

News from around the Parks

Any items in italics are from the CNP staff. Apologies for any stylistic errors, which are caused by the variety of formats in which the reports are received. Some reports have been edited for length.

Brecon Beacons NPA – Mary Taylor

Airlift to restore Hay Bluff to former glory

Wardens from Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and local Black Mountains' graziers have helped to co-ordinate a week long helicopter airlift which involved shifting 120 bales of heather onto Hay Bluff – to repair the largest area of upland erosion in the National Park.

Over 100 tonnes of the heather brash bales have been lowered by helicopter onto Hay Bluff to repair a large area of countryside that was damaged by wildfires in 1976. The helicopter also transported a vast amount of stone that will be used to improve a 1km section of popular footpath on the Twmpa, near Gospel Pass.

Funded by Natural England and working in partnership with the Michaelchurch Estate, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and the local Black Mountains' Graziers, the rejuvenation project is part of a wider initiative to maintain the common and restore the landscape back to favourable conditions. As part of the management of the SSSI, the heather has been cut from other sections of Hatterrall Hill and will be bedded down as mulch to encourage vegetation to recolonise the bare areas of peat and mineral soils to reduce gullying and further erosion.

Brecon Beacons project wins share of £1 million prize for leading the way in reducing CO₂ emissions

The Green Valleys, a community renewable energy scheme supported by Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, was recently named a winner of the Big Green Challenge – a £1 million prize fund to encourage community-led carbon emission reductions. Installing a series of small-scale hydro energy schemes across the National Park (both private and community-owned) The Green Valleys has slashed CO₂ emissions by an impressive 20 per cent in the past year alone, making a significant impact on the UK's 2020 emissions reduction target of 34 per cent.

Taking home £300,000 the project fought off competition from over 350 community groups across the UK because of their achievements over the course of a year in four areas: CO₂ reductions achieved; the innovative nature of their initiatives; the longevity and scalability of their project; and their level of community engagement.

Brecon Beacons launches first UK Park Ambassador scheme for businesses

Last month, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority delivered the first of series of day courses to formally launch the UKs' first National Park Ambassador Scheme aimed at helping tourism businesses to offer outstanding service to visitors.

Funded by the EU Interreg IVB project as part of Collabor8, the new Park Ambassador Scheme is a series of free one-day training workshops designed to offer local tourism businesses the information they need to engage and inspire visitors to explore the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Environmental jobs up for grabs in the Brecon Beacons National Park

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is hoping to welcome up to 18 new recruits – who'll get the chance to work in some of the most outstanding countryside in the Brecon Beacons – as part of its commitment to the Future Jobs Fund Scheme.

Funded by Job Centre Plus and in partnership with Powys County Council, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority has started the first phase of its recruitment with 18

temporary jobs up for grabs across the Park – including 8 Assistant Warden positions, office based and catering vacancies available.

Open to all ages, the new jobs are available for those people who've been on Jobseekers Allowance for over 6 months and all posts are salaried at Grade 1 £12145 p.a. pro rata for 25hrs a week for a 6 month period only.

Brecon Beacons Park Society – Charles Henderson

We have just had the first meeting with BBNPA's planning officers of what is intended to be a regular series of meetings to discuss potential planning issues before they become a problem. This is intended to reduce the likelihood of future Gilestone situations. Full details of the Gilestone judgment are still awaited.

Broads Authority – Rashmi Varma

Broads island restoration gets planning approval

An innovative scheme to restore a lost island near Hickling Broad using dredgings from the navigation channel in Heigham Sound has received planning approval. About 300 steel baskets lined with polyethylene bags standing on the bed of Duck Broad will be filled with mud from the river bed to form the perimeter and the centre will be filled with more dredgings before being planted with reed. Difficulties in finding mud disposal sites in the area have held up the dredging of Heigham Sound which has silted up to a depth of 90 cm in places, causing some sailing boats to go aground.

CNP was lucky enough to visit the site of this project a couple of weeks ago – how innovative, and will be fascinating to return to the site in a few years.

Two Broads finalists in national awards

The Trinity Broads, which provide drinking water for Great Yarmouth, and Whitlingham Country Park on the outskirts of Norwich have been shortlisted for the 2010 Water Renaissance Awards which recognise best practice in sustainable waterway regeneration throughout the UK. A 20-year restoration project at the Trinity Broads that has resulted in clear water, a profusion of water plants, an improved fishery and a return of rare wildlife is lined up for the Natural Environment Award. Whitlingham Country Park is in contention for an education award for its social inclusion work with young people.

Major tourism campaign launched at Boat and Caravan Show

The biggest collaborative campaign ever to promote the Broads as a leading UK tourist destination was launched at the Boat and Caravan Show in Birmingham in February. The Broads Authority joined forces with the Broads Tourism Forum to launch the Enjoy the Broads 2010 campaign which includes a glossy, 24-page brochure giving a wealth of visitor information. A record 175,000 copies have been printed and will be distributed throughout East Anglia and beyond. A new Broads tourism website, www.enjoythebroads.com, will go live at the end of May.

Hilary Franzen:hilary.franzen@broads-authority.gov.uk

Broads Society – Paul Howes

DEFRA consultation

The Society has recently submitted its response to DEFRA's consultation on the new Circular and has published it to widespread praise from the Broads public.

Dredging of Heigham Sound

The Authority has finally announced its intention to dredge Heigham Sound, a key part of the water system in the upper part of the River Thurne basin and use at least part of the spoil to reconstitute a bank between the Sound and Duck Broad. Many locals believe that the silting up of the Sound is at least part of the cause of the decline in the ecosystem of

Hickling Broad. However, the angling community has become very sensitive to the possibility because of concerns of an algal bloom or Prynnesium which may harm the best pike fishery in England. Poisons released by such a bloom could kill every fish in the vicinity. The Authority received planning permission for the bank reconstitution at a planning recent meeting, following which the fisherfolk retired hurt. This is a classic example of how difficult it is to achieve a balance between competing users of a relatively confined area.

Possible offshore dam

Much has been made in a local magazine of a proposal by a leading sailor and birdwatcher for a massive sea wall to be built from Great Yarmouth harbour north for about 15 miles and then coming ashore again somewhere north of Happisburgh. This would protect the coast from erosion and stop the Broads from flooding and at the same time create a massive lake which would gradually lose its salinity, creating a reservoir available for topping up Broads water levels in the summer months while giving a new facility for wildlife and yachtsmen. The Society has refused to comment on this impractical suggestion.

Dartmoor NPA – Diana Moyse

No report received.

Dartmoor Preservation Association – James Paxman

Renewable Energy / Wind Farms

The DPA was very pleased to see the robust response produced by CNP to the draft policy statements from DECC. As drafted the statements appear to provide little reassurance that protected landscapes will remain protected in the face of efforts by developers to contribute to achieving ambitious government targets for renewable energy generation. Recent planning decisions in the south west have further confused the issues over wind power. Planning appeals for turbines at St Paul's Moor and Bickham Moor on the periphery of Exmoor were recently refused with an emphasis being placed on the damage to the setting of Exmoor National Park. On the other hand, the appeal at Den Brook, on the periphery of Dartmoor has been allowed and similar arguments about the damage to the setting of the National Park have been discounted.

EcoSystem Services

Natural England recently hosted a consultation exercise to discuss the Ecosystem Services Pilot Project for Dartmoor. This session appeared to raise more questions than it answered and it is apparent that thinking about this is still very much at the "conceptual" stage. In particular, methods of valuation of ecosystem services did not appear to reward services that were already in good condition. There is clearly a lot of work to be done in the next 12 months to define this project in more understandable terms before farmers can become involved in a practical manner.

Blanket Bog Restoration

The Mires on the Moors project, involving both Exmoor and Dartmoor can be seen as an ecosystems services project. The agencies involved (South West Water, Natural England and the National Park Authorities) have been enthusiastic about progressing the project. However, the enthusiasm is not universally shared among commoners, farmers, walkers and other users of the moor. A lack of communication has produced an uneasiness about the project with a number of different groups (the DPA included).

Exmoor NPA – Andrea Davis
‘Your Future Exmoor’

An important new planning document, ‘Your Future Exmoor’, which will help decide issues such as where new housing and employment on Exmoor should be provided over the next 15 to 20 years as well as conservation, building design and community facilities is beginning the first stages of consultation and Exmoor National Park Authority is inviting local communities to give their views in a series of informal, drop-in events tailored to individual parishes. The first events, which have already taken place, have been well attended.

Million pound boost for Exmoor’s moorlands

The future conservation and enhancement of Exmoor’s moorlands has received a huge boost with the news that the Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership has been offered a grant of £662,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The HLF grant represents about 50% of the total cost of the proposed scheme with some of the balance being represented by in-kind contributions and income generated through events and activities. The Scheme comprises 20 projects in 3 programmes spread over three years.

The Partnership comprises twelve organisations: Active Exmoor, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Exmoor National Park Authority, Exmoor Society, Exmoor Trust, Field Studies Council, The National Trust, National Farmers Union Natural England, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and West Somerset Community College - with the National Park Authority acting as Lead Partner.

Wind turbine decision welcomed

Exmoor National Park Authority has welcomed the Planning Inspector’s decision to dismiss appeals and refuse planning permission for the construction and operation of four 100 metre wind turbines at Bickham Moor in Mid Devon and nine 105 metre turbines at Three Moors in North Devon.

The conjoined Inquiry, which took place at South Molton in June and November 2009, heard evidence from North Devon and Mid Devon District Councils and the Rural Exmoor Alliance against the proposals by Coronation Power and Airtricity Holdings (UK) Ltd.

The Inspector agreed with the Authority and said in his Appeal Decision that while he recognised the need for renewable energy, a wind power station would be ‘a visual feature of intense prominence’ and the balance in this case lay in protection of local landscape and the setting of the National Park.

This appeal decision is very welcome and one of the most explicit and positive recognitions of the importance of the setting of a National Park yet.

Record breaking year for Exmoor sustainability

Exmoor National Park is set for a thriving green future with social and economic benefits resulting from environmental conservation with a range of projects funded through the Exmoor National Park Sustainable Development Fund following a record breaking year during 2009/10. A record 32 grants have been offered funding totalling over £265,000 and securing an additional estimated £2.43 million to the local economy through match funding.

This year a new record was also set regarding the number of small grants of less than £2,500 being awarded covering 19 projects and nearly 60% of all successful applications.

Contact Clare O’Connor, External Relations Manager, ENPA
CKoconnor@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Exmoor Society – Arabella Amory**Three Moors and Bickham Moors Wind Turbine Proposal**

After a lengthy public inquiry into the major wind turbine applications on the edge of the Exmoor National Park the Planning Inspector dismissed the appeals and refused planning permission.

Although both sites are just outside the National Park the Inspector accepted that the 13 proposed 100m turbines would have a detrimental impact on the setting of the designated area, its natural beauty, character and special qualities.

The Exmoor Society launched two appeals and raised considerable funds towards the work of the Exmoor Rural Alliance (Exmoor Society, CPRE and Two Moors Campaign). The partnership represented the objectors and compiled the landscape evidence for the public inquiry.

Consequence of this Decision

Bearing in mind the weight that the Inspector put on the special qualities of the NP landscape in making his decision, the Chairman of the Exmoor Society has written to the Exmoor National Park Authority to highlight some important points.

The gist of these is:-

- The importance of landscape policy when assessing development proposals, particularly when trying to balance the need for renewable energy and protecting the landscape.
- Suggesting landscape architects could be employed when assessing development proposals.
- The use of accurate photomontage and images when trying to show the impact of wind turbines on the landscape.
- The NP designation and the NP Management Plan played a critical part in the Inspector's decision, even though the two sites were outside its boundaries.
- The Inspector identified the special qualities of the NP to include 'a landscape that provides inspiration to visitors and residents alike'. He also defined the word 'setting' as how the NP itself exerts influence over the surrounding land.
- Tranquillity and cultural heritage should be part of the general landscape character assessment.

Heritage Lottery Fund – The Exmoor Moorland Partnership Scheme

In August 2009 The Exmoor National Park Authority, on behalf of the twelve organisations in the Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership (of which The Exmoor Society is a member), submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This was for funding towards an exciting range of projects to contribute towards the conservation and enhancement of the moorlands of Exmoor and to help people look after, enjoy, learn about and celebrate these areas. In December 2009 a letter was received from the HLF confirming the offer of a grant of £662,500 towards the work.

Lake District NPA – John Kerr**Going Nuclear**

With the prospect of three new nuclear power stations on our doorstep, we have spent a good deal of time considering the options. We have worked closely with our Lake District National Park Partnership colleagues to evaluate the proposals and assess the

infrastructure implications, including connections to the national grid, housing demand and transport. We have concluded that one power station at Sellafield might be acceptable if the infrastructure can be accommodated satisfactorily. But we have opposed sites at Braystones, north of Sellafield and at Kirksanton near Millom.

CNP shares the NPA's concerns about these proposals for new nuclear power stations.

One Big Plan

The Lake District National Park Partnership has said that our National Park Management Plan, currently under review, should go further than the minimum requirements of a 'Plan for the Park'. All partners have agreed the Lake District's special qualities also represent its 'outstanding universal values' as a candidate World Heritage Site cultural landscape. The Partnership has identified twenty four key delivery aims. The next step, led by a steering group from the Partnership, will be to spell out detailed strategic actions. We expect to finalise the Plan after engaging the wider public throughout the summer.

Flood Recovery

Many Lake District communities suffered great hardship in the aftermath of the November 2009 floods. The media focus fell on Cockermouth but the impact on many valleys, farms, roads and rights of way was devastating. We are actively engaged in the recovery, working with Cumbria County Council, the District Councils and Cumbria Tourism. Two of our information centres and our boating centre were inundated. More than 190 footbridges and paths were lost or damaged and the cost of rights of way repair is £2 million. We are working with Defra, DCLG and the North West Development Agency to assemble the finance needed to restore a network vital to our tourism economy.

For more information contact Bob Cartwright, Director of Park Services:
Email: BobCartwright@lakedistrict.gov.uk
Tel: 01539 792679

Friends of the Lake District – Andrew Forsyth

Windermere Byelaws – Proposed Amendments

The process of amending the Byelaws now appears to be stalled in Defra. Meanwhile the LDNPA has concluded a new agreement for enforcement of the current Byelaws from 1 April which gives a clear process for dealing with a range of issues – and we have welcomed this. In a linked but separate issue, there is currently a consultation underway on the arrangements for testing the rebuilt (more recreated!) Bluebird, of Donald Campbell fame. The proposal is to run it on Coniston before putting it into the Museum in the village. We have some concerns which we will be making clear.

Low Borrowdale Farm

The new owner is Lord Cavendish of Furness, owner of Holker Hall, through Holker Hall Estates. We have met his Estate Manager and have great confidence that the Farm will be 'developed' appropriately, initially as a home for the artist son of Lord Cavendish. Some work will be done on the house and barn and it is possible that some of the 1960s-style agricultural buildings will be removed. Once all the legal niceties are settled we will establish a firm working relationship. Whilst the Estate may install mains electricity, for example, there is absolutely no plan to build any holiday lodges!! Sighs of relief all round.

Extensions to the National Parks

Friends of the Lake District is working hard at a local level during the consultation period. Jack Ellerby has attended most of the public meetings and – by invitation – a large number of Parish meetings. Views are varied, with some of the farming community unconvinced whilst many Parishes are keen to be included as soon as possible. Outright opposition, especially where misconceptions over economic impact and planning restrictions are corrected, is rare to date and there is a broad measure of support. There is some

discussion of the 'democratic deficit' – partly inspired by local politics – but this is more that the local authorities in some areas are not reflecting the views of the Parishes and people on the ground! We have secured agreement from the main candidates that it will not be used by them as an election issue – but time will tell!

Nuclear Power Generation

We have objected in principle, on landscape grounds, to all three sites but accepted that Sellafield 2 is the least damaging. This is a view shared by the LDNPA, Cumbria Tourism and Cumbria County Council. We note that RWE npower, which is proposing the Kirksanton and Braystones sites, has now relinquished its connection offers from National Grid. A decision from DECC is expected in mid-March.

New Forest NPA – Bob Morris

Managing recreation

The first Recreation Management Strategy for the New Forest National Park is nearing completion following an extensive period of consultation.

The draft strategy describes how outdoor recreation in the National Park might be managed over the next 20 years, aiming to protect the special landscape but enabling people to enjoy it too.

Consultation so far has included, in addition to a full response from CNP, 500 detailed comments, a photocopied circular from around 1,500 people, four working groups, 16 meetings with interested groups and a drop-in session attended by more than 50 people.

Contact: stephen.trotter@newforestnpa.gov.uk

Future of the coastline

Consultation is under way on a draft North Solent Shoreline Management Plan, covering the coast between Hurst Spit in the New Forest National Park and Selsey Bill in West Sussex.

The Plan outlines proposals to manage the coastal flooding and erosion risks to the North Solent shoreline for the next 20, 50 and 100 years.

The coastline is considered in different sections and one of four policies is recommended for each: maintain or upgrade defences; build new seaward defences; allow the shoreline to retreat; no investment in providing or maintaining defences.

Contact: stephen.trotter@newforestnpa.gov.uk

60th celebrations focus on next generation

Television gardener and New Forest resident Charlie Dimmock went back to her roots for a 'Celebration of Childhood' in the New Forest National Park.

The event to mark the 60th anniversary of national parks saw pupils aged seven to eleven from a local junior school pose questions about childhood in the Forest in days gone by to a panel including Charlie plus commoners, a Verderer, a World War II expert, a wildlife specialist and a forestry manager at the historic Verderers' Court in Lyndhurst.

Audio clips from the event can be found on the National Park's website.

Contact: martin.o'neill@newforestnpa.gov.uk

New Forest Association – Peter Roberts

The NFA's focus remains firmly on the emerging National Park documents. We made strong representations, with backing from various bodies, to retain some protection in the Management Plan and Core Strategy. The Recreational Management Strategy has gone through many incarnations. The Authority seems desperate to appease everyone and be loved rather than take effective steps to ensure the future viability of the area.

Northumberland NPA – Peter Nicholson**Northumberland National Park leads on Going Green**

Two more of Northumberland National Park's award-winning visitor centres, at Rothbury and Ingram in the Breamish Valley, achieved the Gold, Green Tourism Business Scheme standard for the sustainable way they operate. They join the National Park Centre at Once Brewed that achieved Gold in 2008.

The awards bring the National Park a step closer to becoming the low carbon role model for businesses, community facilities and domestic premises in the area that it has committed to in its Management Plan, launched in October. The National Park Authority is modifying its buildings, staff working practices and operations in a bid to reduce its own carbon footprint by 20 per cent in the next three years. It aims to make renewables the dominant form of energy use in the National Park.

The visitor centres have had old night-storage heating units replaced with modern, state-of-the-art air source heat pump heating systems – which will reduce the carbon emissions associated with heating these buildings by 400% and save over £3,000 in energy costs!

Northumberland National Park addresses farming succession crisis with new farm-based training scheme

An Upland Farming Traineeship has been developed by Northumberland National Park Authority in conjunction with Landskills North East, Northumberland College and in association with North Northumberland Agricultural Training Association (NNATA). This is in response to local demand to keep traditional upland livestock farming skills in the countryside. It will run alongside but separately to, an arable agricultural traineeship scheme developed by NNATA and Landskills North East.

Most hill farms can no longer justify more than one worker - the farmer himself, so it is almost impossible to gain or pass on experience. The average age of upland farmers is now in the mid- to late fifties and, with many children of farming families opting for alternative careers, only one in seven farmers have a planned succession for their farm. The Upland Farming Traineeship is a unique learning opportunity for up to eight people aged 16+. Trainees will benefit from hands-on, farm-based development backed by certified sessions to gain a formal diploma from Northumberland College, useful in any location. Trainees will be employed by the National Park during their traineeship and paid the national minimum wage for their age group.

Northumberland National Park and Natural England open improved access to Greenlee Lough conservation area

A five-hundred metre boardwalk designed to improve public access to Greenlee Lough - Northumberland's largest natural lake, was opened by Tony Gates, Chief Executive of Northumberland National Park Authority and Rob Aubrook, Natural England's North East Regional Director.

The boardwalk links the lough on the north side of Hadrian's Wall to the public road via a new permissive footpath through farmland, which has been made possible through Higher Level Stewardship funds managed by Natural England. It is intended that this access will protect the sensitive environment of the National Nature Reserve while encouraging visitors

with a particular interest in nature to divert from the National Trail to spend a day enjoying the tranquillity, rich wildlife and awe-inspiring landscape north of the Whin Sill ridge.

The 195 hectares of the Greenlee Lough site on the north side of Hadrian's Wall, which includes a 45 hectare lake and adjoining areas of reedbed and fen, raised peat mire and wet woodland, is owned and managed by Northumberland National Park. The area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a National Nature Reserve and a European Special Area of Conservation (SAC), making it one of the most important areas of biodiversity in both Britain and Europe.

North York Moors NPA – Steve Scoffin

Landscape Photographer of the Year Exhibition

From 4 to 28 March, the Moors National Park Centre's Inspired by... Gallery will be hosting an exhibition of the category winners and runners-up from the Landscape Photographer of the Year Award. This will be the first public showing of these stunning images following their preview at London's National Theatre.

The Award was supported by the English National Park Authorities and the exhibition at the Inspired by... Gallery will include the images chosen to represent the nine English national parks in a special category set up to mark last year's 60th anniversary.

For more information contact Rachel McIntosh, Communications Officer
(r.mcintosh@northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk)

Small Scale Enhancement Scheme

A small scale enhancement scheme for villages and communities in the North York Moors National Park has been established to provide funding for regeneration and environmental projects up to the value of £5,000. The scheme, a subsidiary to the North York Moors Coast & Hills LEADER Programme, has £150,000 to spend on rural development projects between now and December 2011.

Projects need to have community support and fall into one of two themes: village renewal and development and/or conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage.

Successful projects will be implemented by the National Park Authority with responsibility reverting back to the owner or parish once the work has been completed.

For more information contact Clair Shields, SSE Scheme Coordinator
(c.shields@northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk)

Renewable Energy for Moorland Communities

A community interest company in Appleton le Moors and Spaunton is working with Yorwoods and a local landowner to provide woodfuel to local houses. To date, around 60% of the houses (approx 50 out of 89 homes) have had wood fired systems or other energy efficiency measures installed. Fifty percent of the cost has come from residents with the remainder being granted by the Authority's Community Renewable Energy Project.

It is anticipated that using locally sourced woodfuel will reduce the carbon emissions of the local community by 20% as well as leading to a reduction in fuel bills for the householders. This project is the first of its kind in the local area and it is hoped it will inspire other communities in the North York Moors and surrounding area to look at setting up similar schemes.

For more information contact Peter Jones, Community Renewable Energy Officer
(p.jones@northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk)

North Yorkshire Moors Association – Gareth Fawcett
25th Anniversary Year

This year, 2010, marks the 25th birthday of the Association. In order to celebrate this anniversary we are undertaking two projects. The first is the "History Tree" project which is aiming to make use of the remains of an iconic copper beech tree which up to three years ago dominated the front elevation of the old shooting lodge which is the National Park's Moors Centre at Danby. The tree had to be felled for safety reasons and now it is to become the "History Tree". The top of the stump will be planed to reveal the annular rings and a stainless steel template will be installed over the planed surface with engraved dates of significance at different points of the annular rings. A leaflet will accompany this with explanations, information, and activities for children of different ages. We hope it will become a focus of attention for visitors to the North York Moors and of course raise awareness of the Association.

The second project is the development of an area of land near Castleton for both improved woodland and wildlife habitat. This is to coincide with our 25th anniversary and International Biodiversity Year and will be funded through a bequest.

Voice of the Moors

Our quarterly magazine "Voice of the Moors" will logically reach issue 100 in this 25th year and plans are in place to produce a special issue to coincide with the month of the Association's inauguration.

Gas Exploration

The gas exploration company which two years ago made an unsuccessful attempt to locate a predicted gas reserve in a central area of the Moors has flagged up on its website the intention to put in a planning application this year for an appraisal well closer to the location of the reserve, which was discovered in 1966. Since an appraisal infers production we have growing concerns about the impact of any development of this kind. No application has yet been made but we are keeping a close watch.

Peak District NPA – Geoff Nickolds**Moorlands' merry month of May**

The £5.5 million MoorLife project, which will restore 2,000 acres (8km²) of Peak District and South Pennine moorlands, will be officially launched in International Biodiversity Week (May 17-23).

The project, managed by the Moors for the Future Partnership and funded by the EU's Life+ Fund, will help to restore rare wildlife habitats as well as tackling climate change by retaining carbon in peat, reducing flood-risks for major cities and improving household water quality.

The launch will be part of a series of events for the International Year of Biodiversity, with guided walks, talks and displays to tie in with annual events such as European Bat Week and National Moth Day.

Big strides in shrinking carbon footprint

The Peak District National Park Authority reduced its carbon footprint by nine per cent in 2008-09.

And it has signed up to the national 10:10 campaign, aiming to reduce it still further by another 10 per cent in 2010-11.

Most of the reductions have been achieved through a pool of low-emission vehicles for business travel, improved energy efficiency and renewable energy including ground source

heat pumps and a biomass boiler. Staff members are also reminded to switch off equipment, car-share, recycle, and use less paper, energy and water.

Tree planting wins 60th anniversary public vote

A plan to plant 500 trees across the Peak District was the resounding winner in a public vote for a legacy project to commemorate the 60th anniversary of National Parks legislation. The public were asked to vote on seven suggestions for spending £5,000 to create a lasting reminder of the anniversary. Tree-planting won 43% of the votes. Other ideas included an inspirational video for schools, the restoration of historic summit markers on Stanage Edge, and a makeover for the Monsal Head viewpoint.

Friends of the Peak District – Philip Hetherington

Hydro Power Project

Our report on the potential for small scale hydro power in the Peak District will be launched on 25th March. The project has looked at 162 possible sites in and around the National Park. At 12 sites there is installed hydro plant totalling 1.6MW. Of the 150 potential sites, two should be producing power in early-mid 2010 and other schemes are currently seeking licences from the Environment Agency. Ten sites were examined in much greater detail with flow and power output estimated, design options explored and grid connection and turbine choices analysed. With a number of important caveats, we calculate that there is a further potential capacity of c1.8MW from micro hydro power schemes.

The full technical report will be available as a PDF on our website from 25 March. A shorter published popular version is also available. We are planning further workshops to disseminate our findings and a 'user group' to support and encourage individuals and community groups looking to develop hydro schemes.

Mottram – Tintwistle Bypass

After a few quieter months the threat of road building to the west of the National Park has returned. Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council is consulting on new proposals, half of which are various public transport measures, including a bus lane. The other options are new road building. There are no measures to deal with the through traffic of lorries in two of the villages affected. The consultation will last until 14 May.

Website

We have a new website, developed and hosted by Hammer Design (who has also done some work for CNP and Mosaic).

Climate change and energy policy

We have a new climate change and energy policy which recognises that climate change is the greatest threat to our countryside today and supports the national target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The policy recognises that the impact of renewable technologies on the countryside, including our finest landscapes, must be seen in the context of the much greater changes that will occur as landscape tries to adapt to a new climate. Copies are available on request.

Pembrokeshire Coast NPA – David Ellis

Park Authority names new man to take the helm

Tegryn Jones, former Chief Executive of Keep Wales Tidy, has joined the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority as Chief Executive Designate, and will replace long-serving Nic Wheeler in April 2010.

Mr Jones, 41, joined Keep Wales Tidy in 2004, having moved from a senior policy post at the General Teaching Council for Wales. A fluent Welsh speaker, he was formerly Deputy Director and Education Officer of an educational activity centre run by the Urdd Gobaith Cymru movement in the Snowdonia National Park.

Richard Howells, Chairman of the Authority, said that that Tegryn's excellent track record and experience within the conservation sector, and his vision, qualities and leadership skills would guide the Authority into the future with enthusiasm and commitment.

Competition winners are buzzing

Pembrokeshire's bumblebees beat off all contenders to win a £25,000 prize for a bumblebee habitat conservation project. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority and the Countryside Council for Wales joined forces with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust to enter a competition run by EOG Association for Conservation and 'Live for the Outdoors' website.

The project will be based at Castlemartin Range and includes planting native wildflowers, linking related habitats and working directly to conserve a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species, alongside the MOD's proposed creation of a new trail for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Pippa Rayner, the Conservation Officer for the Trust, will be working alongside Lynne Houlston, Castlemartin Ranger to ensure rare species like the shrill carder bee continue to thrive in essential wildflower grasslands.

Visit www.bumblebeeconservation.org.uk for further information.

Oriel y Parc scoops top UK planning prize

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority has clinched the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) 2009 UK Award for 'Rural Areas and the Natural Environment' at a ceremony at the London Hilton on February 4th.

Located on the outskirts of St Davids, Oriel y Parc was opened just over a year ago and marked the culmination of the Authority's long standing plans for developing this gateway site providing a gallery, visitors' car park and a bus service hub.

The building has a BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) rating of 'Excellent' for its sustainable design and management and raises awareness through its interactive displays and programme of family-friendly activities.

Visit www.orielyparc.co.uk for more details.

Friends of Pembrokeshire National Park – David Holmes Proposed Wear Point Wind Turbines

The Society has objected to the building of four 105m (344ft) high wind turbines at Wear Point adjoining the Milford Haven Waterway. We feel that these proposed turbines will impact adversely on the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park which at its nearest point is about 3km from the site. Due to their sheer size the turbines will be seen from many viewpoints within the National Park including the Angle Road, Angle Bay and the headland from the point at Angle. The proposed site is on contours of between 40 and 60 metres OD which would give them a total height of 145-165 metres OD on the landscape. They would be visible from the Ridgeway between Lamphey and Pennally and from high ground in the upper reaches of the Daugleddau. The turbines would adversely dominate the views from the National Park because of their very size, their height above sea level and the huge area of sky (3,848m²) their moving blades will cover. The blades will be in constant motion to avoid the danger of toppling even when there is no wind. Under such conditions the turbines will be turned by the import of electricity. The National Trail, the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path, passes between 25 and 50 metres of these proposed turbines and follows the edge of the site. A manual for operating and maintaining Vestas Wind Turbines advises

that people keep to a distance of 400 metres from a turbine and that children ought not to play nearby. Clearly the National Trail is a lot nearer than that.

Presentation by Tidal Energy Limited

On 13 January 2010 Tidal Energy Limited (tidalenergyLtd.com) gave a presentation, in St David's, to the Friends of its proposals for electricity generation using underwater turbines which are to be placed on the seabed of Ramsey Sound between St Justinian's and Ramsey Island. A year-long test of the company's DeltaStream technology has been given local support.

Cooperation between Welsh National Park Societies

The Friends are preparing for a Welsh National Parks joint weekend of activities based around St David's starting on 11 June. We are also pleased to have collaborated with our fellow Welsh National Park Societies in the formulation of a joint manifesto to be presented to the Welsh Assembly prior to elections to that body in 2011. We must thank the Snowdonia Society for taking the lead on this issue.

David Holmes
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CNP will be appearing at a public inquiry into applications to extend two quarries in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (Pantgwyn and Trefigin) that have been called-in by the Welsh Assembly Government. Our case will focus on the proposals' conflict with national and local planning policy and their landscape and visual effects.

Scottish Campaign for National Parks – Robert Maund Cairngorms National Park.

The Reporters who held a public local inquiry into the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan last year had their report published on 16 December. SCNP had objected to key aspects of the plan dealing with local needs and affordable housing and the proposal to develop An Camas Mor, a National Scenic Area, and impinging on the Spey Special Area of Conservation. The approach adopted in the plan did not stack up and the proposal to meet the need as a spin off from open market speculative housing was clearly flawed. Similarly, the idea of meeting much of the perceived need by building 1,500 houses and other commercial development in a National Scenic Area and threatening a Special Area of Conservation has proved indefensible.

The Reporters have reached conclusions which clearly reflect the concerns of SCNP and other objectors. They have made it clear that the preparation of the NP Local Plan was the right time to break free from the outdated plans inherited from the previous authorities. Circumstances have changed and the real needs of the communities in the Park have to be met in a way that recognises that the Cairngorms National Park is an area of national and international importance. To allow the majority of new housing to be open market with the likelihood of the majority being second homes, would destroy communities and repeat the approach that has so clearly failed in the past. To do much of the development in a NSA and SAC would have been unforgivable.

The NPA is not obliged to accept the findings and recommendations but the criticisms of the Local Plan are so strong that it is very difficult to see how the Park Authority could sustain their position. We also hope that Scottish Ministers will recognise that announcing their support for the so called Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative, including An Camas Mor at the top of the list, whilst the public inquiry was still going on, was premature and threatened the credibility of the planning process which the public rightly expects to be transparent and fair.

Beaully/Denny overhead power line.

Scottish Ministers have just announced their approval to the proposed power line following a lengthy public inquiry. The details of conditions to be imposed are not yet available. The decision calls into serious doubt government's understanding of and commitment to the National Park and to long term environmental sustainability.

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

The Reporters' findings from the Cairngorms NP PLI could have important implications for Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Local Plan. In particular, the clear guidance that in considering new development proposals where there is an irreconcilable conflict with conservation, then greater weight should be given to conservation. "In short, we agree with the objector who pointed out that whilst the NPA (sic) has a duty to promote sustainable economic and social development, this can only be achieved by promoting development on sound environmental principles."

Proposal for gold mining in the Park.

There is a long history of, for the most part, unsuccessful gold mining in the national park near Tyndrum. A company, Scotgold Resources Ltd, is now considering reopening the old mine and operating on a much grander scale. Representatives of SCNP attended a public exhibition prepared by the applicant's in November and December and visited the site. Our conclusion was that the development would have an adverse impact on the park for at least a decade and that the disposal of spoil material (up to 1,000,000 tonnes) would, amongst other things, create an unnatural and damaging feature in landscape, preceded by something akin to an opencast mine.

The Planning and Environmental Statement and supporting documents have just been published – all 1,776 pages!

National Parks Review.

On 12 November last, the Chair SE LINK wrote to the Minister for the Environment, offering the services of LINK as a member of her proposed Strategy Group. At the time of writing, LINK's letter has been acknowledged but no progress has been made on a decision on LINK's possible involvement.

Snowdonia NPA – Denis McAteer**The Hafod Eryri Effect**

The benefits of the development of Hafod Eryri are becoming clearer as information comes in from counters and surveys. Visit Wales has found that it was an initial destination of 16% of the visitors surveyed in north Wales last year outstripping all other attractions. Visitor numbers to the mountain were 27% up on previous counts and the railway ran at near full capacity after the opening. The knock on benefit to the local tourist trade was considerable and the coming season looks promising with the Mountain Railway Company appointing a Centre Manager to oversee all aspects of the operation.

Pen y Pass Refurbishment

The old café at Pen y Pass has come in for a lot of criticism over recent years and has been in desperate need of a re-vamp. The appointment of new tenants for the coming season has given the Authority the opportunity to re-furbish the café, provide new lighting and furniture and greatly improve the interior. The new tenants will be re-developing the catering side and providing an interesting and diverse menu with the possibility of evening opening as a restaurant.

Improved Accessibility to the Miner's Track

All the work on Hafod Eryri and Pen y Pass can tend to overshadow the continuing developments in access to the mountain. Using capital funding the Authority is developing the first mile of the Miner's Track to greatly improve access for the disabled and young

families. Resurfacing the track from Pen y Pass to Llyn Teyrn will allow smooth access into the lower slopes of Snowdon and open up views not easily seen before. The Authority has also purchased a powerful tramper buggy to help transport disabled people up into the mountains.

Cymdeithas Eryri/Snowdonia Society – David Lewis

Former Llanbedr airfield

In November SNPA, on legal advice, refused Certificates of Lawful Use. At a crowded public meeting on February 18 there was raucous support and strong political backing for the promise of jobs on the site, but the proposed operator, Kemble, refused to be specific about what activities it plans or about its next move. We regret Kemble's determination not to apply for planning permission, thereby avoiding normal statutory safeguards for the environment. We do not wish this site to be sterilised. In particular we have consistently supported use of the existing buildings to provide space for local businesses and jobs for local people. We want future use of this site to form part of a wider strategy for regenerating Arduwy which will bring the maximum benefit to the whole area. We also want future use of this site to be compatible with the status of the area as a National Park. There are now reports that Kemble will apply to SNPA for a Certificate of Lawful Use in narrower terms. While far from ideal, use of that procedure would at least help to clarify the situation.

National Park Management Plan

The National Park Management Plan, five years in preparation, is being launched in the spring, but is a great disappointment. It was recast by SNPA at the last moment in such a way as to remove all references to timetables, outcomes or review of the Plan and any reference to specific contributions to be made by partner organisations.

Staffing

Alun Pugh is stepping down as Director having been selected as a candidate in the general election. The new Director, Gareth Clubb, joins us in April from the Environment Agency. Sarah Medcalf joined us in January as Assistant to the Director.

Contact: David Lewis drlewis27@yahoo.com

South Downs Society – Richard Reed

The National Park

Following the signing of the order confirming the South Downs National Park in the week before our last CNP Council meeting, the energies of the South Downs Society and the final sprint of the South Downs Campaign have inevitably been directed mainly towards the post-natal growth of the Park. It may be recalled that the shadow National Park Authority will be brought into being on 1 April this year and the Authority operational from 1 April 2011.

Defra has recently published the names of the Park's seven Secretary of State appointments (two were active members of the South Downs Campaign). The appointments by the local authorities (14) and parish councils (6) are not yet complete. The South Downs Campaign, which has been so vital to the setting up of the Park, and especially in securing the widest possible designated area, was disbanded at a meeting and conference held on 2 February addressed, amongst others, by Richard Shaw, Interim CEO of the Park. Tributes were paid to Robin Crane, long-standing Chairman of the Campaign and to Chris Todd, Campaign Officer.

Work continues in setting up a NATIONAL PARK NETWORK, aiming to retain as much as possible of the expertise and experience of the 160 members of the Campaign. It is proposed that this should have an executive committee of 12, with seven places reserved for the major former Campaign member societies (CPRE Sussex and Hants, and Ramblers'

Sussex and Hants, Sussex Wildlife Trust, and South Downs Society) plus newly enrolled National Trust. The objectives of the Network essentially match national park purposes. Some thrashing out of details of structure and modus operandi remain to be resolved but the Network has been most fortunate in persuading Ruth Chambers to chair its meetings for the time being.

(Richard Reed may be contacted through downsmen@btconnect.com)

Yorkshire Dales NPA – Malcolm Petyt

NP extensions proposals

The Natural England proposals, which are currently out for consultation, involve much larger extensions to the Dales than to the Lake District. They also raise extra issues in that, if agreed, three more local authorities would be involved with the YDNPA and around 30% of the NP could be in Cumbria rather than Yorkshire.

The NPA agreed, by a large majority, to support the proposals, and Officers and Members have attended numerous public and stakeholder meetings. Sadly, the press – and certain Members – have concentrated less on the landscape merits of the proposed areas and more on such issues as the necessary size of the NPA if all areas are to be adequately “represented”, whether local residents should have “the final say” through a referendum, whether the name of the NP should be changed because so much of it will be outside Yorkshire – and whether the Wars of the Roses are likely to resume because a small finger of land in Lancashire will be included.

CNP will be responding positively to the Natural England consultation and encourages all Council members to do the same!

Affordable housing

Because its Local Plan had been adopted relatively recently and most of its policies could be “saved” and thus continue to be used for some years, YDNPA decided not to work on its “core strategy” as one of the first of the new-style DPDs. Instead, and because of the urgent need for affordable housing, it chose to produce first its Housing DPD. An important part of this process was a call to landowners and parishes to identify possible sites where at least two houses (one affordable, the other for local needs) might be built. A Housing Working Group looked in detail at all the 120+ sites proposed, and eliminated many as unsuitable for various reasons. It then issued a second call for further sites in the four largest settlements (Sedbergh, Reeth, Hawes/Gayle, Grassington/Threshfield), which were the best places for such housing. The final list will shortly be published, with all other housing-related policies, as part of the Draft Housing DPD, and when finally approved this will constitute outline planning permission for these preferred sites.

“Green” award for NPA

A special “green” boiler that heats the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority’s offices in Grassington has won a top regional award less than three months after it was installed. The Authority took first place in the best public building installation category of the Yorkshire and Humber Microgeneration Partnership awards for its biomass boiler, which uses wood chippings to heat the Colvend offices. The new, environmentally-friendly heating system was only fired up for the first time in December.

Yorkshire Dales Society – Colin Speakman

No report received.