the Authority's ability to begin to negotiate an element of affordable housing where a need has been proven.

Demonstrating Existence of Need

A previous barrier to moving forward on TAN2 guidance has been the lack of evidence of need. However, this has moved on considerably since the adoption of the Local Plan, particularly in relation to those communities which are covered by the independent Rural Housing Enabler.

Community Strategies

The need to improve the provision of affordable housing is an objective supported by the Powys Community Strategy. This was a key part of Powys' argument to adopt their emerging UDP policy as an interim policy.

Moving current mechanisms forward

Given the points set out above, there is a clear argument to support the negotiation of an element of affordable housing on all sites, **prior to the adoption of the UDP policy.** However, the Authority needs to be able to demonstrate that:

- A need exists
- There is a link to community strategies
- An internal statement can be issued to reinforce what we can do

There are implications for the way in which Development Control carry out their negotiations on applications, particularly in relation to the ability to apply any interim statement retrospectively.

8.4   Conclusions

It is obvious that there is a need to manage the next 12 months with reference to our ability to advise ourselves and potential developers on affordable housing. Within the next 12 months we will have undertaken a Public Inquiry and hopefully have received the Planning Inspector's report. We are able to use the policy referring to affordable housing in the UDP based on TAN2 and the substance of objections to the emerging policy, and with the supporting evidence noted above. We have already established that we have a relevant policy on affordable housing and this can be further enhanced by developing Supplementary Planning Guidance. However, our priority is the successful completion of the UDP to adoption. Any work on the proposed Guidance will take a number of months to develop and should be based on the UDP. This work will be additional to the work we currently undertake. We will also need to investigate shifting resources to deliver a practical tool that will stand the test of time.

a)   *Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: If SPG is to be produced this will require the diversion of staff time and additional monies will need to be identified in the 06/07 budget to employ a specialised consultant.*

b)   *Equality Issues: None*

c)   *Sustainability Appraisal: The UDP is subject to an SEA*

d)   *Human Rights: None*

e)   *Background Papers: Consultation on TAN 2 (WAG)*

Recommendations

a) *That members note the current position with regard to our existing policies on affordable housing.*

b) *That an internal statement be issued offering advice on our current level of protection with regard to affordable housing and how our current policies can be supported by existing advice and guidance being issued by the Welsh Assembly Government through TAN2.*

c) *That Supplementary Planning Guidance be developed based on our current UDP policy on affordable housing at a time compatible with the UDP preparation process and subject to resources being made available.*

9.0   UPDATE ON STATE OF THE PARK REPORT AND THE NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN   *Helen Noble*

9.1   Introduction

Progress has been made on both the State of the Park Report (SoPR) and the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) through the NPMP working group meetings held on 10 February 2005 and 5 April 2005. Attached at **Enclosure 2** for members' information is a proposed schedule that outlines key work targets and dates to ensure the successful publication of both the SoPR and NPMP.

At the recent NPMP working group meeting it was agreed that Brecon Beacons NPA and CCW should work together to produce a SoPR and NPMP; this work will include looking at implementing an appropriate Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the NPMP. This is particularly good news for the Authority as it means that we can seek guidance throughout our process and further develop good working partnership and practices. Part of the NPMP process involves identifying the special qualities for the National Park and drafting a vision to head up the NPMP. Both these areas of work will need to be consulted upon. A review of the NPMP 2000 – 2005 will form the basis of an issue report and will look at the main issues and actions coming from the previous NPMP and how these actions will be taken forward. It is envisaged that the issue report, to be developed later in the year, will highlight the key issues and topic headings for the new NPMP.

9.2   State of the Park Report

Attached at **Enclosure 3** is a list of indicators for inclusion to the SoPR. It is proposed that the SoPR should follow the headings and sub headings as stated within Future Directions. Therefore the SoPR will have 8 headline indicators and approximately 2 indicators under each headline indicators, giving a total of 24 indicators.

A draft SoPR is due to be produced by October 2005 and will include an introduction, a park profile and indicators. Lead officers will be identified and appointed to collect indicator information. Again discussions are taking place with CCW on the proposed indicators for inclusion.

a)   *Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: **None***

b)   *Equality Issues: **None***

c)   *Sustainability Appraisal: **the key indicators will form part of the SEA.***

d)   *Human Rights: **None***

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                                                                     29th April 2005

e) ___Background Papers:___ *SoPRs from other National Park Authorities*

Recommendation: Members are requested to approve the list of indicators for inclusion in the State of the Park Report.

9.3 National Park Management Plan

Again, this document, in principle, will have the same headings as listed in Future Directions. This is to develop the links and integration of the SoPR, the NPMP and other strategic documents.

Key areas of the work include drafting a vision, working closely with CCW on how we will implement a SEA, producing a comprehensive list of consultees and ensuring that our S62 (2) responsibilities are addressed within the NPMP. Under Section 62 (2) of the Environment Act 1995 relevant authorities have a duty to 'have regard to' the purposes of the National Parks when carrying out their work. This responsibility and compliance needs to be reflected in the NPMP.

10.0 CLIMBING HIGHER: SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION IN WALES

Christopher Gledhill

Members' attention is drawn to the Welsh Assembly document, Climbing Higher (launched in July 2003), the executive summary of which is attached at **Enclosure 4.**

Discussions are currently taking place between the three Welsh Parks about the theme for this year's National Park stand at the Royal Welsh Show, and it is suggested that with its emphasis on social inclusion, the document might provide a theme.

It is proposed that a more detailed discussion about this take place at the Strategy and Policy Workshop on 1st July, part of which will be a field trip.

11.0 THEME FOR WANPA SEMINAR: NOVEMBER 2005

Christopher Gledhill

Background

The organisation and hosting of the WANPA Members' Seminar rotates around each Welsh National Park on a three year basis. This year it is the responsibility of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. The WANPA Executive has already agreed to a changed format to facilitate more effective member engagement.

Members' views are sought on the establishment of a small group of members and officers to plan the detail of the seminar.

Seminar

The WANPA Seminar theme has been agreed as 'Vibrant Sustainable Communities'. It will be held in the Manor Hotel, Crickhowell (with accommodation also booked at the Bear Hotel) from the evening of Wednesday 2nd November 2005 to lunchtime on Friday 4th November. Accommodation, conference facilities and translation facilities have been booked. The final day would look at some projects on the ground. On the 3rd members would have the opportunity to discuss and highlight the key issues and actions necessary to facilitate vibrant sustainable communities.

Member Involvement

This is a members' seminar and it is important that members have an input into it.

a) *Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: The costs of the seminar will be divided between the three Parks.*

b) *Equality Issues: None*

c) *Sustainability Appraisal: None*

d) *Human Rights: None*

e) *Background Papers: None*

Recommendation: That members agree to establish a member/officer working group to plan and implement the WANPA 2005 Members' Seminar.

12.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Such other business as is, in the opinion of the Chairman of such urgency as to warrant consideration.

SCHEDULE OF CORRESPONDENCE

1. To receive apologies for absence

2. Such other correspondence as, in the opinion of the Chairman, is of such urgency as to warrant consideration.