

## Local Plan Review Workshop Summary

<b>Workshop Topic:</b>	Landscape, Biodiversity and Nature Recovery
<b>Date:</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
<b>Time:</b>	10.00am
<b>Workshop led by:</b>	Adele Metcalfe

### Summary of Attendees:

Number of external attendees:	32
Organisations Represented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Farmers Union</li> <li>• Natural England</li> <li>• Staffordshire Moorlands Council</li> <li>• Chatsworth</li> <li>• Derbyshire Wildlife Trust</li> <li>• Oldham Council</li> <li>• CLA</li> <li>• Edale Parish Council</li> <li>• Environment Agency</li> <li>• Campaign for National Parks</li> <li>• PDNPA Members</li> <li>• National Trust</li> <li>• Tideswell and District Environment Group</li> <li>• Transport for the North</li> <li>• Peak Park Parishes Forum</li> <li>• Stockport Council</li> <li>• Tissington Estate</li> <li>• Bradfield Parish Council</li> <li>• Hope Valley Climate Action</li> <li>• Barnsley MBC</li> </ul>

Link to topic paper:

[Landscape-Biodiversity-and-Nature-Recovery.pdf \(peakdistrict.gov.uk\)](#)

Link to presentation:

[PowerPoint Presentation \(peakdistrict.gov.uk\)](#)

### Questions asked for workshops:

1. How do we plan for nature recovery?
  - (i) How can we ensure that 'biodiversity net gain' (BNG) plays a significant role in an area where there is very little development?
  - (ii) Landownership is key for nature recovery. Should we re-think how we work with big landowners (e.g. our big estates) so that planning and development there is more closely linked to nature recovery?
  - (iii) Do you see a significant role for offsetting? Will neighbouring authorities be looking to deliver their net gain inside the National Park?
2. How should our landscapes change?

### Summary of responses given:

#### Q1 (i)

A significant part of the debate questioned the NPA's (National Park Authority) approach to the Environment Bill, including that we need to be clear, ambitious and bold. We need to link the local plan to a nature recovery strategy and a nature recovery network. But it was also acknowledged that the mechanisms for implementing net gain through the Local Plan may be limited due to low levels of development overall and the threshold for requirement. In the Peak District net gain associated with individual development is unlikely to be the main driver of nature recovery. The capacity and expertise of the Authority to undertake this was questioned. Some detailed comments included:

- It is likely that most development in a national park will be under the threshold in the Environment Bill.
- PDNP (Peak District National Park Authority) needs to define biodiversity planning guidance. Would like to see stakeholders coming together to produce this. Policies need to support nature recovery, over and above Natural Zone, in areas that are connected. Has to be done in partnership with landowners and farmers. A biodiversity document could also help farmers.
- Net gain policies should go beyond the 10% (not consensus of group)
- Need to know the base-line and identify where net-gain is needed
- Net gain policies need to offer some flexibility
- Net gain might increase tourism in some areas.
- In addition to net gain, policies need to support work that is purely nature conservation.
- Nature recovery can/will be achieved by means outside of planning control/not linked to 'development', i.e. land management practices.
- Need to support "high value" development in order to deliver BNG.
- There is a difference between biodiversity net-gain and wider environmental net-gain.
- There is a range of benefits from nature, not just wildlife. Eg sustainable forestry, sustainable agriculture, climate change, health & well-being.
- National Planning Policy Framework already has a requirement for 'measurable gain'
- Does PDNPA have the ecological expertise needed to work out the calculations?
- Consider policies that are positive in relation to the infrastructure required to deliver nature recovery (equipment store, ranger base, access improvements), potentially including support for well-designed new buildings if necessary e.g. due to isolated location

- Pragmatism and flexibility of decision makers in relation to minor works required to enable nature conservation work (gully blocks, track widening)

### Q1 (ii)

This question was difficult for participants because we did not explain that current planning policies do not differentiate between land that is owned/managed as part of a 'big estate', and all other land. Detailed comments included:

- The real issue is land management (not ownership per se), the LP/PDNPA should acknowledge the significant contribution that 'estates' make in delivering nature-related benefits (through existing land management) and related opportunities for 'nature recovery'.
- 'Big landowners' include not only landed estates but public sector and utilities, e.g. County Council, Yorkshire Water.
- The LP/PDNPA must recognise that BNG does not come at zero cost. Estates are businesses and need to make money before they can fund any environmental management and/or provide ecological benefits. As such, the LP needs a policy on Whole Estate Plans (as per supported by LPs at the S Downs/Yorks Moors/Lake District NPs) to help support estates to continue to take a holistic approach to environmental management.
- Not an issue for small landowners/farmers (which make up most of land in NP)
- Co-ordination of the work of land owners, partnership working, access to funding streams, positive planning mechanisms such as Planning Performance Agreements or Development Team approach are needed.

### Q1 (iii)

It is likely that most development in a national park will be under the threshold in the Environment Bill. It was felt that BNG could and should be delivered on site (within the red line of a planning application) or within the local planning authority area. But there may be opportunities inside the national park via the 'credit' system. In the medium/longer term it was expected that a 'market' for off-setting would develop but it is unclear what role the planning system would play in this. Detailed comments include:

- Neighbouring local authorities need to plan for nature recovery across boundaries and devise a mechanism for funding and delivering biodiversity net gain in 'edge of park' locations.
- PDNPA doesn't have a biodiversity offsetting procedure but needs to adopt one in order to make an impact.
- Is offsetting really an issue for the Local Plan or one for other funding schemes? If the Local Plan provides a policy re offsetting, then it will lead to false hopes.
- DDDC are at early stages of a biodiversity strategy. Can look at off-setting in coordination with other authorities. Many questions to consider eg how to provide options for the developer (on site, financial, off-set) and how do we monitor if on-site? Need to avoid an ineffective 'go-to' cheap option.
- High Peak Borough Council are considering this at the moment
- View from a local authority that it will often be possible/preferable to deliver net gain on site (e.g. larger development sites) or within the district rather than relying on off-sets elsewhere
- Tameside MBC. "Due to the nature of development in Tameside being largely on brownfield sites, we anticipate that biodiversity net gain will be met on-site and our greenspace team are looking at any off-setting opportunities within the borough within our own green assets; potentially receiving funding from developers to deliver mutual beneficial aims of our nature recovery strategy (emerging) whilst also providing an available mechanism for the

developer. Tameside would not envisage the need for us to explore net gain within the national park.”

### Q3

Landscapes are constructs of human activity and their ‘value’ is subjective according to the priorities or specific interests of the viewer. They are the product of thousands of years of land management, and evolve according to the demands placed on them. The Local Plan must recognise that ‘the landscape’ will continue to evolve, in a way that is evidence-based & economically sustainable, having regard to key issues in related locations (eg biodiversity, flood risk/management, climate change etc) as appropriate.

- Need to recognise landscapes are man-made, ie the result of people & impacts over 000s of years. Eg Monsal viaduct photos (c. 1930 & 2020) - which do we prefer - the one with or without trees? Not as simple as more trees = more biodiversity. Need the right species in the right places.
- Need to manage landscape in a way that is economically sustainable
- PDNP has been looking at the **aesthetics** of landscape for too long.
- National Parks are designated for their landscape, not necessarily their biodiversity and this should be recognised.
- NPA should be more ambitious on the ecological crisis. Park has focussed on visual aesthetic without focussing on underlying layers.
- Do we understand the condition of habitats and designated sites?
- Is there the ecological expertise in the NPA to understand it all?
- We need to consider removal of redundant infrastructure including telecoms masts, difficult to monitor and enforce through planning conditions. Need to audit?
- We need a discussion around rewilding – effect on landscape depends on how this is done, e.g. large tracks of land versus linking habitats. Some potential for conflict between landscape as a visual aesthetic (White Peak pastoral landscape with dry stone walls) and greater biodiversity.
- Pros and cons of eco-tourism associated with re-wilding, e.g. economic returns to support nature recovery, but more footfall in sensitive areas.
- Changes to extent and character of woodland cover e.g. associated with ash dieback or reduction in agro-forestry.
- Impossible to answer without knowing about land ownership.
- Re-use of traditional buildings is the focus, but there is also a need for new builds
- Suggestion of unblocking Lathkill to allow it to run all year
- Nature always changing so it would be good to do opportunity mapping
- Rewilding terminology can be confusing
- It needs to be the right change, at the right time, in the right place.
- Landscape character descriptions need adjusting to not just focus on farmed landscape.
- Lawton principles need applying – bigger better more joined up
- Ensure social and economic changes go in hand with the environmental side – identify priority areas for improvement.

### General Comments

- Need to understand if/whether larger agricultural buildings increases intensification of agriculture to the detriment of wildlife.
- Wilder national parks can only happen with less human disturbance (it’s not just a question of land management) so we need to look at increased access and vehicle use
- There will be financial incentives for farmers to do the work eg ELMS
- Confusion with nature recovery and net gain - they are not the same thing
- So much of the nature recovery relies on farming which is outside of the Local Plan
- We need to have more ambitious policies for natural capital.

- Danger of creating false hope.
- Local Plan can encourages farmers who have small schemes.
- Ensure any BNG is the best possible for the region – ensure it doesn't fail, have good checks and measures for management and maintenance – right habitats in the right place
- Reach out to landowners to get conversation started – in this type of forum to see the benefits of net gain
- Clear when reading through topic papers there is not enough evidence – better baseline data to use with landowners to show where enhancements can be delivered.