

Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales

The Review of Areas of Outstanding Natural
Beauty and National Parks in Wales

May 2017

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Foreword by Lesley Griffiths AM, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs



The Future Landscapes Wales Programme has been highly collaborative in nature and has involved a wide range of stakeholders in its debates and deliberations. Developing the relationships necessary to build trust and achieve consensus takes time but then provides a firmer foundation for progress. This approach demands a change of role for the Welsh Government, to open the door on setting the strategic policy and legislative framework and a commitment to work in concert with partners to deliver the response to the challenges identified.

Wales' natural resources and ecosystems underpin all aspects of our well-being including our prosperity, health and culture. We depend on high quality natural resources to provide our food, clean water and air. In Wales we have a quarter of the land recognised as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Park and these designations need to integrate with and take forward the aspirations of our new world-first legislative framework which emphasises the sustainable use of our natural resources as the bedrock of future prosperity and well-being.

The first State of Natural Resources Report for Wales says that all ecosystems in Wales have issues in terms of their resilience and that with this the services and benefits they provide to Wales may be at risk. The UK's withdrawal from the European Union represents a significant upheaval for the key sectors which shape the use of natural resources at a time when we recognise that action is needed to build the resilience of ecosystems. The Proposition developed by Future Landscapes Wales sets out the response of the designated landscapes to this challenge. It draws on the strengths and opportunities of genuine partnership and collaboration and advocates greater flexibility in structures and response so that the needs of places and communities can be met.

The substantial work undertaken firstly by Professor Terry Marsden and his Panel and then by Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM and the working group now positions the designated landscapes in a role which can help address increasingly complex environmental challenges, inequalities in well-being and health, and to deliver more vibrant rural communities.

The challenge now is to deliver against this ambition, not in isolation, but together as part of the collaborative approach Wales will need to address the complex environmental and social issues we face.

Introduction by Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM



As someone who has lived all his life around Snowdonia, the invitation from Welsh Ministers, Carl Sargeant AM and then Lesley Griffiths AM, to chair the working group on Future Landscapes was a special privilege.

From the beginning, taking the Marsden Report as our starting point, this process was a different one, new and inclusive, as we moved to agree between stakeholders on principles and a programme of action. It was decided at the start in our terms of reference that we would not replicate the traditional process of agreeing an independent report and then waiting for a 'government response'.

From the start the main feature of the working group was partnership, including everyone from national park authorities and areas of outstanding natural beauty, from agricultural and tourism businesses, voluntary organisations and trusts, with government officials contributing equally to the discussions. For me this could be a productive and a creative model of developing public policies and drafting devolved legislation for the future.

The basic principle guiding our work is seeing and understanding the role of designated landscapes not as separate excluded areas, but as a distinctive part which could contribute to good practise for the rest of our country's landscape. In our view this follows in the spirit of the Marsden Report and the distinctive Welsh route of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

We see a 'special' value in all our varied landscapes, as having a distinctive amenity whether officially designated or not, to be the foundation of living sustainably.

The Proposition

Delivering for Wales

The designated landscapes should be the drivers of the sustainable management of natural resources in their areas in the framework set by Welsh legislation.

The special qualities of the designated landscapes go wider than their visual and amenity value and embrace their vital role as a provider of wider public and private benefit both within and beyond their areas. There should be a clear formal relationship between the identified special qualities of a designated area and the partnerships, powers and policies that drive its sustainable management.

The bodies and partnerships have a particular opportunity to help realise the economic potential of their communities and to exemplify and promote green growth and the resilience of ecosystems.

All landscapes have special qualities. The bodies and partnerships with responsibility for the designated landscapes should together promote the social, cultural and economic value and sustainable use of all landscapes, working across boundaries with Natural Resources Wales and with local partnerships.

Fit for purpose

Future governance models should allow for localities beyond the designated landscapes to work in partnership to deliver sustainable approaches to management and should reward or acknowledge this action.

The current models of governance within a designated landscape should evolve, informed by core principles, to reflect changing needs and opportunities.

Governance should include a wide range of delivery and partnership models, encompassing shared or delegated responsibilities, linked to a common vision.

A consistent approach to planning and performance reporting should be developed then adopted by the existing or any future designated landscapes.

Formal review points for existing or new governance models should be introduced to ensure they remain fit for purpose, with the possibility of areas proposing new arrangements.

Wider partnerships and innovative funding models should be adopted, where resources are attracted and investments influenced to deliver on the sustainable management of natural resources in the area.

DELIVERING FOR WALES

1 LANDSCAPES MATTER

“...I hold consistently and with passionate conviction that the social and ethical dimensions of land are essential elements in any mature encounter with place. And the practical consequence of this is the difficult business of encounter with the human societies who have inhabited a location – those who have lived there over centuries and whose existence is written into the cultural landscape, as well as those who live there now”.

Father Dorian Llywelyn, - The Picturesque, Arian Byw/Live Culture, 2004

The intrinsic link between people and place forms an important cornerstone of well-being in Wales. Landscapes in all their forms (rural, urban, coastal, marine, industrial, etc.) shape the feelings and identity of individuals, communities and the nation. Landscapes help people to understand their past. They inform the present and help express society’s collective hopes for the future. The desire of Future Landscapes Wales is to unlock the full potential of all landscapes in Wales, including designated landscapes, so that they adapt to contemporary issues and safeguard the well-being of future generations.

Places, and the territories within which they exist, form a fundamental component of human existence. They contain the natural resources required to support well-being and the cultural landscapes that, through the historical inter-relationship between people and place, reinforce identity and belonging. In this regard:

- Designated landscapes must drive the sustainable use and management of natural resources.
- Every place, large or small, urban or rural, on land or at sea, is part of a patchwork of interconnected places; each needs to be able to realise its own potential to be increasingly vibrant, more prosperous, appealing and welcoming.
- Wales’s suite of designated landscapes must continue to deliver so as to be recognised as being of international significance and important national assets.

As visual expressions of identity the landscapes of Wales play a significant role in the process of creating a distinct nation. Some are considered iconic, represented in imagery used worldwide to convey messages about Wales’ collective identity. Of particular resonance in Wales is the sense of *bro*, which is at the heart of community identity and the way many people in Wales express their distinct sense of belonging to a particular place.

“Every mature nation has its symbolic landscapes. They are part of the shared set of ideas and memories which bind people together” (Meinig 1979, 164)

The designated landscapes are now far more than passive ‘green lungs’ for the urban populations that they were once considered. The work of the Future Landscapes Wales programme confirmed that they are dynamic, productive, and support a clearly contemporary narrative. Wales has set out bold ambitions in the recent Well-being of Future Generations and Environment Acts. This provides the framework for the sustainable management of natural resources and the path to resilient ecosystems which are key to increasing economic, cultural and environmental benefits.

It is this connection between contemporary need and opportunity, landscape, identity, and well-being that provides the platform for a new vision for the designated landscapes in Wales. The designated landscapes must exemplify the practice of tackling complex environmental and social challenges through robust local collaboration in a way which maintains and enhances the contribution to the well-being of Wales. This requires the ability to function effectively at a national level to inform and influence strategic priorities and plans, whilst maintaining a credible mandate and the relationships necessary to deliver within a local area.

2 A NEW CONTEMPORARY VISION

The designated landscapes of Wales have a pivotal role to play in the future prosperity of Wales. National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are acknowledged and cherished as important national assets. However, there is an agreed understanding both within and beyond designated landscapes that, with recent legislative changes, they can still deliver more.

There is a significant appetite for a more collaborative approach to developing and implementing a strategic vision that places the well-being of people at its centre and better supports the shared intention of working beyond traditional boundaries. The work of the Future Landscapes Wales programme achieved support for a new vision from all the designated landscape leaders and a wide range of stakeholders.

Our Vision

Wales as a nation values its landscapes for what they provide for the people of Wales and elsewhere. The designated landscapes of Wales deliver both within and beyond their boundaries to enhance their social, economic, environmental and cultural resources; delivering the maximum well-being benefits for present and future generations whilst enhancing the very qualities that make them both distinctive and cherished.

3 REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF LANDSCAPES

The crux of the reform being advocated by the Marsden Report may be summarised as ‘promoting’ the current National Park duty to have regard for the socio-economic well-being of the area into one of its purposes, and to apply these same purposes to AONBs. All other recommendations may be read as relating to the structures, powers, and tools to advance this. This specific amendment to the existing purposes has been considered against the broader and more modern expression of the two recent Welsh Acts and in the light of current practice.

In the current legislative framework the contemporary interpretation of this broader function of National Parks and AONBs is in the delivery of the sustainable management of natural resources, set in the context of the Well-being Goals, with a formal relationship to the special qualities of the area.

The Future Landscape Wales Programme has reviewed current practice across designated landscape management plans and initiatives, finding lead organisations and partnerships already engaging in considerable broader activity. Despite this, the analysis has identified a gap between this activity and perceptions of economic development activity and potential in designated landscapes.

In the context of the new legislation, the Programme also identified a need to revisit the question of what makes these areas special. While areas have now defined their special qualities they are not clearly included as part of the legislative framework. There was also discussion that the areas, though designated in the first instance for landscape quality, and for recreation opportunity in the case of National Parks, were also important for a wide range of other characteristics, such as nature, water supply, food and carbon and that a modern account should embrace these wider characteristics.

New legislation is needed to further some aspects of the Proposition, including making changes to recognise the special qualities of National Parks and AONBs as part of a more formal role in the sustainable management of natural resources. Further work should be undertaken to develop specific detail on the propositions around:

- a) sustainable management of natural resources being the basis for future statutory functions;
- b) special qualities reflecting a broad understanding of the importance of these areas and their ecosystems and be given greater weight in decision-making;
- c) governance arrangements being enabled to evolve to reflect local circumstances;
- d) communities being able to put forward proposals for new areas to be recognised for their special qualities.

In the meantime, there is scope to align better the designated landscapes with the sustainable management of natural resources as set out in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. NRW should co-operate with the lead body or partnership of the designated landscapes to explore the potential for the Area Statement to be incorporated into the area’s statutory Management Plan. NRW should also explore the potential of their powers to innovate and experiment to introduce new ways of working within and outwith the

current designated landscapes, which may better support ecosystem resilience and the sustainable management of natural resources.

This will provide a refreshed sense of what people value and their sense of sustainable use. Tying that formally to a revised purpose should be a priority for primary legislation, but could be undertaken in the meantime as part of developing Area Statements.

4 WORKING BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Behavioural and institutional change

The William's Commission¹ outlined the importance of long term behavioural change as a necessary prerequisite for cultural change across public services in Wales

In order to deliver on the new vision for designated landscapes the new ways of working developed throughout the Future Landscapes Wales programme must be fully adopted. This approach emphasised the value of relationships built on trust and true collaboration, where partners took ownership of both problem and solution. Moving away from traditional hierarchies will be underpinned by a set of collective beliefs. These beliefs respect and strengthen the relationship between people and place and in turn lead to better shared outcomes:

- ▶ Well-being and the sustainable management of natural and cultural resources underpin all outcomes,
- ▶ Sense of place and community resilience is strengthened by an integrated approach to policy and implementation,
- ▶ Approaches that respect and strengthen the relationship between people and place lead to better outcomes,
- ▶ Local and national accountability of the designated landscapes strengthens their ownership and management,
- ▶ Clarity of purposes of the designated landscapes guides outcomes,
- ▶ Dedicated bodies or partnerships for the management of the designated landscapes enable coordination of delivery and provide accountability,
- ▶ Inclusiveness and engagement inform priorities, develop aspirations and improves understanding,

¹ Williams et al., *William's Commission on Public Service, Governance, and Delivery*, Welsh Government, 2014,

- ▶ Communicating the intrinsic value of designated landscapes promotes long term appreciation of their worth,
- ▶ Distinctiveness and cultural values are unique and irreplaceable which are to be managed for the benefit of future generations,

These values draw from the sustainable development principle and its five ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Although the reform of institutional structures cannot in itself deliver behavioural change, the relationship between the two must be considered. The characteristics of a system support particular behaviours.

Working beyond boundaries

The management bodies of the designated landscape of Wales have a duty to react to contemporary needs and can offer opportunities which include:

- Delivering broader well-being benefits within their boundaries
- Assisting other landscape management partnerships across Wales to unlock the full well-being potential of their landscapes
- Operating on a regional basis together and with a range of partners to deliver common goals

The Future Landscapes Wales programme considered how to develop this and improve capacity to deliver on the duties of the Future Generations agenda and concluded that a hub type approach may be the most progressive. This would involve the teams from the designated landscapes supporting areas of Wales which have diminished capacity, to benefit from the level of understanding, expertise and proven track record to deliver of the designated landscapes. This may mean closer operational arrangements between existing designated areas on a regional and national basis, but also between the designated landscapes and areas without a statutory designation. There was a clear appetite to explore further the concept and options for delivering this model.

5 NEW GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

To provide a framework within which the governance arrangements for a designated landscape can be considered, a set of good governance principles have been agreed.

These principles are set within an international context based on the IUCN Principles for Effective Governance² and 'Good Democratic Governance on a Local Level on the European Landscape Convention Accountability'. They also reflected the Welsh dimension of the sustainable management of natural resources principles from the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 goals and ways of working.

² Governance of Protected Areas Report, IUCN, 2013

The good governance principles were developed around five key areas:

- Legitimacy, participation and voice
- Developing and implementing a strategic vision for the area
- Effective performance management
- Accountability and transparency
- Fairness and rights

Table 1: Summary of Principles of good Governance for designated landscapes

Legitimacy, participation and voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance in society • Representation and participation • Active dialogue and consensus • Subsidiarity
Developing and implementing a strategic vision for the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspiring and consistent vision • Consistent with national outcomes • Reflect obligations • Adaptive management and innovation
Effective performance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management effectiveness • Learning culture, skills and knowledge • Advocacy and outreach • Acknowledging and addressing weakness or poor performance • Efficient use of financial resources
Accountability and transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity and commitment • Decision making and reporting • Allocation of resources • Communication
Fairness and rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical and fair decision making • Impartial and without discrimination • Respectful of language and culture • Respect rights • Active engagement

These Principles should be used to assess any changes to the governance of existing designated landscapes and for the governance of new areas being proposed for landscape designation.

The designated landscapes need to work in close partnership with many sectors including business, third sector bodies and academia. The potential for sustainable management of

natural resources in an area is strengthened by the existence of a dedicated body or partnership. This makes the designated landscapes more than 'lines on a map'. A dedicated body or partnership must take responsibility for co-ordinating activities in the area and in doing so should be held accountable locally and nationally.

Within the safeguards of the governance principles and a robust accountability model, it should be possible to move away from a 'one size fits all' into a wider range of local delivery models, including partnerships and shared or delegated responsibilities. The range of tools and powers which a lead body has should also reflect local priorities and need.

Future Landscapes Wales considered the broad range of governance models which exist for designated landscapes and for organisations involved in the management of natural resources against their ability to meet and deliver the Principles. It was found that the existing structures in Wales exemplify many of the principles well and they provide a good basis upon which to explore innovative ways to better reflect local needs for the sustainable management of natural resources, whilst also maintaining enough consistency to influence and inform national policy more effectively. However, to fully realise the potential will require open and collaborative partnerships and behaviour, with a real ability and interest in developing new models and to take risks.

Ensuring governance is fit for purpose suggests the desirability of formal review points for existing or new governance models. Such reviews should empower areas to propose new arrangements which would see them evolve to reflect changing needs and opportunities.

The appetite for reviewing national oversight arrangements remains, particularly to explore the most efficient way to plan the sharing of resources and to collaborate effectively. Further work should be undertaken to develop an approach which provides a balance between the local and national for framing a flexible, locally determined, place based approach within the agreed wider sense of direction. The membership of the Future Landscapes Wales Programme has been drawn from a wide range of stakeholders which are representative of the many demands and aspirations made in the designated landscapes. In the short term, it should continue to meet to have oversight of implementation with a view that it could evolve into a national partnership with a formal role in oversight of designated landscapes.

6 IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The need for measuring output, outcomes, and evaluating impact remains necessary as part of the desire to improve performance, and is of interest to the media and the public in terms of holding government and organisations to account. The designated landscapes are valued by the public of Wales, influence or make decisions which impact on people's lives, and administer and invest public money. Adopting a robust and proportionate approach for the performance and accountability of the managing body is both necessary and laudable.

Both performance and accountability require the objective measurement and reporting of activities against the planned and actual result. What currently exists in the AONBs and

National Parks has evolved over time in response to new statutory requirements, national or local pursuit of the latest incarnation of good practice, and the sometimes contradictory demands of funding or accreditation bodies.

In recent years the focus has shifted from measuring outputs to outcomes and this has increased the complexity of the task, perhaps disproportionately or beyond the capacity of the individual landscape bodies. The aspiration emerging from Future Landscapes Wales is an approach tailored to the designated landscapes which offers consistency across all the designations, but which is flexible enough to be tailored to the scale and status of a managing organisation or partnership and adopted by new areas.

Work should begin immediately to develop a proportionate, consistent yet flexible, integrated approach to planning and performance reporting, which discharges duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act and can be adopted as substitutes or supplements to the other statutory reporting requirements. This approach should then be adopted by the existing National Park Authorities and AONB Partnerships and be adopted by any future designated landscapes.

This offers a unique opportunity to integrate, simplify, and through this increase transparency for stakeholders. The aim is:

- increasing consistency in the range of, and approach to, targets and indicators;
- providing a mechanism which facilitates collaboration and enables cross fertilisation of good practice; and
- strengthening oversight and scrutiny of delivery and impact.

7 INNOVATIONS IN RESOURCING

Public funding is never likely in itself to meet all the opportunities of our landscapes. Wider partnerships and innovative funding models will be needed which are capable of attracting new resources as well as influencing investments by others.

The Future Landscapes Wales programme has identified different resourcing opportunities for the designated landscapes which fall broadly into four categories:

- Influencing the resources and investments already active in an area
- Attracting resources to support the direct activities of a delivery body
- Attracting resources for specific projects
- Securing public funding for core governance of a delivery body.

Influencing

Public bodies and statutory undertakers who make decisions which affect land in an AONB or National Park are already under a duty to have regard to the purpose for which the area is designated. There have been repeated calls in this and previous reviews for such a duty to be strengthened; with reference to requiring such bodies to further the purpose or to report

on what positive action they have taken. Underlying such calls is the recognition that fulfilling the purposes and potential of the designated landscapes requires a broad collaborative response.

Future Landscapes Wales recognises the potential for National Park Authorities and AONB Partnerships to convene and influence stakeholders and this should be strengthened in their delivery approach.

The appropriateness of the current duty for certain bodies to have regard to a statutory designation's purposes should be within the scope of future primary legislation in this area. It is an historic legislative mechanism intended to safeguard the special qualities of an area, and has the potential to stimulate greater collaboration. That it is considered 'weak' in this regard would suggest that more proactive approaches to engagement and collaboration should be pursued, which should extend beyond the limited number of bodies who fall within scope of this statute. A collaborative approach in support of an area's special qualities may be achieved more effectively through building relationships and trust, rather than reliance on compliance on a duty to have regard. Both approaches will require parties to understand and appreciate the aspiration for an area and their own impacts and contribution. The designated landscape bodies can play a critical role in facilitating the necessary joint endeavour for the management of the landscapes which includes, but extends beyond, those who are caught by the duty to 'have regard'.

Public, private and third sector organisations and individual land owners and managers are constantly making investment decisions which impact positively or negatively on the sustainable management of natural resources in an area. The existence of a lead body or partnership for an area should enable such decisions to be influenced or incentivised positively.

Enabling communities to shape land-use in ways which respects local traditions and the sense of place was supported throughout the Future Landscapes Wales programme. Incentivising positive land management and collaboration was identified as key to getting public, private and third sector resources to maximise resilience and benefits for all.

Attracting

Resourcing models for nationally important landscapes across the globe are focused on effective facilitation of natural resource management and landscape scale collaboration.

Opportunities to diversify the funding base should be pursued. Some sources require significant input of staff time that may result in unsuccessful bids or only secure relatively small funds, so a more strategic and collaborative approach to bids should be pursued by the designated landscapes. There may be wider environmental, community or economic benefits or leverage from some schemes and the risks and returns on that investment have to be acknowledged.

Designated landscapes need to develop or acquire the necessary skills to diversify their approach to resourcing the sustainable management of natural resources in their areas. Complimentary opportunities from public, private and third sector should be explored and exploited. There are already good examples of innovations and diversification in the

resourcing of Wales' National Parks and AONBs. Better opportunities should be made of sharing these good practices whilst also improving efficiencies. Ways of working should be established which incentivise public, private and third sector organisations to collaborate where they share vision and purpose. Pooling of resources can lever greater impact and income than could be achieved when individual organisations pursue their own specific and separate objectives.

Securing Core Funding

In terms of resourcing, most designated landscapes in the world have a lead body or partnership which receives public funding to deliver their governance and also extends to facilitate work on the ground. The scale and complexity of governance structures have obvious resource implications. Efficiency should be pursued, consistent with effective governance.

The current model in Wales has a clear distinction between the core revenue grant from the Welsh Government for National Park Authorities and their activities and the funding for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty coming in large part from Natural Resources Wales and constituent local authorities. Within both approaches there are significant variations in funding levels between the eight designated landscapes which may have limited relationship in terms of their size or pressures.

The long term resourcing approach for the designated landscape bodies and partnerships should be explored.

8 DRIVING WELL-BEING AND RESILIENCE

The designated landscapes should be the drivers of the sustainable management of the natural resources in their areas in the framework set by Welsh legislation.

The special qualities of the designated landscapes go wider than their visual and amenity value and embrace their vital role as a provider of wider public and private benefit both within and beyond their areas.

There is a substantial challenge to create resilient ecosystems within and beyond the designated landscapes. But, their restoration can enable the sustainable management of natural resources to underpin social, economic and cultural benefits. The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) indicates that no Welsh ecosystems contain all the necessary attributes of resilience, including those in our designated landscapes. A priority for designated landscapes is to act upon these findings and ensure the management and use of natural resources focuses on maintaining and enhancing the status of their attributes – the connectivity, condition, scale/ extent and diversity. Further action in designated landscapes to address biodiversity decline is therefore necessary to maintain and enhance ecosystem resilience.

Designated landscape management organisations need to further develop and refine their own understanding of local economic resilience and economic opportunities, and continue to collaborate with other economic development agencies, including local authorities. They should draw on their power to convene local bodies, businesses and groups in order to support and create opportunities for employment. There is the potential to deliver both economic and environmental gains if joint objectives are set alongside each other from the outset.

The bodies have a particular opportunity to exemplify and promote 'green growth' as a means of fostering economic growth and development, which is socially equitable and ensures that natural resources are sustainably used and managed. The bodies responsible for the designated landscapes should together promote the social, cultural and economic value and sustainable management of all our landscapes, working with Natural Resources Wales and with local partnerships.

To achieve this, communities need to be inspired, empowered and supported to:

- Develop their own vision and long term goals for the future, which can be manifest in the plans and activities of Public Service Boards and the lead body or partnership of a designated area
- Collaborate across the community and with all stakeholders to develop the skills needed to generate prosperity and employment
- Involve all sections of the community in an approach that focuses on the needs of current and future generations
- Create opportunities for young people to stay in and return to their community
- Maintain and enhance natural resources and the resilience of ecosystems for the benefits they provide for the well-being of present and future generations and their intrinsic value
- Help define how success is to be recognised and measured.

A number of specific opportunities to assist communities and designated landscape management organisations in this task have been identified.

The development of a 'place planning' approach may be a means of meeting the need for innovative, place based collaboration that addresses economic and environmental challenges. The concept of place planning acknowledges that resources and needs differ from area to area. Place plans can represent a cultural shift, enabling appropriate development that supports national, local and community objectives for well-being. The idea is to empower communities to enhance their influence over development sites, local distinctiveness, new green economy ideas and community infrastructure. This will be a community-led approach characterised by greater collaboration between authorities and communities, a better understanding of community needs and responsive delivery.

Such an approach is consistent with the existing and emerging frameworks of Local Development Plans, designated landscape Management Plans and Area Statements and is an opportunity to inform and influence their content leading to whole place plans.

Examination of the key elements of work already underway to promote green growth in Wales has identified the need for better policy integration and increased understanding of how designated landscapes can positively engage in the agenda, including, but not limited to:

- Leverage for Green Growth projects through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)
- Develop sustainable land management schemes tailored to an area to replace or complement existing agri-environment payments, including working with clusters of land managers
- Maximising the benefits of the designated landscape / National Park / AONB brand for portraying a positive image of Wales to the world, and attracting inward investment and tourism
- Sharing of existing best practice such as developing local food supply chains and community based renewable energy schemes

Incentives for sustainable management of natural resources, including Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES), has potential for local economic opportunities for land managers and communities to benefit from work that maintains and enhances natural capital, such as carbon sequestration or upland water storage, and for potential buyers to meet various strategic and operational aims by investing in them.

Wales' designated landscapes deliver a complex array of ecosystem services. Bundles of these services may be considered together for investors in natural capital. A new regulatory framework and public funding may be required to instigate these investments and brokers are also needed. The designated landscape management organisations and partnerships are well placed to provide the high level understanding of ecosystems and the services they provide locally to inform appropriate investments. They are also well connected with the land managers and communities who could benefit from such investments.

There may be merit in developing place-specific sustainable land management schemes tailored to supporting local needs framed in terms of the special qualities of a designated landscape. EU Transition offers the opportunity to explore this. Any new scheme will need to create multiple outcomes, be seen as investment not subsidy and foster public understanding of the benefits derived from restoring and enhancing the resilience of ecosystems. The wish is to introduce flexibility which enables priority ecosystem needs and public goods to be addressed in an area.

Communities and the natural environment can benefit more from sustainable tourism utilising the lens of designated landscapes. There should be proactive engagement with tourism providers to identify how they can contribute to sustain the natural assets on which their businesses rely including through initiatives such as:

- Green apprenticeships
- Visitor payback
- Adventure tourism
- Contribution to biodiverse green infrastructure (e.g. cycle paths and bridleways)
- Promotional events

The development of alternative niche markets through securing and supporting UNESCO Global Geopark, UNESCO World Heritage Site, UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status and the International Dark Sky Reserve can help make the most of green and heritage tourism. The acknowledgement through these awards of the international importance and qualities of the Welsh landscape should be harnessed to maximise the economic and education benefits for communities. There is the opportunity to strengthen collaboration between these areas and the designated landscapes, recognising the significant synergy between their purposes.

The designated landscape management organisations have the potential to further facilitate engagement between local businesses, local authorities, Visit Wales and third sector groups within and outside of the boundaries to better understand demand and development potential.

A DESIRE FOR CHANGE

9 THE IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

The Proposition set out in this report aims to capture the ambition for a collaborative and dynamic approach to designated landscapes and the sustainable management of natural resources on a landscapes scale. Its full realisation will involve multiple stakeholders and partnerships who can work collectively and flexibly, not only taking a planned approach but identifying and responding to opportunities to further the ambition.

The Implementation Priorities as set out in this report aim to capture the activities currently identified by the Group as being necessary to begin this journey. The priorities will change as opportunities emerge or projects conclude in success or failure. The route from ambition to delivery is not simple and linear, and to seek to distil addressing the complex environmental and social issues faced in the designated landscapes into a rigid plan will likely result in modest or token gains at best. A nice project here, a good practice case study there, but ecosystem resilience remaining beyond reach.

Implementation will require an acceptance by all partners that they must take responsibility and ownership over their own actions. Each partner contributes vital knowledge, experience and access to resources in their broadest sense. No one single body holds the key. Through Future Landscapes Wales the Welsh Government has sought to emphasise this point, adopting an approach which has empowered all partners to take ownership. The Welsh Government has taken a seat alongside others and not presumed to be at the head of the table. This has challenged convention, and has been challenging in practice for many.

The new legislative framework for Wales is ambitious and in its infancy. The partners of the designated landscapes will be engaging fully in exploring its potential to deliver the 'Wales we want', and learning what works.

Future Landscapes Wales has come to a view that essential first steps to realising the Proposition are:

Delivering for Wales	
Collaboration and Partnership	
Start now	Start within 18 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the delivery group to monitor the delivery of the Future Landscapes Wales actions. • All participants in the FLW Programme to adopt the way of working developed, which emphasises building relationships for effective collaboration. • The Welsh Government, NRW and all designated landscapes to provide assistance and support to other landscape management partnerships across Wales to unlock the full well-being potential of their landscapes. • The delivery group to develop a communication plan and profile for Future Landscapes Wales which engages the public in the role and priorities of these areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the most efficient way to plan the sharing of resources and to collaborate effectively on delivery. • The designated landscapes to pilot and develop guidance for a hub concept as a mechanism for working beyond existing boundaries. • Agree an approach to monitoring change and trends to demonstrate impact against indicators relating to the well-being goals and the resilience of local ecosystems.
Vision and Direction	
Start now	Start within 18 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members or Boards of all partners to adopt the vision and engage with staff, Members and partners, incorporating it into relevant publications. • The Welsh Government, working with partners, to develop proposals for legislation to better align with the direction set out in the Proposition, creating a clear formal relationship between the identified special qualities of a designated area and the partnerships, powers and policies that drive their sustainable management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore ways of establishing and reinforcing a formal relationship between the identified special qualities of a designated area and its sustainable management. • NRW and the designated landscapes will explore the potential of powers to innovate and experiment to introduce new ways of working which may better support ecosystem resilience and delivery of the Natural Resources Policy by working through the designated landscapes to deliver action at scale.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NRW should fully explore with partner organisations the interaction between designated landscapes' Management Plans and emerging Area Statements. 	
Fit for Purpose	
Refreshing Governance: Improving Performance and Accountability	
Start now	Start within 18 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt the Governance Principles as a model for any future designation. Undertake a more detailed review of current governance against the Principles and make recommendations for change. The Welsh Government and NRW to develop and introduce a consistent approach to planning and performance reporting. The Welsh Government to review the effectiveness of Park Authorities in providing leadership and driving performance and work with the Authorities to take forward any recommendations. The Welsh Government to take steps to reduce the bureaucracy associated with reporting and audit for National Park Authorities, working with the Wales Audit office to pilot ways which harmonises requirements and boost transparency. Landscapes management bodies to adopt the National Principles for Public Engagement and work together to provide guidance on how to improve engagement in designated landscapes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot approaches for a wider range of delivery models, including partnerships and shared or delegated responsibilities Explore the options for formal review points for existing or new governance models. Such reviews should empower areas to propose new arrangements. The Welsh Government to review and consult on a menu of options to securing wider representation on both National Park Authority Boards and AONB Partnerships in accordance with the Governance Principles.
Innovations in Resourcing	
Start now	Start within 18 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin the development of a long term resourcing strategy which maps out short, medium and long terms opportunities. The Welsh Government in partnership with the AONBs to produce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a consensus to inform the direction and measures emerging from EU Transition to secure appropriate measures and delivery mechanism for sustainable land management in designated landscapes.

<p>proposals for a more secure resourcing model.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate charitable and legacy funding opportunities with organisations such as the Community Foundation in Wales. Designated landscapes to form a group to share good practice and learning from funding applications and collaborate on preparation of bids. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Park Authorities to further explore and communicate the public goods and services being delivered by landscapes, utilising the findings as the evidence for diversifying the resources attracted for the sustainable management of the special qualities of the area.
<p>Driving Well-being and Resilience</p>	
<p>Start now</p>	<p>Start within 18 months</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated landscape management organisations and partnerships to further develop and refine their own understanding of local economic resilience and economic opportunities. Where appropriate, Designated Landscapes to adopt the concept of place planning as a mechanism to connect communities with places. Strengthen collaboration and support between the designated landscapes and areas with UNESCO Global Geopark, UNESCO World Heritage Site, UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status and International Dark Sky Reserves to maximise economic and education benefits. Identify mechanisms by which the designated landscapes can build ecosystem resilience based on the results of the SoNaRR and the priorities in the Natural Resources Policy. Review funding priorities for Sustainable Development Fund and other investments by the designated landscapes and partners in order to ensure their effectiveness in supporting local economic initiatives based on local priorities and need, linking to place planning. Engage in dialogue about the urgent needs for broadband connectivity whenever possible. Establish mechanisms to effectively use Payment for Ecosystem Services as a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek out case studies of existing good practice in Green Growth and the circular economy and propose pilot projects to Welsh Government and Natural Resource Wales. Designated landscapes produce a toolkit in order to facilitate a consistent approach to the production of Place Plans whilst recognising they need to be different according to local needs and involve future generations of the community. Designated landscapes to work with Visit Wales to develop a strong brand for National Parks and AONBs to maximise their contribution to Wales' tourism offer. Test new approaches for land management schemes in a Designated Landscape drawing on best practice and ecosystem services principles. Take action to address perceptions of barriers to renewable energy development in Designated Landscapes and set a path to becoming champions of rural renewable energy development. Develop demonstration projects in green growth, circular economy, and Payments for Ecosystem Services.

delivery approach.	
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The collaborative approach emerging through Future Landscapes Wales will be utilised to translate these activities into an Action Plan which gains commitment from partners to lead, contribute and deliver. The Plan will be a live document which can respond to opportunities and change course if that is the will of the partners.

Annexes

Annex 1

The Marsden Report

The independent review into the purpose and governance of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks in Wales, Chaired by Professor Terry Marsden, Director of the Sustainable Places Research Institute at Cardiff University, started its work in the autumn of 2014. The purpose of the review was to consider how the devolved area of designated landscapes fit and deliver with emerging Welsh priorities including green growth and natural resource management.

The review followed from the William's Commission³ which outlined the importance of long term behavioural change as a necessary prerequisite for cultural change across public services in Wales. It highlighted the relationship between positive organisational culture, supported by effective leadership, and high performance. It drew on the Francis inquiry⁴ which concluded that to achieve a change in culture did not require "radical reorganisation but re-emphasis of what is truly important".

Recommendations 13 and 14⁵ of the William's Commission report are aimed at National Park Authorities and focus on the importance of collaboration, leadership, and co-ordination. These recommendations are equally applicable to AONB partnerships.

The Marsden Report was published in 2015. It called for a fresh approach to the purposes and governance and sought to position the designated landscapes in a role which can help to address increasingly complex environmental challenges, inequalities in well-being and health, and to deliver more vibrant rural communities. It included 69 recommendations covering a raft of proposals and observations on purposes, principles, vision, governance models, planning, and funding.

The recommendations can be distilled into the following:

1. Make no change to the designations' name, legal status of National Park Authorities, or management models of AONB.

³ Williams et al., *William's Commission on Public Service, Governance, and Delivery*, Welsh Government, 2014,

⁴ Francis et al., 2010, *Independent Inquiry into care provided by Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust January 2005 – March 2009*

⁵ 13. National Park Authorities (NPAs) must develop clear and consistent ways of collaborating with each other, with local authorities, with Visit Wales and with Natural Resources Wales, on the ground, to avoid duplications and maximise the use of resources and scarce expertise.

14. The Welsh Government and NPAs should secure national leadership and co-ordination and the most effective use of resources and expertise. The Government should consider doing so through a single authority, whilst retaining the distinctive identities of the three parks. (paragraph 2.60)

2. Reform their purpose to be catalysts for regional development in rural areas, with shared interlocking purposes of conservation, well-being, and sustainable management of natural resources.
3. Strengthen the support and delivery role of other bodies.
4. Extend boundaries to cover adjacent sea areas.
5. Reduce the regulatory burden of audit.
6. Create a National Landscape Committee, a National Partnership Board, and Local Partnerships.
7. Introduce a Partnership Plan for each area, scrutinised and adopted by National Assembly for Wales.
8. Retain the strategic planning policy and development control of NPA, and make AONB board a statutory consultee.
9. Remove the political balance requirement on NPA and AONB boards, revise the makeup and proportions of local authority, national and “local” appointees.
10. Provide a core grant from Welsh Government for all designated landscape areas, whilst introducing greater challenge and diversity to their overall revenue budget, based on a strategy for national landscapes, with pan-Wales indicators and targets.

The delivery priorities set out by Marsden would see the designated landscapes (and their officers) involved in stimulating local enterprise partnerships, increasing the stock of sustainable affordable housing, increasing the generation of green energy, and boosting numbers of retailing ventures. Alongside the delivery of economic activity there is a theme of working more with Local Health Boards on health and well-being experiments reaching challenged urban and rural communities. This does pick up some opportunities associated with the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

Marsden advocates a settlement where the designated landscapes and associated bodies should retain their identity and legal status while evolving into regional development bodies with safeguards for conservation, which have a national voice, funding, targets, and indicators, combined with local boards and plans.

At its most simple, the crux of the reform being advocated by the Marsden Report is to ‘promote’ the current National Park duty to have regard for the socio-economic well-being of the area into one of its purposes, and to apply these same purposes to AONBs. All other recommendations can be read as relating to the structures, powers, and tools to advance this.

Rather than responding to the report, the then Minister, Carl Sargeant, convened the Future Landscape Wales process under the chairmanship of Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas to take forward the spirit of the recommendations in a collaborative process and in the light of the new legal framework provided by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, and the potential changes to the structure of local government delivery.

Annex 2

List of contributors to Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales

Chair

Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM

Name	Organisation
Iolo ap Gwyn	Snowdonia National Park Authority/Independent
Andrew Blake	Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
John Cook	Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
Howard Davies	National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Melanie Doel	Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
Bridget Emmett	Centre of Ecology and Hydrology
Heather Galliford	RSPB Cymru
Richard Griffiths	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Edward Holdaway	Alliance for National Parks
Mike James,	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Victoria Jenkins	Environmental Law Association
Arwel Jones	Llŷn Landscape Partnership
Bleddyn Jones	Llŷn Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Llŷr Jones	Welsh Government
Rhianne Jones	Country, Land and Business Association
Tegryn Jones	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Mark Lang	Federation of Small Businesses
Chris Lea	Welsh Government
Matthew Lewis	Monmouthshire County Council
Rachel Lewis-Davies	National Farmers Union Cymru
Chris Lindley	Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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