

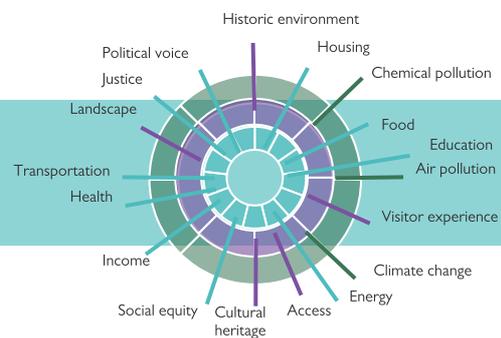


The communities within the National Park will be vibrant, sustainable and most importantly great places to live.

The National Park holds within its boundaries an interrelated network of towns, village, hamlets and individual farmhouses, which collectively house our communities.

Lockdown taught us many lessons about what makes a place a great place to live. We saw a renewed value placed to the provision of local services, local food, and local quality green space. For many being able to walk to a shop to buy basics was a lifeline. Such places are known as walkable neighbourhoods, also referred to as 20 minute towns/neighbourhoods.

A 20 minute community is a blueprint for a sustainable community, one where residents are able to live in affordable housing, meet basic needs within a 20 minute walk or cycle, and easily access green space for daily recreation. It is the aspiration of this Plan to create mechanisms for all our communities to become such places.



Why this is important

If the communities of the National Park are to be sustainable into the future, there needs to be a radical shift in the way we think about housing, employment and service provision. Places without services and facilities are essentially dormitories, somewhere for people to sleep. They lack heart, consequently impacting on the wellbeing of residents.

The pandemic has had profound impacts on the connection between where people live and work. As many across the UK embrace homeworking, interest in housing in rural locations has increased. The pandemic has also meant that people have spent greater amounts of their time within the places they live, for some this has highlighted a lack within the places they live, for others this has demonstrated the strength of their community.

The ability of residents to cope with the pandemic has not only been dependent on their ability to access facilities from their home, but also the ability to connect with others and undertake paid employment digitally. Broadband connection speeds are slower and with less capacity than urban areas. Such differences are an issue of social equity, and much must be done to ensure that rural living does not preclude a resident's ability to access high speed connection. Such connections will be increasingly significant in the future and being without will put our residents at a significant disadvantage.

By far the most significant issue facing the future sustainability of our communities is the high price of housing compared with median wages. Most recent data suggests that a mortgage required to purchase an average house in the Park is almost 9 times median income. The shortage of affordable and intermediate housing (available to people in paid employment) compounds this issue, meaning that many of those who were born and raised in the Park leave the area in their early twenties and start families outside of the Park.

Increasing the supply of housing to meet the needs of future generations is an urgent priority. However, the capacity of the Park to accommodate new development is limited by the need to protect the special qualities and by environmental constraints such as phosphate loading in sensitive river SAC catchments. The balance between social and environmental needs requires careful collaborative effort at grass roots levels.

It is also recognised that rural communities face some of the greatest challenges as a result of climate change. The dispersed nature of rural settlements creates challenges for the delivery of basic infrastructure, such as public transport, high speed broadband and EV charging facilities, and makes some services more expensive than in urban areas (such as fuel for heating and transport). Without significant infrastructure investment, it may be that rural life becomes not only prohibitively expensive but also excessively environmentally damaging.

How the policy will be implemented

The NPA has already begun developing Place Plans, working with communities within the Park. These collaborative grass roots plans seek to empower communities to define their future needs with the support of local service providers.

The aim is now to take these plans a step further and use Place Planning as a mechanism to create route maps for each community to become a '20-minute community'. Efforts here will focus on the development of community based hubs to provide services and facilities; community growing space for health and wellbeing; community led housing accessible to local people for community sustainability; opportunities for home working including community led workshops and office space; and schemes to encourage the retrofitting of existing housing stock for energy efficacy, and domestic renewable energy schemes.

All future development enabled by such plans will provide nutrient betterment.

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

What success looks like

Our principle communities are supported by a range of services and facilities allowing residents to meet their basic needs within a 20-minute walk or cycle along dedicated car free multi-use paths.

Communities are age-balanced, attractive, and affordable places for families to set up home, as well as providing housing to meet the needs of our older residents.

Care for children and older people is provided within communities by local residents, adding to strong connected social capital, and supporting the foundational economy.

Communities are carbon-literate, many having developed their own renewable energy systems to provide affordable green energy directly to community members exclusive of the grid. Many of those people have also been able to use this energy source to support EV charging facilities.

Many communities have developed community gardens, growing spaces, orchards and woodlands. Providing accessible green space for rest and recreation whilst bringing the community closer together over the shared goal of growing food.

How we will measure progress

Community sustainability and resilience is a complex and multifaceted outcome which requires a range of monitoring indicators. Much of these relate to bringing the Park within the minimum standards of our social foundation.

We will monitor progress towards the development of attractive and affordable places by monitoring affordable housing waiting list data with the aim of seeing a reduction in need year-on-year.

We will monitor equity in digital connectivity by analysing levels of provision and cost of high speed broadband. Progress towards key outcomes would be universal coverage across the National Park at affordable levels

We will monitor progress towards '20-minute communities' through annual community sustainability audits, with the aim of seeing all our communities scoring above 16 on the index.