

**Brecon Beacons National Park Authority**

**Annual Report**

**on the**

**Corporate Plan 2016/2017**

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**Draft 5, 03/11/2017**

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1. **Foreword**

Welcome to our Annual Report for the last financial year – April 2016 to March 2017, which looks back over how we performed against our improvement objectives in four priority areas.

I am proud to note that we have made significant progress across those four priority areas – historic environment and cultural heritage, landscapes and biodiversity, recreation and communities and businesses.

Through successful innovative and collaborative working with many partners, including Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water we have exceeded our own expectations; resulting in sustainable land management schemes and the creation of the Black Mountains Land Use Partnership.

Aligning ourselves firmly with the delivery of the Welsh Government’s Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, we have engaged with young people and encouraged them to visit our National Park. Our Geocaching Project has provided young people, and in particular girls, with the opportunity to grow in confidence and we have attracted further funding from Sport Wales in 2017/18.

We have also delivered over 27,000 hours of direct learning experiences to young people and have taken over 7,000 learners into the National Park, providing inspiration for future generations whilst also developing forthcoming National Park ambassadors.

Our Heritage Lottery Fund Skills in Action training project concluded its second phase with participants going on to employment or further education. We are delighted that the third cohort started in September 2016.

In areas where we have not made the progress we would have liked we have stated our reasons for this and how we have reprioritised work to meet this challenge.

I would like to thank our many partners and also pay tribute to all our volunteers who allow us to successfully deliver our objectives, I find you all truly inspirational.

Best wishes



Melanie Doel

Chairman

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

1. **Introduction**
	1. Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is pleased to publish its Annual Report on the Corporate Plan for the year ending 31st March 2017. The Plan itself was published in April 2016 and can be found a:

<https://governance.beacons-npa.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13310> )

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* 1. This report considers the National Park Authority’s progress against the improvement priorities identified in the Corporate Plan. The report also sets out the Authority’s contribution to delivering on the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and to discharging its general duty under the Welsh Government’s Local Government Measure.
	2. The Corporate Plan presents the annual view of delivery against the National Park
	Management Plan 2015-2020, which sets out an ambitious programme of work with a fifteen year horizon.
	3. The National Park Management Plan is the central reference point for all our strategic documents and was produced in consultation with stakeholders, landowners and communities throughout the Park. In 2011, the Authority aligned its Corporate Goals and objectives, which set the context for the Corporate Plan, with the 6 Management Plan themes. These are:



* 1. The six themes from the Management Plan are encompassed by four improvement priorities for action within the Corporate Plan 2016/17 and these are the main subjects of this report:

|  |
| --- |
| 1. The Park’s **historic environment & cultural heritage** will be conserved, enhanced and promoted |
| 2. The National Park’s **landscapes and biodiversity** will benefit from broad scale targeted and promoted conservation projects |
| 3. Visitors from a wide range of backgrounds will have access to a sustainably managed range of **recreation opportunities** |
| 4. The vitality & viability of **communities and their businesses** will be supported with the aim of developing a sense of shared responsibility |

* 1. You can find out more information about the National Park Authority and download this
	report from our website at www.beacons-npa.gov.uk or you can ask for a paper copy by
	ringing 01874 620 465.
	2. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is required to
	comply with the following Welsh Language standards: <http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/wpcontent/uploads/Welsh-Language-Standards-in-English.pdf> and it publishes a report annually on its performance in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme, this report is available here: <http://www.beaconsnpa.gov.uk/the-authority/who-we-are/our-policies-and-procedures/welsh-languagescheme/monitoring-reports-for-the-welsh-language-scheme/>
	3. If you would like any additional information on the Improvement Plan or would like to
	suggest areas of work where we require improvement please write to Mr John Cook, Chief
	Executive, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon
	LD3 7HP, Powys or email improvements@beacons-npa.gov.uk.
1. **Reporting on Delivery**

Our performance against the four improvement priorities is set out in tables below. Some activities span multiple years and where this is the case the target will be to progress the activity to a certain point within the year. The actual results will show whether we have achieved what we set out to do and these use a colour coding system as follows:

Green: achieved or exceeded target

Amber: fell just short of target

Red: fell considerably short of target

**3.1 Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage**

**Improvement Priority 1: *Through effective partnership, facilitation, practical action and the planning function the Park’s historic environment and cultural heritage will be conserved, enhanced and promoted.***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What we set out to achieve** | **What we achieved** |
| **Action or Measure** | **Target** | **Actual** | **Commentary** |
| We will protect and enhance the Park's archaeology by undertaking positive conservation measures on at least 2 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. | 2 | **4** | Wardens delivered conservation work at Allt yr Esgair, Fan Foel, Blaenavon and Pen Twyn |
| We will conserve and enhance the Park's most vulnerable listed buildings by reducing the amount of buildings on the ‘Buildings at Risk’ register by 3. | 3 | 0 | This action has been postponed until Q4 2017/18 due to long term staff absence. |
| We will respond in a timely manner to at least 75% of consultations on planning, listed building consent and other relevant applications  | 75% | 38% | This target has not been achieved due to a significant reduction in overall capacity caused by long term staff absence. Contingency measures were put in place and performance has since picked up. |
| We will review Brecon, Talgarth and Hay-On-Wye Conservation Areas.  | 3 | 3 | Complete - Crickhowell and Llangattock to be progressed in 2017/18 as well as examining the potential for new Conservation Areas at Myddfai and Llanfrynach. |
| We will consider the merits of at least 2 other potential Conservation Areas within the Park area  | 2 | 2 | Myddfai and Llanfrynach Community Councils have been approached by the Senior Heritage Officers. Public meetings will be held following the elections in May 2017. |
| We will gain ‘Delegation’ from Cadw which would enable us to determine listed building consent applications relating to Grade II Listed Buildings in a more timely manner, without referring our recommendation to Cadw.  | Complete | Completed | Delegation was granted in September 2016 |

**3.2 Landscapes and Biodiversity**

**Improvement Priority 2: *Through effective partnership, facilitation, practical action and the planning function the National Park’s landscapes and biodiversity will benefit from broad-scale targeted and promoted conservation projects***

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| --- | --- |
| **What we set out to achieve** | **What we achieved** |
| **Action or Measure** | **Target** | **Actual** | **Commentary** |
| Work with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales to create a **peatland restoration programme: Develop Payments for Ecosystem Services Prospectus** | Progress | Progressed beyond expectation | Two landscape-scale sustainable management schemes (SMS) have been submitted which contain feasibility studies for payment for ecosystem services (PES). The Authority has also supported the National Parks Partnerships in developing this work across the UK, and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water across Wales. |
| Work with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales to create a **peatland restoration programme: Submit expressions of interest for funding** | Complete | Completed | Two landscape scale sustainable management schemes (SMS), "Managing Resources Sustainably in the Black Mountains" and "Realising the Natural Capital of Welsh Peatlands", have been submitted within the year.  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Work with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales to maintain and grow at least two **strategic land management partnerships: Black Mountains Land Use Partnership** | Progress | Progressed | Scheme proposal submitted, required points of common interest and understanding agreed to allow goals and objectives to be defined. Authority established as secretariat and treasurer. Recognition of innovative and collaborative approach received from Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales. |
| Work with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales to maintain and grow at least two **strategic land management partnerships: Mynydd Du and Western Great Forest** | Progress | Progressed beyond expectation | We continued to deliver the Glastir Common Land Advanced elements under Service Level Agreements with the six Glastir Commons Assocations. We secured a renewed Section 39 management agreement with Dwr Cymru Welsh Water to manage its land comprising the Western Great Forest, included within which is the bog restoration project at Waun Fignen Felen. We also targeted Welsh Government grant funding towards access improvements at Llyn y Fan Fach. |

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| Work with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales to **maintain delivery of at least two integrated land management projects** | Progress | Progressed beyond expectation | We delivered collaborative landscape, habitat management, survey and monitoring and visitor management projects in all four focal areas: Mynydd Du, Waterfall Country, Llangasty - Caeau Ty Mawr and Black Mountains Land Use Partnership. These encompass several areas designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Areas of Conservation. |

**3.3 Recreation**

**Improvement Priority 3: *Visitors from a wide range of backgrounds will have access to a sustainably managed range of recreation opportunities***

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| **What we set out to achieve** | **What we achieved** |
| **Action or Measure** | **Target** | **Actual** | **Commentary** |
| We will ensure that visitors from a wide range of backgrounds have the opportunity to access and enjoy the National Park, by delivering a geo-caching project (Sport Wales Funded) to: |   |   | We engaged with young people who had been identified in the School Sports Survey by Sport Wales as physically inactive. They were "stretched" to cover longer distances than previously experienced. The opportunity to lead sections of the activity encouraged girls in particular to grow in confidence and physical literacy. Our Activity Leaders trained youth and community group leaders, followed by an initial inspiring Group visit to the National Park for Geocaching. We helped extend the programme to four neighbouring unitary authority areas, supporting groups to establish and use Geotrails. The project was granted an extension by Sport Wales for a third year for 2017/18. |
| young people | 300 | 304 |
| coaches | 30 | 54 |
|   |   |   |

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| **What we set out to achieve** | **What we achieved** |
| **Action or Measure** | **Target** | **Actual** | **Commentary** |
| We will sustainably manage the Rights of Way network for residents and visitors of all abilities and backgrounds by delivering at least 4 projects from the **Rights of Way Improvement Plan**.  | Complete | Completed | All projects completed by end March 2017. |
|  |  |  |  |
| We will aim to revise and update the Rights of Way and visitor management services: **Rights of Way finance review** | Progress | Progressed | Pending finalisation of the revised Rights of Way Delegation Agreements with five of the seven Unitary Authorities represented on the National Park Authority, negotiations have been successful in increasing unitary authorities' financial contributions, so that these are now slightly closer to meeting the full costs of RoW regulation and management in the BBNP. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **What we set out to achieve** | **What we achieved** |
| **Action or Measure** | **Target** | **Actual** | **Commentary** |
| We will undertake a Visitor Survey in 2016/2017 that will measure basic characteristics through to visitor motivation. | Progress | Progressed | Survey collected and analysed within the year, reported at committee in following performance year (27 April and 22 June). |

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| **What we set out to achieve** | **What we achieved** |
| **Action or Measure** | **Target** | **Actual** | **Commentary** |
| Welsh Government capital funded place-based approach at key locations within the National Park to undertake infrastructure enhancement work and associated project management activity: |   |   |   |
| Llyn y Fan Fach Access Improvements | Progress | Progressed | Quotes have been sought for some of the access track improvements. Major project delivery during 2017-18. |
| New Pay and Display machines at visitor centres. | Complete | Completed | New machines in place. |
| Pont ar Daf Landscape Improvements | Progress | Progressed | Project completion is dependent upon project brief from the landowner, National Trust, and is influenced by outcome of planning application for Pont ar Daf car park. |
| Pontneddfechan traffic management | Progress | Progressed | Cash will be offered to Neath Port Talbot to assist with verge side parking improvements. This forms part of wider efforts to review and improve visitor and traffic management here. |
| Upland Restoration Black Mountains | Complete | Completed | Works commissioned and completed by end March 2017. Works are a continuation of those funded under Nature Fund and Welsh Government Access Grants, including path construction and peat protection. The RDP Sustainable Management Scheme will also provide continuity. |

**3.4 Communities and Businesses**

**Improvement Priority 4: *The vitality & viability of communities and their businesses will be supported with the aim of developing a sense of shared responsibility. Work with the tourism sector will be particularly prioritised whilst understanding and awareness amongst visitors and residents will be promoted***

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| **What we set out to achieve** | **What we achieved** |
| **Action or Measure** | **Target** | **Actual** | **Commentary** |
| We will deliver 12,500 hours of participant learning (5,000 learners x 2.5 hours) | 12500 | 27628 | The Education Service saw over 7,000 learners in the National Park, delivering over 27,000 hours of direct learning experiences. Teachers reported that their learners were inspired by the National Park and that this supported learning outcomes.   |
| We will deliver learning experiences to 5,000 learners across the park  | 5000 | 7596 |
| We will evaluate the learning experiences through responses from teachers and learners (Goal 10 points on an 11 point scale) | 10 | 10 |
| We will provide opportunities for disadvantaged groups to visit the park through the Fairplay programme (6 groups a year from schools with 20% or more pupils on Free School Meals) | 6 | 9 | Our Fairplay programme continues to be oversubscirbed. The fund provides assistance with bus costs to the National Park for school visits (transport costs are the biggest barrier). Nine schools received funding this year, meaning 440 young people were able to visit and learn about the National Park who would not have been able to otherwise. |
| We will work with 3 communities of interest per year to deliver interpretation | 3 | 5 |  We exceeded our target by delivering to 5 communities of interest in Pontsticill and Waterfalls Country. |
| We will assist 4 schools in achieving the Ambassador Schools award  | 4 | 5 | The National Park Ambassador Schools programme continues to be popular with schools and a further 5 schools received the award this year. To see the project please view: http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/learning/ambassador-schools/  |
| We will publicise information about the National Park in 5 healthcare settings | 5 | 11 | Displays and National Park Map boards were put up in GP, hospital and physiotherapy waiting rooms to encourage practitioners and patients to connect with the National Park and make use of the landscape for health. |
| We will support 50 community resilience projects with Sustainable Development Funding and development officer advice & assistance | 50 | 80 | The Sustainable Development fund supported a wide variety of community-based projects in and around the Park. |
| **What we set out to achieve** | **What we achieved** |
| **Action or Measure** | **Target** | **Actual** | **Commentary** |
| We will maintain activity in Ambassadors, business training events and engaging with businesses by: |   |   |   |
| * certifying Ambassadors
 | 150 |  193 | Programme completed |
| * holding business focused training events
 | 22 |  25 | Actions include: destination newsletter; mountain bike development; training programme; strategy development; ambassadors; geopark conference |
| * engage with businesses
 | 500 | 683 |  Programme completed |

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| **What we set out to achieve** | **What we achieved** |
| **Action or Measure** | **Target** | **Actual** | **Commentary** |
| We will deliver a Heritage Lottery Fund Skills in Action Training Project. | 11 | 12 | The second cohort finished August 2016. All achieved their Level 2 Diploma in Work Based Environmental Conservation and a range of accredited practical skills qualifications. 92% year 1 & 2 trainees moved into employment, 4% into further education. The 3rd cohort of trainees started their year September 2016.  |
| We will deliver the Sustainable Development Fund to support community resilience, attracting match funding at a ratio in excess of 2:1 (£match funding:£SDF) | 2:1 | 7:1 | Over 15,000 volunteer hours, valued at £109,000 were contributed to projects. 7 jobs were created or protected on projects receiving grants in the year. All projects contributed to at least 3 Well-being of Future Generations Act Goals  |
| We will deliver a Volunteer Development programme to support the delivery of in excess of 10,000 volunteer hours of Brecon Beacons National Park Authority activity in 2016/2017. | 10000 | 14275 | Long standing and recently established Volunteer groups continued to be well supported by Volunteers from within and beyond the National park boundary. The Mynydd Illtyd Patrol volunteers were established to provide valuable visitor management on the common, including liaising with dog walkers to support good dog behaviour. |

1. **Conclusion**
	1. We have continued to make good progress in all four of the improvement priorities.
	2. Any issues that have arisen with delivery are relatively minor and within the normal bounds of operational activity, allowing them to be dealt with using conventional management controls such as reprioritisation or the reallocation of resources.
	3. This is the first year that the Authority has published an Annual Report rather than part 2 of its Business Improvement Plan. This current report represents something of a transitional arrangement towards a new way of reporting the Authority’s activities, framed within the overall strategy of the National Park Management Plan and aimed at delivering the Wellbeing of Future Generations Goals, as shown in the appendices to the Corporate Plan, through working in accord with the Sustainable Development principles.

**Statement of Responsibility**Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is responsible for preparing the
Improvement Plan, the information and the assessments laid out within it and the estimates on which they are based.
The Authority is also responsible for managing its performance improvements and the internal control measures from which the information and assessment in this Plan have been produced.
The Authority is satisfied that the contents of the Plan are in all material respects accurate and complete, realistic and achievable within the resources available.

**Appendix - National Parks Wales benchmarking**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **SNPA** | **BBNPA** | **PCNPA** |
| **Data** | **Annual**  | **Annual** | **Annual**  |
|   | **2016/17** | **2016/17** | **2016/17** |
|   | **Results** | **Results** | **Results** |
| a)     The percentage of major planning applications determined during the year within 16 weeks | 33% | 59% | 0 |
|   | (1/3) | (13/22) |   |
| b)     The percentage of minor planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks | 69% | 84% | 55% |
|   | (146/211) | (98/116) | (72/131) |
| c)     The percentage of householder planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks | 96% | 96% | 79% |
|   | (158/165) | (163/169) | (148/188) |
| d)     The percentage of all other planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks. | 78% | 96% | 74% |
|   | (118/151) | (272/283) | (87/117) |
|   |   |   |   |
| Average time taken to determine major planning applications | 158 days | 232 days | 220 |
|
| Average time take to determine all planning applications | 77 days | 74 days | 61 |
|
| Total number of decisions made contrary to officer recommendation  | 8 | 0 | 3 |
|
| The number of applications for non-material amendments (less than 28 days) |   |   |   |
| 26 | 44 | 33 |
| The number of applications for non-material amendments (over 28 days) |   |   | 3 |
| 5 | 1 |
| The number of dwellings granted planning permission: |   |   |   |
| Open Market | 36 | 273 | 48 |
| Affordable Housing | 17 | 72 | 17 |
|   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |
| The number of statutory pre-application advice requests responded in: |   |   |   |
| Less than 21 days | 109 | 0 |
| More than 21 days | 44 | 0 |
|   |   |   |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **SNPA** | **BBNPA** | **PCNPA** |
| **Data** | **Annual**  | **Annual** | **Annual**  |
|   | **2016/17** | **2016/17** | **2016/17** |
|   | **Results** | **Results** | **Results** |
| Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases, in days | 36 | 48 | 199 |
|
| Average time to resolve enforcement cases, in days | 545 | 366 | 284 |
|
| Number of cases investigated in: |   |   |   |
| 84 days or less | 124 | 145 | 148 |
| More than 84 days | 9 | 17 | 55 |
| Total number of enforcement cases investigated | 133 | 162 |   |
| 203 |
| Number of cases resolved in:  |   |   |   |
| 180 days or less | 98 | 89 | 110 |
| More than 180 days | 80 | 51 | 37 |
|   | 178 | 140 | 147 |
| Total number of enforcement cases resolved |
| The percentage of employees who leave the employment of the authority, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis. | 8.30% | 20.40% | 13% |
|
| The number of working days/ shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) authority employees lost due to sickness absence. | 8.17 days | 7.35 days | 7.82 days |
|
| The percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid within 30 days of such invoices being received by the authority. | 98.74% | 95.46% | 98.25% |
|
| Percentage of all planning applications determined within 8 weeks. | 80% | 91% | 76% |
| Number of direct volunteers | 131 | 160 |   |
| 1608 |
| (Recorded as Volunteer Days not based on number of volunteers – Discovery and Rangers Teams) |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **SNPA** | **BBNPA** | **PCNPA** |
| **Data** | **Annual**  | **Annual** | **Annual**  |
|   | **2016/17** | **2016/17** | **2016/17** |
|   | **Results** | **Results** | **Results** |
| Number of volunteers through third party groups | 240 | Not recorded |   |
|
|
| Number of listed buildings at risk rescued through NPA action during the year, as a % of the total number of listed buildings at risk in the National Park. | 0.33% | Unknown (survey not run) | PCNPA measures this as % of buildings at risk in the Park: 5.7% |
|   | 70/1225 |
| Number of complaints to the Ombudsman classed as maladministration. | 0 | 0 | - |
| Number of formal complaints received and recorded centrally | 12 | 24 | 10 |
|
| Number of training sessions made available to individual members |   |   | - |
| 6.61 | 6.65 |
|   |   |
| Average percentage of members attending training |   |   | 61% |
| 59% | 72% |
|   |   |