

National Park Management Plans – Guidance



Helping everyone to respect, protect and enjoy the countryside

The Countryside Agency

Following publication of the draft Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill in February, English Nature, the Rural Development Service and the Countryside Agency's Landscape, Access and Recreation division are working towards integration as a single body: Natural England. It will work for people, places and nature with responsibility for enhancing biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas; promoting access, recreation and public well-being, and contributing to the way natural resources are managed – so they can be enjoyed now and for future generations.

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The Countryside Agency's Landscape, Access and Recreation division aims to help everyone respect, protect and enjoy the countryside – protecting natural landscapes; and encouraging access to, enjoyment of and sustainable management and use of the countryside.

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National Park Management Plans – Guidance

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1. Introduction

Who is this guidance for?

1.1. This guidance is for National Park Authorities and for all who have an influence over the future of the National Parks of England.

1.2. Under Section 66(1) of the Environment Act 1995 each National Park Authority is required to prepare and publish a National Park Management Plan for its Park.

1.3. Although preparation of the Management Plan is the prime responsibility of the National Park Authority (NPA), its preparation needs actively to engage and gain the support of all key stakeholders who will assist in its delivery.

What is new in this revised guidance?

1.4. This guidance replaces the earlier publication – *National Park Management Plans Guidance* published by the Countryside Commission and the Countryside Council for Wales in 1997.

1.5. A review and updating of the earlier guidance was one of the specific recommendations in the Defra¹ *Review of the English National Park Authorities* (2002)². This revised guidance is specifically for the English National Parks.

1.6. Key elements in this updating are:

- strong emphasis on the **process** of Plan preparation as a means of engaging key stakeholders in the subsequent delivery of the Plan;
- promotion of **integrated** thinking;
- acceptance of a more flexible approach to Plan **content**;
- the **link to State of the Park Reports**.

¹ Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

² Defra Review (2002) recommendation 19(iii) "The Countryside Agency, in consultation with Defra and National Park Authorities, should review its guidance on preparing National Park Management Plans."

1.7. In addition, this revised guidance sits within an evolving policy context. Sustainable development is now a key principle for the whole of government as well as the driving principle for Defra and the National Park Authorities. Changes since 1997, including publication of Urban and Rural White Papers, include:

- a revision of the Rural Strategy during 2004;
- introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000;
- an increasing emphasis on regional governance with the delivery of national policy through the eight English regions;
- the creation of the Regional Development Agencies and Regional Assemblies in 1999;
- steps to modernise government;
- the development of a raft of strategic partnerships many of which directly influence the future of the National Parks;
- changes to the planning system and rural planning policy;

- the increasing focus of government policy on social inclusion and sustainable development, particularly the establishment of the Sustainable Development Fund in 2002;
- major reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP);
- national restructuring in rural delivery;
- establishment of the New Forest National Park and the proposal for a new National Park in the South Downs.

1.8. At the same time the process of the Defra Review of the English National Park Authorities continues, with a number of the review outcomes taking effect for some time to come.

The importance of National Parks

1.9. National Parks contain the most beautiful, spectacular and dramatic expanses of countryside in England. Along with Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) these are landscapes of national importance with designation conferring the highest

status for the conservation of landscape and scenic beauty. They also contain a wealth of nationally and internationally important wildlife and geodiversity sites. Millions of visitors enjoy these qualities every year. Their establishment from the 1950s was the culmination of a campaign that is part of our political history. In 1989 the seven English National Parks were joined by the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads, managed by the Broads Authority under its own Act, with similar statutory powers and duties as the other National Park Authorities. In 2005 the New Forest became the eighth English National Park.

Cultural landscapes

1.10. Unlike the wilderness parks in some other countries, the National Parks of England include a significant element of cultural landscape, moulded by human influence over millennia. Most of the area of the Parks' is under private ownership. English National Parks are classified as Category V protected areas by the World Conservation Union. (which uses the acronym IUCN).

Box 1.1

Category V protected areas

Category V protected areas are defined in the 1994 *Guidelines of Protected Area Management Categories* (IUCN) as:

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

1.11. It is inevitable and appropriate that these landscapes will continue to evolve but this needs to be in ways that respect the essential qualities of these special areas and the communities that support and manage them.

Box 1.2

Principles for the management of Category V protected areas

Reflecting the cultural nature of the National Parks of England, the particular **principles** that apply to their management as part of the family of Category V protected areas (as set out in *Management Guidelines for IUCN Category V Protected Landscapes/Seascapes*³) include:

- Conserving landscape, biodiversity and cultural values as the central focus of the Category V protected area approach.
- Focusing management at the **point of interaction** between people and nature.
- Seeing people as stewards of the landscape.
- Undertaking management with and **through** local people and mainly **for and by** them.
- Management based on co-operative approaches.
- A political and economic environment that supports effective management.
- Management of the highest professional standard that is flexible and adaptive.
- Measurement of the success of management in environmental and social terms.

These **principles** have been at the heart of landscape protection in England for the past 50 years. UK and worldwide examples of a management system by people living in the landscape has been published - *The Protected Landscape Approach: linking nature, culture and community*, IUCN 2-8317-07978-8 (2005)

The National Park purposes

1.12. Purposes: The future of National Parks is guided by their **two purposes** as set out in Section 61 of the Environment Act 1995:

- (a) **Conservation and enhancement** “to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the National Parks”

³ Phillips, A. (2002) *Management Guidelines for IUCN category V Protected Areas Protected Landscapes/Seascapes*. IUCN – The World Conservation Union



- (b) **Understanding and enjoyment** “to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities [of the Parks] by the public.”

1.13. Reflecting that the National Parks are cultural landscapes with a resident population, the National Park Authorities also have a duty under Section 62(1) of the Environment Act, in taking forward the Park purposes, to: “**foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park but without incurring significant expenditure**”. Effectively this sets the purposes of National Parks in the context of sustainable development, that is: an integrated and balanced approach to environmental, social and economic considerations.

1.14. To put this duty into practice, it is recognised that the NPAs need to work closely with those who have primary responsibility for these concerns, not least the local authorities and regional development agencies (RDAs) and other public bodies.

1.15. These purposes and duties are underpinned by the Sandford Principle, which asserts the primacy of the first purpose over the second in cases of obvious conflict.

1.16. In the case of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads,

their purposes are defined in their own Act⁴ and follow those of the National Parks but with an additional third purpose to protect the interests of navigation.

The role of the National Park Authorities (NPAs)

1.17. The central role of the NPAs is to take the action needed to put into practice the purposes of the National Parks.

1.18. The central role of the Management Plan therefore is to guide the delivery of the National Park purposes and Section 62(1) duty.

Section 62(2) duty

1.19. Importantly, in seeking to deliver the National Park purposes, the NPAs are not expected to work alone – this is a shared task for all. Under Section 62(2) of the Environment Act 1995 relevant authorities⁵ have a duty to “**have regard to**” the purposes of the National Parks when carrying out their work. This underlines that delivery of the Park purposes through the National Park Management Plan needs to be undertaken in partnership with others – both key policy makers and fund holders, such as government agencies, regional offices of government, the RDAs and local authorities, with the farmers, landowners, conservation groups and NGOs, local businesses and local communities of the Parks, and with organisations in the wider region, including local authorities and representatives of leisure users of the National Park.

⁴ The Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act, 1989

⁵ Relevant authorities include:

- Any Minister of the Crown
- Any public body (including government agencies, local authorities and parish councils)
- Any statutory undertaker
- Any person holding public office

Box 1.3

Sustainable Development Fund

Since 2002 each National Park has been given a fund with which to encourage a co-operative and integrated approach to the environmental, social and economic future of the Park and an understanding of these issues in the context of National Park purposes. Launching the Scheme, the Minister for Rural Affairs and Local Environmental Quality suggested that an ideal application would come jointly from a group of young people living in the Park with a group of young people living in an urban area elsewhere in the region, seeking to undertake a project together to promote sustainable development in the Park.

Why are National Park Management Plans so important?

1.20. The National Park Management Plan is the single most important document for each National Park. This is stressed in the Defra *Review of English National Park Authorities* which, in Recommendation 19(ii) notes that: “the National Park Management Plan should be given renewed importance in government policy advice”.

- It is the over-arching strategic document for the National Park – central to the future of the Park.
- It co-ordinates and integrates other plans, strategies and actions in the National Park, where they affect the Park purposes and duties⁶.
- It sets the vision and objectives for the National Park, which will guide the future of the Park over the next 20 – 30 years.
- It indicates how the National Park purposes and associated duties will be delivered through sustainable development.
- It sets the frame for all policy and activity pursued by the NPA, including potential funding bids for grant, from the European to the local level.

⁶ Section 62(1) and 62(2) duties.

Who are National Park Management Plans for?

1.21. The Defra *Review of English National Park Authorities* clearly sets out that “National Park Management Plans are Plans for National Parks, not just Park Authorities. All those with interests in a National Park should take account of the Management Plan’s vision of the area”.

1.22. Recognising the central role of National Park Management Plans in the future of each National Park, it is clear that these Plans are for all those who have an influence over the future of each National Park. No major decisions should be taken affecting the future of a Park without reference to its Management Plan. Preparation of the Plan should be central to cementing those partnerships that will be instrumental in helping to deliver the Plan’s vision and objectives.

Frequency of Plan review

1.23. Given the central importance of the National Park Management Plan it should be up to date and regularly reviewed, with NPAs legally required to review the Plan every five years, ideally in co-ordination with the statutory planning system.

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Lathkill Dale, Peak District

2. Guiding principles

2.1. It is recommended that National Park Management Plans should clearly distinguish between the ambitions for the Park – defined in a vision and supporting objectives – and how the vision and objectives will be delivered – through policies and an Action Plan (explored further in Chapter 4).

2.2. Key principles that should guide the preparation and content of National Park Management Plans are:

Plan preparation

- They should be prepared with the **active participation** of key stakeholders and the wider community, encouraging **shared ownership** of and **support** for the objectives, policies and actions that the Plan identifies (Chapter 3).
- Building on the above, **partnership working** will be an essential pre-requisite in the Plan's delivery, with the Section 62(2) duty providing the opportunity to encourage the pro-active engagement of **relevant authorities** and others in

the delivery of the National Park purposes and the socio-economic duty.

- They should be a **means to an end** and not an end in themselves – they must clearly lead to appropriate action, much of which will be through partnership. This underlines the importance of securing commitment to the implementation of relevant policies.

Plan content

- They **should be ambitious** recognising the national importance of the Parks.
- They should focus on the **delivery of the National Park** purposes within the wider agenda of sustainable development. These should set the agenda for the contents of the Plan. Thus socio-economic aspects (which clearly need addressing within the Plan to reflect the Section 62(1) duty) should relate back to the delivery of the Park purposes rather than being driven by broader issues, such as health and education provision,



which do not have a specific National Park remit and which are covered within community strategies. Nevertheless, wherever possible “win-win” linkages should be sought.

- They should promote the **national and international importance** of the National Parks and align with national policies such as those in the Rural Strategy, while reflecting **local circumstances**.
- **Sustainable development** should underpin the way in which the National Park purposes and socio-economic duty are delivered (considered further below).
- They should show clear **integration in thinking** between different topic areas in the Plan and between different forms of delivery to ensure that sustainable development is achieved in practice.
- They should link to **international, national, regional and local policies and programmes** that in combination can assist in the delivery of the National Park purposes.
- They should **influence and add value** to existing and future plans and strategies affecting the National Parks that are prepared by others, such as the regional development agencies and the constituent local authorities of the Parks, ensuring that all activities within the Parks have a Park focus and rationale and are working to a commonly agreed agenda for the Park.
- They should look both **backwards and forwards**, learning from past trends and the effects of past actions but taking this knowledge into the future, looking at how anticipated future changes should be addressed within the National Park. For example, this is particularly important in the face of climate change and significant changes in agricultural support under the Common Agricultural Policy.
- Their objectives and policies should be **based on clear evidence**. Available datasets, where relevant, should be utilised, ensuring that they relate to the area within the National Park rather than an interpretation of the local authority areas that cross the Park and which collectively may have a very different character to the Park.

Unsubstantiated assumptions and assertions should be avoided. This underlines the importance of the interrelationship with the State of The Park Report (SoTPR) (para 3.12).

- They should be **clearly monitored** in terms of both the **outputs** against targets and milestones established in the Action Plan and **outcomes** associated with achievement of the Plan objectives. This should include having mechanisms in place to allow modification if monitoring suggests that alternative action should be pursued.
- Building on the above, they should provide the **central Plan for the National Park Authority** setting the framework for all the more detailed plans and strategies of the National Park Authority including its annual business plan (Chapter 6).

Sustainable development within the National Parks

2.3. As recognised in the UK Strategy for Sustainable Development *A Better Quality of Life* (1999) sustainable development has “**at its heart the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come**”. This reflects the internationally endorsed Brundtland definition of sustainable development as that which “**meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**”. In the UK Strategy sustainable development has been interpreted as meeting four objectives at the **same time**:

- **social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;**
- **effective protection of the environment;**
- **prudent use of natural resources; and**
- **maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.**

2.4. For rural areas, and National Parks in particular, the inclusion of the term ‘**development**’ in ‘**sustainable development**’ is potentially misleading. It implies that sustainable development is only about decisions affecting built development, whereas its remit is all embracing, asking that all decisions



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affecting the future of an area view the environment, economy and community together to mutual benefit, with emphasis placed on ‘win-win’ solutions.

2.5. What clearly distinguishes sustainable development within the National Parks from that in the wider countryside is that it is specifically concerned with helping to deliver the National Park purposes – reflecting the environmental pre-eminence of the designation. Thus the central concerns within the Parks of conserving and enhancing their landscape, biodiversity, cultural heritage and natural resources – sustainable land management – lie at the very heart of sustainable development within the Parks.

2.6. In Government guidance there is a clear expectation that the National Parks will make a strong contribution to both the local delivery of sustainable development and its wider promotion. This underlines the importance of ensuring that sustainable development lies at the heart of National Park Management Plans. This role is further underpinned at the international level by the expectations for Category V protected areas. The Snowdonia Declaration resulting from the EUROPARC 2002 conference begins with:

“Protected areas have much to offer in the world’s quest for sustainable development... Europe’s Protected Landscapes have a particularly important contribution to make. Bringing together the natural and the cultural, they exemplify the beauty, rich biodiversity and distinctive ‘sense of place’ that can result from the harmonious interaction of people and nature. They deliver growing economic and social, as well as environmental, benefits to the regions in which they are situated”.

2.7. It follows that partnership working is central to the delivery of sustainable development within the National Parks because of the range of interests that it brings together.

2.8. Many issues confront the National Parks – our most precious landscapes – as we seek a more sustainable way forward. These include:

- **Future policies for agriculture and forestry.** In the past these have had profound and often adverse effects on the character of the National Parks, focusing solely on production often at the expense of environmental conservation. Yet both are now refocusing, through reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and national policy, on the delivery of a range of public benefits, offering opportunities for more widespread sustainable land management.
- **Tourism and leisure.** As evident during the Foot and Mouth Disease epidemic of 2001, tourism and recreation are now a central part of the local economy of the National Parks and can provide an economic justification for the sustainable management of land. But they can become unsustainable if the scale of the activity and supporting travel patterns destroy the qualities that provide the main visitor attraction.
- **Transport issues.** The very rapid growth in car use in rural areas (largely as a result of increased commuting and leisure travel) contributes to global Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) levels, air pollution and threatens the tranquillity of National Parks. With the daily exodus of households, it also undermines the provision of local services. At the same time, new road infrastructure can adversely impact on the physical fabric of the Parks.
- **Provision of affordable housing.** This is now one of the most acute issues for many communities including those of National Parks, as house prices are pushed out of the reach of local residents through a combination of purchase by commuters, those retiring, and the second home market, further exacerbated by the contraction of household size.
- **Mineral demand.** Mineral extraction reduces finite natural resources and has direct and indirect impacts on the local environment, but it is a significant economic activity with a long history in a number of the National Parks. In this context it is vital that ways forward are found that do not compromise the environmental quality of the Parks.
- **Waste generation and disposal.** Much more can

be done to minimise the waste of Park communities and industries, and to re-use, recycle or dispose of it in ways that limit impacts on the environment.

- **Energy generation and water demand.** Given the environmental pre-eminence of National Parks they are not the right location for meeting national or regional demands for electricity or water if this will compromise their environmental quality. On the other hand, bottom-up approaches to meeting local energy and natural resource needs of a scale and type in keeping with their locality should be strongly encouraged. Indeed, an emphasis on self-sufficient communities as part of the sustainable development agenda of National Parks should be an important goal.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

2.9. National Park Management Plans will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Sustainability Appraisal under the European Directive 2001/42/EC. This will need to guide all aspects of their preparation. **Box 2.1** provides a brief summary of the assessment process. These steps have been fully taken into account in the process of Plan preparation set out in the next Chapter. For a fuller description of the SEA process reference should be made to the ODPM publication *The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities* (October 2003).



Devon Bike Bus

Strategic environmental assessment (SEA)

European Directive 2001/42/EC ‘on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment’ came into force on 21 July 2004 for plans whose formal preparation starts after this date. Under it a wide range of plans and programmes, including those dealing with land use, will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This will include National Park Management Plans. It should not significantly increase the time committed to the preparation of National Park Management Plans as they have a strong environmental focus driven by the National Park purposes, and should, in any event, be adopting the majority of the steps recommended as part of an SEA, as set out below.

STEPS IN STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)	
Planning stage	SEA stage
Identify the issues and options and preparing for consultation	A. Setting the context and establishing the baseline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify other relevant plans and programmes Identify environmental protection objectives and indicators Collect baseline data including data on likely future trends Identify environmental problems
Consult on issues and options	B. Deciding the scope of SEA and developing alternatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify alternatives and agree preferred alternatives Consult bodies with environmental responsibilities
Prepare proposed Plan	C. Assessing the effects of the Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predict the effects of the Plan Evaluate the Plan’s effects Propose measures to prevent, reduce or offset adverse environmental effects
Full public consultation on proposed Plan	D. Consulting on the draft Plan and the Environmental report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present the results of the SEA up to this point Seek input from the public and authorities with environmental responsibilities Take consultation results into account Show how the results of the Environmental report were taken into account in finalising the Plan
Monitor Plan implementation	E. Monitor the significant effects of implementing the Plan on the environment

The objective of the SEA Directive is “to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans... with a view to promoting sustainable development” (Article 1).

To be effective it is anticipated that SEA should be fully integrated into the plan-making process, following each stage of the plan preparation, implementation and monitoring.

3. The Plan process

3.1. The process of preparing a National Park Management Plan is as important as the Plan itself – it is the process of engendering support and commitment and ultimately ensuring shared implementation. It requires partnership working at all stages, with an emphasis on integrated thinking. It requires a firm understanding of the National Park purposes and special qualities, and how these can best be enjoyed and understood. It equally requires a shared view of how the well being of Park communities can be assured in ways that help strengthen the delivery of the Park purposes.

3.2. This guidance focuses on why and when engagement with partners and the wider community will be appropriate during Plan preparation. The methods of engagement will be for National Park Authorities to decide, reflecting local circumstances and their current engagement with key partners and the wider community.

3.3. Ultimately National Park Management Plans must produce outputs. Much of the success of the

National Park Management Plan and its delivery depends on good working relationships between organisations and individuals.

3.4. The publication of the Plan, therefore, is not so much an event or an end in itself as part of an ongoing relationship between the National Park Authority and all its partners, and between partners in delivering the National Park purposes and socio-economic duty. The National Park Management Plan should be owned by everyone whose decisions affect the National Park.

Who is involved?

3.5. Those who should be involved in the preparation of National Park Management Plans will vary depending both on local circumstances and on the emphasis of the Plan. Key stakeholders other than National Park Authority officers and the local communities include those indicated in **Box 2.1**. In addition, every attempt should be made to take account of the views of Park visitors and to involve them in Plan preparation where possible.



Search and rescue demonstration, Northumberland NP

Key stakeholders

Government departments and agencies

Countryside Agency*
 Commission for Rural Communities
 Defra
 English Heritage
 English Nature*
 Environment Agency
 Forestry Commission
 Government Offices for the Regions
 Regional Assemblies and Regional Planning Bodies
 Regional Development Agencies
 Regional Tourist Boards
 Rural Development Service*
 Sport England
 Visit Britain

* These bodies will merge to create Natural England from October 2006 subject to Parliament's wishes.

Non governmental organisations

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
 Council for National Parks
 Country Land and Business Association
 Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
 National Farmers Union
 National Trust
 Ramblers Association
 Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
 Soil Association
 Wildlife Trusts
 Woodland Trust

Local government (other than the National Park Authority)

Biological records centres
 Local authority economic development departments; Local authority housing departments; Local authority rights of way officers; Local highways authorities
 Local biodiversity fora
 Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)
 Parish and Town Councils

Local communities, interest groups and commercial companies

Will depend on the National Park and may be wide ranging including Access Fora, local tourism groups, user groups, Chambers of Commerce, Rural Community Councils, Friends of the Park and Park Societies, community groups, farmers' support groups, and public utilities.

Advisory services and institutions

FBAS / Business Link
 Local Learning and Skills Councils
 Regional and County Food Groups
 This box will be regularly updated on the website

The statutory requirements for preparing National Park Management plans

3.6. The statutory requirements for the preparation of National Park Management Plans are set out in **Box 3.2**. These are the minimum requirements. National Park Authorities already reach well beyond these requirements, reflecting that successful National Park management is a task requiring work beyond the narrow interpretation of these rules.

Meaningful engagement and effective management

3.7. The legislation requires NPAs as the primary authors of National Park Management Plans to consult and inform others. But the nature of National Park Management Plans and the work they seek to orchestrate, means that their preparation and delivery needs much more than simple consultation. It requires the influencing and sharing of decisions by stakeholders within the clear parameters of the National Park purposes and duties – '**Bounded Dialogue**' (**Box 3.3**).

The statutory requirements for preparing a National Park Management Plan (NPMP)

Section 66 of the Environment Act (1995) and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (1989) requires each National Park Authority to prepare and publish a National Park Management Plan for their Park, setting out policies for:

- managing the National Park;
- carrying out NPA functions in relation to the National Park.

New NPAs must produce a NPMP within three years of being established and all Plans must be reviewed every five years.

In preparing the NPMP, NPAs are required to consult and take account of the observations of:

- every principal council wholly or partly within the National Park;
- the Countryside Agency and English Nature.

The NPAs are also obliged to set up arrangements to inform and consult Parish Councils within the National Park about their work.

The Secretary of State must be sent a copy of any Plan and associated materials.

3.8. In particular, this must include true engagement and integration with sub-national and regional agencies and departments, and local authorities, whose policies and actions have such a strong influence over the future of each National Park.

3.9. It is also essential to engage with the communities of the National Parks – to understand their social and economic needs and the special qualities of the Parks that they cherish. These are partly defined by them and maintained by them. Preparation of the National Park Management Plan should be seen

as one of the primary processes through which Park communities are engaged in planning their future.

3.10. If sustainable development is to be achieved it is vital that the way forward for the National Parks and their communities is not mapped as a series of trade-offs between different interests but is achieved through the coherent identification and understanding of common goals, seeking a wide range of benefits from individual policies and actions. This necessitates the sharing of ideas between different perspectives to identify common ways forward.

Types of engagements.

ENGAGEMENT	FEATURES	RESPONSES
Open dialogue	Decisions shared by stakeholders	Needs/aspirations ↑
Bounded dialogue	Decisions influenced by stakeholders	
Consultation	Stakeholders have limited influence	Options ↓ Reactions
Information gathering	Stakeholders provide information to inform decisions – no influence	
Information giving	Stakeholders have opportunity to react	

Harris, Richard, ed. Why dialogue is different pp24 – 26. In Stakeholder Dialogue Language. Environment Council, London. After Armstein’s Ladder of participation (1969)

Preparing a National Park Management plan

3.11. Preparation of a National Park Management Plan involves a number of stages (Box 3.4). Each NPA with its partners will develop the best way to prepare their National Park Management Plan together, though sharing practice between NPAs will be important.



Stage 1) Establishing an understanding of the state of the Park

3.12. Understanding the state of the Park is a crucial management prerequisite. If the starting point is uncertain then the end point will be equally unsure. The nature of evidence contained in State of the Park Reports (SoTPRs) is outlined in Box 3.5. The

specific roles of SoTPRs in preparing a National Park Management Plan are:

- collecting together existing information about the National Park – **establishing an evidence base**;
- collecting necessary new information about the National Park – **adding to the evidence base**;
- understanding the geographical distribution of the issues raised – **understanding where the evidence applies**;
- stimulating the sharing, explaining and review of information about the National Park and the issues that it now faces – **developing capacity and understanding amongst all partners is essential for effective joint identification of the objectives and policies of the Plan and the actions that flow from it**.

3.13. The last step is critical. The principal value of evidence is that the issues it raises are understood, **shared**, and become a key influence in the development of the Management Plan. Thus the SoTPR provides the platform for the start of meaningful engagement and the identification of issues that will guide the Plan

Stage 2) Engaging stakeholders and empowering local communities

3.14. Engagement by the NPA with stakeholders should be continual and production of the Management Plan only a part of this relationship. However, the process of engaging different stakeholders in the preparation of the National Park Management Plan is likely to vary:

- for **sub-national and regional departments, agencies and NGOs and local authorities**, partnerships will, in many cases, already be in place and involvement in Plan preparation can be achieved over time, especially if there is careful forward planning and fine-tuning of existing partnerships. There will also be economies in co-ordinating liaison arrangements between different statutory and non-statutory plans affecting the National Park. Thus preparation of the Management Plan will form part of on-going processes.

Evidence and State of the Park Reports (SoTPRs)

Reflecting the Park purposes and socio-economic duty, the primary focus of SoTPRs should be information about the current state and issues affecting:

- the special qualities of the National Parks and factors that have direct implications for the special qualities, such as the health of the natural resources of air, biodiversity, soil and water;
- how these special qualities are enjoyed and by whom;
- the economic and social well-being of Park communities as this links to the National Park purposes.

There is now increasing availability of quantitative national data sets that can be analysed geographically using GIS. This will need to be supported by qualitative data including information on the **experience** of the National Parks by those who live in and visit them.

To be of use the evidence in the SoTPRs needs to be kept up to date allowing the identification of trends over time and the monitoring of the outcomes of the national Park Management Plan.

Many of the relevant data sets and other information will be held by partner organisations. Under the Section 62(2) duty, there should be a clear understanding amongst partners that data relevant to National Parks should be capable of being collected, analysed and updated by Park area, i.e. a National Park cut.

- for **National Park communities** the processes must be clearly engaging and of obvious benefit to those involved, recognising that Park communities are often difficult to reach. They must also be careful not to duplicate with other forms of community liaison. This requires careful

coordination with community planning and the production of community strategies. In the future, use of the web may allow more distant communities to participate in the process of preparing the Plan, with the evolving stages of the Plan appearing on a regularly updated website.

- for **National Park visitors and potential future users** methods of engagement may be different again potentially involving surveys or focus groups and/or use of the web.



©Andy Tynner/CA

Training at Grassington Community Learning Centre, Yorkshire Dales

3.15. In taking forward the engagement of partners and the empowerment of local communities, there are four things that are particularly important to bear in mind:

- The programme of engagement should be **carefully planned**, transparent and clearly defined from the outset, so that all know how and when they can contribute to the Management Plan and its delivery. This programme should be closely linked to the different stages in the Plan's development with potentially different stakeholders having most to contribute to particular stages. In turn these stages should directly link to the production of different parts of the Plan so that the Plan clearly evolves out of the process of engagement.

- Whatever methods of engagement are used it is vital that **integration between different viewpoints** is built into the overall process. This may not necessarily mean huge meetings but rather open debate about particular issues and the transfer of these concerns to other groups so that a common way forward can be developed.
- The above places strong emphasis on **good facilitation** throughout the process. This facilitation needs to be impartial. There can be great merit therefore in using an independent facilitator during the Management Plan preparation. At the same time clear summaries must be prepared as the Plan develops so that each stage of stakeholder involvement logically builds on the last.
- There will almost certainly need to be some form of **Steering Group** to lead the process of developing the Plan. This process, especially if it is building on existing and on-going liaison with partners, has the potential to be quite dispersed. It is essential therefore that there is a core group made up of NPA officers and members, and key partners that is steering the process: ensuring integration between different aspects of engagement and pushing the process forward through clearly defined stages. For many there is a tendency to dwell on issues without any great desire to consider how to resolve them – resolution must lie at the heart of engagement.

Stage 3) Agreeing a vision for the National Park and management objectives

3.16. The vision and objectives of the Plan, which set out the ambitions for the National Park, should be the result of shared and transparent processes. Nevertheless, it is essential that these processes focus on raising ambitions rather than compromising with the lowest common denominator. This is the true challenge of engagement. Spatial visions, through the use of GIS and/or maps should be promoted as a way of developing a shared understanding and ownership of desired outcomes for geographic areas within Parks, perhaps based on Joint Character Areas

Stage 4) Examining management options for the National Park (scenario development)

3.17. With ongoing reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and structural changes in the funding of rural areas, combined with the emerging implications of climate change, and changing modern lifestyles, consideration must be given to the different options available for achieving the Park vision and objectives. Against this rapidly changing backdrop, to assume that it is business as usual is to fail to face up to the profound challenges and opportunities now facing National Parks.

3.18. National Park Authorities will need to lead most areas of option or scenario development, and partners will logically contribute most to the areas of closest interest to them. But shared agreement on the most appropriate ways forward will be essential as will the refinement of preferred options, with partners taking decisions together.

3.19. If the preferred options have been worked up in partnership, consultation is likely to lead to further refinement and improvement rather than generating unhelpful disagreement and conflict.

Stage 5) Agreeing the policies of the Plan

3.20. The policies and Action Plan of the National Park Management Plan should deliver the vision and objectives and should evolve from the consideration of options.

3.21. Again it is important that policies are developed in partnership as their implementation will be heavily dependent on the contribution of all stakeholders.

3.22. There is a particular responsibility on the National Park Authority and other key partners to ensure that the policies of the National Park Management Plan demonstrate integrated thinking, enabling integrated delivery of the Plan objectives in ways that maximise the range of public benefits achieved.

Stage 6) Agreeing and coordinating actions flowing from the Plan

3.23. In the same way actions should be agreed together. Indeed this is critical for the delivery of the Plan, with each action clearly assigned to a lead partner.

Stage 7) Consulting on the draft Plan

3.24. Consultation on the draft Plan is a standard component of all statutory Plan preparation and a requirement of Strategic Environmental Assessment, involving a consultation period during which consultees have an opportunity to respond in writing to the draft Plan. Potentially the most important aspects of this stage are:

- keeping a complete and documented record of all comments received;
- allowing time to ensure that consultees do not feel rushed but not so much that they lose interest;
- indicating to consultees how their views will be incorporated in the final Plan or, if not, the rationale for this. This can be captured in a short report of consultation.

3.25. It is at this stage that the Steering Group for the Management Plan will have a particularly important role to play in deciding the extent to which the Plan needs to be modified to meet issues raised through the consultation.

3.26. Nevertheless, if the process of Plan preparation has been inclusive, this period of formal consultation should not introduce any surprises. Indeed, it should be seen as a very positive opportunity for making the Plan even better. This has certainly been the experience of those who have adopted an inclusive approach to Management Plan development.

Stage 8) Coordinating and sharing monitoring of the plan

3.27. Completion of the Plan will be just one stage in the ongoing task of managing the Park. The emphasis must move on swiftly to the delivery of the Action Plan and monitoring the results of the Plan in partnership (Chapter 5).

Stage 9) Reviewing the Plan

3.28. Review of the Plan completes the process. This may lead to the need to amend milestones and objectives.

The overall approach to the National Park Management plan

3.29. National Parks are special places. They are places where special approaches, policy and action should be promoted.

3.30. Circumstances may occur in National Parks, which do not occur elsewhere, requiring unusual solutions. Parks are also expected to offer an environment where innovative policy, particularly with regard to sustainable development, should be spearheaded and tested. An important part of the test bed role is that successful policies and work can be passed on to the wider countryside.

3.31. National Park management should therefore expect to break new ground. Keynote projects have a clear role to play. Innovative research will often be needed to help build better evidence and National Park Authorities have the opportunity to demonstrate the very best of partnership in practice.

4. Components of the plan



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New Forest, Hampshire

4.1. Having looked at the process of Plan development, this Chapter sets out the main components of the Plan, providing a framework within which each National Park Management Plan can take its own form.

Key components of National park Management plans

4.2. A National Park Management Plan should have the following key components:

- A description of the **role of the National Park Management Plan** and the National Park purposes and socio-economic duty that set the prime focus of the Plan (Chapter 1)⁷.
- The **key characteristics** and special qualities of the National Park.
- The **issues** facing the National Park and associated trends.
- The **ambition** for the National Park - vision and objectives.
- The means of **delivering** the ambition – policies and an Action Plan.

4.3. The distinction between ambitions and delivery is an important one. In the past there has been confusion between the role of objectives and policies within Management Plans. Most recent National Park Management Plans have adopted an objective-led approach. In other words, they have set out their ambitions for the National Park (as articulated through their vision and objectives) and then set out how these objectives will be delivered through a range of policies and actions.

4.4. This is the approach supported in this guidance, with a very clear distinction drawn between the ambitions for the National Park (where you want to get to – the vision and the objectives) and how you propose to get there (through consistent application and implementation of policies).

⁷ In the case of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads these are defined by the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1989

4.5. Thus the vision and objectives should be enduring, representing the point of arrival which should not change significantly over time, unless changes in national policy suggest that a very different direction of travel should be instigated, such as the potential change from an agriculturally managed landscape to one left to natural succession and 're-wilding'. On the other hand, National Park policies will (and should) be more responsive to change, needing to respond to issues as they are identified and the results of monitoring. They need to ensure that the actions taken are still on course to deliver the identified vision and objectives, potentially against a background of changing external policy.

Key Characteristics

4.6. While the National Park should be hugely familiar to officers and members of the National Park Authority, it may not be familiar to all those who it is anticipated might and should read the Management Plan. For many the vision and objectives for the Park will make little sense if they are not set within some basic understanding of place.

4.7. An impression should be given within the Management Plan of what makes the National Park so special and unique – what are its defining qualities or key characteristics to which all who read the Plan can relate – and how the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage varies across the National Park to create particular localities.

4.8. Equally the Plan should describe the opportunities offered for the enjoyment and understanding of these special qualities.

4.9. It should also provide a basic understanding of the local economy and community and how they interlink with the management of the National Park, reflecting the socio-economic duty and the broader requirements of sustainable development.

4.10. Information from landscape character assessments, historic landscape characterisation and biodiversity action plans can all help in painting a picture of the National Park, as can recreation studies and tourism profiles. They can also help in

defining the different geographical areas of the Park with their own sense of identity

4.11. The socio-economic character of the National Park should be informed by statistics specific to the Park area. Those generated from an amalgam of the local authority areas that make up the Park are likely to significantly misrepresent the character of the Park because of the very distinct population differences within and outside the Parks – with Park boundaries often having been drawn to exclude urban areas around their periphery (Box 3.5).

Issues facing the National Park

4.12. The issues facing the National Park (threats and opportunities) will be critical in framing the vision and objectives for the Park. After all, it is these issues that the Management Plan should be responding to. These issues are likely to relate to both **current trends** and **forces for change** and should be identified in relation to the National Park purposes and the well being of Park communities. They are likely to be of six main types:

- Issues relating to **climate change**. It is clear that few management plans have so far fully engaged with the implications of climate change and its likely effects on landscape, biodiversity, and the air, soil and water of the National Parks, or its implications for leisure patterns. Information still remains poor on predicting the full effects of climate change and how quickly it is happening but it cannot afford to be ignored as an important driver of the Management Plan.
- Issues relating to the **delivery of international, national, regional and local policies** within the National Parks and the potential for conflict between these policy areas if not orchestrated and filtered through the National Park Management Plan. Fundamental to these will be reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy and implementation of European Directives including the Habitats Directive and Water Framework Directive. But practically every aspect of policy has the potential to affect the Parks, from future water demand and demands for renewable energy at the national and regional level to

transport and economic development policies, which may not necessarily take full account of the purposes for which the National Parks were designated.

- Issues raised through the **State of the Park Report (SoTPR)** which should be monitoring change across a broad front (Box 3.5). These issues will include both trends in issues already identified through previous Management Plans (such as an increase in low level ozone) and new issues identified for the first time.
- Issues arising from the **monitoring** of the National Park Management Plan (this may be one and the same as the SoTPR).
- Issues identified through **other relevant plans and strategies**, which should be highlighted by partners during the process of plan preparation. Such other plans and strategies may include Local Biodiversity Action Plans, Landscape Character Assessments and Landscape Strategies, Rights of Way Improvement Plans, Tourism Strategies, and local authority plans for affordable housing and economic development, to name but a few.
- Issues identified through **participation of stakeholders and National Park communities and visitors** in the preparation of the Plan. In

some cases these may set the agenda for future monitoring in the SoTPR but anecdotal information, especially that coming from local communities, may provide important context that might otherwise be missed.

Ambitions for the National Park (Vision and objectives)

4.13. As already argued National Park Management Plans should make a clear distinction between the Ambitions for the National Park (the vision and objectives) and the means of delivering these (the policies and Action Plan).

4.14. The **vision** and objectives should set out clear ambitions for the future of the National Park.

4.15. The vision should provide a statement of what the National Park should be like in 20 – 30 years. It should be clear, aspirational, ambitious but realistic. It should be particular to that Park and clearly recognisable as relating specifically to that Park. It should integrate environmental, economic and social concerns, developing the links between the National Park purposes and the socio-economic duty. In other words the principles of sustainable development should lie at its heart. (Example visions are set out in Box 4.1).



Example visions taken from current Management Plans

A Vision for the Broads - from the Broads Plan 2004

An unrivalled naturally functioning wetland ecosystem of international natural and cultural importance, with a landscape that comprises a mosaic of interconnecting rivers and shallow lakes, fens, marshes, wet woodlands, mudflats and coastal dunes; supports a wealth of plants and animals; and reflects historic patterns of human activities over many hundreds of years.

A place where people live or work in harmony with its natural and cultural qualities and where the local economy is sustained through small and medium sized enterprises: building and hiring boats; providing services and accommodation, and producing food and other products locally to meet the needs of visitors; harvesting the fens; and farming livestock on the marshes.

A place where people come to enjoy quietly the special qualities of this wetland landscape; exploring the waterways by boat; exploring on land the extensive network of footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways; and pursuing a range of recreational activities that are compatible with its special qualities, environmentally sensitive and socially acceptable, such as sailing, canoeing, fishing, bird-watching and visiting historic sites.

A changing place that, in response to increasing climate and human influences, reflects an increasingly harmonious interaction of people with nature, where local communities enjoy economic prosperity through engagement with the natural environment.

A place where opportunities are sought to enhance and expand the wetland ecosystem, while also seeking to provide wider associated social and cultural benefits, such as flood management and quiet areas for peaceful recreation.

And, importantly, a place treasured for its seclusion and wildness and which provides, in

the words of the late Norfolk naturalist Ted Ellis, 'a breathing space for the cure of souls'.

A Vision for the Lake District National Park - Lake District National Park Management Plan (Consultation Draft) 2004

We want to see a place where: Everyone living in, working in, and visiting the Lake District National Park takes pride in it. People understand the purposes of National Parks, and actively contribute towards them. The especial qualities of the Lake District National Park continue to set it apart, to ensure that it remains England's finest landscape. Those who manage it, or use its resources, consider the impact of their activities on people and places, both inside and outside the National Park. We continue to test innovative ideas and initiatives for sustainable development. The use of traditional livestock breeds, like the Herdwick sheep, is encouraged. The water quality of our lakes and rivers continues to improve. Our fells are open and uncluttered with modern structures. We prevent and remove damaging land use changes that harm the area's special qualities. We celebrate the relationship between people and the land, supporting traditional farming systems and the management of our extensive commons. We conserve the rich legacy of the past including our stone circles, forts and other archaeological sites.

We want to see a place where: The widest range of people who seek out the special qualities of the National Park, including those often excluded for physical, social or financial reasons, have access to it. There continue to be opportunities for a wide range of outdoor sporting and recreational activities. It is possible to find peace and tranquility, a place to unwind and relax, without traveling far or climbing high.

We want to see a place where: National Park residents enjoy a high quality of life and have

Example visions taken from current Management Plans (continued)

good access to services and facilities which are appropriate to the area. There is a clearly defined role for towns and villages, with key settlements and service centres supported and strengthened. There are affordable homes for local people. More local materials and finishes, such as slate and lime wash are used. Local skills, including upland footpath repair and dry stone walling, are developed. More local produce, including that from Cumbrian-reared livestock, is sold and local culture and traditions widely supported, especially through the valley shows.

We want to see a place where: There is a wide variety of opportunities for employment. We recognise the importance of prosperity in farming, and a buoyant and sustainable tourism sector, and the links between them. We acknowledge that other industries also play a role in the National Park's vitality. We are not over-reliant on any one industry. Economic

development is compatible with National Park purposes, and sustains and enhances the area's special qualities: in the long term, this will give it an economic advantage as a desirable place to live and work.

We want to see a place where: Carefully sited and designed development, enhancing the special qualities of the National Park, is positively promoted. The significant contribution of settlements to landscape character is acknowledged. Energy efficiency and improved environmental performance are encouraged in all development. The amount of waste produced, and the pollution of water, land and air are minimised, including pollution by noise and light. Sustainable travel, and new means of communication that reduce the need to travel, are encouraged. We have a better, more accessible and reliable public transport network, and make greater use of lake transport.



©David Burton/CA

River Wensum, Norfolk

4.16. The objectives should underpin and articulate the different aspects of the vision. They should give clarity to what it is expected will be achieved over the life of the vision. In current National Park Management Plans these objectives are variously described as aims or objectives.

4.17. Wherever appropriate these objectives should be SMART (Box 4.2). This should ensure that they have a clear focus and are challenging both for the National Park Authority and its partners. However, there may be some objectives, which, while forming an essential part of the vision, are difficult

to measure – at least currently. This should not automatically preclude them from the Plan. Equally, while it is desirable for an objective to have clearly defined timescales, the Plan should avoid being discredited by having too many unachievable targets that bear little resemblance to reality.

4.18. Example objectives are set out in Box 4.3.

Box 4.2

The SMART Principle

Objectives should be:

- **Specific** (i.e. clearly targeted and defined)
- **Measurable** (through the use of appropriate indicators)
- **Achievable**
- **Relevant** (to the National Park)
- **Time-bound** (achievable within a set timescale)

Box 4.3

Example objectives

SMART objectives:

- To ensure that all Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Wildlife Sites within the National Park are in favourable or improving condition by...
- To ensure that all rivers within the National Park meet x water quality objectives by...
- To ensure that all common land within the National Park is under a scheme of management by...

More general objectives that cover less measurable ambitions:

- To increase understanding of the National Park to encourage a commitment to Park purposes and the conservation of the Park's special qualities.
- To encourage users of the National Park to identify with its special qualities and to behave responsibly in relation to them.

4.19. In existing National Park Management Plans, objectives are usually grouped under specific themes which collectively make up the vision. This is appropriate, reflecting that the objectives also need to be 'specific' and 'measurable'. However, in developing the objectives it will be very important to ensure that those under one theme do not conflict with those under another theme. This emphasises the need for integrated thinking as the Plan is developed - thinking through the likely implications of meeting one objective on the achievement of other objectives in the Plan.

4.20. The review of options during the Plan preparation (paras. 3.17 – 3.19) and the ongoing application of the process of Strategic Environments Assessment (**Box 2.1**), should guard against such conflicts.

Delivery of the ambition (policies and actions)

4.21. The policies and Action Plan should set out HOW the vision and objectives for the National Park will be delivered. Policies should be relevant for the life of the Plan (five years) while the Action Plan may only have a life of one or two years before it requires updating, with a fuller revision at the five-year Management Plan review.

4.22. The inclusion of policies within National Park Management Plans is essential, not least because this is the specific requirement of the Environment Act 1995:

“...every National Park authority shall... prepare and publish a plan...which formulates its policy for the management of the relevant Park and for the carrying out of its functions in relation to that Park.”

4.23. Within existing National Park Management Plans policies take a wide variety of forms or are not included at all, being variously replaced by 'Proposals'; 'Means to Achieve Objectives' and 'Actions'. Where they are included either as policies or are replaced by any of the above, they tend to be grouped under the themes developed for the

objectives. Whilst this may be appropriate, policies and actions provide the opportunity to think about how the objectives can be delivered in an integrated fashion.

4.24. It is therefore underlined that policies and actions should be concerned with HOW the vision and objectives will be delivered, with the policies either taking the form of:

- a simple code identifying the key parameters that should guide future delivery of the objectives; or
- taking a positive and pro-active stance indicating the means by which the objectives will be delivered – potentially grouped under different means of delivery.

4.25. An example of the first of the two approaches is the Broads Plan 2004, where the delivery of the Plan’s objectives (aims) is guided by 11 ‘guiding principles’ or ‘policies’ as illustrated in **Box 4.4**.

Box 4.4

Broads Plan 2004

Guiding Principle 2: The tranquillity and wildness of the Broads will be protected and enhanced for people to enjoy.

Guiding Principle 4: Tourism will be of a high standard catering for a range of needs that are consistent with the special features of the Broads. It will contribute significantly to sustaining thriving local communities while taking into account the interests of others not involved in tourism who live or work in the Broads.

4.26. Under the second approach, the policies have the potential to be seen as cross-cutting, seeking to deliver the objectives in an integrated and joined up way (**Diagram 4.1**). Following this approach policies are grouped by ‘means of delivery’, so that policies dealing with like methods of delivery are grouped together. Important reasons for adopting this approach are:

- Recognition that individual policies should deliver more than one objective. Indeed this should always be the aim. For example, policies on transport planning should be addressing objectives for tranquillity, sustainable or green tourism and social inclusion.
- To ensure integration and coordinate delivery of the objectives. Thus ‘Advice-giving’ is an increasingly important way of delivering a wide range of Plan objectives. For the recipients of this advice it is critical that it is delivered in a coordinated fashion.
- To assist those delivering the Management Plan by grouping like activities together.

4.27. Following this approach potential means of delivery that could be used to group like policies include:

- provision of advice;
- provision of incentives;
- integrated projects;
- land management planning;
- development planning;
- engagement, empowerment and capacity building of key groups etc.

In many cases the National Park Authority will not be expected to be the lead organisation in delivery.

4.28. Action Plan: The Action Plan should prioritise actions with a clear timetable, milestones and agreed targets or outputs (against which the action can be measured), with a lead organisation identified, through agreement, for each action.

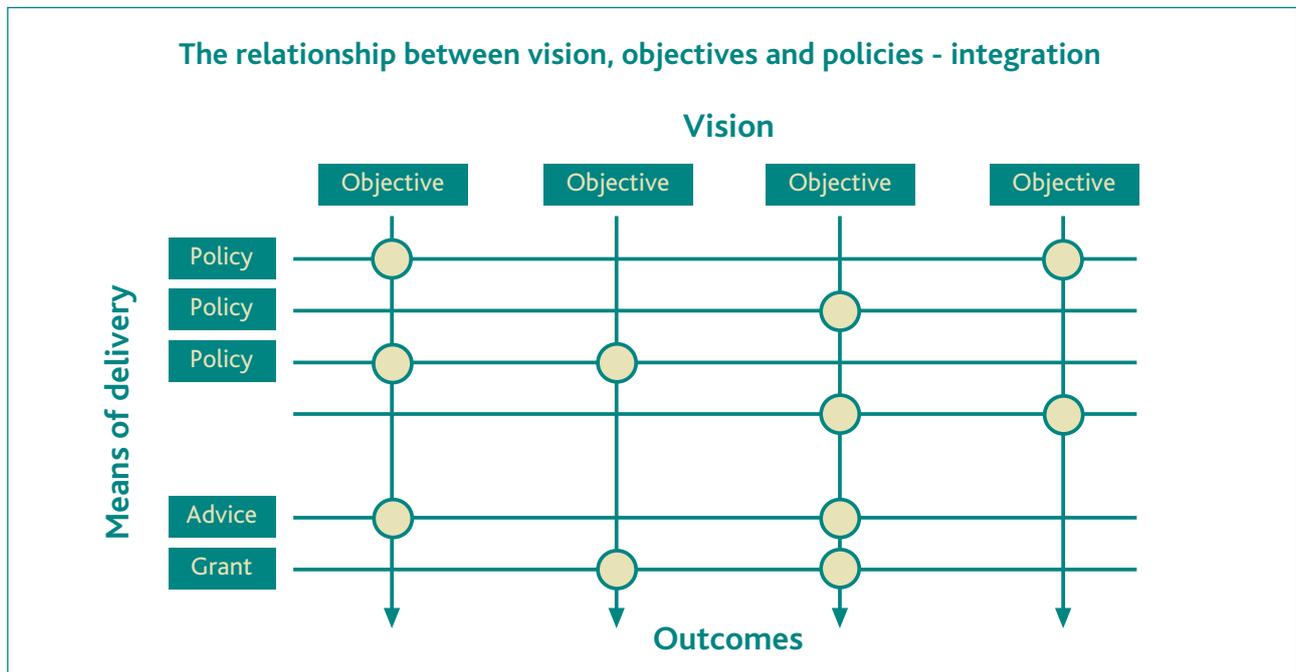
Checklist of topics

4.29. National Park Management Plans need to focus on the delivery of the National Park purposes and socio-economic duty. Potential topics that may be addressed by a National Park Management Plan are:

Over-arching topics

4.30. Climate change: As already noted this is one

Diagram 4.1



of the biggest issues facing the future of the National Parks. The concern for National Park Authorities is not only to keep up to date with predictions of climate change but also to consider what the likely effects will be on the Park. Such changes may be many and include potential changes in semi-natural vegetation and habitats; loss and gain of individual species; changes in agricultural crops and land uses; changes in the natural water cycle; changes in soil structure and erosion; sea level change; changes in leisure patterns and so on. In the context of climate change, a large part of England's peatland resource occurs in the National Parks and as such particular effort should be given to safeguard this potential carbon source.

4.31. Uplands: England's National Parks are largely upland in nature and as such Management Plans should give particular thought to how to promote the sustainable management of the uplands, including action to help tackle over-grazing and promote sustainable catchment and grouse moor management

4.32. In turn, the Management Plan needs to consider how these changes will be responded to, both to mitigate the effects of climate change and to illustrate more sustainable and energy efficient ways

of living. This is a subject that critically needs to be addressed in partnership.

Conserving and enhancing natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage

4.33. Topics that may be considered collectively or individually under the first purpose include:

- **Landscape character and key characteristics** informed by the Countryside Character descriptions and any landscape character assessment of the National Park.



Hay Dale, Pennine Bridleway

- **Wildlife / biodiversity** (habitats and species) informed by the Natural Area Profiles and national, regional and local Biodiversity Action Plans and targets, including targets for SSI condition.
- **Geodiversity** informed by the Natural Area Profiles.
- **Woodlands** – commercial, amenity and semi natural – potentially informed by the Forestry Commission Regional Woodland Strategies / Frameworks.
- Management of **common land** especially in the light of anticipated forthcoming legislation aimed at securing the long term protection of all commons, overcoming unsustainable uses and providing a fairer and more effective system of

under their 2003 Campaign ‘Night Blight’.

- Natural resources of air, soil and water (including rivers and freshwaters) informed by the work of the Environment Agency, Landcare and similar projects, Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMs), Nitrate Vulnerable Zones, Nitrate Sensitive Areas, and River Basin Management Plans delivering the Nitrates Directive, with reference also to broader issues of **pollution** and **waste management**.
- **Coastal management** and links to Integrated Coastal Zone Management.
- **Settlement pattern and built heritage**, reflecting the structure and evolution of settlements and their setting and local vernacular styles, informed by Conservation Area Statements.



Hadrian's Wall, Northumberland

- registration and management of common land.
- **Remoteness** and **tranquillity** informed by the Tranquil Areas Maps of CPRE⁸/Countryside Commission 1995 and observed changes since this date⁹, reflecting that tranquillity is not just a measure of noise but also of intrusive developments such as pylons and aerals. Linked to this, the conservation and enhancement of **dark night skies** informed by the CPRE mapping

- **Archaeology** and **historic landscapes** more generally, as informed by Historic Landscape Characterisation, and more specifically the distribution of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and listed historic designed landscapes.

⁸ Campaign for the Protection of Rural England

⁹ Northumberland NPA with Newcastle University are currently developing a more fine-grained methodology for the assessment of tranquillity more applicable to National Parks.

- **Social history/customs and traditions** as expressed in past and living cultures.
- **Association with the arts** – the National Park in music, art and literature.

4.34. Questions that may need to be addressed in developing the Management Plan in relation to the first purpose include:

- How should the Management Plan respond to climate change?
- What special qualities, features and characteristics need to be conserved at all costs to retain the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park, and which have the potential to be increased in area/number/quality and how?
- Is change appropriate and if so what and where? – is re-wilding an option?, especially in the face of fundamental changes to agricultural support?
- What is the potential to mainstream sustainable land management into all aspects of agricultural practices?
- What is the potential for achieving multi-benefit farming and forestry in the face of reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and national policy change? Does commercial forestry continue to have a role to play within the National Park – where and in what form?
- Should water resource management and diffuse pollution of air, water and soil become more central concerns of the Management Plan?

Promoting understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks

4.35 Topics that may be considered collectively or individually under the second purpose include:

- **Awareness raising** about the National Park, its special qualities, the opportunities that it offers, the threats facing it, and its fragility, amongst partners and stakeholders, local communities and its visitors.
- **Interpretation and education** focusing on increasing understanding of the special qualities of the National Park.
- **Recreation provision** and the opportunities for quiet enjoyment offered by the rights of way

network and open countryside, as well as opportunities for other sports and recreational pursuits.

- **Visitor patterns and management** including trends in visitor use and the addressing of management issues.
- **Tourism** trends, markets, accommodation and attractions as informed by regional and more local tourism surveys and strategies, including those for the National Park, and the opportunities for promoting sustainable tourism that help underpin the first purpose (see para 4.39 below).
- **Rights of navigation** which is a specific third purpose in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1989.
- **Social inclusion** and the opportunities for enjoyment of the National Park by the less able and socially excluded from both within and outside the Park, reflecting the Government's social inclusion agenda and, for example, the findings of the Mosaic project of the Council for National Parks.
- **Accessing the National Park** and associated transport issues, especially for those who do not have access to a private car.

4.36. Questions that may need to be considered in developing the Management Plan in relation to the second purpose include:

- How to ensure that there is a common promotion strategy for the National Park, recognising that the National Park Authority is only one of a number of organisations that will be promoting the Park to the wider world?
- How should the National Park Authority integrate its recreation services with other providers within the National Park?
- How can management increase recreational opportunities and enjoyment and the quality of experience within the National Park? Who should be the target audience?
- What are the recreation activities that should be encouraged across the National Park without conflict with other activities?
- Which recreation activities have special

requirements and characteristics and have the potential to conflict with other uses within the National Park and therefore require specific management?

- Is there a need to site some recreational activities in areas beyond the Park boundaries?
- How can sustainable tourism be promoted as the mainstay of the tourism industry within the National Park, with an emphasis on supporting the local economy and helping underpin the special qualities of the Park?

4.37. Transport is likely to be a particular issue within the National Parks, recognising that the vast majority of visitors travel to the Parks by private car. It is equally an issue in relation to the resident population with a rapid increase in car commuting and declining public transport services, resulting in further isolation of the socially excluded within the Parks.

4.38. These trends make the management of traffic and the promotion of public transport an important issue which impacts on local people, visitors and the overall management of the National Parks, not least in terms of meeting a sustainable development agenda and the needs of the socially excluded, both within the Parks and those seeking to access them from a distance. Traffic also has profound implications for the achievement of the first purpose, especially in relation to tranquillity.

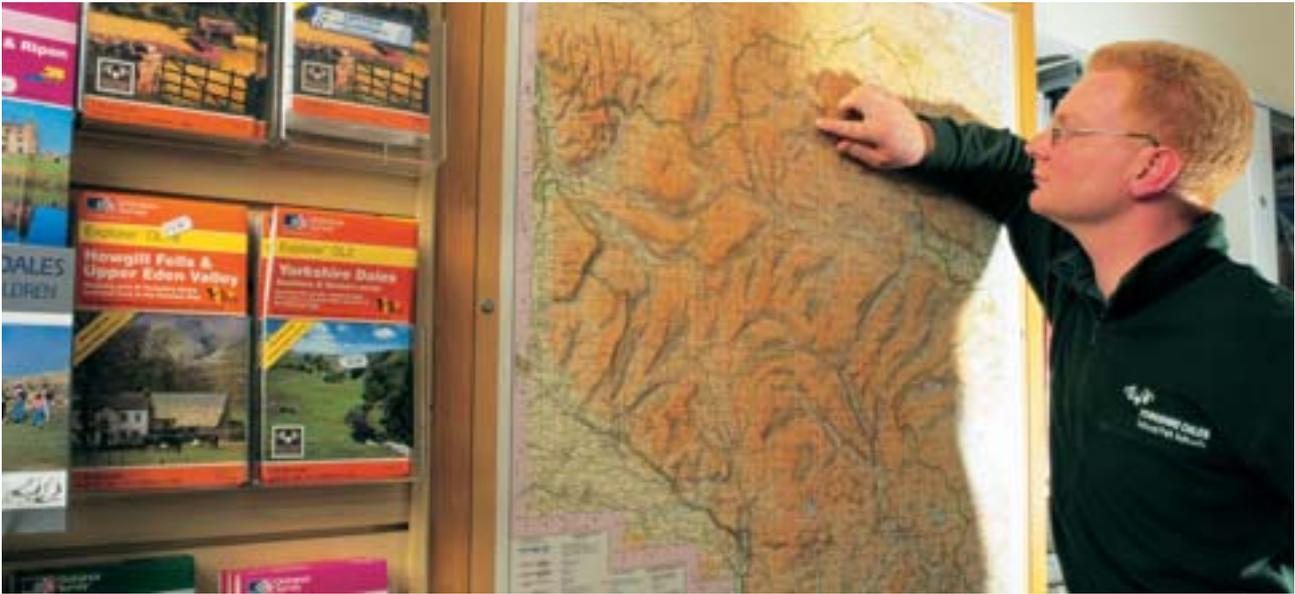
4.39 Particular issues to consider are:

- providing links, other than by car, from the wider hinterland into the National Park;
- seeking to integrate different modes of transport, including cycle routes and cycle hire schemes;
- providing public transport provision that meets the needs of both visitors and local communities;
- consideration of traffic calming measures and the introduction of networks of Quiet Lanes;
- building on existing schemes, developing new innovative approaches, and adopting already tested ones.

Economic and social well-being of local communities

4.40 Topics that may be considered collectively or individually under the Section 62(1) socio-economic duty include:

- Reform of the **Common Agricultural Policy** and its implication for the viability of farming and its contribution to the local economy.
- **Diversification of the agricultural economy** to assist in the maintenance of farm viability, considering those aspects of farm diversification that will be most appropriate in the context of the National Park purposes.
- The central role of **sustainable tourism** in developing the local economy in ways that support the first National Park purpose. This recognises that tourism is the most important economic driver within the National Parks.
- Reflecting on the **character of the wider rural economy** within the Park and its fit with the delivery of the National Park purposes and maintenance of the economic and social well-being of local communities.
- The provision of **local services and facilities** – dovetailing with the findings of the Community Strategies.
- Addressing the need for **affordable housing** which is now of fundamental concern in many rural communities.
- Promoting the role of **market towns** within the Parks as sustainable communities with opportunities for sustainable business development that can help support the economic/social well-being of the Park, while not necessarily being obviously rural in character.
- **Renewable energy** and self-sufficiency with support for bottom-up approaches to meeting local energy and natural resource needs, of a scale and type in keeping with their locality. Indeed the emphasis on self-sufficient communities as part of the sustainable development agenda for National Parks should be an important goal.
- Promotion of **rural skills and training** that link to the delivery of the National Park purposes.



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4.41. Particular issues to consider are:

- How to respond to the changing nature of rural economies and communities with only a small proportion of local communities actively engaged in traditional rural industries?
- How to support local micro-businesses that directly link to the delivery of the Park purposes?
- How to keep money recycling in the local economy, especially in ways that help support the delivery of the Park purposes?
- How to raise understanding of the major economic contribution made by the National Park to the region in which it sits?

Development planning

4.42. Development planning is a vital component of the effective management of the National Parks, and is a statutory responsibility of National Park Authorities. Development planning has a central role in maintaining the character of the Parks and fostering the social and economic well-being of Park communities.

4.43. In addition, planning brings a spatial perspective to National Park management, seeking to understand how they function spatially, in themselves and as part of wider regions and sub regions. In this context planning aims to place the right development in the right place to meet the needs of Park communities and support change that

brings positive benefits to the National Park in line with the National Park objectives. The National Park purposes and socio-economic duty, supported by the Sandford Principle and the Silkin Test¹⁰, set a clear statutory framework for development planning within the National Parks.

4.44. Although many National Park Management Plans have included **objectives** on development planning, this may not necessary be appropriate. As indicated in paragraph 4.27 development planning is one of a range of mechanisms available for **delivering** the National Park purposes and objectives: it is not an end in itself and therefore sits uncomfortably amongst objectives, although it will be one of the key methods for delivering the objectives.

4.45. This is not to downplay development planning within the context of National Park Management Plans, simply to recognise and understand its role better. It follows that as planning will be crucial to the delivery of many of the Park objectives its work should be properly coordinated and integrated with other activities also pursuing delivery of the Plan, both inside the National Park Authority, and amongst a range of partners.

¹⁰ The Silkin Test for major development asks “is the development absolutely necessary in the national interest and is there no possible alternative solution, location, source or supply?” (PPG7 superseded by PPS7)

5. Monitoring and review

Review

5.1. Monitoring and review is an essential part of the development of the National Park Management Plan, with each successive review of the Plan building on the results of the monitoring of the previous Plan – what has and has not been achieved, as well as reflecting changes in the Park and changes in the policy context. **Successive Plans should learn from each other.**

5.2. So the state of the Park, and more specifically the effects of the National Park Management Plan have to be monitored. This will also be a key component of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan (Box 2.1).

Assessing the success of the plan - Monitoring

5.3. Monitoring of the Plan should be approached as purposefully as preparing the Plan and should be undertaken in partnership. It should be part of the

ongoing, essentially cyclical, relationship between the NPA and all its partners, and between partners (Diagram 5.1).

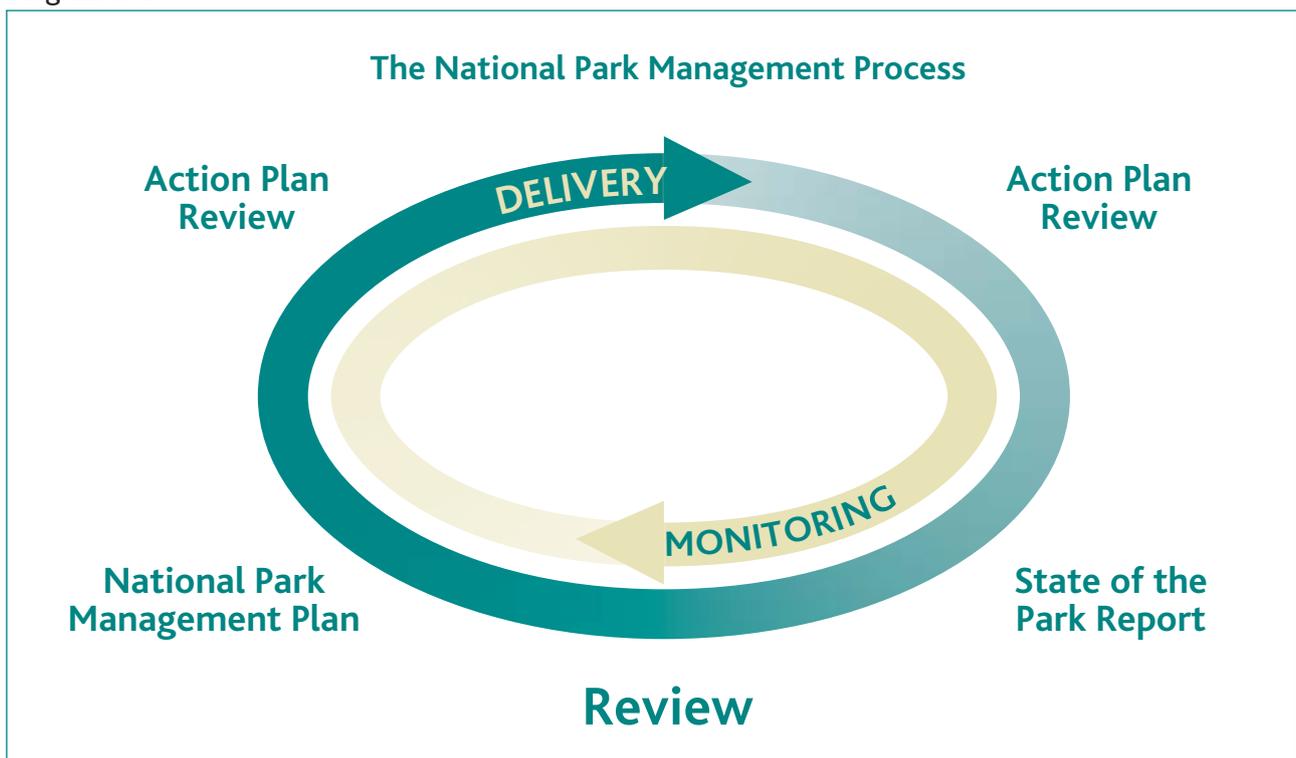
5.4. At a basic level a distinction needs to be drawn between:

- **monitoring** – which is the process of collecting data to describe condition and, when collected over time, change;
- **indicators** – which are the elements of data that are collected during a monitoring programme to focus the monitoring activity and measure change;
- **evaluation** – which is the consideration and use of the collected data to assess the effectiveness of the Plan and its delivery in meeting its objectives and vision.

5.5. For monitoring the success of the Plan, three questions need to be answered:

- What aspects of the Plan should be monitored?
- What types of indicator should be monitored?
- How many indicators should be monitored?

Diagram 5.1



5.6. In answer to these questions it is suggested that:

- Monitoring should focus on the delivery of the Action Plan and achievement of the objectives and should link to the National Park Performance Plan.
- In the case of the Action Plan the emphasis should be on the measurement of outputs or activities, i.e. monitoring the extent to which the targets in the Action Plan are achieved. These are likely to be largely expressed as outputs such as data collection, the development of partnerships and the achievement of specific projects. These are best monitored as on-going assessments of activity, which can be reported on in annual Business Plans.
- In the case of monitoring the objectives, the emphasis should be on monitoring **outcomes** such as the extent and condition of habitats or the number of rights of way in good condition. These are the most important indicators as they centrally focus on whether the quality of the National Park is being maintained and improved.
- Whilst it is suggested that each objective should be capable of measurement, where there are many objectives, monitoring will need to be selective to avoid monitoring overload, with monitoring rather than delivery becoming the key driver.

5.7. Indicators to measure **outcomes** need to be selected with care. The emphasis should be on reliable indicators of quality as well as quantity. In some cases ‘proxy’ indicators may need to be selected i.e. measures that do not directly measure condition but from which judgements about condition can be inferred. An example might be the number of farms entered into agri-environment schemes, as a proxy indicator of the management of semi-natural habitats.

5.8. Particular factors that should guide the choice of indicators are:

- use of indicators that capture the special qualities of the National Park and clearly measure the delivery of the management objectives;

- keeping monitoring simple and straightforward;
- use of indicators that are already being monitored as part of the State of The Park Report or use of data that is already being collected by others;
- reference to the national family of indicators being developed for National Parks and protected landscapes more generally, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

5.9. Depending on the interplay between these four factors some indicators will be better than others. This should be understood and acknowledged. It should also be remembered that indicators cannot paint a full picture. Nor can indicators anticipate the unexpected.

5.10. Monitoring as a whole is a shared task with, ideally, allocation of responsibility to those organisations with the greatest interest in the particular indicators concerned (**Box 3.5**).

5.11. Regular and accessible reporting on the results of monitoring – the progress of the Action Plan and the achievement of the Park objectives – is an important means for ensuring the continued engagement of stakeholders.

Plan review

5.12. Evaluation of the plan should be made against objectives met and outcomes achieved. Evaluation should be approached collectively and on an on-going basis.

5.13. In Chapter 4 it has been argued that National Park Management Plans should be objective-led. These objectives set the justification for the policies and actions identified in the Management Plan. This organising structure means that the review, and the response to monitoring and any unexpected changes, can be systematic and transparent. Thus necessary change in objectives can be made and its impact then traced down through all policy and action and necessary changes identified and made without the need to reassess the policy set as a whole.

6. Linking to other plans and strategies

6.1. There are many national, regional and local plans and strategies that impact on National Parks.

Understanding the relationships between them, and especially their relationships with the National Park Management Plan is very important. As so much of the delivery of the Management Plan depends on partnership it follows that the sister plans and strategies of the National Park Authorities partners should be well coordinated with the National Park Management Plan. This has not always been the case.

6.2. National Parks are a national designation, established in legislation, and defined by the National Park purposes. National Park Management Plans have to be produced for the Parks with the principal aim of delivering the National Park purposes. Section 62(2) of the Environment Act 1995 requires all relevant authorities to have regard to the National Park purposes in all their work in the Parks.

6.3. Taken together these two factors mean that the National Park Management Plan reflects a task that is of national importance. The place of the National Park Management Plan in the network of other plans and strategies has to be understood in this context (**Diagram 6.1**).

6.4. National Park Management Plans have to prevail over regional and local policy as it is delivered in the National Parks. Indeed the imperatives of National Park management should not find conflict in other national policy as the role of National Parks should be acknowledged. The National Park purposes should run through policy and work in the Parks.

6.5. **Diagram 6.1** is a simple illustration of the relationships between the National Park Management Plan and other plans and strategies. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but indicative. The thick arrows represent the dominant flow of influence. For some strategies such as national planning policy, this flow

should be equal in both directions. The thin arrows are a recognition that although the National Park Management Plan is pre-eminent, local policies for pursuit of the National Park purposes will be shaped by local circumstances, which will also be reflected in the other plans and strategies. The business plans of the National Park Authorities are included as these should be prepared within the context of the National Park Management Plan.

6.6. Overall, the large number of thick arrows flowing from the National Park Management Plan highlight its importance, and therefore the importance of engaging other partners in its preparation and delivery.

Diagram 6.1



7. Format

7.1. There is no set format that National Park Management Plans should follow. The format will need to reflect local circumstances. But care must be taken to ensure that the Plan:

- remains strategic;
- is a clearly defined entity;
- is suitable for a wide readership;
- is easy to understand;
- ensures integration between different topic areas to maximise the public benefits delivered and minimise potential conflicts.

7.2. National Park Management Plans have often been divided in two, with the Action Plan separated out as a working document subject to review every one or two years.

7.3. This thinking can be extended and the format of the Plan chosen to reflect how its various parts might be used and how often they might be reviewed. For example, the legislative foundation of the Parks, their key characteristics and the principal issues facing them, and their vision and objectives, are likely to be relatively enduring. In contrast the policy set derived from this core may expect to see greater degrees of change as they are fundamentally concerned with delivery and therefore need to respond to changing circumstances in the National Park, and to wider policy and funding opportunities. Finally Action Plans are the delivery mechanism of the Plan and frequent review will be appropriate.

7.4. Following this thinking the Plan has the potential to divide into a number of parts, reflecting their likely longevity. Alternatively, following existing practice in some National Park Authorities, the Plan may be supported by a series of topic or area action plans reflecting local circumstances. Such subdivision can be helpful and can allow the development of detail that would be inappropriate in a strategic document. However, care must be taken to ensure that the overall Plan remains integrated in its thinking and delivery.

Electronic formats

7.5. To date National Park Management Plans, in common with most documents of their type, have been produced in printed form and are increasingly available on the web in pdf format. There will always be a need for paper copies but electronic equivalents, for example as a web site, are increasingly important offering:

- greater flexibility and allowing the Plan to be used in different ways;
- greater scope to increase integration between different parts of the Plan;
- greatly improved opportunities for dissemination;
- great potential for giving geographical focus through the use of Geographical Information Systems which will also allow users to investigate information spatially.

7.6. Web sites potentially also offer the user of the Plan more functionality, principally through the ability to set up links within the Plan itself and also to other documents, information, examples, best practice, networks and contacts and so on outside the Plan. The inherent flexibility of websites enables different parts of the Plan to be reviewed independently, and would be particularly useful in ensuring that important information linked to the Plan could be kept up to date.

7.7. For the foreseeable future though, there will need to be a printed overview of the Plan, which pulls out its key threads and makes it accessible to as wide an audience as possible. Consideration of producing the Plan in other formats, such as Braille, audiotapes and minority languages may be appropriate.

7.8. Beyond this, there is clear potential to use the Plan, in web form, as a directory to the work of the NPA and its partners in fulfilling the National Park purposes and socio-economic duty. This has not been done yet but given the crucial importance of effective partnership is worth considering.



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