

1. Introduction

NRW has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance natural beauty¹ and a range of legal powers and duties in relation to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

AONBs are of equal status in planning terms² with National Parks and these areas are designated to conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of their landscape character and quality. AONBs are landscapes of national importance and are internationally recognised by the IUCN - World Conservation Union as Category V Protected Areas - living, working landscapes as well as internationally important areas for landscape, natural and cultural heritage.

2. Management Plans

AONB authorities are required under statute³ to prepare and publish an AONB Management Plan for the AONB area or joint AONB Management Plan where the AONB covers more than one local authority. NRW is a statutory consultee⁴ on Management Plans. NRW also provide specific guidance on the Management Plan process to ensure that they meet legislative requirements, implement relevant national policy and deliver shared NRW and Government priorities.

New requirements under the Environment Act (Wales) 2016 mean that NRW must consider AONB Management Plans as part of the evidence base for Area Statements and the AONB Management Plans must also take account of the strategic evidence on the natural resources and their benefits, as well as the priorities, risks and opportunities as set out in the Area Statements.

The implementation of AONB Management Plans is an important tool for the delivery of NRW's new statutory purpose for the sustainable management of natural resources and (SMNR) Area Statements when they are published in 2019.

The AONB Management Plans are crucial documents that:

- Assess the state of the AONB providing valuable evidence on trends, data, issues and condition of natural resources across 5% of Wales;
- Guide on the ground management, resources and decision-making in these special areas;
- Set out policies to address the issues and challenges raised by the State of the AONB Report and (when published) by Area Statements;
- Are a live plan and provide an up to date evidence base, as they are legally required to be reviewed and updated every five years;
- Are integrated delivery plans for a wide range of partners active in the area, co-ordinated by the AONB Local Authorities;

¹ S1(2) Countryside Act, 1968.

² Planning Policy Wales, 5.3.6 Chapter 5 Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and the Coast, Edition 9, 2016.

³ S89 Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000.

⁴ S90(1) Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000.

- Identify and co-ordinate what action is needed and who is best placed to lead;
- Ensure these special landscapes comply with IUCN Protected Area Management Guidelines to meet international standards⁵.

3. NRW Partnerships with AONBs

Due to a shared interest in an integrated approach and the delivery of multiple benefits, over the years NRW and our predecessor organisations have developed strong partnerships working with AONBs in relation to the following areas of our remit:

- Conservation and enhancement of landscape quality, character and distinctiveness
- Access, recreation and sustainable tourism
- Biodiversity enhancement and ecosystem resilience
- Land, water and woodland / forest management
- Developing sustainable agricultural practice
- Coastal and marine issues
- Climate change adaptation, mitigation and carbon management
- Health, well-being and community cohesion
- Sustainable development in rural communities
- Supporting language, culture and the historic environment

Therefore, NRW is establishing this National Partnership Programme to support AONB delivery through partnership funding to:

- Discharge our statutory duty in relation to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty;
- Support the integrated delivery of key NRW priorities across our functions, including SMNR;
- Facilitate the delivery of national policy at a local level;
- Ensure the delivery of the statutory AONB Management Plan;
- Through the AONBs' community engagement and work with land-managers, raise awareness and identify solutions in-relation to environment issues including well-being, climate change and natural resource management;
- Support the delivery of Public Service Boards (PSB) Well-being Objectives.
- Encourage the development of funding bids to other sources to fund major work programmes for the delivery of multiple benefits.

For the reasons outlined in this paper NRW has established an AONB National Programme to optimise this delivery mechanism and bring it in-line with our agreed approach to other strategic resources and management mechanisms that we have statutory responsibilities for such as National Trails. This approach will enable enhanced planning for the integrated delivery of shared priorities in-line with the SMNR principles.

⁵ Management Guidelines for IUCN Category V Protected Areas Protected Landscapes / Seascapes, Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No 9, Ed. Adrian Philips, 2002.

4. A National Partnership Programme

NRW recognises the value of the AONB Partnerships in helping to deliver our new purpose through a place-based approach and the important role that they have in the delivery of recent legislative requirements as part of the Planning, Well-being of Future Generations, Environment and Historic Environment Acts in Wales.

To realise the ambition set out in the Future Landscapes Wales Report (May 2017) that the 'designated landscapes should be the drivers of the sustainable management of natural resources in their areas...' ⁶, there is a consensus that the AONBs now need to work collectively together and collaboratively with NRW and other organisations.

By bringing NRW's funding into a National Partnership Programme will ensure:

- AONBs work more collaboratively to address complex issues;
- As key partners and early adopters they can help NRW test and deliver SMNR on the ground;
- Delivery against Public Service Board (PSB) Well-being objectives and contribution to Well-being of Future Generations National Indicators;
- Deliver the ambition of the Future Landscapes Wales Report (2017) ⁷ to support the AONBs to be key drivers for the sustainable management of natural resources in their areas, by applying the principles of the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) and the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2016):

Principles of SMNR



⁶ Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales, Welsh Government, NRW, Designated Landscapes et al, May 2017.

⁷ Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales, Future Landscapes Wales Partnership May 2017
<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/170508-future-landscapes-delivering-for-wales-en.pdf>

Five ways of working



Long Term

Prevention

Integration

Collaboration

Involvement

5. NRW's Priority Themes and Reporting Framework 2018-2021

NRW has set out priority themes and the Reporting Framework for the AONB Partnership Programme 2018-2021 to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, the including flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features of the designated area:

- Each project and delivery of the AONB management plan objectives, will fit under one or more of the themes from the Environment Act (Wales) 2016 or Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- In-line with advice from the Future Generations Commissioner's Office for public bodies, it is expected over the course of the Partnership Programme period that you will report against all the goals.
- If you have any gaps against the Well-being Goals you should set out the barriers that have prevented you in addressing these goals.

Using the three national priorities from Welsh Governments' Natural Resources Policy (2017)⁸ NRW expects activity to be focussed around:

- Delivering nature-based solutions
- Increasing renewable energy and resource efficiency; and,
- Taking a place-based approach

There will also be local NRW priorities that will sit under the NRW strategic themes, which will be specific to your areas and will also relate to the delivery of your Management Plan actions.

From 2019 area priorities, will be provided by the Area Statements framework.

⁸ Natural Resources Policy, Welsh Government, 2017 <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/170821-natural-resources-policy-en.PDF>

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty National Partnership Programme 2018-21 Guidance

Natural Resources	Integrated landscape management for landscape & natural resource outcomes
Biodiversity	<p>Support delivery the s6 biodiversity duty⁹ on local authorities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining and enhancing the resilience and connectivity of ecosystems to secure existing and future benefits. • Managing habitats at appropriate scale and bring into management schemes to move to favourable conservation status. • Using a place-based approach to deliver nature-based solutions (Natural Resource Policy, 2017). • Delivering integrated natural resource management for the priorities, risks, opportunities and benefits identified in NRW's Area Statements (when published). • Preparing for and supporting rural policy change as part of the Brexit process. • Monitor and manage for key species to support Nature Recovery Plan¹⁰.
Air, Water and Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity to support maintaining and enhancing air, water and soil quality. • Manage, advise and raise awareness on issues relating to air, water and soil quality and management. • Develop our understanding of the marine environment and seascapes.
Minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve or where appropriate support, landscape restoration or mitigation. • Manage for protection of rare species. • Advise or raise awareness of mineral landscapes.

⁹ S6 Biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty on public authorities, Environment Act (Wales) 2016.

¹⁰ Nature Recovery Plan <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/conservationbiodiversity/?lang=en>

Geological features and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance geological features and special qualities that contribute to a sense of place. • Manage, advise, monitor and raise awareness of geological features and processes.
Physiographical features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve, enhance and maintain physiographical features and special qualities that contribute to scenic quality and landscape character. • Manage, advise and raise awareness of landscape quality, physical character and distinctiveness of the landscape. • Research, develop understanding and raise awareness of physiographical landscape processes. • Monitor physiographical landscape change.
Climatic features and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to Welsh Government carbon targets¹¹. • Support climate change adaptation and mitigation. • Develop understanding, raising awareness and work with businesses, communities and organisations to develop action in relation to climate change. • Where appropriate, increasing or testing renewable energy and resource efficiency (NRP).

¹¹ Infographic <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/multimedia/170124-environment-act-decarbonisation-infographic-en.pdf> & building a low carbon economy <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/building-low-carbon-economy-wales-setting-welsh-carbon-targets/>

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty National Partnership Programme 2018-21 Guidance

Well-being Goals	Landscape contribution to Well-being Indicators Examples
<p><u>A prosperous Wales</u></p> <p>An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change);</p> <p>And which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support sustainable development for living, working landscapes with vibrant communities (Indicator 14). • Support sustainable tourism for 'brand Wales', including co-ordinating: action, training, information and providing infrastructure and managing sites. Promoting the special qualities of these nationally important landscapes to local communities and visitors (Indicator 11). • Test innovation for payment for ecosystems services (PES), short supply chains (eg local produce) and circular economy (Indicator 42). • Support and develop rural skills, apprenticeships and traditional crafts (Indicators 8 & 22).
<p><u>A resilient Wales</u></p> <p>A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test innovative approaches to develop healthy ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological landscape resilience (Indicators 44 & 45). • Develop adaptive management and preventative action on climate change (Indicators 42 & 43). • Bringing areas into favourable conservation status through management schemes and other mechanisms as part of preparing for rural policy change under Brexit (Indicators 43 & 44)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work long-term to build evidence base for the foundation of advice, decision-making monitoring and understanding change and potential landscape impacts (Indicator 44).
<p><u>A healthier Wales</u></p> <p>A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit health are understood.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise opportunities to increase physical and mental well-being (Indicators 3 & 5). • Provide recreation and access opportunities and supporting infrastructure (Indicators 3 & 5). • Provide opportunities for people to experience tranquillity, spiritual refreshment and contact with nature for physical and mental well-being (Indicator 29). • Support active travel, public transport opportunities and land management measures to reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) (Indicator 4).
<p><u>A more equal Wales</u></p> <p>A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for all sectors of society to experience and access the AONB, including participation in events, public engagement and governance opportunities (Indicators 23, 24 and 26). • Support place-based approach to conserve local distinctiveness and landscape character to engender sense of belonging to an area (Indicator 27).
<p><u>A Wales of cohesive communities</u></p> <p>Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities to increase satisfaction of local area as a place to live (Indicator 26). • Provide opportunities for participation in decision-making in the local area (Indicator 23). • Provide opportunities for volunteering for the benefit of communities, the environment and well-being (Indicator 28).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for participation in arts, cultural or heritage activities (Indicator 35).
<p><u>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</u></p> <p>A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, sport and recreation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and enhance landscape character and historic environment to support local distinctiveness and culture (Indicators 35 & 40). • Conserve and enhance the historic environment (Indicator 40) • Support Welsh language and cultural heritage through providing opportunities for people to participate in the arts, sports and recreation (Indicators 35, 36 & 37).
<p><u>A globally responsible Wales</u></p> <p>A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to Carbon Targets, including supporting energy efficiency measures and recycling targets (Indicators 15, 41 & 42). • Providing evidence and data from State of the AONB Reporting and monitoring to help identify trends (Indicator 14). • Test innovative approaches and support appropriate renewable energy (Indicator 12 & 33 & NRP) • Raise awareness and engage public in sustainable development and environmental issues focusing on individual, community and nature-based solutions (Indicator 14 & 32). • Through education raise awareness of the special qualities of these internationally recognised landscapes and of environmental issues including climate change (Indicator 42).

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty National Partnership Programme 2018-21 Guidance

List of relevant National Indicators How to Measure a nation's progress? National indicators for Wales, Well-being of Future Generations Act

Indicator 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of adults who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours.
Indicator 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levels of nitrogen dioxide pollution in air (Public Health Wales identifies source as mainly from traffic).
Indicator 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of children who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours
Indicator 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of adults with qualifications at the different levels of the National Qualifications Framework.
Indicator 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of businesses which are innovation-active.
Indicator 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity (in MW) of renewable energy equipment installed.
Indicator 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of waste generated that is not recycled, per person.
Indicator 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of people satisfied with local area as a place to live.
Indicator 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area.
Indicator 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to access the facilities and services they need.
Indicator 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of people satisfied with local area as a place to live.
Indicator 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of people agreeing that they belong to the area, that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect.
Indicator 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of people who volunteer.
Indicator 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mean mental well-being score.
Indicator 32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of properties (homes and businesses) at medium or high risk from flooding from rivers and the sea.
Indicator 33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of dwellings with adequate energy performance.
Indicator 35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of people attending or participating in arts, culture or heritage activities at least three times a year.
Indicator 36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of people who speak Welsh daily and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh.
Indicator 37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of people who speak Welsh.

Indicator 40	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage of designated historic environmental assets that are in stable or improved conditions.
Indicator 42	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emissions of greenhouse gases attributed to the consumption of global goods and services in Wales.
Indicator 43	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Area of healthy ecosystems in Wales
Indicator 44	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Status of biological diversity

6. AONB National Partnership Programme Process

February	March	April	Spring	Summer	Autumn	February / March
2 Feb 2018 NRW open application process	2 March 2018 AONB submit application form to NRW GLO	1 April 2018 AONB Programme commences	AONB delivery	AONB delivery	NRW GLO & AONB half year review of progress update.	AONBs review outcomes & outputs & monitor AONB management Plan delivery.
AONB and NRW Grant Lead Officer (GLO) discuss key themes, priorities and outcomes for the programme & coming year	If necessary NRW & AONB discussions to finalise and agree Programme with key outputs and outcomes		<u>From 2019 onwards</u> AONB Annual Report of previous year to GLO			End of year review meeting NRW & AONB
AONB discuss proposed programme with JAC's, Partnerships and other key partners.	16 March 2018 NRW GLO complete CRONFA 21 March 2018 NRW Grants Team issue Offer Letter		GLO's share AONB Annual Reports with EPP			Repeat - AONB and NRW discuss key themes, priorities and outcomes for the programme & coming year
	<u>Before 1 April 2018</u> AONBs confirm acceptance to Grant Offer Letter to NRW Grants					Repeat - AONB discuss proposed programme with JAC's, Partnerships and other key partners.

7. Reporting Framework

AONB National Partnership Programme – Annual Report

Annual Report covering grant partnership period to include:

Summary Overview

- Brief overview paragraph of landscape and special qualities of the area
- Headline statistics eg area of AONB, population, visitor numbers, conservation designations, key sites etc.
- Summary of governance arrangements for Joint Advisory Committee, Joint Committee and Partnerships.
- Summary of finance (amount of NRW funding, match funding by local authorities / other sources, amount levered in, links to other NRW funding such as wider countryside grants, National Trails, Wales Coast Path etc)
- Summary of key projects
- Headline statistics on AONB activity such as number of consultations commented on, advice on planning applications, engagement with PSBs etc.
- Summary of any headline data eg visitor numbers to AONB managed site, number of consultation responses to AONB management plan, public attendance of AONB event, volunteer days / numbers or young ranger events.
- Summary update on AONB management plan delivery and what stage in the process of reviewing and monitoring the Plan is at: eg Management Plan formally adopted previous year by local authorities and now in first year of monitoring.

For the detailed report on each project in the Partnership Programme please include any evidence photographs, statistics, press coverage and infographics to demonstrate the impact and effectiveness of delivery.

Each outcome or output should be reported on using the following framework

NRW Priority Themes
Natural Resources,
Well-being Goals &
AONB Management
Plan Objective

Describe AONB Outputs & Outcomes, supported by evidence and statistics

Describe how the SMNR Principles & Five Ways of Working have been applied to achieve integrated delivery

Example:

Biodiversity

A resilient Wales

Management Plan Objective –

Address invasive species in river corridor through supporting the local community to undertake survey and management.

AONB Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) River Corridor Project:

- Engaged 35 people from local community in this project, who have worked with the AONB to identify key areas to target in relation to INNS.
- Provided 5 training days for leaders and volunteers including AONB Young Rangers and 4 local community groups.
- Supported transport costs and equipment resulting in 222 hours of volunteer time and 10km of river free from INNS.
- Community Groups have adopted different sections of 24km river and are undertaking an ongoing programme of monitoring and maintenance.
- 10km previously overgrown public footpath now accessible and has re-opened links between two communities.
- A further 15km of the river banks have been surveyed by the Young Rangers.
- Liaison with 5 landowners who granted vehicular access and loaned some of the equipment to support the project.
- Resulted in discussions by AONB with Water Company regarding upstream catchment management and discussions regarding other river corridors.

- Raised community awareness of issue through *public participation, engagement and involvement* of existing community groups.
- Provided on-going, *long term* solution by training community groups to survey and address invasive species management, with advice and an *evidence-based* approach from AONB / NRW.
- Through *involvement* brought different groups to work together and benefits for health and well-being to deliver these *multiple benefits*.
- Community Group submitting small bid to SDF for future *prevention* maintenance and training of further volunteers for *long term* action and *adaptive management*.
- AONB developed new partnership with water company and agreed to work together on other rivers to develop *preventative* action and *build resilience* in other riparian ecosystems.
- Young Rangers survey of return of native flora to demonstrate the delivery of *multiple benefits*.

NB Words in italics are the SMNR principles and/or five ways of working

NRW Priority Themes
**Natural Resources,
Well-being Goals &
AONB Management
Plan Objective**

**Describe AONB Outputs & Outcomes, supported by
evidence and statistics**

**Describe how the SMNR Principles & Five
Ways of Working have been applied to
achieve integrated delivery**

NRW 30 January 2018