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**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL PARK POLICIES REVIEW COMMITTEE**

We are directed by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales to bring to your attention their conclusions on the Report of the National Park Policies Review Committee (the Sandford Report). A statement of these conclusions has today been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament in response to a Parliamentary Question. A copy is annexed.

**Annex**

**REPORT OF THE NATIONAL PARK POLICIES REVIEW COMMITTEE  
STATEMENT OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE SECRETARIES OF STATE FOR  
THE ENVIRONMENT AND FOR WALES ON THE REPORT**

1. The National Park Policies Review Committee was set up by the previous Government in July 1971 under the chairmanship of Lord Sandford with the following terms of reference:  
"To review how far the national parks have fulfilled the purpose for which they were established, to consider the implications of the changes that have occurred, and may be expected, in social and economic conditions and to make recommendations as regards future policies."
2. The Committee's Report was published in April 1974. In their foreword to it the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales paid tribute to the energy and thoroughness with which the Committee had carried out their task and stated they would allow full opportunity for public comment and discussion. A large number of organisations submitted comments and in arriving at their conclusions the Secretaries of State have given careful consideration to these and to the views expressed in the debates held in the House of Lords on 2 July 1974 and in the House of Commons on 17 January 1975. They have been greatly assisted in the work involved by the Countryside Commission.
3. The Committee pointed out in paragraph 8.16 that, while they were at work, considerable changes in the administration and finance of the national parks were already being made or contemplated under the Local Government Acts 1972 and 1974 in the context of local government re-organisation. Each national park is now the responsibility of a single national park authority (NPA); each national park has appointed a national park officer of senior status; national park plans formulating policies for administration and management are to be published by 1 April 1977; and a block grant supplementary to the General Rate Support Grant has been introduced. The conclusions which the Secretaries of State have reached should be viewed against this background.
4. The national parks were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for the twin purposes of preserving and enhancing their natural beauty and of promoting their enjoyment by the public. These are still their purposes. But reviewing the experience of the past 20 years, the Committee drew attention in chapter 8 to vast changes, particularly the greatly increased number of visitors, which have resulted in a situation which could hardly have been foreseen when the parks were first established. The two statutory purposes of the parks may now in some areas be in conflict. The Committee therefore recommended (8.11) that the statutory purposes should be amended to make it clear that public enjoyment of the parks must be such as "will leave their natural beauty unimpaired for the enjoyment of this and future generations." The Secretaries of State agree with the Committee's assessment of the situation and recognise that as the pressures on the parks increase conflicts are likely to become more frequent. NPAs can do much to reconcile public enjoyment with the preservation of natural beauty by good planning and management and the main emphasis must continue to be on this approach wherever possible. But even so, there will be situations where the two purposes are irreconcilable. The Secretaries of State accept the Committee's view that where this happens priority must be given to the conservation of natural beauty and they will issue guidance to this effect to the NPAs. The Secretaries of State will consider further whether and if so, how, this guidance might be given statutory force.

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## PART IV—MINISTERIAL CIRCULARS AND INFORMATION

4-116 5. Several of the comments on the Report suggested that a third statutory purpose should be introduced: the promotion of the social and economic well being of the national park areas. The Government accept as an object of policy the promotion of the social and economic well being of the national parks; and Ministers, local authorities and the Countryside Commission are already statutorily obliged to have due regard to this factor in exercising their functions under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Countryside Act 1968. The Secretaries of State do not consider that it is necessary to go further and introduce the statutory purpose referred to, especially as the national park boards and committees are not themselves primarily responsible for the execution of functions which this purpose would involve.

6. The conclusions reached by the Secretaries of State on the Committee's other recommendations are set out in paragraphs 12-66 below. A number of those recommendations call for legislation to broaden the range of powers available to NPAs and/or for the allocation of additional resources to national park purposes.

7. Since the Committee was appointed in 1971 the approved level of annual expenditure by NPAs has almost trebled and central government's contribution to that expenditure has risen from about 33 per cent. to some 75 per cent. The Secretaries of State accept that the current level of expenditure is still insufficient to enable the NPAs to keep pace with the growing pressures to which the parks are subject. However, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget Statement on 15 April 1975 made clear the need to reduce public expenditure below the level envisaged in "Public Expenditure to 1978-1979" and the national parks clearly cannot be exempted from the effects of such a reduction. It must therefore be recognised that the overriding duty of NPAs over the next few years will necessarily be to ensure that limited resources are employed with discrimination and in the most cost-effective way possible. This will call for difficult—and often unpalatable—decisions.

8. Since, however, the increased powers envisaged by the Committee for NPAs are discretionary, and will serve to widen the range of policy options open to those authorities in allocating whatever resources are available to them from year to year, the Secretaries of State have concluded that (where they are in agreement with the Committee's proposals for new powers) it will be right to proceed with the preparation of the necessary legislation and to introduce it as soon as the parliamentary time-table permits.

9. There are also a number of important recommendations by the Committee with which the Secretaries of State agree and which are not dependent either on legislation or on additional resources. Appropriate action will be taken on these recommendations without delay.

10. The following paragraphs of this statement should be read in the context of paragraphs 6-9 above.

11. For ease of reference the conclusions of the Secretaries of State have been grouped under four main heads: Areas and Administration, Conservation (including development control), Recreation and Tourism, and Roads and Traffic. The Committee's recommendations are identified in the text by the numbers of the paragraphs in the Report where they occur.

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### AREAS AND ADMINISTRATION

#### New National Parks

12. The Countryside Commission will bear in mind the Committee's proposals that in considering new national parks they should examine more diverse types of landscape (22.5) and seek to redress the somewhat uneven geographical spread of national parks (22.6). The criteria for designation laid down in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 already admit of the possibility of designation of a wide variety of landscapes. Quality must, however, clearly take precedence over geographical spread, especially now that the existing national parks are accessible to a far wider population than when they were designated. The Secretaries of State do not consider that amendment of the legislation for designating new national parks (22.10) would be justified.

#### Boundaries

4-116 13. The Secretaries of State agree with the Committee in not favouring radical alterations to national park boundaries (22.2). Adjustments may sometimes be needed, but in the interests of stability, comprehensive regular reviews are undesirable. Adjustments ought not to be contemplated before national park plans have been submitted, but if these, which must be the