

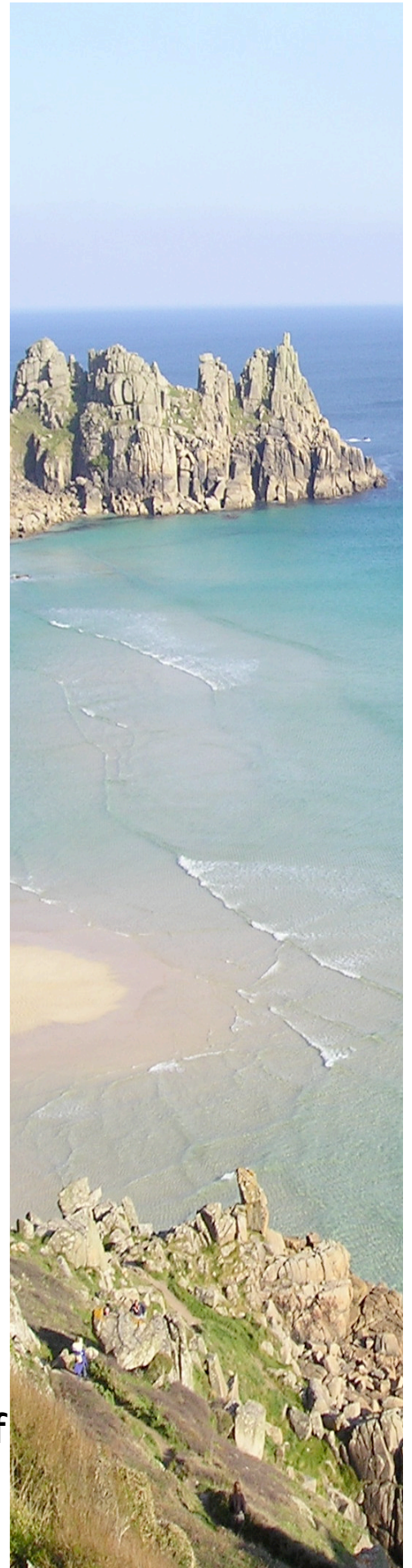


EUROPARC **Atlantic Isles**

Conservation Without Frontiers

**Protected areas in the
21st century –
what does the future hold?**

**Spring Seminar Report
Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff
27–28 March 2008**



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1 Introduction: facing the challenge

The EAI spring seminar in Cardiff was a 24-hour chance for delegates to think carefully and strategically about the future of protected areas. We were delighted that the seminar attracted so many people from across the EAI region and beyond.

Together we set out to address two key questions: are the current UK designations right, and what lessons can be learnt from colleagues in Europe?

David Coleman's keynote presentation on the first evening of the seminar was an excellent start, and challenged protected-area managers to get our act together, be more robust and articulate, and stand up to some of the challenges that Treasury might put our way by being able to justify and value the benefits that protected areas deliver.

Clearly, the importance of the ecosystems services approach is growing in importance. However, it is useful at this juncture to question whether there might also be a need to look further over the horizon, to a fundamental restructuring of designations.

We can point to the excellent track record of protected areas within the UK, Ireland and Iceland, and across Europe, and the pride in designations and work that has gone into managing them. Given the changing context of our work, it is time to consider how this knowledge, from these islands and beyond, could be taken forward into a new crop of designations that might emerge in years to come.

It was exciting and refreshing to hear voices from across the protected area community make such a clear and united call for a revitalised 'vision' for our landscapes, and even more heartening to hear people suggest that EUROPARC Atlantic Isles is in the right position to take a lead on this work.

The EUROPARC Federation is key; as members, we can work together to draw upon expertise and experience across Europe, and make use of it. Forward-facing thinking is going on across Europe, and the results of this seminar will be fed into the next EUROPARC general assembly in Romania in September 2008.



Martin Lane

EAI Chairman

2 Key messages

10 main points from speakers and delegates

- **There is a need for a new collective vision “to get the landscape protection system we deserve”**

“Although we are gaining experience in management and planning, the world is moving very rapidly... we are not ready to face these challenges.”

“More competition means more rigorous prioritising... there is time for protected areas to prepare their cases before the next spending review in 09.”

“We urgently need to update the policy framework for category V protected landscapes as a whole. The 1991 policy framework for AONBs is woefully inadequate”.

- **EAI is well-placed to co-ordinate that vision, to promulgate it and give it voice by providing the space for a new strategic partnership**

“[there is] an opportunity to get a collective vision for the protected areas of the British Isles through EUROPARC. We need to change from within and as a team”.

“EAI needs to show leadership and promote this message”.

“We can challenge the EAI Board for a higher-level vision for protected areas, building on past success, reflecting current society values, yet also the need the need for behavioural change”.

“EAI could take the lead on this, maybe host a Chatham House Rules type event”.

- **A revitalised approach to engagement is a key part of this vision**

“In many cases there is the perception that we are protecting [these areas] from the very stakeholders with which we most need to engage. Also, as we move towards a more technical, often reductionist approach to landscape management, are we in danger of losing the emotional, intangible elements that lead us to value, and often designate landscape in the first place?”

- **There is an opportunity for using the 2009 anniversaries (60 years after the 1949 Act and 100 years after the first National Parks in Europe) to build momentum**

“The 2009 anniversary (of protected areas) is an opportunity to get a collective vision”.

- **There is a need to incorporate the European dimension**

There is an opportunity for the Federation to drive this collaborative effort. Any vision should look beyond UK borders. It should be set in a European context so that joint initiatives with European partners (for example, around branding) can readily emerge. We should examine the specific measures of the ELC, on training, education, involving all mattering and the setting of improvement indicators, in greater detail.

- **Protected areas must grow the business, for example through collective branding**

"Is it the right time to think about further joint branding initiatives, at EAI or European levels? We need to discuss this".

- **Protected areas cannot avoid the reality of cost-benefit analysis
Economic tools must be developed and deployed – there is much we can learn from elsewhere in Europe**

"Every decision that a Minister takes has to have a cost-benefit analysis associated with it - and that seeks to put a monetary value on everything. In protected landscapes and access we are way behind the game and it is something we need to sort out pretty quickly".

"To enhance political attention for protected areas, EUROPARC Germany developed a low-expense method to calculate the economic effects of protected areas, that gives reliable estimates. The method was tested successfully in three large-scale protected areas and showed that they contribute significantly to regional economic systems".

- **Part of any new vision should include natural resource protection**

"We need a stronger ability to bring about the changes in land management that are needed for biodiversity, resource management, climate change mitigation and adaptation".

- **There is a need for greater collaboration...**

"There is no overall framework for strategy development or collaborative working across UK protected landscapes. We have to improve collaboration and the transfer of information and best practice across the protected landscape family with the UK and Europe".

- **...and communications**

"We have to promote a clear and more coherent message across government about the role and importance of protected landscapes".

3 Presentation summaries

What future for protected areas?

David Coleman - Defra

A clear and candid appraisal of the future, based on considerable experience, gave the seminar a flying start. David Coleman, Defra's head of sponsorship, landscape and recreation, outlined key factors influencing government thinking on protected areas and the effects this could have in the medium and long term.

Focussing on England, he set out to answer two questions: how to measure the success of protected areas, and what is the future for designations?

Key context and "growing the business"

On the first question, he examined how protected areas might grow their business and indeed their whole concept; and how they might measure the outcomes/benefits of protected areas in order to sell the "brand".

Describing as "unlikely to change" the increasingly tough environment which protected areas (which mostly rely on public money) are competing in to attract resources, he pointed out that the other important context in England is regional. The Treasury-inspired sub-national review places a stronger emphasis on economic development, backed by regional spatial strategies.

However, protected areas are integrated and area-based - like a local authority - and look after a place, albeit on a slightly narrower basis, so face difficulties in selling services. One possible - but difficult - pitch could be to go to government and say: "For the next three years we will be able to deliver twice as much, so can we have twice as much money?"

Instead he believed that protected areas could more successfully grow by developing sales of "more specific services, turning some of your acknowledged public benefits into products to sell competitively in the marketplace".

"Other people like YHA, BTCV and private organisations would obviously be competing in such a market where you commoditize, in an appropriate way, what you are offering and sell it on."

Another area with even greater potential in the short term could be carbon management, if the market develops.

In terms of business growth, he saw change as necessary in this highly competitive situation, and predicted "difficulty in the pitch of simply saying: 'We are wonderful areas, aren't we, and we can be even more wonderful in three years time, so can we please have a 50% increase in our grant?' More successful could be trying to make what you're offering into products," which, in turn, would raise "the interesting question of whether you act individually, or in groups".

Setting priorities

More competition means more rigorous prioritising, he pointed out. Every three years the comprehensive spending review (the next one is in 2009 and is likely to cover the period of an election) leads to "a thirst to make comparative judgements".

Thus ministers “really do sit down with papers in front of them and make decisions about whether to give more money to protected areas or to solving the waste problem, or providing warmer homes, or carbon fixing. These are genuine choices.”

There is time for protected areas to prepare their cases, as there will be no more exercises in looking at relative priorities for public spending until 2009. Decision-making is informed by targets, which have to be set: not an easy task. Defra has just two cross-government priorities, or public service agreements: the natural environment¹ and climate change².

He said it had been “particularly interesting” developing these targets, and measures by which success will be judged, particularly for the natural environment: “Biodiversity is there in the shape of the old SSSI condition target, and there was a lot of debate about whether we should try to add to something like a landscape

¹ **Natural Environment - Public Service Agreement**

On 9th October 2007, Government published the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR 2007) which contained a new set of cross-government priorities or Public Service Agreements (PSAs). These represent the key priorities for Government for the period from April 2008 until March 2011.

Defra will lead on PSA28 “Secure a healthy natural environment for today and the future” with Department of Communities and Local Government and Department for Transport as formal delivery partners. Other government departments, such as DBERR, MOD and DCMS, will also contribute; and the Defra Network, particularly Forestry Commission, Natural England and Environment Agency will play a key role in delivery.

The natural environment PSA sets out the Government’s vision to:

“secure a diverse, healthy and resilient natural environment, which provides the basis for everyone’s well-being, health and prosperity now and in the future; and where the value of the services provided by the natural environment are reflected in decision-making.”

Progress towards delivering this PSA will be measured against the following indicators: water quality as measured by parameters assessed by Environment Agency river water quality monitoring programmes; biodiversity as indicated by changes in wild breeding-bird populations in England, as a proxy for the health of wider biodiversity; air quality – meeting the Air Quality Strategy objectives for eight air pollutants as illustrated by trends in measurements of two of the more important pollutants which affect public health: particles and nitrogen dioxide; marine health – clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas as indicated by proxy measurements of fish stocks, sea pollution and plankton status; land management – the contribution of agricultural land management to the natural environment as measured by the positive and negative impacts of farming

² **The Climate Change PSA** is to “lead the global effort to avoid dangerous climate change” and is measured against the following indicators:

- * Global CO₂ emissions to 2050
- * Adaptation – proportion of areas with sustainable abstraction
- * Size of the global carbon market
- * Total UK greenhouse gas and CO₂ emissions
- * Greenhouse gas and CO₂ intensity of the UK economy
- * A measurement of cost-effectiveness

Further details on these indicators can be found in the delivery agreements for these two PSAs at www.defra.gov.uk

indicator target and possibly an 'access to the natural environment/recreation' type target."

"It was a tempting thought - the biodiversity world in general has benefited hugely in the past five or six years from having a quantitative target. It was tempting to say that the interests of protected areas, particularly the landscape and access interests, would benefit from being included in that regime."

"We chose not to, for a number of reasons. Partly because if you scratch the surface of some of the biodiversity targets you find they are not as satisfactory as they first appear – they do have some perverse effects too. And when we sat down and thought about what the targets would be it really did crumble in our fingers."

The equivalent of the SSI condition target didn't translate into landscape quality, and on the recreational access front "you almost certainly would be drawn towards something like a distance criteria – for example that everyone should be within 300 metres from a piece of green space. But again, that seemed to us so deficient in summing up whether you were succeeding or not in enriching people's lives, that it was just not the right thing to do."

"So we kind of crossed our fingers a little, having done that, because the implication was that these areas might suffer and time will tell. It is a bit early to say whether landscape and access will suffer within government as a result of not having those very high-profile measures of how successful policies are."

"The whole debate was started again by the advice we are giving on local area agreements, because again we had an opportunity for the government to try to influence what targets are set, and we came to the same conclusion that landscapes and access were of their essence not something you could sum up with national level targets, and that it was much better to let them come up locally."

There was some evidence, he said, that this was the right judgement, as the natural environment is currently "coming up in local targets ... political interest in local environment is so strong that you can rely fairly well on that coming up from the local area, but it is less clear whether we have made the right choice there at a national level."

In 2009 there will be another chance to look at indicators and targets, "possibly having taken your advice to come back to it and have another go".

Putting a price on it all

Currently in government there is an "enormously powerful thrust" towards the assessment of public benefit – "what used to be called cost-benefit analysis and is a little more complex these days".

"What this means is that every decision that a minister takes has to have a cost-benefit analysis associated with it - and that seeks to put a monetary value on everything."

This "monetised value" is illustrated in the forthcoming Marine Bill³, in which the livelihoods of shellfishers that could be stopped from fishing in protected areas come out as worth tens of millions, but the monetised value of the biodiversity is £4 billion: "The contrast in size of those figures makes it a really interesting and difficult piece of

³ defra.gov.uk/marine/legislation/index.htm

decision making. Inevitably, the confidence surrounding the figure of £4bn is far less because it is not based on working businesses.”

He issued a stark warning: “This is the direction we are going in and it is a direction where I am painfully aware that in protected landscapes and access we are way behind the game and it is something we need to sort out pretty quickly.”

His interim conclusions were that, at national level, the main direction to go in is one of impact analysis of protected areas – the benefits of health, well-being, access to landscapes, and getting the environment treated well in impact assessments.

At local level, every protected area will increasingly need some kind of broad strategy for maintaining as well as growing its business – a major component of that will be the money received from central and local government, but it must encompass all sources of project-based funding, whether European, Lottery or other.

The future for designations

The well-established current drive is to be much more integrated in decision-making: “You could call this sustainable development – a need to make sure that all your decisions are informed by every possible benefit and cost there might be, whether social, economic or environmental.”

Drafting the legislation to create Natural England was an opportunity to enshrine this in the new agency’s purpose, which is to improve and enhance the natural environment - with social and economic benefits.

The legislation’s explanatory notes were “a great coup as we persuaded parliamentary council to allow us to put what was an ‘interpretation’ of the purpose of Natural England in the explanatory notes – normally you are not allowed to put explanations in explanatory notes! But it gave it a statutory force.”

In England and Wales that is enshrined within the purposes of national parks already, with the social and economic “duty”. There’s a “very interesting variant” of it in the new marine protected areas and conservation zones.

What are the longer-term implications of those trends for designations? Defra has been putting a lot of intellectual effort into the idea of ecosystems services, strongly based on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment⁴.

“The idea is that all of the services, defined broadly, that the environment can deliver (including social, economic, technical, industrial) are taken into account, assessed and embedded into decision-making.”

⁴ The **Millennium Ecosystem Assessment** (MA) was called for by the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2000. Initiated in 2001, the objective of the MA was to assess the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and the scientific basis for action needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of those systems and their contribution to human well-being. The MA has involved the work of more than 1,360 experts worldwide. Their findings, contained in five technical volumes and six synthesis reports, provide a state-of-the-art scientific appraisal of the condition and trends in the world’s ecosystems and the services they provide (such as clean water, food, forest products, flood control, and natural resources) and the options to restore, conserve or enhance the sustainable use of ecosystems. Further details at www.millenniumassessment.org

How to do this? “One way you could see it going is to designate more areas, so to landscape and biodiversity designations add new designations like nitrate-sensitive zones, flood-risk areas and air-quality zones.”

One way of helping a decision-maker, whether they are making a planning decision or some other sort of investment decision, to understand how to take into account all the ecosystems would be to “layer on designations providing information on services that the ecosystem is providing”.

However, this could create more problems than it solved: “Although very logical, many layers would not be sustainable in terms of good decisions and public transparency”.

He closed with a radical prediction of change, involving “a different way of embedding, that would obviously potentially involve withdrawing many of the existing designations – maybe not all - and replacing them with something that would embed in the decision-making process the principle that you value the services that the ecosystem is providing. There is no proposal to do this at the moment, I hasten to add – I am not letting you in on a little secret – but that seems to me to be the inevitable long-term direction.”

“The only rider I would put on it that is that there is a more political trend in relation to national parks. I can’t see a developed western nation not having a system of national parks. But I’m not sure how you would bring the two together and have them living alongside each other - a national parks system with a more integrated, non-designation-based decision-making system.”

“It does seem to me that, whereas people might not notice if nitrate-sensitive zones disappeared, they would certainly notice if national parks disappeared.”

The future of protected area management in Spain

Marta Múgica - EUROPARC Federation Spain

Background

AREA: 12% Spanish land under some kind of legal protection – 14 national parks (category two), 155 natural parks (category five), and many other types of designated monuments and reserves – six million ha of land, 250,000 marine ha, and around 36% coastline protected. There are 14 million hectares of Natura 2000 areas: 28% of the country is under Natura 2000 (of which 42% is already in the network of protected areas). It is unlikely that more areas will be designated in near future.

MANAGEMENT: Just over half of category-five areas have management plans. Average 23 employees per park in category five, category two have around 100 people per park. Average investment around 35 Euros per ha, more than 1000 municipalities directly influenced by protected areas and between 26 and 36 million visitors per year to category two and five protected areas.

Main new challenges

It’s good – and rare - to take time out from managing the present to look at the future. We need to recognise that we are making decisions based on imperfect knowledge and with limited resources.

Although we are gaining experience in management and planning, the world is moving very rapidly and we are not ready to face these challenges, which include: rapid land-use change causing fragmentation, loss of connectivity, biodiversity loss; isolation of protected areas and the stability of ecosystems functioning altered by declines in local diversity and climate change.

How to respond

Protected areas have a role to play. We are starting to think about how to respond to these challenges at three main levels: policy, planning and management.

At policy level we have good opportunities, with concepts and ideas like ecosystem services and human well-being coming from CBD and Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Protected areas provide demonstrable ecosystem benefits. The challenge is to integrate into national policies.

At the planning level, the ecosystem approach integrates protected areas with the wider land and seascape. Selection and designation of new protected areas are linked with global climate change, and provides opportunities and threats.

At management level we have to integrate monitoring to adapt and improve management, based on the ecosystem approach; and build adaptive capacity through memory, creativity, innovation, flexibility and diversity of human capabilities.

So as a summary I would say that we have some strengths - increasing experience, better trained staff - but we still have weak administrative structures and lack of integration into other policies. I see some good opportunities for international working, but we have the huge threats of rapid land-use change and climate change that can be overwhelming.

Work of EUROPARC Spain

In 2002 EUROPARC Spain produced an action plan in Spanish and English⁵ – a “backbone” programme based on a diagnosis of the whole situation in Spain; currently working on programme to 2013, including and based on European initiatives.

The five main areas of work are: complete systems of protected areas; tools for effective management cycles; governance; benefits and social support and international cooperation.

The future of protected area management in Germany

Olaf Ostermann, EUROPARC Germany

Background

National parks, biosphere reserves and nature parks are large-scale protected areas. There are 14 national parks – 0.54% of the land area; 13 biosphere reserves – 2.8% of land area and 100 nature parks – 25% of land area.

⁵ Available at www.europarc-es.org

Challenges and visions

1. To enhance public awareness of protected areas: EUROPARC Germany did this by bringing areas together into one brand, which was quite a difficult process – park managers chose a picture and a shape, and a three-colour device which works with the name of each park.

We engaged professional communicators, who simply told us that we should stop trying to explain the differences between designations, and put them together into one brand – “Nationale Naturlandschaften”. We received financial support from government and a declaration from the federal government.

The new brand can be combined with other logos and former logos, on a train, beach chair. Subsequent research shows the success of project. In 2005 88% regarded large protected areas as important. In 2006 this had risen to a figure of 93%. The term “Nationale Naturlandschaften” is known and understood by more than one third of all Germans, and 72% welcome three categories under one roof.

Is it the right time to think about further joint branding initiatives, at EAI or EU level? We need discussions!

2. To enhance political attention for protected areas: EUROPARC Germany developed a method of assessing the economic effects of protected areas, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Environment, and carried out by the Institute of Economics/Geography at the University of Munich. The objective was to foster economic development in the context of protected areas by developing of a low-expense method to calculate economic effects that gives reliable estimates. The method was tested successfully in three large-scale protected areas.

Protected areas can contribute significantly to regional economic systems. Ascertained job equivalents: Müritz National Park: 261; Nature Park Hoher Fläming: 211; Nature Park Altmühltal: 483. The results are a solid base for political debates, because the method is set up in such a way that conservative figures are estimated.

The values and benefits of protected areas fit well into rural development policy, provide added value to Europe’s rural areas and Natura 2000 – let’s think about a vision for a specific protected-area policy at EU level.

3. To keep a reference to nature, EUROPARC Federation has passed a resolution on wilderness areas. Although biodiversity in Europe’s protected areas is mostly dominated by culture, the concept of wild land, no-intervention management and areas driven by natural processes should be built into all protected-area systems.

Let’s think about a vision for a minimum of wilderness areas in Europe - the initiative could re-open a perspective for a spiritual dimension in nature conservation, and involve people in a more emotional way.

The future of protected area management in Iceland

Gudridur Thornovardardottir - Unhverfisstofnun

The first general nature conservation law in Iceland is an act from 1956, but guidelines on nature conservation can be found in other laws, regulations and sagas. The first settlers were aware of the guardian spirits which were not to be displeased.

At the beginning of settlement, people idolized certain places or objects in the landscape. In the Book of Settlements is for example a description of idolization of waterfalls, tree groves, hills and mountains.

In 1999 a new nature conservation legislation came into force where a new view on area conservation was introduced in a nature conservation strategy. The strategy has its roots in the Rio Conference, the Bern Convention, and other conservation conventions. The aim is to establish a network of protected areas with emphasis on cultural heritage, necessity of reclaiming habitat types and anthropogenic utilization of nature and wilderness. In addition the following shall be included among the criteria; the areas are habitat of rare species, rich in number of species, sensitive to disturbance, necessary for maintenance of strong stocks of important species, have substantial scientific, social, economic or cultural value, importance for the maintenance of natural evolutionary processes, have international conservation value and are characteristic for the natural surroundings of the region concerned.

The Minister for the Environment in office has emphasized the will to work towards protection of geothermal areas, glacial rivers, enlargement of Vatnajökull National Park and Thorjósárver Nature Reserve and finally designate marine areas in order to conserve cold-water coral and other benthic fauna that have significant conservation value.

Importance of soil conservation areas and forest protection are of great importance in Iceland although the emphasis here is on areas protected according to the nature conservation act.

The future of protected area management in Ireland

Michael Starrett - Irish Heritage Council

Background

Valuing countryside recreation and heritage in Ireland – a new survey followed three others that had shown positive shifts in attitudes and awareness, and added economic information. Objectives were to measure attitudes, experiences and opinions, establish extent of public willingness to pay and understand why the public value heritage.

Methodology – first phase qualitative – eight focus groups of varied age, class and locations; second phase quantitative – over 1,000 adults face-to-face.

Survey results

Key findings – qualitative: progress and change inevitable; progress must respect heritage; respecting traditional streetscapes a concern for many; preserving past more important than preserving present; emphasis on built and cultural rather than natural.

Key quantitative findings: 83% interested in heritage, 25% very interested: interest driven by personal health concerns (68%); threats to environment (65%); concern for future generations (52%); general interest (47%); recreation (38%); sense of well-being (31%).

Willingness to pay analysed; of those willing to pay, 66% stated it was due to interest in natural environment; 58% due to ability to access heritage freely; 56% due to an interest in history and culture and 53% because current protection inadequate. Analysis shows that 66% are supportive of additional spend; 11% not supportive. On average willing to pay 46 Euros per person – an aggregate of 89 million Euros. We have demonstrated to the politicians that there is public support for this work – people are willing to do more than maintain current levels.

Prioritising government spending: Heritage ranks fifth after A&E, before roads, visual and performing arts, training for unemployed. Priorities for heritage spend:

1. Canals and rivers (29%)
2. Coastal landscapes (22%)
3. Habitats for native wildlife (12%)
4. Environmental education (10%)
5. Rural landscape (<10%)
6. Sites and monuments (<10%)
7. Safeguard buildings (<10%)
8. Museums (<10%)

Conclusions

People are: interested in heritage; aware of connections between it and quality of life; willing to pay for protection and conservation of heritage; wanting greater access to and enjoyment of heritage.

Vision for the landscape:

A dynamic, living landscape, one which accommodates the physical and spiritual needs of people with the needs of nature in a harmonious manner.

Challenge is to deliver Snowdonia declaration: combine care of environment with social and economic well-being of people; draw on local knowledge and skills.

European Landscape Convention specific measures: awareness-raising; training and education; identification and assessment; implementation national strategy; 2009 international conference.

Next steps:

Test existing legislation - current planning legislation is incapable of delivering what we are looking for, in Ireland and UK. Stronger legislative framework needed: Ireland can be at the forefront as it can start from scratch.

English National Parks

Andrew Wilson - North York Moors National Park

English national parks are hugely popular institutions. National park purposes are increasingly supported by their resident populations.

The basis of national park management in England involves very precise control over built development but much weaker, largely incentive based, influence over land management.

The national parks have faced significant changes since their creation in the 1950s. Many *recent* changes in land management have benefited park purposes, but these are now under renewed pressure. The impact of a society that can't say "no", and refuses to adapt its lifestyle to the capacity of the environment, is turning protected landscapes into islands of refuge.

In general, park authorities – and the public in general – know what needs to be done to prevent irreversible negative change (whether to the special qualities of protected areas or, globally, to the climate). What is lacking is political will and the appropriate mechanisms.

We need a new asceticism. This must be based on spiritual conviction as well as scientific rationale. It must create the discipline to change lifestyles, allowing the more rational use of land and allied resources which is so desperately required.

We need a stronger ability to bring about the changes in land management that are needed for biodiversity, resource management, climate change mitigation and adaptation. To accept the sacrifice of landscape aesthetic in the process is to deny the need for lifestyle change.

What is needed?

NPAs should have a clear view about what the park as a place should deliver, and where in the Park these things should happen. NPAs should have a better ability to make these things happen. A debate is needed about how this better ability should be delivered.

The value of a third purpose for English national park authorities, focusing on natural resource protection, should be debated. A duty on other bodies to seek to *further* national park purposes, and a requirement on other bodies to assist with the national park management plan as far as reasonably practical, should be introduced.

Welsh Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Howard Sutcliffe - Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Background

Five Welsh areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs) – Clwydian Range, Anglesey, Llyn, Gower and Wye Valley – 884 square miles of Wales. Have undergone significant changes over 20 years – Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act introduced statutory management plans and new duties; creation of National Assembly for Wales bringing AONBs closer to government; Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).

Strengths

Being a small number of AONBs for one country; part of a larger family worldwide; consistent support from Countryside Council for Wales (CCW); consistent support from Welsh Assembly re. SDF; CROW Act statutory plans; section 85 organisation

remit can be used to demonstrate best practise to others; being one of the five local authority plans; joint accords to demonstrate partnership and best practice; integrated countryside services.

Opportunities

European Landscape Convention; European convergence and national competitiveness funding; rural development plans; working more closely with national parks to share and showcase good practise; sustainable tourism; health and equalities agendas; integration into spatial plans; Clwydian Range Pathfinder project.

English Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Martin Beaton - South Downs Conservation Board

Four areas for action:

1. Policy development to update and clarify the statutory framework

Current statutory focus narrow and does not reflect the reality of action on the ground or challenges identified by current management plans. Many AONB areas have massive access and recreational pressures, and struggle to address a range of landscape scale issues around land use and sustainable development. CROW Act moved the debate forward. It consolidates provisions regarding designation, provided a management model Conservation Board, statutory duty to prepare management plans, duty on public bodies to have regard to (85). But it does not provide wider context for action. We urgently need to update the policy framework for category V protected landscapes as a whole. 1991 Policy framework for AONBs is woefully inadequate, Circular 12/96 for National Parks is looking old and Circular 13/99 in Wales covers National parks but not AONBs. That policy framework needs to

- restate importance of nationally designated landscapes;
- move the debate from purely aesthetic/scientific to include cultural and economic rationales and forward to address how protected landscapes can deliver a wide range of benefits to society, ecosystem services, access, health and cultural well-being, climate change and sustainable development - emphasis on a more functional approach to landscapes;
- reflect actions in management plans;
- reflect how protected areas act as test-beds for sustainable solutions;
- reflect how action within protected areas benefits society as a whole;
- recognise that there are valuable landscapes outside of our protected areas and understand how they fit within the wider framework shaped by the European Landscape Convention;
- reflect the future of Heritage Coasts and incorporate the concept of marine conservation into family of protected landscapes.

2. Improving finance

AONB funding has improved but there is still a massive disparity in funding between national parks and AONBs: We must have more equitable funding within family of protected landscapes.

The current grant for AONBs is £9.5 million core ex SDF/Project for area of 2.04 million ha. Compare this to national parks at ca. £50 million for an area of 1.0 million ha - 1/5th of the money for twice the area.

Comparative statistics – 50% of all Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in England and Wales are in protected landscapes, 25% of SSSI in AONBs and 25% in national parks. 90% of Heritage Coast sites are in linked to AONBs. AONBs have 55,000 listed buildings and 6,500 Ancient Monuments. 800 community-based projects completed 2006/07.

3. Improving administration

We need to improve administrative arrangement for AONBs as a whole. The CROW Act established the legal framework for Conservation Boards as mechanism for administrative structures in more complex AONBs. It gave them broadly similar objectives to national parks but left the remaining AONB units, the majority, covered by a variety of AONB partnerships. Many of these current joint arrangements are likely to be caught by emerging audit regulations which will drive a move to formalise current arrangements. We should anticipate these arrangements and suggest a legal framework now.

There will be increasing pressure on finance. The search for economies of scale will force greater joint working between protected landscapes. Despite the pain that might be a good thing. AONB - AONB, AONB – NP, ANPA – AAONB – EUROPARC. We should be actively thinking about such opportunities.

I'm not convinced that current administrative structures AONB Joint Committees / Conservation Boards / National Park Authorities are adequate to deal with range of future challenges, which need to see greater range of joint working between public and private sectors to deliver – sustainable energy production, marketing of local produce or other forms of social enterprise which is a difficult space for public sector to occupy.

4. Improving communications

We must get better at communication. This is not simply about articulating message to the public and to government. We must address the point that there is no overall framework for strategy development or collaborative working across protected landscapes. We need a better framework within the UK for strategic thinking on protected landscape which embraces all stakeholders. There is, at best, a very limited capacity for conceptual “blue-sky” thinking which enables us to promote ideas rather than react to them.

- We have to improve collaboration and the transfer of information and best practice across the protected-landscape family with UK and Europe.
- We have to promote a clear and more coherent message across government about the role and importance of protected landscapes. A point which links to clarity of purpose and neatly returns me to the beginning, identifying the case for change.

4 Conclusion

Howard Davies – Countryside Council for Wales

Over the course of this seminar we heard many interesting presentations and some challenging debates.

- David laid down some very real challenges with regards valuing products and the ecosystem good and services approach. We were given some clear clues as to the direction in which DEFRA is travelling with regards landscape; we ignore these at our peril.
- Marta gave us a three-layered response to issues in Spain, clearly outlining the benefit of approaching issues at the policy, planning, and management levels and holding up the section's action plan as a widely acclaimed product of this approach.
- Olaf outlined Germany's response to the need for careful branding, showing the process that has resulted in a colour coded system for German protected areas. Olaf also highlighted the importance of identifying the real contribution protected areas make to the local economy.
- Gurry gave us a fascinating presentation on protected areas in Iceland, and in discussing marine parks, highlighted clearly the need to understand the relationship between the people, the land and the sea, embodying the principles of connectivity and functionality at all levels.
- Michael asked us some very incisive questions, including questioning whether we have the right designations. He highlighted the very real importance of the need to demonstrate public support, but also stated that the current [Irish] planning system is incapable of delivering what is needed.
- We then had the opportunity to hear the views of three speakers, all at the coalface, dealing with the issues in the UK on a day-to-day basis.
- Andy had a number of very clear messages. Firstly, that things cannot carry on as they are. The present levels of consumption across society are wholly unsustainable, and secondly that we as a protected area movement must continue to embrace and manage change, with a clear call for further change.
- Howard gave us a personal introduction to Blackpool, his hometown, highlighting more generally the passion that comes with the relationship between people and place. He then gave a positive position statement with regards the AONBs in Wales, and highlighted the real value of partnership working particularly as a network of protected areas.
- Martin gave us a very considered paper, accepting progress but acknowledging that the AONBs are playing catch-up, and asking the fundamental question of how we are to balance society's needs with that of landscape protection. He then went on to ask whether we need to update the policy framework for Category V areas and, more specifically, update the UK framework.

So, in summary, it is clear that moving forward is a difficult and messy job. There are two discussions running in parallel. Sometimes the discussions centre on the mechanisms we have for landscape protection, sometimes on the landscapes themselves. We must be very careful that we do not muddle the two, or we will be in danger of valuing the designation more highly than the landscape. We must however, recognise that this is as good as it gets. There are no 'others' moving the debate forward. It is down to us. It is very much up to us to make it what we want, and despite the obvious difficulties I remain confident that we will get the landscape protection system that we deserve.

Appendix – delegate's and speakers' contact details

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