

**Brecon Beacons National Park Authority**

**Local Development Plan Policy 46**

**Non-Permanent Tourism Development  
Incorporating Low Impact Tourism Accommodation.**

**March 2015**

**Supplementary Planning Guidance**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is a special purpose Local Planning Authority (LPA) and therefore holds the responsibility of carrying out the statutory planning function for the National Park area.
- 1.2 The dual purposes of National Park designation are, as first set out in the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949 and updated by the Environment Act 1995:
- Conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
  - Promotion of opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.
- 1.3 Following a review in 1974 of the operation of the 1949 Act, led by Lord Sandford, an important recommendation emerged that became known as the Sandford Principle. This principle was enshrined in the 1995 Act, to the effect that where irreconcilable conflict arises between the two main National Park purposes, then the conservation of natural beauty should prevail over promotion of public enjoyment and understanding
- 1.4 The Authority is committed to supporting appropriate sustainable development to encourage economic and social well-being of its local communities. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Management Plan (2010 – 2015) aims to achieve this through its vision (LC4 and LC6) which identifies that the Park will support exemplar sustainable tourism. The Parks will continue to support the Sustainable Tourism Forum, for stakeholders to share best practice in sustainable tourism and advise Visit Wales.
- 1.5 Low Impact Tourist Accommodation (LITA) can be defined as development of tourist accommodation which, by virtue of its low or benign environmental impact, either enhances or does not significantly diminish, environmental quality and, as a consequence may be allowed in locations where conventional development is not permitted (derived S. Fairlie, 1996 definition for Low Impact Development).
- 1.6 This document sets out how the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority will seek to support low impact sustainable tourist accommodation to encourage “tourism to grow in a sustainable way and make an increasing contribution to the economic, social and environmental well-being of Wales” (PPW, Ed 6, 2014). The guidance note is intended to offer guidance in relation to Policy 46 which will assist all those involved in the formulation and determination of such proposals. Applicants are reminded that this document is not exhaustive and they are advised to consult all relevant policies within the Local Development Plan in designing their scheme.

## 2.0 Policy Context

- 2.1 The development plan for the area is the Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plan 2007-2022 (LDP) adopted on 17th December 2013.
- 2.2 Policy 46 of the LDP and the preceding paragraphs 7.8.5 set out the policy stance in relation to low impact development or more specifically low impact tourist accommodation. It seeks to control the impact that aspects such development will have on the landscape. The policy is set out in full below.

### **Policy 46**

#### **Non-permanent Holiday Accommodation**

***Development of non-permanent holiday accommodation will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where;***

- a. the applicant has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the NPA that the proposed development is fully integrated into the landscape by virtue of topography or surrounding land uses, particularly when viewed from public routes and vantage points outside of the site;***
- b. on-site facilities, including any accommodation for a site manager, washroom facilities, stores, retail outlets or similar, can be provided by the conversion of existing buildings if available;***
- c. the development will not be occupied as permanent residential accommodation and will be subject to a seasonal occupancy condition restricting the use of the site to certain periods throughout the year;***
- d. the proposed site will have an adequate means of access to and into the site that is capable of accepting the width of vehicles required for movement of the accommodation without detriment to highway amenity.***

- 2.3 Planning Policy Wales (PPW, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. 2014) defines sustainable development in Wales as that which enhances the economic, social and environmental well-being of people and communities, achieving a better quality of life for our own generations in ways which:
- Promote social justice and equality of opportunity; and
  - Enhance the natural and cultural environment and respect its limits – using only our fair share of the earth’s resources and sustaining our cultural legacy.
- 2.4 Sustainable development is closely aligned to the commitments to tackling climate change which is the Welsh Government’s approach to reducing the ecological footprint of Wales. Wales’ Sustainable Development Scheme sets out an ambition

for Wales to use its fair share of the Earth's resources, where, within a generation, our ecological footprint is reduced to the global average availability of resources – 1.88 global hectares per person. The current footprint shows that, if everyone on the Earth lived as we do, we would use 2.7 planets worth of resources. Reducing Wales' ecological footprint will require a large reduction in the total resources used to sustain our lifestyles. The policy and guidance set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) will make an important contribution to reducing our footprint, whilst delivering sustainable development and tackling climate change.

- 2.5 PPW (7<sup>th</sup> Ed. 2014) identifies one of the priorities for rural areas is to secure a thriving and diverse local economy where agricultural related activities are complemented by sustainable tourism and other forms of employment in a working countryside

### **3.0 Low Impact Tourist Accommodation within the Brecon Beacons National Park**

3.1 The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Local Development Plan (2013) seeks to support Low Impact Development (LID) and adopt a positive approach to emerging trends for low impact accommodation solutions (such as yurts, tepees and tree houses, see appendix 1). Appropriate proposals will be those which have minimal landscape and environmental impact and are capable of being removed without leaving a permanent trace.

- 3.2 The main features of Low Impact Development are:
- locally adapted, diverse and unique;
  - based on renewable resources;
  - of an appropriate scale and design;
  - visually unobtrusive;
  - enhances biodiversity and landscape;
  - increases public access to open space;
  - generates little traffic;
  - linked to sustainable livelihoods;
  - co-ordinated by a management plan. (Maxey, L. Dr, 2009)

All LITA proposals will need to demonstrate that they incorporate all of the above elements into their scheme.

3.3 The impact of all proposals on the landscape and surrounding community will be assessed under SPI, Policy 1. In addition, proposals for low impact developments will be required, in accordance with TAN 6, to provide a management plan which demonstrates how the proposal aims to mitigate impact on the environment, primarily relating to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, waste processing, expected life span of development, and remediation plans following life span of development (if applicable).

3.4 In all cases, the use of such structures for permanent residential occupancy will not be acceptable. Sites should remain available solely for the intended tourism purposes. Below is a list of matters that would require analysis when considering such development as part of an existing campsite

- Would the proposal lead to more permanent structures on the land as a result of the new structures (e.g. decking)?
- Would the proposal change the operational functions of the campsite beyond that of which is already granted through the land use planning for a particular campsite?
- Would the structures be removed from the campsite out of operating season?

3.5 One of the main policy considerations is the structures degree of permanency and whether or not it will be removed from the site out of season. As such careful

consideration should be made as to whether the scheme adheres to the principles of Low Impact Development, or whether it would be better assessed under policy 47 of the LDP (2013), which is intended to control development involving traditional forms of transient holiday accommodation (tents, trailers, caravans and campervans)

- 3.7 Careful consideration will need to be given to the appropriateness of the Design of the LITA, especially any support structures such as toilet and kitchen blocks and covered eating areas. In designing these elements within a LITA scheme applicants will be expected to seek to reinforce traditional and local distinctiveness appropriate to the location. Applicants are advised to consult the NPAs 'Landscape and Development Supplementary Planning Guidance' (BBNPA October 24<sup>th</sup> 2014, for guidance on developing a scheme appropriate to its landscape setting. <http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Landscape-and-Development-SPG-Adopted-October-2014.pdf>
- 3.8 Proposed LITA schemes should have minimal supporting infrastructure; for example access roads and tracks should be kept to a minimum; drainage facilities, electricity and water supplies should be kept to a minimum; fire pits, barbeque areas, and other incidental features should be integrated within the overall scheme design. In the determination of these types of applications all paraphernalia should be included within the plans and supporting documentation. The whole concept of these types of schemes is that they have little or no impact on the environment and preferably they should add enhancements to an environment.

#### **4.0 Information Required in Support of a Planning Application**

- 4.1 As part of any submission the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority would expect to be submitted a reasonable level of detail in order to allow a comprehensive consideration of the application details. Due to the complex nature of the planning application process applicants are encouraged to engage with the Authority through the paid pre-application service. This service will enable the identification at an early stage of the need for additional information and/or specialist input and assist in preparing such a proposal for formal application submission.
- 4.2 Guidance is offered by Welsh Government through document “applying for planning permission and other related consents” as to the level of detail that is required to be submitted on full applications, for this type of development proposal.
- 4.3 In addition to that detail the National Park Authority would expect the following documents to be submitted in support of any application:
- a) Landscape Visual Impact Assessment;
  - b) Landscape plan;
  - c) Biodiversity report;
  - d) Management Plan (shall include traffic, tourist activity, land management and remediation);
  - e) Full details of all associated paraphernalia with a proposed scheme.

## 5.0 Planning Conditions

- 5.1 Conditions will be used to ensure; that the original use is retained, that suitable seasonal opening restrictions are applied where planting schemes make this necessary, any planting or construction of boundary features required by the National Park Authority will be undertaken prior to any accommodation being placed on the site, the design of the accommodation will be appropriate to the proposed location, the proposed site will have an adequate means of access to and into the site that is capable of accepting the width of vehicles required for the movement of the accommodation without detriment to highway amenity, safety or the landscape.
- 5.2 LITA development proposals will be likely subject to the following conditions:
- i. The accommodation should only be occupied for holiday purposes.
  - ii. The accommodation should not be occupied as a person's sole or main place of residence.
  - iii. The owners/operators of a site should maintain an up to date register of all the owners/occupiers of individual structures, and of their main home addresses, and shall make this information available, at all reasonable times to the Authority.
  - iv. Each approved unit to be removed from the site during the out of season months.
  - v. Measures to minimize impact of lighting to support the International Dark Skies designation.
- 5.3 The reason for the imposition of such conditions is to ensure that approved holiday accommodation is not used for unauthorised permanent residential accommodation. The register stated in (iii) above shall normally be collected by the registered site owner or his/her nominated person.
- 5.4 Seasonal occupancy conditions should maintain a healthy balance between protecting the environment and avoid exacerbating the seasonal nature of tourism within each individual area, thus preventing any negative effects on local businesses and jobs.

## Appendix I

### Clarification of typical examples of potential Low Impact Tourist Accommodation

(Please note that this list is not exhaustive):

**Tree house** – A structure built around, next or among the trunk and branches of a tree above ground level. For such structures to be considered Low Impact Development in accordance with Policy 46 they would need to be more temporary in nature than some forms of permanently occupied Tree- Houses.

**Tepees-** A Native American conical tent that consists of rounded wooden post framing surrounded by a thick layer of canvas. A tepee is a temporary structure (much like any other tent) and therefore should be dismantled when the agreed seasonal months of use have passed. However, unlike a tent, a tepee is difficult and time consuming to erect and therefore will not be dismantled regularly.

**Yurts-** A circular domed dwelling that is felt-covered with a latticed wooden frame. The permanency of these structures would vary depending on its contents/whether it is connected to services. However, for the most part the NPA would expect that they be dismantled out of season.

**Log pods (Wooden Tents)-**Wooden structures much like sheds that are permanent structures. Although it could be the case that they are portable-usually if brought onto a site complete. They have no foundations and for the majority are not connected to services.

**Shepherds Huts-** A Shepherds hut is a 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century version of the modern caravan. Traditionally they were used by shepherds during sheep raising and lambing. Their build tends to vary but the majority have iron wheels and corrugated iron tops, often with corrugated iron sides.

Nb. The above structures have infrastructure requirements in that they do not contain facilities such as toilets or kitchens. However this is not to say that there may be some cases in which there is a toilet facility etc. within a yurt or otherwise.