
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan 2

Hearing Sessions

Opening Statement

**Pembrokeshire Coast
National Park Authority**

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1. Introduction

I am Jane Gibson, Director of Planning and Park Direction with the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. I shall introduce other members of the Authority's team, and any supporting roles I envisage being required, at the end of this statement.

This Local Development Plan will lie at the heart of the National Park Authority's approach to making planning decisions when finally agreed. It sets out our development strategy and supporting policies for the period to 2031.

I won't attempt to deal with the process for preparing the Local Development Plan in this statement, but we are more than happy to deal with any questions on how we got to this point, during the Hearing, from any interested parties. An overview of the process can be found in our Consultation Report, which is available on our website and in the Examination Library at NPA017.

In this brief opening statement, I concentrate on how important this Local Development Plan is to National Park communities and to everyone that visits the National Park for work or pleasure.

2. National Park purposes

National Parks are the pinnacle in Welsh landscape quality and are heartlands for Welsh culture. They are a very important economic resource for the country as a whole.

The two statutory purposes of the Authority are to:

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

In fulfilling these functions, the Authority is also under a duty to foster the social wellbeing of communities within its area. In undertaking its two statutory purposes, the Authority and other stakeholders must give priority to the conservation purpose in resolving any irreconcilable conflict between the conservation and promotion of enjoyment purposes. This is known as the 'Sandford Principle'. In other words, conservation is the primary focus when considering whether development proposals are acceptable, the balance has to lie with the conservation of the Park.

This legislation has underpinned the drafting of the Plan and how it has been translated into policy formed the basis of many debates surrounding the progression of the Authority's first Local Development Plan. Examples included:

- The positioning of the Plan policies within the Plan itself. Should, for example, policies directly related to National Park purposes be given a higher profile? You will see that the replacement Local Development Plan (Local Development Plan 2) has an overarching Policy on the National Park purposes and duty reflecting the conclusions of the Inspector from the first Examination.
- Has the Plan done too much and harmed National Park purposes or has it done too little in relation to fostering the socio-economic well being of the Park's communities?

The Plan seeks to strike an appropriate balance between meeting the needs of local communities and the overarching requirement to conserve and enhance the National Park. Inevitably this view will be debated during our Hearing sessions and its detailed practical application considered when the appropriateness of individual sites for development is considered by the Inspector.

3. National Park Management Plan

Something else that is unique to National Parks in England and Wales is the need to prepare a Management Plan for the area. The Management Plan must provide a context for the Local Development Plan. To achieve this compatibility preparing the first Local Development Plan strategy and Management Plan in tandem provided the Authority with opportunities to jointly progress the testing of a vision for the Park, its aims and objectives through public consultation. Since then, the Authority has ensured that new iterations of the Management Plan and the Local Development Plan dovetail with each other.

4. The Spatial Context

In terms of the spatial strategy chosen by the Authority - this has been informed by the Wales Spatial Plan context in which it sits together with the neighbouring adopted Local Development Plans which were prepared within this context. The Authority continues to liaise with neighbouring local planning authorities on the preparation of their Plans. Statements of Common Ground have been prepared with Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire Authorities on various matters. A draft of the National Development Framework is awaited.

We are aware that being a National Park means that there needs to be a sufficiently clear distinction between land within the National Park – with its special landscape designation, and the remainder of the county. This must form a crucial element of the Local Development Plan. Given that this National Park takes the form of a narrow coastal strip (except for the Preseli Hills), it is impossible to divorce from its immediate setting and yet

the Plan must make a distinction, where required, in relation to its primary purposes and duty.

Six priority issues were identified when the original Preferred Strategy was drafted. These issues were highlighted through:

- A review of the Park's key attributes
- Identifying what are the key messages in relevant Acts, Plans and Strategies for the Plan
- Identifying what is going well for the Park and what key matters need addressing
- Seeing what issues matter to the various stakeholders.
- Needing to explain the Park's role in the wider regional and national context.

The six priority issues identified have been responded to by identifying six priority policy areas to address:

1. National Park purposes, Special Qualities
2. Major development, the potential for growth
3. Climate change, sustainable design, flooding , sustainable energy
4. Visitor economy, employment and rural diversification
5. Affordable housing and housing growth
6. Community Facilities, retailing and transport

These have remained the cornerstone of the replacement Plan and there isn't any fundamental disagreement with the continuation of this approach .

5. Key Outcomes to achieve

The Plan seeks to achieve a series of key outcomes in relation to these priority issues/policy areas. The review of the Plan has provided an opportunity to add value to the Plan's approach. For example:

- A key element of the review has been to reconsider the existing allocations in the current Local Development and remove and replace those unlikely to come forward during this plan period. Development rates and affordable housing requirements have undergone substantial review. However, the ability of the planning system to provide certainty on the delivery of sites will always be coloured by its limited role in site development.
- Another key area, in line, with national planning policy, has been to develop policies to better help manage coastal change. We have introduced a suite of new policies (Policies 36 to 38) to facilitate this forecast change to our coastal areas and communities.
- One final example is the strengthening of the Biodiversity section of the Plan to take account of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to ensure increased emphasis is placed on enhancement including improving connectivity for biodiversity in the assessment of planning applications. .

6. Engagement

Throughout this process we have complied with the principles set out in the Authority's Delivery Agreement – Examination Library NPA01. We have, where resources permitted, sought to go further than the commitments already set out. Key principles included:

- Using various methods to communicate including targeting workshops for Authority Members - with specific issues presented by other staff members, not planners. This

enthused members to participate and debate the solutions with consideration for short, medium and long term outcomes.

- Ensuring feedback was reported to PCNPA members.
- Ensuring inputs and outputs were public information.

As we anticipated, there is only so far that consensus building can go. You are more likely to achieve consensus when developing options rather than when writing detailed policies of the Plan and when aiming to agree what needs to be developed rather than where it is developed.

In terms of input the effort that various stakeholders and participants have made has been invaluable and this role will continue through the hearing sessions. It is very much appreciated.

7. The Authority's Team

Finally I would like to briefly introduce the Authority's team. I can say this with confidence, as it is quite a small team. Martina Dunne will lead the Authority's contribution supported by myself Jane Gibson and members of the team:

- Gayle Lister - Planning Officer
- Sarah Hirst - Planning Officer
- Phil Barlow - Research & Information Officer

In a supporting role we may call on:

- Steve Benger, the Highways Authority representative, based with Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC)
- Andrew Davies-Wrigley Private Sector Housing & Housing Strategy Manager
PCC

- Ryan Norman (Welsh Water)
- Hugh Towns Regional Minerals and Waste Planning Manager, Carmarthenshire
County Council

Thank you – we'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.