



# WHAT ARE NATIONAL PARKS?



National Parks: The Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP) is one of a family of National Parks in Britain. These were designated under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, which also introduced legislation to identify Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and declare National Nature Reserves and Local Nature Reserves.

A National Park's purposes (as set out in more recent legislation – 1995 Environment Act) are to:

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage found there
- Promote opportunities to understand and enjoy these
- Help the economy and people that live and work amidst this beauty, wildlife and heritage.

National Parks are officially Protected Landscape Areas (PLAs), one of a series of categories of 'protected areas' set down by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The BBNP is a "category 5" protected area (see **Appendix 1**).

## How does the BBNPA achieve its aims?

See "Basic Facts about the Park".

### *National Park Management Plan*

Sets out the Park's vision for the area and lists objectives, actions and targets to achieve this vision during a 5 year period.

The BBNPA is organised into 5 sections:

- Countryside – Warden Service, footpath maintenance, habitat management, including education, information, visitor centres (Danywenallt, National Park Visitor centre and Craig-y-nos Country Park), tourist information centres, publicity and publications.
- Chief Executive – Performance, PR and Communications and Human Resources.
- Business Unit – Strategy and Policy, Finance, I.T, Legal and Office Services
- Conservation & Community – planning and development control and buildings conservation.

### *Unitary Development Plan*

Describes the Park's planning powers and functions, sets both strategic (broad, visionary) policies (based upon the National Park Management Plan) and detailed planning policies for development within the National Park.

### *Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)*

Prepared as part of the UK's national Biodiversity Action Plan, which is being implemented through a series of nation wide plans and also local plans covering local authority areas. The LBAP identifies a series of habitats and species that need to be conserved in order to demonstrate that the Park's landscape, ecology, economy and social fabric is being managed in an environmentally sustainable way.

Extract from preface of the "Our Natural World – a local biodiversity action plan for the Brecon Beacons National Park".



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“The principle aim of the LBAP is to secure the sustainable use of natural resources – the wildlife and landscapes – within the National Park. Through this approach, we will emphasise the intrinsic role of landowners, local communities and visitors in managing and utilising their natural environment in a sustainable way. The National Park Authority’s role in this process will be to assist local groups and individuals to develop and implement projects and initiatives that incorporate the targets of the LBAP. This assistance will include providing practical and technical assistance, setting local targets and demonstrating the added economic and social benefits of projects, products and initiatives that rely upon sustainable use of natural resources”.

Biodiversity conservation means; carrying on with and increasing the good things we do to the natural world, whilst reducing the negative impacts our actions sometimes have. This includes things done in industry, offices, schools and on farms as well as in the places dedicated to conservation like nature reserves. Where local practices have benefited the natural world, these must be cherished and passed on to new generations and to people new to the way of life in an area. A positive attitude to the natural world must be fostered. In short, it means doing what a National Park Authority is meant to do.

See extracts from the Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio Earth Summit 1992) in **Appendix 2**.

### **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and local Nature Reserves (LNRs)**

**Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)** are identified by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). They represent a sample of the best sites by virtue of their habitats, populations of species, geology and geomorphology. They are selected by a process that involves:

- Phase 1 survey within an ‘area of search’ such as the BBNP, to identify the main types of habitat present, the numbers of such sites and the likely location of particularly valuable examples of such sites
- Phase 2 survey of these valuable sites, to identify that particular habitats and species present
- Evaluation of a suite of sites possessing the same or similar habitats or species populations
- Selecting the best of these evaluated sites to be notified as SSSIs.

This process, now enshrined under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended) and subsequently the 2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act is an improvement on the way sites were selected in the past (under the 1949 Act above). In the past, site selection was based upon the opinion of a field officer, without any rigorous comparison between similar sites being carried out. Now, this process is guided by “Guidelines for the Selection of Biological SSSIs are selected by national specialists operating out of CCW’s national office.

See examples in leaflets, which are also NNRs.

**National Nature Reserves (NNRs)** are the very best of these SSSIs, that have been included on a definitive list of sites – the Nature Conservation Review – that sets the standard of site to be selected throughout the UK.

**Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)** are declared by local authorities on land that either they own, lease or have some other legal agreement on (such as paying the landowner to manage it in a certain way). They



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are declared where local authorities wish to set aside land for nature conservation, for wildlife education and for access and enjoyment, or for a combination of these. The local authority declares them in consultation with CCW, who have the final say on whether or not the LNR can be declared (i.e. is it good enough and has the local authority demonstrated that it will be able to manage it and look after it well enough).

## **International site designations**

CCW also identifies internationally important wildlife sites on behalf of the National Assembly, who is charged by the European Union with looking after them. These sites include Special Protection Areas (SPAs), declared under the 1979 EU Birds Directive and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), declared under the 1992 EU Habitats Directive.

SPAs are declared to protect sites that attract internationally important numbers of migrant birds and/or significantly large numbers of a single species of migrant bird.

SACs are declared to protect internationally important habitats or internationally important populations of rare species. The EU has approved the following SACs:

- Abergavenny Woodlands
- Blaen Cynon
- Brecon Beacons
- Coed-y-Cerrig Woodland
- Usk Bat Sites
- River Usk
- Coedydd Nedd a Mellte
- Cwm Cadlan
- Cwm Clydach Woodlands
- Llangors Lake
- River Wye

### *Some quotes about biodiversity:*

“The problem (of biodiversity) is that we don’t have a very long-term vision. One spare tyre is fine for you or me and my car. We know what tyres are and we know how they function. But when you’re trying to manage something as complicated as an ecosystem for hundreds of years, it’s hard to know how many spares you need”.

Shahid Naeem, University of Minnesota, reported in New Scientist, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1998

“Whenever we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

John Muir

“When it comes to the future, there are three kinds of people: those who let it happen, those who make it happen, and those who wondered what happened.”

Carol Christensen, quoted in Making It Happen: A positive Guide to the Future

“Only to the white man was nature a ‘wilderness’.”

Luther Standing Bear (Oglala Sioux Chief)

“If you are thinking one year ahead, sow seed. If you are thinking 10 years ahead, plant a tree. If you are thinking 100 years ahead, educate the people.”

Chinese proverb

“Destroying rainforest for economic gain is like burning a Renaissance painting to cook a meal.”

Edward O. Wilson



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## **Appendix 1: Protected Landscapes – IUCN Category V**

Within the family of protected areas are those defined by IUCN as “Protected Landscapes” (Category V). A recently re-drafted set of guidelines defines such landscapes as:

“Areas of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, cultural and/or ecological value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.”

### **Effective Management of PLAs**

The main management objectives for protected landscapes are:

- To maintain the harmonious interaction of nature and culture through the protection of landscape and/or seascape and the continuation of traditional land uses, building practices and social and cultural manifestations;
- To support lifestyles and economic activities which are in harmony with nature and the preservation of the social and cultural fabric of the communities;
- To maintain the diversity of landscape and habitat, and of associated species and ecosystems;
- To eliminate where necessary, and thereafter prevent, land uses and activities which are inappropriate in scale and/or character;
- To provide opportunities for public enjoyment through recreation and tourism appropriate in type and scale to the essential qualities of the area;
- To encourage scientific and educational activities which will contribute to the long-term well-being of resident populations and to the development of public support for the environmental protection of such areas; and
- To bring benefits to, and to contribute to the welfare of the local community through the provision of natural products (such as forest and fisheries products) and services (such as clean water or income derived from sustainable forms of tourism).

To achieve these objectives, management regimes should be instituted which endeavour to integrate the needs of owners and other interest groups. Furthermore, “these regimes should be subject to a degree of planning or other control and supported, where appropriate, by public funding and other incentives, to ensure that the quality of the landscapes/seascape and the relevant local customs and beliefs are maintained in the long term.”



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## Extracts from the convention on Biological Diversity

(**Bold** emphasis added by BBNP)

### Article 1. Objectives

The objectives of this Convention, to be in accordance with its relevant provisions, are the conservation of biological diversity, **the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits** arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer or relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding.

### Article 6. General measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use

Each Contracting Party shall, in accordance with its particular conditions and capabilities:

- (a) Develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the **conservation and sustainable use** of biological diversity or adapt for this purpose existing strategies, plans or programmes which shall reflect, inter alia, the measures set out in this Convention relevant to the Contracting Party concerned; and
- (b) Integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the **conservation and sustainable use** of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies.

### Article 8. In-situ Conservation

(j) Subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of **indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity** and **promote their wide application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of such knowledge, innovations and practices;**

### Article 10. Sustainable Use of Components of Biological Diversity

Each Contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate:

- (a) Integrate consideration of the **conservation and sustainable use** of biological resources into national decision making;
- (b) Adopt measures relating to the use of biological resources to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on biological diversity;
- (c) **Protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements;**
- (d) **Support local populations** to develop and implement remedial action in degraded areas where biological diversity has been reduced; and



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- (e) Encourage co-operation between its governmental authorities and its private sector in developing methods for sustainable use of biological resources.

### **Article 13. Public Education and Awareness**

The Contracting Parties shall:

- (a) **Promote and encourage understanding of the importance of, and the measures required for, the conservation of biological diversity, as well as its propagation through media, and the inclusion of these topics in educational programmes; and**
- (b) **Co-operate, as appropriate, with other States and international organisations in developing educational and public awareness programmes, with respect to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.**