

REPORT OF Scrutiny Panel - Lead Member - Professor Alan Lovell

SUBJECT:

Improvement Objective 5 from the 2011/12 Business Improvement Plan:

Minimise damage to the Park's environment, which is evidenced by:

- a. Delivery of key practical projects that mitigate negative impacts.**
 - b. The establishment of baseline data to inform state of the Park monitoring.**
- This will result in a more thorough and scientific understanding of the current state of the Park's environment.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key issues arising from the study

1. Improvement objective 5 from the 2011/12 Business Improvement Plan goes to the heart of the Authority's statutory purposes and will feature, in one form or another, as an improvement objective over succeeding business improvement plans. Success in delivering this improvement objective will go a long way to explaining the Authority's success in fulfilling the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) and its statutory purposes.
2. The Authority recognises that it cannot deliver the NPMP exclusively from within its own resources, but it is not clear if there is a shared understanding, at Authority level at least, as to how best to harness the cooperation, engagement and collaboration of partners and stakeholders in the delivery of the NPMP.
3. There is a critical need to ensure that annual improvement objectives are compatible with and support the longer term objectives of the NPMP. If annual improvement objectives dominate the Authority's thinking it is likely that projects will be selected that are predominantly within the Authority's control and own resources. At the present time 80% of the projects undertaken to minimise harm to the Park's environment, i.e. Improvement Objective 5, are taking place on 14% of the Park's land area. This is the area of the national park owned or directly managed by the Authority.
4. There is a need to develop and agree a clear understanding of partners and stakeholders and how these different relationships can contribute to the successful delivery of the NPMP.

5. The National Park Management Plan (NPMP) is the key management document for each UK national park. However, in Wales it does not, as yet, feature in external review of Wales' national parks. It tends to be seen as an internal management resource, the canvas upon which the long and medium term objectives feature. In principle this should not be a problem because the senior management of a national park can always refer back to their NPMP to justify what they are doing at a point in time and to have their performance judged against the milestones contained within the NPMP. However, NPMPs span a number of general elections with the potential for changing priorities of new administrations. In addition, policy priorities of governments flex over time and economic conditions change. As a consequence the focus for BBNPA's resource allocation decisions has, until relatively recently, tended to reflect the directions signaled in the annual strategic grant letter and, more recently, the requirements of annual improvement objectives. The NPMP has until relatively recently, played less of a central role in taking the Authority forward than might be expected, although this has now changed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For CMT to bring to the NPA its proposals for:

1. placing a time continuum against the NPMP and using the resulting milestones as annual improvement objectives, certainly over the next five years of the NPMP. Whilst this scrutiny study has focused upon projects associated with minimising harm to the National Park, this should be treated as a recommendation for the NPMP as a whole.
2. broadening the area of the national park which is the focus of improvement projects to conserve and enhance the Park's natural environment.
3. strengthening the quality of baseline data, demonstrating why the areas identified are the key indicators and how the data collection is to be achieved.

Report No. **01-2012/13**

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Scrutiny study of Improvement Objective 5 from the 2011/12 Business Improvement Plan

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1.0 Introduction

This is the first official scrutiny study undertaken by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (hereafter referred to as BBNPA or the Authority), although two pilot studies were undertaken during the development of Scrutiny within the Authority. A statement identifying the research methods employed during the study and the organisations which were approached to take part are shown in Appendix I.

The Welsh Government's Local Government (Wales) Measure (2009), which requires all local authorities and national parks in Wales to submit annual improvement objectives to the Wales Audit Office (WAO), echoes the Authority's own commitment to continuous improvement. Reflecting the Authority's practice of transparency and public accountability¹ it was decided to focus the initial scrutiny studies upon the improvement objectives as a way of assessing how well the Authority is achieving these agreed performance objectives.

The need for public bodies to be regularly accountable for their actions is a sine qua non of good governance, but in the context of national parks this need does raise challenges because many important and urgent issues are not easily addressed within twelve month time slots. Indeed projects undertaken to address issues such as the degradation of wildlife habitats or seepage from peat bogs may involve little perceptible improvement for some time before recovery and renewal begin to take effect. It is thus imperative that improvement objectives are seen in the context of the medium to longer term plans and objectives of the Authority. Thus, the first part of this report is a brief review of the Authority's planning horizons and reporting requirements to consider the extent to which compatibility and complementarity exist between the different elements of the Authority's performance jigsaw.

¹ In 2012 the Authority began live webcasting of its three main committee meetings, i.e. meetings of the National Park Authority, Public Access and Rights of Way, and Audit & Scrutiny.

2.0 Improvement Objective 5 (part 1)

This improvement objective goes to the heart of BBNPA's statutory purposes. It will feature in future Business Improvement Plans in some form or another and the success of the Authority in achieving this improvement objective will go a long way to explaining the Authority's success in fulfilling its statutory purposes.

Improvement Objective 5 for 2011/12 (hereafter referred to as IO5) was in two parts, the first being the development of projects to minimise harm to the Park's environment, whilst the second concerned developing and enhancing the BBNPA's baseline data. These two elements are closely related but separable.

The Welsh Government's Local Government (Wales) Measure (2009), which requires all local authorities and national parks in Wales to submit annual improvement objectives to the Wales Audit Office (WAO), echoes the Authority's own commitment to continuous improvement. Reflecting the Authority's practice of transparency and public accountability² it was decided to focus the initial scrutiny studies upon the improvement objectives as a way of assessing how well the Authority is achieving these agreed performance objectives.

From the outset it was agreed that this study would reflect upon the improvement objectives and governance structures operating in all the UK National Parks, to listen to and reflect upon their practices in these areas. This part of the study has been particularly insightful and has raised some important questions and issues for the Authority to consider, not least:

- i) the different approaches being adopted by National Parks across the UK in operationalising their respective National Park Management Plans; and
- ii) what is meant by the terms partners and stakeholders and the differences between these two terms for the Authority.

3.0 Planning horizons and reporting requirements

Diagram 1 shows the relationships between the different planning horizons of the Authority and the National Park Management Plan (NPMP). With its twenty year planning horizon, the NPMP is the Authority's overarching and key planning and management document and is updated every five years.

As shown in Diagram 1, the BBNPA has three groups of time-based objectives and goals, with associated reporting requirements. The first group is represented by the NPMP. Achievement of the NPMP is not solely a function of managing and directing the Park's limited resources to the most critical priority areas. It requires securing the support and engagement of key organisations to give the NPMP's priorities the same level of priority in their respective organisation's resource allocation processes, and to do this over the life of the NPMP.

² In 2012 the Authority began live webcasting of its three main committee meetings, i.e. meetings of the National Park Authority, Planning, Access and Rights of Way, and Audit & Scrutiny.

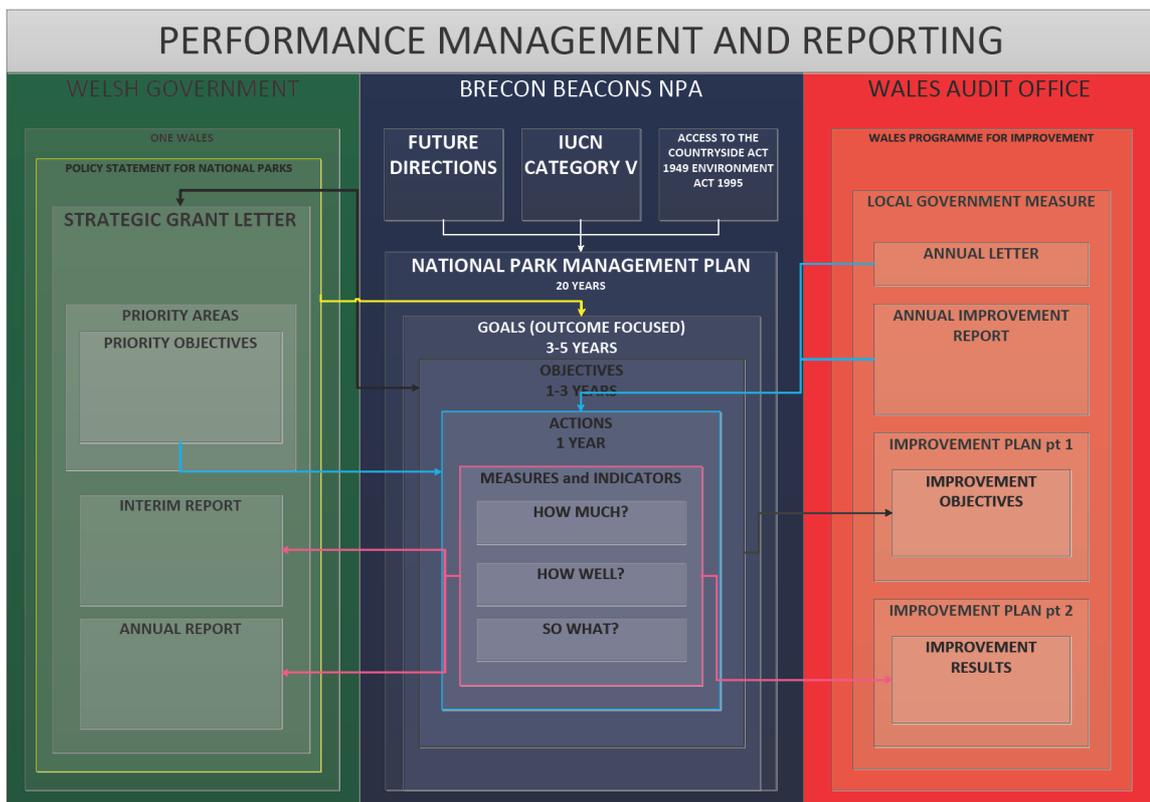


Diagram I

Source: BBNPA

The second group are the ‘Goals’, which have a 3-5 year time perspective. These are the articulation of what the BBNPA has decided to focus its attention and resources upon over the next 3-5 year period. These outcomes are largely within the control of the BBNPA and hence action plans are influenced by what is ‘doable’ within the Park’s resources. In the context of the BBNPA this is significantly facilitated by projects which are undertaken on land which the Authority owns.

The final group of objectives cover a 1-3 year time horizon and relate to the annual improvement objectives and matters contained in the strategic grant letter from the Welsh Government.

Within this planning framework there are two key issues. The first, as mentioned above, is that the Authority cannot achieve some of the identified high priority issues identified within the NPMP without convincing other organisations and agencies, such as Environment Wales, the Forestry Commission, Countryside Council for Wales, Dwr Cymru and significant local authorities to give the Park’s key issues high priority within their own organisations. Thus, partnership working is central to a number of the Authority’s key priority issues being successfully addressed.

The way some of England’s national parks are addressing the issue of partnership raises important questions for the Authority and these are considered later in this report. The creation of a single environment body in Wales may, in time, facilitate such discussions, but in the short term, whilst the new organisation grapples with the merger, the impact upon communication channels and partnership working is unclear.

The second factor is that, whilst the NPMP is recognised by all as the key management document for national parks in Wales, it does not, as yet, feature in external review of the parks. It tends to be seen as an internal management resource, the canvas upon which the long and medium term objectives feature. In theory this should not be a problem, because the senior management of a national park can always refer back to their NPMP to justify what they are doing at a point in time and to have their performance judged against the milestones contained within the NPMP. However, NPMPs span a number of general elections with the potential for changing priorities of new administrations. In addition, policy priorities of governments flex over time and economic conditions change. As a consequence the focus for BBNPA's resource allocation decisions has, until relatively recently, tended to reflect the directions signaled in the annual strategic grant letter and, more recently, the requirements of annual improvement objectives. The NPMP has until relatively recently, played less of a central role in taking the Authority forward than might be expected, although this has now changed.

4.0 Stakeholders and partners

The term stakeholders usually applies to individuals, groups and organisations which have an interest or stake in the development of a separate entity, even though they do not possess any ownership rights. The organisations which were consulted during this study and which are listed in Appendix I, all have an interest or stake in the Brecon Beacons National Park. For some that stake is of such an intensity, or their role is of such significance to the delivery of the NPMP that their status goes beyond that of stakeholder and graduates towards that of 'partner', prospective or actual. That is, the BBNPA cannot undertake some of its work as effectively as it would like, or at all, without significant commitments and actions by those organisations.

Unusually amongst UK national parks the BBNPA owns or directly manages a significant amount of the land in the Park (14%). At first glance this would appear to offer the BBNPA an advantage in that sometimes difficult and time consuming negotiations with landowners concerning access; the type of restorative or management work that needs to be undertaken; how that work is to be undertaken; and over what period, might be avoided. However, with most of this land 'common land', such negotiations are still required with grazier associations. Notwithstanding this it remains the case that around 80% of the current improvement projects (i.e. Improvement Objective 5) are located within that part of the national park which is owned or directly managed by the Authority. The potential downside to this situation is that the remaining 86% of the Park's land might be unintentionally de-prioritised as decisions are made as to which projects should be undertaken in a programme of work designed to reduce harm to, or conserve and enhance the Park's environment.

A second factor which will continue to shape resource allocation in national parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) is the government target that all SSSI's must be in a favourable condition by 2020. Failure to do so will no doubt attract the attention of pressure groups and the public at large and suggest that where a sub-standard SSSI is located in a national park or AONB, then that authority is failing in its duty³.

³ Within the Brecon Beacons National Park there are 19 geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); 64 biological SSSIs; 21 UK priority habitats; 48 UK priority species; and 11 Special areas of Conservation (Source: National Park Management Plan)

Limited resources demand prioritisation and the factors mentioned above can be major reasons in deciding where those limited resources are applied.

With few additional resources likely to be available to the Authority over the next 3-5 years to fulfil its two primary purposes, the notions of partners and partnerships become ever more relevant. As will be seen when the approaches adopted in some other UK national parks are considered, different alignments and working relationships, and even different governance structures, are emerging to allow the management plans of the respective national park authorities to be delivered.

5.0 Improvement Objective 5 (IO5) (part 2)

As this scrutiny study progressed it became clear that the Authority had not undertaken any new projects to minimise harm to the Park as a direct result of the improvement objectives' initiative. Projects which would satisfy IO5 were either already underway or in the work plan. That there was no need to identify any new projects to satisfy IO5 is neither surprising nor an issue. The projects that would allow IO5 to be achieved are listed in Appendix 2.

What was surprising, however, was that none of the projects had clearly stated performance levels to be achieved by the year-end. Whilst it is accepted that some of the initial beliefs of what would be possible against each project might prove to be unachievable due to changing priorities as the year unfolded, not to have a clear and shared understanding of what was intended to be achieved against each project at the start of the year was a weakness of the approach. This limitation was recognised and responded to in the development of the 2012/13 improvement objectives.

In the 2012/13 Business Improvement Plan a development of 2011/12's IO5 was included, but the processes by which the improvement objective and its associated projects were selected displayed much greater rigour than its 2011/12 comparator. The 2012/13 improvement objectives flow directly from the Authority's National Park Management Plan (NPMP) and were debated at workshops involving officers, representatives of various stakeholder groups and Members of the Authority. In addition performance outcomes were identified.

Notwithstanding the above, questions remain concerning the projects selected. There is no doubt the projects selected represent important projects which will conserve and enhance the Park's natural environment. Whether the projects selected are the most pressing or the most important is an open question. Due, in part, to the Authority's significant land holding and the advantages this potentially affords the Authority in terms of the speed and ease with which it can begin directing resources at projects, some areas of the Park may be better served than others regarding conservation and enhancement projects.

However, any questions about the conservation projects undertaken by the Authority to satisfy IO5 must also recognise that the Authority would be criticised if it directed its limited resources in such a way that its own land holdings were seen as some of the Park's neglected areas. Furthermore, the Authority would be rightly questioned concerning the wisdom of spending large amounts of its time in potentially protracted negotiations over land access and what it would and would not be allowed to do by landowners, if these negotiations were at the expense of actually undertaking projects which allowed it to address its two statutory purposes and act as the guardian of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

To explore this conundrum further the scrutiny study moved to the phase which involved interviewing all the UK national parks. With most of the UK national parks having smaller land holdings than the BBNPA, in some cases none at all, their approach to enhancing and conserving their respective national parks was of considerable interest. It is to this aspect of the study that the report now moves.

6.0 UK National Parks - projects and relationships to protect and enhance their respective natural environments

As mentioned above the BBNPA is unusual in the amount of the national park that it owns or directly manages. Interviews with all of the other UK national parks revealed interesting differences in how the authorities progressed projects designed to minimise harm and protect and enhance their respective national parks. However, first it is important to reflect upon the different governance structures of national parks which exist in Wales, Scotland and England, because these have a bearing upon the way the respective national parks interact with their partners and stakeholders and the ways they employ their respective NPMPs.

In England the relationship between the national parks and the National Audit Office (NAO) is a more distant one than between the national parks of Wales' and the Wales Audit Office. England's National Parks submit annual accounts to the NAO, but unless something in the accounts, or the associated statistical reports, gives rise to concerns a visit from the NAO is unlikely.

The principal performance review of each national park in England takes the form of a quinquennial review, with a quinquennial review panel being composed of senior officers from other national parks (often CEOs), representatives from central and local government and NAO representatives. The quinquennial reviews take as their starting point the NPMP agreed at the previous quinquennial review. The reviews last for four days and appear to be demanding.

To take their respective NPMPs forward England's national parks require a close set of relationships with a variety of organisations. To this end some national parks have created, or are developing, 'Partnership Boards'. These Boards are a formalisation of partnership working, involving particular key organisations in developing and implementing various National Park Management Plans.

6.1 New Partnership arrangements - Partnership Boards/Committees

Like most organisations the resources of national parks are heavily constrained and if as many as possible of the projects needed to protect and enhance a national park are to be undertaken then more than the resources of the national park are required. This is where the Partnership model offers a different way forward. The upper case 'P' is purposeful and designates a notion of partnership which is long term and structurally embedded. It is not the conventional notion of partnership, which tends to reflect bi-lateral agreements, limited to specific projects

Possibly the two most advanced Partnership approaches are those of the Lake District National Park and Northumberland National Park, although the Yorkshire Dales identified itself as close to this 'strong form' of Partnership working⁴. An indication of the advance of this notion of Partnership is that with its first quinquennial review due in 2012, the New Forest National Park is proposing a Partnership model similar to that of the Lake District National Park Authority and Northumberland National Park Authority. In this context it is also important to highlight the approach of the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA), which has adopted a similar approach with respect to a critical aspect of its remit.

With social and economic development an equally important aim of Scotland's two national parks as the conservation and enhancement of the Parks' natural and cultural heritage, the CNPA has established a separate grouping known as the Cairngorms Business Partnership which has responsibility for delivering its business/tourism strategy. The CNPA provides funding on the basis of a business plan but responsibility for delivering the business plan is ceded to the Cairngorms Business Partnership, which is comprised of leading business people and business organisations. Given the fragility of the local economy the business plan is a fundamental part of what is termed the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan, the equivalent of the NPMPs of Wales and England. Because of this the chief executive of the CNPA judged her authority to be moving in the direction of the Lake District and Northumberland model of Partnership.

A Partnership Board reflects a grouping of key partners and this grouping is formalised into a recognised committee of the Authority, charged with responsibility for developing, implementing and overseeing the NPMP.

⁴ The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's principal conservation and restoration project (both currently and into the foreseeable future) is the restoration and conservation of its upland peat areas and this is managed by the Yorkshire Peat Partnership. There are also key partnerships with the Yorkshire and Ribble Rivers' Trusts and the Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company. Probably the most significant partnership, however, is with the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust which acts as a major fundraising organisation for projects in the national park. The Millennium Trust also administers the Authority's Sustainable Development Fund.

The Lake District National Park Authority has established a Lake District National Park Partnership, which meets four times each year. The equivalent committee of the Northumberland National Park Authority meets twice each year. The terms of reference of the Lake District National Park Authority Partnership are:

1. Develop, agree, and continuously review, a vision for the Lake District National Park by engaging others.
2. Develop, agree and monitor a delivery plan for the vision for the National Park by establishing clear roles for members of the partnership and other organisations.
3. Provide strategic advice and recommendations to the National Park Authority in the creation, monitoring and review of policies for developing and managing the National Park and any issues related to its future. This will include the Lake District National Park Management Plan, the Local Development Framework, and the State of Park Report.

The Lake District National Park Authority's vision for the Park has four elements and the Partnership Board (termed a sub-group of the Authority), has been charged with the delivery of the four key elements. What is so distinctive is that each element is led by a person who is not a member or officer of the national park. The current position was established in November 2009 and the lead organisations for each element are as follows.

<u>Key elements of the vision</u>	<u>Lead organisation</u>
• Prosperous economy	Cumbria County Council
• World class visitor attraction	Cumbria Tourism
• Spectacular landscape	Natural England
• Vibrant communities	Cumbria Association of Local Councils/ACTION with Communities in Cumbria (ACT)

In addition to the organisations acting as leads of the four elements, the following organisations are active members of the Partnership Board, which the Lake District National Park Authority refers to as the Partnership's Plan sub-group.

- **Friends of the Lake District**
- **South Lakeland District Council**
- **Environment Agency**
- **The National Trust**
- **Forestry Commission**
- **Copeland Borough Council**
- **National Farmers Union**

Reports and recommendations from the sub-group do go before the Authority for approval, but as the chief executive observed, too much time has been invested by too many influential people from the Partnering organisations for recommendations to be overturned. Once the Partnership has agreed its recommendations, approval by the Authority seems to be a formality.

The Northumberland National Park Authority works at a similar level of embeddedness with a range of organisations via what is known as the Management Plan Partnership. The key Partners are:

Natural England; One North East; English Heritage, Forestry Commission, Defense Estates, Northumberland Tourism Limited, Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum, Northumberland County Council and the Environment Agency. In addition a number of other partners have contributed to the development of both the Management Plan and the first Annual Action Plan.

Interestingly the Northumberland National Park Authority owns only 1% of the land in the Park but it has two significant landowners, the Forestry Commission (20%) and the Ministry of Defence (23%).

What is key to this approach is that the representatives of the Partner organisations are senior officers, i.e. main board directors or regional directors. Agreements made at the Partnership Board are taken back to their respective organisations and embedded into those organisations' action plans and strategy documents. The individuals are sufficiently senior within their own organisations to be able to commit their organisations to a decision taken at the Partnership Board. This is the principal reason why recommendations of a Partnership Board have to be seen as having integrity. The trust of Partnering organisations in committing their own organisation's resources to objectives and projects which are central to the NPMP cannot fall foul of internal politicking within a national park. However, processes and structures can be organised to ensure that all members of a national park are kept fully informed and involved with developments within the Partnership Board.

Interestingly there are no members of the Lake District National Park Authority on the Partnership Board. This is why it is seen as the most radical example of Partnership Boards. However, there is no reason why variants of this approach cannot operate effectively, for example:

- Members of the Authority being represented on the Partnership Board.
- Regular reports from the Partnership Board to the Authority, each requiring formal Authority approval, thereby minimising/removing the likelihood that major recommendations from the Partnership Board will come as a surprise and possibly meet with resistance from the Authority.
- Some or all of the key working groups to be led by the Authority's officers or members.

A variant on the above is Exmoor National Park Authority which has adopted a different approach again. It has established a Management Plan Implementation Board, with the NPMP reviewed quarterly and partners (principally bi-lateral arrangements on specific projects) being asked to scrutinise achievements. Such a review board can comprise or include unelected members who are invited or voted onto the review board as a result of their known expertise or their position as a representative of important external constituencies.

The development of Partnership Boards is seen by many who have been interviewed (and more than the Lake District, Northumberland and New Forest National Parks) as a powerful way forward, maybe the only way forward if national park management plans are to be achieved in significant ways. However, a number of the national parks in England operate without Partnership arrangements, employing bi-lateral arrangements with key organisations to deliver on key aspects of their NPMP. The common denominator between this group of national parks and those employing or moving towards an embedded Partnership model is the centrality of the NPMP and that is the acid test; the fundamental question for each national park. Which approach is best suited to achieving the National Park Management Plan in a significant way? This is the fundamental question for the BBNPA.

It was suggested that the stimulus for an embedded notion of Partnership in some national parks arose out periods of crisis; when relationships between particular national parks and their local communities had broken down and notions of trust had all but disappeared. Indeed periods of crisis are recognised in the literature on organisational change as key opportunities to make changes, radical or otherwise. So this is neither surprising nor a criticism. The important point is to be clear why the approach of any specific national park towards Partnership/partnership is as it is. It clearly cannot be because “that is the way it has always been”, but rather because the Authority has evaluated the options with regard to achieving its NPMP and arrived at the considered view that the approach being adopted offers the greatest prospects of achieving the NPMP.

The idea of bringing together senior figures from key organisations to address difficult social issues is not new. Local Service Boards (LSBs) were developed with such intentions in mind, but the mixed performance of LSBs may not fill some with the confidence to see such an approach being adopted in national parks. However, the issues facing national parks, whilst complex and difficult, cannot be as complex and intractable as many of those faced by some LSBs. Whilst no-one who was interviewed for this study suggested that Partnership Boards were a panacea, there was general agreement by those adopting them that their national park was achieving far more of its NPMP than it had ever achieved in the past. An extract from the November 2010 Northumberland National Park Authority Performance Assessment Report is pertinent. This report relates to the Authority’s latest quinquennial review conducted by SOLACE⁵. The extract relates to partner involvement and delivery.

⁵ SOLACE is the Society of Local Authorities’ Chief Executives and this organisation has developed a quinquennial review model for national parks in England. The SOLACE Enterprises model of peer assessment for NPAs involves an NPA Chief Executive, a serving local authority Chief Executive, an NPA member and an NPA Staff reviewer, all working with a SOLACE Enterprises facilitator for 4 or 5 days on site. This model has been specifically designed for providing peer assessment for national parks.

Partner involvement in developing the NPMP is impressive. Partner involvement and public engagement in developing the NPMP was extensive and inclusive..... The Management Plan Partnership, established to oversee the delivery of the NPMP, now provides a strong guiding and monitoring role. The partnership has an extremely high level of ownership and connection to NPMP priorities and to the wider environmental and socio-economic agenda in the sub-region. This level of ownership means that NPA priorities are increasingly reflected in the delivery plans of the organisations that form the partnership and in the work of their managers. The Authority's approach engenders this high level of ownership and encourages partners to go farther than they might otherwise have done. (page 5)

It is fair to say that not all CEOs of England's national parks were without criticisms of the quinquennial peer review process, but these issues lie outside of the ambit of this scrutiny study.

6.2 New Partnership arrangements - conditional out-sourcing

A different, but not mutually exclusive approach is being adopted by some national parks, that of what is termed in this report as 'conditional out-sourcing', which involves some of the work of a national park being out-sourced or delegated to external organisations, but in such a way that the out-sourcing is not irrevocable should performance fail to satisfy the standards agreed in a framework document. This notion of outsourcing does not concern services such as accounts management or cleaning services, but rather responsibility for areas of the national park and hence the NPMP.

The term 'conditional' goes far broader than the conventional use of the term, with conditionality being applied to the values, objectives and legal status of potential Partners of outsourced national park work. This is a profoundly different concept to the use of out-sourcing used in many local government contexts. Indeed, in a number of conditional outsourcing cases involving a national park, the contract or agreement might involve no exchange of money.

National Parks (and most other organisations in the UK) are actively seeking new funding streams. It can be said that National Parks hold a particular place in the national psyche and the prospects for raising additional funds via public appeals may appear to offer some promise. However, at a time of what is being described as the worst double-dip recession in fifty years (The Guardian, 25th July 2012) and with so many other organisations and 'good-causes' chasing a diminishing pot of charitable giving, the pathway to additional financial resources maybe more problematic than anticipated. In addition other organisations have a much longer track record of successful fundraising e.g. RSPB and National Trust.

Some recent initiatives have seen national parks entering into discussions regarding leasing agreements with organisations such as RSPB and National Trust. The proposals are that the national parks in question lease specific tracts of land to the charity for a period of, say, twenty years, with intermediate review periods, and a well-defined service level agreement (SLA) defining what the lessee will deliver. This scenario assumes the national park owns the land, but if not, then a national park can act as a facilitator between land owner and prospective lessee in developing an appropriate SLA.

It is not out of the question for national parks to sell rather than lease some of their landholdings, but again with strict conditions as to future use. More confidence in such possibilities would exist if the purchasers were registered charities with avowed commitments to the same values, principles and vision as the national park. Conditional out-sourcing is a way of bringing more resources and expertise into the achievement of a national park management plan and is an approach being actively explored by a number of national parks.

Many National Parks enjoy close collaboration with key partners delivering on important projects within the National Park. For example, both Exmoor National Park Authority and Dartmoor National Park Authority have agreements with utility providers to employ underground (rather than over ground) cabling when developing electricity distribution networks. This development has been facilitated by the Countryside and Public Rights of Way (2000), known as the CRoW Act, which lays a duty on organisations such as utility companies to have regard for the purposes of National Parks. Indeed, at the time of writing this report, the BBNPA is itself in negotiations with an electricity distributor to lay electricity cables underground in that part of the Park affected by the electricity distribution project.

Exmoor National Park Authority also has one of its key partners, the RSPB, undertaking bird monitoring as part of its drive to enhance its baseline data. In the same vein, wildlife trusts associated with the Broads Authority own, manage or take responsibility for nature reserves, in much the same way as the Brecknock and Gwent Wildlife Trusts do in the Brecon Beacons National Park. Indeed BBNPA's record in developing creative partnership and Partnership arrangements, as in the Sustainable Tourism Partnership and The Green Valleys initiative, bear testimony to the Authority's readiness and ability to respond positively to opportunities when they arise. What is now required is a debate within the Authority to determine the extent to which such Partnerships/partnerships are pro-actively sought with regard to protecting and enhancing the National Park's natural environment.

It must be stressed that delegating responsibility for parts of the NPMP, and even leasing tracts of land, are not akin to selling off the family silver. What is important is that the two options considered in this section offer national parks real opportunities for:

- i) substantially increasing the resource and expertise base to deliver the NPMP;
- ii) securing the commitment of key organisations at the most senior levels in the delivery of the NPMP; and
- iii) achieving the primary purposes of the national park in more substantial ways than might be currently possible, especially with regard to the conservation and enhancement of specific habitats and eco-systems.

The second part of Improvement Objective 5 related to the development and enhancement of baseline data. As the foundation of a national park management plan has to be good quality baseline data, the embedding of Partner organisations such as the Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency, key local authorities, relevant charitable and third sector organisations, including wildlife trusts, to the achievement of the plan, brings their organisational resources and expertise to bear on enhancing the quality of baseline data as it relates to the national park.

7.0 Partners and stakeholders of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

To explore the notions of partnerships and stakeholding within the context of environmental issues contained within IO5 the scrutiny study involved a wide variety of organisations in a mailed questionnaire (the organisations approached are shown in Appendix I). Before distributing the questionnaire, the organisations were contacted by telephone to obtain their agreement to take part in the study and follow-up telephone calls were made to those from whom responses had not initially been received. As a result the following organisations responded to the questionnaire.

- Brecknock Wildlife Trust
- Countryside Council for Wales
- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Gwent Wildlife Trust
- Local Access Forum
- Powys County Council
- National Trust
- Storey Arms Outdoor Education Centre
- Torfaen Borough Council

7.1 Notions of partnership

Notions of partnership were explored via a range of questions (see Appendix 3), and the range of responses was considerable. The concept of a Partnership Board was not raised overtly, but a series of questions sought to explore the responding organisation's attitudes towards deepening or distancing working relationships with BBNPA, both in the present time and in the future.

With organisational energies being directed to the establishment of a Single Environment Body in Wales by the Spring of 2013, discussions with the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and the Countryside Council for Wales on matters of strategic development with BBNPA could prove to be affected by the merger, but the responses of all three organisations were generally positive in terms of closer strategic cooperation between the respective organisations and BBNPA. The issue of partnership working was referred to by one of these organisations when commenting upon one of the key projects they had identified to minimise harm to the Park's environment (the grazing of cattle and cattle on common land),

“ This is a project that would need buy-in and time from partners, but is not necessarily costly. Involvement from farming representatives would be essential as the objective would be to understand fully the practical and regulatory difficulties and possible remedies”.

As alluded to above, possibly the most costly investment will be that of officer time in taking the notions of Partnership or partnership forward on a significant scale in the delivery of the NPMP's environmental objectives, but other organisations showed equal commitment to working with the BBNPA in this endeavour including the two wildlife trusts. Indeed this was the case with all the respondents within their respective spheres of engagement with the BBNPA. This suggests that opportunities for greater 'Partnership' arrangements for the BBNPA are available, thereby offering the prospect of a greater proportion of the NPMP's environmental issues being achieved.

7.2 Key projects for minimising harm to the BBNP and enhancing baseline data

The projects which formed BBNPA's IO5 are listed in Appendix 2, but the range of projects identified by existing partners and stakeholders as needing attention included, but unsurprisingly, went well beyond those projects included in IO5. From projects associated with upland footpath repair; to conservation projects of significant watercourses (notably the Usk and Wye rivers); from the development of greater evidence-based decisions on an eco-systems approach to landscape scale land management; to projects which increase water and carbon storage capability within the national park; the respondents identified key projects which officers of the BBNPA recognise as extremely important, but a number of which are currently beyond the resource capability of the Authority. Once again the need for creativity and thoughtful innovation in delivering the NPMP is evident in these replies.

A number of references were made to the potential impacts of climate change on wildlife and eco-systems and one respondent observed that,

BBNP could position itself as the Welsh barometer of climate change by monitoring and therefore collecting data about changes to the landscape and its habitat.

A multi-agency approach to large-scale landscape management challenges was explicitly recognised by one responding organisation as the way forward.

Developing the evidence base to support taking an ecosystem approach to landscape scale management in the NP. Via multi organisation collaborative projects which demonstrate the value (economic, social & environmental) but also confirm the deliverability of these larger scale integrated interventions.

This collaborative approach was seconded by another responding organisation.

I feel there is opportunity to share good land management practice and work together to enhance biodiversity conservation in the Park, particularly working on landscape scale projects.

The above statements reflect the recognised need for a multi-agency approach to some of the complex issues facing national parks in general and BBNPA in particular. The notion of embedded Partnerships and/or more strategic alliances for BBNPA may be analogous to pushing at open doors.

7.3 Critical areas for the development of baseline data

BBNPA and its major collaborating organisations can point to examples of where collaboration is working. As the Environment Agency (EA) pointed out, it provided an evidence pack summarising environmental information from the EA's main data sets for the preparation of the NPMP.

Interestingly, as well as a frequently expressed need for much greater detail and segmentation of visitor numbers, including impact surveys on habitats and ecosystems, a number of respondents flagged the need for impact assessments on employment levels as a result of various initiatives.

Opportunities were highlighted concerning the use of lakes, reservoirs and rivers and how closer cooperation in developing important information could allow possible developments in these areas to be more effectively evaluated.

Transport issues, including impact assessments of increasing visitor numbers, were raised by a number of respondents. As with many developments in the national park, such developments as increasing visitor numbers bring both potential benefits and drawbacks.

The need for good quality data and information on climate change were understandably highlighted and as observed above, one respondent felt that the BBNPA could become the barometer for Wales with respect to climate change and its impacts.

The feedback on the questionnaires has been shared with officers of the Authority.

8.0 REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The National Park Management Plan - its place within the Authority's DNA

The NPMP should be the central document of the Authority's intent and vision, and when disaggregated, the touchstone of officer actions and Authority decisions. However, the extent to which the NPMP acts as the fulcrum towards which all management and Member thinking gravitates is still developing. Due to the very difficult period the Authority experienced some five to seven years ago, with its

very existence called into question, the priority at that time had to be to restore the Authority's organisational and financial credibility. As a consequence, until the past three years or so, the shorter term Strategic Grant Letter had tended to have a dominating effect on management priorities within the BBNPA. Within the past two to three years this has been supplemented by annual improvement objectives.

Whilst a National Park Management Plan has existed, until the last three years, it does not appear to have been the anchoring point of management or Member priorities. Amongst the Members of the Authority it was rarely discussed in detail. This has changed and the NPMP is becoming the key management document that it should be within the BBNPA, but there has been a need to build the baseline data which is so essential for an effective NPMP, hence the second element of IO5.

Although much progress has been made with regard to prioritising the centrality of the NPMP to everything that takes place in the national park, there is still progress to be made amongst both officers and members. Indeed it is instructive that the selection of improvement objectives by Members as the focus for the initial scrutiny studies had more to do with the fact that improvement objectives are assessed by the WAO, rather than the improvement objectives being an opportunity to assess how well the NPMP is progressing.

In addition, an improvement objective of both 2011/12 and 2012/13, the development of an excellent planning service, does not feature in the 2010/15 NPMP 'Priority Actions'. The roots of this improvement objective lie in an earlier, high priority, short-term objective of the Authority, which was to 'develop an effective planning service'. This was a critical area for the Authority to address at the time (2005-7) due to the then totally unacceptable performance of the Development Control function. As Development Control's performance began to be turned around, the objective morphed into one where 'excellence' became the standard.

To aspire to be excellent in one's field is a laudable goal and the development control function of the Authority is widely recognised as one in which performance has improved in very significant ways, and continues along that path. However, for the purposes of this report it is the lack of reference to the NPMP in the decision - making process of selecting this as an improvement objective, or maybe the omission from the NPMP 'Priority Actions' of this clearly significant objective of the Authority, which is the issue.

At one level the fact that no new projects were undertaken in 2011/12 as a direct result of the Authority committing itself to Improvement Objective 5 should be applauded. The projects which were identified as supporting IO5 were already underway or in the work plan of the Authority. Thus, it could be argued, IO5 reflected an improvement objective which was an intermediate staging post along a journey of improvements to achieve the NPMP. However, objectives without targets are less than effective and this weakness was corrected in the 2012/13 improvement objectives. What is now required is for the Authority, i.e. members, to be more demanding of how the NPMP, not just the annual improvement objectives, is progressing and how the improvement objectives are assisting in the attainment of the NPMP.

8.2 The National Park Management Plan - Partners, partners and stakeholders

At the present time the Authority has a number of organisations that it might refer to as partners and a largish number of stakeholders. Indeed the seventh element of the current NPMP's vision statement states;

In 2030 the Brecon Beacons National Park will be managed sustainably through active partnerships among the Park's stakeholders so that it continues to be a source of inspiration and enjoyment for future generations.

This report has highlighted a deeper notion of Partner, characterised by the upper case 'P', which reflects a level of embeddedness not yet evident in any of the three national parks of Wales with regard to environmental issues. As observed in this report, the primary question is not whether BBNPA should have relationships which can be characterised by either an upper or lower case "p" in the term 'partner', but rather identifying and agreeing upon the appropriate set of relationships with all the organisations associated with the BBNPA to facilitate the successful achievement of the NPMP.

In terms of renewable energy generation the BBNPA's significant support, both financial and physical, for The Green Valleys series of projects is a fine example of the Authority acting entrepreneurially in supporting an exciting initiative, not just in the short-term, but as a long-term commitment. Indeed the Green Valleys partnership can be seen as an example of conditional out-sourcing, with BBNPA delegating responsibility for the Authority's renewable energy targets to The Green Valleys. This is an example of the Authority responding imaginatively to a request for support to an impressive proposal and is in some ways the exception that proves the rule. BBNPA has not sought embedded partnerships but has shown itself to be adaptive and responsive when opportunities arise. The notion of embedded Partnerships or strategic alliances (significant bi-lateral agreements) in some other national parks represent a more proactive stance on the part of those national parks in progressing their NPMPs.

8.3 The National Park Management Plan - the role of improvement objectives

Whether a national audit office and/or a government requires improvement objectives over one year, three years, five years or more, should not be an issue for any National Park. If the NPMP has been disaggregated along a time dimension, then the improvement objectives fall-out from the NPMP. Whether any national park actually segments its NPMP along a time continuum at the time of developing the NPMP is questionable. The more common practice seems to be to set, say, 1-year or 3-year action plans based upon what the NPMP requires to be achieved. However, achievement of the NPMP requires far more than the expertise, resources and commitment within a national park's own resources and this is where the role of, and relationships with, P/partners comes sharply into focus.

Without these deep relationships the annual improvement objectives become what the national park itself can achieve, from within its own resources. If so this can lead to a decoupling of the improvement objectives from the NPMP. Yet improvement objectives cannot be management priorities running along parallel lines to the NPMP. The NPMP and annual improvement objectives have to be one and the same. The latter being the milestones along the route to attainment of the longer-term NPMP. This is understood within BBNPA in terms of general conversations between officers and members, but its embedding in thought, actions and decisions; into the organisations 'DNA' is still developing. The prioritisation process being employed by the Authority in 2012 in its allocation of resources with regard to improvement objectives and hence the NPMP is a positive example of this development.

8.4 The National Park Management Plan and Improvement Objectives' Recommendations

The level of disaggregation in BBNPA's current NPMP is impressive. It reflects a systematic analysis of all the key areas that need addressing if the NPMP is to be achieved, with responsibilities for the various projects clearly identified. What is more challenging is that many of the projects and required developments are not exclusively within the control of the BBNPA's management and in some cases BBNPA does not have the principal role, e.g. with regard to the quality of water entering the Park. Organisations, other than the National Park Authority, which have key roles in the achievement of different facets of the NPMP cannot be just stakeholders. Even partnership agreements, as conventionally understood, may not be the appropriate vehicles to cement the level of shared commitment. The notion of embedded Partners describes the type of relationship that some national parks are working towards to achieve their NPMPs and this is an approach that BBNPA should debate.

For CMT to bring to the NPA it's proposals for:

- 1. placing a time continuum against the NPMP and using the resulting milestones as annual improvement objectives, certainly over the next five years of the NPMP. Whilst this scrutiny study has focused upon projects associated with minimising harm to the National Park, this should be treated as a recommendation for the NPMP as a whole.**
- 2. broadening the area of the National Park which is the focus of improvement projects to conserve and enhance the Park's natural environment.**
- 3. strengthening the quality of baseline data, demonstrating why the areas identified are the key indicators and how the data collection is to be achieved.**

APPENDIX I

Research Design

As with most studies of this type the emphasis has been upon the gathering of information and understanding from many different sources, both secondary and primary, to bring as many perspectives as possible to bear upon the scrutiny subject. Learning is a fundamental aspect of all organisations' development and scrutiny provides a powerful opportunity for reflecting upon one's own practices and pondering the best practices in the field.

With this in mind the scrutiny team established a programme of enquiry which entailed questioning and/or interviewing:

- **Members of the Authority's Corporate Management Team (CMT)**
- **Members of the Authority's Joint Management Team (JMT)**
- **Park wardens**
- **Key stakeholder/partner groups, notably:**
 - Environment Agency
 - National Trust
 - Brecon Beacons Park Society
 - WEL – Wales Environment Link and members
 - The Army
 - RSPB
 - Cynnal Cymru
 - South Wales Outdoor Activities Group
 - Campaign for National Parks
 - Wildlife Trusts (including Brecknock Wildlife Trust and Gwent Wildlife Trust)
 - Local Authorities (Carmarthenshire CC, Monmouthshire CC, Powys CC and Torfaen CBC),
 - Dwr Cymru
 - Ramblers
 - Forestry Commission
 - Countryside Council for Wales
 - Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales
 - Outdoor Education Centres within the National Park
- **All the UK National Parks**
- **Wales Audit Office**

The research methods employed were:

- **face-to-face interviews;**
- **telephone interviews;**
- **mailed questionnaires, with initial contact made by telephone and with follow-up emails to prompt respondents;**
- **secondary evidence, primarily published documents by various national parks and websites.**

The research material generated from the interviews and returned questionnaires has proved a rich source of understandings and perspectives and all have informed this report.

APPENDIX 2

Improvement Objective 5: Projects undertaken to minimise harm to the Park's environment

Black Mountains SSSI

1. Cross Border Project Erosion Scar 1: works completed to reduce peat erosion, though this work was in England rather than within the Park (SSSI crosses the border); this work was completed under contract to Natural England. Proposal by NE to apply for DEFRA consent to erect a stock exclusion fence around the completed works were shelved following objections from the Black Mts Graziers Association.
2. Cross border Project Erosion Scar 2: project strategy completed, awaiting uptake and implementation by Natural England.
3. Annual controlled burning projects completed as per usual on Hatterrall Hill.
4. MSc project completed by student from UEA on vegetation recovery following burning.
5. Survey undertaken to locate the Silurian moth (a UK BAP species) completed on Hatterrall Hill, with sponsorship from the BBNPA Conservation and Community Grant

Henallt Common SSSI

6. Completion of site enhancement works (bracken control, scrub control, introduction of stock grazing by graziers, installation of cattle grid) using CCW S15 agreement and enhancement grant provided by NG Gas PLC in connection with the 1220mm natural gas pipeline

Llangasty (Llangors Lake SSSI) and Caeau Ty Mawr SSSI

7. Continued use of cattle grazing to improve habitat management of Caeau Ty Mawr pastures
8. Scrub clearance within reed swamp of Llangasty
9. Ditch clearance works to improve habitats and water quality entering the Lake and to create 'wet fences'
10. MSc project on the distribution of Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) in response to ditch management works.
11. Drafting of the brief management plan for Llangasty and Caeau Ty Mawr
12. Design competition, public consultation, design and build of replacement bird hide.
13. New interpretation panel (CCW grant) at Llangasty Car Park.

Mynydd Illtyd (Illtyd Pools SSSI)

14. Spraying of gorse re-growth in places where it has been previously cut down

Waterfall Country (including Coedydd Nedd a Mellte SAC)

15. Further implementation of the Waterfall Country Management Plan including:
16. Footpath erosion restoration works
17. Signage and information improvements
18. Initial preparation for a lower plant survey of the Mellte by a gorge walk to ID the locations at risk of erosion

Manor Penderyn

19. Controlled burns
20. Extensive wildfire damage
21. Completed the S194 application (1925 Law of Property Act) to retain the fence between Manor Penderyn and Eastern Great Forest commons
22. Application submitted with the consent and involvement of the Manor Penderyn Commoners Association

Mynydd Du (including Mynydd Bach Trecastell/Mynydd Du)

23. Controlled burns on Tair Cairn Uchaf
24. Extensive wildfires
25. MSc fire risk assessment project
26. Specialist aerial photographs commissioned from NERC using LIDAR and hyperspectroscopy to establish a new monitoring baseline for the peat and surface vegetation following extensive wildfires (also used for Herbert's Quarry in support of the Calch Project, Waun Figen Felen to assist hydrological modeling and Black Mts for the Erosion Scar 2)
27. Experimental habitat enhancements on Mynydd Myddfai under the enhancement grant from NG Gas PLC
28. Installation of new cattle grid on Mynydd Bach Trecastell under the enhancement grant from NG Gas PLC
29. Continued liaison with NG Gas PLC and contractors to provide increased assurance of restoration and aftercare on Myddfai (pipeline scar)

Woodlands

30. Better Woodlands for Wales grants received for The Govilon Line, Llangattock Beech Woods, Clun Gwyn, Gunpowder Works, CYNCP and Carreg Cennen Woodlands
31. At least four active Community Woodland Groups supported through TGVs SLA

Carreg Cennen Woodlands SSSI

32. Habitat mgmt (bracken and woodland control)

Garn Goch SAM

33. Continued Tir Gofal agreement
34. Continued bracken regrowth control (weed wiping)

BIS

35. Annual SLA maintained with BIS, particular achievement during 2011 is the further development of GIS habitat suitability models for European Protected Species, to be used to contextualise planning policy and decisions.

Research

36. Commenced KESS studentship with Swansea University, examining the peat carbon profiles of raised bogs in the Park
37. Continued support to staff PhD on the ecology and distribution of Carabidae within a modified riverine environment.

APPENDIX 3

Questionnaire for organisations associated with the BBNPA

Dear

As explained during our recent telephone call, Members of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority are currently undertaking a scrutiny study of one of the Authority's improvement objectives. Improvement objectives are the shortest term objectives within the Authority's planning framework, the principal document of which is the National Park Management Plan (NPMP), which sets out the Authority's plans, priorities and vision for twenty years into the future. As a key organisation in the delivery of the NPMP your participation in this study is much appreciated.

The improvement objective which this scrutiny study is focused upon is in two parts. The first part is concerned with developing projects which minimise harm to the Park, whilst the second part addresses the quality and quantity of the available baseline data, particularly that which underpins the 'State of the Park' report⁶.

Attached is a short questionnaire which I hope will take you no more than 10-15 minutes to complete, but which should provide us with very helpful information for the scrutiny study.

Once you have completed the questionnaire I would be very grateful if you would either email or post your response to:

**Ms Lora Davies,
Scrutiny Officer
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
Plas y Ffynnon
Cambrian Way/Ffordd Cambrian
Brecon/Aberhonddu
LD3 7HP**

**Telephone: 01874 620479
email: Lora.Davies@breconbeacons.org**

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the final report (due to be published in November this year), then please place a tick in the space provided at the end of the questionnaire.

Yours sincerely

**Professor Alan Lovell
Chair of Audit & Scrutiny**

⁶ The State of the Park Report reflects the key indicators used by the Authority to monitor aspects such as eco-systems; habitats, bio-diversity; flora; and fauna; sustainable communities, economic development and landscape assessment within the Park's boundaries.

Name of Organisation: _____

1. Given your experience and understanding of the Park, what would be your key projects for minimising harm to the Park's environment and why?

- 2 To what extent would you say that responsibility for the projects you have identified, and the resources needed to undertake and complete the projects, are within the control of the National Park Authority?

3. Have you been consulted when the National Park Authority has been setting its priorities?

Yes No

Please write any comment you have on this question below.

4. Does your organisation consult with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority when setting your key priorities?

Not at all Very occasionally Sometimes When necessary Frequently

Please add any comments below

5. For each national park its National Park Management Plan is the key planning document. In the case of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority this forward view covers the next twenty years, with the plan reviewed every five years. This scrutiny study has already revealed that different National Parks have formalised their relationships with significant partner organisations and stakeholder groups in quite different ways, impacting significantly upon how the National Park Management Plan is achieved.

Please place a tick in the all the boxes which describe your organisation's relationship with the BBNPA.

Column A relates to the relationship your organisation currently has with the BBNPA, whilst

Column B relates to the relationship which you consider your organisation should have with the BBNPA in order to maximise the prospects of the National Park Management Plan being achieved in the areas where your organisation and the BBNPA have a shared interest and/or involvement.

Please tick as many boxes as are relevant.

Type of relationship	A	B
The relationship is very loose between my organisation and the BBNPA with either organisation only contacting the other when there is a need.		
My organisation has not been involved in, or consulted on, any aspects of the National Park Management Plan.		
Some joint project working has been undertaken between my organisation and the BBNPA, but nothing significant or long-term.		
Some major, self-contained projects have been undertaken between my organisation and the BBNPA, but these have been one-off projects and have not led to anything more strategic between the two organisations.		
My organisation and the BBNPA have consulted one another when developing our respective strategic plans.		
My organisation and the BBNPA have entered into formal contractual arrangements on occasions and in relation to specific projects. These include service level agreements and/or other formal written agreements.		
My organisation works closely with the BBNPA and we are part of the working group that has been responsible for the development of the National Park's Management Plan.		
On those areas where there are shared or common interests, we integrate the relevant parts of the National Park Management Plan into our own strategic planning process.		
The main points of contact between my organisation and the BBNPA are between officers operating at middle-manager level.		
The main points of contact between my organisation and the BBNPA is between managers at all levels, including director level.		
When considering the development of baseline data we take into account the information needs of the National Park's State of the Park Report as identified by officers of the National Park (as outlined in the footnote to the covering letter).		

6 As a development to the final part of question 5 above, to what extent do you liaise with the National Park in either developing or enhancing baseline data information on issues such as eco-systems monitoring; habitats, bio-diversity; flora; and fauna.; sustainable communities, landscape assessments and economic development.

7 In your opinion which are the most critical areas of baseline data which either need developing from scratch or enhancing and which either impact upon the National Park or to which the National Park could make a valuable contribution?

Thank you

If there any additional comments or questions you would like to add please write them below, particularly in relation to areas of work where you feel your organisation and the National Park could work together in productive ways .

I would like to receive a copy of the final report.



APPENDIX 4

Interview schedule for the UK National Parks

1. All three National Parks in Wales are required to submit improvement objectives to the Welsh Audit Office (WAO) on an annual basis and these improvement objectives are then monitored by the WAO. Is your National Park subject to a similar approach by either the National Audit Office or a government department?

Please circle either : 'Yes' or 'No'

If 'Yes', please identify the external organisations involved and explain what is required.

2. All UK National Parks are charged with conserving and enhancing their natural environments, and their Park's natural beauty, but constraints on time and resources compel us all to prioritise. Would you identify (A) whether you undertook any significant projects in the financial year 2011/12, which were undertaken as priority objectives to conserve and enhance your National Park' environment and landscape quality; and (B) if you have, would you please explain below the nature of these projects.

(A)

(i) We did undertake significant projects

(ii) We did not undertake any such significant projects

Please circle the relevant option

(B) A description of the significant projects undertaken to conserve and enhance the Park's environment and natural beauty and which were priority projects for your Authority.

1. What were the criteria you employed that prioritised these projects?

4. Who was involved in the selection of the projects identified in question 2B above? Please only state job titles or management groups, not individual names.

5. What were the explicit objectives for each of the projects identified in your response to question 2B?

6. For each project identified in question 2B, what was achieved by the end of the 2011/12 year?

7. If the objectives for each project identified in 2B above were not fully achieved by year-end, have these projects been carried forward into 2012/13 as significant priorities for the Park?

8. Which officers of the Authority have been involved in setting the primary objectives for the Park for 2012/13? Please only provide job or role titles.

9. Do you produce a 'State of the Park' report (or its equivalent) on a regular basis? By 'State of the Park' report we mean a report which records the key indicators of species, habitats, and ecosystems in the Park, reflecting the levels and quality of bio-diversity within the Park. Please circle one of the responses below.

Yes **No**

10. If your answer to question 9 above was 'Yes', how frequently do you produce a 'State of the Park' report. Please circle the appropriate option.

Every year **Every 3 years** **Every 5 years** **Every 10 years**

11. Please identify and explain the key indicators you include in your State of the Park report, identifying which indicators are concerned with bio-diversity, eco-systems, natural beauty, or other categories the National Park might use.

12 Please explain the criteria employed which prioritised the above indicators as the key indicators for your Park.

13 On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing no baseline data at all; to 10 being comprehensive data on all species and biodiversity indicators, would you indicate in the oval shape below how satisfied you are with the quality of your baseline data upon which you produce your 'State of the Park' report?

Level of satisfaction



14. If you answer to question 13 above was less than 10, would you state below the principal areas of data deficiency.

15. What plans do you have to address any baseline data deficiencies and are these plans seen as key priorities for the Park Authority, which will be addressed within the next 12-24 months?
