

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks

Introduction

On the 27th July the Chair of the Authority received a letter from the Minister for Environment, Hannah Blythyn AM, which outlined the Priorities for National Park Authorities 2018-19. A copy of the letter can be seen at Annex A. The letter refers to the Welsh Government statement "Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks", which was published on the same day.

The statement outlines key priority areas following consideration of the outcomes from the Review of Designated Landscapes, Future Landscapes Wales Programme and responses to the *Taking forward Wales' sustainable management of natural resources* consultation. It provides clarity of purpose for the National Parks and AONBs in the context of the UK's exit from the European Union and at the close of a period of review.

The statement aims to improve resilience and realise the full value of Wales' landscapes and is based on the following four goals:

- Valued Places
- Resilient Environments
- Resilient Communities
- Resilient Ways of Working

and ten cross-cutting themes:

- Landscapes for everyone
- Exemplars of the sustainable management of natural resources
- Halting the loss of biodiversity
- Green energy and decarbonisation
- Realising the economic potential of landscape
- Growing tourism and outdoor recreation
- Thriving Welsh language
- All landscapes matter
- Delivering through collaboration
- Innovation in resourcing

The statement calls on the designated landscapes' managing bodies to deliver on a number of Welsh Government priorities, including the Nature Recovery Plan, a refreshed woodland strategy, the decarbonisation agenda, and Cymraeg 2050.

Delivering on this agenda demands that the Authorities and Partnerships for the designated landscapes provide leadership in their areas and collaborate more effectively with each other and beyond their boundaries.

A copy of the statement can be seen at Annex B.

Funding

The letter from the Minister informed the Authority that the Welsh Government has decided to increase our funding for the current year by £154,431 which effectively reverses the cut in funding received from the Welsh Government announced earlier this year. However, this will not trigger an increased levy from Pembrokeshire County Council. In addition, the proposed 5% cut in grant for the next financial year has also been reversed.

Compliance

The National Park Authority will take account of the priorities when developing its National Park Management Plan and Corporate Plan.

Conclusion

The publication of the Priorities Statement brings to an end a long period of review and provides policy guidance to inform the work of the Authority in the future.

Recommendation:

Members are requested to note the statement “Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government’s Priorities for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks” and the positive funding announcement from the Welsh Government.

(For further information, please contact Tegryn Jones, Chief Executive on 01646 624803 or by emailing tegrynj@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)

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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks

July 2018

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Designated Landscapes: Valued and Resilient

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Valued and resilient

Foreword by Hannah Bythyn AM, Minister for the Environment

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks contain some of the most beautiful, spectacular and dramatic areas of countryside in Wales. These are landscapes of national importance with designation conferring the highest status for the conservation of landscape. Millions of visitors enjoy these special qualities every year.

Recent reviews have demonstrated the appetite to innovate how landscapes are recognised and managed whilst respecting the enduring value of safeguarding the nation's most spectacular areas.

I have already confirmed unequivocally that all the existing designated landscapes will be retained and their existing purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty will not be weakened. The intention of the priority themes in this statement is to improve the integration of the existing purposes, including biodiversity conservation, with the ambition for the sustainable management of natural resources and to grow the population who value these landscapes and the benefits they bring. They are intended to improve the resilience and realise the full value of Wales' landscapes.

I will continue to encourage and support collaborative action aimed at addressing the opportunities and challenges posed by the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, and to address the issues and priorities identified in the State of Natural Resources Report and the Natural Resources Policy.

This statement and the financial settlement for the remainder of this Government term provides a foundation for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks to push on with confidence to shape future landscapes which deliver for Wales.



Summary: Valued and Resilient

This statement contains four goals for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks in Wales.

First, that they are **Valued Places** which reach out beyond traditional audiences and engage a more diverse cross section of Welsh society to feel they have a stake in these national landscapes. Formal partnerships, which provide meaningful opportunities to participate in the preparation of plans and decision-making, need to be established or maintained.

Second, that they contain **Resilient Environments** where the value of nature is enhanced and the decline in biodiversity is reversed. This is important for both its intrinsic value, and to ensure lasting benefits to society. The areas must become exemplars for the sustainable management of natural resources, with the Authorities and partnerships championing action to halt the decline in biodiversity. The Welsh Government will introduce a requirement for pursuing the sustainable management of natural resources in the exercise of functions and the preparation of the management plan. This will mean greater alignment with the contemporary Welsh approach to natural resources whilst respecting the enduring value of their original purpose.

Third, that they support **Resilient Communities**. The relationship between people and the environment has shaped these landscapes and their communities. The economic and social resilience of these communities is integral to the purpose of designation. More needs to be done to develop and refine understanding of local economic resilience and economic opportunities, and for designation to actively support and create opportunities for employment. As important destinations for the visitor economy fit for purpose places and facilities for outdoor recreation, which are consistent in standard with the spectacular landscapes they serve, must be encouraged and provided.

Finally, the AONB partnerships and National Park Authorities must adopt **Resilient Ways of Working**, where they champion collaborative approaches to maximise the benefits and tackle the challenges faced in these landscapes. There should be closer operational arrangements between existing designated areas on a regional and national basis, as well as between the designated landscapes and areas without a statutory designation. The Welsh Government will work with the AONB partnerships to introduce greater parity with National Parks when it comes to status, profile and resourcing. In addition, a National Designated Landscapes Partnership will be established to develop a robust culture of collaboration whilst also providing scrutiny and challenge on designated landscapes' priorities and delivery. At the local level measures to improve diversity and local representation on National Park boards will be supported.

The Welsh Government will reduce the administrative burdens on National Park Authorities and put in place measures which enable resource planning by the lead bodies for the duration of an Assembly Term. This statement, setting out priorities for the remainder of the term is a step in this direction and will inform future strategic grant letters. The National park Authorities, in particular, must increase the level of revenue generated through

appropriate commercial activities whilst remaining true to the core values and purposes of the areas. A consistent and strengthened performance management regime, linked to the evaluation framework for the Natural Resources Policy will be introduced and this will inform formal review points for existing governance arrangements.

Together, the commitments and priorities in this statement, alongside the ongoing financial support, provide a foundation for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks in Wales to be increasingly valued and resilient.

Purpose and Background

Designated landscapes are strategic national assets and are a key delivery mechanism for the Welsh Government's environmental, social and economic ambitions.

The previous Welsh Government statement on National Parks was published in 2007. A consultation on a revised version which included Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) took place in 2013 but wasn't published because of the emerging debates leading to the Well-being and Environment Acts. There followed an independent review into the purpose and governance of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks in Wales, chaired by Professor Terry Marsden (Director of the Sustainable Places Research Institute at Cardiff University) followed by the Future Landscapes Programme to explore its recommendations and the case for reform.

Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales was published in 2017 advocating greater recognition for all landscapes and strengthening alignment with the sustainable management of natural resources. The degree to which this required a change to the existing statutory purposes of the designated landscapes and the degree of protection afforded to them prompted significant debate.

The purpose of issuing this statement now is to bring the period of review and reflection to a close and to set out the Welsh Governments' priorities for AONBs and National Parks in Wales.

This statement includes ten cross-cutting priority themes which provide a consistent framework for all designated landscapes and for national stakeholders whose policies and decisions influence designated landscape management. It still provides for flexibility of management and delivery within each area.

Individual AONB and National Park statutory management plans can differ from each other in order to reflect local context and priorities. The priorities are aimed at improving delivery and accountability in ways consistent with the Environment Act and the Natural Resources Policy in Wales.

Priorities for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks

AONBs and National Parks contain some of the most beautiful, spectacular and dramatic areas of countryside in Wales. These are landscapes of national importance with designation conferring the highest status for the conservation of landscape. These special places provide exceptional opportunities to experience the natural environment including National Trails, the Wales Coast Path and open access areas. They also provide opportunities to enjoy a variety of appropriate recreational activities such as mountain biking, mountaineering, canoeing and coasteering. Millions of visitors enjoy these special qualities every year.

The first purpose of National Parks is ‘to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of these areas’ and AONBs have a similar statutory purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty. National Parks also have a second purpose to promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks. In addition National Park Authorities have a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of their local communities.

The designated landscapes are recognised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as Category V Protected Areas “where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.”

The Welsh Government believes there is enduring value to the original aims of the designated landscapes. It therefore intends to ***retain the existing purposes of National Parks, along with safeguard of 11A of the National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (“Sandford”) and retain the existing purpose of AONB.***

The State of Natural Resources Report shows that none of Wales’ ecosystems are currently showing all the attributes of resilience. Overall, biological diversity is declining, which can be seen by the loss of habitats and species. The extent of some habitats has also declined significantly. This means that unless action is taken, the benefits we derive from natural resources are at risk.

If the environmental challenges Wales faces are to be addressed, the designated landscapes must do more to identify, safeguard and realise the benefits from the public goods they protect for all the people of Wales.

The new legislative framework for Wales is ambitious. ***The designated landscapes’ management bodies must engage fully in exploring its potential to deliver the ‘Wales we want’, and learning what works.*** When natural resources are managed well, communities flourish, wider society and the economy are enhanced and Wales’ well-being is improved. The designated landscapes have the potential to bring their collective experience to bear to halt the decline in nature, whilst recognising the need for economic resilience in our rural communities.

Valued Places

Reaching out beyond traditional audiences and engaging a more diverse cross section of Welsh society to feel they have a stake in these national landscapes.

1. Landscapes for everyone

The intrinsic link between people and place forms an important cornerstone of well-being in Wales. Landscapes in all their forms (rural, urban, coastal, marine, industrial, etc.) shape the feelings and identity of individuals, communities and the nation. Landscapes help people to understand their past. They inform the present and help express society’s collective hopes for the future.

As visual expressions of identity the landscapes of Wales play a significant role in the process of creating a distinct nation. Some are considered iconic, represented in imagery used worldwide to convey messages about Wales' collective identity.

The designated landscapes have an important role to get more people being passionate about the natural environment, to recognise the contribution it makes to the rural economy and the effect it has on the health and quality of life of the people who live in and visit. Beyond this ***broad partnerships should be formally established or maintained, which are enabled and empowered by the managing body to provide meaningful opportunities to participate in the preparation of plans and decision-making*** of these designated landscapes.

While it is important for all sectors of society to experience these designated landscapes, particular focus should be given to children and young families from deprived areas. Action must be taken to ***help to tackle the inequalities that exist in health, education and economic outcomes amongst the poorest in society***. This work will include enhanced outdoor education programmes and volunteering opportunities.

The AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities should recognise the complex and multidimensional nature of social exclusion, seek to promote social inclusion in all AONB and National Park work, seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities and seek to reduce social exclusion in all its forms.

Resilient Environments

Enhancing the value of nature and reversing the decline in biodiversity, for its intrinsic value, and to ensure lasting benefits to society.

2. Exemplars of the sustainable management of natural resources

There is broad support for the Welsh Government's ambitions for the sustainable management of natural resources. Leading from this is a recognition the designated landscapes' managing bodies are well placed to take this agenda forward in their areas because of the diversity of natural resources found within their boundaries, their experience and expertise, and their extensive connections with communities of interest, including people who live and work within their boundaries. The designated landscapes cover 25% of Wales' land area which make the National Park Authorities and AONB partnerships key partners in the success of delivering on national priorities and achieving the Wales we want to see.

There is also recognition for the opportunities afforded by better aligning the approaches in designated landscapes with the sustainable management of natural resources, particularly in light of the UK's exit from the European Union and the impact this could have on land management and rural development. The Welsh Government recognises the need to take a spatial approach to get the most from land, and is proposing an approach where future land management support can be targeted to particular areas. In this context the potential for

National Park Authorities, amongst others, to take an active role in the administration of schemes will be explored.

AONBs and National Parks, which contain a socio-economic dimension, should exemplify approaches to reconciling tensions around competing demands for natural resources. They have established governance and accountability structures and should utilise mechanisms such as the Management Plan and Local Development Plan in this endeavour. The emerging Area Statements offer the opportunity to inform and enhance further the role of landscape scale action.

To support this ambition The Welsh Government will introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity to ***require a National Park Authority to pursue the sustainable management of natural resources in the exercise of its functions.*** A similar duty will be ***applied to the constituent authorities of AONBs relating to their duty to prepare the management plan*** for the area. This will bring the designated landscapes up to date with the contemporary environmental legislation in Wales whilst recognising the enduring value of their original purpose.

3. Halting the loss of biodiversity

The AONBs and National Parks contain some of Wales' most stunning natural beauty, rich in geological and biological diversity.

Changes in the distribution and abundance of plants, animals, and microbes affect ecosystem functions and the capacity of those functions to deliver ecosystem services. Loss of species from ecosystems affect their ability to resist invasion by other species, affect production and nutrient cycling, and affect the reliability and stability of ecosystems. Therefore, biodiversity is essential to sustaining ecosystems that provide the vital services our lives depend on.

Each designated landscape is distinctive in its own way. Each faces significant challenges from the impact of climate change and increasing pressures on the landscape to deliver food, energy, water and to accommodate carbon storage. There has never been a more critical time to rise to the challenge of developing landscape resilience and managing these changes to minimise the negative impacts on landscapes and communities.

The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) indicates that no Welsh ecosystems contain all the necessary attributes of resilience, including those in our designated landscapes. A priority for designated landscapes is to act upon these findings and ensure the management and use of natural resources focuses on maintaining and enhancing the status of their attributes – the connectivity, condition, scale/ extent and diversity. Further action in designated landscapes to address biodiversity decline is therefore necessary to maintain and enhance ecosystem resilience.

Designated landscapes often contain or adjoin designations including Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, National Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, World Heritage Sites and non-statutory designations like Heritage Coasts. Such protected sites are widely regarded as being central to local, regional and global strategies for the conservation of biodiversity. The health of designated landscapes will be inextricably linked with the improvement of neighbouring landscapes and sites. The extensive nature of **landscape designation provides a mechanism to secure healthy, resilient and productive ecosystems that are managed sustainably and contribute to connectivity between habitats.**

Woodlands for Wales sets out a strong case for woodland expansion and for good woodland management. This strategy sets out the kind of woodland we want, building on the priorities in the Natural Resources Policy which include supporting the development of resilient ecological networks to maintain and enhance the resilience of Wales' ecosystems and increased canopy cover and well located woodland. Creating both new native and new mixed woodlands that can deliver multiple benefits, and to use planting and natural processes to do so, is a challenge which applies equally to the designated landscapes as to the rest of Wales. It is possible to **increase woodland cover whilst respecting the special qualities of these landscapes.**

4. Green energy and decarbonisation

Designated landscapes must **contribute to a sustainable low carbon economy for Wales**, for example, **through enabling the generation of renewable energy at an appropriate scale, water management and carbon sequestration.**

In order to conserve and enhance the outstanding quality of these landscapes, AONBs and National Parks are afforded special protections within the land use planning system compared with the rest of the countryside. This is right. However, it is also right for the Authorities and Partnerships to be challenged to assist Welsh Ministers to discharge the duty under the Environment (Wales) Act to ensure that in 2050 net emissions are at least 80% lower than the baseline set in legislation.

Through careful planning and management these landscapes can play a key role in meeting the challenges of adaptation and mitigation of climate change, achieving energy security whilst creating resilient communities and supporting the environment. **Communities should be supported to bring forward appropriate renewable energy schemes** which have the potential to reduce dependence on carbon based energy and be a source of revenue for the community.

In addition, this Government has an ambition for the Welsh Public Sector to be carbon neutral by 2030. The National Park Authorities, in particular, can demonstrate leadership on achieving a carbon neutral public sector.

Resilient Communities

Supporting the social and economic resilience of communities.

5. Realising the economic potential

The Authorities and Partnerships have a particular opportunity to help realise the economic potential of their communities and to exemplify and promote green growth. There is no barrier to them doing so within the remit of their existing purpose.

The Marsden Review suggested new purposes to include an explicit remit for economic development. This 'third purpose' is something the National Park Authorities and some stakeholders have called for in order to shift the perception of a designated landscape to one which is seen to consider more the well-being of communities. The Well-being Goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the principles of the Sustainable Management of Natural resources in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 make the connections between the environment and the economy as a means of pursuing sustainable development and use. While the symbolism of a new economic purpose has not been discounted, there is insufficient evidence that the existing purposes operating within the new Welsh legislative framework are a barrier to practical delivery. For that reason, there will not be a change of this nature now without broader support or when it is clear impediments to delivery can only be overcome through new legislation.

National Park Authorities have a duty to 'foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within their national park' and AONB local authorities also have a similar responsibility across the whole of their authority areas. To reflect their national importance the planning system will continue to afford them the highest possible protection from inappropriate development. This does not prevent the designations from playing a key role in facilitating appropriate development whilst maintaining the integrity of landscape quality.

Designated landscape management organisations need to further develop and refine their own understanding of local economic resilience and economic opportunities, and continue to collaborate with other economic development agencies, including local authorities. They should draw on their power to convene local bodies, businesses and groups in order to support and create opportunities for employment.

6. Growing tourism and outdoor recreation

Wales' natural environment and designated landscapes offer significant opportunity for growing tourism sustainably.

The designated landscapes enhance Wales' tourism offer. The National Parks in particular are well known tourism destinations and their status provides a strong brand image which extends beyond their boundaries. This brand must be nurtured and its value realised to support local enterprise. There is an opportunity to collaborate across the family of designated landscapes to work with land managers and food producers to improve public awareness of farming welfare standards and promote local produce. Local produce provides opportunities to promote regional character and supports producers and suppliers.

To **encourage, provide for and manage responsible outdoor recreation opportunities** is an important role for AONBs and a key remit for Park Authorities. Efforts need to focus on working towards the provision of fit for purpose places and facilities which are consistent in standard with the spectacular landscapes they serve. Programmes must encourage participation and strong links across the sector to ensure harmonious use of the areas and their special qualities.

Communities and the natural environment can benefit more from sustainable tourism and there should be proactive engagement with tourism providers to identify how they can contribute to sustain the natural assets on which their businesses rely including through initiatives such as green apprenticeships and 'visitor giving'.

The development of alternative niche markets through securing and supporting UNESCO Global Geopark, UNESCO World Heritage Site, UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status and the International Dark Sky Reserve can help make the most of green and heritage tourism. The acknowledgement through these awards of the international importance and qualities of the Welsh landscape should be harnessed to maximise the economic and education benefits for communities. There is the opportunity to strengthen collaboration between these areas and the designated landscapes, recognising the significant synergy between their purposes. The designated landscape management organisations have the potential to further facilitate engagement between local businesses, local authorities, Visit Wales and third sector groups within and outside of the boundaries to better understand demand and development potential.

AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities should seek to improve travel planning for visitor attractions and increase the use of demand responsive transport.

7. Thriving Welsh language

Like our designated landscapes, the Welsh language is one of the treasures of Wales. It is part of what defines us as people and as a nation. Cymraeg 2050 is the ambition of the Welsh Government to see the number of people able to enjoy speaking and using Welsh reach a million by 2050. The designated landscapes will have ***an important role to play to increase public awareness of the value of the Welsh language, both as part of our national heritage and as an important skill in modern life.***

Through the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 the constituent authorities of AONBs and the National Park Authorities are required to work towards seven well-being goals, one of which is 'A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language'.

The language profile across the designated landscapes varies. In those with strong Welsh-speaking communities, the challenge is to ensure that people have good quality jobs, fulfilling careers and homes so that they can stay, or return to those communities. In other areas, promoting the use of Welsh as a language for the workplace and business will become increasingly important.

Resilient Ways of Working: *Working effectively and efficiently.*

Parity for AONBs with National Parks broadly exists in terms of planning policy but is lacking when it comes to status, profile and resourcing. Both Marsden and Future Landscapes observed this. Whilst I acknowledge the flexibility of governance and partnerships in AONBs may be a strength, it is also a potential weakness in terms of the stewardship of these equally valuable landscapes. Work will continue with AONBs on what changes could usefully be introduced in this area.

8. All landscapes matter

All landscapes have special qualities. The bodies and partnerships with responsibility for the designated landscapes should together ***promote the social, cultural and economic value and sustainable use of all landscapes, working across boundaries*** with Natural Resources Wales and with local partnerships.

This means closer operational arrangements between existing designated areas on a regional and national basis, but also between the designated landscapes and areas without a statutory designation. In this way the designated landscapes can lead efforts to try and test new solutions to environmental and rural challenges. They have the potential and presence to engage rural communities to fully collaborate alongside other partners and authorities in identifying issues, defining success and targeting investment. Best practice exemplars must be shared across rural Wales.

The Welsh Government wishes to see the designated landscapes taking confident strides in managing positive landscape change for the benefit of people and the landscape. This attitude should be evident in all plans, activities, and communication.

9. Collaboration

The AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities are mechanisms for the collaboration and networking required to identify the key challenges in relation to the environment, society and the rural economy and then innovate and identify suitable solutions. To function effectively they must adapt to address national priorities, statutory purposes, local authorities, and local community interests. To this end, the importance of building effective and durable cross-sector networks and partnerships must not be underestimated.

The designated landscapes must exemplify the practice of tackling complex environmental and social challenges through robust local collaboration in a way which maintains and enhances the contribution to the well-being of Wales. This requires the ability to function effectively at a national level to inform and influence strategic priorities and plans, whilst maintaining a credible mandate and the relationships necessary to deliver within a local area.

AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities can support each other through shared identification of problems, joint decision making and multi-stakeholder participation in clarifying sustainable development. However, the Welsh Government believes a helping hand is needed to assist at a strategic level and intends to ***establish a National Partnership to develop a robust culture of collaboration whilst also providing scrutiny and challenge on designated landscapes' priorities and delivery.***

Structures within the AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities must continue to evolve towards a more empowering role for communities and voluntary bodies. Opportunities to enhance the ways local communities and wider stakeholders shape and share in the vision and priorities for each area should be explored. To assist, the Welsh Government will ***support measures to improve diversity and local representation on National Park boards through further member mentoring and shadowing initiatives and introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity to enable Local Authorities to disregard the requirement for a political balance in their appointees*** where this frustrates their ability to appoint members who represent wards within the Parks. It is crucial our public bodies are well-led, inclusive and reflective of Welsh society.

The appropriateness of the current duty for certain bodies to have regard to a statutory designation's purposes has been questioned during the review, with the suggestion it could be strengthened. The argument has logic, but the Welsh Government wants to see more proactive approaches to engagement and collaboration being pursued, which extend beyond the limited number of bodies who fall within scope of this statute.

A collaborative approach in support of an area's special qualities may be achieved more effectively through building relationships and trust, rather than reliance on compliance on a duty to have regard. Both approaches will require parties to understand and appreciate the aspiration for an area and their own impacts and contribution. The designated landscape bodies exist to facilitate the necessary joint endeavour for the management of the landscapes which includes, but extends beyond, those who are caught by the duty to 'have regard'. This also provides an opportunity for the AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities to engage with national stakeholders on strategic issues.

To support this, Natural Resources Wales, as the Welsh Government's statutory advisor on landscape and natural beauty, is expected to forge and promote effective liaison and collaborative working practices with those partnerships and authorities responsible for the designated landscapes. It will also continue to provide advice and evidence across the broad range of competencies at its disposal, and in accordance with its purpose to ensure that the natural resources of Wales are managed sustainably.

10. Innovation in resourcing

Wider partnerships and innovative funding models should be adopted, where resources are attracted and investments influenced to deliver on the sustainable management of natural resources in the area.

The Welsh Government has consistently provided the National Park Authorities with a decent core grant settlement when considered in the context of pressure on public sector spending. It will ***put in place measures which enable resource planning by the lead bodies for the duration of an Assembly Terms*** which will allow focus on delivery and avoid the uncertainties and inefficiencies which creeps in as a result of short term financial settlements. Additional support for pressures and projects on a case by case basis has been supported when the opportunity has arisen; this will continue.

A key function for the Authorities and Partnerships is to seek to galvanise the resources necessary to deliver against designated landscape priorities. The Future Landscapes Wales programme identified different resourcing opportunities:

- Influencing the resources and investments already active in an area
- Attracting resources to support the direct activities of a delivery body
- Attracting resources for specific projects

In addition, ***increasing commercial acumen and subsequent revenue*** is a key challenge for the designated landscapes. There is a clear need to ensure the senior team in each of the areas takes responsibility for commercial performance; that robust plans are in place to increase revenue; and that more is done to collaborate as a family of designated landscapes to both learn from each others' experience and to avoid duplication or competition. The Welsh Government needs to be confident that there is a planned approach which maximises appropriate commercial activities whilst remaining true to the core values and purposes.

The scale and complexity of governance structures have obvious resource implications. Efficiency should be pursued, consistent with effective governance. The Welsh Government intends to ***reduce the administrative costs of National Park Authorities*** by removing them from the audit regime of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, and reducing the size of the BBNPA membership from 24 to 18.

Monitoring Progress

Bringing a period of review to a close doesn't mean reverting to business as usual or not looking for better ways to work. The Welsh Government will look to ***introduce formal review points for existing governance*** to remove uncertainty associated with announcing reviews, allow the Welsh Public and stakeholders the opportunity to have their say and through this ensure approaches remain fit for purpose.

The need for measuring output, outcomes, and evaluating impact remains necessary as part of the desire to improve performance, and is of interest to the media and the public in terms of holding government and organisations to account. To ensure that the Authorities and Partnerships continue to be fit for purpose the Welsh Government ***will introduce a consistent and strengthened performance management regime on the impact of designation and the efficacy of administration*** to ensure transparency and accountability. This approach will integrate with the national approach to monitoring the environment which is being developed.



Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P/HB/2089/18

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Chair
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27 July 2018

Dear Gwyneth

Priorities for National Park Authorities 2018-19

Further to my meeting with you on 18 April 2018 and the publication of *Valued and Resilient: the Welsh Government's priorities for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks*, this letter confirms your revenue grant for this and the next financial year.

I want to see the National Park Authorities delivering a leading role on the environment and rural agenda. I have listened to your representations regarding the difficulties you will face as a consequence of the indicative budget settlement. I have decided to increase your budget for the year by £154,431 and to reverse the previous decision to reduce the core revenue budget in 2019-20. This means that the core revenue grant from the Welsh Ministers to the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority for the 2018-19 financial year is £2,954,030. In 2019/20 your National Park Authority core revenue grant will be £2,954,030.

In March, I was able to provide an additional £3.4 million to the National Park Authorities for unfunded pressures. Collectively, the designated landscapes have received almost £6million in additional funding over the last two years.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 provides the strategic direction for all public bodies in Wales. You should have already taken positive steps to align your planning with this Act and you should continue to reflect on and re-design your activities in light of its goals.

"*Valued and Resilient*", alongside the national strategy "Prosperity for All" and the "Natural Resources Policy", provide you with the Welsh Government's clear priorities for the remainder of the Assembly term. As Park Authorities you are well placed to contribute to the ambition and address the challenges identified. This is particularly crucial during the UK's withdrawal from the European Union which could have a significant impact on land use and landscapes in Wales.

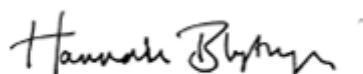
When we met in April we discussed issues raised by the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee relating to income generated from commercial activity. All three Authorities provided information about their commercial performance and plans and on balance I believe there is room for improvement. You should reflect collectively and individually on your approach to commercial income generation: to ensure the senior team takes responsibility for commercial performance; that you have robust plans in place to increase revenue; and that you do more to collaborate as Park Authorities to both learn from each others' experience and to avoid duplication or competition. We will return to this area at one of our future meetings because I want to be confident that you have a planned approach which maximises appropriate commercial activities whilst remaining true to your core values and purposes.

There continue to be opportunities for collaboration, nationally and locally, to deliver vibrant and resilient Parks, and you should be using your position, skills and knowledge to unlock this potential. I expect all of the designated landscapes to work collaboratively and to reach out beyond their traditional audience.

My officials have considered your draft Corporate Plans. I am pleased to see improvements in the consistency of their development as well as their reference to the Prosperity for All strategy and the Natural Resources Policy. I hope that in providing you with an improved funding settlement and confirmation of your revenue grant for 2019/20 you are in a better position to develop and share with me the completed Corporate Plans for next year as soon as possible.

I would like to end by thanking you for the work your National Park Authority members and staff do. I look forward to visiting your Park again during the year and to receiving updates on your progress with delivery when we meet again in the autumn.

Yours sincerely



Hannah Blythyn AC/AM
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd
Minister for Environment