REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL

SUBJECT:

How has and how can the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority's work help to increase the National Park's communities' ability to withstand change?

Purpose of Report

To ask Members to:

- Consider the evidence presented and make recommendations to the National Park Authority;
- Agree an action plan be drawn up.

Acknowledgements

As lead member on this study I am particularly grateful to external members of the Scrutiny Panel without whose contributions this report would be much diminished. I wish to acknowledge the contributions of all those members of our communities interviewed as part of the study for their time and contributions. Finally thank you to the NP officers who contributed in particular I wish to acknowledge the contribution of the Scrutiny Officer without whom this report would not have been possible.

Introduction/Background

The involvement of our communities, not only in giving evidence but also sitting on scrutiny panels and 'voting' for areas of work to be scrutinised, has become the core strength of our process and a means of addressing any potential lack of objectivity within our scrutiny model.

Scrutiny currently reviews of two improvement objectives (selected through a public online vote) per annum to provide evidence to the Wales Audit Office and the public. It looks beyond the mere reporting of numbers against performance indicators and examines the impact behind those figures – the 'so what' factor.

Reviews are carried out by panels of members, the public (including town and community councillors and experts). They, together with an officer from an unrelated directorate, scope the review and agree a set of sub-questions in order to look behind the reported figures.

Any recommendations contained within this report are discussed and approved by the Authority. These are then developed into action plans and delivery on these is monitored by the Authority's Audit and Scrutiny Committee (ASC) to ensure these are implemented. The evidence has been gathered in a variety of ways:

* Face to face and telephone interviews with community members and NP officers
* Written submissions
* Use of existing (secondary) evidence (previous reports, publications), and performance data.

External panel members have been committed, enthusiastic volunteers in this scrutiny. They have made significant contributions and helped and review evidence independently. The level of trust on both sides has strengthened the objectivity of the process and fostered a culture of openness and accountability with communities who have engaged with our scrutiny.

Methodology

At the scoping meeting and with some subsequent refinement the scrutiny panel arrived at a methodology for each research question (Annex A). This plan provided a framework for the evidence gathering although difficulties were encountered in some areas due to the shared workload and the time and work commitments of some Panel members. Another limitation is perhaps due to Authority officers not recognising a request for information as an opportunity to promote the achievements of their department. Although some information was provided by departments this information could have been enlarged upon and the link to the Authority's objective of contributing to the social resilience of communities explored more fully.

A Learning Point has been noted to raise awareness amongst Authority officers that a request for information or evidence from the scrutiny panel should be regarded as a positive opportunity to present successes.

Methodologies Employed

Evidence – The Lead Member thoroughly researched a viable definition for the term social resilience and produced a definitive definition which could be adopted by the Authority for the purposes of the Improvement Objective. This definition was discussed and agreed at a meeting of the panel. Also, contributing panel members and staff members provided extremely useful primary and secondary evidence which together with background information has been incorporated within and annexed to this report.

Face to Face Interviews were carried out with staff members from tourism on the Rural Alliances scheme and with key members of staff with regards to the Service Level Agreement in place with The Green Valleys.

A **focus group** was held as part of a Brecon Town Council meeting where the Sustainable Communities Manager introduced the scrutiny study and sought feedback. Similarly, the SC Manager also attended cluster community council meetings for evidence.

Requests for evidence were submitted to key members of Authority staff on the Sustainable Development Fund case studies, Local Development Plan consultation process – community engagement, Rural Alliances and the Residents' Survey.

Partner working with other Authorities – A substantial body of evidence was provided by the Housing Regeneration Officer at Powys County Council, the same officer also attended meetings with Authority staff and a Panel Member to discuss this concept more fully.

LEARNING POINT: It is important for the Authority to raise awareness amongst its officers that requests for information or evidence from the scrutiny panel should be regarded as an opportunity to highlight issues and present successes.

The recommendation below was first put forward in the scrutiny report into how well National Park communities are inspired by and feel the benefit of where they live which was undertaken at the end of 2013. However, the lead member for this study felt that difficulties encountered on the research for this study warranted its repetition here. It is understood that following the recommendation opportunities within the Ffynnon reporting system were developed to allow those who were not directly charged with a KPI to contribute to it but the Ffynnon system itself may be subject to change hence the repetition of the recommendation here.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Officers need to take responsibility for recognising that where they may not have direct KPIs, that they do have relevant data to demonstrate delivery of an objective.

The measures of success should be more widely linked across NPA departments to ensure a more robust capturing of existing data for any improvement objective. This would serve to enhance the roles of all departments in delivering this particular objective and meeting our secondary purpose and statutory duty. This should include perhaps a central storage place for all surveys so scrutiny panels can draw on this for future reviews whilst taking into account any Data Protection or Privacy constraints.

Key findings

1. Increasingly we need clarity on how we interpret current legislative and political parlance.

2. The scrutiny study highlighted continuing reputational issues for the Authority. It also demonstrated anew that the proliferation of good news stories in the press and social media (see Annex 1b) still have not eclipsed some of the negative perceptions of the National Park Authority. The continuing improvements in performance in the Planning Department, (taking the Authority to the top of the all-Wales performance tables) in particular have not yet produced a widespread improvement in the perception of the Authority's work. Local memories are long and highly criticised Authority activity from a decade or so ago is still often presented as the current picture.

3. It is clear that the reputation of the Authority is improving with more understanding of our roles and responsibilities. However what has come across clearly within many of the interviews conducted is that we need a greater 'public face'. This will be increasingly important as resources diminish and we need to find alternative delivery methods, work in partnership and still meet all our regulatory requirements.

4. With current and developing technological developments in information dispersal we need to be making more of the communication opportunities available to us.

5. It is time for a significant review of our priorities for SDF within the Welsh Government objectives to ensure our ability to continue to develop *social resilience*.

6. The Authority has made significant progress in developing new mechanisms for delivering its purposes and duties which include the very successful secondment of an officer under a formal Service Level Agreement; however it could further expand how it does this through the Powys Loans Scheme model.

7. The Authority has developed a body of knowledge on developing and managing large scale European projects. Within any European project there opportunities to publicise and promote successes. It is not clear how well we do this to those outside the confines of the project.

8. In its work with Town and Community Councils the Authority has made significant progress but must not rest on its laurels.

9. Finally the evidence we have presented in this report clearly shows that we are significantly contributing to the *social resilience* within communities in the National Park be it through our SDF scheme, officer secondment, European tourism initiatives, support for income generation schemes such as hydro and wood products or our planning processes. We need to be sharing these successes more widely.

Annexes

CHAPTER 1

Overarching and Framework Questions

The Scrutiny Panel recommended that the wording of the overarching question and sub-questions be clear and unambiguous.

Has the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority's work helped to increase its communities' ability to withstand change?

The degree to which a community is able to withstand change is commonly referred to as *social resilience.*

Within this context, the panel discussed areas of National Park Authority service delivery which could impact upon social resilience in the Park's communities. The following framework questions were developed based on the measures of success set out within the **Business Improvement Plan 2013/2014**.They assess the Authority's performance in these areas:

1. **How has/does the Authority use/d information e.g. residents' survey data to action social resilience?**

2. **How are the recipients of Sustainable Development Funding and Development Officers' support more capable of adapting to change (development support/loans)?**

3. **How do communities who took an active role in the LDP process differ from those who did not?**

4. **How has being part of a Rural Alliance made your community more able to cope with change?**

5. **Is the Green Valleys Service Level Agreement contributing towards the social resilience of communities and is there anything the BBNPA can do better to enable this?**

6. **Do Town and Community Councils believe that taking part in the Charter Action Plan and liaison with the BBNPA has enabled them to work better together to make communities stronger?**

Defining *social resilience*

Once again before the study could begin in earnest it was necessary to be clear about what we understood by the term *social resilience* in this study.

Social is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as *Relating to society or its organization: living together in groups, typically in a hierarchical system with complex communication*

In the context of this improvement objective we take *social* to mean communities living and working within the Brecon Beacons National Park boundaries.

Resilience is defined by the OED as *the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness*

Resilience can be further defined as *the capacity of a system to continually change and adapt yet remain within critical thresholds.*[1]

Based on a critical review of recently published literature on the issue, we propose to define social resilience as being comprised of three dimensions:

1. *Coping capacities –the ability of social actors to cope with and overcome all kinds of adversities;*
2. *Adaptive capacities – their ability to learn from past experiences and adjust themselves to future challenges in their everyday lives;*
3. *Transformative capacities – their ability to craft sets of institutions that foster individual welfare and sustainable societal robustness towards future crises.*

Viewed in this way, the search for ways to build social resilience – especially in the livelihoods of the poor and marginalized – is revealed to be not only a technical, but also a political issue.
What is social resilience? Lessons learned and ways forward

*Markus Keck, Patrick Sakdapolrak: 2013, **Vol:** 67, **Issue:** 1,**Pages:** 5-19*

Using all these various elements, the following definition was developed and agreed by the panel.

Definition of social resilience for this study

Social resilience is the ability of those communities living and working within our boundaries to adapt to, cope with and manage social, environmental, political and economic changes and risks in a way that enables them to remain sustainable.

The role of the NP therefore becomes one of an enabler providing the support, policies, models and structures that help communities not only become, but also remain **socially resilient**.

A clear understanding of the importance of effective feedback mechanisms will ensure that communities will become more resilient and

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[1] Stockholm Resilience Centre

adaptive to change.

Improvement Objectives

Extract from Business Improvement Plan 2013/2014 from which the six study questions were developed. It is clear that from the reporting against each of the measures we have met or exceeded each target set so the study looks in more depth to assess what impact meeting those targets has had on ***helping to increase our communities' ability to withstand change?***

The Performance Indicators provide only an indication of what has been achieved. Drilling deeper into these reveals what has changed and whether communities are 'better off' as a result e.g. SC2 the 27 beneficiaries from the Rural Skills programme have achieved a range of hard and soft skills including formal Agored accredited training and confidence building, re-engagement with formal learning and awareness and understanding of the natural environment.

ID	Measure of success	2012-13 target	2012-2013 actual	2013 – 14 target	2013 – 14 actual
SC1	Use the report on the Park wide residents survey to inform future improvement through activity and allocation of resources	-	-	New initiative: Complete survey with statistical relevance. Disseminate report on findings.	Survey completed with statistical relevance. Used widely by park officers. Widely disseminated into community council meetings, community newsletters and external
SC2	Number of beneficiaries from Skills programmes	26	29	26	27
SC3	Achieve or exceed 1:1 match funding ratio with Sustainable Development Fund grands[1]	1:1	4:1	2:1	2.23:1
SC4	Deliver the stages for the Local Development Plan process on time as laid out in the Delivery Agreement	Submit for examination	Submitted for examination	Adoption	Adopted
SC5	Developing a framework and facilitating a workshop with Town and Community Councils to identify the level of interest in and support for Village Plans.	-	-	New initiative - Framework developed and workshop held	Achieved - Framework developed and workshop held

SC6	Deliver the Community Council Charter Action Plan	Detail in action plan	Actions in plan delivered or progressed if on-going	Achieve participation from 25 Councils in delivering targets from the action plan	28 Councils
SC7	Rural alliances active across the Park	8	8	10 active alliances	13 alliances
SC8	Achieve targets from The Green Valleys Service Level Agreement.	Targets in action plan to be achieved within year	75% achieved	100% of targets including: work with community groups to: ☐ Manage 70Ha woodland. ☐ Produce 90 cu m wood fuel ☐ Produce 700kg charcoal.	69ha 67cu m 750kg
SC9	Deliver the action plan arising from the Scrutiny Review of Inspiration and benefit conveyed by living in the National Park	-	-	New initiative: produce an agreed action plan and act on 7 recommendations, deliver targets for this financial year.	Produced plan and delivered on 11 recommendations

1 The ratio the Sustainable Development Fund achieves in any given year can be significantly raised if the Fund contributes to even one very large project. Project quality and its contribution are the primary award criteria

CHAPTER 2

Question 1:

How has/does the Authority use/d information e.g. residents' survey data to action social resilience?

It is important to note here that the Residents' Survey was a 'snapshot' in time and the views of those who responded and the results should be considered as such.

In addition to the main question, this chapter will examine what notice we are taking of critical studies to give us advance warning.

The one single most important result of the survey that will more than likely help address a number of other issues, is the criticism of the NP being 'Out of Touch' with local communities.

Definition of social resilience, and its significance within this framework:

Social resilience can be divided into 3 areas:

1. *Coping capacities –the ability of social actors to cope with and overcome all kinds of adversities;*
2. *Adaptive capacities – their ability to learn from past experiences and adjust themselves to future challenges in their everyday lives;*
3. *Transformative capacities – their ability to craft sets of institutions that foster individual welfare and sustainable societal robustness towards future crises.*

When the terms are combined, social resilience becomes the ability of those communities living and working within our boundaries to <u>adapt to</u>, <u>cope with</u> and <u>manage</u> social, environmental, political and economic <u>changes and risks</u> in a way that enables them to remain sustainable.

The role of the NP therefore becomes one of an enabler providing the <u>support</u>, <u>policies</u>, <u>models</u> and <u>structures</u> that <u>help</u> communities not only become, but also remain socially resilient.

Stakeholders

As we can see from the External Stakeholders diagram below, for the purpose of this Survey Framework, the following external stakeholders are identified overall (not sub-grouping them):

- Residents within the Park
- Visitors to the Park
- Local Authorities
- BBNPA Members
- Welsh Government
- Town & Community Councils

Members of the Panel were asked to seek views from town and community councils with which they had links. An external panel member kindly supplied information on the Raglan Community Plan (**Annex 1c**) but no further evidence was supplied by the panel.
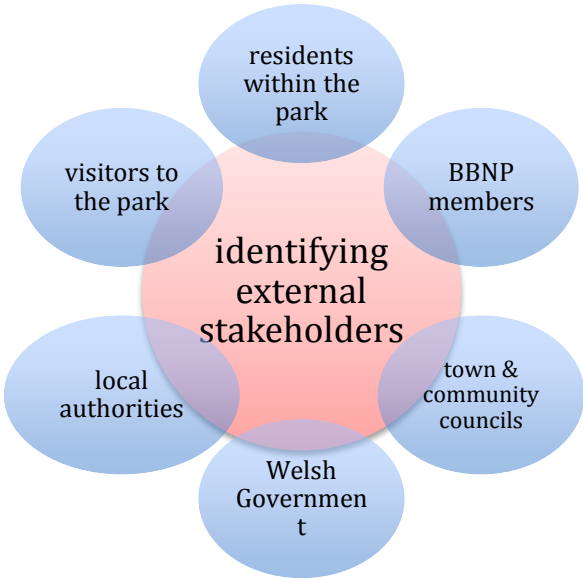
Coming back to the Objective:

- How has the authority used information e.g. residents surveys to action social resilience?
- What notice are we taking of critical studies to give us advance warning?

This is an important trigger that would be in the best interest of the Park today and into the future, to implement within the overall strategy, especially within the area of "communication". The advance warning is there - there is a disconnect. It is hard for local communities to feel as though they are being helped in the task of the NP to provide support, issue policies, develop models and structures to help communities become and remain socially resilient, when there is a feeling that they are 'out of touch'.

If we take an example of a patient seeking counselling, how can the patient believe in the tools, advice and help being provided by the counsellor, if the patient *feels* the counsellor is 'out of touch' with their issues, and that they their views are not being listened to? Whether or not the counsellor believes they are doing the right job, it is imperative that the patient also believes this. Without this, there is a disconnect, and all forms of education will hold little value. When there is belief, there is hope for understanding.

Resolving the issue of 'Out of Touch' is the core to the success of many challenges for the Authority.

The advantage the Authority has in this case, is that the disconnect seems to be localised to the Planning department. Therefore, a focus on this area is a good start. However, in the eyes of the local resident, they will most likely not be able to distinguish that, and will most likely see the National Park as a whole. A negative feeling from one area of the Authority will generate a negative feeling of the National Park overall, within the eyes of the local

resident. Discussions with residents have shown this, as has the overall outcome of the survey.

Evidence from the Authority's Communications Team has gone a long way to addressing this negative perception.

The residents survey identified that 63% of respondents receive information about the National Park Authority mainly from the local paper – and 69% believe the reports they read. The National Park Authority's Communications Team regularly put out positive press about the Authority –approximately 40 a year with more going out between Easter and Christmas, and these are picked up by the local newspapers almost without exception. (Annex 1b gives a full brief on the work of the Communications Team during June – Sept 2014.) For the period July to Sept 2014, 20 releases went out and all were picked up by local papers. These releases celebrated the Authority's positive achievements, with six on stories generated form the work of the Sustainable Tourism Team mentioning the European funding they had received, four from the Geopark and the Calch project and ten promoting conservation and events run by the National Park Authority. During this time two columns by Chris Morgan, the Director of Planning also appeared in the local newspapers and these both included information on the excellent performance of the Planning department in the Welsh Assembly produced league tables – appearing in the top three for months.

The Authority has also begun a proactive engagement with the farming community through a revitalised Agricultural Stakeholder Group which has looked at some of the key issues facing farmers within the National Park boundaries.

However, from the survey analysis, there are key points to note on the feelings of residents' disconnect within the planning function, such as methodology of communication, the importance of inclusivity, the sense of loss of control, and the sense of ownership and belonging.

Some suggestive beginnings would be to follow the methodology of inclusivity, and humanisation between Planning and Residents/local authorities:

- Building a relationship foundation through key spokespersons who already have a good relationship with Planning, and are well recognised and respected by local authorities and residents

- Understanding the key faults and triggers that motivate residents and local authorities to feel this disconnect

- Setting a plan to address such disconnects

- Building an atmosphere of respect for the views and presence of local authorities and residents

- Holding a greater "open door" policy to build on the connectivity issue

- Inclusivity – allowing the residents and local authorities to feel that they are being listened to, heard, involved, and instrumental in the decision process

It should be recognised that some of these issues are already being addressed through the Authority's work with its Town and Community Council planning training programme and it is much more regular face to face meetings with these bodies. (See Chapter 4) It should be

noted that where possible the Chief Executive and the Head of Planning both attend these meetings offering a face to face opportunity for open discussion.

Demographic

One key point to retain within the primary question is the "change" factor. How can the Authority adapt to change, whether today or into the future?

When analysing the survey results, it is important to understand the age demographic of the response. This age demographic has the ability to sway the results tailored to their lifestyle wants/needs/desires/issues, and in turn should be factored in so that any potential strategy moving forwards must be factoring in this bias. This response demographic may or may not correlate with the actual demographic of some of the external stakeholders, namely visitors to the park and residents within the park.

In summary, the survey largely represents an older generation. If we look at the received data, the respondent profile indicates as follows:

Age Band	Response (%)
16-24	0.9
25-29	1.4
30-44	13.50
45-59	28.10
60-64	14.60
65+	41.60
Total	100%

Table 1 Survey response vs. age demographic

The majority of responses came from the age groups over 60, almost half. This is a considerable sway to an older population for any response. So therefore, the first question to ask, is how this above table correlates to the age demographic of visitors and/or residents within the park, depending on what particular area of interest is being examined.

Some factors for this swayed response rate is due to the surveys being sent out by post, and not online. Older people prefer reading newspapers, feeling literature in their hands. The younger generations rely more on digital forms of communication.

Therefore, more of the older residents would have been targeted to begin with.
In other words, the determinants could be:

- Promoting surveys through digital communication platforms, such as social media to target younger audiences.
- Bringing awareness of the Park through social media platforms and digital promotional strategies.
- Depending on age group, demographic, some suggestions include:

    - Twitter
        - Tweeting interesting facts, tweeting short tips, promotional
    - Facebook
        - Promotional offers, sharing stories and experience, information
    - YouTube
        - YouTube channel sharing activities, events, launches
    - LinkedIn

- Reviews connecting networks, brochures, downloads
  - ○ Pinterest
    - Pinterest profile, boards, Pin-it, Pin videos, Pinning contest

Following this theme, if we take recent statistics on social media:

> As of September 2013, 73% of all online adults use social networking sites. For adults aged 18-29, 90% of them use social networking sites. For adults aged 30-49, 78% of them do. For adults aged 50-64, 65% of them do, and for adults aged 65+, 46% of them use social networking sites (*Pew Research Center*).

How does this relate to our current challenge?

There are two main questions that can be answered:

1. **Adapt and withstand change**
   In the coming next 10 years or so, the current ageing population group of 65+, the highest response in the survey, will reach an age group that will no longer be as capable of engaging with activities as they do today. Assuming we retain all other factors as constant, the next younger population group 60-64 and just below, will be the most targeted group. However, to assume nothing will change in the community would be unwise, as the above stats show that 78% of the current group of ages 30-49 use social media, therefore in 10 years, this group will slowly edge towards the older population making an essential form of connectivity through social media beginning right now building a community of followers on-line.

2. **Connectivity**
   How does the Park remain connected to the communities? The global trend is moving towards connectivity. The population wants to retain control of when they get their information (all times of the day), where they get their information (mobile, PC), and how they get their information (App, Website). This is a continuing trend that is affecting most industries. Most external stakeholders of the Park will then most likely fit that profile as well. Therefore, the challenge to "connect" and "engage" will be essential and crucial to the success of social resilience.

   In its assessment of performance certificate of compliance for 2013-14 the Wales Audit Office commented on the lack of an explicit invitation for citizens to provide feedback on the Business Improvement Plan but stated:

   > *"However, we recognise that the Report makes it clear that it should be read in conjunction with the Authority's earlier report, setting out what the Authority wanted to achieve during 2013-14. This earlier report did contain an invitation for stakeholders and the public to provide feedback and comments. The Authority has subsequently also included the required invitation on its website. These factors, together with its public webcasting of its main committee meetings and its inclusive approach to carrying out its scrutiny reviews, suggest that the Authority is eager to engage with the public."*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Authority incorporates the following processes into its work in supporting communities to increase social resilience within the National Park communities:

   (a) Building a relationship foundation through key spokespersons who already have a good relationship with Planning, and are well recognised and respected by local authorities and residents

   (b) Identifying and understanding the key faults and triggers that motivate residents, town and community councils and local authorities to feel disconnected, and setting a plan to address such disconnects

   (c) Building an atmosphere of respect for the views and presence of local authorities and residents through a more effective communication strategy

   (d) Building on our active "open door" policy to increase inclusivity through an 'invitation for citizens to provide feedback or to make comments on' our work where possible. Our residents, town and community councils and local authorities need to believe that they are being listened to, heard, involved and are instrumental in the Authority's decision process;

2. That the Authority looks at how it can implement the following:

   a) Encourage officers across the National Park Authority to provide the Communications team with more information to use as posts – ideally and most effectively with a photograph.

   b) Continue to offer community groups the opportunity to take up their concerns directly with senior officers.

   c) Renew case studies on Sustainable Development Fund on Authority website pages

   d) Explore the most appropriate method to put information about the positive work of the Authority before members of the Welsh Government – possibly a regular newsletter.

Combining the above two insights, it would be important for the future success of this element, to increase connectivity through all primary digital communication platforms, through a digital marketing strategy. From the Residents Survey, we learnt that 96% of residents have some form of Internet connection. Therefore, an internet-based form of strategic communication will surely reach most residents.

A full copy of the Panel Member's Report on the Residents' Survey analysis conducted for this study can be read at Annex 1a together with additional evidence from the Communications Team Annex 1b.

CHAPTER 3

Question 2:

How are the recipients of Sustainable Development Funding and Development Officers' support more capable of adapting to change (development support/loans)?

It has long been recognised by the Authority and its communities that SDF and development officer support can play a pivotal role in kick starting the development of a particular community or project. The SDF has been very successful and has allowed the BBNPA access to people and communities who might not have otherwise engaged with the Authority. The examples given in this chapter demonstrate the value of being able to invest albeit sometimes small sums of money into our communities to build *social resilience*. From initial individual projects ideas have developed and communities have been able to begin to determine their own futures. It is clear from the reporting that SDF has achieved its targets.

One of the advantages of having external members on the panel is clearly demonstrated by an example from Powys County Council's Housing Regeneration Officer, Julian Preece who outlined the details of a loan scheme the Housing Department has developed to regenerate housing in Powys, in particular empty properties. This might be an area that the Authority might wish to consider through the allocation of a portion of SDF funding. It is recognised that the Fund and Authority would have difficulties in providing loans directly however the Powys example of using an intermediary body may provide an option.[2]

As an aside, the Authority has been successful in obtaining funding to develop skills within certain target groups including NEETs. This again demonstrates that by providing skills based training we are helping to build local skills and improving long term employment prospects as well as being able to address health and well-being needs within communities.

1. The Authority has continued to deliver the Rural Skills Programme providing Entry and Level 1Agored accredited training to a range of local excluded groups including Gwalia Brecon and Ystradgynlais (young homeless) , Drug Aid Cymru, Neath Port Talbot College (students with learning difficulties or disabilities),South Wales probation service, Hafan Cymru (domestic abuse).In addition to formal skills, evaluation has shown a range of other positive outcomes in self-confidence and awareness of the National Park and the wider environment.

2. The Skills in Action scheme funds 12 trainees per annum for three years. The first cohort started 1st Sept 2014, and the group of trainees are drawn from across the National Park and adjacent areas in south Wales. The aim is to develop locally relevant environmental heritage skills for young people, meeting a skills gap identified by Lantra in the development stage of the project.

   Trainees are paid for one year plus have paid training (Level 2 Environmental Conservation) plus a £1,500 individual training budget for chainsaw, Brushcutter and bespoke selection of training depending on individual interest. They work alongside Authority staff four days a week, with one college day. Evidence from previous interventions is that work experience alongside Authority staff provides an effective means of increasing individuals' employability. The £1M project is a partnership of the

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[2] See Powys Housing Loan Schemes page 31

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (lead partner),Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority and Torfaen Council.

SDF Funded Examples – Case Studies can be found at Annex 2a

Sustainable Development Fund - Match Funding

	Match Funding	Ratio
Llangattock Allotments	£39,949	3.07
Llangattock Woodland Group	£49,021	4.39
Llangattock Green Valleys	£242,150	8.13
The Green Valleys	£110,167	1.98
Hay Castle Trust	£15,450	1.02
Eco Travel Network	£26,918	1.06
Talgarth Mill	£112,605	2.06

1. Housing loan schemes

Background to Powys Interest Free Revolving Loans

Over many years local authorities have received diminishing capital investment and it was becoming obvious to sustain private sector renewal, an alternative approach was necessary.

Five years ago, Private Sector Housing introduced the concept of interest free revolving loans initially aimed at landlords, to encourage private sector investment/renewal. This proved very successful and developed specifically to tackle problems associated with empty properties, culminating in award for "Outstanding Leadership by a local Authority" 2011, Chartered Institute of Housing.

The principle was extended to all forms of financial assistance for housing improvement and links to grant assistance removed (except mandatory disabled facilities grants). All processes for distribution and recovery being undertaken in-house by the local authority.

Owner occupiers were first addressed by introducing loans within Housing Renewal Areas (the only area of Welsh Government (WG) funding in Powys). This was extended to include energy efficiency measures targeting CO2 reduction and required partnership with Robert Owen Community Banking Fund (FCA registered /able to undertake financial checks, provide advice etc). Scheme finalist for "Outstanding Leadership by a local Authority" 2012 by CIH.

Powys County Council has been working with WG on new National Loan scheme for sustainable delivery of private sector renewal.

The Housing Team have secured finance to broaden the scheme to deliver town centre regeneration, where both residential and commercial units are targeted simultaneously for renovation. There is now a new Town Centre Loan scheme where the Housing Team have managed to secure £1.25 million from Welsh Government to deliver town centre regeneration. This will be aimed at the three local growth zones in Powys covering the towns of Llandrindod Wells, Newtown and Brecon. The team are hoping to work together in Brecon and possibly match fund projects to secure greater impact.

Statistics regarding values loaned, properties returned to use, match funding/value for money & default rates etc. have been included within the attached charts.

While the local authority itself is unable to directly make loans, the programme was delivered in conjunction with the Robert Owen Credit Union.

The processes whereby the scheme operates and the direct and indirect benefits identified can be found in **Annex 2** with thanks to Julian Preece of Powys County Council for providing information on this scheme and his contribution to this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. As the Sustainable Development Fund continues to be recognised as a fundamental mechanism for investment into our communities, and the SDF budget is protected:

   (a) A review of the Sustainable Development Fund should be undertaken to ensure that projects that contribute to *social resilience* receive greater priorities to help us deliver our purposes and duties within the WG remit for the Fund.

   (b) The possibilities of using / adapting a loan model (Powys model or another model relevant to enabling community led sustainability initiatives) should be investigated.

CHAPTER 4

Question 3

How do communities who took an active role in the Local Development Plan process differ from those who did not?

1.   Community Council engagement

As part of the development of the Authority's Local Development Plan, it engaged the services of Planning Aid Wales - an independent, charitable organisation helping individuals and communities across Wales to participate more effectively in the planning system.
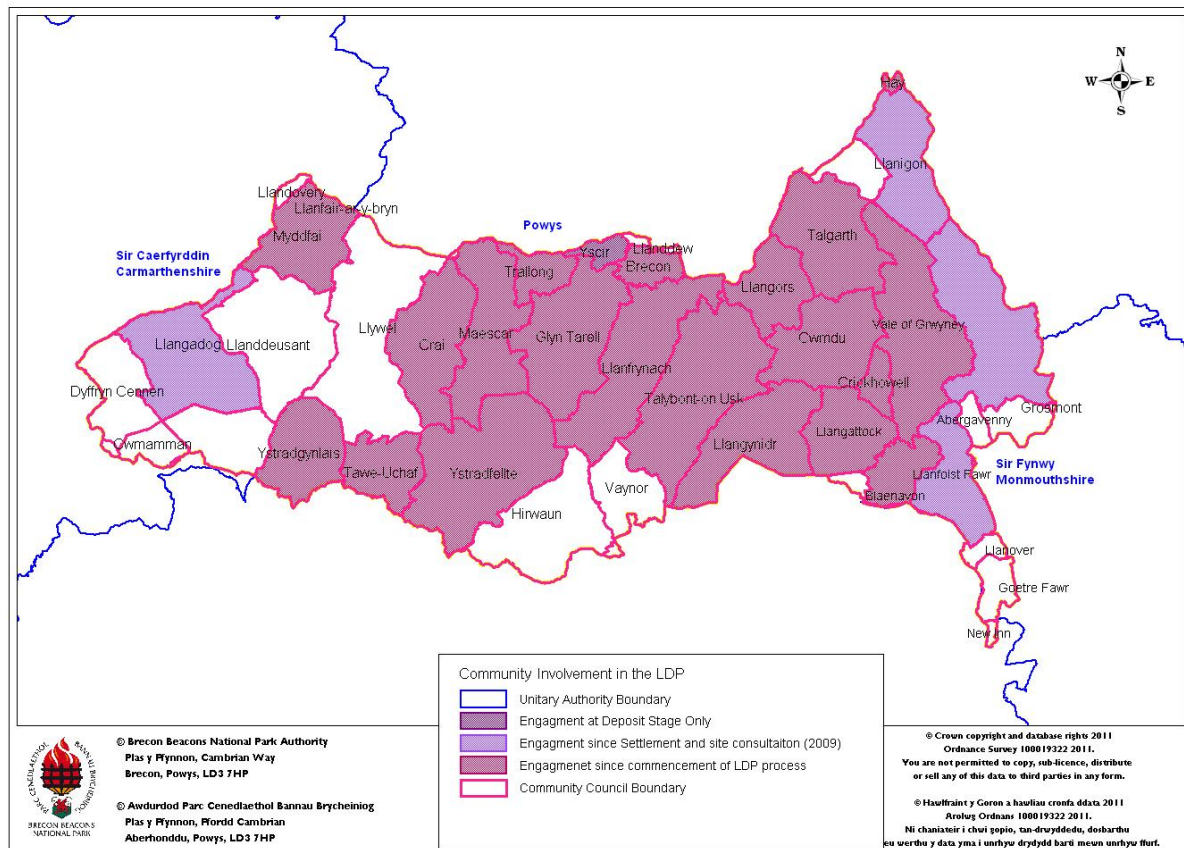
A number of training sessions were made available to town and community councils to explain the LDP process and help engagement with the process. As far as is understood, BBNPA remains the Authority with the widest community engagement of all authorities in Wales according to Planning Aid Wales.

"I have been involved with the Brecon Beacon National Park Authority as a consultee for many years as a Community Councillor and currently as a clerk to several Community Councils. For many years the Brecon Beacon National Park Authority did not appear to take on board the views or concerns of residents living in the National Park Area, but since the introduction of a clear scrutiny process this has improved greatly. Independent scrutiny panels have been set up consisting of individuals and other external interested parties, enabling the Authority to enhance the objectives of the Authority and improve public interaction."
Adrian Edwards, Clerk to Llanelly, Llangattock and Raglan Community Councils, Panel Member for the Planning Review

The following information was provided by the Authority's Local Development Plan team:

The map below sets out the extent of community interaction with the LDP consultation and engagement phases.

1. Hay
2. Talgarth
3. Vale of Grwyney
4. Crickhowell
5. Llanelly
6. Llangattock
7. Cwmdu
8. Llangors
9. Llangynidr
10. Talybont on Usk
11. Llanfrynach
12. Brecon
13. Glyn Tarell
14. Trallong
15. Maescar
16. Ystradfellte
17. Tawe-Uchaf
18. Ystradgynlais
19. Myddfai
20. Crai

The following four communities became engaged in the process at site selection stage:

1. Llanigon
2. LlanfihangelCrucorney
3. LlanfoistFawr
4. Llangadog

One other community (Yscir) responded at Deposit stage only while 18 community council areas did not engage with the LDP process.

Have communities also expressed interest in the Village Plan process (although in its infancy)?

The Authority has not, as yet, extended an invitation to all communities to become engaged in the Place Plan programme (previously referred to as the Village Plan). The project is being piloted with Hay on Wye. Through the development of this plan, a toolkit will be developed and offered to all remaining communities within the National Park.

The Authority has approached Crickhowell Town Council regarding the development of a plan and the Town Council are investigating the feasibility of such action. The Authority has also been approached by Llangattock Community Council regarding the development of place plan. Once the programme is live we will be working with them.

Have community and town councils responded to further consultations e.g. Local List, Supplementary Planning Guidance?

The number of community and town councils responding to the consultation of SPGs has not been at the same level as that for the LDP. Consultation responses from Community Councils are below 10%.

How has the Authority responded to community consultees?

Realistically this will depend upon the nature of the consultation and the contents of their consultation responses.

In relation to the LDP, community council responses, based on wider community engagement, were given significant weight in the formulation of the plan. The level of growth (outside of key settlements) defined within the LDP is directly related to consultation responses. For further detail see section **4.5 of the LDP. Annex xx**

In relation to other planning consultations, community and town councils comments are given equal weight as other statutory consultees in the consideration responses.

As far as this study has been able to ascertain, those town and community councils who took an active role in the development of the LDP have become more engaged with the Authority both through the planning processes and through the scrutiny work of the Authority.

Some useful information on the LDP engagement process has been provided for the scrutiny study by the Planning Officer (Policy):

The Local Development Planning system was introduced in 2004. At the time of the introduction, WAG set out that planning system was fundamental to the creation of a good quality of life, but only if all parts of the community – individuals, organisations and businesses – are able to make their voices heard. The new LDP system, therefore, included at its core, the requirement to engage with communities. Whereas previous development plan regimes such as Local Plans and Unitary Development Plans required elements of community engagement their method of consultation and means of production are usually referred to as top down policy formation, a static system of *plan-consult-defend*. LDPs in contrast were to be more dynamic in their approach to consultation, produced from 'the bottom up' local issues were to be in defined in collaboration with stakeholders and strategies and policy responses formulated and agreed upon prior to formal publication of

proposals. The consultative form of plan preparation was intended to ensure consensus from all those who have a stake in the future development. WAG stated that this will result in plans which:

'Inspire confidence in stakeholder: ensuring that developers know that their planning applications will be dealt with consistently, transparently and efficiently, and that communities know that their views will be properly considered and will influence outcomes' (WAG *LDP Wales: Planning Your Community: A Guide to Local Development Plans (LDPs,* 2006 p.131)

In keeping with this vision, the NPA developed a Community Involvement Strategy based on a 3 step 'Empower- Engage- Integrate'. The first step 'empower' was to ensure that the all Stakeholders to the LDP had a clear understanding of the purpose and parameters of the process. The NPA engaged Planning Aid Wales to undertake a series of training sessions with Community and Town Councillors. The objectives of the training sessions were to engender a sense of partnership between the communities and the National Park. By utilising PAW to undertake the training sessions the BBNPA was able to remove ourselves for our traditional role as curators of planning knowledge. The concept of shared authorship of the plan was central and active participation was promoted as a positive benefit for future development of National Park Communities. The final training sessions focused on community engagement methods with the aim of the Community Council itself undertaking engagement of the wider communities regarding issues for the LDP to address. This element of the NPA's CIS has been highlighted as a best practice example as follows, for example:-.

http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/planningnaturally_tcm9-349413.pdf (p.20)

The second element of the process 'engage' saw community councils devising and running their own community engagement sessions in relation to the LDP. The objective of the engagement was to ensure that the community was able to enter into policy formation through provision of evidence in relation to their future needs. These events were 'anything goes; arenas for debate and discussion within the community itself. No subject matter was excluded as being a 'non-planning' issue and all findings were reported back to the NPA. Officers of the NPA did not dictate how events were to be documented in the report, although guidance was produced for communities who requested assistance.

The third and final stage 'integrate' relates to the process by which the issues identified by the community were integrated in to the LDP. The process directly related to the production of the Environmental Capacity Approach to Sustainable Development central to the strategy of the LDP. Within this approach, policy decisions for the future development of settlements were based on a three part matrix of assessment, one part of the assessment matrix, is there aspiration within the community for future growth. The answer to this question was provided as a direct result of the evidence provided in the community engagements sessions, and, was in the majority of cases was the deciding factor in the form and level of future growth for a community development.

Research undertaken into the success of the project has sought to scrutinise the effectiveness of the process to meet the initial objectives, that is, to empower communities to engage meaningfully in the formation of the development plan and to achieve appropriate outcomes as per their stated needs. This research, undertaken at the close of the Deposit consultation, looked at the nature or community and town council responses to the Deposit Plan (ie the plan the NPA deem to be sound) and the NPA responses to these comments. .

The full findings of this research form part of a Post-Graduate Dissertation and are available from the Library of the School of Planning at Cardiff University.

The research demonstrated that whereas the process engendered widespread participation and collaboration at the early stages of plan preparation (when anything goes) at the point which the issues were translated into policy there was a significant drop off in community participation. Moreover, the nature of the dialogue between communities and the NPA changed remarkably from open and inclusive to closed and adversarial. Objections from CTC increased, and NPA openness to change was restricted to that which could be evidenced in 'planning terms' not just community aspiration.

The research showed that despite the efforts made by the NPA in the early stages of development plan formation a divide developed between the objectives of the collaborative project and how communities see themselves situated within the finalised policy text of the LDP. Despite objectives to the contrary, the NPA has been unable to effectively respond to these expressed needs, due to the emphasis the process places on sound evidence, which has to be interpreted by the NPA as knowledge in relation to technical policy issues. The transformation from open to closed dialogue observed within the LDP process suggest that it is the LDP process itself as set out in regulatory requirement that forms a significant barrier to the creation of a more inclusive discourse of development plan formation. As the plan moved from early stages to implementation, the regulatory requirements alter the nature of the accepted forms of knowledge that could be utilised to amend defined policy positions.

Whereas this could be read as a failure of the collaborative system set out in the Community Involvement Strategy, the evidence does suggest that where engaged communities commented on the finalised plan, they did so on it in its entirety, and not just on the issues which related to their own settlement area. This is a significant movement forward in the extent to which communities engage with concepts of spatial planning, which prior to the LDP collaborative process was entirely done on the micro level. This shift in perception is testament to the early enabling work of the collaborative project and the validity the communities' voices were given in early development plan formation. This in itself ensures that communities are better placed to interact with the planning system and to understand the macro issues which can dictate local impacts. It is felt that this increased knowledge of community planning issues as a whole will mean that communities will seek to engage with the 'Place Plan ' programme, as this will be an arena where they, rather than the NPA, will be able to enact on community aspirations.

While the collaborative phase does not provide the expected outcomes, there are clear forms of benefits (capacity raising) that are really important to community resilience, even if that means we train and encourage our communities to be better objectors.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
>
> 1. That when time and resources permit, a study be undertaken to look at the correlation between responses to consultations and subsequent engagement in the Local Development Plan and planning processes.

CHAPTER 5

Question 4:

How has being part of a Rural Alliance made your community more able to cope with change?

It is clear both from data provided and interviews undertaken that the Rural Alliances Project builds on and develops the successful COLLABOR8 project which was worth in total some €11m. It is an important mechanism for bringing in inward investment to communities within the National Park. Our expertise in delivering large European funded projects is very evident both from the partnerships we are able to form and the amounts we are able to secure. BBNPA is currently the lead body for the Rural Alliances Project which is worth in total some €10m and we are in the process of developing a successor project – LAND – which if successful will be worth approximately a further €11m. Individual examples given in this chapter demonstrate the ways in which the Rural Alliances Programme contributes significantly to the development of *social resilience* within National Park communities.

In a recent survey of the project: (see full questionnaire in Annex 4c. Full reports on the results of the survey can be found at Annex 4h Crickhowell, Annex 4i Hay on Wye and Annex 4j Brecon)

> *Tourism has the ability to deliver a multiple of community driven objectives. It can keep local businesses alive – particularly those of community importance like pubs and post offices. It feeds income into a wide cross section of enterprises from local food producers to graphic designers. Above all it supports a vibrancy within the local area which is partially economic but is also cultural. Thus festivals and concerts, arts events and male voice choirs all are encouraged and supported by a strong tourism market. Lastly it is also a means of helping protect and enhance the local environment – enabling local resources to be valued and protected for sound economic reasons.*
>
> *For all these reasons, the local community has a valid voice in determining the direction that tourism develops locally and - more than this – can be energised to contribute towards the development of events and products that will both improve the tourism offer but also add to the 'liveability' of the area.*
>
> *It is vital that concrete expression is given to these concepts to enable communities to put the ideas into action.* Extract from the Rural Alliances project definition.

Rural Alliance Groups are formed of an alliance between community and private sector residents in a rural community. By bringing public policy objectives together with business interests, the aim is to develop win-win solutions to problems inherent in the population and

then put into action. Rural Alliances are set up to generate increased local *vibrancy*[3] which in turn should assist in reducing the negative impacts of demographic change.

Because conflicts can arise between residents and the businesses within the community, Rural Alliances contribute a meeting point for those conflicts to be raised and discussed which, if resolved satisfactorily, should reduce tensions and increase trust in one part of the community or the other.

Across the Rural Alliances project, different partners are using different themes to address the vibrancy issue. In the Brecon Beacons National Park we are addressing tourism, because of the potential of this major income stream to contribute towards local economic development in its widest sense. It can also contribute towards community vibrancy because of the activity it generates – for instance, local festivals would have no hope of surviving without tourism support and often arts and crafts are similarly supported. However, there is also the potential, if managed wrongly, for tourism to cause residents significant difficulties. Car parking for instance is often an issue as is visitor behaviour.

The process of forming and developing an alliance has significant importance in raising resilience. It is a mechanism whereby external or internal threats can be dealt with, engaging the key players in a community in the resolution of issues.

Following a discussion with the Sustainable Tourism Manager and the Rural Alliances Officer the following key points on Rural Alliances and their influence on the social resilience of communities were noted:

- The key role of the Authority in the Rural Alliances project is to help and enable the communities to manage and overcome any stumbling blocks.

- There are currently 13 Rural Alliances and all at different stages of development. Brecon, Talgarth, Hay, Talybont, Crickhowell, Canal Communities, Abergavenny, Upper Usk, Cwm Tawe, Brynaman/Glanaman, Llandovery, Dark Skies, Llangors.

- The Rural Alliances project has benefitted from the preceding work of Collabor8 as there was a pre-existing understanding within the communities about what the Authority is trying to achieve.

- Community Council involvement - It is essential to have the elected representatives as the Alliances are not accountable to the communities so to have the elected council buy-in provides an essential link to an accountable system. A balance has to be found as if the process is too bound and interlinked with a bureaucratic system the Rural Alliance progress could be hindered.

- Some communities are more amenable to the Rural Alliances ethos than others and the Authority recognises it may not be able to work all the communities of the National Park. Difficulties have been experienced within a community which has a large number of community groups and is therefore fragmented. Success is more likely with a cohesive community and often this is as a result of a community drawn

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[3]Rural Vibes provides rural communities with great tools to assess the individual perceptions of members or community groups in rural areas. Collectively these can form an overall picture of how your community views itself. http://www.ruralvibes.eu

together in adversity.

- Talgarth has been a success where Sustainable Development Funding kick started the Mill renovation. The community group is now thriving and drawing in visitors and business to the town.

- Llandovery is also an interesting and successful Alliance. More information on this Rural Alliance can be found at Annex 4f Llandovery Rural Alliance: A Case Study.

- LAND – This proposed project (approved by the Authority on 6 February 2015), if successful in securing funding, would follow on from the Rural Alliance achievements and as part of the delivery of the Visitor Management Plan would aim to engage with the farming communities and the communities whose businesses stand to benefit from visitors, essentially to open up lines of communication between them.

- It is believed that LAND will contribute to social resilience because there are currently a set of unresolved conflicts within communities which are not being expressed at a level where they can be addressed. The Authority hopes to open the lines of communication.

Future Projects

Although the shape of the new proposed project LAND has yet to be fully formed, the intention is to build on the foundations of both COLLABOR8 and Rural Alliances in order to make best use of the previous investment in those groups and the volunteers that have committed themselves to the process. In outline, the idea is to bring the Alliances groups together with farmers in the local area (whether that be at a town/village scale or by a larger geographic area eg Black Mountains) and negotiate actions on access. Initial thinking was to form LAND groups from the interests represented in Rural Alliances plus the farming community and this may be possible at least in some cases.   On the other hand the existing farming groups operate at a larger scale and discussions may need to take place at that level. Either way, LAND will be based on local community based groups taking forward tourism & visitor management actions based on locally agreed plans.

Full details of the LAND project can be found at Annex 4k

Social resilience needs to be implicit within the scheme. If the participants are aware from the outset that it is a prerequisite of a successful alliance it is likely that it will evolve naturally from the reaction of the community within the alliance to perceived threats to the alliance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The work within the Rural Alliances Programme and the development of the LAND project should take into account the work being undertaken as part of the Nature Fund project to develop future partnerships and groupings

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CHAPTER 6

Question 5:

Is the Green Valleys Service Level Agreement contributing towards the social resilience of communities and is there anything the BBNPA can do better to enable this?

The benefits of seconding a National Park officer to The Green Valleys under an SLA and the resulting social resilience of the groups he has worked to set up.

1. **The purpose of the SLA**

   In its current form, the TGV SLA focuses on delivering biodiversity conservation outputs and outcomes in cooperation with community groups by linking these groups to tangible aspects of environment that affect people directly: food, energy and woodland management.

   Being a separate and independent body, TGV can accomplish a number of community-led tasks that the National Park Authority cannot. In some instances there are negative associations with the Authority that TGV can avoid. Even where the Authority has positive relationships with communities or community groups, there are benefits to having a third party work directly with them. For instance, TGV can focus directly on the community projects and proposals at hand and not be distracted by the internal reporting mechanisms and other responsibilities inherent in the Authority's posts. TGV can access grant aid and support mechanisms that are not available to the Authority. TGV are not hindered by political, social and economic restrictions that present hurdles for the Authority.

2. **What has the SLA achieved to date? (Cross reference to BIP – managing woodland)**

   Please see attached Business Improvement reports for 2012-13 and 2013-14
   http://governance.beacons-npa.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13131&path=13130

3. **How has it contributed to social resilience in the relevant communities?**

   Ultimately, social resilience in a community-based, biodiversity conservation context is about two elements: connecting (or re-connecting) people to their environment so that they recognise they are a part of the environment and not apart from it; and allowing people to experience this connection in ways that they think are important, adopting nature on their own rather than through someone else's prescription. As Aldo Leopold noted in the 1940s, people need to understand that food doesn't come from a grocery store and heat doesn't come from a furnace. (See Annex B for Adger Report on the Relationship between Social and Ecological Resilience.)

TGV have been working with communities who wish to reassert their interdependence with biodiversity and adopt means of controlling to some extent their sources of food, energy and/or the quality and abundance of species around their communities (the non-consumptive use value of biodiversity). The SLA has assisted communities by providing assistance and expertise to get communities started with a view that they will then be able to become independent of TGV assistance and, perhaps, assist other communities in achieving a connection with the world around them. In so doing, communities become less dependent on the globalised marketplace and, consequently, more adaptive to forces of change.

In addition the following points were made during a face to face interview with the seconded officer:

- the officer has found that his secondment to The Green Valleys affords him access to community groups who may not otherwise choose to co-operate with the Authority due to negative perceptions of the Authority

- Woodland groups are set up to be self-sustaining – the groups have their own insurance, tools, management plans etc. so that they reach a point where they no longer need input from the officer

- There is now the possibility of the groups forming a network of communication and co-operation to increase their sustainability. With good links between the groups they could jointly source and provide charcoal and logs to local retailers but one group alone would struggle to meet the supply and demand requirements of the retailers.

- None of the groups established were in existence five years ago. Over time, communities have formed church groups or allotment groups but not energy sustainability groups. We have created this subject group. The strength in this sector being that sustainability groups can dip into everything – they support the growing of food, woodland, transport and jobs etc. People have found having a broad remit group gives them strength and cohesion.

- In his seconded role, the officer works directly with and alongside the communities whereas working for the Authority he tended to work with selected representatives of the communities rather than the community as a whole.

> *I do feel that the community woodland groups and the successes they have built upon have a confidence that if changes and issues arise they are enabled to get together and work out a way around the problems. Whereas prior to these groups being established the community members would have perhaps reacted differently to these adverse changes and maybe grumbled and walked away. I am confident that the groups which have been running for a good length of time now are enabled to tackle any adverse changes and effectively 'fight back.'*
> **Gareth Ellis – BBNPA Officer seconded to The Green Valleys**

The TGV SLA Project report for 2013-14 can be found at [Annex 5c](#).

It is clear from the various interviews and reports that the secondment via the Service Level Agreement has been instrumental in developing a number of initiatives that have enabled communities to come together and take an active part in developing their future be it food production, developing income from energy projects or managing parcels of land. It has also been instrumental in providing access to individuals and groups the Authority would find it difficult to engage with.

Evidence also emerged of how the officer was able to dispel some important misconceptions in relation to planning and farming and agricultural permitted development rights. This in turn led to the useful suggestion that the Authority develops a suite of clear simple guidance notes within a farming context. The Authority has also hosted two meetings with the farming community on access and planning issues which were well attended and well received. The Authority's Member Champion for Agriculture and Land Management commented:

> *"In November 2014 the second Rural Planning Seminar was held with Authority members and staff and members of the farming community including the farming unions, NFU and FUW, and the CLA. This followed an earlier Seminar with the farming community on proposed legislation to Access to the Countryside. Presentations were given by Planning Officers covering common issues such as permitted development, converted use of existing farm buildings and also the accessibility and availability of the Authority's pre application planning advice service was highlighted. The presentations were largely well received and gave rise to useful discussions on issues and concerns raised by the farming community with staff on hand to answer any questions directly. Further meetings have since been held with interested parties to address specific areas of concern.*
>
> *A regular schedule of similar meetings has been arranged and it is hoped to build on this initial success and forge a regular forum for liaison and communication between the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, the farming unions, NFU and FUW, and the CLA and the Park's farming community, strengthening links and keeping lines of communication open."*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The value of seconding officers into strategic key community organisations is recognised and maintained as a mechanism for delivering services.

2. The Planning Department looks at how it might provide a focussed set of simple planning guidance specifically targeted for the farming community to include what is and what is not permitted development.

CHAPTER 7

Question 6:

Do Town and Community Councils believe that taking part in the Charter Action Plan and liaison with the BBNPA has enabled them to work better together to make communities stronger?

> **Qu. 6. *Do Town and Community Councils believe that taking part in the Charter Action Plan and liaison with the BBNPA has enabled them to work better together to make communities stronger?***
>
> ***Officers: Clare Parsons/John Cook***
> ***Panel Members: Dave Sharman (Five council meeting)***
>
> 1. Signed up to the Community Charter? (See report on performance for 2013/14 at the beginning of this report).
> 2. Part of clusters but not signed up?
> 3. As a result of cluster meetings/improved communication how have communities benefited from the advice of NP officers/encouraged partnership working/highlighting other opportunities e.g. SDF – other examples?

The Sustainable Communities Manager attended Town and Community Council meetings and the following are her notes on the key points:

a)   Scrutiny Review Resilience Brecon Town Council Discussion 16 July 2014

Part of Brecon Town Council full meeting. Started with an introduction to Scrutiny Reviews generally, followed by the Review of BBNPA contribution to social resilience. Review was endorsed by Cllr Ieuan Williams (part of the Review panel). The meeting the discussed the elements of the Review, seeking input on BBNPA's role in resilience- as perceived and what more could be done. Discussion focused on mainly on three strands of the review: Town and Community Council Charter and Action Plan; SDF/ Development Officer support; and Rural Alliances.

The views expressed by Town Councillors are summarised below. Finished with reiteration that all strands of the review would be pulled together to produce recommendations, from which BBNPA officers would produce an action plan, which would be reported back to participants (including Brecon Town Council)

b)   Town and Community Council Charter and Action Plan

1. Communication is a vital strand and action plan actions around communication are useful.
2. Councillors would like to hear more about BBNPA success and delivery specifically in non-planning areas e.g. access work, conservation work.
3. Can BBNPA officers attend TC meetings on some sort of regular basis to provide updates? /another Councillor felt this too big a drain on BBNPA staff resources.
4. Discussed BBNPA Community newsletter as a means to provide updates – the Mayor offered to share this information electronically with Councillors and networks (it was subsequently noted that the newsletter is sent to all Clerks of Town and Community Councils).
5.   A Councillor asked if the PR releases sent to BBNPA Member could also be sent to all Town/Community Councils

c)   SDF/ Development Officer support

6. SDF and development officer support is widely valued in Brecon and Councillors recognise that a range of important resilience initiatives have been supported
7. A Councillor expressed a general concern about short term funding and worthwhile projects sometimes having to continually reapply for funding (not specifically about SDF). SDF development officer role in supporting business planning for future sustainability discussed

d)   Rural Alliances/Tourism

8. The value of the Authority's work on Dark Skies was recognised by Councillors
9. The work of the Rural alliances was recognised. Discussion about "what is the relevance of linking of with various European countries?"(explained that this is route to securing funding for the National Park area as well as sharing best practice). A view was expressed that Rural Alliances should deliver tangible outputs including quick wins.

Notes of the Town and Community Councils 29th March 2014 liaison meeting can be found at Annex 6c.

> **RECOMMENDATIONS**
>
> 1. That the Authority continues to liaise and build on relationships with Town and Community Councils to work together within respective remits to support local communities.
>
> 2. That the Authority works with Town and Community Councils, including through the development of Village Plans, to support their work in community resilience, including during the transfer of public sector services.

CHAPTER 8

Recommendations

LEARNING POINT 1: It has been noted that is important for the Authority to raise awareness amongst Authority officers that a request for information or evidence from the scrutiny panel should be regarded as an opportunity to highlight issues and present successes.

LEARNING POINT 2: Once again defining what we mean by a particular set of words used within our corporate objectives highlights the need to have clear definitions in mind when using particular phrases. This is becoming increasingly important as the National Park is required to set out how it will contribute to the new Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill and the new Environment Bill within in the context of sustainable development

RECOMMENDATION 1: Officers need to take responsibility for recognising that where they may not have direct KPIs, that they do have relevant data to demonstrate delivery of an objective.

<u>Chapter 1</u>

<u>Chapter 2</u>

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Authority incorporates the following processes into its work in supporting communities to increase social resilience within the National Park communities:

(a) Building a relationship foundation through key spokespersons who already have a good relationship with Planning, and are well recognised and respected by local authorities and residents

(b) Identifying and understanding the key faults and triggers that motivate residents, town and community councils and local authorities to feel disconnected, and setting a plan to address such disconnects

(c) Building an atmosphere of respect for the views and presence of local authorities and residents through a more effective communication strategy

(d) Building on our active "open door" policy to increase inclusivity through an 'invitation for citizens to provide feedback or to make comments on' our work where possible. Our residents, town and community councils and local authorities need to believe that they are being listened to, heard, involved and are instrumental in the Authority's decision process;

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the Authority looks at how it can implement the following:

a) Encourage officers across the National Park Authority to provide the Communications team with more information to use as posts – ideally and most effectively with a photograph.
b) Continue to offer community groups the opportunity to take up their concerns directly with senior officers.
c) Renew case studies on Sustainable Development Fund on Authority website pages
d) Explore the most appropriate method to put information about the positive work of the Authority before members of the Welsh Government – possibly a regular newsletter.

Chapter 3

RECOMMENDATION 4: As the Sustainable Development Fund continues to be recognised as a fundamental mechanism for investment into our communities, the SDF budget is protected:

(a) A review of the SD Fund should be undertaken to ensure that projects that contribute to *social resilience* receive greater priorities to help us deliver our purposes and duties within the WG remit for the Fund.

(b) The possibilities of using / adapting a loan model (Powys model or another model relevant to enabling community led sustainability initiatives) should be investigated.

Chapter 4

RECOMMENDATION 5: When time and resources permit, a study be undertaken to look at the correlation between responses to consultations and subsequent engagement in the Local Development Plan and planning processes.

Chapter 5

RECOMMENDATION 6: The work within the Rural Alliances Programme and the development of the LAND project should take into account the work being undertaken

as part of the Nature Fund project to develop future partnerships and groupings.

Chapter 6

RECOMMENDATION 7: The value of seconding officers into strategic key community organisations is recognised and maintained as a mechanism for delivering services.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The Planning Department looks at how it might provide a focussed set of simple planning guidance specifically targeted for the farming community to include what is and what is not permitted development.

Chapter 7

RECOMMENDATION 9: That the Authority continues to liaise and build on relationships with Town and Community Councils to work together within respective remits to support local communities.

RECOMMENDATION 10: That the Authority works with Town and Community Councils, including through the development of Village Plans, to support their work in community resilience, including during the transfer of public sector services.

CONCLUSION

THE REPORT NEEDS A CONCLUSION FROM MARGARET