

Improvement Plan

2012 - 2013

PART I



Improvement Plan for 2012 to 2013

Introduction

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is committed to securing continuous improvement in the delivery of its efficient and resourceful services. Our work has a direct impact on the people who access the services of the National Park and we want to tell them how we are performing and what our priorities are for the coming year.

This Improvement Plan incorporates the National Park Authority's improvement objectives for 2012 – 2013 and sets out the National Park Authority's approach to discharging its general duty, under the Welsh Government's Local Government Measure legislation, to continually improve. The National Park Authority is required to publish its plan for improvement as soon as practicable after the 1st April each year. The National Park Authority is also required to publish its own assessment of how well it has performed by the 31st October each year.

Statement of Responsibility

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is responsible for preparing the following Improvement Plan, the information and the assessments laid out within it and the estimates on which they are based.

The Authority is also responsible for managing its performance improvements and the internal control measures from which the information and assessment in this Plan have been produced.

The Authority is satisfied that the contents of the Plan are in all material respects accurate and complete, realistic and achievable within the resources available.

A Team Brecon Beacons approach to improvement

We're pleased to introduce Brecon Beacons National Park Authority's Improvement Plan Objectives for 2012/2013.

As part of the Corporate Business Cycle, we need to annually review our corporate priorities and develop targets for the following year. Our Corporate Strategy, which is summarised in the below table, exists to give us direction for our endeavours.

National Park Management Plan	Our 20 year strategic drivers
Corporate Goals	What we will aim to achieve over a 3 to 5 year period
Annual Objectives*	What we will achieve in the next 1 to 3 years
Team and individual actions	How we will achieve them
Performance Indicators	How we will measure them and assess whether we have achieved them

*Including our Improvement Objectives

The Authority delivers services via its three Directorates:

Chief Executive	Corporate support and services including democratic services, human resources, communications, IT, finance, legal and administration services.
Countryside and Land Management	Conservation, land management, sustainable tourism, sustainable communities, community development, warden and estate services, biodiversity and ecology, Fforest Fawr Geopark, property management, Visitor and Tourist Information Centres
Planning	Planning services, development control, enforcement, strategy and policy, built heritage

Continuous improvements and attention to the priority needs of those who use our services are important to us and we realise that in the light of financial cutbacks and savings in the public sector, these will be challenging. We have approved new management structures in both our Planning and Countryside and Land Management departments which we hope will better reflect our core priorities and improvement objectives that we've adopted.

The process for establishing future priorities and objectives has been advanced this year. Our work to identify these began in October 2011, when Members agreed that the Corporate Goals which underpin all our work should remain unchanged.

Our Corporate Goals for 2012/2013 are:

- Taking care of planning
- Taking care of business
- Taking care of the environment
- Taking care of people

How did we decide what our Improvement Objectives for 2012/2013 would be?

Aligned to each of these Corporate Goals are a number of annual objectives, which, in turn will drive team and individual objectives and work programmes. A number of the annual objectives are identified as Improvement Objectives.

In determining the improvement objectives for 2012/2013, the Authority took the following into account:

- The outputs from community stake holder consultations that took place between 2010 and 2012 for the National Park Management Plan and the Local Development Plan with a strong alignment to the National Park Management Plan Priority Actions.
- Meetings held with over 25 Community Councils to find out what is important to them.
- The newly developed Community Council Charter which sets out how we aim to work together for the benefit of local communities which follows on from the Community Engagement Strategy Action Plan from April 2010 which aimed to develop enhanced communication between community councils and the National Park Authority.
- The Future Directions Forum in early October 2011 at which Members agreed that the Corporate Goals should remain unchanged and identified priorities for inclusion within objectives.
- Joint Management Team workshops in late October 2011 to link priority actions from the National Park Management Plan with the Authority's Corporate Goals, annual objectives, the strategic grant letter, outcome agreements and individual work programmes with an aim to streamline these processes and simplify them for all concerned.
- Results Based Accountability (RBA) workshops in early December 2011 at which Members and Officers identified outcome based objectives for 2012/2013 for each of the Corporate Goals.
- A final meeting of the Joint Management Team at which the annual objectives were refined and improvement objectives were identified.

During all these sessions we looked at each individual objective and particularly focussed upon results based accountability with these questions in mind:

- Why are we focusing on this outcome?
- What are we going to do to achieve it?
- How well did we do it?
- What will success look like?
- Is anyone or anything better off as a consequence?

This year a number of Improvement Objectives remain unchanged from the last financial year of 2011/2012 as some objectives will often take more than one year to fully deliver. A Lead Officer has been identified for each objective and will be responsible for monitoring its performance.

In January 2012, the Corporate Management Team proposed the following six broad improvement objectives for 2012/2013, each of which links to one of the four Corporate Goals. These were considered and agreed by the National Park Authority Committee in February 2012 and Officers have prepared more details supporting how these will be evidenced and achieved. We do not have any major areas of service weakness; our aim is still to secure continuous improvement across everything that we do, by making incremental and practical changes to the way we conduct our business.

Taking care of planning

- The Authority provides an excellent planning service
- The National Park's special qualities are protected from inappropriate development
- The National Park's special heritage is conserved and enhanced.

Taking care of business

- Public confidence in and accessibility to the Authority's conduct of business and governance will be improved.

Taking care of the environment

- Biodiversity is conserved and enhanced through public engagement, practical action and planning advice.

Taking care of people

- Communities are inspired by and recognise the benefits of where they live.

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE 1: The Authority provides an excellent planning service.

Background

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority has statutory duties to protect both the special landscape of the National Park and to foster the social and economic well-being of the people living and working within its boundaries.

In line with Welsh Planning Policy, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority works with its communities, unitary authorities and other key partners to provide a service that seeks to inspire confidence, trust and an increased level of understanding of the planning service.

Working with others to make good development happen in the right places is at the heart of what we do. However, this is just a small snapshot of the excellent service we aspire to deliver. The first and essential stage is to identify what excellence means to both our stakeholders and communities and then to us.

In seeking an excellent planning service, we have been committed to delivering sound decisions that lead to quality development outcomes, improvements in processes and information available which underpin our key achievements in the planning service to date.

Over the last three years we have concentrated firstly on the statutory process and improving our performance against the statutory measures. Building on this we sought to improve the quality of our processes and communication measuring our success in these areas through customer surveys. However, we realise that this doesn't encompass everything that might be considered necessary to fully achieve an excellent planning service. In order to develop a wider appreciation of whom the customers are, which includes communities and the Park as a whole – not just applicants and agents.

Consequently, in October 2012 we are going to engage in a wider public consultation exercise with all of our stakeholders and customers that reflect a team approach to help us define excellence in planning terms and what it should deliver.

We present a summary of how we will drive forward the improvement and delivery of the planning service for the benefits of the National Park, its residents, businesses and visitors, and what we are going to do in the coming year to achieve an excellent planning service. This is considered an important area of work which will take a number of years to deliver.

It should be noted that the below table of measures look primarily at speed of decision making in the types of applications (known as PSI returns) reported to the Welsh Government for statistical purposes on a quarterly basis. These types of applications do not account for all applications and consultations required to be dealt with by the Authority. Whilst the speed of determinations is an important qualitative indicator of an excellent service in its own right, other qualitative measures are being proposed to measure additional value added to the quality of development by the service. In addition to continuous investment in staff skills and expertise to deal competently with all application proposals, the development of a set of eight quantitative and qualitative measures are proposed. In addition to the achievement of speed targets already detailed, an excellent service could also be measured against the following;

- Providing timely and professional pre-application advice and validation guidance
- Conceptualising and visualising 'value added'; through the pre-application and submission of application process
 - Additional 'added value' notions;
 - Appeals;
 - Monitoring of customer contact and satisfaction;
 - Community engagement;

- And procedure.

Why we are focusing on this Improvement Objective.	What we will do.	How we will do it.
<p>We want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the National Park's environment and special qualities • Inspire public and business confidence in the planning service. 	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review with our Members our targets and redefine what is perceived as an excellent service. • Produce a baseline communications strategy that will be further strengthened by the results of the public consultation exercise. • Establish a level of customer confidence in the service. Implement plans to monitor any changes in these indicators. 	<p>By:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking public consultation with customers and user groups which will include agents, consultees, community and town councils, residents, clients and contractors. • Continuing to provide the customer service survey. • Publishing the results summary of all feedback, surveys and consultations undertaken.

How will we know if we have achieved an excellent planning service?

- Improvement in service levels.
- Increased understanding of the role of planning.
- Understanding what is meant by an excellent planning service.
- Establishing and meeting the criteria that we set based on the above understanding.

Measure of success	2011-2012 Target	2011-2012 Actual	2012-2013 Target
**Conduct a public consultation exercise and produce a communications strategy which will review our targets and delivery objectives.	N/A	N/A	October 2012 ¹
**Percentage % of customers that rates the planning service as good or better.	76%	88%	80% ²
**Percentage % of customers who have confidence in the planning service.	N/A	94%	80% ³
The number of planning applications over 13 weeks old of age at the end of the period (backlog).	N/A	43	35
**Percentage % of applications determined within statutory timescales.			
a) *The percentage of minor planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks	40%	60%	60%
b) *The percentage of householder planning applications determined during the year	50%	75%	85%

c)	within 8 week The percentage of all other planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks	45%	61%	60%
	**The percentage % of minor, householder and other applications determined within 8 weeks.	65%	67%	70%
	*The percentage of applications for development determined during the year that were approved.	85%	84%	85%
	**The percentage of appeals determined that upheld the Authority's decision in relation to planning application decisions.	100%	85%	80% ⁴

*Statutory Performance Indicator

**Local Performance Indicator or measure

¹The survey is timetabled to when resources allow. As indicated above in our background this is work that is part of continuous improvement of the service over time and will take place over a number of years. A balance has to be achieved in the excellent planning service between the traditional performance measures of determining planning applications and the more qualitative aspects we are now trying to draw out and evidence in the future.

² This is a perception measure taken directly from customers in our regular survey of planning architects/agents/applicants who have submitted applications to us. Architects and agents submit a large proportion of applications and issues such as certainty from planning policy/guidance and consistency in decision making figure prominently in customer satisfaction with and confidence in the planning service. In previous years the National Park Authority has come under criticism for setting a 90% target which was too high and possibly unrealistic. The rationale for the target being set as an improvement on last year's target but not as high as we have achieved in last year's survey results, is that during this year the National Park Authority will progress its Local Development Plan, hopefully to adoption. This period of change will likely impact on satisfaction levels until the changes have bedded in.

³ There was no target last year as we have only in the last year begun to collect data. The target set is ambitious in terms of aiming for over 75% of customers surveyed in the sample indicating they have confidence in the service. It is however, likely to be susceptible to swing for the same reason as above.

⁴ In 2011-2012 100% was an internal target. We have lowered it to 80% to reflect a more realistic target of dismissing 2 out of 3 appeal cases which is line with Planning Inspectorate advice.

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE 2: The National Park's special qualities are protected from inappropriate development.

Background

National Park status is the highest level of protection available for landscapes and areas of scenic beauty in the UK. This protection is described in the first statutory purpose given to the National Park Authority which means that we have to conserve the landscape, along with its biodiversity and cultural heritage.

The special qualities of the National Park can be impacted in many different ways – from noise, lighting, signage, commercial operating in residential areas and visual amenity to pollution, carbon emissions, flytipping and illegal off-roading.

The Planning Enforcement Service is invariably a highly emotive and often contentious area of the National Park Authority's work. Complaints can be received from customers who feel aggrieved that an investigation has not been progressed as speedily as they would have liked. Conversely, complaints can

be received from persons at whom an investigation is directed who feel the Authority may have been over zealous in its actions.

Part of ensuring the achievement of the key aims of the service - in particular those of accountability and strong customer focus - requires a sound and fair approach to dealing with cases whilst maintaining confidentiality until the Authority makes a decision. Engagement with all our user groups is a key part of delivering a responsive, accountable and modern planning and enforcement service. Whilst enforcement action is discretionary, the decision whether or not to take enforcement action is based on whether a breach of planning control has occurred and whether it is expedient to take action.

Whether it is "expedient" for the Authority to initiate formal enforcement action, to remedy or stop an alleged breach of planning control requires thorough assessment of the relevant facts in every case. In order to protect the special qualities of the National Park we recognise that the key issues are:

- Protection of Special Qualities (taking into account National Park Authority's Management Plan definitions as peace and tranquillity; vitality and health; sense of place and cultural identity; sense of discovery; sweeping grandeur and outstanding natural beauty; contrasting patterns, colours, and textures; diversity of wildlife and richness of semi-natural habitats; rugged, remote and challenging landscapes; enjoyable and accessible countryside and an intimate sense of community).
- Timeliness (recognising that it's in all parties interest that cases are resolved sooner rather than later)
- Excellence of Service (recognising that the service should strive to make the correct decisions in relation to the need for enforcement action)
- Customer Satisfaction

Why we are focusing on this Improvement Objective.	What we will do.	How we will do it.
<p>We want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve the natural environment and built heritage of the National Park. • Build public confidence and understanding of the role of enforcement. 	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the special qualities of the National Park from alleged planning breaches. • Establish a level of customer confidence in the service. 	<p>By:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a checklist mechanism to each case that will indicate which special qualities are threatened by alleged planning breaches. • Providing a customer service survey. • Publishing the results summary of all feedback, surveys and consultations undertaken. • Re-engineering the process with a view to optimal resource levels. • Review performance measures and determine any changes to requirements.

How will we know if we have achieved protecting the National Park's special qualities from inappropriate development?

- We will experience fewer breaches of unauthorised development.
- Satisfactory results will be achieved where a breach has occurred.
- Timely responses will be given to the issues.
- There will be a good level of public understanding of the role of enforcement.

Measure of success	2011-2012 Target	2011-2012 Actual	2012-2013 Target
**Develop a checklist mechanism to each case that will indicate which special qualities are threatened by alleged planning breaches.	N/A	N/A	July 2012
**Reduce the backlog of enforcement cases.	No target set	140	50
**Percentage % of cases resolved within 12 weeks.	65%	22%	65%
**The percentage % of appeals determined that upheld the Authority's decision in relation to enforcement notices.	100%	100%	100%

*Statutory Performance Indicator

**Local Performance Indicator or measure

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE 3: The Park's heritage is conserved and enhanced.

Background

The 1995 Environment Act expanded the first purpose of all National Parks to include the conservation and enhancement of their cultural heritage. Culture was defined as including everything that people make or do and heritage comprised of everything that was done, thought or built in the past and which remains today.

The National Park has a wide and varied range of architecture and protected buildings. These range from Norman castles, medieval farmhouses and churches, concentrations of 17th and 18th Century structures to very fine rural buildings which often retain many original features.

The character of the National Park's heritage and built environment, in common with the rest of Wales, is threatened by the neglect of listed buildings, incremental changes to buildings, unauthorised work to buildings, the declining use of original and traditional materials, new developments and the loss of traditional uses for buildings like stone barns.

The Authority is committed to protecting and improving the National Park's built heritage by decreasing the number of buildings at risk. Currently, the Brecon Beacons National Park is home to 1,955 Listed Buildings – many of which are lovingly cared for and protected by their owners. However, as these buildings are privately owned the Authority needs to work hard with owners to raise awareness of their status by offering assistance and advice to help them maintain and look after their buildings. There are also grants available that the Authority can use to assist owners protect their buildings for generations to come.

The Brecon Beacons National Park also contains some 358 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs). SAMs in the Brecon Beacons National Park represent human activity in the area from prehistoric times to World War II. These are nationally important archaeological sites, which are also afforded legal protection from unauthorised and unmanaged change in order to protect them for future generations to enjoy.

Why we are focusing on this Improvement Objective.	What we will do.	How we will do it.
We want to:	We will:	By:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that the National Park's built heritage is maintained. Build public confidence and raise awareness and enjoyment of that special heritage. Focus on our statutory duty to protect our built heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the number of buildings at risk. Raise awareness of the conservation of historic buildings. Establish a level of confidence in the service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producing one leaflet to highlight the opportunities available for conserving buildings at risk. Organising one workshop for owners of listed buildings to achieve further awareness. Providing guidance to planners on the requirements in conservation areas. Process Listed Buildings' consents more effectively with a target of 65% to be forwarded to Cadw within 8 weeks.
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How will we know if we have achieved conserving and enhancing the Park's environment?

- There will be fewer buildings at risk.
- There will be improved awareness and knowledge amongst owners and applicants of the importance of protecting and enhancing the special character of listed buildings, conservation areas and archaeology.
- There will be fewer unauthorised works to historic buildings.
- There will be improved knowledge of, and data on, Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

Measure of success	2011-2012 Target	2011-2012 Actual	2012-2013 Target
**Reduce the number of buildings at risk.	No target set	132	129
**Percentage % reduction in buildings at risk.	No target set	6.5%	6.2%
**Number of conservation area guidance notes.	1	1	1
**Number of listed Buildings grant aided.	No target set	4	5
**Number of conservation area appraisals completed.	1	1	1
**Percentage % increase in photo evidence for Scheduled Ancient Monuments.	50%	20%	20% ¹
**Percentage % of grant funding going to BAR.	50%	50%	50%
**Percentage % of Listed Building consents forwarded to Cadw within 8 weeks.	No target set	Not known	65% passed to CADW within 8 weeks

*Statutory Performance Indicator

**Local Performance Indicator or measure

¹ This outcome of this measure is volunteer dependant. Although we will make every effort through our partnership work with Cadw to photograph our Scheduled Ancient Monuments it will entirely depend on how successful we are in our volunteer recruitment uptake.

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE 4: Public confidence in and accessibility to the Authority's conduct of business and governance will be improved.

Background

The Authority has worked hard to develop citizen centred governance principles at the heart of all it does. This year, the Authority has chosen to focus on scrutiny and webcasting of committee meetings

which will be important tools in building public confidence, trust and accessibility to the decision making process.

Public scrutiny is a valuable mechanism to review our policy and development, deliver best value and excellent performance which ensure that our corporate objectives are met whilst offering greater engagement with the public, the press and partner organisations.

The Authority also values and recognises that any decision it makes should be open to review or challenge. A yearlong Scrutiny project has led to the Authority developing and taking the lead in its own scrutiny process which will lead to better decision making and regaining public confidence and trust in the years to come. The Authority has chosen to link its scrutiny work to improvement objectives, and will scrutinise one objective from 2011-12 (Minimising the Impact on the Environment) and one from 2012-13 (Communities are inspired by and recognise the benefits of living in the Park). The public will be invited to give evidence for both these scrutiny reviews, bringing both objectivity and accountability into the process.

Following recent public interest in the recording of meetings there was discussion at the Authority of the potential benefits it might bring, which led to a decision to conduct an 18 month pilot of webcasting National Park Authority, Planning Access and Rights of Way, and Audit and Scrutiny committee meetings. In making this decision the members of the Authority went on record to state their commitment to Citizen Centred Governance principles which are:

- Putting the citizen first
- Knowing who does what and why
- Engaging with others
- Living public service values
- Fostering innovative delivery
- Being a learning organisation
- Achieving value for money

and the Nolan committee’s “Ten Principles of Public Life” which are Selflessness, Honesty and Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Personal Judgement, Respect for Others, Duty to Uphold the Law, Stewardship and Leadership (see <http://www.public-standards.gov.uk/>).

This project is taking place with the assistance of the Welsh Government and one of the project aims is to determine what improvements in accessibility, governance and general understanding can be achieved through use of such a system. It is hoped that by sharing its experiences in this area with a wide audience the Authority can help inform decisions at other public bodies in Wales that might be considering a similar move.

Why we are focusing on this Improvement Objective.	What we will do.	How we will do it.
<p>We want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that everyone is aware of what we do and how they can be involved. • Improve the trust and confidence in the National Park Authority 	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define and implement a communications plan which will encompass scrutiny and webcasting. • Promote and explore webcasting and scrutiny via websites and various 	<p>By:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out two formal scrutiny reviews before March 2013 – the areas of which have been chosen by Members taking into account the feedback of the public in response to the communications plan and

business and governance.	<p>media opportunities (including e-newsletters, newsletters, local and national media, feedback channels).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present and discuss webcasting and scrutiny with community and town councils, tourism business cluster groups, area advisory forums and other external partners and user groups. Their input will inform scrutiny reviews and may define priority areas for future scrutiny. • Explore the potential for webcasting scrutiny workshops. 	<p>community consultations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to develop Member and Officer skills on the principles of scrutiny and its important role in building trust and confidence and leading to service improvements • Taking forward the Community Council Charter Action Plan and feedback results to Community Councils. • Conducting an 18 month pilot of webcasting the three main Committees meetings (National Park Authority, Planning, Access and Rights of Way and Audit and Scrutiny). • Evaluating and reporting findings back to the Welsh Government's Office of the Chief Information Officer (WG OCIO) as per the project definition. • Reporting and set targeting for usage figures and direct feedback from users. • Further engaging with communities via forums and clusters to help publicise and guide the project and to gauge its success. • Using the webcasts as a training aid within the Authority and externally.
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How will we know if we have achieved an improvement in public confidence and accessibility to the Authority's conduct of business and governance?

- There will be better feedback through Members.
- There will be an endorsement of our performance from the Wales Audit Office.
- Greater feedback from user groups and community consultations.
- Members will receive better feedback on the Authority from their constituents and members of the public.

Measure of success	2011-2012 Target	2011-2012 Actual	2012-2013 Target
Number of training sessions made available to individual Members during the period.	6	10.36	7 ¹
Percentage % of Members attending training sessions.	75%	67%	75%
Total number of training days held. ²	144	226	168
Carry out scrutiny reviews with recommendations and action plans for service improvements arising out of the scrutiny reviews approved by the Authority Members.	To carry out two pilot scrutiny reviews	Two pilot reviews held for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Rights of Way.	Two scrutiny reviews completed and approved by March 2013.

Conduct an 18 month pilot of webcasting three main committee meetings.	N/A	N/A	From 29 June 2012 to webcast all meetings of main committees (for 18 months).
Survey finding: Members and community groups judging webcasting as “useful” or “very useful”	N/A	N/A	75%

*Statutory Performance Indicator

**Local Performance Indicator or measure

¹ Although we achieved an average of 10.36 Member training days in 2011-2012 we have set the target at 7 because we only exceeded the target of 6 last year owing to the Scrutiny Project, as all members attended several training events.

² After receiving the training we ask Members to evaluate the training they receive which informs future training.

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE 5: Biodiversity is conserved and enhanced through public engagement, practical action and planning advice.

Background

The conservation of biodiversity is of critical importance to the Brecon Beacons National Park. Put in simple terms this rich web of life in which we live and one which we depend contributes to the landscape character of the National Park and maintaining strong connections between healthy environments and sustainable communities is key to the role of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 ("the NERC Act") places a duty on all public bodies, in exercising their functions, to “have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”. This means that we also have an obligation to ensure that development is appropriate for the National Park and that it does not damage the special landscape and wildlife around us.

The National Park Authority undertakes a range of biodiversity conservation work which we have divided into three main sections. These are:

- Public engagement (that leads to practical action);
- Practical action (where we lead the work directly without necessarily any public or partnership involvement) and
- Planning advice (to a number of beneficiaries including the planning service).

Why we are focusing on this Improvement Objective.	What we will do.	How we will do it.
<p>We want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help mitigate the negative impacts and encourage positive changes through public 	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support community-based biodiversity projects that will increase understanding 	<p>By:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a Service Level Agreements (SLA) with The Green Valleys (TGVs) Community Interest Company.

engagement, practical action and advice.	<p>and awareness as well as improve the ecological condition of managed habitats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate Talybont Reservoir as a Local Nature Reserve. • Undertake further habitat management at Llangasty (Llangors Lake Special Area of Conservation and SSSI) and Waterfall Country (Coedydd Medd a Mellte Special Conservation Area). • Develop the means to undertake compliance and outcome monitoring of the planning conditions relating to biodiversity conservation. • Maintain a watching and consultative brief with NG Gas PLC re teh 1220mm natural gas pipeline restoration and aftercare works. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with DCWW and key stakeholders and through a S39 agreement with DCWW (landowners). • Using in-house staff and CCW grant aid. • Implement objectives in site management plans. • Commissioning surveys to improve habitat management. • Finalising screening guidance. • Providing planning guidance within consultation deadlines. • All consultations and emergencies responded to in a timely fashion.
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How will we know if we have achieved the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through public engagement, practical action and planning advice?

- Active involvement from community groups.
- Favourable conservation status maintained for European Protected Species or habitats of principal importance.
- Improved decision making as a result of complete survey information.
- Myddfai pipeline scar restored to the satisfaction of Countryside Council for Wales and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

Measure of success	2011-2012 Target	2011-2012 Actual	2012-2013 Target
**Meet the target set out in the Service Level Agreement with The Green Valleys (TGVs)	N/A	N/A	75% met by March 2013 ¹
**Designate Talybont Reservoir as a Local Nature Reserve.	N/A	N/A	Designation completed during 2012 ²
**Complete 2012-2013 programme of habitat management tasks at Llangors Lake and Waterfall Country	N/A	N/A	As per management plans; consented by Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) ³

**Commission survey for one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).	N/A	N/A	Survey completed and report received.
**Develop an effective means of compliance monitoring of planning conditions relating to biodiversity conservation.	N/A	N/A	Process drafted by December 2012. Programme for sample compliance monitoring in place by March 2013.
**NG Gas PLC contractors maintain their presence on site in order to complete tasks in line with conditions of consent.	N/A	N/A	Conditions of consent adhered to. (Adhering to the conditions of consent is the key here, in particular the requirements to continue working on restoration until CCW is happy to sign off.)
**Provide planning advice 2 days per week within consultation deadlines.	N/A	N/A	Planning conditions /obligations reflect the ecological advice provided. (This measurement is tied to the compliance monitoring mentioned above.)

*Statutory Performance Indicator – In relation to Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSIs) there is a statutory requirement for statutory bodies to “take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of the National Park Authority’s functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of the flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features by reasons of which the site is of special scientific interest,” (S28G of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended)).

**Local Performance Indicator or measure – The local measure is to meet objectives in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). The main habitat and species objectives for the National Park’s LBAP are now in line with the national objectives, which is to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2020.

¹ This is an estimated target, which we do not know if The Green Valleys will be able to meet or not. It is set at 75% because this is considered to be an acceptable level of success for effort invested.

² This depends upon actions and support by third parties as well as by other department sections within Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. A legal agreement is required in order to achieve this target.

³ These are programmed for relevant times of the year and are dependent upon suitable weather conditions and staff availability.

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE 6: Communities are inspired by and recognise the benefits of where they live.

Background

The National Park relies on the active involvement of the communities within it. Our work to engage with many aspects of community life has far reaching effects.

We recognise that worldwide issues of climate change, change in agricultural practices and policy, economic decline and rising prices of fossil fuels all have an even bigger impact on the resilience of our communities. Support from the Authority's Sustainable Development Fund and Conservation and Community Grant Schemes have ensured that local community sustainability projects keep benefitting communities for years to come.

Great and innovative projects are already ongoing across the National Park from grassroots catchment based approaches which encompass renewable energy generation like micro hydro schemes to community regeneration projects to our work with Community Councils and One Voice Wales (their representative body). The latter includes together revising and delivering a Community Council Charter and Action Plan to better work together to benefit local communities. These are just some of the sustainable projects that receive continued support from the National Park Authority.

Community organisations, including town and community councils and voluntary organisations, have an enormous role to play in regeneration and community well-being. They can prioritise how resources are used locally as well as create a sense of place by promoting locally distinctive events. Choosing to apply for grant schemes or being involved in projects that support sustainability or regeneration involves communities being inspired by and recognising the benefits of where they live. The following objectives help build a solid foundation for the coming years.

This objective will also be scrutinised by Members in 2012.

Why we are focusing on this Improvement Objective.	What we will do.	How we will we do it.
<p>We want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable people's enjoyment of the National Park. • To help bring income into the area. • To fulfil our second statutory purpose to 'promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.' 	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with community and town councils and One Voice Wales (their representative body) to revise the Community Council Charter and Action Plan. • Encourage, recruit and retain volunteers in the National Park, particularly in new work for the National Park including the new 	<p>By:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to support local community projects that encourage sustainability and rural regenerations through grants' schemes available through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), Rural Alliances, Conservation and Community Grant Scheme and The Brecon Beacons Trust. • Receiving, encouraging and acting on feedback from Community Champions.

	<p>Waterfalls Country Volunteer Warden Scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a Social Inclusion and Child Poverty Action Plan that will increase numbers of children and families in poverty that benefit from the National Park and use of our services. • Work with Snowdonia and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authorities and the Council for National Parks to establish the MOSAIC project in Wales, part of which will help to establish Community Champions to share information on the Parks with Black Minority Ethnic communities. • Deliver Rural Skills programme to provide Agored accredited training for disadvantaged groups including NEET young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a valued Education Service to schools visiting the National Park. • Continuing to promote the Park Ambassadors Scheme which encourages businesses to deliver a unique sense of place to those who visit the National Park. • Continue to promote sustainable tourism and the Fforest Fawr Geopark to our communities through achieving reaccreditation under the Europark Charter for Sustainable Tourism and being successfully revalidated as a Member of the European Geoparks Network. • Helping Members lead a Scrutiny review that will make further recommendations on how to help inspire our communities to recognise benefit from the National Park.
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How will we know if we have achieved inspiring communities to recognise the benefits of where they live?

- There will be a positive percentage % of good rating or above on surveys.
- There will be a percentage % reduction in crime statistics (eg. Illegal off-roading, theft from car parks.)
- There will be an increase in Community Councils signing up to the Community Council Charter.
- We will meet Sustainable Development Match Funding ratios on grant aided projects.
- There will be increased feedback from tourism operators and user groups.
- Increased levels of inspiration measures.
- More Community Champions will be recruited.
- There will groups submitting applications and gaining the Walkers are Welcome award.
- Increase in new community resilience groups supported by The Green Valleys.

Measure of success	2011-2012 Target	2011-2012 Actual	2012-2013 Target
Deliver Community Council Charter Action Plan.	Detail in action plan	Actions in plan delivered or progressed where ongoing.	March 2013
Achieve and or exceed 1:1 match funding ratio with Sustainable Development Fund grants.	1:1	4.1:1 (Ratio exceeded)	1:1'
Achieve The Green Valleys Service Level Agreement	Detail in	Targets	March 2013

work targets for hydro power, community woodland, local food, carbon reduction and biodiversity.	Service Level Agreement	achieved.	
Deliver a Social Inclusion and Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan.	Detail in 2011-2012 Action Plan.	Achieved.	Details in the Social Inclusion and Child Poverty Action Plan including the increase numbers of children in poverty attending events.
Increase numbers of children and families in poverty benefitting from the National Park.	N/A	N/A. Child poverty is a new area of work for 2012 onward.	
Maintain Environmental Management System – 3% CO2 reductions.	3%	Reduced 8% to March 2011. Figures not yet available for 2011- 2012	3% CO2 ^{1*} reductions
**Total number of participants (students/teachers/assistants) receiving education messages from National Park Officers.	4,300	5852	5,000 ²
**Average time each participant spends with Officers of the Education Service experiencing National Park messages.	2.5 hours	3.35 hours	2.5 hours ³
**Number of Participants receiving National Park messages through education in the medium of Welsh.	600	1026	600 ³
**Level of inspiration.	10	10	Modal score of 10 on an 11 point scale.

*Statutory Performance Indicator

**Local Performance Indicator or measure

¹ The Welsh Government set the ratio at 1:1 and some of the best Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) projects have low funding ratios. We cannot raise the ratio of this measure as we require organisations to provide 50% match (maybe part in kind) so will always achieve 1:1. We achieve more than this because in many cases SDF is the minority funder and the nearer we are to 1:1 the more certain we are that without our involvement funding for these projects would not otherwise happen.

^{1*} The Welsh Government also set the CO2 measurement at 3%. There is certainly a diminishing returns issue - each 1% reduction in the coming years is likely to be harder to achieve than those associated with earlier achievements. For example the first promotion of working from home resulted in a 16% reduction in the 1st year and we are unlikely to achieve that again without significant organisational change. Figures are not in yet for 2011-2012 but we expect business mileage figures to be completed by early summer.

² The target for total participants is up 700 from 4,300 to 5,000 and this represents 20 additional groups being catered for. Last year's achievement of 5,852 included one-off events such as that organised at Carreg Cennen and there is considerable volatility to these dependent on a range of factors outside of our control (cost of transport, weather, competing events, etc.).

³ The Welsh medium messages and the average time with participants remains the same for 2012-2013. We are already accounting a 700 participant rise because it is very difficult to predict the proportion in advance – however it is recognised that some of the 20 additional groups are likely to be Welsh medium groups. In addition the Welsh language school provision is being reorganized in the West of the park and the new school is not scheduled to open until January 2013.

Monitoring Performance

These details will be measured, recorded and assessed in our Performance Management System called 'Ffynnon' and will provide the basis for reporting our performance.

The information uploaded into Ffynnon comprises of core data on statutory performance indicators and local performance indicators which shows each Directorate's work in context by showing workload, cases, figures, numbers and targets. Ffynnon reports are generated quarterly and presented to the National Park Authority Committee highlighting the areas that have improved or areas that require attention.

In order to monitor effectiveness and efficiency, progress reports will also be delivered to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee every quarter on one selected improvement objective. In addition to this, the Authority will continue to benchmark its performance with the other National Parks of Wales and these details will also be presented to the National Park Authority Committee when available.

The improvements will be evidenced in a variety of ways including:

- Performance indicators (which include those that are national and statutory ones and those that are local)
- Consultation with stakeholders and service users through surveys and other means.
- Internal assessment
- Inspection by the Welsh Audit Office
- Benchmarking and meeting targets

We have strong corporate governance and internal measures to manage the conduct of the Authority. The essential principles are respect, accountability, transparency, openness, accessibility, fairness, inclusiveness, honesty and achievement which echo the Nolan committee's "Ten Principles of Public Life". We have a range of policies to achieve these principles supported by the Members, Officers, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, the Standards Committee, the Monitoring Officer, the Solicitors of the Authority, the Complaints Procedure and the Freedom of Information Act. We will ensure that our decision making and our commitment to improve our services also adopt these principles.

This Improvement Plan sits within an ambitious planning framework, the National Park Management Plan, which maps developments in the Park over the next twenty years. Our experiences will continue to inform and influence work programmes, budgets and funding proposals as we strive to exceed our targets. If you would like any additional information on the Improvement Plan or would like to suggest areas of work where we require improvement please write to Mr John Cook, Chief Executive, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon LD3 7HP, Powys or email improvements@breconbeacons.org