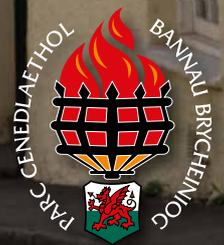


# Annual Report on the Improvement Plan 2012 - 2013

## PART 2



BRECON BEACONS  
NATIONAL PARK

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

# Annual Report on the Improvement Plan

2012 - 2013

PART 2



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## Foreword

I very much welcome the publication of this report on our performance last year. The report that you have in your hands gives the lie to some of the myths about the performance of National Park Authorities - for example the idea that it is hard to get permission for planning applications in a National Park is disputed by the statistics - the Authority approved 85% of the applications it received.

It is with some personal pride that I note that the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority remains one of very few Authorities (and the only National Park) which webcasts its meetings for the general public to see – showing our dedication to transparency for our own processes and accountability to the public.

The future of the National Park and the many communities within its boundaries are inextricably linked. Thriving communities complement the natural beauty of the park's landscape and our community based initiatives reflect a determination to nurture that symbiotic relationship. The work of the National Park Authority also extends beyond the Park's physical boundaries and we are pleased to be supporting programmes such as the Mosaic project for black and ethnic communities. We have also delivered projects with our own staff and through Service Level Agreements with partners which meet our biodiversity targets.

There is still work for us to do – our teams working in Development Management and Enforcement are continuing to improve their performance. The pressure to reach all their targets within the prescribed deadlines means that they have to continuously juggle their workloads. In some areas for 2012-13 we know our performance has slipped back a little but in the current financial year we expect to see improvements again in this area. As an Authority we are monitoring these activities to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our customers.

I hope that you enjoy reading this report and that you will share my sense of pride in our achievements and will watch with interest to see Members and Officers working together on areas where we need to improve in the coming year.

Best wishes,

Julie James  
Chairman,  
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

## I. Introduction

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is pleased to publish its Annual Report and Improvement Plan for the twelve months ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. The Plan is written in two parts with Part I - which looks forward and outlines the Authority's priority objectives for the new financial year - being published as soon as practicable after the 1<sup>st</sup> April each year. This can be found at Appendix 5.

The Annual Report and Improvement Plan Part 2 considers the National Park Authority's progress against the improvement objectives for the financial year April 2012 to March 2013 which were set out in the Improvement Plan Part I which was published in April 2012. The report also sets out the Authority's approach to discharging its general duty under the Welsh Government's Local Government Measure and its commitment to continuous improvement. The Authority is required to publish its Annual Report and Improvement Plan Part 2 by no later than 31<sup>st</sup> October each year.

You can download this report from our website at [www.beacons-npa.gov.uk](http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk) or you can ask for a paper copy by ringing our IT Department on 01874 620465 or emailing [IT@beacons-npa.gov.uk](mailto:IT@beacons-npa.gov.uk).

The National Park Authority publishes a report annually on its performance in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme, this report is available here: <http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/the-authority/who-we-are/our-policies-and-protocols/welsh-language-scheme/monitoring-reports-for-the-welsh-language-scheme?searchterm=welsh+monitor>

### **Statement of Responsibility**

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is responsible for preparing the following 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.

## 2. About us

Brecon Beacons National Park is a beautiful protected landscape that covers 520 miles<sup>2</sup> and lies between rural Mid Wales and the industrial South Wales Valleys. It was designated in 1957 and is one of 15 members of the UK National Parks family, three of which are in Wales. All three of Wales' National Parks (Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia) share the same statutory purposes and duty. The two Statutory Purposes are:

- **Conservation and Enhancement**  
*“To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.”*
- **Understanding and Enjoyment**  
*“To promote opportunities for and understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks by the public.”*

In addition, we also have a Statutory Duty is to ‘seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park by working closely with the agencies and Local Authorities responsible for these matters’.

In any conflict of interest between the purposes and the duty, National Park Authorities are instructed to give most importance to the first purpose; this is called the Sandford Principle.

The National Park is home to approximately 33,000 residents and is a popular destination for visitors with numbers estimated at nearly 5 million (visitor days) in 2010.

The National Park is administered by a special National Park Authority made up of 24 Members, over 130 Officers and staff and many volunteers.

The area of the National Park includes 50 Community Councils and covers parts of nine Unitary Authorities. Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is the local planning Authority for any development within the boundary of the National Park. It also has delegated responsibility for Rights of Way network whilst the constituent Local Authorities retain responsibility for all other local government services (e.g. highways, council tax etc.).

We have a clear vision for the National Park laid out in the National Park Management Plan – a document which spans 20 years at a time. It sets the scene for all our strategic documents and it was produced in consultation with stakeholders, landowners and communities throughout the Park. This Annual Report and Improvement Plan rely heavily on its priority actions and goals. For more information on how the National Park is structured and administered please visit our website [www.beacons-npa.gov.uk](http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk).

### 3. A Year in Brief

In order to deliver on the priorities set out in our National Park Management Plan, we have established a series of Corporate Goals which set out the strategic priorities over a three to five year period. In brief, these are described as follows:

- Taking care of Planning
- Taking care of (Authority) Business
- Taking care of the Environment
- Taking care of People

From these 4 Corporate Goals, 6 Improvement Objectives were identified and are expanded on in section 4 below:

1. The Authority provides an excellent planning service
2. The National Park's special qualities are protected from inappropriate development
3. The National Park's special heritage is conserved and enhanced
4. Public confidence in and accessibility to the Authority's conduct of business and governance will be improved
5. Biodiversity is conserved and enhanced through public engagement, practical action and planning advice
6. Communities are inspired by and recognise the benefits of where they live

The following provides a brief overview of what we have achieved, and also where we did less well, for each of our Corporate Goals:

#### 3.1 Taking care of planning

- We progressed the Local Development Plan through the Examination Stage, with a view to adoption by Winter 2013. The Local Development Plan sets the development framework for the Park for the next 15 years. It comes after approval of the Deposit Local Development Plan and four years of extensive consultation and engagement with local communities and stakeholders.
- 85% of 418 determined planning applications were approved.
- 31 public planning engagements were undertaken.
- We improved on the number of enforcement cases investigated within 12 weeks of receipt (though we fell short of the agreed target) while focussing resources on reducing the backlog of enforcement cases (from 139 to 90 cases).
- Through our partnership work with Cadw we achieved a 44% increase in in photographic evidence for Scheduled Ancient Monuments against a target of 20%.
- One Conservation Area appraisal was undertaken and one Conservation Area guidance note was prepared.
- One archaeologist was put in post.

## 3.2 Taking care of business

- We began webcasting committee meetings over the Authority's internet pages to improve transparency, public accountability and governance. There have been over 8,000 viewings of the webcasts so far (May 2013), an average of around 300 views per meeting.
- Further development of the programme of Scrutiny which is successfully engaging the public in helping us to improve services.
- Full assurance for Corporate Governance from our internal auditors.
- An innovative project was underway throughout the year to bring together the website run to represent the commercial interests of the tourism companies and the desire of the National Park Authority to promote enjoyment of the area – the resulting website promoting the National Park as a destination will be launched in July 2013.

## 3.3 Taking care of the environment

- We celebrated achieving the highly prized International Dark Skies Reserve status.
- Continued controlled burns programmes took place on National Park owned Hatterrall Hill and in the Black Mountains where we worked with the landowners to assist in heather management on Bal Bach/Bal Mawr. Controlled burning also took place to assist grazing management on Mynnyd Myddfai and Great Forest West. The new fire fighting equipment made the process safer and assisted fire fighting of illegal burns.
- We completed a further 3,800 metres of upland path works, up on the total for 2011/12 by approximately 800m, half of which were pre-emptive works designed to prevent further deterioration of existing path sections which would then be more costly to repair.
- Limited progress was made on the State of the Park Report, however progress has been made on the Research Prospectus which we are progressing with a variety of Academic institutions in 2013/14.
- Beacons Bus Passenger numbers fell (predominantly due to bad weather) although they remained above target. 10,776 people used the Beacons Bus against a target of 10,000 (the figure for the previous year was 15,722).
- Continued Match Funding through the Sustainable Development Fund was well in excess of the target match funding ratio. The ratio of match funding was 1:2.94.
- Five Public Path Orders were completed and four were made. The previous year saw eight completed and one made. Improvement was restricted for the most part because of the unanticipated need to deal with temporary path closure orders as a result of *Phytophthora ramorum* infections.
- We achieved grant funding from what was then the Countryside Council for Wales through the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. We improved 15km of rights of way. The physical condition of the Park's public rights of way saw good improvement in terms of the proportion of the network being easy to use.
- We completed the Splash Project. This has improved recreational facilities to and on inland water and at waterside places, for example a reservoir passport scheme has

been established providing new managed access opportunities for Canoeists and kayakers at 4 of the Dr Cymru Welsh Water reservoirs in the National Park.

### 3.4 Taking care of people

- Work commenced on the preparation of a Visitor Management Plan which will complete in the financial year 2013/14.
- A Residents survey was commenced with the results expected in 2013/2014, this survey had a 21.6% response rate, which is excellent for an un-named householder survey.
- We provided 6,694 young people across the National Park with unique inspiring National Park education experiences through our education work – Participation in Education activities grew 14% relative to 2011/12. Part of the increase was due to externally funded projects.
- We have increased our volunteer numbers from 127 to 147 in 2012/2013. This includes the new Waterfall Volunteer Scheme and the Black Mountain Upland Volunteer Scheme. The number of schemes or projects that volunteers contributed to increased from 14 to 20 in 2012/2013.
- 1,383 days of volunteer time were expended on National Park Authority projects (a 77% increase on the 780 days achieved last year).
- There has been on-going work with Black and Minority Ethnic groups through the Mosaic programme in partnership with the Campaign for National Parks where 13 community champions are currently undertaking visits and Champion training.
- A full Rural Skills (Agored) training project ran for the first time in 2012/2013. It secured a very strong take up with 21 (72%) of the 29 participants achieving AGORED accreditation (against a target of 20).
- A further 28 National Park Ambassadors attended and passed the 3 day Ambassador scheme which builds on the total of 37 from the previous year. 21 businesses were accredited through the Green Tourism Business Scheme.
- Beacons Bus ridership was above target although the figures fell from the previous year.
- Partnership working saw significant levels of activity continuing for the benefit of both residents and visitors and the Authority including: Rural Alliances, Walking with Offa, Romans in Carmarthenshire, The Llangasty Bird Hide Project, Our Beacon for Bats (Vincent Wildlife Trust), Calch (Herbert's Quarry), and the MOSAIC project.

## 4. Did we deliver what we set out to achieve in 2012-2013 (Improvement Objectives)?

### 4.1 IO 1 - The Authority provides an excellent planning service

We said we would know if we were achieving an excellent planning service if:

- a) There was an improvement in service levels
- b) There was an increased understanding of the role of planning
- c) There was improved understanding of what is meant by an excellent planning service
- d) Establishing and meeting the criteria that we set based on the understanding set out in BIPI for this financial year

#### **What we achieved:**

- We established a baseline for the recording of public consultation exercises which demonstrates progression from previous years. In 2012/2013, 31 public engagements on planning were undertaken. A consultation exercise was also undertaken on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013 with statutory and non-statutory consultees and Community Councils. A Communications Strategy is expected in 2013/2014 on completion of the residents' survey.
- The percentage of customers that rate the planning service as satisfactory or better was 91% against a target of 80%<sup>1</sup>. This shows an increase from the previous year of 88% against a target of 76%.
- The percentage of customers who have confidence in the planning service was 83%. Although this was lower than the previous year (94%) it was higher than our agreed target of 80%.
- The number of planning applications over 13 weeks old at the end of the period (backlog) reduced from the previous financial year from 43 to 42. This demonstrates an improvement on the previous year but it was short of the target of 35.
- The percentage of minor planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks was 53.59%. This did not meet the Authority target of 60% and was slightly down on the figure for the previous year (60%).
- The percentage of householder planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks was 70.90% against a target of 85% and was slightly down on the figure for the previous year (75%).
- The percentage of all other planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks was 53.84% against a target of 60% and was slightly down on the figure for the previous year (61%).
- The percentage of minor, householder and other applications determined within 8 weeks was 60.80% against a target of 70%. This was down on the figure for the previous year (67%).

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<sup>1</sup> Note slightly different wording to the measure identified in BIP1 which states “% of customers that rates the planning service as good or better”. The change was required to keep the measure consistent with the previous year’s measure.

- The percentage of applications for development determined during the year that were approved was 85% and met its target of 85%. This was slightly up on the figure for the previous year (84%).
- 4 appeals were determined that upheld the Authority's decision in relation to planning application decisions at 50% against a target of 80%. This was down on the figure for the previous year (85%).

We believe we have made good progress in our aspiration to deliver an excellent planning service. Despite a 9.1% increase in planning applications on the previous year we have exceeded our target for customer satisfaction and improved on the previous year. We also exceeded our target for customer confidence in the service. Although we reduced our backlog of cases over 13 weeks old we acknowledge that we have not met our targets for the year and there is work to do in this area. We have also not met our target regarding the number of cases determined within 8 weeks in all categories and to recognise this we have restructured the Planning Service to ensure we can address this issue in time for next year's review.

## **4.2 IO 2 - The National Park's special qualities are protected from inappropriate development**

We said we would know if we were achieving the protection of the National Parks special qualities from inappropriate development if:

- a) We experience fewer breaches of unauthorised development
- b) Satisfactory results are achieved where a breach has occurred
- c) Timely responses are given to the issues
- d) There is a good level of public understanding of the role of enforcement

### **What we achieved:**

- We developed a checklist mechanism in July 2012 to indicate which special qualities are threatened by alleged planning breaches. This demonstrates progression from previous years when such data was not available.
- The backlog of enforcement cases was reduced significantly by 49 from 139 to 90. Although we missed our target of 50 cases by one there was significant improvement on the figure from the previous year (140).
- The percentage of cases resolved within 12 weeks was 29%. Although this was an improvement on the figure for the previous year (22%), it did not meet our target of 65%. This was because we focussed on reducing the backlog of enforcement cases.
- There was one enforcement appeal determined within this period which upheld the Authority's decision in relation to enforcement notices. This met the target of 100%.

Overall we have improved on the previous year but we did not reach our target of 65% of enforcement cases resolved within 12 weeks. We have however significantly reduced the backlog in enforcement cases and continue to work on meeting our targets this year.

### **4.3 IO 3 - The National Park's special heritage is conserved and enhanced**

We said we would know if we were achieving the conservation and enhancement of the Parks environment if:

- a) There are fewer buildings at risk
- b) There is improved awareness and knowledge amongst owners and applicants of the importance of protecting and enhancing the special character of listed buildings, conservation areas and archaeology
- c) There are fewer unauthorised works to historic buildings
- d) There is improved knowledge of, and data on, Scheduled Ancient Monuments

#### **What we achieved:**

- There was no reduction in the number of buildings at risk, which remained at 129. The percentage of buildings at risk also remained at 6.5%. This target was missed due in part to sickness absence.
- One Conservation Area guidance note was prepared which met the Authority's target for the year.
- Seven Listed Buildings were grant aided against a target of 5. This also showed an improvement on the figure for the previous year (4).
- One Conservation Area appraisal was completed against a target of one.
- We achieved a percentage increase of 44% in photo evidence for SAMs against a target of 20%. This showed a significant improvement on the figure for the previous year (20%).
- The percentage of funding going towards Buildings at Risk was 93% against a target of 50%. This showed an improvement on the figure for the previous year (50%).
- The percentage of Listed Building consents forwarded to Cadw within 8 weeks is now being recorded and measured. The figure was 14% against a target of 65%.

Overall we are satisfied that we are performing well in this area. We have introduced a new measure to be recorded (% of Listed Building consents forwarded to Cadw within 8 weeks) which demonstrates progress, though we acknowledge that we have not met our agreed target in this measure. We did not reduce the number of Buildings at Risk -again predominantly due to sickness absence. As a small Authority, often with specialist departments of only one or two individuals we are particularly vulnerable to the results of sickness absence. In all other measures in this area we have met or exceeded the agreed targets.

### **4.4 IO 4 - Public confidence in and accessibility to the Authority's conduct of business and governance will be improved**

We said we would know if we were achieving an improvement in public confidence and accessibility to the Authority's conduct of business and governance if:

- a) There is better feedback through Members

- b) There is an endorsement of our performance from the Wales Audit Office
- c) There has been greater feedback from user groups and community consultations
- d) Members will receive better feedback on the Authority from their constituents and members of the public

**What we achieved:**

- 8.71 training sessions were made available to individual members during the period against a target of 7.
- The percentage of Members attending training sessions was 62% against a target of 75%. The measure is below target due to the unusual number of new members (13 out of 16) and several new councillors of constituent authorities who were simultaneously attending induction in their own authorities. This was a capacity issue rather than lack of interest or commitment.
- There were 209 training days held against a target of 168.
- Two scrutiny reviews with recommendations and action plans for service improvements were prepared against a target of two – the second review was wider and deeper than originally scoped and it was not actually completed until shortly after the financial year.
- An 18 month pilot of webcasting the three main committee meetings was completed which meets the agreed target.
- A survey was created where Members and community groups were able to judge how useful webcasting has been. 89% of Members and community groups surveyed found the webcast useful or very useful, against a target of 75%.

Overall we are pleased with how we have performed in this area. We met or exceeded our agreed targets in every measure except Members attending training days which is due to the unusual number of new members who were also going through induction in their own authorities at the time. We also introduced two new measures which demonstrates progress in this area.

#### **4.5 IO 5 - Biodiversity is conserved and enhanced through public engagement, practical action and planning advice**

We said we would know if we were achieving the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through public engagement, practical action and planning advice if:

- a) There was active involvement from community groups
- b) Ecological condition improved for habitats of principal importance to Wales
- c) Improved decision making as a result of complete survey information
- d) Gas pipeline landscape restoration achieved to the satisfaction of Countryside Council for Wales and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

**What we achieved:**

**Woodland**

- Woodland management targets were estimates of what was achievable and the achievements came close to the estimates; e.g., 54 hectares rather than 60 is a 90% hit rate, and 83m<sup>3</sup> rather than 90m<sup>3</sup> is a 92% hit rate. The charcoal production target of 700kg was exceeded (900kg or 129%).
- The examination of the S39 woodland agreements has been carried forward to the next financial year; community groups were not ready to adopt new woodlands last year.
- One woodland group has submitted its expression of interest in the Glastir Woodland Grant Applications.

**Biodiversity**

- See the table below for a list of Community biodiversity projects achieved during 2012-2013:

<b>Community biodiversity projects achieved during 2012-2013</b>		
Himalayan Balsam, Gilwern OEC	Undertook Balsam pulling and training for OEC staff to continue to prevent further spread	
Fedw Wood Biodiversity Survey	Bats, moths small mammals and bird surveyed during May	
Lluest Horse & Pony Trust	Work in support of a successful Beacons Trust grant bid to create a nature trail and bring wet woodland back under management. Trail works started as has training to Trust staff and volunteers on woodland management	
Otter Holt training	Built an otter holt with 7 members of woodland groups trained in how to build otter for future reference	
Habitat Improvements, Park Wood	Beginning partnership work between Woodland Trust and Talgarth Woodland Group to undertake scrub management to create sunlit area for invertebrates and reptiles.	
Habitat Improvements,	Improvements to habitat for	Supported by Amphibian and

Maendu Well	amphibians and reptiles	Reptile Conservation Trust
Habitat Improvements, Llangattock	Improvements alongside M&B Canal to improve habitat for grasssnakes	Supported by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust
Community Cotton grass growing	Volunteer recruitment, coordination, distributing materials and gathering feedback for this BBNPA project	Support by Brecon Beacons National Park Authority via WG Resilience Fund
Tales from the Wild Wood	Provided technical support and advice to the BB4 production	Six episodes aired on BBC 4 Autumn 2012
Woodland Homes	A project working with the Vincent Wildlife Trust (Our Beacons for Bats) to installed 100 bird, and 50 bat boxes on community woodland sites, installed 3 experimental roosts and train communities in undertake bat surveys	Granted aided by Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Conservation and Community Fund
Brecon Greenspaces	Initial approach to Powys CC to assist in habitat improvements at Island Field and Priory Groves in Brecon	
Watton Limekilns and woodland	Work begun on project to restore both listed lime kiln structure and habitat improvements at adjacent woodland	Working in partnership with Canal & River Trust. Funding from Keep Wales Tidy, Wild Weekend

- We were involved in an on-going service level agreement with the Biodiversity Information Service, a biological records centre, to improve our recording of information of different types of species and habitats. They also provided reports on planning applications, providing information on species within a certain geographic buffer, which has been of significant use to planning officers.
- Not achieved/Plan to roll forward to next financial year:
  - Liaison with the National Park Authority's Strategy and Policy Team to identify where synergy might be achievable between village design plans, biodiversity audits, new community woodlands and food projects.
  - Seek early direct advice from PONT on the feasibility of developing one or more local grazing schemes (LGSs).
  - Actively promote at least one useful national initiative, e.g., "Nature's Calendar" co-ordinated by The Woodland Trust and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (see <http://www.naturescalendar.org.uk/>).

- provide a complete set of audits with recommendations for biodiversity conservation projects (habitat management, interpretation, education, training etc).

### **Remaining Measures**

- The designation of Talybont Reservoir as a Local Nature Reserve was not completed due to land ownership issues outside the Authority's control. These issues have now been resolved and a new date for completion in the next financial year has been agreed. Significant progress was made however, including grant support for the establishment of a Friends group, finalising the Management Plan and defining an ideal site boundary. The latter was contingent on the land ownership issues. Instructions have been forwarded to the Authority's legal team to process the designation in the next financial year.
- We completed the 2012-2013 programme of habitat management tasks at Llangasty (Llangors Lake Special Area of Conservation) and Waterfall Country (including Coedydd Nedd a Mellte SAC) which met the target for this measure
- We commissioned one survey for a SSSI against a target of one. It relates to the lower plant survey completed along the Mellte Gorge, within the Coedydd Nedd a Mellte SAC. The report provided advice on the sensitive locations vulnerable to disturbance by gorge walking and made recommendations on how to reduce impacts. These recommendations have now been incorporated into a revised and expanded Gorge Walking Code of Conduct, which already covered the Sychryd Gorge. The survey and report were funded by the Sustainable Development Fund, the application made by the South Wales Outdoor Activities Providers Group (SWOAPG).
- Regarding the measure 'Develop an effective means of compliance monitoring of planning conditions relating to biodiversity conservations' - research on suitable methods of compliance monitoring was commenced but not completed. It is worth noting that Planning Advice Note 17 (bats and buildings) was substantially revised and the provision of two days per week to support the planning service was consistently exceeded, with three days per week provided against a target of two days per week
- National Grid Gas PLC contractors maintained their presence on the remaining affected locations along the gas pipeline route in order to complete tasks in line with conditions of consent. This situation remains and continues to be monitored

Overall we are very happy with progress we have made in this area. Both the work we undertake directly with our own resources and staff (such as that undertaken by the Wardens team) and the support we provide partners such as The Green Valleys

Community Interest Company through the Service Level Agreement have delivered work to conserve and enhance biodiversity this year. Examples of this work include the local community-led biodiversity and woodland group projects delivered by TGV to our management work at Llangasty Caeau Ty Mawr, and our winter heather and grass burning programme on the Black Mountains and Mynydd Du.

Longer term we have made good progress across Mynydd Du in supporting Commons Associations applications for Glastir and are developing partnership relationships in the Black Mountains.

#### **4.6 IO 6 - Communities are inspired by and recognise the benefits of where they live**

We said we would know if we were achieving inspiring communities if:

- a) There is a positive percentage of good rating or above on surveys.
- b) There is a percentage reduction in crime statistics (eg. Illegal off-roading, theft from car parks)
- c) There has been an increase in Community Councils signing up to the Community Council Charter
- d) We have met Sustainable Development Match Funding ratios on grant aided projects.
- e) There is increased feedback from tourism operators and user groups.
- f) Increased levels of inspiration measures.
- g) More Community Champions will have been recruited.
- h) There will be groups submitting applications and gaining the Walkers are Welcome award.
- i) Increase in new community resilience groups supported by The Green Valleys.

##### **What we achieved:**

###### **Communities:**

- We undertook a Scrutiny Study for this Improvement Objective which comprised of a panel of National Park Members together with representatives from a range of outside bodies including One Voice Wales, arts tourism, youth and community organisations. The reference for the study is No: 4/2012-13. Recommendations included making data more available; increased public participation from the planning department; the introduction of Results based accountability; investigation of the Rural Vibrancy Index; consideration of the ethos of customer service; evidence of 'who does what' made available internally and externally; promoting understanding of what a quality planning service entails; ensuring an outward facing accountability philosophy remains enshrined in our policy making; and promotion of awareness of the benefits of evaluation is undertaken amongst relevant staff.
- We delivered a Community Council Charter Action Plan with 28 Community Councils engaged and 17 signed up. This met the target for this measure.

- We exceeded the target of 1:1 Match funding ratio with SDF grants. The actual ratio was 1:2.94.
- The Green Valleys Service Level Agreement for communities was achieved and the targets for this measure were met through the following projects:
  - Hydro development (10 feasibility studies, 2 design and permissions and 2 installations)
  - Home heat loss awareness project
  - support of 12 Community resilience groups (including development of new groups)
  - Woodland management & woodfuel production: 91 cu m=Co2e saving of 36400kg
  - Support of 11 local food projects
- We delivered a social inclusion and child poverty strategy and action plan which met the target for this measure.
- Regarding the measure ‘increasing the numbers of children and families in poverty benefitting from the National Park’, the task for the 1st year of the plan was in part to create a baseline for education visits, though staff sickness delayed this. This is a new measure and demonstrates progress in this area.
- The total CO2 reduction is calculated in the July after end of year when all the raw data is available, though it is worth noting that 22% reduction was achieved over the previous 5 years. CO2 reduction does not follow a smooth curve, implementation of initiatives (eg introduction of lower CO2 fleet) may make a significant impact in year which (for that element of the CO2 footprint) plateaus in following year.

### **Education:**

- The total number of participants (students/teachers/assistants) receiving education messages from National Park Officers was 6,694 against a target of 5,000. This was up on last year’s figure of 5,852.
- The average time each participant spends with officers of the education service experiencing national park messages was 3.55 hours against a target of 2.5 hours. This was up on last year’s figure of 3.29 hours.
- The number of participants receiving National Park messages through education in the medium of Welsh was 694 against a target of 600.
- The level of inspiration reached its target of 10 on an 11 point modal score scale.

Overall we are very pleased with progress we have made in this area. Not only have we met or exceed all of the agreed targets (where known), we have in a number of measures exceeded our performance from the previous financial year. We have also introduced a new measure ‘increasing the numbers of children and families in poverty benefitting from the National Park’ which demonstrates progress in this area.

## 5. Conclusion

2012-13 saw the Authority take another step forward in terms of developing Improvement Objectives that are outcome focused and are derived from the priorities contained within the National Park Management Plan. This was seen as work in progress and further improvements in linking improvement objectives to Management Plan priorities will be introduced in 2013-14.

There is always room for improvement but overall we believe that we have delivered on our Improvement Objectives as follows:

### **The Authority provides an excellent planning service**

91% of customers of the planning service rated the service received as satisfactory or better compared to our target of 80%<sup>2</sup>. We received an increased number of planning applications, though we did not reach our targets for the number of cases determined within 8 weeks within all categories. We met our target of 85% for applications determined that were approved.

### **The National Park's special qualities are protected from inappropriate development**

Overall we have continued to lay the groundwork for future improvement. The parked backlog of enforcement cases was reduced significantly from 139 to 90 and we improved our percentage of enforcement cases resolved within 12 weeks.

### **The National Park's heritage is conserved and enhanced**

We are satisfied that we have achieved improvement in this area. We introduced a new measure (percentage of Listed Building Consents forwarded to Cadw within 8 weeks) which demonstrates progress of measures in this area. We will continue to work to meet our target though we acknowledge we did not meet our target this year. Although we have not reduced the number of Buildings at Risk, we have met or exceeded our target in all other measures (Conservation Area guidance note; Listed Buildings grant aided; Conservation Area appraisal; An increase in photo evidence for SAMs; and improved percentage of funding going towards Buildings at Risk).

### **Public confidence in and accessibility to the Authority's conduct of business and governance will be improved**

We met or exceeded our agreed targets in every measure except 'Members attending training days'. This includes the number of training days undertaken, the number of training sessions available to Members and the number of scrutiny reviews prepared. We introduced two new measures which demonstrates progress of the measures in this area. One of these new measures was a webcast of the three

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<sup>2</sup> See footnote 1, page 11.

main committee meetings and the other is a survey on how useful community groups and Members had found the webcasting.

**Biodiversity is conserved and enhanced through public engagement, practical action and planning advice**

There are a wide variety of projects that we have undertaken ourselves and also supported our partners on and overall we are very happy with progress we have made in this area particularly the significant progress made in The Green Valleys Service Level Agreement.

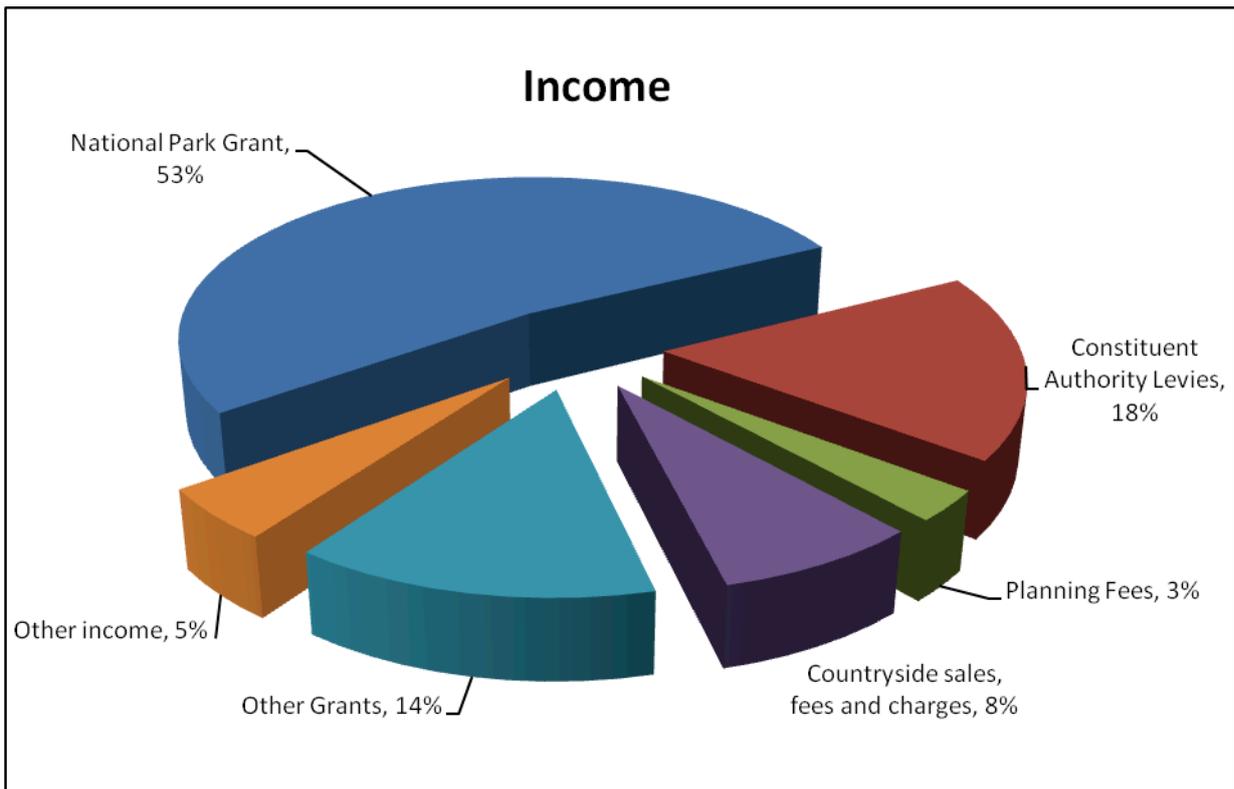
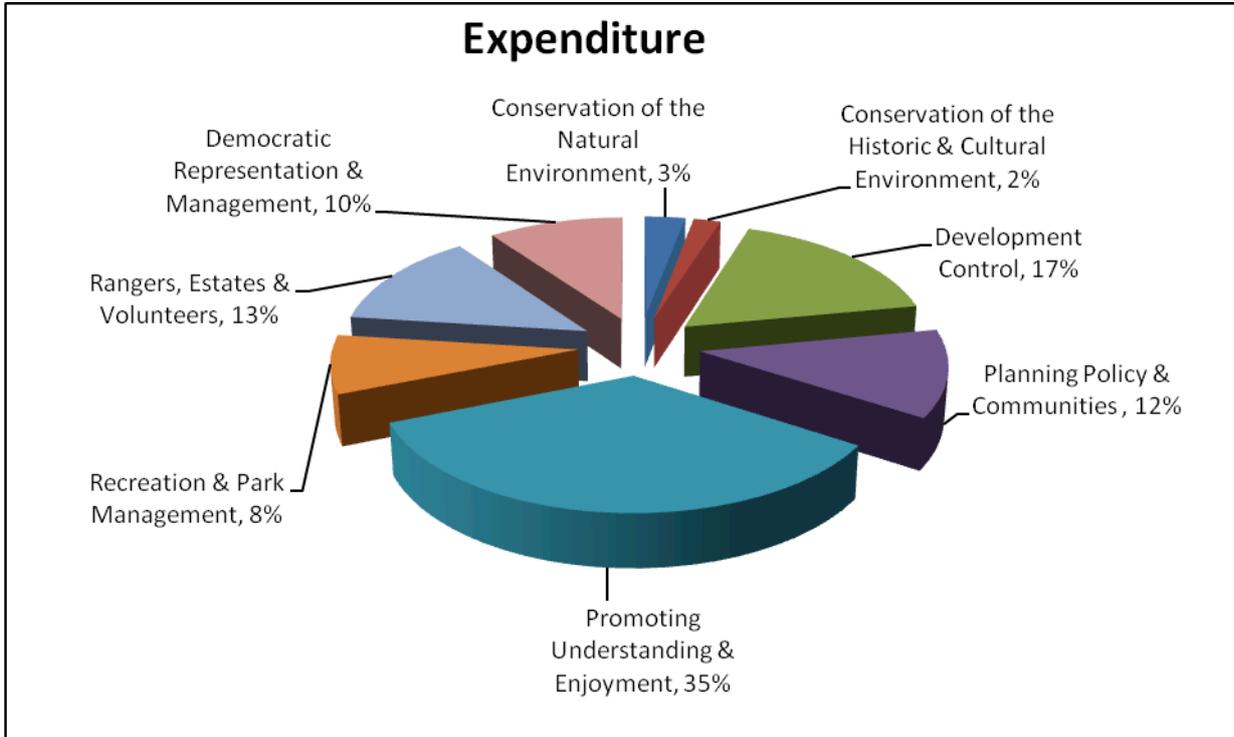
**Communities are inspired by and recognise the benefits of where they live**

The work of both the Sustainable Communities and Sustainable Tourism teams in 2012/13 demonstrate increasing delivery and engagement with communities through the Ambassadors scheme and its offshoots, our Fforest Fawr Geopark work, the work to support the 8 Rural Alliances, Community Council engagement through the Charter, and our growing involvement in rural skills training. The achievement of International Dark Skies Reserve Status generated substantial press interest and raised significantly the awareness of the National Park externally but also created a real buzz across the communities in Park as well. The education team continue to support learning and the provision of information and advice.

We have also completed the Splash Project which has improved access to inland water for canoeists, kayakers, paddlers, people with a disability, walkers and cyclists.

## 6. Appendices

### Appendix I: Financial Summary



## Appendix 2: Performance Indicators 2012-2013

No.	Performance Indicator	Results 2010-2011	Results 2011 - 2012	Results 2012 - 2013	Target 2012 - 2013
CHR/ 001	The percentage of employees (including teachers and school based staff) who leave the employment of the authority, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis.	10.77%	6.98%	12.21%	10%
CHR/ 002	The number of working days/ shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) authority employees lost due to sickness absence.	9.36 days	7.42 days	8.84 days	8 days
CHR/ 004	The percentage of authority employees from minority ethnic communities.	1.54%	2.33%	1.53%	2.27%
CHR/ 005	The percentage of Authority employees declaring that they are disabled under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act.	3.1%	3.20%	5.9%	2.26%
CFH/ 006	The percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid within 30 days of such invoices being received by the authority.	97.60%	98%	86.40%	100%
PLA/002	The percentage of applications for development during the year that were approved.	84%	84%	85%	85%
PLA/003	The number of appeals that were determined during the year, in relation to:  a) planning application decisions b) enforcement notices  a) Planning application decisions b) Enforcement notices	Total 20  11 (8 dismissed) 2  72% 83%	Total 13  13 (11 dismissed) 1  85% 100%	Total 11  8 (4 dismissed) 1  50% 100%	
PLA/004	a) The percentage of major planning applications determined during the year within 13 weeks*	0%	0%	0%	0%

	b) The percentage of minor planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks	57.10%	60%	53.59%	60%
	c) The percentage of householder planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks	59.60%	75%	70.90%	85%
	d) The percentage of all other planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks	49%	61%	53.84%	60%
PLA/005	The percentage of enforcement cases resolved during the year within 12 weeks of receipt.	16%	22%	29%	65%
PLA/006	The number of affordable housing units provided during the year as a percentage of all additional housing units provided during the year.	N/A	15%	20%	N/A
PLA/007	The number of additional housing units provided during the year on previously developed land as a percentage of all additional housing units provided during the year.	N/A	N/A	47%	N/A

\*PLA 004 (i) is rarely going to be determined in a National Park within 13 weeks unless it's a quick refusal of planning permission. Many such major applications would fall into Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development and are therefore determined over a longer timescale.

**Appendix 3:****National Parks Wales Comparative Performance Indicators  
2012-2013**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Brecon Beacons National Park Authority</b>	<b>Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority</b>	<b>Snowdonia National Park Authority</b>
CHR/ 001	The percentage of employees (including teachers and school based staff) who leave the employment of the authority, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis.	12.21%	7%	5.6%
CHR/ 002	The number of working days/ shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) authority employees lost due to sickness absence.	8.8 days	7 days	9.5 days
CHR/ 004	The percentage of authority employees from minority ethnic communities.	1.53%	0%	0%
CHR/ 005	The percentage of authority employees declaring that they are disabled under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act.	5.9%	Data not collected	0.5%
CFH/ 006	The percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid within 30 days of such invoices being received by the Authority.	86%	98%	99%
PLA/002	The percentage of applications for development during the year that were approved.	85%	83.5%	89%
PLA/003	The number of appeals that were determined during the year, in relation to:	Total 9	Total 11	Total 10
	a) planning application decisions	8	10	10
	b) enforcement notices	1	1	0

	The percentage of these determined appeals that upheld the Authority's decision, in relation to:			
	a) Planning application decisions	50%	63%	55%
	b) Enforcement notices	100%	100%	N/A
PLA/ 004	a) The percentage of major planning applications determined during the year within 13 weeks.*	0%	20%	0%
	b) The percentage of minor planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks.	53.59%	55%	60%
	c) The percentage of householder planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks.	70.90%	80%	75%
	d) The percentage of all other planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks.	53.84%	58%	100%
PLA/005	The percentage of enforcement cases resolved during the year within 12 weeks of receipt.	29%	89%	58%
PLA/006	The number of affordable housing units provided during the year as a percentage of all additional housing units provided during the year.	20%	4% (applications approved)	61%
PLA/007	The number of additional housing units provided during the year on previously developed land as a percentage of all additional housing units provided during the year.	47%	4%	28.5%

\*PLA 004 (i) is rarely going to be determined in a National Park within 13 weeks unless it's a quick refusal of planning permission. Many such major applications would fall into Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development and are therefore determined over a longer timescale.

## Appendix 4: Glossary of terms

BAR	Buildings at Risk
BBNPA	Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
BDG	Building Design Guide
BIP	Business Improvement Plan
BIS	Biodiversity Information Service
BBPS	Brecon Beacons Park Society
Cadw	Welsh: to keep, Welsh pronunciation: kadu. The historic environment service of the Welsh Government, part of the Housing, Regeneration and Heritage Department
CiC	Community Interest Company
CCW	Countryside Council for Wales (see NRW)
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
EAW	Environment Agency Wales (see NRW)
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
FCW	Forestry Commission Wales (see NRW)
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GIS	Geographic Information System
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
KESS	Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships
LDP	Local Development Plan
LiDAR	Light Detection and Radar
LPG	Liquid Petroleum Gas
MSc	Master of Science
NG	National Grid
NPA	National Park Authority
NPMP	National Park Management Plan

NRW	National Resources Wales (Combination of FCW, CCW and EAW)
NT	National Trust
PAROW	Planning and Rights of Way
PCNPA	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PI	Performance Indicator
PLC	Public Limited Company
ROW	Rights of Way
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument
SDF	Sustainable Development Fund
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SNPA	Snowdonia National Park Authority
SOP	State of the Park
TGV	The Green Valleys
Uniform	Name of computer software system
WAO	Welsh Audit Office
WG	Welsh Government
WLGA	Welsh Local Government Association

## **Appendix 5:**

### **Business Improvement Plan Part I**