

Consultation draft National Park Management Plan

Name of Committee	National Park Authority
Date	24 th September 2021
Report Author	Helen Lucocq MRTPI (Statutory assessments undertaken by Christopher O'Brien MRTPI)
Job title	Strategy and Policy Manager
Contact Details	Helen.lucocq@beacons-npa.gov.uk
Purpose of Report	To seek member agreement to publish the Consultation Draft Management Plan <i>Future Beacons</i> for a 16 week period of consultation
Single Integrated Assessment	Four months of public consultation is planned to build upon stakeholder involvement to date. This will enable communication and for the National Park Authority to understand and listen to the views of people and organisations on the proposals. The consultation will need to ensure the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English Language. Responses will be analysed and reported to NPA alongside any changes they bring to the final National Park Management Plan. This also helps to mitigate risk as the NPA will be better informed when setting the final National Park Management Plan and bringing it into use. The way in which the policies are implemented, by working in partnership, will help better contribute to positive and mitigate any negative impacts and consider the differing needs of protected characteristics.
List of Enclosures	Enclosure 1 Single Integrated Assessment Enclosure 2 Equality Impact Assessment Enclosure 3 <i>Future Beacons</i> Consultation Draft Management Plan for the Brecon Beacons National

	<p>Park (2022-2027)</p> <p>Enclosure 4 Summary Future Beacons</p> <p>Enclosure 5 Sustainability Appraisal of Future Beacons</p> <p>Enclosure 6 Habitats Regulation Assessment of Future Beacons</p>
Public Interest Test	N/A
Recommendation(s)	To seek member agreement to publish the Consultation Draft Management Plan <i>Future Beacons</i> for a 16 week period of consultation

I Introduction or Background

I.1. The requirement for the Authority to produce a Management Plan for the area is defined by Section 66(1) of the Environment Act (1995) which states: -

Every National Park authority shall, ...prepare and publish a plan, to be known as National Park Management Plan, which formulates its policy for the management of the relevant Park and for the carrying out of its functions in relation to that park

I.2. The Authority's current NPMP *Managing Change Together* was adopted in 2010 it underwent full review in 2015, which culminated in the publication of the first review in 2015 *Putting Well-being at the Heart of Managing our National Park*. This currently forms the statutory Management Plan for the area.

I.3. Since the review of *Managing Change Together* the Welsh Government has published its policy priorities for the National Parks in Wales. *Valued and Resilient* defines a series of 10 cross-cutting objectives for the National Park to deliver.

I.4. In order to ensure conformity with these priority actions the Authority has determined the need for the development of a replacement NPMP. This will cover the period 22-27. This is produced in accordance with our general powers and with the agreement of the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales.

2 Proposals

2.1 The role of the Management Plan is to guide delivery of the National Park purposes and duty assisted by the NPAs statutory planning function.

2.2 The National Park Management Plan is the single most important policy document for each National Park. As a plan of National significance, it provides context and direction to all other policy being developed within the park be those Authority led or otherwise, and it also provides an opportunity to make a clear statement about the Authority's vision for the Park.

2.3 The current guidance on the production of Management Plans was produced in 2007 by the Countryside Council for Wales. It states that Management Plans must:-

- Be ambitious recognising the national importance of the Park.
- Focus on the delivery of the National Park purposes within the wider agenda of sustainable development.
- Identify and seek to protect and enhance the special qualities of the Park.
- Promote the national and international importance of the National Park whilst reflecting local circumstances.
- Be underpinned by sustainable development.
- Be appropriate responses to climate change demonstrating exemplar action in relation to sustainable development.
- Integrate thinking between topics and delivery.
- Link to international, national, regional and local policies and programmes which can assist in the delivery of National Park purposes.
- Influence and add value to existing and future plans and strategies prepared by others.
- Be both forward thinking and reflective building on past action.
- Contain objectives and policies based on clear evidence.
- Be clearly monitored in terms of both outputs against targets, milestones and objectives.
- Have mechanisms for review should monitoring demonstrate need for change.
- Provide the central Plan for the NPA, setting the framework, together with the Local Development Plan(LDP), for the more detailed strategies and programmes of the NPA including its annual Business Plan AND;
- Be prepared with the active participation of key stakeholders and the wider community encouraging shared ownership.
- Be delivered through active partnerships.
- Be a means to an end

2.4 In accordance with the guidance Officers of the Authority have been actively engaged in the development of a replacement Management Plan for the area since the Autumn of 2020.

2.5 This has involved the following action on the part of the Policy Officers Group:-

- Reviewing the evidence base to define key issues for the Park which the plan should address
- Consulting on high level vision and objectives to start the conversation between the Authority and key stakeholders as to the direction of travel.
- Undertaken numerous targeted engagement meetings with a range of stakeholders including community councils, farming unions, rambler organisations, The Dark Sky as well as Welsh government sponsorship unit and Natural Resources Wales.
- Formulated a Stakeholder Reference Panel with a range of invited organisations to discuss in detail future policy interventions.
- Constituted a citizen's assembly for detailed discussions with members of the community around key issues.
- Undertaken Strategic Appraisal of the proposed plan and policies to consider social, environmental, and economic impacts.
- Undertaken Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Policy and Strategy to determine the degree of potential for likely significant effects as a result of the plan on special areas of conservation within the Park and on our boundaries.
- Working through a series of guest expert speakers in Policy Forum, we have engaged members in topic based debate to help inform the strategy and policy of the Plan.
- Presented draft sections of the plan to Policy Forum for detailed member feedback to enable collaboration in drafting.
- Held workshop sessions with senior leadership and key officers around policy topics to develop and refine policy in collaboration with key delivery officers.
- Engaged and sought input from the Chief Executive.

2.6 This detailed and intense programme of policy development has resulted in a Management Plan that is bold and ambitious, facing the most complex wicked problems head on. Unashamedly the plan seeks to provide the vision and the evidence to influence transformational change in the actions of all those who live, work and operate within the Park. To that end, and following stimulating and challenging sessions with the Citizen's Assembly the plan has been renamed *Future Beacons* as a signal that the plan is both a warning sign for the need to take a different path, and a means to illuminate the pathway to a better more sustainable future.

2.7 The Plan has as its central theme the need for activity to take place within environmental sustainability and social resilience. To do this, the plan advocates for nature based solutions to the challenges we face.

2.8 *Future Beacons* is divided into eight distinct sections

1. A **foreword** by the new CEO, a strong and impassioned rationale for the vision of the plan and the risk of not taking on such bold policy goals.
2. An **introduction** about the Brecon Beacons as a National Park.
3. Our **Special Qualities**. Expressed using a range of poems, art and policy statements to capture a sense of the park (the final consultation draft will include illustration from a local artist)
4. A **section explaining the purpose and significance of the Management Plan** and its use of the 'Doughnut' model to conceptualise our purposes and duty as an interrelated system of action.
5. An **overview of the state of the Park today**, and identification of key issues for the Plan to address.
6. Our **vision and objectives** for the park of 2045 complete with illustrations of the extent of landscape change needed for ecological and social resilience.
7. A series of twenty-four policy **statements** framed around our purposes and duty and ways of working to guide implementation of our vision.
8. An overview of the mechanisms for individuals and organisations to get involved with the consultation, the development and implementation of *Future Beacons*.
9. Annex – setting our indicators for long term policy goals arranged around the Park Doughnut.

Due to the breadth of subject matter addressed the plan has ended up as a lengthy document. To ensure that this doesn't prevent full engagement Officers have produced a summary version (enclosure 4 to this report) which provides an easier more condensed summary of the plan, with appropriate links to the full document.

3 Implications and risk

- 3.1 As set out above the development of a Management Plan for the area is a statutory requirement on the Authority. For various reasons, not least lockdown and staffing change, the Authority has not met statutory targets for the review of the Management Plan. Welsh Government and NRW are satisfied that the reasons for this delay are valid and a renewed timetable has been negotiated with them. This timetable sees the plan being delivered by April 2022 with the requirement that the consultation draft is published for at least 12 weeks public consultation. To these ends it is a matter of reputational necessity to ensure that we deliver against this renegotiated timeline, to ensure that the sponsorship unit have confidence in our ability to meet our statutory obligations.
- 3.2 More than reputational risk, further delay in the development of the Management Plan poses potential challenge for the applicability of emerging policy for the region. As stated above the Management Plan is of national significance, this means that any plan

that is being developed for the area must take account of and respond to the strategic direction defined by the plan (a way that other organisations can discharge their duties to the National Park under S62(2) of the Management Plan. At present there are a number of key policy documents being developed and reviewed within the region such as the emerging strategic development plans and well-being plans which should be looking to the Management Plan to inform their plan making. Failure to keep the plan up to date will result in other external policy not delivering on objectives that we know are vital to the region.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 Officers have produced a consultation draft Management Plan for the area through engagement and collaboration whilst clearly aligning action with an evidence based understanding of the issues facing the Park.
- 4.2 The plan is bold and ambitious concentrating on the socio-economic and environmental challenges facing the area whilst delivering on the statutory and policy requirements of a Management Plan.
- 4.3 The plan has received widespread support from both our citizen assembly and our stakeholder reference panel.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

To seek member agreement to publish the Consultation Draft Management Plan *Future Beacons* for a 16 week period of consultation