

Localism in National Parks

National Park Authorities working alongside local communities to achieve sustainable development in practice

National Park Authorities (NPAs), as local planning authorities, are uniquely placed to deliver the localism agenda. We work with our local communities, parishes, businesses and others to seek to meet their aspirations in a way that draws on and reinforces the special qualities of the National Parks.

Unlike some National Parks elsewhere in the world, those in the UK have significant resident populations. Over 444,000 people live in the UK's 15 National Parks. We are proud of the contribution that they make to these special places. Being sensitive environments requires particular care to find solutions that respond to local needs and respect the nationally protected landscape.

NPAs have a critical role to balance local and national interests in the context of National Park purposes and our duty. Planning is a key tool as successive Governments have recognised, to deliver National Park purposes, but NPAs use a variety of ways to engage with our communities.

- National Park Authorities invest considerable time and resources into providing pre-application advice on the basis that this can lead to better development outcomes for all.
- 89% of planning applications in England were granted in National Parks in 2010 – higher than the national average.
- NPAs in England and Wales are unique in being local planning authorities with parish councillors sitting on them.
- Within England, 70% of NPAs have adopted Core Strategies, against a national average of 22% of local planning authorities by the end of 2010.
- NPAs were the first planning authorities to pilot the rural exceptions policy to ensure local needs affordable housing could be provided in perpetuity in National Parks.
- NPAs support a variety of forums for businesses, farmers, parishes and others to ensure people can input directly into the future priorities for the National Park.
- The National Park Management Plan provides a ready-made mechanism to ensure priorities are agreed, and that there is close working between the public, private and voluntary sectors, and between local people and national agencies.

Three NPAs (Exmoor, Northumberland the Lake District) have successfully applied to be front-runner planning authorities – continuing the tradition of National Parks as places that can pilot innovative approaches to sustainable development. They shall be piloting neighbourhood planning.

The Coalition Government has endorsed the Vision for National Parks set out in the *English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010*. This includes the ambition that 'National Parks should be places where sustainable development can be seen in action'.

This document provides details of just a few examples of NPAs working with businesses and local communities as highlighted in today's presentations. This provides only a snap shot, and examples are available from National Parks across the UK.

Northumberland National Park: Action Area Approach



Left: The Traditional Boundaries, Traditional Skills Programme combines job creation with conservation and equips local people with the skills needed to start up their own businesses

The 'Action Area' approach reflects both the central role of thriving communities in securing a sustainable future for the National Park and the fact that the natural and cultural qualities express themselves differently from one part of the National Park to another. 'Action Area' working seeks to use this local distinctiveness as a framework for engaging communities and other partners in the planning, care and management of local landscapes. It harnesses the knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm of local people and supports them with expert technical advice, help and funding to nurture and strengthen local connections between people and place.

The National Park is divided into four 'Action Areas' based on a mix of geographical and social factors which direct the NPA's way of working. 'Action Areas' extend beyond the National Park boundary, recognising that the 'gateway settlements' outside the National Park are essential to maintaining strong and sustainable communities.

The approach is built on:

- Four distinct 'communities of place'
- Four local 'Forums' to agree priorities
- Skilled staff locally based
- Member engagement
- Access to funding, advice, expertise

Action Area working is:

- Engaging local communities and businesses
- Building a shared agenda
- Building capacity
- Enabling partnerships
- Matching resources
- Delivering action on the ground

Below: Map of the Action Areas: the paler sections denote the National Park area



Peak District National Park: Live & Work Rural

Live & Work Rural is a programme run by the Peak District National Park Authority to help new and existing small and medium sized businesses, social enterprises, and voluntary and community sector initiatives that enhance the special environment of the Peak District. The L&WR area is wider than the National Park boundary. The programme provides advice and support to help turn business ideas into reality or help them to develop and grow sustainably. It supports businesses and projects that benefit the environment; bring long-lasting social and economic benefits; and develop better ways to work in partnership with others. It provides help by:

- Working collaboratively to develop enterprising ideas
- Offering environmental healthchecks to reduce costs and protect the environment
- Signposting to useful business networks and training
- Offering training and workshops relevant to small rural businesses
- Offering small seedcorn grants and signposting to funding sources

Right: Thriving local businesses are vital to the National Park economy



Business Peak District

This group was formed in April 2011 to promote the Peak District as a place to do business. The group is led by a wide range of representatives from the business community and represents all businesses in the area, which extends beyond the National Park boundary. Business Peak District is supported by the Peak District National Park Authority, Derbyshire Dales District Council, High Peak Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. It works closely with the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce and the Derbyshire Economic Partnership. The group is also linked in with Visit Peak District and Derbyshire, the official tourist board for the area and the University of Derby and other skills training providers. It aims to:

- Create and protect jobs and increase investment in the area and local businesses
- Use the special environment of the National Park as a positive tool to boost the marketing and success of businesses
- Develop more apprenticeship and training opportunities to give businesses the skilled workforces they need and local people jobs
- Increase the range of businesses so the area's economy is not just dependent on tourism and agriculture
- Link with the tourism sector to make the most of business opportunities created by visitors
- Give businesses a voice with the six new Local Enterprise Partnerships, set up in neighbouring cities and areas to help support the regional economy

Lake District National Park Partnership



Above: Lowick Community Hall. The solar panels were funded in part by the Lake District Sustainable Development Fund

The Lake District National Park Partnership is a partnership of over 20 organisations representing the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. It has an independent Chair and the Lake District NPA acts as an equal member of the partnership. Since its establishment in 2006, the Lake District National Park Partnership has started some excellent, and often challenging, initiatives. The projects either involve a few or many of the organisations on the Partnership. To date the Partnership has achieved the following:

- Created and adopted the Vision for the National Park and agreed a set of indicators which will measure whether the Vision is being realised
- Collectively developed and endorsed The Partnership's Plan – The Management Plan for the Lake District National Park 2010-2015. This is the first time this type of approach has been used to produce a Management Plan for the Lake District National Park
- Set up a group to look at how to bring in more money to help further fund the Plan
- Worked collectively to comment on the creation of the Local Development Framework. Planning policies have never been developed in this way before in the National Park
- Established a Business Task Force and more strategic working with Parish Councils and local communities
- Endorsed a proposal to make the Lake District a Fairtrade Zone
- Through the Lake District Sustainable Development Fund, invested £180k of grants into local projects in 2010-11, with a combined worth of over £900k
- During 2010-11, over 90% of planning applications were approved in the National Park