

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION POLICY OFFICER

SUBJECT: NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN – INTERIM CHANGE REPORT

Purpose of Report

This report summarises progress and change relating to the National Park Management Plan 2009-2013, including updates to state of the Park information. It is for Members' information and comment prior to its consideration by the National Park Authority on Wednesday, 7th December 2011.

Introduction/Background

This report will feed into the Management Plan's next public review (2013), and is also intended to provide context to the NPA's corporate plan. The report sections are as follows:

1. Landscape quality
2. Tranquillity
3. Seascape quality
4. Nature conservation on land
5. Nature conservation in the marine environment
6. Climate change and energy security
7. Air quality
8. Water resources and quality
9. Geodiversity
10. The historic environment (including the archaeological resource)
11. Enjoying the National Park
12. Understanding the National Park
13. Fostering socio-economic wellbeing in pursuit of the purposes

While understanding, climate change and the NPA's socio-economic duty have separate headings, they are also themes which run through other sections in this report.

1. Landscape quality

Landscape and the policy framework

The Management Plan aims to achieve a healthy and functioning National Park landscape and the myriad social and economic benefits which accrue from it. Although the Management Plan contains a headline policy for landscape, the aim is only achievable through of all other policies in the Management Plan - for wildlife, heritage, and so on.

The landscape section of the Management Plan is complemented by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Landscape Character Assessment Study,

which was commissioned by the NPA in 2006 and substantially adopted as SPG to the LDP in June 2011.

In autumn 2010, Welsh Government proposed a Natural Environment Framework for management of Wales' landmass and seas. Initial consultation by Welsh Government was undertaken through the document *A Living Wales*, which set out the principles of a management and regulatory approach based on ecosystem health and productivity. The next steps for the Framework are expected to include a series of reports, on future environments, valuation of natural capital, delivery and regulation.

National Park purposes and the Management Plan's aims are entirely consistent with the emerging principles of the Natural Environment Framework. They are likely to be further supported by the proposed Sustainable Development (Wales) Bill, which will provide for the establishment of an independent body to embed sustainable development as the central organising principle across Welsh Government and all public bodies in Wales.

A National Ecosystem Assessment was also published in 2011. This assessed the state and functioning of the natural processes that underpin human welfare in the UK. It found that biodiversity and ecosystems are undervalued by conventional economic analysis and that there is a need to develop a broader approach to valuation. In this regard, a legitimate role for the Natural Environment Framework would be providing a unifying banner for Welsh economic policy, as well as for conservation, by basing it on a truly sustainable use of Wales' natural assets. (Similar messages have been promoted by the Campaign for Protection of Rural Wales and by Natur, the Welsh conservation management institute.) In addition, a report¹ published recently by the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme makes a case for giving national parks a third purpose, in order to strengthen their strategic role in natural resource management.

The *National Ecosystem Assessment* sets up six different policy scenarios for the UK, against a backdrop of declining global resources and the UK population's age profile. The policy scenarios with the best results for the health of ecosystem services emphasise environmental awareness and ecological sustainability. Only one policy scenario (dubbed 'Nature at Work') is truly effective in terms of maximising good outcomes (human well-being, adaptation capacity) and minimising bad outcomes (an oversize ecological footprint), and defeats all other scenarios by a considerable margin. The Nature at Work scenario implies one of the strongest regulatory/intervention roles in managing public goods. Significantly for protected areas, this scenario is founded on the idea of multifunctional landscapes and high regard for the environment.

The *National Ecosystem Assessment* therefore provides more evidence, were it needed, of the importance of ecosystems approach and the role of protected areas - particularly useful at the current time.

¹ http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/policy%20and%20practice%20notes/33%20Carroll/13549%20RELU%20PP33_WEB.pdf

2. Tranquillity

Everyone has their own idea of what tranquillity means, but it usually implies a sense of distance from roads, from built-up areas and/or from people. Semi-natural habitats or 'wilderness' add to the impression of tranquillity, so remoteness and tranquillity are often, but not necessarily, found together.

In 2009 CCW received an updated *Wales Tranquil Areas Report* commissioned from Land Use Consultants. The project was partly a response to a monitoring requirement in the *Environment Strategy for Wales (2008-2011)* which recognises the importance of tranquil areas. The project follows the same methodology as a 1997 Wales Tranquil Areas Map so the two mapping exercises are comparable.

The 2009 report also includes information on dark night skies, although this is based on satellite data from 2000.

In 2009, the total amount of Tranquil Area in Wales was around 11,600km² (~55% of Wales' land area). This is a reduction from 1997 of nearly 1,500km² (more than 6% of Wales' land area - an area greater than Brecon Beacons National Park). Tranquil area loss in Pembrokeshire is 5.47%, i.e. comparable to the all-Wales figure.

Changes in tranquillity status (km² and %): Pembrokeshire

Zone	1997		2009		Change from 1997
Significantly disturbed*	279.01	16.91%	315.27	19.10%	+12.95%
Somewhat disturbed**	309.46	18.75%	348.98	21.15%	+12.8%
Total disturbed area	588.46	35.66%	664.25	40.25%	+12.87%
Tranquil***	1043.04	63.21%	985.96	59.75%	-5.47%
No data	18.71	1.13%	NA	NA	NA
Total	1650.21	100%	1650.21	100%	NA

Land Use Consultants, 2009

***Significantly disturbed:** Countryside subject to significant traffic intrusion and other equivalent disturbance

****Somewhat disturbed:** This land would fit within the broad English definition of tranquillity, but is not deemed fully tranquil by Welsh standards. Countryside somewhat disturbed by light traffic noise, small settlements, etc.

*****Tranquil:** Countryside usually free of any substantial disturbance in daytime. Significant intermittent aircraft noise can occur.

Changes in tranquillity status for National Landscape Character Areas (NLCAs) in Pembrokeshire are also given in the report. While the coastal and Preseli NLCAs approximately reflect the National Park boundary, the 'Milford Haven' landscape unit encompasses a large non-Park area around the Waterway and Cleddau Rivers, including Haverfordwest and large industry on the Haven. The Milford Haven unit shows a 26% loss of tranquil area, and corresponding 17% increase in disturbed area, in the period 1997-2009². The changes for all areas are given below.

Changes in tranquillity status: National Landscape Character Areas

LCA	Zone	Change from 1997-2009
South Pembrokeshire	Total disturbed area	+6.89%

² Implies that this was 55% disturbed/45% tranquil in 1997

Coast	Tranquil area	-0.88%
West and North Pembrokeshire Coast	Total disturbed area	+23.34%
	Tranquil area	-6.16%
Milford Haven	Total disturbed area	+17.4%
	Tranquil area	-26.25%
Preseli Hills	Total disturbed area	+42.54%
	Tranquil area	-4.4%

Land Use Consultants, 2009

3. Seascape quality

The *Wales Tranquil Areas Report* is confined to land, but includes a map showing areas which have been identified (in LandMap) as being of high or outstanding visual quality, which are also generally tranquil, and from which the sea is visible. Much of the western and northern coastline of the National Park, including the islands, a considerable area in the Preseli Hills, and some of the Castlemartin Coast is classified in this way.

Europarc Atlantic Isles and various partner organisations have been pushing for increased recognition of seascapes amongst policy-makers, in particular through a manifesto for seascapes which was published in 2011, which adapts the European Landscape Convention's³ definition of landscape to cover seascapes. Capitalising on the development of UK marine spatial plans (under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009), Europarc Atlantic Isles calls on the governments, agencies and authorities to recognise, promote and protect coastal character through the marine planning process. Where important seascapes lie adjacent to protected landscapes, the manifesto urges relevant agencies and authorities to extend the coverage of their management plans to encompass seascape considerations (i.e. visual character, conservation and recreational value).

However, if defining a landscape boundary is difficult, defining a seascape seems even harder, since marine protected areas (which may be protected for migratory fish, benthic habitats, wreck sites and so on) do not necessarily trace out any obvious "visual envelope" above water. Similarly, an obvious visual envelope above water does not necessarily reflect significant features below.

Much of what partners can achieve in practical terms for seascape protection is going to depend on the nature of Welsh Government's national plans for the Welsh inshore area and offshore areas, and funding for their delivery. The plans are scheduled for adoption by 2012/13⁴. UK-level guidance on seascape character assessment is expected in 2012; meanwhile, some large marine development proposals are underway (the proposed RWE npower renewables Atlantic Array windfarm will be 16km from the South Wales coast, with an application to the Infrastructure Planning Commission anticipated soon and the first electricity generation scheduled for 2016).

³ ELC (signed and ratified by UK Gov. 2006) - applies to the entire territory of the Parties - includes land, inland water and marine areas.

⁴ England has begun work on marine plans for the East Inshore and Offshore areas, while Scotland intends to produce a national marine plan and a number of regional marine plans. In Northern Ireland the development of marine planning is still dependent on primary legislation being passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly.

In terms of local marine management, a key delivery mechanism is already in place – the management schemes for the European marine sites adjacent to the National Park, and the relevant authority groups which help deliver them. (These are covered below.)

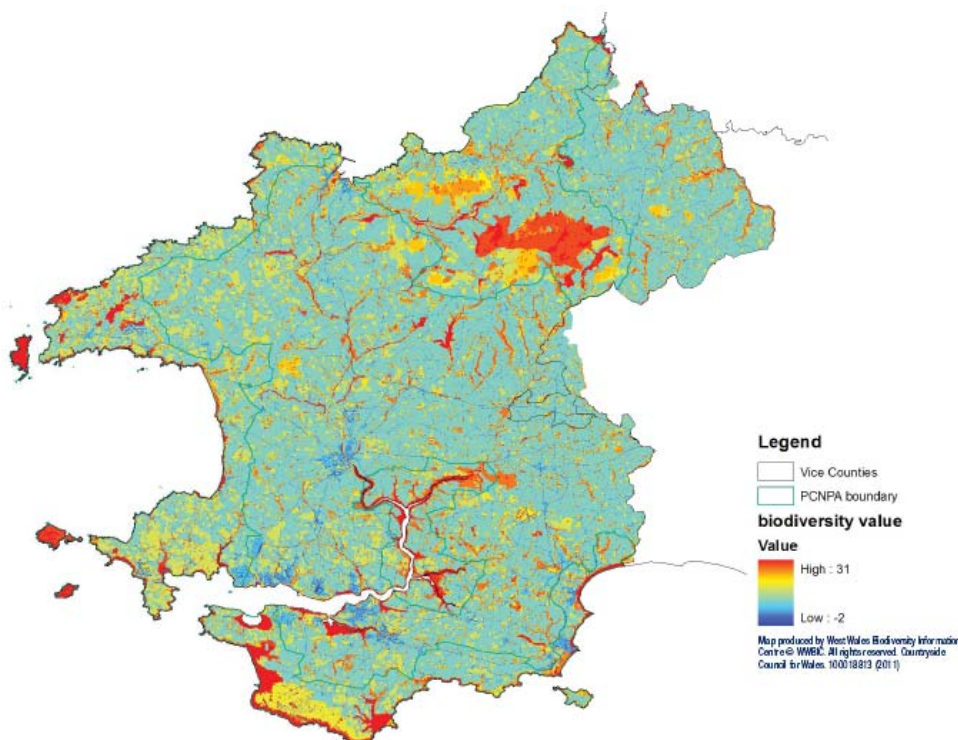
4. Nature conservation on land

Review by the Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership in 2011 of the *State of Wildlife in Pembrokeshire*⁵ describes a continued overall decline in the quality and conservation status of some of the National Park's signature habitats and species, such as traditional grassland and farmland birds, and also of once-common species, such as the starling. However, the report also celebrates numerous successes, such as the NPA's *Conserving the Park* initiative and the National Trust's *Pembrokeshire Heathland Beef* project.

Species populations, and the factors affecting them, are inherently dynamic, which can make it difficult to ascribe any particular population change to any given factor. For this reason the NPA has led and/or been closely involved with long-term monitoring of a number of key species and the factors affecting them, in order to determine the impact of various influences and to gauge the effectiveness of conservation policy and action in the round. Monitoring contributes to wider effort across the region, in which the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre performs a vital collation and analysis role.

The NPA commissioned county-wide wildlife value data layers from the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre in 2010. The layers can be superimposed to indicate the value and connectivity of the countryside according to habitat cover and protection, based on 2m x 2m squares. As one might expect, land management outside the Park has significant influence on Park wildlife. The importance of stream and river corridors, for example, is visible even at large scale.

Biodiversity value – Pembrokeshire



Based on Countryside Council for Wales data, approximately 48% (29,500 ha) of the National Park is improved grassland and 11% (6,500 ha) is arable. Accordingly, agricultural uses are probably the biggest single factor affecting wildlife in the Park, for better and for worse: “for better” in that much of our familiar and well-loved wildlife has adapted alongside traditional pastoral patterns of management, and is, so to speak, a cultural imprint of historic ways of life; “for worse” in that policy and market forces have profoundly altered our relationship with the countryside since the Second World War. In particular, policy and market forces have driven out much of what agricultural markets deem to be inefficient - which often includes the time and space for wildlife to co-exist with food production.

The NPA is active on around 220 sites covering over 2,500 hectares. This includes management agreement sites, NPA-owned sites, woodlands brought into management and Pembrokeshire Grazing Network sites. However, there still remains a significant area of marginal land within the Park on which we could gain conservation management influence. The NPA’s corporate plan aims to achieve a 5% increase in land managed for conservation, in partnership with the NPA, by 2013.

The simplest and most effective way to increase the scope and depth of our influence to date has been to gradually expand the tried and tested elements of the conservation programme already in place. This remains our preferred approach and we have an excellent track record of delivery, and valuable and established relationships with landowners and partner organisations. The NPA’s organisational restructuring will build on these successes by enabling more staff-time to be assigned to conservation delivery over the year. *Conserving the Park*, which is entirely complementary to the whole-farm national agri-environment schemes (Tir Gofal/Glastir), becomes ever more important.

The connectivity map above shows how the state of the Park’s wildlife may be affected by land management further afield. Accordingly there is scope to contribute to Park purposes by extending elements of *Conserving the Park* outside the Park area. In fact, some elements of the scheme already operate across the Park boundary; for example the Pembrokeshire Grazing Network, initiated by the NPA, is county-wide.

5. Nature conservation in the marine environment

Although the National Park extends only to mean low water mark, it is a nevertheless a maritime Park. The legislative and policy context for marine management and conservation is changing as sections of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 are implemented. Welsh Government ministers constitute the marine planning authority for devolved matters in Wales, responsible for marine spatial planning, and have powers to manage fisheries in Welsh waters (incorporating Sea Fisheries Committees). Ministers also have powers to create Highly Protected Marine Conservation Zones, and to license certain marine activities within a more streamlined consents system.

In 2011, a UK-wide Marine Policy Statement was published. This provides a framework for marine planning, and has been adopted by UK government and the devolved administrations. Welsh Government proposes two marine plans for Wales, for the offshore and inshore areas, integrated along their seaward boundaries with neighbouring UK plans and with terrestrial plans at Mean High Water.

The NPA sits (as a Welsh Local Government Association representative) on the Wales Marine Conservation Zone Project Steering Group, and site selection for Highly Protected Marine Conservation Zones is underway. Concern has however been expressed that the number and overall area of the MCZs will be insufficient for them to achieve their role as a core component of the wider (UK) marine protected area network, or of the ecosystem approach envisaged by *A Living Wales*. There is also some concern that sectoral interests may be able to veto MCZ designation (this was the barrier to implementing meaningful Marine Nature Reserve protection at Skomer under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended.)

The marine SAC management schemes referred to earlier in this report are of course the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC management scheme (published 2008⁶), Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries European Marine Sites management scheme (consultation draft 2011), and Cardigan Bay SAC management scheme⁷. The latter has been in place since 2001 and has been amended to reflect the six additional conservation features designated since.

Three major considerations (i.e. requiring action at a national level or above) emerge from the marine SAC management schemes, at least as far as impacts on the National Park's special qualities are concerned. These are, firstly, fisheries management (as noted, Welsh Government now has fisheries responsibility out to the median line with Ireland); secondly, development - especially marine energy and associated transmission/landfall infrastructure, and thirdly the management of recreational craft.

In 2008, Welsh Government launched the Wales Fisheries Strategy, which aims to support the development of viable and sustainable fisheries in Wales, and covers aquaculture, commercial fisheries and recreational fisheries. Delivery of the strategy is through implementation plans for each sector. The implementation plans were published in 2009 and reviewed in 2011; the revised plans are due for publication in 2012.

A report⁸ published in summer 2011 by Wales Environment Link - an umbrella body for environmental and countryside non-governmental organisations in Wales - may be of interest to Members. The report, *The Use of Voluntary Management in the Protection of UK Marine Biodiversity*, evaluates the successes and failures of voluntary approaches to marine conservation using case studies from around the UK, including the Pembrokeshire Marine Code.

⁶ <http://www.pembrokeshiremarinesac.org.uk/english/downloads/sitemandoc.htm>

⁷ http://www.cardiganbaysac.org.uk/pdf%20files/Cardigan_Bay_SAC_Management_Scheme_2008.pdf

⁸ <http://waleslinkmarine.org.uk/images/user/WEL%20Voluntary%20Marine%20Management%202011.pdf>

Key findings of the report are that voluntary initiatives driven by a statutory body in place of statutory management tools have generally not been successful, and that voluntary management is unlikely to be an appropriate approach to controlling damaging activities for sensitive features within highly protected MPAs. The report therefore sends a clear message regarding the effectiveness of non-statutory approaches to achieving marine conservation objectives.

6. Climate change and energy security

The Welsh Government's Climate Change Strategy for Wales (2010) reiterates a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in areas of devolved competence by 3% per year from 2011, against a baseline of the average emissions between 2006 and 2010. Welsh Government has also committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Wales by 40% by 2020 (1990 baseline), and reported last month that Wales' total greenhouse gas emissions have reduced by 23.3% compared to the baseline. Greenhouse gas reductions since 2008 are partly attributable to the recession. Wales produced 7.6% of the UK's total net greenhouse gas emissions in 2009.

The three Welsh national parks produced a joint statement on climate change and security of energy supply in 2009, recognising our considerable common ground as national parks, but staying mindful of our distinct geographical opportunities and challenges. In terms of nature conservation, climate change would arguably be less of an issue if it was not accompanied by the many other human impacts on ecosystems and wildlife. So a major part of the NPA's role lies in protecting or restoring ecosystems and maximising nature's adaptive potential, and our land management programme is critical to this.

The LDP aims to provide a supportive framework for renewable energy generation, subject to environmental or amenity issues. Even without counting generating capacity which is installed as permitted development, the LDP is ahead of target on approved renewable energy schemes. It is behind target on heat generation, but this is due mainly to the exclusion of biomass from the figures (biomass generally enjoys permitted development rights), coupled with the substantial contribution that biomass is expected to make. (More detail on policy implementation will be available in annual LDP monitoring reports.)

The Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Fund, administered in this National Park by the NPA, continues to provide essential support to a range of energy projects alongside many other sustainable development themes. A particular milestone was the 2011 consenting for the DeltaStream tidal energy unit in Ramsey Sound. The pre-commercial demonstrator for this project was financed out of SDF (the then Environment Development Fund). This highlights the Fund's important role in supporting renewable energy generation devices/developers at stages when they find it very difficult, or impossible, to secure capital from other sources.

The NPA sits in an advisory capacity on the Marine Energy Pembrokeshire group, a partnership of developers, the public sector and research institutions

which aims to establish Pembrokeshire as a centre of excellence for sustainable marine energy generation.

The NPA also of course remains committed to reducing its own footprint in terms of energy, waste, fuel and water. Many of our sites showcase renewable energy technologies and best practice efficiency measures, and the NPA signed up to the Wales Sustainable Development Charter initiative in 2010.

7. Air quality

In May 2011 Pembrokeshire County Council published an Air Quality Progress Report in accordance with the Environment Act 1995 (Local Air Quality Management), which concludes that air quality objectives will be met in the National Park area.

Outside the National Park there is potential for exceedances in nitrogen dioxide concentrations from vehicle emissions at three street locations in Haverfordwest and one in Pembroke. This reflects a general upward trend of nitrogen dioxide concentrations associated with vehicle emissions.

8. Water resources and quality

The Environment Agency Wales' 2009 River Basin Management Plan (key to implementing the Water Framework Directive) for the Western Wales River Basin District⁹ found that 29% of surface waters meet good ecological status/potential or better - hence 71% do not meet good status. The reasons for failure relate mostly to suboptimal fish and invertebrate health, and phosphate levels. 96% of groundwater bodies are at good quantitative (volumetric) status.

Bathing water quality is measured by EU mandatory and guideline standards. 2011 saw 13 beaches awarded Blue Flags in the National Park, reflecting excellent water quality and a range of other beach management criteria.

Green Coast awards are an equivalent designation for excellent water quality on less developed beaches. There are 13 Green Coast beaches in the National Park in 2011. This is down from 15 Green Coast awards in 2010; wet summers can lead to pollution from run-off from farmland and from over-burdened sewerage systems.

9. Geodiversity

In 2009 Welsh Government commissioned a study to identify Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites. These are an advisory, i.e. non-statutory, designation intended to complement Geological Conservation Review (GCR) sites. (GCR sites are nationally- and internationally-important sites, notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act

⁹ EAW 'Water for Life and Livelihoods' RBMP for Western Wales district, Annex A (Current State of Waters), 2009. Next report is due by December 2012.

1981, as amended; the National Park's rich geological heritage makes it a potential candidate for UNESCO Geopark designation.)

The Welsh Government study identified around 80 Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites (RIGS) in Pembrokeshire, of which 65 lie in the National Park. The NPA has produced draft Supplementary Planning Guidance which identifies the RIGS boundaries and provides a statement of the geomorphological interest for each. As with GCR notification, RIGS identification should be seen as an ongoing process - there are still some potential RIGS within the National Park and Pembrokeshire which have not been evaluated, and which may be at risk.

If (undesigned) rock exposures or landforms are present on potential development sites, advice on their significance should be obtained from CCW. Even where no features are visible, a watching brief may be advisable when new excavations are being made in an area that has potential to reveal significant new geological interest. Recording/sampling may be all that is needed in cases where an undesigned feature is likely to be damaged or obscured.

10. The historic environment (including the archaeological resource)

Condition of Historic Environment Records

There are 7,513 Historic Environment Record sites in the National Park, which include Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The condition of non-scheduled archaeological sites is in many cases unknown, and may be difficult to assess, as some records are only known from documentary sources or aerial photos, for example. However, we do have condition assessments for Scheduled Ancient Monuments and for Listed Buildings.

Condition of Scheduled Ancient Monuments

A third round of Cadw monitoring of Scheduled Ancient Monuments took place between 2003 and 2010 (so the figures below may be up to 8 years old). 249 of the 284 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the National Park were visited (88%).

SAM condition	National Park area	All-Wales
Greatly improved	2.4% (6)	1.1% (39)
Improved	15.3% (38)	8% (284)
Stable	46.2% (115)	77.6% (2751)
Worsened (superficial)	3.6% (9)	3% (107)
Worsened (moderate)	26.5% (66)	8.1% (289)
Worsened (severe)	6% (15) (Some of these have subsequently been addressed.)	2.1% (75)
Destroyed	0% (0)	0.1% (2)
Total	249	3547

Condition of Listed Buildings

There are no additions to the number of Listed Buildings in the National Park since the Management Plan was published; the only possible additions would arise from spot listings.

There have however been some changes since the last Buildings At Risk survey in 2009. Of the 1,242 listed buildings in the National Park, 70 are on the Buildings at Risk Register. Of these, 6 are at 'grave risk' (the highest level of concern), 2 are at 'extreme risk', and a further 62 are 'at risk'.

Legislative and policy protection

The Welsh Government's recently announced legislative programme includes a commitment to introduce a Heritage (Wales) Bill in 2014-15. A package of measures is envisaged, some of which might require primary or subordinate legislation, and some of which can be delivered without regulation (through advice and guidance for example).

Planning authorities can also use Supplementary Planning Guidance to encourage more proactive management of historic landscapes. The detailed landscape characterisation work carried out by the regional archaeological trusts, in support of the Register of Historic Landscapes, is an important resource for local authorities. Planning Policy Wales makes specific reference to historic landscapes, and makes it clear that landscapes are a material consideration in the planning process.

Conserving and enhancing local distinctiveness

The National Park's historic environment is of course more than the sum of listed and scheduled assets; it includes their context, from settlement patterns to entire landscapes, and the 'ordinary', as well as the historically or architecturally noteworthy. Cadw's 2011 report *Conservation Principles* recognises that the entire rural and urban landscape of Wales is an historic asset, and that sustaining heritage values embraces both preservation and enhancement. Cadw's programme of urban characterisation has helped to identify the general elements of historic character in towns, but its principles would also apply in rural areas, and could fill the need for a consistent method of assessing the state of local distinctiveness.

The statutory framework can protect some elements of the historic environment, but local authorities have scope to address other aspects, for example through establishing 'local lists' of historic buildings and through development policy. Local lists do not confer statutory protection, but can be a material consideration in the planning process.

TAN 12 (Design) also provides broad support for heritage conservation, emphasising the need for the planning system to be proactive in raising design standards through development plans, SPG and design briefs. Since the LDP for the National Park was adopted, SPG has been produced and adopted for historic environment, and SPG for proposals in the National Park's 13 Conservation Areas has been consulted on.

Protection through agri-environment measures

Measures to protect the historic environment under agricultural cross-compliance will also be carried forward from the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme to the new scheme, Glastir. The NPA may be able to help raise farmers' and landowners' awareness of responsibilities, and possibly also

assist them in delivery. However, opportunities for proactive management of historic/archaeological features within Glastir are likely to be restricted to the higher level scheme, so the NPA may want to consider options to assist entry level holdings, in terms of site management advice and support. This is particularly the case on undesignated sites, where Cadw will not have an involvement.

11. Enjoying the National Park

Pembrokeshire's coastal scenery and inshore waters are of course the major recreational attraction for residents and visitors. The National Park offers some of the best opportunities for outdoor recreation in Europe, and CCW's 2008 Wales Outdoor Recreation Survey found that Pembrokeshire has one of the highest visitor participation levels in outdoor activities in Wales.

A new plan for recreation in and around the coast

'Enjoying the National Park'¹⁰ is a plan aimed at providing and managing sustainable recreation opportunities in the National Park. It was produced by the NPA in partnership with public, private and voluntary partners, funded by CCW and Visit Wales, and published in September 2011 following public consultation. The evidence base for the plan is the Wales Activity Mapping project (formerly the South West Wales Recreation Audit), a web-based geographical information system which allows changes in recreational use and impacts to be monitored over time.

'Enjoying the National Park' is the key to implementing National Park Management Plan policies for recreation, and also contributes to objectives for conservation and life-long learning. It also forms the basis of Supplementary Planning Guidance, providing more detailed advice on the way in which relevant policies of the LDP will be applied. Access on foot is not a focus of the plan; this is covered by the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail Strategy and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Promoting recreation in the right places

By identifying Recreation Character Areas and mapping wildness, 'Enjoying the National Park' gives the NPA and its partners a common basis for guiding recreation to the most appropriate locations while protecting sites where activities would have unacceptable impact or which are simply over-used. The *Enjoy Pembrokeshire* website plays a complementary role in this.

Coasteering provides a good example of the benefit of having a shared recreation plan. The nature and popularity of coasteering, and its spread to more remote areas, is a concern in terms of disturbance to wildlife. The National Trust is increasingly adopting a licensing approach to activities on Trust property, aimed at capping numbers and protecting wildlife and the quality of user experience, rather than at raising revenue. However, a consequence of capping use at certain sites may be that pressure is displaced elsewhere, hence the need for a coordinated approach to zoning activities in time and space. The plan and its evidence base helps partners to achieve this.

¹⁰ <http://www.walesactivitymapping.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/PCNPA-Recreation-Plan-2011-Low-Res1.pdf>

Activities for which more capacity exists

Pembrokeshire is a walker's paradise, but there is scope to improve provision for and promotion of a number of low-impact activities on a site-specific or more general basis, and over a longer season. 'Enjoying the National Park' identifies sea-swimming/snorkelling, cycling, and kayaking in particular as activities for which capacity exists.

However, the maintenance load associated with existing recreation provision can be a brake on new work areas. Finding ways to promote and enhance recreational opportunity throughout the year with limited resources is part of a more general challenge for the NPA and its partners, promoting the links between outdoor recreation and health, wellbeing and a sustainable local economy. Events like 2011's *Ironman Wales* provide a great opportunity to showcase the Park outside the main season.

12. Understanding the National Park

People's enjoyment of the National Park is closely linked to understanding of it, and success in much of the NPA's conservation and access work depends on people's awareness, attitudes, behaviour and goodwill. Whether the NPA is seeking to influence land management for conservation, open a permissive path, improve the condition of a historic building, or reduce traffic volumes, we work with partner organisations, residents and visitors, as agents of change.

Encouraging young people to enjoy the Park

Young people are tomorrow's decision-makers, the foundation of communities, and can wield considerable influence within families. A particular concern is children's increasing disconnection from the natural environment, which can contribute to, for example, childhood obesity, mental health issues and 'nature deficit disorder'. The 2009 Welsh Government publication 'Creating an Active Wales' estimated that the cost of physical inactivity to Wales is about £650m per year¹¹.

A key medium term challenge for the NPA therefore is to encourage Pembrokeshire communities in general, and young people in particular, to make more of the recreation opportunities available. Related to this challenge is that of 'shifting baselines'; people are generally less likely to care about things they have not experienced.

The NPA is ideally placed to support schools, providing active outdoor learning opportunities, and enhancing the general development and wellbeing of children and young people. We also support informal learners, and hard to reach audiences.

However, while the NPA has been successful in working with primary schools, a barrier to working with secondary schools is the availability of teachers during the day. This makes it more important to involve children through extra-curricular activities, which also gives us scope to include those children who

¹¹ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/phhs/publications/actiwales/100121actiwalesen.pdf>

may fall outside the National Curriculum. Working with youth groups (using the John Muir scheme as a delivery mechanism) is one approach, with an increasing focus on events like wildlife-watching or bushcraft, rather than 'generic' walking events. The NPA's current bid to the Big Lottery Fund, if successful, will enable us to build on the success of the Go4It project.

We are also exploring the best ways in which we can contribute to the current *Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy for Pembrokeshire* and the *Children and Young People's Plan for Pembrokeshire*. Some initial conclusions are as follows.

Firstly, our outreach work with young people should concentrate in the urban areas which have been identified as the most deprived. In order to target the most needy children and parents locally, the NPA should work in partnership with agencies which have access to these groups e.g. Plant Dewi, Youth Offending Team, Communities First.

Secondly, the NPA should continue to offer opportunities for active participation in outdoor recreation for children and young people as a means of addressing wellbeing and health issues. Delivery mechanisms include the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, and the NPA's schools and outreach programmes.

Thirdly, there are few opportunities for work with ethnic minorities within the National Park, and this area of work is best addressed through the Campaign for National Parks' *Mosaic* initiative, which involves communities outside national parks as well. Funding has been secured from the Big Lottery Fund for three years which will enable a project officer to be employed to cover the Pembrokeshire Coast and Brecon Beacons national parks.

Finally, the NPA will need to take into account the increasing elderly population in the county, particularly where for those living in areas of multiple deprivation or rurally-isolated areas.

In all this the NPA's goal remains the same: to provide people from all walks of life with tailored and memorable National Park experiences, and to inspire them to take action.

13. Fostering socio-economic wellbeing in pursuit of the purposes

UK national parks of course have their very origins in health and wellbeing, as the initial UK designations formed part of the post-WWII reconstruction effort. In addition, many of the UK parks' special qualities are the result of past social and economic decisions. Pembrokeshire Coast's wildlife, for example, has co-adapted alongside what was historically a pastoral economy, while our historic buildings reflect practical commercial considerations, as well as those of culture and status. Hence National Park purposes, and the NPA's socio-economic duty in pursuit of them, are inseparable; conservation of the special qualities often depends on their continued management, which in turn depends on their appropriate economic use.

The 2008 financial crisis seems to have triggered increasing public and policy recognition of the roots that environmental and social problems - and their solutions – often have in the economy. This appreciation, coupled with initiatives like the Natural Environment Framework, is helping once again to propel protected areas to the fore. In celebrating and encouraging people to enjoy this protected landscape, we can also use it as a platform to increase awareness and inspire action.

We are fortunate to live in a relatively fertile, renewable energy source-rich corner of Wales, with abundant technical and engineering expertise and, in most cases, an enviable quality of life and environment. The opportunity, now more than ever, is to recast the Park and Pembrokeshire as a healthy, functioning landscape, to help re-establish more meaningful values as a nation and, simultaneously, to support Park communities in building a resilient and sustainable economy.

Financial considerations

This interim report has no financial implications at this time.

Recommendation

Members of the Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee are invited to ENDORSE this interim report, subject to any comments they may wish to make, as a basis for its consideration by the National Park Authority on Wednesday, 7th December 2011.

Background Documents

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Management Plan 2009-2013

Other relevant references can be found in the footnotes in this report.

For further information, please contact Michel Regelous on 01646 624827