

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Annual Report on the   
Improvement Plan

2011 – 2012

PART 2

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**Foreword**

Looking back on my first year as Chairman has given me a much deeper appreciation of both the achievements of the National Park Authority and the challenges it faces in fulfilling its aims, objectives and aspirations.

The Annual Report and Improvement Plan Part II provide an opportunity to reflect on the significance of Brecon Beacons National Park to those who rely on our services and support. In my role as Chairman, I will continue to devote our resources towards a quality service, particularly in those departments that have the potential to make a contribution to improving the quality of life and wellbeing of our communities and individuals, protecting our environment, development and expanding economic growth.

In the following document we have collated and analysed the data and information that we aimed to achieve when we delivered our Improvement Plan Part I for performance in 2011-12. We have reached our targets and benchmarks in most areas, but are wholly aware that delivery excellence is a precious entity that requires constant tending and the ability to change where we need to. The National Park Authority’s activities depend on the contribution of many talented individuals and I thank them all for their service and commitment.

Many challenges still loom for National Parks in the 21st century – in energy, water, adaptation to climate change, sustainable agriculture and preservation of biodiversity.   
To tackle these challenges we need our partner organisations, our graziers, our communities, our volunteers, our staff and Members and our leaders and policy makers to be well-informed about what we have achieved, what we hope to achieve and what we may not achieve.

National Parks are more essential for our prosperity, our security, our health and wellbeing, our environment and our quality of life than they have ever been before. In fact, the potential for National Parks has never been greater. We are deeply committed to advancing our skills and our reach so that we may continue to innovate, inspire and support all those who depend on our services.

I welcome the significant responsibility we face in the years ahead and I urge everyone to become involved and actively participate in our endeavours as we look forward to the coming year.

Mrs Julie James

Chairman

# 1. Introduction

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is pleased to publish its Annual Report and Improvement Plan for the twelve months ending 31st March 2012. The Plan is written in two parts with Part 1 - which looks forward and outlines the Authority’s priority objectives for the new financial year - being published as soon as practicable after the 1st April each year.

The Annual Report and Improvement Plan Part II considers the National Park Authority’s progress against the improvement objectives for the financial year April 2011 to March 2012 which were set out in the Improvement Plan Part I which was published in April 2011. The report also sets out the Authority’s approach to discharging its general duty under the Welsh Government’s Local Government Measure and its commitment to continuous improvement. The Authority is required to publish its Annual Report and Improvement Plan Part II by no later than 31st October each year.

You can download this report from our website at [www.breconbeacons.org](http://www.breconbeacons.org) or you can ask for a paper copy by ringing our Communications Department on 01874 624 437 or emailing [communications@breconbeacons.org](mailto:communications@breconbeacons.org)

**Statement of Responsibility**

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

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

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

# 2. About us

Brecon Beacons National Park is a beautiful protected landscape that covers 520sq miles and lies between rural Mid Wales and the industrial South Wales Valleys. It was designated in 1957 and is one of 15 members of the UK National Parks family, three of which are in Wales. All three of Wales’ National Parks (Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia) share the same statutory purposes and duty. The two Statutory Purposes are:

* **Conservation and Enhancement**

*“To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.”*

* **Understanding and Enjoyment**

*“To promote opportunities for and understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks by the public.”*

In addition, we also have a Statutory Duty is to *‘seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park by working closely with the agencies and Local Authorities responsible for these matters”.*

In any conflict of interest between the purposes and the duty, National Park Authorities are instructed to give most importance to the first purpose.

The National Park is home to nearly 33,000 residents and is a popular destination for visitors with numbers estimated at nearly 5 million (visitor days) in 2010.

The National Park is administered by a special National Park Authority made up of 24 Members, over 130 Officers and staff and many volunteers.

The area of the National Park includes 50 Community Councils and covers parts of nine Unitary Authorities. Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is the local planning Authority for any development within the boundary of the National Park. It also has delegated responsibility for Rights of Way network whilst the constituent Local Authorities retain responsibility for all other local government services (e.g. highways, council tax etc.).

We have a clear vision for the National Park laid out in the National Park Management Plan – a document which spans 20 years at a time. It sets the scene for all our strategic documents and it was produced in consultation with stakeholders, landowners and communities throughout the Park. This Annual Report and Improvement Plan rely heavily on its priority actions and goals. For more information on how the National Park is structured and administered please visit our website [www.breconbeacons.org](http://www.breconbeacons.org)

# **3. A Year in Brief**

In order to deliver on the priorities set out in our National Park management Plan, we have established a series of Corporate Goal which set out the strategic priorities over a three to five year period. In brief, these are described as follows:

* Taking care of Planning
* Taking Care of (Authority) Business
* Taking care of the Environment
* Taking care of People

The following provides a brief overview of what we have achieved, and also where we did less well, for each of our Corporate Goals:

## 3.1 Taking care of planning

* We approved the Authority’s **Deposit Local Development Plan (LDP)** – the development framework for the next 15 years - for submission to the Welsh Government for examination after four years of extensive consultation and engagement with local communities and stakeholders as highlighted by the Director of Planning Aid Wales.
* 84% of more than 380 **planning applications** we received were approved.
* During 2011-2012 the Chief Executive and Director of Planning met with ten (10) **Community Councils** as part of their on-going process of meeting with Communities within the National Park to listen to their concerns and seek their views on future priorities.
* We resolved only 22% of all **enforcement cases** within 12 weeks of receipt which did not meet the Authority’s target of 65% although there was a marked increase in the total number of resolved cases in 2011-12 (179) compared to the previous year (44). Our performance was also below the Welsh national average. However, once we identified resourcing issues within enforcement, a new structure was approved in February 2012 and March 2012 saw a significant and sustained increase in closure rate to 8 cases per officer per month.
* Through our partnership work with Cadw we achieved a 20% increase in photographic evidence for **Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs)**. This figure did not meet the Authority’s target of 50%.
* We were unable to deliver a **Building Design Guide** due to insufficient funding however, we are looking to source further funding in the coming year to secure a tender to proceed with this document.

## 3.2 Taking care of business

* Working with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority we developed a **scrutiny model** for National Park Authorities which would allow Members, officers, partner organisations and the public to review areas of work in detail with the aim of identifying good practice, improvement and funding. Two pilot reviews were carried out on the effectiveness of the Sustainable Development Fund in encouraging low carbon communities and the maintenance of more than 3,000km of footpaths and bridleways of the Rights of Way network in both National Parks.
* We successfully hosted the annual **European Geopark Network Conference** for more than 100 European Delegates.
* We replaced more than 20 desktop printers with **three multi-function photocopier**s which also print and scan documents saving the Authority more than £17,000 per annum.
* We were awarded the **Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development** which provides our Members with advanced training to make informed decisions to support National Park purposes – making us only the second Authority in Wales to achieve this award.

## 3.3 Taking care of the environment

* Wardens have continued to work closely with graziers associations helping them to mark out common boundaries on upland commons to be submitted into the **Glastir Common Land Element**. This work has built upon existing working relationships.
* Work continued on developing the **water related recreation hub**, which has included improved access on the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal towpath and River Usk, installation of the new bird hide designed and built by the Prince’s Trust Foundation at Llangors Lake which was officially opened by HRH Prince Charles and progress made to provide access to a number of reservoirs in the Park.
* We reduced our **vehicle CO2 emissions** to below 92g/km since June 2011 by introducing a fleet of 5 eco-friendly vehicles.
* Our overall **CO2 footprint** reduced by 2.45% - just short of our target of 3%. However, over the last 4 years we have reduced our CO2 footprint by 22%. In 2011-12 we generated 97 tons less CO2 than in 2007-08.
* During May 2011, the National Park experienced the worst wildfires in over 30 years to more than 6000 acres of heathland common and peat bog located on Mynydd Isaf, Manor Penderyn and Mynydd Llangors. As a result we have invested £11,000 in **LiDAR and hyperspectroscopy images** to capture baseline data across the National Park that can be used in GIS modelling for the future. In addition, we have invited two University MSc students to complete their dissertations on post-fire ecology which will improve our baseline data. We have also strengthened our relationship with the South and Mid-West Wales Fire and Rescue Services conducting controlled burns, attending training sessions, collaborating on various prevention, education initiatives and enforcement campaigns to reduce deliberate grass and mountain fires.
* Major improvement works were completed to more than 18km of the **Rights of Way networks** and more than 3,000 metres of upland path erosion (almost three times more than we achieve in 2010/2011). We also saw a significant increase in the number of Public Path Orders being completed this year due to improved delegation of decision making.
* Passenger journeys on **Beacons Bus** increased by 19%, averaging a 22% increase per year for the last 10 years.
* In partnership with Brecon Beacons Park Society we launched an **International Dark Skies campaign** as part of an ongoing bid for International Dark Skies Reserve status.
* We led a bid to secure funding of £34,000 for **The Engagement Gateway project** to provide free environmental training to those who met the criteria set by the Welsh Government. Unfortunately, we were unable to deliver on this project because applicants were unable to meet the strict requirements for eligibility.
* Limited progress has been made compiling data and selecting indicators for the **State of the Park Report**. The principal limiting factor is the availability of relevant and robust data sets specific to the National Park geographic area. Most of the datasets available are structured according to units which are aligned to the nine (9) unitary authorities over which the National Park is designated. The fact that the National Park boundary encompasses portions of these units complicates the calculations of such elements as average house prices, equality information, tourism figures and community well-being.
* Our work to develop the **Upland Management Programme** is taking longer than we anticipated due to the scale and complexity of the tasks involved and the need to develop our partnerships with other stakeholders.
* There have been setbacks on the restoration and aftercare works for the 1220mm **gas pipeline** where it crosses Mynydd Myddfai and Mynydd Bach Trecastell with the restoration and aftercare works taking longer to achieve the desired the desired outcome. The National Park Authority will continue to work with National Grid Gas PLC, Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and graziers to achieve the best possible outcome.

## Taking care of people

* We provided over 5,800 young people across the National Park with unique inspiring National Park experiences through our **education work**.
* We secured the **Rural Alliances project** worth more than €10 million - funded by the EU’s Interreg IVB North West Europe programme - spread across 12 international partners to support rural communities taking control of their sustainable development. As lead partner the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority will invest £800,000 towards tourism, of which £320,000 has been provided by the Welsh Government’s Targeted Match Fund.
* We offered local businesses a varied programme of 19 courses including how to market themselves more effectively through Social Media and how to source local food. 37 National Park Ambassadors from local businesses have also received special training to give them a broader knowledge of the Park.
* Total funding of more than £50,000 was secured or the national **Walking with Offa project** to support local town bids from Talgarth, Crickhowell and Hay on Wye to become ‘Walkers are Welcome towns, generate a walking website and a community access management project encouraging local people to help protect our footpaths.
* An increase in **volunteer numbers** from 97 to 127 with 780 days of volunteer time expended on National Park Authority projects representing £39,000 worth of work – or more than two full time posts worth. The Authority firmed up its commitment to volunteering with the appointment of a part-time Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteers are now engaged with more departments than ever before and have added considerable knowledge and skills outside the core activities which have employed volunteers in the past - conservation and walks leading. Volunteers are engaged across the Authority taking part in diverse activities from surveying the public to using LiDAR.
* Working with **socially excluded groups** to meet its target with Agored Cymru accredited Rural Skills Training, we developed more than 10 accredited courses with more than 21 participants of which 100% felt they would consider volunteering in the outdoors and wished to partake in further courses on dry stone walling, geocaching, wildlife conservation, hedge laying, geology and forestry.

# 4. Did we deliver what we set out to achieve in 2011 to 2012?

## 4.1 Strive towards providing an excellent planning service.

We said we would measure how well we did by:

1. Establishing the level of customer confidence in the service.
2. Gaining more than 76% for those who rate the service as good or better in response to the survey.
3. Implementing plans to monitor any changes in these indicators.

**What we achieved:**

**Establishing the level of customer confidence in the service**

* We established a baseline of customer confidence for the first item this year so that we can compare performance in future years. In 2011-12 94% of those surveyed reported confidence in the planning service

**Gain more than 76% for those who rate the service as good or better**

* Our annual customer service survey reported that 88% of customers rated the planning service as good or better - a result that was 12% above our target.

**Implementing plans to monitor any changes in these indicators**

* Planning performance figures are monitored on a quarterly basis with regular reports delivered to alternate meetings of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

**Other achievements include:**

* We received 588 valid applications (16.8% increases on the previous year).
* 67% of planning applications were determined within 8 weeks compared to the target of 65%. Of particular note was that 75% of householder applications were determined within 8 weeks compared to the target of 50%.
* A total of 385 PSI returns\* planning applications were determined, of which 84% (322) were approved.  This result was 9% above our target of 75%.

\*This figure is based on PSI returns, which does not include Listed Building Consents, Conservation Area Consents, or Agricultural Notifications.

* In total 496 applications were determined during 2011/2012.
* We granted planning permission for 25 affordable housing units through our planning obligations strategy with a further 8 affordable housing units granted on affordable housing exception sites within the National Park.
* Two successful planning agents meetings were held, attended by more than 15 representative agents - providing an informal forum for agents to openly discuss any planning issues they may have and for the Authority to provide information on the latest developments within planning.

**Overall, we believe we have made good progress in our aspiration to deliver an excellent planning service. Despite a 16.8% increase in planning applications, we exceeded our targets for the number of cases determined within 8 weeks in all categories and 84% of applications determined were approved. 88% of planning service customers surveyed rated the service received as good or better compared to our target of 76% and 94% of those surveyed said they had confidence in the planning service.**

## 4.2 Produce more renewable energy, bringing income and improved resilience to increasing fuel costs in the locale.

We said we would measure how well we did by:

1. An increase in the amount of renewable energy being generated
2. The income received by local communities

**What we achieved:**

**An increase in the amount of renewable energy being generated**

* More than £24,000 was provided from the Authority’s Sustainable Development Fund for local renewable energy projects which provided funding for an air source heat pump at Libanus Chapel and Community Hall, reducing barriers to micro-generation within Monmouthshire and improving energy efficiency measures including a mixture of loft, cavity and external wall insulation together with voltage optimisation to help reduce carbon emissions and support the village of Llangattock to become carbon neutral by 2015.
* The amount of renewable energy being generated was increased by supporting 11 hydro schemes (currently under contract with landowners) and 4 community energy groups in Llangadog (woodland), Llanbedr (hydro), Llangynidr (hydro) and Carmarthenshire Energy Group (hydro). Two further community scale hydro feasibility studies have been completed in North Merthyr and Vaynor National Park sites.
* The National Park Authority received 35 renewable energy applications in the 2011-2012 financial year. 32 of those were approved, 2 more were deemed not to need planning permissions since they were allowed under permitted development and one was refused.  This included applications for solar panels, ground source heat pumps, micro hydro installations, domestic wind turbines and air source heat pumps.

**Income received by local communities**

* We worked with The Green Valleys Community Interest Company (CiC) to generate 47 cubic metres of wood fuel production from community woodland schemes (a saving of £6015 based on equivalent kWh from oil or LPG\*.

\* Average of oil and LPG costs calculated 6.8p/kWh as of February 2012 prices

**Other achievements include:**

* We organised 15 community energy training events in the National Park through partnership working with The Green Valleys CiC.
* Following on from an Initial Assessment Report produced in October 2010 which initially identified 16 potential micro-hydro sites on Authority-owned land, an evaluation and prioritisation exercise was undertaken to select the 4 sites most suitable for more detailed evaluation. The exercise was completed in July 2011 and the recommendation arising from it was that 5 sites progress to full feasibility stage.
* Following the July 2011 report, The Green Valleys Hydro Ltd were commissioned to carry out full feasibility studies on the 5 selected sites and these were all completed by the end of March 2012.
* The Authority is still evaluating the studies undertaken and the next stage will involve selecting the order in which schemes should progress, securing the necessary funds for implementation, and negotiating any infrastructure/connections/wayleaves which may be necessary on adjoining land.

**Overall we are pleased with the progress we have made in this area. It is difficult to assess the amount of energy saved or additional renewable energy generated from SDF funded projects as many are still in their infancy but what is clear is that £24,000 has been invested in projects which otherwise would not have taken place. The work with The Green Valleys CiC has achieved an expenditure offset by community woodfuel production of over £6000 and this is an area of additional focus for National Park Authority support of the CiC in the 2012-13 year.**

## 4.3 Better protect the Park’s special qualities from inappropriate development.

We said we would measure how well we did by:

1. Developing plans to reduce the level of inappropriate development in the National Park.
2. A reduction in the backlog of enforcement cases to be resolved
3. An increase in the percentage of planning breaches satisfactorily resolved

**What we achieved:**

**Developing plans to reduce the level of inappropriate development in the National Park**

* The enforcement service was restructured in February 2012, following which the team developed processes and targets to deal with new complaints as they arise and to begin the process of reducing the backlog of cases. This has enabled monthly productivity to be brought onto a par with the performance of respective local authority enforcement teams.

**A reduction in the backlog of enforcement cases to be resolved**

* The backlog in cases was not reduced during the year.

**An increase in the percentage of planning breaches satisfactorily resolved**

* We resolved only 22% of all enforcement cases within 12 weeks of receipt which did not meet the Authority’s target of 65%. Our performance was also below the Welsh national average.
* However, once we identified resourcing issues within enforcement, the new structure approved in February 2012 saw a significant and sustained increase in closure rate to 8 cases per officer per month from March 2012 onwards.
* It is also important to note that in 2011-12 we resolved a total of 179 cases, 22% of which within 12 weeks. This compares to a total of 44 in 2010-11, 16% of which within 12 weeks and only 17 in 2009-10, 18% within 12 weeks.

**Other achievements include:**

* Our target of 100% of determined appeals that upheld the Authority’s decision in relation to enforcement notices was achieved.
* As part of the process of improvement, we produced an updated Enforcement Charter, Planning Enforcement Advice Note and a new enforcement complaint form.

**Overall we have laid the groundwork for future improvement but we did not reach our target of 65% of enforcement cases resolved within 12 weeks. By March 2012, closure rates had increased to 8 per officer per month. In 2012-13 this should allow new cases to be resolved within the required timescale and additional resource will be provided to reduce the backlog.**

## 4.4 Better conserve the Park’s built heritage

We said we would measure how well we did by:

1. a reduction in the number of buildings at risk
2. fewer unauthorised works to historic buildings
3. guidance provided to planners on the status of conservation areas

**What we achieved:**

**Reducing the number of buildings at risk**

* A strategy for Buildings at Risk (BARs) was developed and was approved by the Authority in May 2012.
* We achieved a 6.5% reduction in the number of BARs which has reduced the total remaining to 132.
* Grant aid of £9,000 was provided for three Buildings at Risk.

**Fewer unauthorised works to historic buildings**

* Pre-application advice was provided on more than 60 Listed Buildings.

**Guidance provided to Planners on the status of conservation areas**

* Training on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas was provided to planning officers.

**Other achievements include:**

* Provision of grant aid to three (3) buildings within the Talgarth Conservation Area. The total value of grant aid awarded was £12,000 which was funded jointly by Powys County Council.
* We completed a conservation area appraisal of Brecon which has resulted in an extension of the conservation area boundary.  Grant aid will be available to works to commercial buildings in the Conservation Area in 2012/13
* Listed Buildings information in Uniform and on GIS was updated, scrutinised and consolidated so that it falls into one definitive dataset.
* We raised awareness of the need to protect the integrity of Listed Buildings by producing a general leaflet on conserving and enhancing heritage assets in the National Park.

**Overall, whilst there is still a lot of work to do, we are satisfied that we have achieved improvement in this area. We have reduced the Buildings at Risk by 6.5%, funded improvements to buildings in the Talgarth Conservation Area and have revised and extended the Brecon Conservation Area and provided training to planning officers as planned.**

## 4.5 Minimise damage to the Park’s environment

We said we would measure how well we did by:

1. Delivery of practical projects that mitigate impacts
2. The establishment of baseline data to inform State of the Park monitoring

**What we achieved:**

**Delivery of practical projects:**

**Black Mountains SSS1**

* Reduced peat erosion on the Cross Border Erosion Project Scar 1 through our joint partnership with Natural England. The Cross Border Project Erosion Scar 2 strategy has been completed and is awaiting implementation by Natural England.
* Sponsored the completion of night surveys to locate the rare Silarian Moth (a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species) which was completed on Hatterrall Hill, with sponsorship from the Conservation and Community Grant Fund which is funded by monies received from filming in the National Park.
* Completed annual controlled burns on Hatterrall Hill and established baseline data on vegetation recovery following burning completed by a university student completing an MSc project.

**Henallt Common SSSI**

* Completed site enhancement works including bracken and scrub control, introduced stock grazing by graziers and installed a cattle grid using a CCW S15 agreement and an enhancement grant provided by the National Grid Gas PLC.

**Llangasty (Llangors Lake SSSI) and Caeau Ty Mawr SSSI**

* Continued use of cattle grazing to improve habitat management of Caeau Ty Mawr pastures.
* Cleared scrub within the reed swamp of Llangasty, created ‘wet fences’ and completed ditch works to improve habitats and water quality entering the Lake.
* Supported an MSc project on the distribution of Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) in response to ditch management works.
* Drafted management plan for Llangasty and Caeau Ty Mawr.
* Installed a new interpretation panel with the aid of a CCW grant at Llangasty Car Park, following on from the partnership work we helped facilitate in implementing the design, public consultation and replacement of the new bird hide.

**Mynydd Illtyd (Illtyd Pools SSSI)**

* Sprayed gorse re-growth in places where it had previously been cut down.
* Provided funding from filming to rebuild more than 30 metres of dry stone walling on the common.

**Mynydd Du SSSI**

* Completed controlled burns on Tair Cairn Uchaf and established baseline data by supporting an MSc fire risk assessment project.
* Commissioned LiDAR and hyperspectral aerial photographs of Mynydd Isaf where damaged by very large wildfire; also included images for Herbert’s Quarry (for Calch Project), Waun Fignen Felen and the second erosion scar on Black Mountains SSSI.
* Installed new cattle grid on Mynydd Bach Trecastell and undertook experimental habitat enhancements on Mynydd Myddfai under the enhancement grant from National Grid Gas PLC.
* Continued liaison with National Grid Gas PLC and contractors to provide increased assurance of aftercare and restoration on Mynydd Myddfai (pipeline scar).

**Manor Penderyn**

* Continued to work with commoners and graziers to improve conditions for livestock, biodiversity and walkers by mowing areas and carrying out controlled burns.
* Continued to prepare the application for consent to retain the fence separating the common from Eastern Great Forest.

**Carreg Cennen Woodlands SSSI and other woodlands**

* Controlled bracken and supported habitat management at Carreg Cennen SSSI.
* Received grant funding from Better Woodlands for Wales for The Govilon Line, Llangattock Beech Woods, Clun Gwyn, Gunpowder Works, Craig y Nos Country Park and Carreg Cennen Woodlands.
* Supported at least four active Community Woodland Groups through The Green Valleys Service Level Agreement (SLA).

**Garn Goch SAM**

* Continued to support the Tir Gofal agreement and controlled bracken regrowth with weed wiping and spraying.

**Biodiversity Information Service (BIS) and Research**

* Maintained the annual SLA with BIS and successfully development GIS habitat suitability models for European Protected Species to be used to contextualise planning policies and decision.
* Commenced KESS studentship with Swansea University to examine peat carbon profiles of raised bogs in the Park.
* Continued to support staff PHD studentship on the ecology and distribution of Carabidae within a modified riverine environment.
* Drafted Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Research Prospectus for approval by the National Park Authority.

**Upland Landscape Management**

* A project team has been assembled to deliver the planned objectives in the 2012-13 year.
* We have commenced our scoping looking at uplands across the entire Park
* We have commenced work regarding funding sources from HLF and supporting graziers to enter Glastir scheme
* Commenced work on stakeholder engagement in terms of work on the Black Mountain and inclusion within Glastir Agri environment scheme.

**Establishment of baseline data to inform State of the Park Monitoring**

* We commissioned a landscape character assessment for the entirety of the National Park. This work will provide geographic reference for the Park’s special qualities as well as a baseline for conservation management. It is underpinned by CCW’s LANDMAP, and together they support the Park’s designation as a protected landscape.
* We held discussions with officers and partners to identify key issues facing the Park’s resources. Candidate data sets and indicators were explored. Data gaps were identified where applicable.
* We sought assistance from Data Unit Wales, Welsh Government Statisticians, Environment Agency Wales, and others in gathering data sets and disaggregating them at the Park level where applicable. The only ONS data sets available for National Parks are general population statistics. This challenge continues to hamper progress on the state of the park report.

**Other achievements include:**

* In November 2010 the Waterfall Country Management Plan was approved by the Members of the National Park Authority. The ten year plan is a joint project between Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Forestry Commission Wales and Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) focussing on protecting and enhancing the waterfall area whilst balancing the needs of visitors, residents, and sensitive habitats. The evolving Five Year Work Plan sits along-side the Management Plan and acts as a live document and includes targets and deadlines that are officer and organisation specific.   In order to prioritise the Five Year Work Plan, a core steering group (including officers from FCW and CCW) meet three times a year to discuss and agree outcomes, targets and funding.

**Overall we have carried out a significant number of projects that will contribute towards the objective of minimising damage to the Park’s environment. We recognise the need and are working on improving the robustness of our performance targets and to determine how best to increase the distribution of conservation projects across the whole of the Park. In 2102-13 we need to look at how we can develop a wider partnership based approach to focus resource and effort where it is most needed. A good example of where we have worked well is in the Waterfalls area.**

# 

# 5. Conclusion

2011-12 saw the Authority take another step forward in terms of developing Improvement Objectives that are outcome focused and are derived from the priorities contained within the National Park Management Plan. This was seen as work in progress and further improvements in linking improvement objectives to Management Plan priorities will be introduced in 2012-13.

There is always room for improvement but overall we believe that we have delivered on our Improvement Objectives as follows:

**Striving towards providing an excellent planning service**

88% of customers of the planning service rated the service received as good or better compared to our target of 76%. In the face of increased numbers of applications received, we exceeded our targets for the number of cases determined within 8 weeks within all categories and 84% of applications determined were approved. We have still to define “excellence” and how it can be measured and we have set ourselves a target of defining and consulting on this in October 2012.

**Produce more renewable energy, bringing income and improved resilience to increasing fuel costs in the locale.**

Through the Sustainable Development Fund we invested £24,000 in renewable energy and energy saving projects which otherwise would not have taken place. The work with the Green Valleys CiC has achieved an expenditure offset by community woodfuel production of over £6000 and this is an area of additional focus for BBNPA support of the CiC in the 2012-13 year.

**Better protect the Park’s special qualities from inappropriate development.**

Overall we have laid the groundwork for future improvement but we did not reach our target of 65% of enforcement cases resolved within 12 weeks and no reduction in the backlog of cases was achieved. By March 2012, closure rates had increased to 8 per officer per month. In 2012-13 this should allow new cases to be resolved within the required timescale and additional resource will be provided to reduce the backlog. We have set targets to reduce the backlog from 140 cases to 50 in the 2012-13 years and to resolve 65% of cases within 12 weeks.

**Better conserve the Park’s built heritage**

There remains much to do in this area but we are satisfied that we have achieved improvement in this area. Although no specific target was set, we have reduced the Buildings at Risk by 6.5%. We have also funded improvements to buildings in the Talgarth Conservation Area and have revised and extended the Brecon Conservation Area and provided training to planning officers as planned.

**Minimise damage to the Park’s environment**

We could have been more effective in the setting of targets and a good deal of the work has been focussed on Authority owned land but we have carried out a significant number of projects that will contribute towards the objective of minimising damage to the Park’s environment. In 2102-13 we need to look at how we can develop a wider partnership based approach to focus resource and effort where it is most needed, building on the exemplar approach adopted in the Waterfalls area. This Improvement Objective will be the first to be subject to a formal scrutiny review during 2012-13 as part of the Authority’s newly introduced scrutiny programme.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Financial Summary

## Appendix 2: Performance Indicators

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Performance Indicator** | **Results**  **2009-2010** | **Results**  **2010-2011** | **Results**  **2011 - 2012** | **Target**  **2011 - 2012** |
| [CHR/ 001](#CHR001) | The percentage of employees (including teachers and school based staff) who leave the employment of the authority, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis. | 6.0% | 5.9% | 7.69% | 10% |
| [CHR/ 002](#CHR002) | The number of working days/ shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) authority employees lost due to sickness absence. | 6.3 days | 9.1 days | 7.42 days | 8 days |
| CHR/ 004 | The percentage of authority employees from minority ethnic communities. | 1.8% | 1.53% | 2.3% | 2.27% |
| CHR/ 005 | The percentage of Authority employees declaring that they are disabled under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act. | 4.0% | 4.0% | 3.2% |  |
| CFH/ 006 | The percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid within 30 days of such invoices being received by the authority. | 96% | 97.6% | 98% | 98% |
| PLA/  002 | The percentage of applications for development during the year that were approved. | 79% | 84% | 84% | 85% |
| PLA/  003 | The number of appeals that were determined during the year, in relation to:   1. planning application decisions 2. enforcement notices   The percentage of these determined appeals that upheld the Authority’s decision, in relation to:   1. Planning application decisions 2. Enforcement notices | Total 29  27 (12 dismissed)  2  44%  100% | Total 20  11 (8 dismissed)  2  72%  83% | Total 13  13 (11 dismissed)  1  85%  100% | 100%  100% |
| [PLA/](#PLA004)  [004](#PLA004) | 1. The percentage of major planning applications determined during the year within 13 weeks\* 2. The percentage of minor planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks 3. The percentage of householder planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks 4. The percentage of all other planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks | 0%  62.8%  82.5%  53.7% | 0%  57.1%  59.6%  49% | 0%  60%  75%  61% | 40%  50%  45% |
| PLA/  005 | The percentage of enforcement cases resolved during the year within 12 weeks of receipt. | 18% | 16% | 22% | 65% |
| PLA/  006 | The number of affordable housing units provided during the year as a percentage of all additional housing units provided during the year.\*\* | N/A | N/A | N/A | 15% |
| PLA/  007 | The number of additional housing units provided during the year on previously developed land as a percentage of all additional housing units provided during the year.\*\*\* | N/A | N/A | N/A |  |

\*PLA 004 (i) is rarely going to be determined in a National Park within 13 weeks unless it’s a quick refusal of planning permission. Many such major applications would fall into Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development and are therefore determined over a longer timescale.

\*\*PLA 006 is a percentage based on the planning permissions given and we are not currently measuring the implementation of the affordable units.

\*\*\*PLA 007 likely to be small as we certainly don’t have large tracts of brownfield land in the way the southern Authorities do.

## Appendix 3:

National Parks Wales Comparative Performance Indicators   
2011-2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Performance Indicator** | **BBNPA** | **PCNPA** | **SNPA** |
| [CHR/ 001](#CHR001) | The percentage of employees (including teachers and school based staff) who leave the employment of the authority, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis. | 7.69% | 16% | 7.2% |
| [CHR/ 002](#CHR002) | The number of working days/ shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) authority employees lost due to sickness absence. | 7.42 days | 6.5 days | 13 days |
| CHR/ 004 | The percentage of authority employees from minority ethnic communities. | 1.54% | 0% | 0% |
| CHR/ 005 | The percentage of authority employees declaring that they are disabled under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act. | 3.6% | 5.8% | 0.5% |
| CFH/ 006 | The percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid within 30 days of such invoices being received by the Authority. | 98% | 98.5% | 99.8% |
| PLA/ 002 | The percentage of applications for development during the year that were approved. | 84% | 92% | 85% |
| PLA/  003 | The number of appeals that were determined during the year, in relation to:   1. planning application decisions 2. enforcement notices   The percentage of these determined appeals that upheld the Authority’s decision, in relation to:   1. Planning application decisions 2. Enforcement notices | Total 14  13  1  85%  100% | Total 21  21  66%  NA | Total 15  13  2  61.5%  50% |
| [PLA/](#PLA004)  [004](#PLA004) | 1. The percentage of major planning applications determined during the year within 13 weeks.\* 2. The percentage of minor planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks. 3. The percentage of householder planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks. 4. The percentage of all other planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks. | 0%  60%  75%  61% | 0%  54%  81%  68% | 25%  53%  76%  89% |
| PLA/  005 | The percentage of enforcement cases resolved during the year within 12 weeks of receipt. | 22% | 81% | 53% |
| PLA/  006 | The number of affordable housing units provided during the year as a percentage of all additional housing units provided during the year.\*\* | N/A | 20% | 46% |
| PLA/  007 | The number of additional housing units provided during the year on previously developed land as a percentage of all additional housing units provided during the year.\*\*\* | N/A | 95% | 61.5% |

\*PLA 004 (i) is rarely going to be determined in a National Park within 13 weeks unless it’s a quick refusal of planning permission. Many such major applications would fall into Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development and are therefore determined over a longer timescale.

\*\*PLA 006 is a percentage based on the planning permissions given and we are not currently measuring the implementation of the affordable units.

\*\*\*PLA 007 likely to be small as we certainly don’t have large tracts of brownfield land in sustainable locations in the way the urban southern Authorities do.

**Appendix 4:** Glossary of acronyms and abbreviations

BAR Buildings at Risk

BBNPA Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

BDG Building Design Guide

BIP Business Improvement Plan

BIS Biodiversity Information Service

BBPS Brecon Beacons Park Society

Cadw     Welsh:  to keep, Welsh pronunciation:  kadu.  The historic environment service of the Welsh Government, part of the Housing, Regeneration and Heritage Department

CiC Community Interest Company

CCW Countryside Council for Wales

DDA Disability Discrimination Act

EAW Environment Agency Wales

EIA Environmental Impact Assessment

EU European Union

FCW  Forestry Commission Wales

FTE  Full Time Equivalent

GIS Geographic Information System

HLF Heritage Lottery Fund

KESS Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships

LDP Local Development Plan

LiDAR Light Detection and Radar

LPG Liquid Petroleum Gas

MSc Master of Science

NG National Grid

NPA National Park Authority

NPM National Park Management Plan

NT National Trust

PAROW Planning and Rights of Way

PCNPA  Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

PhD Doctor of Philosophy

PI Performance Indicator

PLC Public Limited Company

ROW Rights of Way

SAM Scheduled Ancient Monument

SDF Sustainable Development Fund

SSSI Site of Special Scientific Interest

SAC Special Area of Conservation

SLA Service Level Agreement

SNPA Snowdonia National Park Authority

SOP State of the Park

TGV The Green Valleys

Uniform Name of computer software system

WAO Welsh Audit Office

WG Welsh Government

WLGA Welsh Local Government Association

## Appendix 5:

[**Business Improvement Plan Part 1**](file:///C:\Users\joannam\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Low\Content.IE5\9FNY2QIO\Item%2010%20Background%20Paper%20-%20The%20Improvement%20Plan%20for%202012%20-%202013%20final.pdf)