



Evaluation of management options

Forces for Change NE Wales

Natural Resources Wales

Final report

Prepared by LUC

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Crynodeb Gweithredol

Cyflwyniad

Nod yr adroddiad hwn yw cynnal adolygiad o'r opsiynau rheoli sydd ar gael, er mwyn deall ai dynodiad Parc Cenedlaethol yw'r mecanwaith gorau ar gyfer rheoli'r grymoedd dros newid (materion a chyfleoedd) sy'n effeithio ar yr Ardal Chwilio.

Nododd yr adroddiad Grymoedd dros Newid y dylanwadau sy'n wynebu'r Ardal Chwilio a defnyddiwyd y rhain fel sail ar gyfer gwerthuso opsiynau rheoli yn y dyfodol yn yr adroddiad hwn.

Mae CNC wedi ymgysylltu â'r cyhoedd sydd hefyd wedi nodi amrywiaeth o faterion eraill o fewn yr Ardal Chwilio.

Adolygu opsiynau rheoli

Rhestrir trosolwg o'r pum opsiwn rheoli isod:

1. Busnes fel arfer: mae hyn yn golygu parhau i reoli'r Dirwedd Genedlaethol a rheoli gweddill yr Ardal Chwilio fel y gwneir ar hyn o bryd.
2. Parc Rhanbarthol y Cymoedd: sefydlwyd y bartneriaeth hon i helpu'r Cymoedd i ffynnu yn amgylcheddol, yn gymdeithasol ac yn economaidd, gan gymryd rôl alluogi.
3. Parc Rhanbarthol y South Pennines: roedd yr ardal yn barc cenedlaethol arfaethedig blaenorol, ac fe'i datblygwyd fel parc rhanbarthol drwy ddull partneriaeth.

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4. Bwrdd Cadwraeth: dull rheoli ar gyfer Tirwedd Genedlaethol a ddefnyddir ar hyn o bryd ar gyfer Tirweddau Cenedlaethol y Chilterns a'r Cotswolds (AHNEau gynt).
5. Parc Cenedlaethol: yn adlewyrchu cwmpas disgwylidig parc cenedlaethol yn y dyfodol, gan ystyried yr Archwiliad Dwfn Bioamrywiaeth a Deddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol.

Mae pob opsiwn rheoli wedi'i adolygu yn erbyn y swyddogaethau hyn:

- Cyd-destun, cylch gwaith a phwrpas,
- Llywodraethu ac aelodaeth,
- Cyllid Craidd
- Cynllunio.

Yna mae'r gwerthusiad yn ystyried sut mae pob opsiwn rheoli yn mynd i'r afael â phob un o'r prif gategoriâu a nodwyd o'r adroddiad Grymoedd dros Newid:

- Newid yn yr hinsawdd,
- Datblygiadau adeiledig a seilwaith,
- Rheoli tir, amaethyddiaeth, coedwigaeth a'r amgylchedd naturiol,
- Pobl, cymunedau, a rheoli treftadaeth ddiwylliannol
- Hamdden, twristiaeth a mynediad.

Materion y mae angen eu rheoli yn yr Ardal Chwilio

Mae'r bennod hon yn crynhoi effeithiau'r grymoedd dros newid ar rinweddau arbennig yr Ardal Chwilio. Mae nodweddion arbennig yn cynnwys:

1. Lle ysbrydoledig sy'n hybu iechyd a lles meddyliol, corfforol ac ysbrydol

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2. Lle gyda chymunedau cydlynol a phatrymau anheddu nodedig
3. Hanes o ryngweithio rhwng pobl a'r dirwedd dros filoedd o flynyddoedd
4. Cartref i rywogaethau a chynefinoedd o bwysigrwydd rhyngwladol a lleol
5. Tirwedd nodedig, sydd ag elfennau sy'n cydweddu ac yn gwrthgyferbynnu
6. Tirwedd sy'n darparu buddion y tu hwnt i'w ffiniau.

Mae'r materion a nodwyd yn codi o amrywiaeth o ffynonellau; gellir mynd i'r afael â rhai ohonynt trwy reoli'r ardal fel tirwedd ddynodedig, ac mae eraill yn adlewyrchu'r heriau ehangach sy'n wynebu cymunedau gwledig a chefn gwlad.

Gwerthusiad

Mae gwerthusiad terfynol o'r pum opsiwn rheoli amgen yn cymharu'r opsiynau yn erbyn y swyddogaethau canlynol:

- Graddfa dylanwad,
- Sail statudol neu anstatudol,
- Cynllunio rheolaeth,
- Blaengynllunio a rheoli datblygiadau,
- Cyllid.

Argymhellion

Gan adlewyrchu egwyddorion SMNR a'r pum Ffordd o Weithio a nodir yn Neddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol, mae'r fframwaith statudol ar gyfer dynodi Parc Cenedlaethol neu greu Tirwedd Genedlaethol estynedig newydd ar draws yr ardal chwilio yn darparu'r fframwaith integreiddio cryfaf a'r diogelwch mwyaf.

Crynodeb Gweithredol

Gan gymryd y ffactorau hyn i ystyriaeth, mae hefyd yn darparu'r mecanwaith cryfaf ar gyfer mynd i'r afael â'r grymoedd dros newid a nodwyd. Fodd bynnag, cydnabyddir y bydd dynodi parc cenedlaethol yn cyflwyno pwysau a heriau a chyfleoedd newydd i'r ardal, ond hefyd yn darparu mecanweithiau i fynd i'r afael â'r rhain.

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report aims to conduct a review of available management options, to understand whether the designation of a National Park is the best mechanism for managing the forces for change (issues and opportunities) acting upon the Area of Search (AoS).

The Forces for Change report identified the influences facing the AoS which have been used as the basis for the evaluation of future management options in this report.

NRW has carried out public engagement which has also identified a range of other issues which the public have raised within the AoS.

Review of management options

An overview of the five management options is listed below:

1. Business as usual: this reflects the continuation of the management of the National Landscape and the management of the rest of the AoS as currently.
2. Valleys Regional Park: this partnership was established to help the Welsh Valleys thrive environmentally, socially and economically, taking an enabling role.
3. South Pennines Regional Park: the area was a previous prospective national park, and was taken forward as a regional park through a partnership approach.

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4. Conservation Board: a management approach for National Landscape currently applied for the Chilterns and Cotswolds National Landscapes (former AONBs).
5. National Park: reflecting the anticipated scope of a future national park, taking into account the Biodiversity Deep Dive and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

Each management option has been reviewed against these functions:

- Context, remit and purpose,
- Governance and membership,
- Core Funding and
- Planning.

Evaluation then considers how each management option addresses each of the main categories identified from the forces for change report:

- Climate change,
- Built development and infrastructure,
- Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment,
- People, communities, and management of cultural heritage and
- Recreation, tourism and access.

Issues requiring management in the AoS

This chapter summaries the impacts of the forces for change on the special qualities of the AoS. The special qualities include:

1. An inspiring space that promotes mental, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing

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2. A place with cohesive communities and distinctive settlement patterns
3. A story of human interaction with the landscape over millennia
4. A home to internationally and locally important species and habitats
5. A distinctive, complementary and contrasting landscape
6. A landscape providing benefits beyond its borders.

The issues identified arise from a variety of sources, some of which can be addressed through the management of the area as a designated landscape, and others which reflect the wider challenges facing rural communities and the countryside.

Evaluation

A final evaluation of the five alternative management options compares the options against the following functions:

- Scale of influence,
- Statutory or non-statutory or non-statutory basis,
- Management planning,
- Forward planning and development management,
- Funding.

Recommendations

Reflecting the SMNR principles and the five Ways of Working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the statutory framework of National Park

Executive Summary

designation or creation of a new extended National Landscape across the area of search provides the strongest integrating framework and greatest security. Taking these considerations into account, it also provides the strongest mechanism for addressing the identified forces for change. However, it is acknowledged that national park designation will introduce new pressures and challenges and opportunities for the area, but also provide mechanisms to address these.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 This section sets out the purpose of the report and explains the link to the Forces for Change report.

Purpose

1.2 It is necessary to carry out a review of available management options, to understand whether the designation of a National Park is the best mechanism for managing the forces for change (issues and opportunities) acting upon the Area of Search (AoS), shown in Appendix A.

1.3 Forces for change are described in the Forces for Change report (LUC, (2024) Forces for Change for North East Wales National Park Area of Search, Natural Resources Wales) and a list of forces for change is provided in Appendix B.

1.4 The process is framed to reflect the Welsh legislative and policy framework, National Park statutory duties, the Well Being of Future Generations Act and the application of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) principles, with a focus on nature recovery and climate adaptation and mitigation.

Relationship to forces for change report

1.5 The Forces for Change report identified the influences facing the area of search which have been used as the basis for the evaluation of future management options in this report, set out in Chapter 4.

Context

1.6 NRW has carried out public engagement which has also identified a range of other issues which the public have raised within the AoS. These are reflected in Chapter 3.

Duty to have regard to the purposes of designated landscapes in undertaking their functions

1.7 In seeking to deliver the Designated Landscape purposes, National Park Authorities and National Landscapes (previously Area of Natural Beauty (AONB)) Authorities are not expected to work alone – this is a shared task for all and should be delivered in partnership. This will require working both at a strategic national level and at a local level specific to each Designated Landscape. Certain organisations have duties with regards to Designated Landscapes in Wales which are set out below.

National Parks - Section 62 (2) Duty

1.8 Under Section 62 (2) of the Environment Act 1995, relevant authorities in Wales have a duty to 'have regard to' the purposes of the National Parks when carrying out their work.

National Landscapes (AONBs) Section 85 (1) Duty

1.9 Under Section 85 (1) of the CRoW Act 2000, relevant authorities have a duty to 'have regard to' the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes when carrying out their functions.

1.10 Relevant authorities include:

- Any Minister of the Crown
- Any public body (including government agencies, local authorities and parish councils)
- Any statutory undertaker
- Any person holding public office.

Report Structure

1.11 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: describes the management functions under consideration and provides a review of each of the management options.
- Chapter 3: Explores the issues requiring management in the area of search.
- Chapter 4: Evaluates the five alternative management options.
- Chapter 5: Sets out the conclusion and recommendations.

Chapter 2

Review of management options

Management functions

2.1 This section firstly introduces the key management functions which have been used in the comparative analysis of five different management options. The headings below set out the range of management functions considered. Each management option has been reviewed against these functions.

2.2 This section is then followed by a description of each of the management options.

Context, remit and purpose

2.3 For each management option, introductory information is provided on the context, history and remit. This includes the main aims and purpose of the approach.

Governance and membership

2.4 The governance of each management option is explored in terms of board structure and membership, functions and responsibilities.

Core Funding

2.5 This sets out how each management option is funded, and any in-kind support provided by members.

Planning

2.6 This explores whether a management option has planning powers, or outlines other documents used to inform future planning for the area, and the relative weight of these documents.

Forward Planning

2.7 This outlines where the management option has forward planning powers.

Development Control

2.8 This outlines where the management option has development control powers.

Management of the Forces for Change

2.9 The evaluation then considers how each management option addresses each of the main categories identified from the Forces for Change report:

- Climate change;
- Planning, built development and infrastructure;
- Sustainable communities, people, and management of cultural heritage;

- Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment;
- Visitor management, recreation, tourism and access.

Overview of the management options

2.10 A range of management options which could feasibly be applied to manage the Forces for Change affecting the AoS were identified. This section sets out each management option, how they work and evaluates this against the forces for change.

2.11 The management options included in the assessment are listed below:

- Business as usual: this reflects the continuation of the management of the National Landscape and the management of the rest of the AoS as currently.
- Valleys Regional Park: this partnership was established to help the Welsh Valleys thrive environmentally, socially and economically, taking an enabling role.
- South Pennines Regional Park: the area was a previous prospective national park, and was taken forward as a regional park through a partnership approach.
- Conservation Board: a management approach for National Landscapes currently applied for the Chilterns and Cotswolds National Landscapes.
- National Park: reflecting the anticipated scope of a future national park, taking into account the Biodiversity Deep Dive and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

Business as usual

2.12 This reflects the continuation of the management of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape and the management of the rest of the AoS as currently.

Context, remit and purpose

2.13 The Area of Search (AoS) was identified by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) as the area with potential for a new National Park in North East Wales. The Area of Search is not a draft National Park boundary but the first step in the evidence gathering process, in progressing towards a National Park designation. The starting point was the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape and the geographical area of North East Wales.

2.14 The AoS is managed through regional and national policy administered by the local authorities of Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham, Gwynedd and Powys. The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape covers part of the area. As a statutory landscape designation it brings greater focus to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. The National Landscape has a duty to produce a statutory management plan. The National Landscape partnership (previously the AONB partnership) coordinates the involvement of representatives from the local authorities and interest groups. The National Landscape unit includes a number of officers responsible for administrative duties including the preparation of the management plan, liaison and promotion of the National Landscape with landowners and the public, the management of sites, carrying out projects on the ground, funding bids, and development planning consultations.

2.15 The Clwydian Range was designated a National Landscape (AONB at the time) in 1985 and subsequently extended in 2011 to include the Dee Valley. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 established a new framework for the management and protection of National Landscapes.

2.16 The purpose of a National Landscape designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designated landscape. To achieve their purpose National Landscapes rely on planning controls, practical countryside management, promotion of the area and its objectives, collaboration and partnership with local authorities, communities and interest groups.

Governance and membership

2.17 The area in the AoS outside of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape is governed by regional and national policy. Large sections of the AoS lie within the counties of Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham and Powys, with a very small proportion within Gwynedd. These areas are influenced by the regional/local policy, strategy and plans associated with these counties and the regions they occupy, such as their Local Development Plans and Joint Local Transport Plans. In the future regional transport strategies and Strategic Development Plans will be relevant.

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape

2.18 The management of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape is governed by a Joint Committee (JC) and its success depends upon the strong partnerships built with communities, volunteers, farmers and landowners, and organisations such as Natural Resources Wales and CADW. They work together with a common goal to improve the environment and make it more accessible.

2.19 The National Landscape Partnership reports to and advises the Joint Committee in the development and delivery of the National Landscape's Management Plan. It was established to ensure a wide range of interests are represented in planning and delivering the work of the National Landscape. There are 25 members representing the urban and rural communities which make up the National Landscape, three local authority members from each of

the partner authorities, landowners, recreation, access and other special interests such as biodiversity and the historic environment.

2.20 Five Working Groups have been established to help focus the work of the Partnership in steering the delivery of the National Landscape's Management Plan. Each Working Group is able to expand its membership beyond the partnership and can co-opt members from relevant bodies to advise on particular aspects of work.

2.21 The National Landscape works in partnership with a wide variety of groups and organisations to deliver projects and improvements around the area, including councils, NRW, Welsh Government, CADW, National Trust and Public Health Wales.

Core Funding

2.22 National Landscapes receive their funding from NRW for National Landscape management together with funding from the Welsh Government, along with contributions from the constituent local authorities.

2.23 For some projects, National Landscapes also bid for grant funding and support from other organisations.

Planning

2.24 Development management across the AoS is administered by the planning departments of the relevant local authority. This includes areas within and out with the National Landscape. The area is subject to national, regional and local policy, with the National Landscape given particular weight.

2.25 The National Landscape is a planning consultee and comments on planning proposals that could affect the statutory purpose of the area. The planning decision remains with the local planning authority.

2.26 Future Wales sets out a strategic framework for growth, which for the north east region is focused along the north Wales coast and the large towns and industrial areas of Flintshire and Wrexham. Planning for renewable energy is included, with Pre-assessed Areas for Renewable Energy identified within Denbighshire and Powys. The Joint Structure Plan seeks to take an integrated approach to transport planning and housing across the region. The North Wales Minerals and Waste Planning Service and Powys Minerals and Waste Planning Service seeks to maintain access to mineral reserves and manage active mineral sites. These lie both within and outside of the National Landscape. The planning departments of each local authority produce Local Development Plans – which include local site allocations for housing, employment, transport and renewable energy and policy for development management purposes. In regards to local landscape designations, Wrexham County Borough Council has Special Landscapes Areas. The National Landscape is a consultee to planning applications that take place within the designated landscape and those of a type and scale that could affect the National Landscape's setting, including within the wider area of search. The planning decision however lies with the relevant local planning authority, not the National Landscape.

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape

2.27 Planning Policy Wales 12 outlines that in National Landscapes, planning authorities should give great weight to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes, and should have regard to the wildlife, cultural heritage and social and economic well-being of the areas.

2.28 Each National Landscape must have a management plan. It must be in place within 3 years of an its designation and a review must take place within 5 years of the start of the plan. Its purpose is to consider conserving and

enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape with continuity and consistency over time.

2.29 The plan includes:

- an assessment of the special quality of the National Landscape, such as a landscape character assessment that includes its condition and vulnerability to change;
- cross reference to existing plans, such as local transport plans or biodiversity action plans;
- a strategy, such as a 5 year plan, of how the National Landscape partnership will manage change;
- other special sites that exist in the National Landscape, such as scheduled ancient monuments or sites of special scientific interest;
- an action plan, for example who's doing what, why and by when;
- a monitoring plan to show how the National Landscape's condition and effectiveness of management will be measured.

Forward planning

2.30 The constituent local development plans reference the National Landscape within plan policy, and National Landscapes are referenced within national planning policy.

Development Control

2.31 Only local authorities or the Welsh Minister can give permission for development in, or affecting, a National Landscape. Local authorities must make sure that any proposals have regard for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape, for example when:

- adding utility services, like gas pipes and telecommunications cables

- creating public access as part of rights of way improvement.

2.32 Local authorities can use National Landscape management plans to help:

- Shape Place Plans
- make decisions on development proposals.

Management of the forces for change

Climate change – CRDV National Landscape

- The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape’s management plan significantly supports appropriate and effective climate change mitigation and adaptation for the area of the National Landscape, outlining ten policies under the aim of “adapting to a changing climate”.
- National Landscape partnerships have relatively less power to enact actions regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation than National Landscape Conservation Boards or National Park Authorities.
- The Welsh Government’s Biodiversity Deep Dive (2022) outlines the longer term aim to ensure that the potential designation of a new National Park in northeast Wales affords opportunities for climate change mitigation and nature recovery as key delivery priorities for the new Park. This further strengthens the National Landscape’s contributions to climate change mitigation.
- The LDP policies for the wider AoS will be varied and have a different balance of policy priorities than for a coherent plan area.

Planning, built development and infrastructure – CRDV National Landscape

- The National Landscape’s respective Local Development Plans will outline development needs and related policies.

- National Landscapes have the same planning status as National Parks, therefore large infrastructure projects are generally prohibited.
- The statutory purpose of National Landscapes includes to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
- The National Landscape's management plan encourages development in the area which would benefit the area and its people, including protecting its special qualities- such as a shift to sustainable transport, high quality facilities and infrastructure for visitors and local communities and development of affordable, sustainable housing.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment – CRDV National Landscape

- The statutory purposes of National Landscapes to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area means that Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape supports more sustainable agriculture and forestry practices.
- The National Landscape's management plan is written to help direct planning decisions as well as conversations with land managers and land owners. It also includes policies for conserving and enhancing the Special Qualities of the area. Alongside the conservation and enhancement of valued landscape features, characteristic and qualities, the management plan seeks to support land management to protect and enhance habitats and species, and promote climate change mitigation and adaptation, effective woodland management and sustainable farming and land management.
- The Welsh Government's Biodiversity Deep Dive (2022) outlines an objective and associated aims to unlock the potential of designated landscapes, including National Landscapes, to deliver more for nature and 30 by 30. This further strengthens the National Landscape's contribution to nature conservation and enhancement, which may further influence certain types of land management. This will provide an opportunity for nature recovery and continued production of food and other services, within the area of the National Landscape.

Sustainable Communities, people, and management of cultural heritage – CRDV National Landscape

- The statutory purpose and aims of National Landscapes result in the enhancement of the physical and mental health and well-being of local communities, this includes ensuring high-quality green space for recreation. They will also have positive impacts on communities in the respective National Landscape.
- The National Landscape's management plan supports communities though supporting the provision of services and facilities, infrastructure, local businesses, affordable and sustainable housing, strengthening relationships with local health and social organisations, engaging communities in their local environment and access to the landscape and associated health benefits.
- The National Landscape's management plan supports the conservation and enhancement of the areas historic environment and promotes a deeper understanding of the Welsh culture and language.

Visitor management, recreation, tourism and access – CRDV National Landscape

- The statutory purpose of National Landscapes is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of their area. Recreation and tourism increase pressure on the natural environment and landscape of National Landscapes. Therefore, whilst not a purpose, National Landscapes seek to carefully manage access and visitors.
- National Landscapes also seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within their area, access to recreation and the recreation and tourism economy is key to support these aims in National Landscapes, thus the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape's management plan includes policies and objectives which aim to manage this balance.

- The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape promotes sustainable tourism which contributes to the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape's natural beauty and does not adversely affect the National Landscape's special qualities, as well as encouraging appropriate recreational use. Regarding development and opportunities regarding access, recreation and tourism, right development, right place is encouraged, of a scale and character that makes a positive contribution to the locality. Access, recreation and tourism is monitored by the National Landscape to manage pressures.

The Area of Search (out with the National Landscape) and management of the Forces for Change

2.33 LDP plans and policies respond to the geographical extent of the county and inherently focus on local considerations. Planning for development and sustainable communities is factored within LDPs. Response to climate change, land management and nature recovery are strategic issues that, whilst recognised within LDPs and council community strategies, are problematic to practically address within established council structures and ways of working. Visitor management, recreation and tourism are similarly important interests to manage. The challenging fiscal context has resulted in reduced capacity for local authorities to provide services, including a loss of capacity within countryside services and public rights of way teams.

Valleys Regional Park

Context, remit and purpose

2.34 The Valleys Regional Park (VRP) partnership was first established in 2007, with the development of a VRP Framework [See reference 1]. It is a

partnership of Welsh organisations working with nature to help the South Wales Valleys thrive environmentally, socially and economically. Valleys Regional Park was then established in 2020 as a collaborative service planning and delivery partnership for environment, heritage and tourism services in the Valleys.

2.35 The Valleys Regional Park brings partners together at a landscape scale to enable and deliver significant social, economic and environmental benefits, rather than imposing unnecessary constraints, including:

- helping safeguard and create jobs and training opportunities, supporting local businesses and inward investment;
- providing accessible high-quality green space for improved health and wellbeing;
- developing community resilience, developing local economic opportunities based on the landscape, making our towns and villages more liveable places;
- supporting climate change adaptation by maximising the role of green infrastructure;
- improving biodiversity and habitat connectivity;
- changing perceptions of the Valleys, internally and externally.

Governance and membership

2.36 The Valleys Regional Park is governed by a board made up of the leaders of 13 local authorities and works closely with organisations and individuals including community enterprises, charities, government organisations, health organisations, local communities and voluntary groups.

2.37 The activities of these organisations in developing and delivering the Valleys Regional Park vision are coordinated through a governance structure comprising a Strategic Group, an Implementation Group and themed

development sub-groups. Day-to-day operations related to the Valleys Regional Park are carried out by the VRP Management Team. [\[See reference 2\]](#)

- The Strategic Group is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the overall VRP vision and drive its future direction through effective strategic working.
- The Implementation Group is responsible for ensuring and monitoring successful delivery of VRP projects, the sharing and promotion of best practice across partners, and more effective collaborative working within and across organisations.

Core Funding

2.38 Funding was provided through the Welsh Government Valleys Taskforce for capital infrastructure, the European Social Fund and Rural Development Programme, which have since come to an end. Future core funding is uncertain with funding provided until the end of the 2023/24 financial year from Welsh Government, and agreement of Bridgend County Borough Council to continue to host the project until 2024. The intention is to develop a permanent operating model, however, the funding model demonstrates some of the variability and uncertainty around funding.

Planning

2.39 A major focus of the VRP approach is the cross sector and cross boundary approach to environment, heritage and tourism service planning and delivery across local authorities in the South Wales Valleys, which was set out in the 2007 framework as the pre-requisite for achieving the overall vision. Several themed cross boundary groups have been established to facilitate this, and there has been progress within and between some partner organisations, but the progress is variable across the Valleys. However, the current economic climate makes the need for this even more pressing. This framework commits to placing greater efforts on encouraging the development of more shared

services between and across the Valleys, with greater emphasis on partnering with private sector organisations.

Forward Planning

2.40 Planning control lies with constituent local planning authorities, although regional park purposes are reflected through local planning policy.

Development Control

2.41 The VRP does not have planning powers but aims to influence development within its boundaries. The constituent local development plans include policy reference to the VRP and its aims.

Climate Change

2.42 Tackling the climate emergency is embedded in the Valleys Regional Park's aims and objectives, outlining that it is keen to maximise the way in which the programme is able to contribute to mitigating against the potentially damaging effects of climate change. An outcome of the VRP under the delivery theme of landscape, culture and identity is that the Valleys' environment is healthy, supporting responses to climate change.

2.43 In addition, the VRP aims to support climate change adaptation by maximising the role of green infrastructure and connecting people with the region's growing green spaces thereby tackling the nature and climate emergency. The VRP also supports the education of young people and adults to the dangers of climate change and providing the skills to produce long-term solutions, including by using the natural landscape to educate people about climate issues.

2.44 Furthermore, the VRP aims to plan and deliver activities related to Green Infrastructure in accordance with the [then] Welsh Government's Natural Environment Framework (NEF) - 'A Living Wales', developed to encourage more effective governance of environmental resources within the context of sustainable development. The NEF itself integrates climate change mitigation and adaptation under the pillar of Sustainable Resource Use, including via the consideration of the questions of “how can we ‘future proof’ the natural environment and man-made infrastructure against the impacts of climate change?” and “how will our work or proposal reduce greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere?”. In addition, under the pillar of A Sustainable Economy, the outcome is outlined as “a resilient and sustainable economy for Wales that is able to develop whilst stabilising, then reducing, its use of natural resources and reducing its contribution to climate change”.

Built development and infrastructure/Planning

2.45 The VRP is a driver for the force for change of built development and infrastructure, primarily focused on recreation and tourism-related infrastructure, sustainable transport and green infrastructure as well as renewable energy. These types of development are supported by the VRP in its Strategic Delivery Framework.

2.46 The VRP aims to support the development and promotion of a sustainable transport network, including by making a significant contribution to encouraging more sustainable modes of transport. For example, in its Strategic Delivery Framework, VRP outlines an investment of £5 million in the Valleys Cycle Network and work with Cardiff University to investigate necessary interventions to promote more sustainable transport use across some of the Valley towns and visitor centres.

2.47 The VRP also aims to improve recreation and tourism-related infrastructure, including through Visitor Centres, Country Parks and Landscape Destination enhancements. In addition, the VRP aims to support the revitalisation of vibrant Valleys town centres.

2.48 The VRP does not have planning powers but aims to influence development within its boundaries. Regarding place-making and housing, the [then] Welsh Government's Natural Environment Framework (NEF), which is integrated into the VRP strategy, outlines under the pillar of A Sustainable Society, the outcome of “safe, sustainable, attractive communities in which people live and work, have access to services, and enjoy good health and can play their full roles as citizens”. The VRP also aims to develop enterprise and provide a quality location for corporate business. This implies that the VRP will support and encourage development which aids in the achievement of these objectives, such as appropriate affordable housing provision, and provision of key services and facilities. VRP will support the use of traditional methods and materials in building, particularly encouraging partners to maintain and introduce traditional field boundaries.

2.49 The VRP also supports renewable energy development, with the [then] NEF outlining under the pillar of A Sustainable Economy the question of “What opportunities are there to incorporate sustainable use of renewable resources into this proposal?”. The VRP also outlines that they aim to take an integrated and collaborative regional approach to ‘place’, the use of nature-based solutions including opportunities to increase renewable energy and resource efficiency. In addition, the VRP aims to explore opportunities for community led energy projects and investigate opportunities to establish a framework for such projects. Furthermore, the VRP aims to work with landowners to encourage biomass production to ensure continuity of wood fuel, develop partnerships with green energy suppliers to facilitate the development of local opportunities for energy production (through for example wind or ground source heat) and support and assist in the development of programmes and where possible secure funding, for projects that have the potential to generate green energy where there is payback for communities in the Valleys.

2.50 Regarding waste, the VRP aims to tackle litter and fly-tipping, including via the operations of Fly Tipping Action Wales, the Cleaner Greener Communities Programme and the Forgotten Landscapes Project.

2.51 Constituent local authorities refer to the VRP within their local development plan policy, although there is limited additional protection for the area beyond

the existing plan policies. The three LDP which include reference to the VRP are Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen.

2.52 The Caerphilly Local Development Plan [See reference 3] includes a policy which requires that development proposals that contribute to the Valleys Regional Park will be permitted provided that there is no adverse impact on areas of recognised environmental or landscape importance. Whilst development proposals that would contribute to the delivery of the Valleys Regional Park will be considered favourably, such as visitor attractions or employment opportunities. The LDP outlines that it is important that proposals do not have a negative impact on existing areas of environmental importance. In addition, a number of Country Parks that contribute to the Valleys Regional Park are protected in the LDP.

2.53 The Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan [See reference 4] includes policy to support active and healthy communities which outlines that the council will promote the VRP and leisure activities, thereby developing opportunities for Blaenau Gwent to contribute to the Valleys Regional Park. Development proposals that would contribute to the delivery of the Valleys Regional Park, including leisure and tourism development at Parc Bryn Bach, will be considered favourably.

2.54 The Torfaen Local Development Plan [See reference 5] includes policy to support leisure / tourism proposals which outlines that proposals for the VRP of an appropriate scale which are related to tourism, will be favourably considered.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

2.55 As outlined in its Strategic Delivery Framework, the Valleys Regional Park aims to provide and sustain the improvement and management of a highly visible network of uplands, woodlands, nature reserves and country parks, rivers, reservoirs and canals, heritage sites and attractions across the Valleys,

linking with towns and villages. This supports the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural environment.

2.56 The VRP also aims to support and assist in the development of strategic partnerships with landowners and farming organisations to support sustainable land management. In addition, the VRP supports traditional methods and materials in both building and land management, particularly encouraging partners to maintain and introduce traditional field boundaries, as well as developing practical land management projects that will reduce the impact of flooding. This will result in the conservation and protection of current and traditional land management practices.

2.57 Furthermore, the VRP will support forestry activity through working with Forestry Commission Wales through their VRP officer and Coed Cymru to support the development and sustainable supply of wood fuel for a new generation of wood chip boilers. The VRP will also result in the protection of forestry and woodland via work with Fire and Rescue Services to reduce the incidence of wildfires, in particular via the Upland Management Project.

People, communities and management of cultural heritage/Sustainable communities

2.58 Forces for change on people, communities and management of cultural heritage is reflected in the aims of the VRP as its Strategic Delivery Framework is set out within the context of an ecosystem services approach and the [then] Natural Environment Framework (NEF). There is significant consideration of cultural services in the VRP Framework, including under the topic areas of community regeneration, heritage and culture and health and well-being/ community food growing. In addition, this force for change is addressed in all three of the delivery themes [\[See reference 6\]](#) outlined in the Valleys Regional Park prospectus.

2.59 A key aim of the VRP outlined in the prospectus is “developing community resilience, developing local economic opportunities based on the landscape and making our towns and villages more liveable places”. The Valleys Regional Park also seeks to support greater community stewardship as a cornerstone of its development.

2.60 Outcomes outlined in relation to the communities and enterprise delivery theme include:

- Empowered communities are integral to a new, exciting type of designated landscape in the Valleys Regional Park, with greater stewardship of their natural assets providing local social, economic and environmental benefits.
- The environment and associated heritage play a key role in a strong foundational economy supporting businesses and social enterprises in our communities.

2.61 An action of the VRP to support these outcomes includes supporting and facilitating community initiatives, including by establishing a community peer-to-peer network and enabling community ambitions through logistical and financial support for developing and existing strategic projects. The VRP also outlines the actions of enhancing community stewardship and supporting skills development to deliver change.

2.62 Regarding cultural heritage, related outcomes outlined in the VRP prospectus include:

- The Valleys are recognised nationally and internationally for the quality and beauty of their unique, distinctive landscapes and heritage;
- The Valleys’ natural and cultural landscapes are at the heart of the Valleys’ identities and culture.

2.63 VRP actions for these outcomes include supporting a long-term collective vision enabled by a designated landscape; discovery of the Valleys via Discovery Gateways; and improving connectivity. In addition, the VRP aims to

develop and create new landscape assets, protect and promote landscapes and explore the opportunities to work with heritage and showcase arts and culture, providing a framework for using the Valleys' natural and cultural heritage to develop and showcase its arts and cultural activities. Furthermore, the VRP aims to use interest in the areas cultural heritage to enhance local economies and community regeneration.

2.64 Another key focus of the VRP is recreation, including the aim of providing and enhancing the opportunities for active and passive recreation to improve people's physical and mental health and wellbeing, social equity and cohesion of people and communities, people's appreciation of and care for the environment and the economic benefits of recreation and amenity to Wales. The VRP also aims to create a high-quality, sustainable network of green space, which will improve the health and well-being of communities and generate increased pride in the area.

2.65 The Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan includes policy to support active and healthy communities which outlines that the council will promote the VRP and leisure activities, thereby developing opportunities for Blaenau Gwent to contribute to the Valleys Regional Park. It outlines that development proposals that would contribute to the delivery of the Valleys Regional Park, including leisure and tourism development at Parc Bryn Bach, will be considered favourably.

Recreation, tourism and access/Visitor management

2.66 Recreation, tourism and access is also particularly focused on by the aims of the VRP, particularly via its delivery theme of recreation and wellbeing. As outlined in the Valleys Regional Park prospectus, the VRP aims to provide and enhance the opportunities for active and passive recreation, with intended outcomes of this including to increase people's appreciation of and care for the environment and increase the economic benefits of recreation and amenity to Wales.

2.67 Outcomes outlined in the prospectus in relation to the recreation and wellbeing delivery theme are “the Valleys enjoy a reputation for high-quality outdoor recreation with communities and businesses benefiting from a thriving visitor economy” and “people in the Valleys enjoy improved health and wellbeing through enhanced outdoor recreation and more active lifestyles”. To achieve these outcomes, the VRP aims to develop and promote outdoor activities and associated tourism opportunities, support connectivity to the outdoors and nature via walking and cycling trails, and explore new opportunities to support improved well-being, such as green social prescribing. In addition, the VRP aims to support the creation and enhancement of green infrastructure and work with the emerging Metro to maximise the opportunities for walking and cycling at the developing transport hubs to support shared ambitions of connecting green infrastructure and attractions with a modern, transport system.

2.68 Associated actions outlined in the VRPs Strategic Delivery Framework includes investment of £5M in the Valleys Cycle Network, £5.5M improvements to walking trails, enhancing the visitor experience in terms of quality and variety of activities at country parks and other visitor attractions, establishing and developing a partnership of outdoor activity providers, working with private sector operators to maximise the opportunities for revenue generation to enhance and maintain the tourism infrastructure through sponsorship and supporting projects and where possible, help to secure funding for projects that create new or improve existing tourism infrastructure or promote activity based tourism in the Valleys.

2.69 In addition, Valleys Regional Park is working with communities to help develop tourism opportunities through its Community Tourism Officers (CTOs) who have been liaising with and supporting community groups across the valleys, and have held two annual Community Tourism conferences.

2.70 The Caerphilly Local Development Plan seeks to develop opportunities for the County Borough to contribute to the Valleys Regional Park. In particular, it includes policy which requires that development proposals that contribute to the Valleys Regional Park will be permitted provided that there is no adverse impact on areas of recognised environmental or landscape importance. Whilst

development proposals that would contribute to the delivery of the Valleys Regional Park will be considered favourably, such as visitor attractions or employment opportunities, the LDP outlines that it is important that proposals do not have a negative impact on existing areas of environmental importance. In addition, a number of Country Parks that contribute to the Valleys Regional Park are protected in the LDP.

2.71 The Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan includes policy to support active and healthy communities which outlines that the council will promote the VRP and leisure activities, thereby developing opportunities for Blaenau Gwent to contribute to the Valleys Regional Park. It outlines that development proposals that would contribute to the delivery of the Valleys Regional Park, including leisure and tourism development at Parc Bryn Bach, will be considered favourably.

2.72 The Torfaen Local Development Plan includes policy to support leisure / tourism proposals which outlines that proposals for the VRP of an appropriate scale which are related to tourism, will be favourably considered.

South Pennines Regional Park

Context, remit and purpose

2.73 The South Pennines Regional Park (or South Pennines Park) was a proposed national park that would cover the South Pennines area in Northern England, encompassing parts of Greater Manchester, Lancashire and West Yorkshire, covering an area of 460 square miles. It would also adjoin the borders of two existing national parks; the Yorkshire Dales in the north and the Peak District in the south. The South Pennines is the only upland area of England without any designated protection framework.

2.74 Pennine Prospects acts as the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for the South Pennines and attends the South Pennine Group of Authorities. It is a

rural regeneration company set up in 2005 to champion the South Pennines and delivers projects aimed at promoting, protecting and enhancing the built, natural and cultural heritage of the area.

2.75 In 2018, Pennine Prospects was awarded Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) for training and providing information in the designation of a Regional Park, the first of its kind in the country. Pennine Prospects stated before the National Parks review that rather than wait for government approval in a designated status, they would work from the ground up to achieve regional park status. As part of this process, the park was announced in September 2021, under a "self-declaration" scheme, though without official recognition from the Department for the Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The Park was a collaboration led by The South Pennines Park organisation between public, private and third sector organisations.

2.76 The organisation behind the proposal closed at the end of 2023.

2.77 The South Pennines Regional Park aimed to:

- Be England's first non-statutory designated national landscape.
- Develop a new model of landscape management.
- Co-create a new normal for delivery of sustainable development in the South Pennines Park that respects the life of all species.

Governance and membership

2.78 The partnership aimed to implement a new approach, a partnership plan approach, to the governance and management of undesignated landscapes that complements and informed the current model for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This was through an inclusive and people-led effort; one that gives a voice to all of those who live, work and visit the area. It aimed to have everyone invested in the South Pennines Park – neighbours, visitors, members, stakeholders, partners – to sign up to a Partnership Plan in

order to help shape the future, and make sure that future generations are able to shape theirs.

2.79 Reports that support this view drew several similar conclusions and recommendations about managing landscapes more effectively including:

- A smaller, high-functioning board.
- A collaborative membership that can work together.
- Opportunities for all communities to engage with the establishment and development of the space they live, work in and have access to.
- A resilient, adaptable business model which can respond to change and external pressures.

Core Funding

2.80 In 2018, Pennine Prospects was awarded Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) for training and providing information in the designation of a Regional Park.

2.81 Pennine Prospects had received £183,500 funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund to improve sustainable management and build capacity to potentially pave the way for a South Pennines Park.

Planning

2.82 Pennine Prospects was leading on the production of a 15 Year South Pennines Park Partnership Plan (with three consecutive 5-Year Action Plans) which aimed to ensure due care of statutory designated sites as identified in the NCA 36 Southern Pennines profile by Natural England. This aimed to be prepared in consultation with stakeholders, communities and statutory agencies etc and would have been similar to national park's/National Landscape's management plans.

Forward Planning

2.83 Planning control lies with constituent local planning authorities, although regional park purposes are reflected through local planning policy.

Development Control

2.84 The South Pennines Regional Park is a non-statutory upland landscape. The South Pennines Park Partnership did not have development control powers.

Climate change

- The partnership approach resulted in effective and appropriate action in the South Pennines, particularly in relation to local climate change adaptation.
- The partnership supports sustainable land management, a nature-centred approach and developing a landscape that is more resilient to future challenges such as climate change.
- Pennine Prospects' approach aided in collating and responding to the best available data and information that show both short- and long-term pressures and needs.
- The partnership approach also aided in creating further opportunities and collaborations for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Planning, built development and infrastructure

- A partnership for the South Pennines would likely limit development which is harmful to the natural environment and character of the area.

- Its aims, missions and values support connecting people to nature, growing local jobs, providing opportunities and boosting prosperity, and sustainable development that benefits all people.
- Renewable energy is generally supported.
- As an LNP, Pennine Prospects can aid in providing a forum for the discussion of planning issues at a landscape scale and helping neighbouring authorities to cooperate across administrative boundaries.
- The partnership approach supports the development of green infrastructure.
- Pennine Prospects also leads on the South Pennines Walk, Cycle, Ride and Local Distinctiveness programmes.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- Support for sustainable land management.
- Pennine Prospects is a cross-sector partnership, with a board comprising membership organisation such as the National Farmers Union and the National Trust.
- Technical advice, information and data on the natural environment is provided by a Sustainable Land Management group, which is integrated in decision and plan making. Such joined-up partnership action across sectors enables an integrated approach to land management.
- Pennine Prospects provide strategic focus to the work of several local woodland initiatives.
- As an LNP, Pennine Prospects can aid in providing a framework to manage existing areas of woodland, link fragmented habitats and increase woodland cover in appropriate locations.
- The partnership approach significantly supports the natural environment of the area, particularly by enshrining the principles of biodiversity net gain for sustainability at the heart of their thinking.

- As an LNP, Pennine Prospects also can aid in providing significant opportunity to safeguard, manage and enhance the large areas of open moorland and the internationally important species and habitats they support, as well as enabling coordinated action to sustain, enhance and promote the Ecosystem Services provided by the South Pennines to adjacent areas with large populations.
- Pennine Prospects can provide a mechanism for coordinating existing and new activities to align efforts and make the best use of available resources in the future.

Sustainable communities, people, and management of cultural heritage

- Aims for the South Pennines Park's distinctive character to be recognised, resourced and resilient, and for its built and cultural heritage to be promoted, protected, and enhanced.
- Its values include pride in the areas built and cultural assets.
- The establishment of a LNP created capacity to raise project funding and public engagement. Pennine Prospects has secured more than £5 million to deliver heritage, landscape and community projects in partnership with local organisations.
- Aims to connect people to nature, which aids in enhancing individuals and community health and wellbeing.
- Supports the development of green infrastructure.
- Integrating community voices will result in better outcomes for local people.
- Pennine Prospects is in part owned by the voluntary and community sector. Voluntary sector organisations sit on the board of Pennine Prospects and on the Sustainable Land Management group.
- Enables community voices to be heard.

Visitor management, recreation, tourism and access

- The partnerships focus less on aspects of tourism and recreation than the other themes.
- The partnership approach is an inclusive and people-led effort, which includes giving a voice to people who visit the South Pennines Park.
- Aims to be a partnership that respects and protects the intrinsic value of the natural environment and seeks to maximise the functional value and outcomes of the environment in economic and social terms.
- Supports and leads on initiatives which will increase accessibility to the area and associated recreation.
- Facilitates a sustainable visitor economy within the area.
- Aims to explore the opportunities for creating a visitor pay-back scheme to support improvements to the natural environment such as footpath restoration.
- Enhanced accessibility would likely result in increases in visitor numbers.
- Approach would aid in collating and responding to the best available data and information that show both short- and long-term pressures and needs, including visitor pressure. This would aid in mitigating negative impacts of increasing visitor numbers.

Conservation Board: a management approach for National Landscapes currently applied to Chilterns and Cotswolds National Landscapes

Context, remit and purpose

2.85 Conservation boards are established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. There are two National Landscape Conservation Boards in England, for Chilterns and Cotswolds National Landscapes (previously called AONBs), both created in 2004.

2.86 Paragraph 251 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Explanatory Notes:

Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act introduces provisions to allow the better management and protection of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). It provides for the creation of conservation boards for individual AONBs by means of an establishment order made by the Secretary of State in England, or by the National Assembly in Wales. It requires the preparation and publication of a management plan for every AONB by the appropriate local authorities, or by an AONB conservation board where one is established. It places a duty on 'relevant authorities' when exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. It also consolidates the provisions on AONBs previously contained in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 ("the 1949 Act").

2.87 The statutory purposes of National Landscape Conservation Boards are to **[See reference 7]**:

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
- National Landscape Conservation Boards have a further responsibility to increase the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area of outstanding natural beauty.

2.88 If there is conflict between the two then greater weight is attached to the former purpose (under the Sandford principle which already operates in the National Parks). The Sandford Principle is a concept which states that if there is conflict between the purposes for National Parks and National Landscapes, they are both required by statute to place greater weight to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the park.

2.89 When National Landscapes carry out these purposes they also have the duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Landscape, but without incurring significant expenditure in doing so.

2.90 Conservation boards can be established for individual National Landscapes, with the consent of a majority of constituent local authorities.

2.91 Powers may be transferred from local authorities to the conservation board or, where appropriate, may be shared between the two. The powers of individual conservation boards will be specified in their particular Establishment Orders.

Governance and membership

2.92 Each National Landscape Conservation Board is managed by an executive of permanent staff with oversight from members. Members make decisions about the actions that each National Park Authority/National Landscape Conservation Board should take to deliver its purposes.

2.93 The executive carries out the necessary work to run the National Parks/National Landscapes and support and advise the members. Staff include professionals such as ecologists, archaeologists/ heritage experts, rangers, planners and education specialists.

Cotswolds Conservation Board

2.94 The Cotswolds Conservation Board is made up of 37 Members; 15 local authority nominees, eight parish council nominees and 15 Secretary of State nominees.

2.95 The full board appoints from its membership an Executive Committee of 12 members - five drawn from the local authority nominees, five from the Secretary of State nominees and two from the parish council nominees. The board elects its own chairperson and vice chairperson.

2.96 The Board has a series of functions or powers that it shares with the Local Authorities, as specified in the Board's Establishment Order.

2.97 Members gather at Board, Executive and Sub-Committee meetings across the year and are drawn from three tiers of regional government to ensure that a fair and broad range of views and areas of expertise are reflected.

2.98 Board members are appointed as individuals to the Board. While they may be appointed by a local authority or nominated by an organisation, they are not appointed to the Board to represent that authority or organisation. The membership of the Board is constructed so that both local and national interests are reflected in its make-up. All Board members are collectively responsible for decisions and should apply policies consistently. Whilst Board members are drawn from three groups or sectors they work and act as one Board.

2.99 Main Roles of the Board:

- To guide the management of the Conservation Board so that it achieves its two purposes and in doing so helps deliver its duty.
- To guide the management of the Cotswolds National Landscape so that it delivers wide benefits to its local communities and the nation.

Chilterns Conservation Board

2.100 The Board has 27 members, all of whom are independent and do not represent any other organisation. The Chilterns Conservation Board meets several times a year.

2.101 This comprises 13 local authority appointed members, six Parish Council elected members and eight Secretary of State appointed members. All Board members will have expressed an interest in joining the Chilterns Conservation Board.

- Members appointed by the Secretary of State must go through a formal application and selection process and are appointed for a period of three years, which can be extended twice by another three years, nine years maximum.
- Parish Council members are elected by the parish councils in their appropriate county within the Chilterns National Landscape: two Buckinghamshire, two Oxfordshire, one Hertfordshire and one Bedfordshire parish councillors. They can remain Board members as long as they are parish council members and are willing to remain Board members.
- Local Authorities in the Chilterns National Landscape appoint their members usually in May some do it annually, some appoint them for years: five for Buckinghamshire Council, and one each for Oxfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Central Bedford Council, Luton Borough Council, Dacorum Borough Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and Three Rivers District Council.

2.102 The Chilterns Conservation Board and CEO have no formal influence over who is appointed or elected to the Board. The CEO is responsible to the Board members of the Chilterns Conservation Board.

2.103 The Executive Committee is composed of nine members of the Board, one of whom is the Chair, plus up to four persons who are not members. The Committee meets on a quarterly basis and has a number of functions, including:

- Monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Board's policies and strategies.
- Regulating and controlling the Board's finances.
- Administering the Board's personnel matters.

Core Funding

2.104 Defra encourages National Park Authorities/ National Landscape Conservation Boards to maximise funding from a range of sources to supplement the grant they receive from Government.

- DEFRA AONB landscape protection and enhancement support scheme - the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) provides annual grant aid to Conservation Boards to support delivery of the National Landscape's management plan.
- Grants such as Defra's Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and Access for All.
- Section 91 allows the Secretary of State and National Assembly to make grants to conservation boards. Before determining the amount to be paid, the Secretary of State must consult the Agency and the National Assembly must consult the Council. The existence of this provision does not prevent grants going directly to conservation boards from the Agency or Council.

Planning

2.105 The Boards have a statutory responsibility, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000, to draft and publish their respective National Landscape's Management Plans within two years, promote its implementation by a wide range of organisations, including local authorities, government agencies, community groups and landowners.

2.106 Management plans are to set out the managing body's (local authority or conservation board) policy for the management of the National Landscape and the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. This formula follows the provision in the Environment Act 1995 which requires National Park Authorities to prepare management plans on a similar basis.

2.107 Once adopted and published, management plans are to be reviewed at intervals not exceeding five years. The exception is where a conservation board has adopted a local authority statutory plan, in which case the first review must be within 3 years.

2.108 The Cotswolds Conservation Board's work programme for how it will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is set out in the Board's separate, rolling, three-year Business Plan.

2.109 The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019–2024: Caring for the Chilterns forever and for everyone, was produced by the Chilterns Conservation Board following a review of the 2014–2019 Plan and wide public consultation. It contains a comprehensive summary of the key issues facing the National Landscape and the management policies and actions needed to conserve this special place. The delivery of the actions highlighted in the Management Plan is not the responsibility of the Conservation Board alone. The involvement of a wide range of organisations is essential in achieving the Plans aims over the next five years.

Forward Planning

2.110 Although the National Landscapes do not have forward planning powers, they seek to influence the relevant authorities. This is done through published guidance and advice and position statements on key development types.

Development Control

2.111 The Conservation Boards advise local authorities on all matters concerning the planning and development process in their respective National Landscapes. The Boards aim to ensure that the special qualities of the National Landscape are recognised and protected in all development plans and planning decisions and that local authorities carry out their 'duty of regard' as set out in the CRoW Act.

2.112 Planners and developers within the National Landscapes and their setting are encouraged to refer to their respective Management Plans and supporting guidance when making their decisions on both planning applications and policy formulation. Every year the Conservation Boards make responses to a variety of consultations on projects and developments which may impact on their National Landscapes. They look at and respond to everything from applications for new flight paths over the National Landscape to regional spatial strategies, plans for utilities pipelines, major housing developments and large-scale wind turbines.

Management (reflecting categories that came out of the forces for change work)

Climate change

- The statutory purpose of Conservation Boards includes to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape and increase the public enjoyment of the special qualities of their area. To achieve both of these, climate change must be considered by the Board.
- Conservation Boards have relatively more power to enact actions regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation than other National Landscape partnerships, similar to National Parks.
- The Welsh Government's Biodiversity Deep Dive (2022) outlines the longer term aim to ensure that the potential designation of a new National Park in northeast Wales affords opportunities for climate change mitigation and nature recovery as key delivery priorities for the new Park. This further strengthens the National Landscapes contributions to climate change mitigation.

Planning, built development and infrastructure

- National Landscapes have the same planning status as National Parks, therefore large infrastructure projects are generally prohibited.
- The statutory purpose of Conservation Boards includes to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape and to increase the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Landscape, which results in National Landscape management plans produced by Conservation Boards posing barriers to development.
- National Landscapes have the duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within their area, therefore Conservation Boards still need to promote development which enable sustainable communities and community wellbeing.

- Conservation Boards, while not having development plan and development control powers, are a statutory consultee for National Infrastructure Projects. This may present barriers to development, but will also likely enhance its sustainability.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

2.113 The statutory purposes of National Landscape Conservation Boards likely results in a shift to more sustainable agriculture and forestry practices, in particular those which aid in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of a National Landscape and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.

2.114 Conservation Boards have the duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Landscape, therefore Conservation Boards still need to promote land management practices and relation policies which enable sustainable communities and community wellbeing.

2.115 The Welsh Government's Biodiversity Deep Dive (2022) outlines an objective and associated aims to unlock the potential of designated landscapes, including National Landscapes, to deliver more for nature and 30 by 30. This further strengthens the National Landscapes contributions to nature conservation and enhancement, which may further restrict certain types of land management.

Sustainable Communities, people, and management of cultural heritage

- The statutory purposes of National Landscape Conservation Boards are to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape and

to increase the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of their area.

- National Landscapes also have the duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities.
- This will result in the enhancement of the physical and mental health and well-being of local communities.
- The statutory purposes also result in the protection and enhancement of historic and cultural heritage.

Visitor management, recreation, tourism and access

- The statutory purpose of National Landscape Conservation Boards will likely result in the enhancement of access to their area, and increased recreation and tourism related opportunities.
- Increasing access, recreation and tourism presents increased impacts on the natural beauty and special qualities of a National Landscape from related pressures.
- Management plans will likely promote sustainable tourism, including that which supports recreational use carried out in an appropriate and responsible manner.
- This may restrict overall development and opportunities regarding access, recreation and tourism.

A National Park: reflecting its statutory purpose, the Wellbeing of Future Generations and the Biodiversity Deep Dive

Context

2.116 In its Programme for Government (2021-2026), Welsh Government sets out its intention to designate a new National Park in North-East Wales based on the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape.

2.117 The 1947 Hobhouse report [[See reference 8](#)] was the basis for the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. It proposed 12 National Parks in England and Wales, and these areas have all been designated, albeit with different boundaries. The committee also recommended the designation of 52 Conservation Areas, most of which are now protected as National Landscapes.

2.118 Whilst the 1949 National Park and Access to the Countryside Act sets out the main legislative framework and statutory purposes for National Parks, the designation of a new National Park must be cognisant of the contemporary policy and legislative framework. This includes the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act; The Environment (Wales) Act requiring the sustainable management of natural resources; Welsh Government declaring a climate and nature emergency and the Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations for Designated Landscapes.

Governance

2.119 Each National Park Authority is a free-standing corporate and executive body within the local government framework. Each National Park Authority comprises members appointed by the Welsh Government drawn from local authorities who have land within the National Park [\[See reference 9\]](#).

2.120 Looking towards a new national park and reflecting the recommendations in 'Future landscapes' [\[See reference 10\]](#) future governance should involve:

- Partnership working with localities beyond the designated landscape.
- Evolving governance to reflect changing needs and opportunities.
- A wide range of delivery and partnership models encompassing shared or delegated responsibilities linked to a common vision.
- A consistent approach to planning and performance reporting.
- Wide partnerships and innovative funding models.

2.121 In addition to this, the Welsh Government's position statement 'Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks' [\[See reference 11\]](#), outlines four goals for the National Parks in Wales seeking that they:

- are Valued Places;
- contain Resilient Environments;
- support Resilient Communities;
- adopt Resilient Ways of Working.

2.122 The Welsh Government also aims to reduce the administrative burdens on National Park Authorities and put in place measures which enable resource planning by the lead bodies for the duration of an Assembly Term. They also set out that the National Park Authorities must increase the level of revenue generated through appropriate commercial activities whilst remaining true to the

core values and purposes of the areas. In addition, a consistent and strengthened performance management regime, linked to the evaluation framework for the Natural Resources Policy will be introduced and this will inform formal review points for existing governance arrangements [See reference 12].

2.123 The Welsh Government consultation White Paper `Securing a Sustainable Future: Environmental Principles, Governance and Biodiversity targets for a Greener Wales` proposes statutory targets for the protection and restoration of biodiversity. The paper also proposes placing a duty on Welsh public authorities, National Park Authorities are specifically identified, requiring them to contribute to the delivery of the statutory biodiversity targets.

National Park Authorities may do anything which, in their opinion, may facilitate or is conducive to the accomplishment of the Park purposes.

National Park Authorities also have a duty to seek to foster the economic and social prosperity of local communities within their area but must do so without incurring significant additional expenditure. A general duty is also placed upon any 'relevant authority', to have regard to the purposes of the National Parks.

The National Park Authority is also usually the sole local planning authority for the park area, though there are alternative models for delivery, such as the South Downs National Park Authority, where the development control function has been delegated to the individual constituent planning authorities.

Each National Park Authority is required to produce a local development plan and a management plan setting out strategic objectives and policies for managing the Park. These plans should be regarded by all bodies who influence the future of the Park and there should be a strong link between them and partnership-based plans for the area such as Well-Being Plans.

Prepared by Public Service Boards and the Area [\[See reference 13\]](#) statements prepared by NRW.

Ways of working

2.124 Each national park is managed by a national park authority (described under governance) and is guided by a number of key management documents.

Management documents

2.125 National Park plans inform, contribute to and guide the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of each designated area. [\[See reference 14\]](#)

2.126 Key management documents include:

- National Park Management Plan
- State of the Park Report
- Local Development Plan.

National Park Management Plan

2.127 This provides a plan for the geographic area of the Park. It provides a strategic overarching document which co-ordinates and integrates other plans, strategies, and actions in the national park, and where these affect the park purposes and duty. The National Park Management Plan is, therefore, the principal vehicle for ensuring that the statutory provisions of the Environment Act 1995 are met, including the duties imposed on all public bodies under Section 62(2). NRW is currently working to prepare Designated Landscape Management Guidance which updates previous guidance, including embedding actions for nature recovery and mitigation and adaptation for climate change.

State of the Park Report

2.128 The State of the Park Report (SoPR) provides the basis for on-going monitoring of change within a National Park. It looks at environmental indicators, condition of designated areas and features, and indicators of the quality of life of communities and individuals. It plays an important role in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the National Park Management Plan.

Local Development Plan

2.129 The local development plan sets standards and policies for development within the National Park. Planning aims to place the right development in the right place to meet the needs of park communities and to support change that brings positive benefits to the National Park in line with the National Park purposes and the National Park Management Plan objectives.

2.130 Local Planning Authorities are required to review their LDP at least every four years from the date of adoption to ensure that LDPs and their supporting evidence base are kept up to date to provide a sound and effective basis for making planning decisions [See reference 15]. The National Park Local Development Plan (LDP) is one of the key delivery mechanisms of the National Park Management Plan.

Working collaboratively with other designated landscapes

2.131 Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales [See reference 16] is a partnership of the designated landscapes in Wales: three National Parks and five National Landscapes, who are working together to address key shared challenges, including action on the climate change and nature emergencies. The partnership aims to ensure:

- Wales' landscape bodies have structured and supportive relationships across all partners and work together on key challenges including the nature and climate emergencies, delivering sustainable tourism, and supporting resilient and green communities.
- Wales' landscape bodies are supported and enabled to deliver on their Statutory Management plans and key Welsh Government policy areas and priorities through partnership working.
- They support Designated Landscapes to diversify funding streams.
- They demonstrate the progress of Designated Landscapes and Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales in collaborative working and their contribution to priority areas.

Core Funding

2.132 The revenue and capital budget of NPAs is made up of a National Park Grant from the Welsh Government and a contribution from constituent authorities.

2.133 The Welsh Government sets the Authority's approved level of net revenue expenditure for the year and pays 75% of this in a National Park Grant. The remaining 25% is raised by issuing a levy on the constituent local authorities. Further income can be derived from bids for additional grant funding, trading activity, fees, and interest from financial instruments [**See reference 17**].

2.134 A report by Audit Wales [**See reference 18**] is calling on Welsh Government and National Park Authorities to work together to identify appropriate ways of diversifying the funding available to National Parks. This highlights the future importance of considering different sources of funding. The report made recommendations to the Welsh Government to support income diversification, and based on this it is anticipated that diversification of income streams will be a future aspect of a new National Park.

Purpose/aim and outcomes

2.135 National Parks in Wales currently have two purposes, as set out in the Environment Act 1995:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks; and.
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities (of the Park) by the public.

2.136 The 2018 written statement ‘Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government’s Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks’ builds upon the 2015 Marsden report [See reference 19] and Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales (2017) [See reference 20].

2.137 The 2022 Biodiversity Deep Dive [See reference 21] includes a number of recommendations for collective actions to support meaningful delivery of the Convention on Biological Diversity ‘30 by 30’ goal. The 30 by 30 goal is the worldwide initiative for governments to designate 30% of Earth’s land and ocean area as protected areas by 2030. Within this is the recommendation to unlock the potential of designated landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) to deliver more for nature and contribute to the achievement of 30 by 30. This includes action in the immediate term to support National Parks and National Landscapes to develop prioritised action plans for nature restoration embedding these in strategic planning. In the longer term this includes:

- Realign Designated Landscapes priorities to enhance and accelerate nature by updated policy, resources and guidance to build capacity and expertise and to target activity.
- Develop the evidence and mapping tools to enable designated landscapes to baseline, target and monitor areas of high nature value that could be secured as their contribution to 30 by 30.

- Ensure Designated Landscapes bodies are funded adequately, sustainably and flexibly to deliver nature recovery at a transformational landscape scale.
- Ensure that the potential designation of a new National Park in northeast Wales affords opportunities for climate change mitigation and nature recovery as key delivery priorities for the new Park.
- Consider the need for legislation in the next Senedd to reform the statutory purposes, duties and governance arrangements for designated landscape bodies to equip them better to drive nature's recovery.

2.138 The Welsh Government consultation White Paper `Securing a Sustainable Future: Environmental Principles, Governance and Biodiversity targets for a Greener Wales` propose statutory targets for the protection and restoration of biodiversity. The paper also proposes placing a duty on Welsh public authorities requiring them to contribute to the delivery of the statutory biodiversity targets. A future national park in north east Wales would therefore potentially a revised statutory purpose, duty and governance arrangements to existing national parks and have a greater emphasis on climate change mitigation and nature recovery than the existing national parks.

Evaluation: Management of the Forces for Change

Climate Change

2.139 The statutory purpose of National Parks is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the park by the public. The Biodiversity Deep Dive also includes actions which may include greater support for nature restoration through a National Park.

2.140 The national park management plan, as outlined in NRW's Designated Landscape Management Plan Guidance (2024), will be a key document to address climate change and is likely to set out key actions to address both the climate and biodiversity emergency and address climate resilience. It will also align with the SMNR principles.

2.141 A new National Park will provide a coherent mechanism to address the climate change challenges within the Area of Search.

2.142 The recommendations from the Welsh Government consultation White Paper 'Securing a Sustainable Future: Environmental Principles, Governance and Biodiversity targets for a Greener Wales' could contribute to a greater emphasis on climate change mitigation than existing national parks.

Built development and infrastructure/Planning

2.143 A new national park would influence forward planning through the preparation of a local development plan. This would reflect national planning policy, future strategic development plans and establish new local policy, and provide a single plan with decision making focused on the areas special qualities and Park aims.

2.144 Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12 clearly sets out the parameters for development in National Parks and National Landscapes. It is anticipated that large infrastructure projects would be generally prohibited and reflecting the statutory purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the national park, this would also be reflected through the local development plan and national park management plan.

2.145 Minerals development is limited to very exceptional circumstances in National Parks (Planning Policy Wales, edition 12), and the statutory purposes of National Parks have great weight in planning decisions. Major developments should not take place, except in exceptional circumstances. National Park Authorities have a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of local

communities in ways which are compatible with National Park purposes [See reference 22], and therefore there may be a more positive approach to types of development which support these aims, whilst securing the highest protection from inappropriate development.

2.146 Decision making on planning applications would take into account national park purposes, which may lead to a greater weight being placed on conservation of natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. It may also facilitate development which supports understanding and enjoyment of the National Park.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

2.147 The statutory purposes of National Parks to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area, is supported through the National Park Management Plan and Local Development Plan. This is likely to contribute to support for more sustainable agriculture and forestry practices and action for nature. In support of the recommendations set out within the 2022 Biodiversity Deep Dive to embed nature restoration in strategic planning there is likely to be greater action planning within a National Park than in non-designated areas.

2.148 A National Park provides a coherent area for which strategic planning for nature can take place. Examples include the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Bannau Brycheiniog. In addition individual national parks may set out further commitments for how they will progress different aims, such as the Bannau Brycheiniog position statements on peatland, river and wetland restoration, sustainable rural economy, climate change and nature recovery and woodland expansion and restoration.

People, communities and management of cultural heritage/Sustainable communities

2.149 The statutory purpose of National Parks is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. When National Parks carry out these purposes they also seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities.

2.150 The governance of a new National Park will involve partnership working within the constituent local authorities. However they are likely to take a new approach to delivery and partnership which would include greater involvement of partnerships to ensure that communities and stakeholders are fully engaged in decision making and are empowered to have a stake in their local landscape and invest in its future. Future national parks may also include partnership working with localities beyond the protected landscape, bringing benefits to a wider area.

2.151 National Park Authorities are required to conserve and enhance cultural heritage, resulting in positive effects regarding cultural heritage.

Recreation, tourism and access/Visitor management

2.152 The statutory purpose of National Parks is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities. Recreation and tourism can increase pressure on the natural environment and landscape of the National Park, requiring the management of access and visitors. However, a new national park will typically have a ranger service and a remit to manage recreation and tourism impacts. In addition the national park management plan can set out actions to address these issues in an integrated way.

Chapter 3

Issues requiring management in the AoS

3.1 There are a range of issues that need to be managed in the area of search. These issues arise from a variety of sources, some of which can be addressed through the management of the area as a designated landscape, and others which reflect the wider challenges facing rural communities and the countryside.

3.2 The following text summarises the impacts of the forces for change on each of the special qualities of the AoS. This is followed by an illustration of how each force for change impacts across multiple special qualities.

Summary of impacts of the forces for change on the special qualities of the AoS

1. An inspiring space that promotes mental, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing

Climate Change

- Changes in farming, habitats and woodland landcover patterns are likely as a result of changing temperature and rainfall patterns.
- Nature based solutions to mitigate climate impacts could include peatland restoration, soil management and tree planting (in the right place for

farming and nature) for carbon capture and reduction in downstream flooding.

- Our current experience of landscape and nature of views has the potential to change and evolve over the long term because of climate impacts. Conserving valued natural and cultural heritage features and qualities of a place - within an evolving landscape, can help maintain the Special Quality.

Built development and infrastructure

- New development, depending on the location, scale and character can complement or detract from the landscape experience.
- To meet decarbonisation targets renewable energy development and associated infrastructure will continue to grow in Wales. Large-scale strategic wind farm development is proposed outside the AoS. Local Development Plan search areas for solar farms lie within a small extent the AoS. Single wind turbines to power farms are present in two locations, and there are several small-scale hydro-electric power schemes. New strategic grid connection is needed to link renewable energy development in Wales with the National Grid in England.
- Wind farms and community windfarm development may result in community benefit funding, with opportunities to support local projects that enhance and promote the rights of way network, and support nature and built heritage projects, repair of field boundaries, the planting of trees, woodlands and orchards. Local co-ordination, project ideas, volunteers and project management are required to make the most of funding.
- New housing and infrastructure development will be an ongoing pressure largely focused within the nearby regional and national growth areas outside of the AoS.
- The growth of villages and towns within the AoS will also take place, but at much smaller scale.

- Incremental change can see traditional rural villages evolve and become more suburban and urban in character. Additional lighting, can also alter the dark sky character of the area.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- Land management changes are a key force for change relevant to this special quality.
- Food production, forestry and land management are likely to evolve in response to climate change. The nature of views and landscape character will similarly evolve.
- Sustainable farming practices to balance food production with nature recovery and climate change mitigation has the potential to maintain important uses of land and traditional farmland features, alongside improving habitat diversity and connectivity.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- Landscape provides the everyday setting and backdrop to the villages, towns and dispersed rural communities within the AoS. Farmers have brought about the Welsh landscape that is evident today. Future requirements from farmland to produce food and help address some of the impacts of climate change and reverse the loss of native habitats, means that the farming community has much to contribute to this Special Quality.
- The pressing issues of climate change and addressing nature loss means that some form of landscape change will occur within the medium to long term. What this is, where, and the degree of change, requires oversight and opportunities for communities and interest groups to inform. (The principles of the European Landscape Convention are imbedded within the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the development of Area Statements).

Recreation, tourism and access

- The designation of a National Park has the potential to encourage additional visitors to sites and facilities that are already popular and showing signs of pressure.
- Future strategic transport infrastructure improvements to the east and north of the AoS have the potential make access to the area a little easier.
- Plans to improve public transport and active travel within the AoS have the potential to enable access for communities and visitors with less reliance on motor vehicles, encouraging green tourism.
- Improvements to accessibility increase the opportunities for people to experience the inspiring space of the AoS, bringing opportunities for mental, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing.
- Increased number of visitors can bring additional pressures and may detract from the experience of the area.

2. A place with cohesive communities and distinctive settlement patterns

Climate Change

- The impacts of extreme weather events, including storms, flooding and coastal erosion could affect some communities.
- Climate change will place pressures particularly on vulnerable cultural assets and communities.
- Climate adaption measures, such as nature-based solutions in the uplands and along watercourses, together with traditional flood defences, can help alleviate the physical and emotional impacts of flooding. This helps maintain viable and cohesive communities.

Built development and infrastructure

- The availability of local housing and employment is an existing issue.
- Development may not always be in sympathy with the local landscape character and settlement pattern.
- New development that addresses local needs, in the provision of affordable housing, local services and facilities, is important in maintaining cohesive communities.
- The designation of a National Park is likely to stimulate the need for tourist accommodation and facilities - both an opportunity and something that would need to be managed alongside the needs of existing communities.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- . Policy and the future funding support for agriculture, land management and rural businesses will influence employment, the rural economy and the contribution to cohesive communities.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- Population change from migration and age structure can impact on community involvement and participation in local events and traditions, knowledge about heritage, the use of the Welsh language, 'bro' and the viability/ demand for local services.
- A decline in employment in land-based industries could lead to a loss of knowledge, traditional skills and Welsh language.
- Future improvements to public transport, active travel and transport connectivity are being planned for rural communities (Regional Transport Plan 2050 and National Transport Plan 2022- 2027).

- The availability of local housing and employment affects the viability of rural communities. A National Park designation could encourage inward migration and purchase of second homes; increase levels of recreation and tourism - but also an opportunity for local employment.

Recreation, tourism and access

- Increased tourism and recreation brings economic opportunity.
- Although visitors can increase pressure on local services, they also provide additional support for the provision of these services.
- Future improvements to public transport, active travel and transport connectivity could provide opportunities for Green Tourism.

3. A story of human interaction with the landscape over millennia

Climate Change

- Climate change will bring new challenges to farming, land management and communities in terms of flooding, soil erosion, pests and disease, less predictable weather and seasons.
- The pressing issues of climate change and nature recovery mean that agriculture and forestry is now required to deliver food and timber plus wider benefits for nature and climate mitigation. The scope of current land management practices will need to adapt and evolve.
- Human action and interaction with the landscape is as ever active, but swift and dynamic changes to land management are being imposed by climate change.

Built development and infrastructure

- Development to mitigate or adapt to climate change will increase, and this could place pressures on the historic assets in the AoS unless factored within site planning decisions.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- . Land management changes driven by both policy and climate adaptation could impact on the historic features of the landscape unless factored within management decisions.
- Unregulated planting of forests for carbon offsetting has the potential to displace farming and people.
- Changes in agricultural policy, funding and viability can influence the management of features.
- A tradition of knowledge passed down through generations of farming comes to an end with the family line, or the next generation choosing another life.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- Impacts upon cultural heritage resources from diverse sources and scale of effect including - climate change, land management, and visitors.
- Population change from migration and age structure can impact on community involvement and participation in local events and traditions, knowledge and use of the Welsh language and the viability/ demand upon local services.
- Changes in employment, including a decline in employment in land-based industries, leading to a loss of knowledge, skills and Welsh Language.

Recreation, tourism and access

- People have been visiting the area for well over 100 years for tourism and recreation. There are established pressures on honeypot sites, trails and routes. A National Park has the potential to increase visitor numbers, but would seek to manage pressures affecting historic features, land managers and communities.
- A National Park designation is likely to stimulate the need for new tourist accommodation and facilities.
- The designation of a National Park would seek to promote an understanding of the landscape, historic environment, culture and historical evolution of the AoS to both communities and visitors. This along with policy drivers to support conservation would help support conservation and restoration efforts.

4. A home to internationally and locally important species and habitats

Climate Change

- Climate change will affect habitats and species in the AoS, through changing weather patterns, periods of drought and waterlogging, damage from storms and flooding and erosion.
- Climate change increases the risk from pests and diseases and the spread of invasive non-native species.
- Climate change brings additional challenges to farming and the management of land.

Built development and infrastructure

- New development (housing, renewables, commercial, tourism transport and minerals) will in the main avoid or mitigate for direct, indirect and cumulative effects.
- There are potential gains for habitats and species through the achievement of net benefits for biodiversity through the planning system and by supporting the Biodiversity Deep Dive Recommendations: 3. Unlock the potential of designated landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) to deliver more for nature and 30 by 30.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- Policy to support farming and wider ecosystem services from land brings about positive forces for change to support this special quality.
- The new sustainable farming scheme has the potential to create opportunities for habitats and species alongside the primary aim of food production.
- Changes in the management of moorland will also impact on the habitat for key habitats and species, and also issues associated with the persecution of raptors.
- Forestry and woodland are being planned and managed to support a National Forest for Wales for timber and wider benefits for nature and climate mitigation.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- The viability of farming and forestry affects the rural community in the AoS. Their capacity to manage land and adapt to food production, solutions for nature and climate change has a direct bearing on this special quality.

Recreation, tourism and access

- Current levels of access to landscapes within the AoS with sensitive habitats will continue and potentially increase as a result of a National Park designation. Existing 'honey pot' sites could see additional pressure, with impacts from footpath erosion and overspill parking. Dogs not on leads can disturb ground nesting birds as well as livestock. Off road vehicles where there is no legal right of access can damage habitats.
- Tourism / ecotourism that promotes the natural, cultural, built heritage and dark skies of the area, provide opportunities to enhance public understanding and enjoyment of this special quality.

5. A distinctive, complementary and contrasting landscape

Climate Change

- Climate change will affect the landscape qualities of the area through changing vegetation patterns, coastal and river erosion, extreme weather events and flooding. Waterlogged soils and strong winds can lead to the loss of woodland edges and veteran trees in historic parkland.
- The response of habitats and species to climate change is evolving.
- The response of farming and forestry to climate change will evolve.

Built development and infrastructure

- New built development (housing, renewables, commercial, tourism transport and minerals) introduces change that can affect rural character, visual amenity, the settings of historic features and perceptions of tranquillity and wildness. Good siting, design and integration can resolve many of these issues. Vertical structures and large/extensive industrial

type development are more difficult to integrate. Nighttime lighting can affect perceptions of dark skies and removal from developed areas.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- The Sustainable Farming Scheme in Wales is asking farmers to manage land to deliver food and wider benefits for nature and climate mitigation. Current land management practices will adapt and evolve. The landcover type and pattern seen today is similarly likely to evolve, potentially moving away from what is perceived to be the traditional farmland landscape.
- Policy for the planning and management of forestry and woodland is to support a National Forest for Wales, to produce timber and wider benefits for nature and climate mitigation.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- The capacity of communities invested in farming and forestry to assist nature and climate mitigation, alongside food and timber production, has a bearing on this special quality.
- Population change from migration and age structure; changes in employment; a decline in employment in land based industries - Communities have the potential to evolve and develop different connections to the land and how it is managed/cared for.

Recreation, tourism and access

- There are localised impacts on existing recreational resources including honeypot sites, trails, and routes, with issues of erosion, litter, traffic and parking. The designation of a National Park has the potential to add to these issues but would seek to proactively manage them.

- New visitor accommodation and facilities - these provide opportunities to engage communities and visitors with their local landscapes and the wider AoS.

6. A landscape providing benefits beyond its borders

Climate Change

- Climate change impacts directly on the delivery of many ecosystem services including, the water cycle, soil cycle and nutrient cycle, food and fibre production.
- A National Park designation would seek to promote nature based solutions to mitigate impacts on communities and land within and beyond the AoS.

Built development and infrastructure

- Renewable energy development and associated grid infrastructure - small scale, well integrated renewables within the AoS can play its part in decarbonising energy in Wales.
- The National Park brand creates an identity and way to market this area beyond Wales. It can stimulate the need for visitor accommodation and infrastructure - both a pressure and an opportunity.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- The management of land within the AoS for food, timber, resilient habitats and species, carbon storage, water quality, capture and flood management - provides benefits that extend to communities within Wales and England.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- Regional growth in surrounding areas - the centres of populations close the AoS derive wellbeing benefits from visiting the AoS.
- Future improvements to public transport, active travel and transport connectivity - could benefit communities within and beyond the AoS and facilitate green tourism.

Recreation, tourism and access

- A new National Park would facilitate this, to benefit the enjoyment and wellbeing of communities within and outside the AoS. The management of existing and future impacts on honeypot sites, land managers and communities would be a key management objective.

Summary of impacts of the forces for change on the special qualities of the AoS

An inspiring space that promotes mental, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing

Climate change

- Direct impacts on the natural and cultural heritage features of the landscape: impact on the views and experience of the landscape, through changes to these features

Built development and infrastructure

- New development, depending on the location and scale may detract from the landscape experience.
- The trend for further renewable energy development and associated infrastructure is set to continue both within and around the AoS.
- Large scale developments such as wind farms may result in community benefit funding which may provide opportunities to enhance the access network and facilities at a strategic scale, bring about habitat enhancement and increase connectivity to the AoS.
- New housing and infrastructure development will be an ongoing pressure largely focused within the nearby regional and national growth areas outside of the AoS.
- Development can result in incremental cumulative effects e.g. the growth of a rural village leading to suburban and urban characteristics and additional lighting, impacting on the dark skies of the area.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- Land management changes is a key force for change relevant to this special quality.
- Increases in woodland and forestry may impact on views.
- Sustainable farming practices can strengthen the traditional farmed character of the landscape and support habitat diversity and connectivity.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- Indirect effects upon peoples' visual and sensory experience of the landscape

Recreation, tourism and access

- Changes in accessibility and increases in visitor numbers are key forces for change relevant to this special quality.
- There are a number of formal recreation and visitor sites that experience visitor pressures.
- Future strategic transport infrastructure improvements to the east and north of the AoS will enable increased access to the area.
- There are future trends in a modal shift to more sustainable travel will mean the AoS will be more accessible to a greater number of people, alongside trends in increased recreation.
- Greater accessibility will result in more people experiencing the inspiring space of the AoS bringing opportunities for mental, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing for these individuals.
- More people in the AoS will result in greater pressures on the landscape and features of the AoS.
- Increased number of visitors may detract from the experience of the area.

A place with cohesive communities and distinctive settlement patterns

Climate change

- Climate change will place pressures on cultural assets and communities, particularly those who are most vulnerable.
- Displacement from storms and flooding can disrupt communities.
- Adaption measures to climate change, including those which strengthen community resilience, will provide opportunities to aid in mitigating the impact of climate change on communities and community and cultural assets, and strengthen community cohesion.

Built development and infrastructure

- New development is a key pressure on the distinctive settlement patterns and cohesive communities of the AoS.
- Development may not always be in sympathy with the local landscape character and settlement pattern.
- Appropriate provision of affordable housing and the maintenance and development of local services and facilities are important factors in maintaining cohesive communities.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- Policy supports cohesive communities and employment in the rural economy, which supports land management.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- Changes in community composition from population change and migration patterns can impact on the community knowledge and the vibrancy of Welsh culture, 'bro', traditions, language and place.
- Increased regional connectivity and accessibility to the AoS could result in more cohesive communities.
- Reduced viability of rural services, combined with rural transport issues can impact on the cohesiveness of communities.

Recreation, tourism and access

- Increased tourism and recreation may result in increased migration and purchase of second homes, which will reduce the sense of community from a lack of permanent residents.

- Increased tourism and recreation brings economic opportunity.
- Although visitors can increase pressure on local services, they also provide additional support for the provision of these services.

A story of human interaction with the landscape over millennia

Climate change

- Climate change will place significant pressures on this special quality, by resulting in degradation or harm to the AoS historic environment.

Built development and infrastructure

- Development to mitigate or adapt to climate change will increase, and this will also place pressures on the historic assets in the AoS and their setting.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- Land management changes driven by both policy and direct adaptation will impact on the historic features of the landscape.
- High levels of grazing pressure can combine with the impacts of climate change and visitor numbers.
- Changes in land cover such as afforestation can impact directly on historic environment features.
- Changes in agricultural policy and viability can influence the management of features.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- Population change may impact on the knowledge and awareness of language, cultural events and traditions.
- Population change can also impact on the composition of local employment, and employment in land management and knowledge of the landscape and environment.

Recreation, tourism and access

- The future trend in greater visitor numbers is a key force for change regarding this special quality. More people in the AoS will result in greater pressures on the historic environment of the AoS and their setting.
- Pressures arise from the need for the development of more buildings, infrastructure and facilities and increased traffic and light pollution.
- Policies to increase active travel and reduce need to travel will result in opportunities to reduce traffic pressure on the historic environment.
- Trends of increasing tourism provides opportunities for the promotion and thus greater appreciation of the AoS' historic environment. This along with policy drivers to support conservation will also help support conservation and restoration efforts.

A home to internationally and locally important species and habitats

Climate change

- Results in direct loss and damage to habitat, habitat change, habitat fragmentation, pollution, disturbance and the spread of invasive non-native species.

- Climate change will result in significant pressures on habitats and species in the AoS, including through changing weather patterns, periods of drought and waterlogging, damage from storms and flooding and erosion.
- Climate change increases the risk from pests and diseases and the spread of invasive non-native species.

Built development and infrastructure

- Result in direct loss and damage to habitat, habitat change, habitat fragmentation, pollution, disturbance and the spread of invasive non-native species.
- There are also potential gains for habitats and species through the achievement of net benefits for biodiversity through the planning system.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- Policy to support sustainable land management and nature conservation and restoration brings about positive forces for change to address the adverse effects being experienced.
- The new sustainable farming scheme will create opportunities for habitats and species by supporting more sustainable food production, which also results in the maintenance and enhancement ecosystems and their resilience.
- Changes in the management of moorland will also impact on the habitat for key habitats and species, and also issues associated with the persecution of raptors.
- New woodland planting may result in habitat creation.
- Inappropriate afforestation can create pressures on this special quality by leading to habitat loss, constraints to natural dynamics and species loss.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- Impacts of population change can contribute to direct loss and damage to habitat, habitat change, habitat fragmentation, pollution, disturbance and the spread of invasive non- native species.

Recreation, tourism and access

- Increased access to the AoS as well as overall trends in increasing recreation, results in direct loss and damage to habitat, habitat change, habitat fragmentation, pollution, disturbance and the spread of invasive non- native species.
- Increased tourism may provide opportunities for ecotourism and enhancing understanding of the value of this special quality.

A distinctive, complementary and contrasting landscape

Climate change

- Climate change will impact on the landscape qualities of the area through changing vegetation patterns, direct impacts of climate change on the coastal edge and river valleys as a result of flooding, impacts on woodland and historic parkland due to wind throw exacerbated by waterlogging.

Built development and infrastructure

- Impacts on views are related to new built features within the views, or changes in enclosure and exposure. New built features in the landscape, such as agricultural buildings or wind turbines can draw the eye and interrupt views.

- Built development impacts on tranquillity and in more remote and upland areas this may include renewable energy and communications masts.
- New development may impact on the setting of historic environment features.
- New development may impact on the character of areas through the introduction of features such as kerbs, lighting and traffic management.
- The cumulative effects of new developments, including lighting will impact on the dark skies of the area.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- Changes in agricultural support may influence land management activities and alter landcover type and farm development, with a move away from what is perceived to be the traditional farmland landscape.
- Policy influences on moorland management, combined with the effects of climate change affecting the future viability of grouse may impact on the management of these areas.
- Actions to restore natural habitats helps to support the quality of landscape features such as peatland.
- Policy influences seek to increase woodland. Climate change impacts on pests and diseases of woodland, combined with vulnerability to drought and waterlogging may impact on existing species, future choice, planting locations and management approaches.
- Land management changes can impact on unknown archaeological resources.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- Challenges including lack of management and combined with impacts from climate change can increase the rate of deterioration of the historic environment resource.

Recreation, tourism and access

- Visitor and recreational pressure may impact on the landscape quality as a result of the impacts of visitor numbers including parking pressures, littering and direct damage to landscape features.
- Recreational pressures can lead to impacts on historic assets such as archaeological resources including via erosion.

A landscape providing benefits beyond its borders

Climate change

- Climate change impacts directly on the delivery of many ecosystem services including, the water cycle, soil cycle and nutrient cycle, food and fibre production.
- Development can impact on the delivery of ecosystem services through loss of habitats, disturbance and changes in landscape quality affecting recreation and tourism.

Built development and infrastructure

- Development can impact on the delivery of ecosystem services through loss of habitats, disturbance and changes in landscape quality affecting recreation and tourism.

Land management, agriculture, forestry and natural environment

- Changes in land management can impact on the delivery of many ecosystem services, particularly food and fibre production, but also supporting services.

People, communities, and management of cultural heritage

- Changes in the provision of regulating services, including water supply, carbon storage and flood management impact directly on people. Affecting the health and wellbeing and viability of rural communities.

Recreation, tourism and access

- Changes in the levels of recreation, tourism and access can impact on the delivery of provisioning services, regulating services and supporting services as these activities impact directly on the land and land use.

Chapter 4

Evaluation

4.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation of the five alternative management options. This illustrates a comparison of the functions, that directly influences how the forces for change can be managed.

Scale of influence

4.2 The scale of influence of the management mechanism is critical to achieving the coherent management of the area. All of the options except business as usual provide a means to manage an area in its entirety, although with varying influence between the options.

Statutory or non-statutory basis

4.3 The management options include those with a statutory and non-statutory basis. The benefits of a statutory basis (including National Landscape, Conservation Board and National Park) are reflected through the national policy context, development planning and funding. In addition, a statutory footing gives impetus to the delivery of the areas purpose and objectives, and a duty for others to have regard to the purposes.

Management planning

4.4 Management planning is an aspect of all of the management options, with typical five yearly review periods for plans. Statutory basis gives management plans greater weight in decision making. A National Park also requires the preparation of a local development plan, which allows the purpose and

conservation objectives of the area to be given a high level of consideration alongside planning for economic, social and cultural issues.

Forward planning and development management

4.5 National Park designations have a statutory basis, which is reflected through national and local planning policy. A National Park, like a Local Authority, sets out its own planning policy through a Local Development Plan (LDP). All LDPs seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities, alongside the conservation of landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage to deliver sustainable development. The LDP of a National Park however frames economic, social well-being and local community interests within a plan that gives particular weight to working with, supporting and enhancing (where possible) the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area. Options for development management within a National Park may vary in terms of decision making, with decisions made either within the national park authority, or delegated to the local authority.

4.6 National Landscapes do not have development control powers in the UK. National Parks in the UK generally do, though a key exception is the South Downs National Park, where development control function is delegated back to constituent local authorities. Similarly in the Cairngorms National Park development management decisions are made by the relevant local authorities, and the National Park has call in powers on planning applications of general significance to the National Park

Funding

4.7 Security and longevity of funding is generally related to the statutory or non-statutory status of the management option, though National Parks have core funding via National Park grant unlike National Landscapes. Statutory

management options typically receive core funding and can raise funds through other sources. Non statutory management mechanisms are typically reliant on grants and in-kind contributions which can be restricted in the context of other budgetary constraints.

4.8 All of the management options, with the exception of business as usual, offer opportunities for partnership working across the area of search. Statutory and non-statutory partnerships brought together around a project area seek out collaboration and funding opportunities that the constituent local authorities otherwise may not have capacity for.

Overview of management options and functions

Function

Scale of influence

Business as usual

- Coordinated action within area of National Landscape through statutory management plan, however there is a lack of management coherence within the wider AoS or to address the issues in the AoS in a coherent way.

New national park

- Coordinated management of the area as a whole.

Conservation Board

- Coordinated management of the area as a whole.

Valleys Regional Park

- Coordinated management of the area as a whole.

South Pennines

- Coordinated management of the area as a whole.

Statutory or non-statutory basis

Business as usual

- Statutory purpose for National Landscape.

New national park

- Statutory purpose for National Parks.

Conservation Board

- Statutory purpose for National Landscape Conservation Boards.

Valleys Regional Park

- No statutory purpose or basis or explicit reference in national policy.

South Pennines

- No statutory purpose or basis or explicit reference in national policy.

Management planning

Business as usual

- National Landscape management plan prepared for Clwydian Hills and Dee Valley. , There is no land management planning mechanism put in place by a public body for areas that lie outside the National Landscape. Management of wider area is reflected through wider national and local planning policy.

New national park

- Managed through National Park Management plan and local development plan.

Conservation Board

- Management plan required and prepared by board.

Valleys Regional Park

- Non statutory strategic delivery plan prepared for the area.

South Pennines

- Managed by a partnership through a partnership plan, with five year action plans.

Forward planning and development management

Business as usual

- Planning control lies with the constituent local planning authorities [See reference 23] , although National Landscape purposes reflected through national and local planning policy.

New national park

- LDP prepared providing single coordinated policy framework, focused on National Park aims, key characteristics. National Park authority has development control. National Park purposes reflected through national planning policy. However, there are alternative models for delivery such as the South Downs National Park Authority where the development control function has been delegated to the individual constituent planning authorities.

Conservation Board

- Planning control lies with constituent local planning authorities, although National Landscape purposes reflected through national and local planning policy.

Valleys Regional Park

- Planning control lies with constituent local planning authorities, although regional park purposes reflected through local planning policy.

South Pennines

- Planning control lies with constituent local planning authorities, no reference in constituent local plans.

Funding

Business as usual

- Funding from Natural Resources Wales, some from Welsh Government and other sources to the National Landscape. No dedicated funding for wider AoS.

New national park

- Core funding through Welsh Government, constituent local authorities and opportunity to raise further income from other sources, including through income diversification.

Conservation Board

- Core funding provided through central government department and grants.

Valleys Regional Park

- Dependent on grant funding and in-kind funding through host council.

South Pennines

- Dependent on grant funding.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 The conclusion and recommendations are framed around the principles of the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) and the ways of working from the Well-being of Future Generations. Where appropriate the SMNR principles have been grouped under the ways of working from the Well-being of Future Generations. The two SMNR principles which do not sit beneath the ways of working are 'scale' and 'evidence' which are described below.

Scale

consider the appropriate spatial scale for action

5.2 All of the options, with the exception of business as usual, provide a mechanism to plan and manage across the entire area of search. Planning and management across the entire area allows greater certainty of outcomes, greater opportunity for achieving landscape scale benefits and greater impact on national policy priorities such as biodiversity restoration and enhancement. The longevity and certainty of the management mechanism is also important in supporting planning and management at an appropriate scale. This is reflected in the statutory mechanisms considered in the evaluation. This allows the future management of the area to reflect the longer timescales required to achieve some aspects of future management.

Evidence

take account of all relevant evidence, and gather evidence in respect of uncertainties

5.3 Evidence gathering is a key component of management planning, which is applicable to all of the management options to some degree. However there are statutory requirements for the preparation of management plans for National Landscapes and National Parks and information gathering through State of the AONB/ National Landscape and State of the Park reports. Having access to the most appropriate evidence base is important in planning for the future management of the AoS. Having allocated funding and resources to develop the evidence base for National Landscapes or National Park will therefore also support the effectiveness of future management.

Collaboration and involvement

Collaboration and engagement

promote and engage in collaboration and cooperation

5.4 All of the management options, with the exception of business as usual, offer opportunities for partnership working across the area of search. Statutory and non-statutory partnerships brought together around a project area seek out collaboration and funding opportunities that the constituent local authorities otherwise may not be able to undertake. This increases the sense of local value and investment, supporting community capacity.

5.5 There is also potential for a new National Park to contribute to partnership working beyond the national park boundary, extending the benefits of the management of the area.

Public Participation

make appropriate arrangements for public participation in decision-making

5.6 All of the management options offer opportunity for public participation. The preparation of a management plan under all of the four management options, with the exception of business as usual, would involve public consultation. In addition, the preparation of a national park local development plan has statutory processes for public consultation.

5.7 Linking to both the scale of the area under management and the commitment to the long-term management of the area, National Park or National Landscape designation provides greater certainty around the impact of public participation. This is through the increased certainty of commitment to the future management of the area through a statutory designation.

Integration

Multiple benefits

take account of the benefits and intrinsic value of natural resources and ecosystems

5.8 The statutory purposes of National Parks and National Landscapes support the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. The National Landscape and National Park model, the Valleys Regional Park and South Pennines Regional Park all have some alignment with ecosystem service thinking. The National Park model in addition has a statutory purpose for recreation, although National Landscapes in practice also plan for and manage this.

Long term

Adaptive management

manage adaptively by planning, monitoring, reviewing and where appropriate, changing action

5.9 Both National Park management plans and associated local development plans are legally required to be reviewed every five years. This review process provides a key opportunity to update these plans to respond to the changing context. The five yearly review period applies to National Landscape's management plans and the South Pennines Regional Park action plan.

Long term

take account of the short-, medium- and long-term consequences of actions

5.10 The establishment of a long-term management option for the area of search as a whole is only achievable through either the designation of the area as a national park, or through the designation of the entire area of search as a

National Landscape, with management as either a National Landscape or Conservation Board. The other regional park examples have not demonstrated longevity or capacity for planning on long timescales.

Prevention

Preventative action

take action to prevent significant damage to ecosystems

5.11 Management planning for the four options, with the exception of business as usual, would take into account actions to prevent significant damage to ecosystems. National Landscapes **and National Parks** are required to do this as it is integral to their statutory purposes. There is no statutory requirement for this for the other two management options.

Building resilience

take account of the resilience of ecosystems, in particular the following aspects: (i) diversity between and within ecosystems; (ii) the connections between and within ecosystems; (iii) the scale of ecosystems; (iv) the condition of ecosystems (including their structure and functioning); (v) the adaptability of ecosystems

5.12 National Parks and National Landscapes are recommended in the Biodiversity Deep Dive to develop priority action plans for nature restoration, which supports resilience. Alongside the statutory purpose of National Parks and National Landscapes to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife

and cultural heritage, there is a clear role for supporting resilience for the National Park and Conservation Board options. South Pennines Regional Park provides a model aligned with national park purposes, but without the statutory framework. For business as usual, the key limitation is the extent of the National Landscape compared to the area of search. For the Valleys Regional Park, there is alignment with ecosystem services, however there is also a stronger emphasis on achieving social and economic potential.

Recommendation

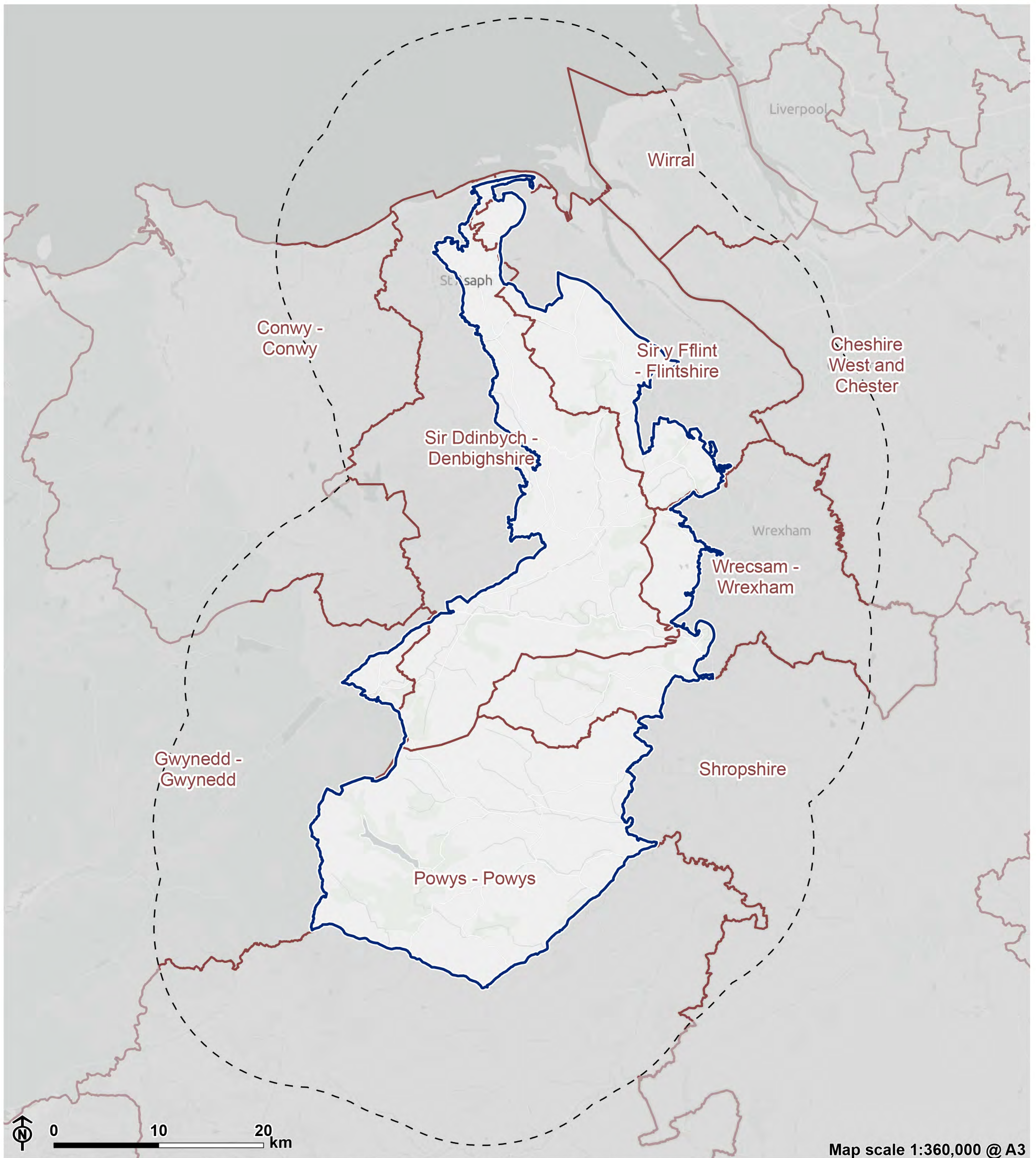
5.13 In conclusion, reflecting the SMNR principles and the five Ways of Working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the statutory framework of National Park designation or creation of a new extended National Landscape across the area of search provides the strongest integrating framework and greatest security in terms of longevity and partnership working.

5.14 Both a National Park and a National Landscape would provide a statutory basis for the area, including the requirement for a Management Plan and a duty on relevant authorities to have regard (s62 and s85). A National Park would have planning functions and also security of core funding via national park grant. Taking these considerations into account, this also provides the strongest mechanism for addressing the identified forces for change.

5.15 However it is acknowledged that National Park designation, or an extended National Landscape would in itself introduce new pressures, challenges and opportunities for the area in terms of visitor numbers, patterns, funding and partnership working. Closing the circle, a new National Park would be able to draw on the extensive experience of other national parks, and the management mechanisms available to address these.

Appendix A

Area of search and wider context



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Figure 1: Area of search and wider context

- Area of search (revised May 2024)
- Area of search 15km buffer
- Local authority boundary

The National Park Area of Search was amended in May 2024 following NRW's review of additional evidence submitted as part of the public engagement events Autumn 2023. The original Area of Search is presented in the Forces for Change report.

Appendix B

Summary forces for change

Climate Change

- The impacts of extreme weather events, including storms and coastal erosion
- Management of water resources for flood risk and water supply
- Nature based solutions to mitigate impacts on communities and land within and beyond the AoS
- The response of habitats and species to climate change
- The response of farming and forestry to climate change
- Impacts on the historic environment.

Built development and Infrastructure

- The impact of new built development on the area's special qualities, including cumulative effects
- Existing challenges of affordable housing and local sites for employment
- Regional growth in surrounding areas
- Renewable energy development and associated grid infrastructure
- Potential expansion of mineral extraction
- Future improvements to public transport, active travel and transport connectivity
- New visitor infrastructure.

Land management, agriculture and natural environment

- Viability of agriculture and the need for income diversification
- Agricultural change influenced by agricultural support - framed to deliver food and wider benefits for nature and climate mitigation
- Forestry and woodland forestry planned and managed to support a National Forest for Wales for timber and wider benefits for nature and climate mitigation
- Climate change bringing additional challenges to farming and land management in terms of flooding, soil erosion, pests and disease, less predictable weather and seasons.

People communities and management of cultural heritage

- Impacts upon cultural heritage resources from diverse sources and scale of effect including - climate change, land management, and visitors
- Population change from migration and age structure can impact on community involvement and participation in local events and traditions, knowledge and use of the Welsh language and the viability/ demand upon local services
- Changes in employment, including a decline in employment in land based industries can result in loss of knowledge, skills and Welsh Language
- The availability of local housing and employment affects the viability of rural communities.

Recreation, tourism and access

- New tourist accommodation and facilities

Appendix B Summary forces for change

- Increased levels of recreation and tourism with potential for impacts on communities, land managers and wildlife
- Impacts on existing recreational resources including honeypot sites, trails and routes
- Traffic, congestion, parking and a lack of public transport and active travel options.

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