



Securing the Value of Nature in English National Parks

Progress report from English National Park Authorities – June 2012

National Park Authorities welcomed the publication of the Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) – *The Natural Choice* in 2011. National Park Authorities (NPAs) were already making a significant contribution to the main themes of the White Paper in their own right and collectively as a network but we also recognised that the White Paper signalled the need for a step change in what we do and achieve. Below we highlight some of the progress on delivery of key NEWP aims. As well as through individual activities and projects, NPAs can also support the White Paper's implementation by working collectively through ENPAA on priority projects, sharing experience, and acting as pilots. We look forward to continuing to work with existing and new partners to deliver NEWP outcomes.

In this report we highlight some of the work NPAs are doing to deliver three of the themes of the NEWP as follows:

- **Protecting and improving our natural environment**

- *Local Nature Partnerships and Nature Improvement Areas* – all NPAs are involved in LNPs. Two NIAs are primarily located in National Parks.
- *Restoring nature in our rivers and water bodies* – continuing with existing catchment level work and new restoration projects.
- *Protecting and improving our woodland and forests* – contributing to the Independent Panel on Forestry's work and working to increase woodland cover inside and adjacent to National Parks.

- **Growing a green economy**

- *Growing business opportunities that pay back to nature* – NPAs have been involved with innovative work on payments for ecosystems services and use of an ecosystems approach to project management and spatial planning.
- NPAs run or support a range of initiatives to develop local green economies including the Sustainable Development Fund, business forums, training and skills programmes and investing in local infrastructure such as livestock markets and community renewable energy schemes.

- **Reconnecting people and nature**

- *Connecting through education in and about the natural environment and Connecting by improving access to the countryside* - This theme underpins the work of the NPAs in a fundamental way but our activity is most visible through education and engagement programmes. One of the most successful programmes of recent years has been the engagement in the Mosaic project led by the Campaign for National Parks.

This report gives just an outline of the work of NPAs to deliver the NEWP, and a few case studies. It does not provide an exhaustive description of all the activities NPAs undertake in delivering our purposes, shared Vision¹ and the NEWP ambitions.

While the areas of work indicated above are common to all National Parks the degree and type of activity varies. Each NPA will make use of local opportunities and resources to best suit local needs and aspirations.

Protecting and improving our natural environment

Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs)

Two of the 12 NIAs (South Downs Way Ahead and Dark Peak) are primarily located in National Parks with NPAs playing a key role in the partnership. In addition, the Morecambe Bay NIA contains a small area of the Lake District National Park. NPAs who were involved in unsuccessful bids for NIA funding are working to take forward elements of NIA plans with partners. (Commitments 4-6 and 8-9)

All NPAs have been involved in the development of prospective LNPs. NPAs were well placed for this as they already work with a wide range of partners across sectors to deliver Biodiversity Action Plans and projects within their areas. NPAs are also involved in and committed to the implementation of Biodiversity 2020 through action on the ground and contributing to national working groups (Commitments 2-3).

Restoring nature in our rivers and water bodies

NPAs have long been involved in catchment scale working to provide benefits for nature, cleaner water and flood risk alleviation. NPAs welcome the new opportunities presented as a result of the NEWP to progress work at the catchment scale and are involved in the Catchment Pilots, with the New Forest NPA acting as a host body. NPAs are involved in partnerships applying to the Catchment Restoration Fund. (Commitments 27 and 28)

Protecting and improving our woodland and forests

NPAs have been contributing to the Independent Panel on Forestry's investigation on the appropriate level of ambition for woodland creation and on the restoration of open habitats and plantations on ancient woodland sites (Commitments 25 and 28). Despite varying baselines and opportunities, all NPAs feel there could be more woodland in our National Parks and they are also keen to work with others to increase woodland outside National Park boundaries in the landscapes connected to the National Park where this provides benefits for biodiversity, landscape and communities.

Haytor © Dartmoor NPA



¹ *The English National Parks and Broads UK Government Vision and Circular 2010*, Defra, March 2010.
<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/national-parks/vision-circular2010.pdf>

Growing a green economy

Growing business opportunities that pay back to nature

We welcomed the publication of the National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) and the commitment to developing an ecosystems approach to managing our natural environment in the NEWP (Commitments 43 and 87). NPAs are pioneering the use of an ecosystems approach to both project management and to spatial planning through National Park Management Plans.

NPAs have also been involved as key partners and facilitators in a number of innovative schemes introducing payments for ecosystems services as well as continuing to develop new and existing visitor payback schemes (Commitment 74). We have contributed to the development of a good practice guide on payments for ecosystems services by Defra (Commitment 43) and are engaging with the Ecosystem Markets Task Force (Commitment 44) and other recently established networks to share our own expertise in this fast developing area and learn from others.

NPAs remain committed to the shared Vision² that our National Parks will be 'thriving, living, working landscapes' and with that in mind continue to help support and develop high quality, sustainable local businesses. All NPAs have operated the Sustainable Development Fund since 2002. During the nine years of the programme to March 2011, even though job creation is not the primary goal of the SDF, 484 jobs were created directly and hundreds of small rural businesses have been developed. Sustainable development funds also helped lever in external funds to rural communities and businesses at an average level of 4.5:1 bringing in £61.3million of match funding over nine years. Other significant benefits were delivered for communities and the environment, from renewable energy installations and community building refurbishments to business start-ups, education projects and habitat restoration. Individuals, business and communities have received advice and practical support that has enabled them to make a real difference where they live - in England's National Parks.

Across the National Parks, NPAs run or support a range of initiatives to develop local green economies including business forums, training and skills programmes, business training, quality mark schemes and investing in local infrastructure such as livestock markets and community renewable energy schemes. NPAs are exploring the new opportunities presented by the Rural Growth Networks and Rural Economy Grants and are very well placed for the type of locally sensitive and community led delivery needed to make a real difference.



Demonstration at
Heritage Skills Fair
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Authority

² *The English National Parks and Broads UK Government Vision and Circular 2010*, Defra, March 2010.
<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/national-parks/vision-circular2010.pdf>

Reconnecting people and nature

Connecting through education in and about the natural environment **Connecting by improving access to the coast and countryside**

This theme of the NEWP reflects the second of the National Parks' purposes, namely to 'promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks by the public'³.

While the theme of reconnecting people to nature underpins the work of the NPAs in a fundamental way, our activity is most visible through our education and engagement programmes. One of the most successful programmes of recent years has been the engagement of all the NPAs in the Mosaic project led by the Campaign for National Parks. Since 2009, Mosaic has inspired an estimated 28,000 new people from black and minority ethnic communities to get involved in the activities and adventures on offer in National Parks. It has also led to real and meaningful organisational changes within the NPAs themselves so that Mosaic principles are now embedded within our work. (Commitments 73 and 75)

NPAs also reach out to tens of thousands of schoolchildren and students every year through education programmes which support initiatives such as Learning Outside the Classroom and Natural Connections (Commitments 61 and 63). The newest project is [Our South Downs](#) which has been developed in partnership between the national charity Learning through Landscapes and the South Downs National Park to connect young people with inspiring opportunities for outdoor learning. More than half a million young people could benefit from this scheme and new guidance will help teachers from 738 schools in and around the National Park to use the South Downs to bring life and interest into all areas of the curriculum. (Commitment 63)



Activity day at
Lepe,
New Forest
National Park
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NPA

³s.5 (1) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949



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