

South Downs National Park
Opportunities for Enhancement



Council for NATIONAL PARKS



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Foreword

The landscape and wildlife habitats of the South Downs are of national and international importance. This is a unique corner of the world: white cliffs and rolling downland, wildflowers and butterflies, and above all, written clearly on the landscape, the story of how people have lived in it over thousands of years. Millions visit the South Downs, looking for a gentle, very English kind of peace.

Back in the 1920s environmental organisations put this precious place on their long list of areas to be considered for National Park designation. When the necessary legislation came along in 1949 the South Downs did not make it onto the list. It was too scarred by the war, much of the fragile chalk ploughed up for food production.

But now things have changed.

The Broads broke the mould of National Parks - being a lowland wetland important for boating, rather than the 'traditional' heather moorland prized for rambling. We have understood that there can be different kinds of National Park: so now the designation process is under way for the South Downs and the New Forest, and new National Parks are coming on apace in Scotland. Fifty years of National Parks in England and Wales have shown what can be achieved - these areas benefit from great gains in conservation and opportunities for enjoyment and education - National Parks in the 21st century are ever more vital, offering the highest level of protection whilst staying accessible. They make an enormous contribution to our quality of life.

The Council for National Parks, working with WWF-UK and English Nature, commissioned consultants

to answer this question: "what difference will a National Park make to biodiversity enhancement in the South Downs?". Against a backdrop of anxieties of local authorities, enthusiasm from conservation and access bodies and mixed feelings from local residents this report sets out to look at what National Park designation offers in practical terms. The consultants have taken a thorough approach, talking to the existing National Park bodies and local people in the South Downs and identifying and analysing other relevant models.

They show that by pressing the right buttons the National Park designation will open up new opportunities for biodiversity and landscape enhancement, and work for those who live on or manage the land in the South Downs as well as for outsiders coming to enjoy it. It sets out clearly the challenges ahead and the scale of the task. This latter should not be underestimated, but not shirked either.

National Park designation provides the best hope for the South Downs, now and in perpetuity.



Libby Purves, President
Council for National Parks
July 2001

Summary conclusions and recommendations

Designation as a National Park will make an identifiable difference to the potential for enhancement in the South Downs. It will bring:

- ◆ increased direct Government financial resource allocations to the area;
- ◆ secure long term direct funding;
- ◆ improved staff resources for conservation, enhancement, recreation and fund-raising work;
- ◆ closer working relationships with funding agencies;
- ◆ improved access to funds from external sources;
- ◆ enhanced status, locally, nationally and globally;
- ◆ a closer relationship with farmers.

Priorities for short term action include:

- ◆ adopting a plan-led approach to achieving its objectives, including:
 - + effective targeting so that resources are devoted to schemes with the greatest potential to deliver environmental benefits;
 - + underpinning applications for finance; and
 - + providing a basis for monitoring and evaluation;
- ◆ creating a framework for stakeholder involvement: local ownership of 'environmental enhancement' schemes is critical to their success where they involve changes to the management of private land, so those with an interest must be actively involved from concept to implementation;
- ◆ integrating landscape and wildlife enhancement with the cultural heritage, local communities and economic land management: whilst this is common practice in National Parks already, financial support systems increasingly specify an integrated approach (particularly EU grants);
- ◆ amending the South Downs ESA scheme to attract more farmers

into it, to promote long term commitment to environmentally friendly land management and to meet other local objectives; whole farm plans should be encouraged;

- ◆ examining a range of mechanisms for raising external funding, particularly establishing a charitable company limited by guarantee with a wholly owned trading company;
- ◆ promoting added-value agricultural products (e.g. branding and the production of niche products), as the market for them provides a direct economic value for the specialist management required for their delivery.

Priorities for the medium and longer term include:

- ◆ greater direct financial support for environmental objectives in the South Downs, in addition to encouraging farming activities likely to support sympathetic land management: new cost-efficient mechanisms should be tried out, such as tender invitations for defined environmental results;
- ◆ greater effort to attract large scale National Lottery funds into the South Downs;
- ◆ establishing the new Authority as the focus for information and as many grant and advisory services to farmers as possible, perhaps being the agent too for the distribution of agri-environment and other funds within the South Downs;
- ◆ the new Authority should engage in local initiatives relevant to the achievement of National Park objectives, such as the preparation of Community Strategies and the pursuit of Best Value.

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Introduction

Chapter 1

A National Park for the South Downs

1.1 In September 1999 the Government announced its desire to see a National Park created in the South Downs and an intention " to restore the area to its natural splendour and beauty". In April 2000 the Countryside Agency began the designation process. The area would be given a new Authority to oversee its planning and management. This would replace the Sussex Downs Conservation Board (and the Joint Advisory Committee for the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), which was established voluntarily by the local authorities in the area with considerable financial assistance from the Countryside Agency primarily to advise on planning issues and undertake practical management of the area. The new Authority would be given more powers and funds than the existing Conservation Board to enable it to build on the work of the Board.

1.2 As the Countryside Agency begins the designation process, this brief study examines how the new Authority might be able to 'add value' in the Downs. The broad aim is to establish the most worthwhile mechanisms and funding sources to achieve the enhancement of landscape and biodiversity in the South Downs.

The Brief

1.3 The study was given the objectives of identifying:

- ◆ current practice in the South Downs in respect of protection, enhancement and restoration;
- ◆ experience and best practice in landscape and biodiversity protection, enhancement and restoration in National Parks in England and Wales;

- ◆ opportunities additional to those already in place in the South Downs based on experience elsewhere in the UK and Europe;
- ◆ potential funding sources;
- ◆ mechanisms which deliver long term protection and enhancement;
- ◆ mechanisms which fulfil landscape and biodiversity objectives as part of a wider remit in keeping with National Park purposes;
- ◆ projects dependent on National Park designation/involvement for their effectiveness;
- ◆ projects which have used the second National Park purpose (promoting opportunities for public understanding and enjoyment) to achieve protection and enhancement; and
- ◆ priorities for action.

1.4 The project is led by the Council for National Parks, with funding from English Nature and WWF-UK, the global environment network. A steering group has overseen the conduct of the research (see Appendix 1). This comprised representatives from the sponsors and from the Sussex Downs Conservation Board, the Countryside Agency, Sussex Wildlife Trust and The Wildlife Trusts.

Scope of the report and use of terms

1.5 Terms such as 'protection', 'conservation', 'restoration' and 'enhancement' are used in this report with their every-day non-technical meanings. 'Protection' refers to shielding from damage, 'restoration' to the reinstatement of a site's lost attributes, 'conservation' to maintenance of existing

desirable attributes, and 'enhancement' to raising the amount or quality of desired attributes. Clearly these blend into each other, particularly with 'enhancement' often contributing to 'restoration' and with the transition from 'conservation' to 'enhancement' being blurred.

1.6 'Enhancement' has been a statutory function of NPAs since the passage of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The Environment Act 1995 clarified that this included enhancing not only landscape but also wildlife and the cultural heritage of the Parks.

1.7 A survey of National Park Authorities (NPAs) in England and Wales conducted for this study (described below) demonstrated the overlap between the practical activities in line with these definitions. A principal objective in many Parks was to avoid loss of habitat and landscape quality, for instance as bracken or scrub threatened to encroach onto valuable habitats. As well as protection against deterioration, all Parks were also striving to recover environmental qualities which had been lost, but on varying scales which were determined by the level of threat still apparent to valuable habitats and landscapes. The development of the Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF - see paragraph 1.10) had enabled NPAs to switch their attention to some extent from conservation towards the restoration and enhancement of declining habitats. A gradation in the degree of enhancement on offer was therefore in evidence. Agri-environment schemes aiming for sympathetic management of agricultural land might offer primarily 'conservation', but could this also count as 'enhancement' in that biodiversity might be improved? Or is enhancement only achieved when lost habitats are physically restored/recreated? The approach of this study is

to be inclusive rather than strict: the distinction at the farm level may not be important, as the objective is often to do the best possible for the money available, whether the emphasis is on conservation or enhancement.

Current research initiatives

1.8 There are initiatives recently completed or under way to investigate ideas directly or indirectly relevant to the restoration of the traditional qualities and management practices in the South Downs. These include the following:

- ◆ The Countryside Agency is preparing an ambitious 'Initiative for the Landscape Enhancement of the South Downs' to provide a strategic, co-ordinated approach to their better protection. This offers an assessment of the land management needs of the area, and also outlines an extensive research programme for the period at least until a National Park is designated. The research will focus on three topics:
 - ✦ developing the existing agri-environment measures (primarily the South Downs Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) and Countryside Stewardship);
 - ✦ possible alternative agri-environmental approaches, such as an 'Environmental Land Bank Scheme' (land purchase and restoration) and environmental compensation (similar to 'planning gain'); and
 - ✦ complementary measures, such as marketing and the South Downs 'brand', removal of eyesores, and a study of the economic value of the South Downs protected landscapes.
- ◆ English Nature is developing a 'LifeScapes' project to explore the opportunities for restoration of the South Downs and to enhance the area's conservation value.
- ◆ The European Union has funded a project to support the sustainable

management of protected areas' landscapes (piloted in Italy, the UK and Greece). This project (PRIMAV-ERA) developed methods to produce and integrate large amounts of data (including data from satellite remote sensing) in a Geographical Information System relevant to environmental management. The Sussex Downs was a test area.

1.9 The contribution of the present study is to focus on how the scope and mechanisms for implementing enhancement fit into the purposes of National Park designation. This will be relevant to the whole of the designated area rather than just the chalk downland.

1.10 Following the UK's General Election in June 2001, the functions and responsibilities of MAFF in England have been passed to the new Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. For simplicity, the abbreviation MAFF has been used throughout this report.

The South Downs at present

Issues, pressures and opportunities

Biodiversity

2.1 The South Downs is home to many valuable habitats, including chalk grassland, heathlands, woodland, wetlands and rivers. The chalk grasslands which are so characteristic of the South Downs have declined alarmingly this century, now covering only 3% of the area (but still representing about 10% of the UK habitat). The change is explained by the massive decline in sheep grazing, which had directly created the habitat, and the accompanying conversion to arable farming. The once extensive grasslands on the dip-slope of the Downs, facing south, have largely been ploughed up, with remnants largely confined to the steeper slopes, notably the steep escarpment facing north.

2.2 Chalk grassland has effectively been reduced in area to places too steep to plough, but remains under threat from scrub encroachment, air pollution, farmers' chemicals and fragmentation. The ESA in the South Downs and the availability of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) in the remainder of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) outside the ESA have provided incentives for farmers for environmentally-friendly farming practices. These have raised environmental awareness amongst farmers, slowed the rate of loss of chalk grassland and other habitats. The impact of the ESA is discussed below. There is an ongoing need to conserve the remaining chalk grassland but more fundamentally an urgent need to expand its area. The Chalk Grassland Habitat Action Plan for Sussex identifies considerable potential to expand and enhance chalk grassland, and aspires to recreate its broad landscape qualities. Planned programmes to

extend suitable management and recreate habitat are also proposed in Habitat Action Plans for Sussex for floodplain grasslands, woodland and heathland. More background to the issues and details of proposed enhancements can be found in the Habitat Action Plans, in the South Downs Natural Area Profile (English Nature, 1997) and, looking further back, in Sussex Wildlife Trust's *A Vision for the South Downs* (1993).

Landscape and cultural heritage

2.3 The chalk grassland landscape of the South Downs is an English national icon. Historically the first landscape which visitors to these shores encountered, it is also strongly implanted in the national consciousness. Images of the South Downs were widely used in the Second World War as one of the qualities that the nation was fighting for, and the landscape importance of the Downs was recognised at the time in the proposal by the Hobhouse Committee that the area should be designated as a National Park. This is a landscape that has inspired writers and artists, residents and visitors for generations, easily on a par with the Lake District. This is also a long-settled, cultural landscape, made by man and his agriculture, with much evidence remaining from the first Neolithic colonisation onwards.

2.4 The South Downs continues to inspire, despite the loss of habitat, nibbling encroachment and fragmentation, the A27 carving through the eastern Downs, and the subtle taming and suburbanising of the countryside. The views to and from the Downs and the large expanse of sky over the chalk whalebacks continue to give a sense of space, openness and freedom in the Eastern Downs, whilst the more secret and wooded atmosphere of the Western Downs feels more off the beaten track. These qualities survive even though the Downs are

surrounded by settlements including, on the south side, the city of Brighton and Hove and a succession of large coastal towns. The experience could be better, particularly if chalk grassland could return more extensively and the openness be restored by the removal of fences and other boundaries.

Integration with recreation and the local economy

2.5 Sustainable development involves not only sound environmental practices but also action which brings social and economic benefits too. The importance of integration of these dimensions is well appreciated by the existing National Park Authorities and will be central to establishing a sustainable future for the South Downs. If either the economics of the new land management cannot be sustained or there is not broad public support, the transition now sought will be doomed. At the same time, the Downs are an extremely popular destination for recreation. With around 30 million leisure visits annually, the South Downs will easily overtake the Peak District as the most visited National Park, once it is designated. Considerable thought has been applied to the means by which a new economic foundation based on traditional sheep grazing can supplant the current agricultural practices driven by the Common Agricultural Policy, and how this can mesh with public access and tourism. The Sussex Downs Conservation Board and now the Countryside Agency's 'Initiative for the Landscape Enhancement of the South Downs' are tackling this. A philosophy and a strategy for the South Downs, spanning agriculture, development, the local economy and tourism management are admirably set out in Peter Brandon's closely researched book *The South Downs* (1998).

2.6 The economic and social implications of biodiversity are also touched on in the Habitat Action

Plans for Sussex. The plan for chalk grasslands sees the chance to promote the link between sympathetically managed countryside, animal welfare, environmental benefit and a distinctive local quality product, plus green tourism associated with the extensive farming methods envisaged.

Current action: objectives, achievements and limitations

2.7 This section focuses on the two principal mechanisms devised for tackling biodiversity and landscape enhancement in the South Downs through land management initiatives, one agri-environment measure and one administrative structure.

South Downs Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)

2.8 An Environmentally Sensitive Area was established in the eastern South Downs in 1987 and an extension to the western Downs followed the next year. The scheme is administered by MAFF and aims to secure environmentally-sound farming methods by subsidising preferred activities. The ESA concentrates on the main area of chalk hills and is therefore distinctly smaller than the area of the current Sussex Downs and East Hampshire Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (which are the basis of the agreed 'area of search' for the boundary of the National Park). Farmers and landowners enter part or all of their farms into the scheme, and about 30% of eligible farms are now included. About 6,000 hectares of arable land has reverted to grassland under the scheme (10% of which is being restored to species rich downland).

2.9 The South Downs ESA has clearly had some success within the terms it set itself, though the scale of conversion of arable land to permanent grassland is only about half that originally anticipated and only

a small percentage of that is downland, the rest being modern agricultural swards. However, the scheme does have limitations which constrain its benefits from a landscape and biodiversity perspective.

2.10 First, the scheme is optional. Farmers and landowners may still use the subsidies available for intensive agriculture rather than enter the scheme. About £1.5-2mpa is available for the ESA, but the rate of investment in intensive agriculture is at least ten times this, so the ESA cannot be considered a reliable attraction. Important habitats and landscapes remain at risk.

2.11 Second, the achievements of the ESA cannot be considered permanent. The ESA scheme was not structured to ensure this as participants can opt out every five years. This again reflects the optional nature of ESAs and the effect of alternative financial attractions for farmers which are available at each point of decision. This culture, of treating the ESA as just another subsidy option, does not support the principle of long term commitment to environmental land management. There are indications of less interest among farmers in entering the ESA now than when the scheme began, though in the forthcoming round of commitments (to be made in 2002) farmers already within the scheme may well remain.

2.12 Third, the ESA has had difficulty in remaining relevant to farmers in the changing climate facing the agriculture sector. Particularly difficult business conditions face the livestock sector at present, discouraging a switch from arable to livestock. There has, however, been one helpful response from MAFF with an additional tier of payment being made available to subsidise the retention of over-winter stubble in the arable sector, which helps farmland birds, invertebrates and soil retention in wet weather.

2.13 Fourth, reflecting the culture of ESAs, the scheme has not produced enduring partnerships between the funding agency (MAFF), local bodies (such as the Sussex Downs Conservation Board) and farmers. For example, the Board is not consulted by MAFF on individual proposals to enter the ESA (though some details may be discussed), and the Board, whilst encouraging farmers to enter the ESA, tends to lose touch with them thereafter. This contrasts with the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, in which Board staff often assist farmers with applications, and the Board's own countryside management service, in both of which the relationship tends to endure.

Sussex Downs Conservation Board

2.14 The Sussex Downs Conservation Board (SDCB) came into being in April 1992 with the following objectives:

- ◆ To protect, conserve and enhance the natural beauty and amenity of the Sussex Downs AONB, including its physical, ecological and cultural landscape;
- ◆ To promote the quiet enjoyment of the Sussex Downs AONB by the general public but only so far as is consistent with the first objective; and
- ◆ Generally to promote sustainable forms of economic and social development especially working with farmers and landowners to encourage land management which supports the two objectives above.

2.15 These objectives have clear parallels with the purposes of National Parks and are very attractive from a landscape and biodiversity perspective by including reference not only to the 'ecological landscape' but to land management work with farmers and landowners. The Board was originally set up for six years, but this has been extended on several occasions and it will now be in place until the establishment of a National Park subject to

local authority funding.

2.16 The creation of the Board resulted in a significant improvement over the arrangements which preceded it, which had involved the County Councils of East Sussex and West Sussex running their own countryside management services and each local planning authority treating AONB policies as it saw fit. The Board gave greater status to AONB issues and resulted in a significant increase in funds for conservation work. The overall integration of policies and practices across the Downs also improved noticeably.

2.17 The Board has broadly achieved what it was established to do. A report prepared for the Countryside Agency's forerunner on *The Achievements and Effectiveness of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board* (Countryside Commission, 1996) found that after a slow start the Board had provided particular value for money in countryside management services and its engagement in planning procedures - the two main spheres of its operation. Local commitment to the Sussex Downs AONB had been institutionalised by the creation of the Board, and the Board had responded well to its limited powers by engaging co-operatively with many other interested parties in the Downs.

2.18 Whilst few would now wish to see the Board disappear, many appreciate the shortcomings in its constitution which still remain. The Board itself has recognised that enhanced powers, secure funding and permanence are necessary. First, it remains short of executive powers, which are largely restricted to carrying out practical countryside management work. The Board cannot decide planning applications and is limited to influencing the plans and decisions of local planning authorities. Whilst this was not a special problem in the mid-1990s, when development threats

to the Downs handled through the planning system were modest, there remains the risk of resurgent enthusiasm for (currently) a football stadium, industrial development and other schemes within the AONB, and development very close to its boundaries. Furthermore, the Conservation Board's objections to some planning applications in the Sussex Downs have not been accepted by the local authorities. In the 18 months to September 2000, 26 applications out of 88 to which the Board objected were permitted without all the Board's objections being satisfied, and in particular two significant schemes were approved in the AONB against the Board's advice (a children's hospice near Arundel and the King Edward VII Hospital at Midhurst). The forthcoming National Park is more likely to be able to achieve effective resistance to inappropriate development than ever the Board could through persuasion, as well as promoting and encouraging appropriate sustainable development.

2.19 Second, the temporary funding basis for the Board has impeded the growth of partnerships, long term commitments to enhancement, and the establishment of effective liaison arrangements. For example, none of the major Government agencies (Countryside Agency, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Farming and Rural Conservation Agency) consult the Board about their grant aid decisions. Board staff have been able to advise farmers and landowners, but these opportunities have not amounted to partnerships because the Board has not been able to commit itself to actions in years ahead. The option of buying land, either permanently for public benefit or temporarily on a rolling programme, has simply not been available to the Board. (The Board could not even raise the £30,000 needed to buy a small building on the market at Seven Sisters Country Park to facilitate its

demolition and environmental improvement.) The kind of long term vision on the future of the Downs, of the kind reviewed by Bridget Bloom and Patrick Leonard in their paper *Investing in the Future of Downland Landscapes* (SDCB, 2000) (which now underlies the Enhancement Initiative) cannot practically be taken forward by the Board.

2.20 Third, the level of funding available to the Board has been a welcome improvement on previous arrangements but is still limited and viewed as a struggle for participating authorities and the Countryside Agency. The budget available to the Board is small compared with the £3-5 million annually that might be anticipated to be available for a National Park in the South Downs (which are effectively 100% Government-funded), and small compared with the sums spent on agricultural support (and even agri-environment support). This leaves the Board as a light weight contributor in resource allocation bids, unable to overcome the culture of agricultural support. For example, a research study for the Environment Agency on a flood defence scheme to protect farmland in the Ouse Valley between Lewes and Newhaven indicates a cost of £10.5 million, hugely more than the sums available to the Board for environmental work, (though further consultation on this is being held in abeyance pending a review of the response to the Lewes flood of 2000). On other topics where the Board has an interest, achievement of its objectives depends on persuading other parties to contribute sums of money which are not available to the Board. For example, a concerted effort to market South Downs lamb will need the financial support of bodies like the South East Economic Development Agency (SEEDA) to make it happen effectively.

Conclusions

2.21 The South Downs are a nationally cherished icon rich in landscape, biodiversity and cultural qualities. However, these qualities have been assaulted during the last century, progressively through changing agricultural practices from livestock to arable and additionally from the pressures of recreation and physical development. The biodiversity losses have been particularly acute. The urgency now is not so much to protect what remains, though there are aspects of this in respect of scrub encroachment and physical development especially, but to reinstate former agricultural practices and encourage more sustainable, environmentally sensitive practices as the catalyst to enhance many aspects of the experience of the Downs.

2.22 The arrangements set up to help the process along have been effective in their own worthy and limited ways, but have not fundamentally engaged the forces shaping change in the subregion. The creation of a South Downs National Park will provide the focus for a renewed effort to do this. The problems and broad objectives are clear, and the institutional arrangements are about to be strengthened. The remainder of this study examines how a National Park might help achieve the necessary improvements in practice, in respect of landscape and biodiversity enhancement, focusing on land management arrangements.

Learning from the National Parks

Chapter 3

Summary

3.1 Landscape and wildlife enhancement work around the Parks has consistent features. Action is principally by bringing together people and interests in projects to achieve multiple Park objectives. This is typically assisted financially by external grant aid obtained for the purpose, often with the Park's own contribution being staff time or modest top-up grants rather than direct payment from their own resources. All the National Park Authorities have achieved a high level of integration between landscape enhancement and biodiversity enhancement, and often integration with other Park objectives at the same time. They have often looked for lasting solutions by tackling the root causes of problems: this has often extended their activities away from direct measures to sustain the landscape, habitats and cultural qualities of the Parks and towards spheres such as supporting marketable products which reinforce not only local employment but also environmentally desirable models of land management. The Authorities have been flexible in finding innovative solutions to the problems they each face, rather than pursuing a single favoured approach for all purposes.

3.2 National Park Authorities have access to a wide variety of funds for enhancement work. Some of the money derives from their core funds, which takes the form of 75% of approved expenditure paid directly by the Government as National Park Grant and the other 25% levied from local authorities (most of which is reimbursed by the Government through Revenue Support Grant). The sums likely to be provided for a South Downs National Park would represent a substantial increase on the resources currently applied there.

3.3 European funds are the most heavily used source of external finance. The most significant of these were the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), Leader and LIFE. However, these are not a good indication of funds likely to be available in the South Downs, since the ERDF and EAGGF monies were channeled through the EU's Objective 5(b), which has never been available in the South Downs. Furthermore, the basis of EU support has changed recently so that projects which take a very narrow view of 'environmental enhancement' are unlikely to secure large scale funding. Projects which link environmental benefits with social issues and economic development are likely to score more highly. Agri-environment schemes will remain important in National Parks and will be especially significant in the South Downs. Funds are now channeled through 'regional chapters' of the England Rural Development Plan (ERDP), with that for the South East including policies which provide an excellent framework for environmental enhancement schemes in the South Downs. The two main delivery mechanisms used in National Parks, Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Stewardship, are already available in the South Downs.

3.4 The National Lottery has provided about one fifth of National Parks' external funding, but remains a somewhat underused resource by land and countryside organisations (compared with other heritage sectors). Funds for enhancing landscape and biodiversity are also available from a variety of Government agencies. Many take the form of specific grant packages, but the agencies are keen to be flexible and respond to

environmental interests, including National Park purposes. Designation of the South Downs as a National Park is likely to bring some of the key national agencies into a closer working relationship with its Authority than they enjoy with existing local authorities, and these agencies can be helpful in seeking finance in partnership with other co-funders of projects.

3.5 The South Downs National Park Authority will need to structure itself to ensure an organisational capacity to bid for external funds and maximise the benefits it can secure from those funds. It should also be in a position to influence to its advantage future revisions of the South East Chapter of the ERDP and the Regional

Economic Development Strategy prepared by the South East Economic Development Agency.

3.6 A workshop convened in the South Downs to discuss future enhancement, and especially the role of land managers, hoped to see environmental benefits supported in their own right on farms, rather than be assumed to follow as a by-product of agricultural incentives. Opportunities for greater promotion of local 'South Downs' products were also noted. The creation of a permanent National Park Authority could be expected to provide stability for incentive schemes and the development of closer working relationships with the farming community.

Introduction

3.7 This chapter reviews the experiences of existing National Parks in England and Wales in promoting the enhancement of landscape and biodiversity. Particular attention is given to the means by which the National Park Authorities 'add value' to the process, for example by using funds which they access to achieve not only the money's prime purpose but others too, or by creating partnerships to achieve results which the individual partners could not manage alone. The experiences of the Parks are reviewed for their potential applicability to the forthcoming National Park in the South Downs.

3.8 The purposes of the new National Park in the South Downs will be broadly similar to those of the existing Conservation Board's purposes. This means that there will be no sea change in the enhancement objectives, though the scale of operations will be greater and other opportunities will arise. The purposes of National Parks under the original legislation in 1949 were amended by the Environment Act 1995 to:

- ◆ conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas designated, and
 - ◆ promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public.
- National Park Authorities also have a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well being of their communities in pursuing these purposes, but must do so without incurring significant additional expenditure.

3.9 There are two differences between National Park purposes and those set for the Sussex Downs Conservation Board. First, the Sussex Downs Conservation Board is required to promote 'quiet enjoyment' whilst a new National Park Authority will be bound by a wider duty of promotion (though in practice most of the existing National Park Authorities have identified opportunities for quiet enjoyment as one of the special qualities they seek to conserve). Secondly, a National Park Authority for the South Downs will not be required (in terms of national purposes) to promote suitable land management

(as the Board currently is). In reality, this, like the first, is a minor difference as suitable land management is a prerequisite for the delivery of the first purpose of National Park designation.

3.10 This chapter reviews a variety of contributory opportunities for promoting wildlife and landscape enhancement. It draws on four main sources of information and advice:

1. Interviews were conducted with appropriate senior staff in all National Parks in England and Wales, including The Broads. Almost all the interviews were by telephone, with one face-to-face. One authority wished only to respond to written questions. The interviews focused on:

- ◆ wildlife and landscape objectives and fulfilling wider Park objectives;
- ◆ land management mechanisms as a priority;
- ◆ the integration of enhancement into existing mechanisms/resources;
- ◆ innovation: setting particularly high landscape and wildlife standards;
- ◆ problems and opportunities experienced by the Parks.

2. Telephone interviews were conducted with senior officers of the main national agencies which are involved with enhancement in National Parks, whether in their capacity as grant giving bodies, as investors in their own estates, or in furtherance of their own responsibilities. Organisations interviewed were English Heritage, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Farming and Rural Conservation Agency, Countryside Council for Wales, and Countryside Agency.

3. A review was undertaken as a desk exercise of the available sources of funding potentially available for enhancement purposes in National Parks. The experiences of the Parks identified through interviews (item (1) above) were considered in this

light.

4. A meeting was convened of landowners, land managers and interested parties in the South Downs to discuss the opportunities for enhancement in the light of current and recent experience. Although the South Downs is not yet a National Park, the achievements of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board and other funding sources do have a bearing on the perceptions of what kind of enhancement might be most appropriate in future. The meeting therefore acted as a source of practical advice from those undertaking land management now and who would be most closely involved in applying any new enhancement methods. It also served as a reality check on the applicability in the South Downs of experiences in other National Parks.

3.11 Using these sources of information, this chapter describes the main routes which National Park Authorities have taken to enhance biodiversity and landscapes in their areas and the sources of finance they have used. Some examples of good practice are given in Appendix 2 to this study, briefly illustrating the points made. The first section describes the strategies typically adopted by National Park Authorities to bring about enhancement. The second section sets out in some depth the sources of funding available in National Parks, both directly through the funding of National Park Authorities and indirectly through EU funds, the National Lottery and the initiatives of national agencies in England and Wales. The third section outlines the options open to NPAs for structuring their fund raising activities, and the fourth section shows that there is scope for still more proactive intervention by NPAs in seeking to change the funding structures from which they themselves benefit. The fifth section outlines the issues which need to be addressed

in future arising from a workshop held in Chichester in December 2000. A final section recommends the principal ways in which NPAs can most effectively 'add value' to enhancement by their actions.

National Parks' enhancement strategies

3.12 The scale of progress with landscape and wildlife enhancement and the reinstatement of lost features varies from one National Park to another. There are those which are least well funded in relation to their needs, such as Exmoor and Pembrokeshire Coast, where most effort is focused on preventing further losses, rather than gaining ground through enhancement and reinstatement. There are others, such as the Lake District, Peak District and Yorkshire Dales, where impressive strides are being made to improve the natural environment.

3.13 Interviews with National Park Authorities showed clearly that the style of contribution to enhancement made by the Parks is principally by bringing together people and interests in projects to achieve multiple Park objectives. Schemes are typically assisted financially by external grant aid obtained for the purpose, often with the Park's own contribution being staff time or modest top-up grants rather than direct payment from Parks' own resources. The Park Authorities have only modest budgets to allocate to projects after covering all their core costs, and these unallocated sums are relatively small compared with EU agri-environment funds, the Lottery and other combined sources. Whilst the National Park Authorities would naturally appreciate more money to achieve their objectives more thoroughly, direct funding from Park resources to achieve specific, single objectives was generally seen as inefficient, missing opportunities to engage more people and interest groups in the pur-

poses of National Parks.

3.14 All the National Parks have achieved a high level of integration between landscape enhancement and biodiversity enhancement, and often integration with other Park objectives at the same time. This has taken various forms. First, the National Park Authorities all developed close working relationships with farmers and landowners in their areas. Their particular role in land management has been well articulated in the Council for National Parks' report *Cutting through the Green Tape: reform of agricultural support in National Parks* (1993): "the NPAs are deeply involved in the provision of farm advice and support, running both their own schemes as well as acting as brokers for other agencies whose funds help further National Park purposes. Their niche amongst the many players is founded on their proximity to and familiarity with the customer - the farmer. They are thus able to target their own scarce resources as well as tailoring the funds from other schemes to suit the farm and conservation needs of the Park."

3.15 The second form of integration at which the NPAs have been strikingly effective is between land management and the wider purposes of National Parks. This often involves working with other agencies which have compatible aims. The varied objectives of individual schemes are often matched by a variety of sources contributing money to them. For example, in the Yorkshire Dales a new scheme to conserve barns and walls attracts money from English Heritage (because of their landscape and cultural heritage value), the Regional Development Agency (for tackling redundant buildings), and the Countryside Agency (because of the training in rural skills). These multiply the contribution from the NPA's own funds. One-dimensional schemes were simply not promoted.

3.16 Third, the NPAs have been concerned to find enduring solutions to the threats to landscape and biodiversity. This has often extended their activities away from direct measures to sustain the landscape, habitats and cultural qualities of the Parks and towards spheres such as supporting marketable products which reinforce not only local employment but also environmentally desirable models of land management (see for example the case study in Appendix 2 on an integrated approach to moorland regeneration in the North York Moors). By such action NPAs have enhanced the identity of their Parks and supported the 'brand' in ways which are self-reinforcing to each Park's unique character.

3.17 The National Park Authorities have sought and found innovative solutions to the separate and several problems they each need to tackle. None of them have particular favoured 'models' for enhancement which they pursue single-mindedly: rather, they demonstrate considerable flexibility in adjusting to local issues.

3.18 They have also been effective at 'moving with the times'. At different periods in their histories they have adopted different priorities, adjusting to take advantage of new funding opportunities, new legislative contexts, and new ideas. For example, many NPAs acquired land in the past to protect it from inappropriate change, but no longer do so on the scale of earlier years. This partly reflects other solutions (e.g. encouraging voluntary bodies to do so instead, such as the National Trust and The Wildlife Trusts), and other ways of addressing the problem (e.g. working with other grant aiding bodies to minimise the risk of state funding for inappropriate changes in land management). Whilst many Parks are still prepared to buy land as a last resort, they generally prefer to avoid this capital expenditure and the commitment to long term man-

agement of land. The Peak District NPA has found, though, that buying native woodland and reselling it with restrictive covenants is a good way of protecting this resource at an acceptable cost. The authority typically has 150 woodlands on its books at any one time.

3.19 All the National Parks try to demonstrate best practice in environmental management on their own land, usually finding that their core budgets need to be used for this. Some of the best practice schemes are run as environmental projects without trying to achieve economic viability (e.g. in the Broads): they may therefore represent an ideal form of land management rather than demonstrate a viable alternative to typical commercial farming. In this the NPAs are different in their approach from the options realistically available to others: few local authorities other than NPAs nowadays acquire land for conservation purposes. Even the National Trust, with its many tenant farmers in National Parks, is struggling to maintain environmental quality in some areas in an effort to enable tenants to earn a livelihood. In this context it should be noted that it is the National Trust more than NPAs which has experimented (albeit on a small scale) with 'wilding' of marginal farmland, in the Lake District.

3.20 All the National Parks already have or are well on the way to having in place Local Biodiversity Action Plans. These are important documents for identifying the wildlife improvements which are needed in the Parks, providing an improved basis for seeking funds for biodiversity enhancement. The NPAs were actively considering how to obtain more funds to take forward their Local BAP priorities, such as from the EU Leader+ Programme, and were confident that additional money would be forthcoming. It is clear that these will be increasingly important statements of the environmental

enhancement requirements in National Parks, including the South Downs, and will be a useful reference point in bids for funds.

3.21 National Park Authorities have been adept at using their statutory powers to assist enhancement of landscape and wildlife, often in the context of their own permanence on the scene. Long term management agreements, for example for 25 years in Northumberland National Park, demonstrate a partnership and commitment which landowners can appreciate. Most NPAs have a long history of using management agreements, often from a period pre-dating the availability of other funds (such as agri-environment funds through Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Stewardship). Some of them have also used their legal agreements under the planning system, and conditions on planning permissions, to assist enhancement (e.g. Lake District, Exmoor and Pembrokeshire Coast).

3.22 Each National Park undertakes practical work through its park management service and in varying degrees is able to call on the support of volunteers as rangers/wardens and for other practical support. External funding may be available for this, with Snowdonia for example, currently using £1m from the ERDF to assist with a programme of footpath and stone wall restoration.

3.23 National Park designation itself is an important consideration in achieving enhancement. First, section 62 of the Environment Act 1995 requires any Government Minister, public body, statutory undertaker or person holding public office, to have regard to the purposes of a National Park, when performing any function affecting land within a Park. This gives National Park Authorities the opportunity to invite statutory bodies to show how

they have taken the Parks into consideration in their decisions - spurring the various organisations to demonstrate preferential treatment for the Parks. Some NPAs felt that this feature in the legislation had helped a bit to create a favourable climate for and contributions towards their enhancement work, though we were left with the impression that rather more could be done to capitalise on it.

3.24 Some funds are specifically targeted at National Parks, such as the Forestry Commission's Native Woodland Challenge Fund, but most are not and are either generally available or have alternative geographic remits. There was evidence from some National Park Authorities that National Park status was sometimes (but by no means always) an advantage in the determination of grant applications by some of these external sources (variously for agri-environment, forestry and biodiversity purposes). In addition to the perceived value of assisting National Parks, some funding agencies appeared to appreciate the experience of the NPAs in running projects and having staff on the ground to make them happen reliably, again assisting the case for grant aid.

Sources of funds

3.25 This section considers the funding procedures for National Park Authorities and sources of external funding for 'environmental enhancement'.

3.26 NPA expenditure can come from one of four sources:

- ◆ National Park Grant (NPG - from the Secretary of State or National Assembly for Wales).
- ◆ Levies raised from participating local authorities (set at one third of NPG).
- ◆ Borrowing to fund capital investment (dependent upon Secretary of State or National Assembly for

Wales approval).

- ◆ Income from supply of goods or services.
- ◆ Other grants, for example from the European Commission and National Lottery.

Direct National Park Funding

National Park Grant

3.27 The Environment Act 1995 makes provision for the Government to pay a National Park Grant to each NPA. This grant has traditionally been based on an annual programme of expenditure submitted by each NPA to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and approved by the Secretary of State. The National Park Grant is paid at the rate of 75% of approved expenditure.

3.28 The National Park Review Panel included in its 1991 report a recommendation that the funding of NPAs should be further investigated and that the arrangements for bidding for government grants should be reviewed. Building on a report into the funding of protected areas (ERM, 1998), the Countryside Agency has been working on a system to inform the allocation of National Park grant on behalf of the DETR. The "National Park Grant Allocation Formula" is based on 'baskets of indicators' covering three different functions. The baskets are made up as follows:

Basket 1 (Core funding) - includes indicators on: park population, park area, number of authority members and number of planning applications processed.

Basket 2 (Conservation of the natural and built environment) - includes indicators on: park area, area owned by the NPA, length of linear features (hedgerows etc.), number of scheduled ancient monuments, number of listed buildings and number of conservation areas.

Basket 3 (Recreation and visitor management) - includes indicators on: number of day visits per annum, length of public rights of way (ProW) for which the park authority has responsibility.

3.29 The indicators are used to determine the relative needs of each National Park, with a system of weighting used to fix the percentage share of each 'basket's' allocation. For the current financial settlement, 80% of the total grant to NPAs in England was allocated to baskets 1, 2 and 3 and 20% allocated on a discretionary basis. This 20% share covers the special needs of particular Parks (eg. the burden of mineral work in the Peak District, the Broads Authority's special responsibility for wetland conservation and navigation, and Exmoor's small size).

3.30 The move to a new resource allocation procedure is important as it moves National Park grant allocation towards a more transparent and needs based assessment. Needs allocation comes into play once the expenditure settlement for National Parks has been decided.

3.31 In terms of funding for 'environmental enhancement', the new allocation procedure is significant as it allows NPAs to make specific bids for enhancement projects that fit within the traffic management/sustainable transport category or for their own agri-environment schemes. It also includes provision for consideration of match funding for external sources - a very important factor.

Levies

3.32 Section 71 of the Environment Act 1995 allows NPAs to levy on the Councils by whom the local authority members of the NPA fall to be appointed. Section 71(3) provides that NPAs may levy for:

- ◆ Revenue expenditure for the year in question;
- ◆ Appropriate contingency provision;
- ◆ Working balances on revenue accounts; and
- ◆ Any revenue deficit carried forward.

3.33 The level of levy is restricted to one-third of the National Park Grant (i.e. 25% of approved expenditure) but local authorities may enter into voluntary agreements to provide additional funding. Whilst the levy would appear to mean that 25% of National Park expenditure is raised 'locally', in reality the levy is reflected in the contributing authorities' Standard Spending Assessment and hence the Revenue Support Grant paid to each authority by central government, making effectively 100% central government funding.

Other Sources

3.34 In addition to the approved programmes of expenditure, NPAs are allowed, to the extent permitted by the Local Government Goods and Services Act, to raise supplementary income from other sources and activities, including:

- ◆ Grants for projects from government agencies
- ◆ Planning application fees
- ◆ Trading activities (e.g. through visitor centres)
- ◆ Car parking fees
- ◆ Rents

3.35 In summary, National Parks receive 75% of their agreed expenditure direct from central government but in reality this figure is nearly 100% as the NPA levy on constituent local authorities is reflected in the Revenue Support Grant for those authorities. This is a long term reliable source of funding. It is important not to overlook the value of National Parks' own core funding in any analysis of how the NPAs pursue enhancement. This money is valuable not only for core funding the Authorities but as the

means of employing staff to lever in funds from elsewhere. (Also, in future, the Welsh National Parks will benefit from the Environment Development Fund, with a £3 million annual budget dedicated specifically to their needs.) National Park status for the South Downs would deliver additional resources and also the capacity to seek further resources from external funding sources. Those external sources are very important and considered in more depth in the following subsection.

External Funds for Environmental Enhancement

3.36 The approval for NPAs to supplement income for their approved programmes was one of the key recommendations resulting from Fit for the Future (National Parks Review Panel, 1991) and the report identified a number of income sources that should be developed, namely:

- ◆ increased grants from government agencies;
- ◆ increased funds from the European Community;
- ◆ increased fees from car parks;
- ◆ increased net income from trading activities;
- ◆ planning application fees; and
- ◆ contributions from the voluntary sector and charitable trusts.

3.37 The National Parks Review Panel also identified a range of potential income sources which it felt should not be developed, on the basis of potential conflicts of interest with existing park residents and enterprises. These included:

- ◆ tourist or bed taxes;
- ◆ charges for tourist attractions;
- ◆ any form of levy on industries in National Parks;
- ◆ charges for road use through tolls; and
- ◆ supplementary vehicle licensing.

3.38 Despite this discouragement, the National Park Authorities

for Exmoor, the Brecon Beacons, Lake District and Peak District had tested the water for 'visitor pay-back' schemes. National Parks have led the way with such schemes in the UK (Denham, 1998). Some of these have been arranged at arm's length from the NPA, though in Exmoor the NPA has obtained EU funding for a specific visitor pay-back project to assist footpath repair (see Appendix 2). The assumption should not be made that local businesses are hostile to supporting financially the objectives of National Parks: for example, the retail firm Hawkshead, based in the Lake District, makes very helpful donations to the National Park by giving £1 for every pair of walking boots sold.

3.39 It is not possible to identify sources of external funds from the published annual reports of the NPAs. However, a study undertaken by Exmoor NPA in 1997 on behalf of the National Park Officers, identified over 25 different sources of external funds for projects in National Parks. The major sources of external funding identified were:

- ◆ European funds (43% of all external funds) - the most significant of these were the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), Leader and LIFE. The ERDF and European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund monies were channeled through Objective 5(b) 'designation'; and,
- ◆ National Lottery (19.8% of all external funds).

3.40 The other key source of funds for environmental enhancement within National Parks were identified as the various agri-environment schemes operated by MAFF or the Welsh Office Agriculture Division (now National Assembly for Wales). These, however, are not administered by the NPAs (with the exception of Snowdonia NPA which managed the former Tir Cymen pilot scheme within its area), and the NPAs have less influence over their distribution/allocation.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

The ERDF is aimed at reducing regional imbalances and assisting disadvantaged regions, particularly, run-down areas facing restructuring problems and industrial decline and peripheral rural areas.

European Social Fund (ESF)

The ESF aims to improve employment opportunities in the EU by providing financial support towards the running costs for vocational training schemes, guidance and counselling projects, job creation measures and other steps to improve the employability and skills of both employed and unemployed people. It also provides support for research and improving the capacity of organisations to better help their target communities.

European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)

The EAGGF funds the common organisation of the agricultural markets, the processing of agricultural products and the structure of agricultural holdings.

Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG)

The FIFG finances measures for the adjustment of fisheries and aquaculture structures and processing and marketing of their products.

Box 3.1: Structural Funds

Figure 3.1: Comparison of priority objectives for European structural actions 1994 - 99 and 2000 - 06

1994 - 1999: 6 OBJECTIVES	2000 - 2006: 3 OBJECTIVES
Objective 1: promoting the development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind	Objective 1: promoting the development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind
Objective 2: converting the regions or parts of regions seriously affected by industrial decline	Objective 2: supporting the economic and social conversion of areas facing structural difficulties
Objective 3: combating long-term unemployment and facilitating integration into working life	Objective 3: supporting the adaptation and modernisation of policies and systems of education, training and employment
Objective 4: adapting the workforce to industrial changes	
Objective 5(a): adjusting agricultural and fisheries structures	
Objective 5(b): developing rural areas	
Objective 6: (created by the Act of Accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden), developing regions with an extremely low population density	

3.41 This subsection considers in turn the sources of European Funds, the National Lottery, and other grants from Government agencies in England and Wales.

European Funding for Environmental Enhancement

3.42 The European Union's (EU) Structural Funds finance socio-economic development programmes in the 15 Member States. There are four Structural Funds (see box 3.1) which target financial assistance via:

- ◆ a number of 'objectives' (these are a mix of defined geographic areas and common themes (see figure 3.1));
- ◆ Community Initiatives aimed at resolving specific social and economic problems affecting the whole of the European Union; and,
- ◆ the Rural Development Plan.

Objectives

3.43 A new 'programming period' has recently started. At the Berlin European Council, 24 and 25 March 1999, the Heads of State and Government agreed to allocate 260 billion Euros to structural measures in the European Union for the period 2000-06. Figure 3.1 details the principle differences between the objectives for the 1994-99 programming period and the new programming period (2000-06). The number of objectives has been reduced to three and a new EAGGF (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund) Regulation (EC 1257/1999) on Rural Development groups together a range of measures intended for all rural areas in the Union. These changes are significant for the National Park family as they remove Objective 5b (it is merged into the Objective 2 programmes under the rural theme) which, during the programme period 1994-99, proved a significant

source of funding for environmental enhancement in National Parks. However, the South Downs was never designated as a 5b area and no Objective 2 status has been granted for any area in the South East under the 'rural strand' for the programme period 2000-06.

3.44 Our survey of National Park Authorities showed the very considerable importance of funding under Objective 5(b) in underpinning agri-environmental investment in many National Parks. Targeted at declining rural areas, it was particularly heavily used in the Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors, Lake District and

Peak District NPAs for a range of environmental enhancement projects from moorland regeneration to woodland management. In the North York Moors, funding from Objective 5(b) has allowed the National Park Authority's own agri-environment Farm Scheme to proceed since 1990. Latterly known as the Farm and Rural Community Scheme, this is now being extended as the North York Moors Land Management Initiative, with additional funding from the Countryside Agency, the NPA's own resources, the Regional Development Agency, MAFF, local authorities and the private sector. Only in The Broads is

Interreg III

This is focused on cross-border, transnational and inter-regional co-operation intended to encourage the harmonious and balanced development and spatial planning of the European territory.

Leader+

The aim of Leader+ is to encourage and help rural actors to think about the longer-term potential of their area. It seeks to encourage the implementation of integrated, high quality, original strategies for sustainable development designed to encourage experimenting with new ways of:

- Enhancing the natural and cultural heritage;
- Reinforcing the economic environment, in order to contribute to job creation;
- Improving the organisational abilities of their community.

All rural areas are eligible for Leader + (unlike Leader I and II). Financial assistance will be granted to groups of partners known as 'local action groups' (LAGs). Funding will be structured around three actions:

- Action 1: Support for integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature based on the bottom-up approach and horizontal partnerships;
- Action 2: Support for inter-territorial and transnational co-operation;
- Action 3: The networking of all rural areas in the Community, whether or not beneficiaries under Leader+, and all rural development actors.

Equal

This Initiative is aimed at transnational co-operation to promote new approaches to combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in connection with access to the labour market.

Urban

This Initiative is focused on the social and economic regeneration of towns and neighbourhoods in crisis, with a view to promoting sustainable urban development.

Box 3.2: Community Initiatives

Objective 5(b) funding not available, though the new South Downs National Park will also have to look elsewhere for equivalent funding. (Other agri-environment funding such as for Environmentally Sensitive Areas and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme are considered below.)

Community Initiatives

3.45 In addition to Objectives 1, 2 and 3, the Structural Funds will also finance four Community Initiatives for the programme period 2000-06 (see box 3.2).

3.46 Leader+ and Interreg III (strand C) offer potential funding for environmental enhancement in the South Downs. However, applications for project funding under Interreg IIIC have to be partnership bids involving partners in other eligible areas and there are no existing Leader groups in the South East (Leader II was focused on the 'most fragile and under-developed rural areas' covered by Objective 1 and 5b designations for the period 1994-99). Because of the changes in eligibility, past experience is not necessarily a guide to future opportunities, though Leader funds have been used by the Brecon Beacons, Peak District, Snowdonia and Dartmoor National Park Authorities, but Interreg barely at all. Part of the South Downs, however, is in an Interreg area by virtue of the cross-channel boundary between East Sussex and Picardy. The Sussex Downs Conservation Board has established a Chalk Grassland Networks for Action project with Picardy (for two years to the end of 2001) with funding of £109,000 in East Sussex. As Interreg provides open-ended opportunities for cross-boundary cohesion between member-states, there may well be other enhancement opportunities which a future South Downs NPA could pursue.

3.47 LIFE is the only EU financial instrument to provide aid for the

environment throughout the EU and in bordering regions. The general objective of LIFE is to contribute to the development and implementation of EU environmental policy, by financing environmental actions in specific sectors. The two sectors of most relevance to National Parks are LIFE-Nature and LIFE-Environment. LIFE-Nature's main objective is to contribute to the establishment of the Natura 2000 network and, as such, the project area must be focused on a Special Protection Area or proposed as a candidate site of Community Importance under the terms of the Habitats Directive. LIFE-Environment has traditionally been designed to help develop and implement the Union's environmental policy, as outlined in its environmental action programme. In the future, LIFE-Environment is likely to be targeted on the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy as well as the Sixth Environmental Action Programme.

3.48 Some particularly innovative schemes have been brought about by NPAs through LIFE funding. The Broads secured LIFE funding for a fen harvester machine, which was instrumental in achieving fen restoration by facilitating the rotational cutting of reeds and enabling some economic benefits from this. In the Lake District, LIFE funds have supported equipment to bail brush-woodland, enabling the restoration of limestone pavement and the supply of wood to a wood-burning power station. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority secured LIFE funding for a study to investigate methods of improving the management of common land and reconciling different user interests.

Rural Development Plan/Programme

3.49 The Rural Development Regulation (EC Regulation 1257/99), which was part of the Agenda 2000 reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) agreed in March 1999,

establishes rural development as the second pillar of the CAP and brings together what were previously nine separate measures covering Less Favoured Area payments, the so-called 'Accompanying measures' (agri-environment programmes, afforestation and early retirement schemes); agricultural structural schemes; and a set of wider rural development measures previously only available in designated areas under the Structural Funds (notably Objective 5b). The Regulation requires that single, integrated, rural development plans be drawn up "at the most appropriate geographical level" to cover all rural territories. The Rural Development Regulation enshrines the subsidiarity principle with regions having control of their own priorities and budgets have been allocated regionally. In England there is a national, 'umbrella' England Rural Development Plan/Programme with 'regional chapters' that provide information on the regional context, priorities and funding objectives.

3.50 The principal source of funds for landscape and biodiversity related work within the National Parks has been MAFF's Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme. This has been of vital importance for Dartmoor, Exmoor, Lake District, Peak District, Yorkshire Dales and Broads. There are no ESAs in North York Moors or Northumberland. The introduction of MAFF's Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme, and particularly the inclusion of enhancement into the scope of activities the scheme can fund, has been important in helping many NPAs to progress from a strategy of damage limitation to a more proactive strategy of enhancement. ESAs have until recently been funded through the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, but are now within the scope of the Rural Development Regulation and funded through the more comprehensive framework of the ERDP.

3.51 The Countryside Stewardship Scheme to fund local land management was originally devised by the Countryside Commission and then taken over by MAFF. Like ESAs it too is now funded through the ERDP. Countryside Stewardship has been particularly important in those National Parks not covered by ESAs and in those parts of National Parks outside the designated areas of ESA. For example, the Northumberland National Park Authority has secured more than £10 million of Countryside Stewardship funding since 1996. It has been of notable additional benefit in the Yorkshire Dales. The total sum of money made available to National Parks as a whole for Countryside Stewardship has nonetheless historically been much less than that available to them through ESAs.

3.52 In Wales, the new agri-environment scheme Tir Gofal integrates ESAs and all other schemes that were funded under the Agri-Environmental Regulation. Tir Gofal is an all-Wales, whole farm scheme which includes scope for environmental enhancement. It builds upon the experimental Tir Cymen scheme which, in terms of National Parks, only operated in parts of the Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia. However, the operation of Tir Cymen in Snowdonia was the most significant instance of a NPA acting on an agency basis (for the Countryside Council for Wales) as the means of delivering locally the wider objectives of an agri-environmental scheme. This integrated national policy and local application to further National Park purposes. Whilst the Snowdonia NPA is no longer responsible for distributing money to farmers, as it was under Tir Cymen, the new Tir Gofal scheme has allowed the NPA to adopt a less inhibited stance in pressing funding agencies for the best possible environmental standards, and is, we are told, producing superior results.

Box 3.3: Regional Goals for the South East Chapter of the England Rural Development Programme
Source: MAFF, 2000.

Environmental

En 1 Protect and enhance distinctive landscapes, countryside character and historic environment.

En 1.1 Better managed landscapes in AONBs and National Parks

En 1.2 Strengthened countryside character in the South East

En 1.3 Enhanced, restored and recreated open downland and other traditional landscapes

En 1.4 Safeguarded historic features through appropriate management

En 2 Safeguard and enhance the diversity of habitats and species of the region.

En 2.1 The achievement of national and local BAP targets

En 2.2 Key habitats linked by creation and restoration

En 2.3 Protect key wildlife and natural features from detrimental activity

En 2.4 To develop appropriate long-term management of designated wildlife sites

En 3 Ensure appropriate management of woodland and water resources.

En 3.1 Better integrated management of woodland with other farm enterprises

En 3.2 Planting of appropriate new multi-purpose woodlands on farms

En 3.3. Hydrological integrity of wetlands maintained

En 3.4 Reduce pressure of water resources and maintain water quality

En 4 Promote environmentally friendly farming.

En 4.1 Increased adoption of best practice

En 4.2 Skills in the techniques of environmental management increased

En 4.3 Better understanding of farming

En 4.4 Improved provision of on-farm advice to land managers

Social

S 1 Build on market opportunities to develop local employment that is accessible to all.

S 2 Improve provision of and accessibility of essential services.

S 3 Ensure that the skills of the workforce match existing and potential business opportunities

S 4 Promote understanding of the countryside and rural issues

Economic

Ec 1 Exploit niche markets for high value products.

Ec 2 Ensure economic activity is sustainable.

Ec 3 Develop collaborative marketing initiatives.

Ec 4 Encourage diversification of the rural economy and stimulate related activities.

3.53 An ESA covers an important part of the South Downs and Countryside Stewardship is likely to be available for the remainder of the National Park area. Chapter 2 noted that these agri-environment funds have provided incentives for farmers for environmentally-friendly farming practices in the South Downs. The South East Regional Chapter of the England Rural Development Plan/Programme sets out a series of "Regional Goals for the South East" (see box 3.3). These goals, and the related objectives, provide an excellent framework for an environmental enhancement scheme in the South Downs as most of the environmental goals and related objectives talk about enhancement as well as conservation. For example, En 2.2 "Key habitats linked by creation and restoration" is intended to encourage targeting of: *"habitat creation or restoration so as to achieve the best return on that investment. For example, linking fragmented areas of grassland and heath by restoration, creation and scrub control will provide greater wildlife enhancement than isolated efforts and will help address the problem of wildlife fragmentation"* (MAFF, 2000, p.90).

3.54 Another important change since the 1994-99 programming period is the incorporation of the principle of sustainable development into the EU Treaty and the revised Structural Funds Regulations. This provides a strong legal justification for using the Structural Funds to fund environmental projects. However, the designation of sustainable development and environmental protection as a 'horizontal theme' relevant across the Structural Funds means that separate 'environment' priorities are no longer acceptable to the European Commission. Instead, environmental objectives will now have to be pursued through 'vertical' priorities, so environmental enhancement projects will have to be linked to other objectives such

as economic development. This change is clearly witnessed in the South East Regional Chapter of the England Rural Development Programme:

"The regional partners recognise that in order to secure their desired aim of a sustainably improved quality of life for all the people of the South East, the delivery of activities to achieve the goals must be taken forward in an integrated manner. As an example, the safeguarding of environmental and cultural assets should assist in securing economic benefits for the region" (MAFF, 2000, p.85).

3.55 In summary, EU funding (notably Objective 5b, Leader and Interreg) has been an important source of finance for environmental enhancement projects in National Parks in England and Wales. The recent reforms to the CAP and new guidelines for the operation of the Structural Funds will have important implications for the future funding of such projects.

3.56 The Rural Development Regulation (RDR) means that EU funding for integrated rural development will now be available outside of the former Objective 5b areas. The UK will only receive 150 million Euros per annum from the Commission to finance the RDR - less than 4 per cent of the total EU allocation. However, the Minister for Agriculture announced in December 1999 the Government's decision to apply modulation in the UK. Modulation is a technical term for a process whereby individual Member States can reduce compensation payments under the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund by up to 20 per cent and redirect those resources to the accompanying measures of the RDR (agri-environment, forestry measures, etc.). The Government's decision will mean a doubling of agri-environment expenditure by the year 2006/07. Thus in terms of environmental enhancement the Rural Development Plan would

appear to be the key source of EU funds (both in terms of national agri-environment schemes and local integrated rural development projects). The publication of the South East chapter of the Rural Development Plan provides a starting point for the future South Downs National Park. The National Park Authority may wish to seek changes to reflect its own objectives more clearly in future revisions of this Plan.

3.57 Leader+ is, like the Rural Development Plan, focused on integrated rural development. The difference is that Leader+ is meant to be focused on innovation and the testing of new approaches before they are 'mainstreamed' (i.e. funded through Objective 1, 2 or possibly 3).

National Lottery

3.58 The advent of the National Lottery has had a significant impact on the practice of countryside conservation (Bishop et al., 2000). During the first four years of the

Lottery (November 1994 - 31 December 1998) the Lottery Distributing Bodies awarded £364m for 429 countryside conservation projects. This equates to roughly the combined grant-in-aid to the government conservation agencies for this period or an average of £14.91 per ha of land in the UK (Bishop et al., 2000). Cabinet Office statistics state that in 1998/99 Lottery spending was the second largest source of funding for rural areas (Cabinet Office, 1999). Analysis of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's Lottery database suggests that NPAs in England and Wales have received Lottery awards worth £3,331,025 for 30 projects. This figure is for money awarded to a NPA and thus does not include grants for projects within National Parks submitted by organisations other than the NPA, even if the NPA is part of the bidding partnership (e.g. the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust). All NPAs except Exmoor have secured an element of lottery funding, predominantly for purchases of some kind (e.g. buildings, land, heritage

Box 3.4: Lottery Funded Area-based Schemes

In 1999 HLF issued an advice note on area-based schemes. The note identifies the main characteristics of a successful bid for an area scheme:

- ◆ It should relate to a distinctive area
- ◆ It should be based upon a holistic and strategic vision
- ◆ The activities supported through the scheme should add up to more than the sum of the parts
- ◆ It should bring heritage and access benefits
- ◆ It should be relevant to heritage assets of several different kinds
- ◆ It should involve many partners and communities
- ◆ Where activity takes place on private land, it should bring public benefit
- ◆ There should be an organisational capacity to deliver the project
- ◆ The scheme should be sustainable (in several senses).

The note also makes clear (paras. 5.1-5.3) that applicants should consider a two-stage application when schemes total more than £500,000, and/or involve several heritage elements. It advises that in making a Stage 1 bid, applicants should provide the context, vision, approximate costs and evidence of a capacity to deliver the project.

The Blue Remembered Hills scheme, promoted by the Shropshire Hills Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), is an example of an area-based proposal for Lottery funding. It is concerned with the outstanding landscape asset of South Shropshire, both the AONB and a zone of land around the designated area. It is a five year project/programme which aims to increase "physical and intellectual access" to the Shropshire Hills, conserve its heritage assets, raise community awareness and

sites).

3.59 With the exception of the Yorkshire Dales, the NPAs have not, however, been as successful in attracting Lottery funding for countryside enhancement projects directly as other large organisations. To put the £3.3m figure in context, the Wildlife Trusts had received over £35m by the end of 1998, the Countryside Commission and English Nature £27.9m. Comparing the figure with other sources of funds available to National Park Authorities, the Lake District Environmentally Sensitive Area alone provides agri-environment funding of £5 million annually.

3.60 The EnviroNet project coordinated by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (see the case study in Appendix 2) is the only example of an area-based scheme that includes environmental enhancement objectives that has secured Lottery funding within a National Park. Whilst some Park Authorities (e.g. the Peak District) are in the process of submitting

Lottery bids there does not seem to have been a general move towards Lottery applications for area-based schemes as with AONBs, though the interviews suggested that this may be about to change.

3.61 The relative lack of engagement with the Lottery Distributors to date may be due to factors such as:

- ◆ the availability of alternative European funding;
- ◆ concerns about eligibility for Lottery funding; and
- ◆ the issue of additionality: Lottery funding should be in addition to existing public sector funding and not replacing it.

3.62 The Lottery has encouraged a more integrated approach to countryside conservation policy (see box 3.4). The wide remits and responsibilities of the Millennium Commission and (especially since the Heritage Act 1997) of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) have encouraged them to support an integrated approach. For example, HLF has supported projects which

improve the prospects for the economic and ecological sustainability of the area.

The main elements of the scheme include:

- ◆ Conservation of the special heritage of trees in the area (by conserving black poplars, alders and veteran (ancient) trees and promoting seeds from local provenance).
- ◆ Protection of special sites (both County Wildlife Sites and "sacred" sites, or sites of special significance to local communities).
- ◆ Development of new products from orchards, bracken and wildflower seeds.
- ◆ Improved access and understanding, through better physical access to, and education and interpretation about these heritage assets.

A key feature of this proposal and other area-based schemes is the extent to which they integrate the various components of the project to deliver 'added value', for example:

- ◆ new products (charcoal) will come from the alder project
- ◆ locally-composted bracken will go to supply National Trust sites nearby, as a replacement for use of peat (which the trust has now abandoned)
- ◆ the value-added of sales of wildflower seed will help in securing conservation management of some meadow wildlife sites
- ◆ better management of traditional orchards will be supported by creating a market for their produce
- ◆ veteran trees and sacred sites are often linked (e.g. ancient yew trees in churchyards) and
- ◆ public access, education and interpretation is to be focused on the trees and sites to be conserved through the scheme.

Figure 3.2: Features of national agencies' grant schemes

Questions/schemes	WGS	NWCF	FWPS	TG	ESA	CSS	OFS	BMG	AG
Available in NPs?	Y	Y	Y	Y	parts	parts	Y	Y	Y
Exclusive to NPs?	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Priority to NP applicants?	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Automatic/competitive?	Auto	Comp	Auto	Comp	Auto	Comp	Auto	Comp	Comp
NPA consulted on grants?	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Adjusts to NP purposes?	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
NPA agents for grants?	N	N	N	N	N	some	N	N	N

Index of Schemes

- WGS:** Woodland Grant Scheme (Forestry Commission)
- NWCF:** Native Woodland Challenge Fund (Forestry Commission)
- FWPS:** Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (Forestry Commission/MAFF)
- TG:** Tir Gofal (Countryside Council for Wales)
- ESA:** Environmentally Sensitive Area (MAFF)
- CSS:** Countryside Stewardship Scheme (MAFF)
- OFS:** Organic Farming Scheme (MAFF)
- BMG:** Buildings and Monuments Grants (English Heritage)
- AG:** Archaeological Grants (English Heritage)

bring together a range of activities (education, conservation and restoration of the built and natural environments, access, interpretation and research) in areas such as the South Pennines (SCOSPA) and the Tweed) (Tweed Forum - see chapter 4). The encouragement given to such approaches in the Fund's strategic plan means that such a programme of work is now being devised for AONBs and other areas of countryside having distinctive heritage character (see box 3.4). We are not aware of a NPA developing an area-based scheme for Lottery funding, though some, such as the Peak District, are working on ambitious applications for Lottery funding. The Peak District NPA announced in June 2001 that the Heritage Lottery Fund had agreed in principle to put £3 million into a flagship "Moors for the Future" restoration project.

3.63 There is considerable scope for the countryside sector in general to derive additional funds from the National Lottery. To-date, take-up by land and countryside organisations has been lower than in other heritage sectors (Gay, 2000). However, this potential will only be realised through an initial investment of resources. Most of the organisations which have been successful in securing significant amounts of Lottery funding have invested in appointing professional fundraisers (either as members of

staff or as consultants to projects) and/or establishing specific units to develop close relationships with the Lottery Distributing Bodies and other funders.

Initiatives by National Agencies in England and Wales

3.64 Funds for enhancing landscape and biodiversity are available from a variety of Government agencies. Many take the form of specific grant packages, but the agencies are keen to be flexible and respond to environmental interests as they arise. Many of the grant packages available have relevance to this study either because they are already applicable to the South Downs, because they will be applicable after designation as a National Park, or because they illustrate a way of working which may offer lessons to the future managers of the South Downs. Particular features of the schemes are summarised very briefly below, and their basic features compared in the following table. This information derives largely from telephone interviews with the various agencies.

3.65 The Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) is in effect a series of related grant schemes for different aspects of woodland planting and management. Funding is not competitive for the basic WGS

establishment grant, but the Forestry Commission is encouraging grant aid according to a series of priorities in line with the England Forestry Strategy, one of which is in support of National Parks (along with community forests, ancient woodland, economic regeneration and proximity to large population centres, amongst others). However, landscape and biodiversity enhancement is not an assessment criterion. There is some flexibility in the priorities at the Forestry Commission Conservancy scale (for example funding under the 'Jigsaw' part of WGS targets one Natural Area per Conservancy). We were also advised that, when a National Park is established in the South Downs, the priorities for grant aid in the South East would be changed to reflect the designation.

3.66 The Forestry Commission operates a Native Woodland Challenge Fund (as part of the Woodland Grant Scheme), extended to 2002, to encourage the creation of significant areas of new native woodland specifically in the National Parks of England and Wales. Emphasis is given to expanding or reversing the fragmentation of existing native woodlands. The partnership works well due to the high level of consultation, joint action and the sharing of advisory roles (e.g. with officers in the Peak District undertaking initial site work with applicants for forestry grants). The Fund nationally is cash-limited and competitive. There is a series of criteria against which bids are assessed, one of which is the degree of partnership involvement: the Forestry Commission has set aside £1m as a separate budget head to support partnership working. Applicants must demonstrate the support of the NPA and of English Nature (in England) or the Countryside Council for Wales (in Wales) for their proposals.

3.67 The Farm Woodland Premium Scheme offers financial

incentives to plant woodland on farms, primarily for landscape and biodiversity reasons. Proposals must meet WGS standards and other criteria, and are encouraged to take into account a range of environmental circumstances in siting, design and management, though there is no additional consultation with NPAs beyond the soundly-based WGS consultation arrangements. FWPS is effectively a top-up payment in addition to WGS.

3.68 Separately from these schemes, there is evidence of a new partnership emerging between the Forestry Commission and the NPAs, in terms of the redesign of existing forestry blocks as well as new planting strategies. This is highly appreciated by the NPAs interviewed. In the Lake District, where forest design plans cover 10,000 hectares, landscape and biodiversity enhancement through forest-related schemes is considered by this NPA to be more substantial than agriculture-based schemes.

3.69 Tir Gofal officers from the Countryside Council for Wales work closely with Farm Liaison Officers in the National Parks in Wales, though there is no formal arrangement for consultation with each NPA on applications. However, funding is prioritised towards applications which offer the greatest environmental benefit, and this is a matter of discussion between CCW and NPAs. The NPAs are able to target the scheme within their area, so there is some adjustment of the scheme to National Park purposes.

3.70 National Park Authorities will become more closely involved than before with agri-environment funding through the Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme and Countryside Stewardship Scheme under the new Rural Development Plan. Furthermore, because Objective 5(b) funding is not available in the South Downs, the FRCA will be pro-

viding new money under the RDP to help sustain farming systems in the South East (including training and diversification) in ways which elsewhere might have attracted Objective 5(b) funds. Countryside Stewardship funds are generally not available within ESAs unless an ESA is unable to provide a relevant Countryside Stewardship benefit, such as orchard payments. However, to compensate National Parks which do not have ESAs, Countryside Stewardship money is preferentially directed to those Parks. The doubling of the budget for Countryside Stewardship in 2000, from £8m to £16m, is expected to ease the problem of half of all applications for Countryside Stewardship being rejected in 1999. Both ESAs and CSS are devised with local circumstances in mind and can therefore reflect National Park purposes. The scoring system for assessing CSS grants includes landscape, wildlife and (unlike ESAs) enhancement elements and is therefore very relevant to achieving the objectives for the South Downs under consideration in this study.

3.71 The Organic Farming Scheme includes modest landscape and wildlife-related criteria (e.g. treatment of hedgerows) but is not

otherwise tailored to National Park purposes. The budget for the Scheme has been over-subscribed but is not otherwise competitive.

3.72 Although Buildings and Monuments Grants and Archaeological Grants do not appear from the table to be tied in well to National Park purposes, English Heritage does liaise closely with MAFF on Countryside Stewardship and Environmentally Sensitive Areas so that historic and cultural aspects are taken into account in these schemes. BMG is able to offer higher levels of grant, for capital works, than CSS can, and is focused on a smaller number of larger grants targeted at the most important listed buildings and scheduled monuments in need of finance. The considerable archaeological interest in National Parks has resulted in them receiving a disproportionate share of Archaeological Grants. There has been considerable archaeological survey work undertaken in National Parks, for example. These grants are also often able to lever-in other money. One priority is to target areas which need economic regeneration, and south coast resorts such as Hastings have benefited from this. Other towns close to the

Figure 3.3: National agencies' relations with National Parks

Agency	NPs identified in funding strategy?	Closer links with NP than LA staff?	Projects co-financed with others?
Environment Agency	No	No	Yes
English Heritage	No	Slightly: annual NPA liaison meeting	Yes
Farming & Rural Conservation Agency	Yes	Not specifically	Yes
Countryside Council for Wales	No	Yes (and some good relations with LAs)	Yes
Forestry Commission	Challenge Fund	Yes	Yes
Countryside Agency	Only NP Grant	Yes (and some good relations with LAs)	Yes

South Downs might also benefit.

3.73 In addition to these specific funds, the Countryside Agency and its forerunner the Countryside Commission have over the years been a valuable source of innovative projects with enhancement benefits, integrated objectives, and opportunities for National Parks. The Countryside Stewardship Scheme began as a Countryside Commission measure before being taken over by MAFF, and the Commission's Hedgerow Incentive Scheme was absorbed into CSS in 1997. One of the Agency's current schemes of special interest to the South Downs is the Land Management Initiatives (LMI). This is a programme around the country targeting distinctive kinds of land management and farming systems (wetland, upland, lowland pastoral, arable, etc.) to examine how viable farming systems can maintain healthy, attractive environments and thriving rural economies. With many traditional farming systems under severe challenge and in decline, each LMI is addressing the circumstances peculiar to its location to see how funding and integrated action can overcome the problems. For example, the Dark Peak LMI is considering how the sum total of agri-environment subsidy in four parishes might be used more efficiently for both farming and the environment if available through a single mechanism, and how this might be established within the framework of EU legislation. The principles emerging from this and other LMIs may well have application in the South Downs.

3.74 Our study has also examined briefly the way in which the national agencies pursue their interests in relation to National Parks. Key information is set out for each agency in Figure 3.3.

3.75 The table suggests that designation of the South Downs as a National Park is likely to bring some of the key national agencies into a

closer working relationship with the NPA than they enjoy with existing local authorities. Although their own funding priorities are only modestly tied to National Park designation (and their interpretations of their commitments under section 62 of the Environment Act 1995 also vary), the national agencies can be helpful in seeking finance in partnership with other co-funders of projects. The Environment Agency has no specially allocated fund or scheme for National Parks, but aims to respond positively with money and partnership to enhancement schemes within the framework of its own Local Environment Agency Plans. There is some scope for tailoring the expenditure of these agencies to National Park priorities, particularly by prioritising the location of grant aid. NPAs are perceived by the national agencies as generally to be better focused on enhancement and able to apply more staff and money to the task than other local authorities.

Funding structures

3.76 This section examines the means by which National Park Authorities can structure themselves to ensure an organisational capacity to bid for external funds and maximise the benefits they can secure from those funds.

3.77 Over the last ten years there has been a switch towards competitive funding from an increasing number of sources. 'Competitive' means that proposals are considered on their merit and funding is not dependent upon just meeting certain eligibility criteria. Another key characteristic is the need to be able to develop funding bids that combine potential funding sources - with one acting as match funding for another. This drive towards increased external funding means that organisations such as NPAs are having to consider the establishment of professional external funding programmes. We would

suggest that the key to successful external fundraising is a professional approach - the structures are arguably just as important as the funding sources. There are three basic options for such programmes.

Option 1 - Use existing staff to fundraise

3.78 This is a common model as it does not incur any direct additional expenditure on staff resources. The risks with such a model include: the opportunity cost factor (what staff might have been doing if not researching funding sources); potential for lack of strategic co-ordination (do you have one person or delegate responsibility to individual project teams/sections?); and the steep learning curve for personnel allocated for this task - will they have the necessary skills or time to devote to the task?

Option 2 - Appoint a professional fundraiser/establish a properly resourced development unit

3.79 The benefits of this model are that professional fundraisers are recruited who know what they are doing, and know what is and is not fundable through different sources. However, consideration has to be given to sources of match funding and establishment of a budget line for this purpose. This is a relatively low risk strategy compared to the establishment of a charitable trust. A variation on this model would be to appoint/retain a fundraising consultant. With this option it is possible that some of the consultancy costs could be included in any application made, thus reducing the direct cost to the commissioning body.

Option 3 - Establish a separate charitable company limited by guarantee and wholly owned trading company

3.80 This option has been implemented to varying degrees in several National Parks. The Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust has probably been the most successful model to-date (see the case study in Appendix 2). This model has been based on the

success of organisations such as Help the Aged and Save the Children in terms of raising external funds. The advantages include:

- o Access to funding sources not available to NPAs or local authorities e.g. National Lottery Charities Board, legacies etc.
- o Ability to raise money in ways that charitable trusts cannot (e.g. selling goods, corporate sponsorship, acting as consultants etc.). The wholly owned trading company can covenant or gift aid profits back to the charity.
- o Stakeholder involvement - the trust or charitable company model has the advantage of allowing scope to include a wide range of partners/ local organisations in the management board or as formal trustees. This model can act as a useful mechanism to develop a formal partnership approach involving public, private and community/ voluntary groups. It can also help overcome bureaucratic scepticism - it can act more quickly than a local authority.

3.81 Potential disadvantages include:

- ◆ Set-up costs
- ◆ Liability
- ◆ Political concern about loss of power from an elected/appointed body to a charitable company

National Park Authorities' involvement in shaping funding strategies

3.82 The integration of the environment into mainstream EU programme priorities means that it is no longer a specialist issue of relevance only to a minority of applicants. However, this process also means that it is important for environmental authorities (such as NPAs) to ensure that they take an active interest in the development and implementation of relevant Single Programming Documents across all priorities and measures (these are the documents that outline how the Structural Funds will be spent). This will encourage these documents to

contain appropriate targets, objectives, guidance and assessment regimes that will enable NPAs to secure funding.

3.83 This development in EU funding is to some extent mirrored in Britain by current initiatives in Lottery funding, where the Heritage Lottery Fund has been encouraging the submission of integrated area-based bids rather than ad-hoc one-off projects. There are parallels with the importance of influencing development plan policies under the 'plan-led' planning system, rather than reactive firefighting when individual planning applications arrive.

3.84 A comprehensive study of the efforts of NPAs to influence the programmes from which they may expect to draw substantial parts of their funding was beyond the scope of this project. However, where interview time allowed, NPAs were asked about their role in shaping the emerging rural strategies of the new Regional Development Agencies (in England). NPAs had generally endeavoured to influence the strategies to reflect National Park priorities, and some had been very successful (e.g. North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales with the Yorkshire and Humberside RDA 'Yorkshire Forward') whereas others had struggled for recognition. Some Parks had already secured modest funding from RDAs, though it is too early in the life of the Agencies to assess how significant these prospective partners will become. Each RDA has published a Regional Economic Development Strategy, so National Park Authorities will need to work within the priorities set by these frameworks. The South Downs National Park Authority will need to use the next revision of the Strategy for the South East as the opportunity to press for any changes it may wish to seek

The South Downs experience and opportunities

3.85 A workshop meeting was

convened by CNP at Chichester in the South Downs on 15th December 2000 to discuss the scope for enhancing the future National Park. The meeting had been rescheduled from an earlier occasion when floods had almost cut off Chichester, and even on the second occasion localised flooding and disruption to transport routes had prevented some participants from getting to the venue. We were therefore delighted that three farmers and representatives from eight local organisations were able to join the consultants and Council for National Parks under independent chairmanship. A full list is provided in Appendix 3.

3.86 The pattern of farming in the South Downs is led, naturally enough, by market forces and the incentive arrangements through the Common Agricultural Policy and other schemes. Current trends in practices are progressively out of livestock and into arable, and to farmers being able to devote less time, labour and money to enhancement activities. Both of these are the opposite of the environmental priorities for the area.

3.87 The generally accepted basis for agri-environment incentive schemes was that these should follow the objective of supporting individual farms as economically viable units. A significant impediment to doing this efficiently is seen as MAFF's adherence to 'profits foregone' as the basis for calculating payments. There was wide agreement across the sectors that farmers were well capable of responding to economic stimuli, and that environmental benefits could be delivered most efficiently if they were treated as objectives in their own right rather than assumed to follow as a by-product of agricultural incentives. There was interest in extending the system of tendering, already applied to environmental objectives within the National Forest, so that efficient means came forward to achieve stated environmental objectives within known budgets. Environmental

objectives would be new 'products', and these could be provided using different funding mechanisms. These could also be local products, particularly with the added value of South Downs provenance, creating new opportunities for farmers and extricating them from the domination of MAFF's priorities. There was some feeling that farmers had been slow to promote distinctive local products and to gain access to new sources of funds, such as the lottery and LIFE, in support of them.

3.88 Continuity of objectives and a greater permanence to incentive schemes is necessary to build confidence in the industry and attract more young farmers into it. A new National Park Authority would provide a permanence which the Conservation Board had lacked, and there was a case for this Authority to be the conduit for agri-environment subsidies. This could work well if sufficient trust was built up between the Authority and the farming community, which (it was felt) would depend upon a reliable element of farmer representation upon it. This method would also help achieve a greater integration between the many important objectives of policy in the South Downs, which was widely seen as desirable. This involved not only farming incomes and methods (there being an environmental desire to see mixed farming and less intensive arable farming) but attention to wildlife, landscape, public access, aquifer protection and other social and cultural interests. Archaeology in particular is not currently integrated effectively into the land management regime. The new Authority could be a one-stop shop for farmers looking at alternative financial arrangements for running their businesses.

Conclusions: 'added value' for enhancement

Additional funds arising from National Park designation

3.89 It is clear that the designa-

tion of the South Downs as a National Park would bring additional resources to the area. NPA authorities are 75% funded through a National Park Grant from central government, the allocation procedure for which is moving towards a system which will include consideration of the need for funds for certain forms of environmental enhancement and match funding for external funding bids. A South Downs NPA, established under current legislation, would have the power to levy councils who appoint a local authority member(s) to the NPA. Whilst the levy would appear to mean that 25% of agreed National Park expenditure is generated locally, in reality the figure is less as the levy is reflected in the Revenue Support Grant paid to each authority by central government. Thus central government funding of NPAs is much higher than the 75% direct National Park Grant allocation. In addition, these funds will be available permanently, allowing a South Downs National Park Authority to enter into much longer term agreements than is practicable at present. This will be especially important as the basis for building up trust between the authority and local landowners and farmers, as has generally happened in other National Parks. A South Downs NPA might at least be able to operate as a one-stop shop for the farming community in search of funds and advice.

3.90 The additional funds available to a South Downs NPA (rather than the Sussex Downs Conservation Board and East Hampshire Joint Advisory Committee) will not only allow an increase in direct funding of local enhancement, but will enable more people to be employed to raise funds from external sources. Most NPAs act entrepreneurially, leveraging in external sources of finance for environmental enhancement projects. It is arguable that without a NPA many of the integrated rural development projects outlined above would not have taken place on the scale which has been achieved (e.g. the Moorland Regeneration

Programme in the North York Moors and Barns Conservation Project in the Yorkshire Dales).

3.91 The Forestry Commission's Native Woodlands Challenge Fund is an external fund which is available only in National Parks. There is also some evidence from other National Parks that applications for grant aid within National Parks are viewed particularly favourably. Designation as a National Park will therefore have further immediate tangible financial benefits for the area. Allied to this, the requirement on statutory bodies to have regard to National Park purposes under section 62 of the Environment Act 1995 has in some cases helped NPAs to do their job: there is a cultural climate supportive of National Parks as well as a supportive financial climate.

3.92 An environmental enhancement scheme for the South Downs should be determined by local needs and objectives rather than priorities being driven by funding opportunities. The first essential requirement for the South Down NPA will therefore be to articulate its enhancement objectives. It can then search the opportunities available to supplement its direct central government income from other suitable sources. It is estimated that 25% of all expenditure is now covered by income generated locally through trading or external funding sources (Countryside Commission, 1998). This represents the 'indirect' benefits of having an organisation with the capacity to generate such income. Much of this income is targeted on various forms of 'environmental enhancement', reflecting the NPAs statutory duties. Expressed another way, NPAs on average generate a return of 33% on their National Park Grant.

External funds for integrated action

3.93 The main sources of external funding to NPAs for environmental enhancement projects (excluding agri-environment schemes) have

been the EU's Structural Funds and the National Lottery. Both of these sources of funding have undergone a metamorphosis in recent years with integration being a key theme of the new priorities (be it the objectives of the new England Rural Development Programme or the Heritage Lottery Fund's Strategic Plan). Projects that take a very narrow view of 'environmental enhancement' are unlikely to secure large-scale funding, whilst projects which link environmental benefits with social issues and economic development are likely to score highly.

3.94 National Park Authorities are already practising this integrated approach to pursuing the purposes of National Parks, with landscape and biodiversity conservation and enhancement central to many major projects. Their style of working is typically in partnership with agencies having related objectives. The NPAs tackle their purposes mainly by acting as catalysts, using their staff and, where necessary, their own money to enable others to bring about physical enhancement and to attract outside finance into the Parks. The innovation by the NPAs is not so much in the packaging of policy issues and funding sources, impressive though that is, but in the ability to link broad strategies to meaningful activity at the farm scale. This is achieved by having effective local contacts and sufficient staff to generate grant applications and practical land management over substantial areas. The long term commitment of each NPA to its area provides a stable basis for partnerships, management agreements and investment in the overall well-being of the Parks' environments and communities. This local presence is especially valuable for influencing farmers and landowners, whose activities have such a bearing on the appearance and biodiversity of National Parks.

3.95 The England Rural Development Programme is a very important development. It extends

Objective 5b-type funding to the whole of the country and provides for a much greater degree of regional accountability in terms of shaping the programme's objectives and allocating resources. The South East Chapter of the England Rural Development Programme provides a useful framework for an integrated environmental enhancement scheme for the South Downs. National Park status can be expected to assist in the targeting of such monies.

3.96 Conservation and enhancement of landscape, wildlife and historic heritage are often interpreted as depending on traditional processes of land management. The England Rural Development Programme and many of the area-based schemes submitted for National Lottery funding reflect this by aiming to add value to the products to which these processes give rise. This added-value (through branding, production of niche products etc.) is seen as the way to sustainable conservation/environmental enhancement, as the market for such products provides a direct economic value for the specialist management required to deliver the products. However, there is an issue about the size of the market for this type initiative (such as "Eat the View"). Our survey of National Park Authorities showed that many of them were tentatively engaged in supporting National Park related products, though we had the impression that much more could be done.

3.97 The theme of integration also applies to the mechanisms for raising external funding. The number of potential funding sources has grown in recent years and a key consideration is the extent to which different funding sources can be used as match funding for each other to deliver an integrated programme. The model of a charitable company limited by guarantee and wholly owned trading company is worth further research as it maximises the range of potential funding sources and offers the potential to act as a

formal means of stakeholder involvement that can help ensure local and targeted delivery of funds.

Exerting influence on external funding programmes

3.98 The shape of some of the outside funding arrangements has been influenced by the Parks themselves and can be influenced by them in future. Some of the NPAs were able to influence the first round of the Regional Economic Development Strategies of the Regional Development Agencies, and have the scope to exercise more influence in future reviews. EU funding at the regional level is increasingly integrated through Single Programming Documents, so NPAs will need to gear themselves up to influence the detailed objectives of these Documents in future, not least because of the significant resources channeled through this route.

Future sources of funds for enhancing the South Downs

3.99 Agri-environment funding relevant to the South Downs is in a state of flux. The Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme which have done so much for many of the English National Parks already apply in the South Downs and will be able to continue. The South Downs ESA as currently arranged has its advantages and disadvantages, but remains the largest source of external finance with an environmental enhancement element. As indicated in Chapter 2, it is capable of improvement to meet the specific local needs of the Downs. Attention will increasingly focus on the South East chapter of the England Rural Development Plan. Those National Park Authorities which have experimented with whole farm plans appear to have been very satisfied with that approach, which may well be worth developing in the South Downs.

3.100 Our analysis of funding mechanisms in other National Parks is to some extent cautionary for the South Downs. Some National Parks have been heavily reliant for substantial funding on sources such as Objective 5(b) which are not available in the South Downs. Also, the recent changes to the Structural Funds and new policy directions to the Lottery Distributing Bodies mean that reading across from past experience is an unreliable guide to the future. Future funding for environmental projects will be increasingly tied to economic and social goals and vice versa. Looking ahead, there may well be increasing interest in different funding mechanisms, such as tendering to find the most efficient way of spending public funds to achieve defined environmental enhancement objectives. The new National Park Authority might itself become the agent for the distribution of agri-environment or other funds, as Snowdonia NPA was for Tir Cymen funds - though experience in that case suggests that the power was a double-edged sword.

3.101 The achievement of many NPAs has been to tap into the available funds to achieve their own objectives. This study has shown that some NPAs have been able to take advantage of specific EU initiatives such as (what are now known as) LIFE, Leader+ and Interreg III, and this should spur a South Downs NPA to pursue these opportunities vigorously so long as they persist. Similarly, as funding sources change, so NPAs must adapt to make use of them. NPAs have the advantage of being well-positioned to do just that: they already have the integrated approach and are also well-placed to devote staff and other resources to the increasingly competitive world of grant applications.

3.102 There are additional recent initiatives which may be capable of having a beneficial effect on investment in enhancement in the South Downs, but which it has been beyond the capacity of this project to investigate. Two are particularly worthy of

mention. Both are in their early stages, so we would anticipate that there is little practical experience to report to date. First, under the Local Government Act 1999, all local authorities are subject to an administrative regime to ensure that their services offer 'Best Value'. Each service is expected to improve its value for money year-on-year, and services should seek to raise their standards against performance against 'benchmark' levels. The delivery of enhancement is likely to be affected by Best Value considerations, with an increasing challenge to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

3.103 The second recent initiative came through the Local Government Act 2000, which introduced a new power for each local authority to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of its area. This extends across all local government services and includes those provided by other agencies (e.g. Health Authorities and voluntary providers of services). Priorities for action are to be decided through the active participation of local communities in the decision process and the preparation of a Community Strategy. Local people in the area covered by the South Downs may decide, for example, that enhancing the Downs is a priority. The expectation would then be that all agencies would have a responsibility to take that into account in their own spheres of activities, and local authorities would gradually prioritise spending on such issues. The process of Community Strategy preparation and implementation therefore has the capacity to influence the weight given to South Downs enhancement in community affairs.

4 Learning from Others

Summary

4.1 Environmental enhancement in the form of landscape and nature restoration is now a central feature of countryside conservation in Europe, both within and beyond protected areas. Within category V protected landscapes agri-environment schemes have provided the main impetus for such enhancement through the re-introduction of traditional farming techniques.

4.2 Analysis of environmental enhancement schemes operating outside of National Parks in England and Wales and within and beyond protected areas in other countries allows a number of conclusions to be drawn:

Need for a Plan-led or Strategic Approach

4.3 There is a move towards a more strategic approach towards conservation and environmental enhancement. The Dutch Nature Policy Plan and Parks Canada initiative on ecological integrity are examples of this comprehensive approach. Whilst it would not be appropriate to draw direct comparisons between these case studies and the situation in the South Downs, it is possible to identify key elements of this approach, namely:

- o Effective targeting by ensuring that resources are devoted to schemes with the greatest potential to deliver environmental benefits (e.g. linking key wildlife sites as with the 'Prime Biodiversity Area' concept in Somerset or the concept of 'ecological corridors' in the Netherlands).
- o Underpinning applications for finance (e.g. the role of Biodiversity Action Plans in Lottery funding for the Somerset Wildlife Trust).
- o Providing a basis for monitoring and evaluation (e.g. the initiative on ecological integrity of Canadian National Parks).

Local Ownership

4.4 The case studies suggest that local ownership of 'environmental enhancement' schemes is critical to their success where they involve changes to the management of private land. This does not just mean consulting on proposals (as with the Bodmin Moor Project) but genuine stakeholder involvement throughout the process from the genesis of ideas to scheme delivery.

Partnership

4.5 Linked to the need for local ownership is the concept of partnership working. Scheme based partnerships (e.g. the Tweed River Heritage Project) can provide both a mechanism for stakeholder involvement and a means of maximising funding opportunities (see chapter 3).

Linking Landscapes and Livelihoods

4.6 There is increasing recognition that for environmental enhancement projects to be sustainable they must be able to demonstrate economic benefits. Such benefits may be in the form of an improved resource for tourism or increased premiums for products produced in ways which respect and enhance the local environment. Although not reviewed, this is the focus of the Countryside Agency's 'Eat the View' initiative and a common feature of many of its Land Management Initiatives.

Delivering Value for Money

4.7 There is growing recognition that national schemes need to incorporate the flexibility to respond to local circumstances (this has been a criticism of REPS in Ireland and ESAs in Britain). Such flexibility could be in the form of better targeting of existing payments or through local negotiation of new/revised management prescriptions for agri-environment schemes.

International Frameworks for Environmental Enhancement

4.8 Against a background of declining biodiversity and reduced landscape diversity, it is not surprising that there is a growing debate about 'environmental enhancement' at every level from the global, through the European to the local, and that policy instruments are being developed to encourage that process (Phillips, 1996). The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which was agreed at the Earth Summit 1992 and came into force at the end of 1993, includes an important requirement under Article 8(f) to "*rehabilitate and restore degraded ecosystems and promote the recovery of threatened species, inter alia, through the development and implementation of plans or other management strategies*".

4.9 At the pan-European scale the EECONET (European Ecological Network) concept has acted as a framework for policy development. The EECONET concept (Bennett and Baldock, 1991) aims to identify the species and habitats of European importance and to develop measures that conserve the integrity of the natural systems upon which they depend. It is a strategic and dynamic idea which could provide a framework for protected areas, conserving nature in the wider countryside and focusing nature and landscape restoration priorities. EECONET seeks to reverse the fragmentation of remaining habitats into small isolated 'islands' surrounded by land of limited biodiversity value, by creating a Europe-wide ecological network. The main elements of such a network would be:

- ◆ Selection of core areas and ensuring their conservation;
- ◆ Protection of the core areas from harmful activities in 'buffer' areas around;
- ◆ Creation of corridors (e.g. riparian habitats, hedgerows, forest

strips, ancient routeways) and stepping stones between conservation sites to allow dispersal and migration of species; and

- ◆ Restoration of damaged habitats and creation of new ones as part of the network (emphasis added)

4.10 The network applies at all spatial scales - from the continent to the farm - and at each level, the concept would involve nature and landscape restoration to create the network.

4.11 The EECONET concept has influenced the thinking behind Natura 2000 and the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (see below). A conference in 1993 to debate the EECONET concept agreed a set of nine principles, one of which was the Principle of Restoration and (Re)Development: "*that where possible, parts of the biological and landscape diversity of Europe should be restored and/or (re)developed if it can be demonstrated by reference studies that the original state should be re-established*" (Bennett, 1994).

4.12 The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy was endorsed by the European Environmental Ministers at the third Pan-European Conference in the "Environment for Europe" process, in Sofia, Bulgaria, in October 1995. The Strategy aims to:

- ◆ Reduce threats to Europe's biological and landscape diversity.
- ◆ Increase resilience of Europe's biological and landscape diversity.
- ◆ Strengthen ecological coherence of Europe as a whole.
- ◆ Ensure full public involvement in conservation of biological and landscape diversity.

4.13 The Strategy gives much attention to nature and landscape restoration. In particular, it focuses upon "*Conserving, enhancing and restoring key ecosystems, habitats, species and features of the land-*

scape through the creation and effective management of the Pan-European Ecological Network". Thus it provides a pan-European framework within which restoration strategies at various scales can be promoted.

4.14 The Birds and Habitat Directives contain specific references to nature restoration in Special Protection Areas and Special Areas for Conservation (SACs) designated under these two directives respectively - and which together will form the representative network of protected sites in the European Union to be known as Natura 2000. For example, Article 2(2) of the Habitats Directive states that: *"measures pursuant to this Directive shall be designed to maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest"*.

4.15 Environmental enhancement programmes also have a place within the recently agreed European Landscapes Convention which aims to strengthen the con-

servation of the rural landscapes of Europe.

A New Role for Protected Areas

4.16 Following the Fourth World Parks Congress in Caracas in 1992, IUCN (The World Conservation Union) issued guidance which defined a protected area thus: *"an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means"* (IUCN, 1994a).

4.17 The guidance also identified six categories of protected area based on primary management objectives (see figure 4.1).

4.18 In this classification the term 'National Park' has a particular meaning, it is specifically attached to Category II and the Yellowstone model of a National Park where the land is owned and administered by the State. National Parks in England

Figure 4.1: Protected areas management categories

Source: IUCN, 1994a

Category	Primary Management Objective(s)
I	Strict nature reserve - wilderness area; protected area managed mainly for science or wilderness protection.
II	National park - protected areas managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation.
III	Natural monument: protection area managed mainly for conservation or specific natural features.
IV	Habitat/species management area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention.
V	Protected landscape/seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation.
VI	Managed resource protected area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems.

ACTION POINT

4.2.6 Create and restore habitats of conservation value, some of which could be used to extend or create protected areas.

Recommendation. Governments and conservation agencies should consider the scope for creating, or re-creating, habitats of conservation value.

These could include:

- a) Planting forests;
- b) Encouraging natural succession;
- c) Restoring and creating wetlands; and
- d) Restoring former heathland or limestone grassland.

Mechanisms used for this include ESA-type schemes, incentive payments to farmers, and partnerships between farmers, conservation NGOs and national conservation bodies."

Box 4.1: "Parks for Life: Action for Protected Areas in Europe"

Source: IUCN, 1994b, p.51.

and Wales are examples of category V protected landscapes - humanised landscapes which have been exploited for centuries and owe, in large part, their special qualities to this interaction between the physical environment and the human race.

4.19 The IUCN categories are useful in that they emphasise that protected areas (despite the name) are not just about protection but also about positive management. This management has often taken the form of trying to maintain the status quo. Indeed, the establishment of protected areas has been a traditional response of society to loss of species of fauna and flora and degradation of landscapes. However, in recent years there has been growing recognition that the conventional approach of protecting species and habitats cannot conserve biodiversity (witness the international frameworks for 'environmental enhancement'); it must be buttressed by conservation efforts in the wider countryside to re-establish essential ecological linkages between the various physical and biological systems which constitute a dynamic natural environment.

4.20 In response to recommendations of the World Congress on Protected Areas held in Caracas in 1992, IUCN, after extensive consul-

tation, published "Parks for Life: Action for Protected Areas in Europe" (1994b). This document adopts a dynamic approach to the concept of a protected area, including measures for nature restoration (Phillips, 1996). One of its key recommendations is for governments and conservation agencies to consider the scope for creating, or re-creating, habitats of conservation value (see box 4.1).

4.21 It is clear that 'environmental enhancement', in the form of landscape and nature restoration, is now a key feature of pan-European policies for landscape and biodiversity conservation. Protected areas are seen as a part of this process providing protection for key features but also opportunities for enhancement.

Case Studies of 'Environmental Enhancement'

4.22 As part of the brief for this study we have examined a series of 'environmental enhancement' projects that have taken, or are taking, place outside of National Parks in England and Wales. The purpose of this desk review was to identify key lessons to be learnt and applied from this experience.

4.23 The case studies are structured around three themes:
◆ Comprehensive plan-led

approaches - examples of national plans for 'environmental enhancement';

- ◆ Agri-environment led - examples of 'environmental enhancement' through the operation of agri-environment schemes;
- ◆ Funding-led - examples of projects that have been developed to meet funding opportunities.

Comprehensive/Plan-led Approaches to 'Environmental Enhancement'

4.24 Many European countries have experience of 'environmental enhancement' projects but most of these relate to the implementation of Environmentally Sensitive Area type schemes, made under Article 19 of the Structures Regulation 797/85, and more recently programmes developed under the Agri-Environmental Regulation. However,

the Netherlands' Nature Policy Plan (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, 1992) and the Danish Nature Protection and Management Acts 1989 and 1992 represent examples of a comprehensive, planned approach to 'environmental enhancement'.

4.25 In response to a consolidated period of land reclamation and intensification of land use, the Danish Government introduced a new Act on Nature Management in 1989 which, in principle, gives total protection to all remaining natural and semi-natural habitats apart from the smallest localities (i.e. meadows, heathland and marshes smaller than 0.25 ha and ponds smaller than 0.01 ha). The 1989 Act also, for the first time provided a legal framework and resources for nature restoration. This has enabled the Ministry of Environment and

Box 4.2: Nature Restoration in Denmark

Fjand Enge - Re-establishment of cultivated saltmarshes and consolidation of agricultural units

Fjand is part of Nissum Fiord, one of the most important nature areas in Denmark (it is designated as a Ramsar Area and Special Protection Area). It provides a feeding point for migrating geese and is home to some of Denmark's largest colonies of black-headed gulls, sandwich terns and arctic terns, and the gull-billed tern - a Red Data Species.

In November 1991 the National Forest and Nature Agency acquired approximately 200 ha of saltmarshes from 50 farmers. Grazing of the marshes and associated meadows was essential to maintain the area's nature conservation value but unprofitable, as the area was divided into a large number of small plots with many different owners. The restoration scheme involved a programme of land consolidation with the aim of trying to rationalise ownership of the saltmarshes to ensure that their continued management was economically viable. Under the scheme certain owners were offered the opportunity to swap less productive areas on the saltmarshes for better land nearby purchased in advance by the State. The end result is a pattern of land ownership which makes it more viable for private landowners to graze the saltmarshes as their landholdings are now consolidated in one area rather than dispersed across a large area.

Hojby So - re-creation of an old lake

In November 1990 the Department of the Environment and Energy switched off the pumps that had been draining 40 ha of low lying fields north of the town of Hojby. The area had been drained as part of a land reclamation and agricultural intensification project, however, the scheme was never successful as the lake bed subsided almost 1.5 metres as the lake dried out. The low lying areas were most valuable as hay harvesting and grazing areas, but the fall in the land surface meant the area was always prone to poaching and the damp conditions often spoilt the hay crop. Following a local feasibility study, the National Forest and Nature Agency became involved through a programme of land consolidation among the land owners concerned. Through acquisition of land pools outside of the project area, a series of land exchanges were negotiated so that the State acquired 40 ha of the lake's original area thus facilitating the re-creation of the lake. The project has also involved the establishment of a series of trails to link the lake to Hojby and the creation of two wooded islets.

Source: National Forest and Nature Agency, 1992 and Moller, 1995.

Energy to implement nature restoration projects on a large scale. The Act provides for the following measures to be used in nature restoration projects:

◆ *Subsidies and loans (including nature management contracts)* - subsidies have been the most frequently used option with loans rarely used. Subsidies have been granted to cover some or all of the project costs (i.e. capital costs) and rarely used to cover on-going management.

◆ *Property acquisitions* - within the first year of the Nature Management Act 1989, this power had been used to acquire 2,489 ha primarily for nature restoration and state afforestation.

◆ *Registration of an option to purchase under the Land Register and Expropriation* - these were existing powers that were consolidated in the Nature Management Act 1989. they are viewed as powers of 'last resort' and only used when a large scale restoration scheme is being prevented by one or few landowners. All such proposals must be approved by a system of Regional Consultative Committees.

◆ *Information.*

4.26 The Nature Management Act 1989 also consolidated other existing powers, for example, the power to subsidise environmentally friendly farming and powers for land consolidation. Under the latter, nature restoration projects have been developed in tandem with land consolidation initiatives whereby State powers are used to adjust the structure of land ownership in order to improve conditions for agriculture and nature conservation (see box 4.2).

4.27 The main principles of the Nature Management Act 1989 were integrated into the Nature Protection Act 1992, clause 3 of which states that the objectives of the Act are "...to improve, restore or create areas of significance for wild animals and plants and for

landscape and historical interests".

The average annual budget for nature restoration and management, since 1989, has been 8 million ECU, most of which has been spent on nature restoration projects. Between 1995 and 1998 public nature management projects have been completed on 4,870 ha, including the re-establishment of 1,700 ha of lakes and other shallow wetlands and re-creation of 1,600 small ponds, restoration of 2,000 ha of bogs, 4,800 ha of heathland, 1,300 ha of commons (old grasslands) and 100 ha of natural forest (Danish Ministry of Environment and Energy, 1999).

4.28 The Netherlands' Nature Policy Plan (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, 1992) represents another example of a comprehensive approach to 'environmental enhancement'. The introduction to the plan states that:

"The Nature Policy Plan of the Netherlands is a strategic plan. It contains the objectives and strategies of the government's policy for the landscape and the natural environment and their inter-relationships. The plan indicates which measures in nature conservation and in other policy areas and sectors are called for. This ensures that the government's nature conservation policy will be taken into account in other government plans". (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, 1992, p.1).

4.29 The plan proposes a "National Ecological Network" comprising 'core areas' (areas with existing ecological values of international or national importance), 'nature development areas' (areas offering special perspectives for the development of ecological values) and 'ecological corridors' (areas or structures enabling the distribution, migration and exchange of species between the various core areas). Within this network, environmental enhancement in the form of nature

restoration has a pivotal role to play with a target of 50,000 ha of land to be acquired for "nature development". The experience gained in the development and implementation of this plan has influenced the EECONET concept.

4.30 Outside of Europe, the Canadian initiative on the ecological integrity of National Parks provides an example of a comprehensive 'environmental enhancement' programme linked to protected areas.

4.31 Canada has 39 National Parks with the first, Banff, created in 1885. The Canadian National Parks are examples of category II protected areas (an area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation). They cover almost a quarter of a million square kilometres or about 2% of Canada's land mass and attract over 14 million visitors per annum. In 1998 the Minister for Canadian Heritage established a Panel on Ecological Integrity to: identify issues affecting the management of Canadian National Parks; examine Parks Canada's approach for maintaining ecological integrity; and, develop recommendations for improvement. The Panel defined 'ecological integrity' thus: "an ecosystem has integrity when it is deemed characteristic for its natural region, including the composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change and supporting processes" (Parks Canada Agency, 2000a, p.2). The emphasis was on ensuring that the natural ecosystems represented within Canada's National Parks were in balance (i.e. they had their native components (e.g. plants and animals) and that processes such as growth and reproduction were intact).

4.32 The Panel concluded that all but one of Canada's National Parks were under ecological threat and that these stresses were a warning of larger and more serious

stresses that already affected much of Canada. Examples of the broad internal and external issues facing the National Parks included:

- ◆ *Habitat loss* - in particular boreal forest
- ◆ *Habitat fragmentation* - many species (such as grizzly bears to flying squirrels) were cited as having difficulty in surviving in habitats that had been broken into isolated fragments
- ◆ *Losses of large carnivores* - even within National Parks, large carnivores such as wolves were found to be under pressure from hunting and visitor developments
- ◆ *Air pollution* - drift of pollutants from the cities and a critical problem of acid deposition in excess of the ability of the landscapes within the parks to buffer sulphate and other acidic compounds.
- ◆ *Pesticides* - drift from use outside of the parks.
- ◆ *Exotic species* - invading non-native species (e.g. in Point Pelee National Park garlic mustard is invading from Carolinian forests and out-competing native species).
- ◆ *Over use* - a sense that growing levels of human use within most National Parks is leading to 'over-crowding' and a loss of wilderness.

4.33 The Panel's report (Parks Canada Agency, 2000b) sets out a new direction for Canada's National Parks based on this concept of ecological integrity. A key part of this 'new direction' is the implementation of an 'active management and restoration programme'. This is in contrast to Parks Canada's Guiding Principles and Operating Policies which state that "ecosystems should evolve in the absence of most human intervention" (cited in Parks Canada Agency, 2000b, p.5-1). The active management programme is more interventionist than the traditional policy of laissez-faire management and includes such actions as:

- ◆ *Fire Restoration Programme*. Aboriginal peoples used fire to cre-

ate wildlife habitat, maintain grassland and for other purposes. The report calls for Parks Canada to re-discover this traditional management technique based on consultation with Aboriginal peoples.

◆ *Species Restoration Programme.* This would be a research orientated programme of species re-introduction to test hypotheses about factors that affect small populations.

◆ *Site Restoration.* There are many degraded sites within the Canadian National Parks (a legacy of old mines, roads, clear cuts, defence programmes etc.). There was concern that a laissez-faire approach based on natural succession was allowing foreign species to colonise the National Parks.

◆ *Control and Removal of Alien Species.* Parks Canada to develop a policy and guidelines on the removal of alien species.

◆ *Guidelines for Harvesting.* Although examples of category II protected areas, Canadian National Parks are 'harvested' in terms of fishing, hunting, domestic grazing and felling of trees. The plan is to develop a series of guidelines for harvesting and any harvesting not meeting these requirements would be discontinued.

4.34 The Canadian Government have accepted the Panel's recommendations and introduced a new Canada National Parks Act (March 2000) to reconfirm maintaining ecological integrity is the first priority of National Parks. The concept of 'ecological integrity' is also to be put at the core of Parks Canada's organisation and central to the State of the Parks Reports (Minister of Canadian Heritage, 2000).

Agri-Environment-led Approaches to 'Environmental Enhancement'

4.35 The development of agri-environment schemes such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Countryside Stewardship (England) and Tir Gofal (Wales) have greatly extended the scope for environmental enhancement. Such schemes

are principally focused on re-creating or restoring features of traditional farming systems, such as re-creating grazing meadows and limestone/chalk swards. As the review of 'environmental enhancement' practices in English and Welsh National Parks illustrated, such schemes are particularly important in the context of Category V protected areas.

4.36 The case studies reviewed below were selected for differing reasons. The Bowland Initiative and Bodmin Moor Project are examples of pilot rural development initiatives aimed at linking agri-environment funding with rural development. They are potential precursors to the post Agenda 2000 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The Agenda 2000 reforms included a new Rural Development Regulation which brings together what were previously nine separate measures covering Less Favoured Area payments; the accompanying measures (agri-environment programmes, afforestation and early retirement schemes); agricultural structural schemes; and a set of wider rural development measures previously only available in designated areas under the Structural Funds. The Regulation requires that single, integrated, rural development plans be drawn up "at the most appropriate geographical level" to cover all rural territories.

4.37 The Rural Environmental Protection Scheme, a whole farm agri-environment scheme operating in the Republic of Ireland, was selected as an example of a whole farm approach to environmental enhancement.

(i) Integrated Upland Experiments: The Bowland Initiative and Bodmin Moor Project

4.38 Following the consultation paper on "Environmental Management in the Uplands" (MAFF, 1998), the Government formally launched two rural development

initiatives to test new approaches to bind together rural economic development with measures to conserve the countryside in a more integrated manner than previously (MAFF, 1999). These experiments were based in the Forest of Bowland, Lancashire and Bodmin Moor in Cornwall. There are three main aims behind the pilot projects:

- ◆ To test at a regional level what sort of measures are required to integrate rural economic activity with positive environmental management. Both elements have been taken up by farmers and other rural businesses when offered as individual grant aid packages. The aim is to see whether linking economic development and environmental enhancement directly will be equally successful and whether it brings greater benefits overall.
- ◆ To test the effectiveness of a single application process for this integrated scheme. The process requires applicants to consider their business in holistic terms. This will provide information on the benefits of this approach and how easy and costly it will be to administer.
- ◆ To test the effectiveness of the delivery mechanism. The experiment is to be implemented by local partnerships rather than a single national body. Monitoring of the experiment will determine how successful this approach proves to be in terms of scheme delivery and achievement of objectives.

4.39 The central theme of both

projects is that the protection and enhancement of the environment is dependent on a viable, sustainable agricultural economy.

4.40 Funding for the projects has come from various sources including contributions from the applicants (see figure 4.2). The European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund funding was provided via Objective 5b with match funding from MAFF (see figure 4.2).

4.41 The Bodmin Moor Project area covers the whole of Bodmin Moor and some surrounding farmland. The core of the area is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its moorlands, marshes and meadows support a number of rare plants and animals including the Golden Plover and the Marsh Fritillary butterfly. Bodmin Moor has extensive archaeological remains and conservation of these sites and features is a key objective of the experiment. The project is run by a group of local partners including Cornwall County Council, district councils and local farming organisations.

4.42 As a first step, the Project offers a free business and environmental appraisal of the farm. The appraisal is conducted by a consultant (farmers can pick from a list of approved agents/consultants) who will list and describe the resources of the business (e.g. the land, stock, labour, buildings) and all that is of environmental interest (e.g. ancient monuments and unimproved

Figure 4.2: Funding sources for the Bowland Initiative and Bodmin Moor Project

Source: Whelon and Dart, 1999.

Source of Funding	Bodmin Moor Project	Bowland Initiative
EAGGF	£650,000	£666,797
Public	£550,050	£129,000
Private	£961,500	£689,757
MAFF	£650,000	£537,796
Total	£2,811,550	£2,023,350

grassland). The appraisal will also identify possible opportunities for the further development of the business and conservation/enhancement of the environment.

4.43 Following the appraisal, participants are free to develop a proposal with financial help from the Project. Applications are normally expected to include a business proposal (e.g. a capital improvement funded through the Project) and some form of environmental enhancement (e.g. management of moorland and ancient monuments with help from Countryside Stewardship). The various elements of the Project are outlined below:

Business Development

4.44 Grants are available under the Project for a variety of business developments including diversification in order to reduce dependence on cattle and sheep. Examples of eligible projects cited include: improvements to a campsite, livestock contracting services and cold storage for local products. There are also grants for specialised consultancy services (e.g. production of a business feasibility plan or management plan, marketing advice). The Bodmin Moor Project has also facilitated the establishment of a Bodmin Moor Farmers Club which provides advice and assistance with livestock related facilities (e.g. grassland management, group buying of materials to cut costs) and a separate Marketing Group whose aim is to bring economic benefit to the Moor through appropriate tourist development (e.g. promotion of farm holidays).

Environmental Enhancement

4.45 The Bodmin Moor Project acts as a gateway to access a range of existing and new environmental grants. The Project co-ordinates grants for the following schemes:

- ◆ Countryside Stewardship
- ◆ Woodland Grant Scheme and farm Woodland Premium Scheme
- ◆ Organic Farming Scheme

4.46 In addition to the national Countryside Stewardship management prescriptions/options, MAFF and local partners have established a set of key objectives for the operation of the scheme on Bodmin Moor, these are as follows:

- ◆ Enhanced management of moorland.
- ◆ Enhanced management of valley mires and wetlands.
- ◆ Enhanced management of species-rich meadows and pastures.
- ◆ Enhanced management of golden plover feeding and roosting areas.
- ◆ Enhanced management of archaeological features.
- ◆ Restoration and maintenance of field boundary hedges and walls.
- ◆ Enhanced management of archaeological features.

These objectives have been translated into a set of Countryside Stewardship options that are only applicable to applicants within the Bodmin Moor Project area (see figure 4.3).

4.47 The Bodmin Moor Stewardship guidance also encourages a whole farm approach.

4.48 The Bowland Initiative and Bodmin Moor Project are experiments in the development of locally based integrated rural development initiatives that combine economic development with environmental management. Indeed, the philosophy behind the projects is that these two issues are inseparable. The experiments have been subject to an on-going evaluation. The draft evaluation report (Garforth and Wibberley, 2000) focuses on the following issues:

- ◆ *Timescale and local ownership* - both projects have operated within a very tight timetable with the partnerships in both areas required to submit detailed project proposals within four months of the establishment of the project teams. Whilst this timescale served to focus the minds of those involved,

**Figure 4.3:
Special
Countryside
Stewardship
options for
Bodmin Moor**

Land Management Option / Capital Item	Payment	Summary Description
Moorland Management	£80/ha/pa	Moorland and heathland with less than 50% dwarf-shrub cover (including western gorse) is eligible for this moorland management option, where the objective is a varied sward structure and a grass/dwarf shrub mosaic with a prominent dwarf-shrub component of 25% cover or more. Guideline prescriptions are for stocking levels at no more than 0.225 LUs/ha from 16/4 - 31/8 and no more than 0.17 LUs/ha from 1/10 - 15/4.
Moorland Restoration	£125/ha/pa	Moorland and heathland with less than 50% dwarf-shrub cover (including western gorse) where there is a high potential for recovery. The objective is a varied sward structure and, on dry heath sites, to increase dwarf-shrub cover to 50% or more. Guideline prescriptions are for stocking levels at no more than 0.17 LUs/ha from 16/4 - 31/8. All livestock to be excluded from 1/10 - 15/4.
Moorland Enhancement	£92/ha/pa	Eligible land is moorland and heathland with more than 50% dwarf-shrub cover (including western gorse). The objective is varied sward structure and, on dry heath sites, dwarf shrub cover of more than 75%. Guideline prescriptions are for stocking levels at no more than 0.17 LUs/ha from 16/4 - 31/8 and no more than 0.08 LUs/ha from 1/9 - 15/4. Cattle cannot be grazed over the winter period.
Summer purple-moor grass grazing	£30/ha/pa	This supplement is to implement an agreed stocking programme for cattle grazing on areas dominated by purple-moor grass between 16/4 - 31/8 and is available on Moorland Management, Moorland Restoration and Moorland Enhancement options.
Winter cattle removal	£10/ha/pa	This supplement is to remove all cattle between 1/10 and 15/4 and is available on the Moorland Management option only.
Winter livestock removal	£12/ha/pa	This supplement is to remove all livestock between 1/9 and 15/4 and is available on the Moorland Enhancement option only.
Moorland Habitat Management	£20/ha/pa	This option is for the management of moorland where grazing is not possible. The objective is to prevent a decline in the quality of the moorland/heathland habitat. Measures are likely to include rotational cutting and scrub management.
Regenerating dwarf-shrub heath on agriculturally improved land	£70/pa/ha	Agriculturally improved land includes 'white moor' grass moorland that has lost its dwarf-shrub component. The objective is a varied sward structure and an increase in dwarf-shrub cover, especially heather.
10 Year Supplement	£50/ha/pa	
Managing permanent pasture for over wintering Golden Plover	£20/ha/pa	Sites known to be used by the Golden Plover are eligible for this option along with sites identified as having high potential. The objective is to improve habitat conditions for, and minimise disturbance to, this Red Data Book species.
New granite gatepost	£120	Granite gateposts are a characteristic landscape feature of the Moor. This payment is for the purchase and installation of new (ex quarry) split granite gateposts.
Side wiring	£0.60/m	Although top-wiring of hedges provides effective stock control, it is visually intrusive and detracts from the quality of the landscape. The payment for side wiring is available on either one or both sides of hedges being restored, and on other hedges where top wiring is to be removed.
Removal of old fences	£0.50/m	This main scheme capital item can be used for the removal of top-wiring both on hedges that are being restored and on other hedges.

the evaluation report suggests that it also mitigated against genuine stakeholder involvement with some individuals and groups feeling that they were being asked to participate in a programme developed by the local authority and MAFF.

◆ *Flexibility* - the focus on applications from individual holdings and the need for all applications to include both business development and environmental management elements has sometimes acted as a straight jacket for the project teams. The Bodmin Moor Project covers an area of substantial common land and the Bowland Initiative includes large swathes of landed estates. The focus on grant applications from individual holdings has made it difficult for local initiatives on a community or estate level to be given due consideration.

(ii) Whole Farm Enhancement - The Rural Environment Protection Scheme, Republic of Ireland

4.49 In contrast to the Countryside Stewardship scheme in England, Tir Cymen and now Tir Gofal (Wales) and the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) (Republic of Ireland) are examples of whole farm initiatives. In addition, REPS has developed to include targeted payments for protected areas.

4.50 The REPS was developed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and became operational on 1 June 1994. REPS was developed as a direct response to Council Regulation 2078/92 and the opportunity of 75% EU funding (provided through Objective 1 status for the Republic). Prior to the REPS, Ireland had only a very limited agri-environmental policy (two pilot Environmentally Sensitive Areas were introduced in 1991).

4.51 The REPS is designed to "reward farmers for farming in an environmentally friendly way and to bring about environmental improve-

ment on farms" (Emerson and Gillmor, 1999). Its stated objectives are:

◆ *"To establish farming practices and controlled production methods which reflect the increasing concern for conservation, landscape protection and wider environmental problems.*

◆ *To protect wildlife habitats and endangered species of flora and fauna.*

◆ *To produce quality food in an extensive and environmentally friendly manner."* (Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, 1996, p.2).

4.52 To qualify for participation in the REPS, a person must own, or have leased for five years, at least 3 ha of utilisable agricultural land. Farmers who comply with the conditions of the scheme qualify for a basic annual payment of 151 Euros/ha subject to a maximum of 40 ha (or 6,040 Euros per annum). The farmer must undertake to implement the scheme on all of the holding, farming it according to an individual comprehensive agri-environmental plan for five years. The splitting of holdings, between family members for example, or the creation of farming units in order to obtain REPS payment is prohibited.

4.53 The agri-environment plan must be produced by an agency approved by the Department of Agriculture and Food and it is paid for by the farmer. Nearly half of all participants employ the semi-state research and advisory organisation Teagasc and the remainder use approved private-sector planners. The planner begins by discussing with the farmer the feasibility of participating in the REPS with reference to the specific conditions of that farm. This discussion is shaped around a financial evaluation and an analysis of possible adjustments to the farming system. If the decision is to proceed then a detailed agri-environment plan is drawn up for the whole of the farm. This plan

must:

- ◆ Set out the current status of the farm as it relate to agri-environmental specifications;
- ◆ Identify, by reference to a 1:25,000 farm map the features that should be protected, maintained and managed;
- ◆ Contain a nutrient management plan based on the relevant conditions of the farm; and
- ◆ Set out a programme of works to be undertaken in order to comply with the scheme, indicating the projected time scale and necessary changes in farming practices.

4.54 Each plan is subject to a minimum of two reviews over a five year period. Revisions to the plan are permitted, provided that they

are in accordance with the specifications of the scheme. The farmer retains the planner over the period of the plan, for an annual fee, to advise on implementation, record keeping and any modifications that may arise.

4.55 The REPS comprises 11 basic measures (see figure 4.4). Failure to comply with any one of these measures as set out in the agri-environmental plan and specifications constitutes a breach of the scheme. Measures 1 and 2 (see figure 4.4) have proven to be the key requirements of the REPS as Irish agriculture is essentially mixed livestock production based on grass.

Figure 4.4: Rural Environment Protection Scheme Measures Management Prescriptions

Compulsory Measures

1. Waste management, liming and fertilisation plan. The objective is to protect the quality of water resources by minimising nutrient losses from agriculture. A nutrient management plan must be formulated and limits are set to the applications of fertilisers and of animal and other wastes. Participants must follow a code of practice relating to the collection, storage and disposal of all wastes in order to avoid pollution. There are limits on livestock densities and spreading of slurry in winter is prohibited.
2. Grassland management plan. The objective is to promote a sustainable grassland management regime which minimises overgrazing and damage to soils and which protects wildlife habitats. Restrictions may include limits on livestock numbers and in particular on the traditional over-wintering of animals.
3. Protection and maintenance of water courses and wells. The objective is to afford a sustainable environment for flora and fauna by minimising the nutrient enrichment of waterbodies from agriculture and by strengthening channel banks and allowing natural streamside vegetation to develop. Within 1.5m of watercourses, application of chemicals is prohibited and access of bovines is prevented by fencing.
4. Retention of wildlife habitats. The objective is to conserve a range of specified habitats on farms in the interests of biodiversity. These habitats must not be removed, interfered with or subjected to certain specified practices.
5. Maintenance of farm and field boundaries. The objective is to maintain and manage boundary and roadside fences, hedgerows and stone walls in the interests of wildlife, scenic appearance, stock control and shelter. The high density of hedgerows is a distinctive feature of the Irish landscape, in which there is little woodland.
6. Ban on chemicals near hedgerows and water bodies. In order to protect water resources and habitats for flora and fauna, the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers is prohibited within 1.5m of hedgerows, ponds and streams.
7. Protection of historical and archaeological features. The objective is to promote greater awareness of these features on farms and to encourage the management of strategies required to protect them, with prohibition of interference and damage. Repair of features is not involved. There is a dense concentration of features of historical and archaeological interest in the Irish countryside.
8. Maintenance and improvement of the visual appearance of farm and farmyard. Harmonisation with the surrounding countryside is promoted and an annual programme of farm and farmyard maintenance is required. Waste materials must be

The Burren region is a classic example of a limestone karst landscape, internationally renowned for its floral, geomorphological and archaeological interest and diversity. In 1995 seven natural Heritage Areas were designated covering roughly half of the Burren region and including limestone pavements, grasslands and heaths, fens turloughs and calcareous-oligotrophic lakes. Some 1,300 ha of the Burren form part of the Burren National Park. This is an example of a category II National Park with the land owned by the State.

A set of specific management prescriptions were developed for the Burren and the 'high' Burren and have been offered to farmers in the eligible area since 1995. A review of the operations of the REPS on the Burren (Bohnsack and Carrucan, 1999) produced the following conclusions:

- ◆ There was a need for a clear conservation strategy that would set out conservation objectives and how agricultural management was to achieve these specific objectives. Such a strategy should include baseline environmental survey to facilitate proper monitoring.
- ◆ The Farm Agri-environment plans need to be more detailed and thoroughly researched with baseline data to facilitate farm-level monitoring.
- ◆ The Agri-environment plans should include farm-level interpretation of the management prescriptions rather than a blanket application of all of the NHA supplementary measures.
- ◆ There is scope for the REPS provisions to be linked with the development of direct marketing initiatives - a 'Burren Brand' to symbolise high quality, conservation grade lamb.

cleared, traditional buildings maintained and attention given to the siting, screening, design and colour of buildings.

9. Production of tillage crops without growth regulators. It is designed to minimise the negative impacts of arable crop production on the environment. In addition to banning growth regulators, the burning of straw and stubble is prohibited and there must be an uncultivated field margin of at least 1.5m.

10. Familiarity with environmentally friendly farming practice. The objective is to provide information on the environmental benefits of the REPS, clarification of the requirements in the agri-environmental specifications and the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the farm plans. This is done through training courses, for which participants are paid, and open days on demonstration farms.

11. Keeping of farm and environmental records. Detailed records relating to specified farm activities and inventories have to be kept to ensure compliance with the agri-environmental plan and specifications and to reinforce the farm practices promoted by the REPS.

Supplementary Measures

1. Natural Heritage Areas. In order to conserve these designated environmentally sensitive areas of international or national significance on farms, there are certain requirements such as stocking density and fertiliser restrictions.
2. Rejuvenation of degraded areas. In specified hill areas in the west of Ireland which have been overgrazed by sheep, restrictions are imposed on stocking densities and winter usage.
3. Local breeds in danger of extinction. The conservation of specified breeds of cattle, horses and sheep is promoted.
4. Long-term set-aside. This involves the withdrawal from agricultural production of corridors of land 10-30m wide along designated salmonid water bodies.
5. Public access and leisure activities. Farmers are assisted in providing free access to their land for environmentally friendly and sporting activities.
6. Organic farming. Registered organic producers of crops and/or livestock qualify, with an additional payment during the conversion phase. A derogation from the minimum requirement for the REPS is provided to allow organic horticultural producers with 1-3 ha of utilisable agricultural land to participate and they qualify for higher payments.

Box 4.3: Operation of REPS in the Uplands of the Burren

Source: Bohnsack and Carrucan, 1999.

Footnote: Measures 1 and 2 were superseded by a more comprehensive supplementary measure relating to 'Conservation of the Natural Heritage' during 1999. As part of the new REPS 2000 package, all lands in designated areas (Natural Heritage Areas, SPSs, SACs and Commonages) which are entered into the scheme must undertake the new supplementary measure for which they receive additional payments.

Funding-led Environmental Enhancement

4.56 In the UK, recent years have witnessed the development of a series of 'environmental enhancement' projects in response to particular funding opportunities (notably the advent of the National Lottery and Objective 5b, but also other European funding sources such as LIFE (see chapter 4)). There are two distinguishing features of such projects: their reliance on a partnership approach and the integration of different elements of 'environmental enhancement' within a selected area.

4.57 The Tweed River Heritage Project (see box 4.4) is a good example of a partnership approach to environmental enhancement. The Tweed Forum was established in 1991 and brings together government departments, agencies, private companies and individual landowners around the shared vision of sustainable use of the River. It is doubtful that a single agency approach would have secured Lottery funding (refer to the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust example in chapter 3) and this funding has helped to 'cement' the Forum. The Project is also a good example of the way in which Lottery funding is helping to integrate the different aspects of 'heritage': from the natural to the built heritage and promoting greater access. The Heritage Lottery Fund, in particular, benefits from having a whole heritage remit rather than the sectoral remits of the traditional funders of countryside conservation (e.g. English Nature and the former Countryside Commission).

4.58 The case study of Somerset Wildlife Trust (see box 4.4) demonstrates the potential for integration (nature conservation with archaeological conservation with public access and understanding) and the importance of having a clear strategy that can underpin bids for funding.

Conclusions

4.59 Environmental enhancement in the form of landscape and nature restoration is now a central feature of countryside conservation in Europe and an element of wider global frameworks (e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity). From the case studies reviewed in this chapter it is possible to draw the following conclusions.

A Planned Approach

4.60 In response to the continued decline of Europe's biological and landscape heritage many countries are moving towards a strategic approach to countryside conservation that is not only concerned with halting this decline but reversing it. The Dutch Nature Policy Plan and Danish Nature Management Act 1992 are characteristic of this new approach that looks beyond the protection of endangered species or the designation of individual nature reserves to ways of conserving the wider countryside and enhancing the processes which determine its ecological health.

4.61 The key elements of a planned or strategic approach include:

- ◆ Effective targeting by ensuring that resources are devoted to schemes with the greatest potential to deliver environmental benefits (e.g. linking key wildlife sites as with the 'Prime Biodiversity Area' concept in Somerset or the concept of 'ecological corridors' in the Netherlands).

- ◆ Underpinning applications for finance (e.g. Somerset Wildlife Trust's use of Biodiversity Action Plans to help secure Lottery funding).

- ◆ Providing a basis for monitoring and evaluation (e.g. the initiative on ecological integrity of Canadian National Parks).

Box 4.4: Examples of National Lottery Funded 'Environmental Enhancement' Projects

The Tweed River Heritage Project

The Tweed River Heritage Project is an integrated, area-based countryside project located in the catchment of the River Tweed in Scotland and England. The project will involve a total expenditure of £4 million (£1.8 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund) on about 25 schemes spread across the whole catchment and across the whole spectrum of the Borders' heritage. It will include nature conservation, access and recreation, built and archaeological heritage and also educational and interpretation schemes. The natural heritage projects are primarily concerned with the conservation and enhancement of riparian habitats.

The project has been developed over a period of three years by the Tweed Forum whose remit is to promote the wise and sustainable use of the River Tweed and its tributaries through holistic and integrated planning and management. The Forum was established in 1991 and comprises representatives from over 25 organisations, including, government departments (e.g. MAFF), agencies (e.g. FRCA), representative bodies (e.g. NFU), companies (e.g. Northumbrian Water) and private landowners (e.g. Buccleuch Estates). The long-term aim of the Forum is to become self-sufficient, drawing on membership income, EU and Lottery funding and agri-environment schemes.

The Somerset Wildlife Trust has received 12 grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, worth in excess of £1.4 million for a series of projects aimed at conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Somerset. The grants have allowed the Trust to acquire over 180 ha of land and implement new management regimes aimed at enhancing the biodiversity value of the land. The Mendip Biodiversity Action Plan has proved an important 'hook' for many of these Lottery bids as the Plan identifies a series of 'Prime Biodiversity Areas' which the Trust has targeted for acquisition and/or positive management regimes. In particular, Lottery funding has been used to establish a chain of nature reserves across the Mendip Scarp 'Prime Biodiversity Area'. Wildlife Trust sites are now being managed in partnership with other landowners and agencies (including Longleat Estates, Pioneer Quarries, English Nature and Somerset County Council) to ensure a continuous network. The management includes environmental enhancement in the form of scrub clearance and the re-introduction of traditional grazing regimes. The Lottery funded projects have also included provision for public access and interpretation and conservation of archaeological remains.

Examples of Lottery grants received by Somerset Wildlife Trust (figures in brackets refer to grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund):

- ◆ East Poldens Downland Restoration Project £83,000.
- ◆ Purchase and management of Turlicmead Meadows (£36,900)- 5.33 ha of unimproved flower rich grassland.
- ◆ Purchase and initial management of Lynchcombe (£62,181) - acquisition of 25.17 ha of calcareous grassland, scrub and small areas of woodland. The project includes for: exploration and restoration of a medieval farm and field system; environmental enhancement through scrub clearance and grazing; public access and interpretation.
- ◆ Farmwood meadows and woodland (£45,000) - acquisition of 36.22 acres of woodland and species rich grassland.
- ◆ Edford Meadow (£28,800) - acquisition of part of an area identified as a 'Prime Biodiversity Area' in the Mendip Biodiversity Action Plan.

Environmental Enhancement' in Somerset: Lottery Funded Projects undertaken by the Somerset Wildlife Trust

4.62 The National Park Management Plan that a South Downs National Park Authority would have to prepare could bring together existing plans and strategies to form a coherent framework for the environmental enhancement of the South Downs.

Local Ownership

4.63 A plan-led approach must not be confused with a top-down approach. The case studies suggest that local ownership of 'environmental enhancement' schemes is critical to their success where they involve changes to the management of private land. This does not just mean consulting on proposals (as with the Bodmin Moor Project) but genuine stakeholder involvement throughout the process from the genesis of ideas to scheme delivery.

Partnership

4.64 Linked to the need for local ownership is the concept of partnership working. Scheme based partnerships (e.g. the Tweed River Heritage Project) can provide both a mechanism for stakeholder involvement and a means of maximising funding opportunities (see chapter 3).

Linking Landscapes and Livelihoods

4.65 There is increasing recognition that for environmental enhancement projects to be sustainable they must be able to demonstrate economic benefits. Such benefits may be in the form of an improved resource for tourism or increased premiums for products produced in ways which respect and enhance the local environment. Although not reviewed, this is the focus of the Countryside Agency's 'Eat the View' initiative and a common feature of many of its Land Management Initiatives. The Danish experience of land acquisition and exchange is also relevant. There may be potential for an innovative approach to environmental enhancement of the South Downs through land acquisition and farm rationalization. However, to suc-

ceed such a scheme would have to be developed in partnership with local landowners.

Delivering Value for Money

4.66 There is growing recognition that national schemes need to incorporate the flexibility to respond to local circumstances (this has been a criticism of REPS in Ireland and ESAs in Britain). Such flexibility could be in the form of better targeting of existing payments or through local negotiation of new/revised management prescriptions for agri-environment schemes. The latter is a real possibility under the England Rural Development Plan.

Conclusions and recommendations

The changing policy context

5.1 Environmental enhancement in the form of landscape and nature restoration is now a central feature of countryside conservation in Europe, both within and beyond protected areas. We have entered a new era, with those responsible for the planning and management of protected areas able to think beyond protection to design and implement schemes aimed at restoring and/or recreating lost landscapes, habitats and, in some instances, species. The major catalyst for this change, at a European level, has been the gradual reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the introduction of agri-environment schemes. Within the UK this has been supplemented by the introduction of new sources of competitive funding that are wider in scope than previous grant schemes and better resourced (e.g. the National Lottery).

5.2 The Rural Development Regulation (agreed as part of the Agenda 2000 reform of the CAP) can be seen as another landmark. It introduces a 'second pillar' to the CAP concerned with diversification of agricultural production and the integration of economic, social and environmental objectives. As such, it reflects the UK Government's modernization agenda and represents the future for public-sector support of rural areas. A framework and financial support for environmental enhancement are now in place.

5.3 The implementation of the Rural Development Regulation and England Rural Development Plan, the continuing debate about the future of the countryside (recently given added impetus by the Foot and Mouth crisis) and the establishment of a new Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs,

coupled with the process of designating the South Downs as a National Park would suggest that the time is right for some new thinking on how to enhance this environment.

Environmental enhancement of the South Downs

5.4 The South Downs is a national icon. Its new National Park Authority will need to establish clearly the environmental enhancement priorities for the area. Considerable work has already been done to identify this, for example, though the Management Plan prepared by the Sussex Downs Conservation Board and through the Local Biodiversity Action Plans for Sussex and Hampshire. In view of the integrated nature of much rural and local government policy, combining social, economic and cultural as well as environmental objectives, projects should be devised which meet multiple objectives established from a range of other strategies and plans, rather than exclusively those of landscape or biodiversity enhancement.

Current difficulties

5.5 Existing initiatives for enhancement in the South Downs are affected by a number of difficulties which need to be addressed:

- ◆ Poor integration between the various existing schemes that might, in combination, add up to a comprehensive menu of options for environmental enhancement;
- ◆ Little targeting of agri-environment payments according to local priorities (notably ESA payments);
- ◆ Low take-up of the South Downs ESA scheme;
- ◆ Short term voluntary involvement: both ESA and CS payments are based on 10 year voluntary agreements with an optional break after five. The thinking behind this

approach is understandable (to maximize landowner participation), but there is an issue of what happens after ten years. Under the present system, all of the environmental benefits secured at public cost over the period of the agreement could be lost if the participant decides to leave.

The impact of National Park designation

5.6 The designation of the South Downs as a National Park would swiftly introduce significant opportunities for enhancing landscape and wildlife, including:

- ◆ providing substantial additional direct funding through National Park Grant and levies on local authorities (the latter largely reimbursed by the Government);
- ◆ establishing a long term commitment to funding environmental land management, encouraging long term management agreements, permanent changes to farming practices and a closer relationship with farmers;
- ◆ improved staff resources for conservation, enhancement, recreation and fund-raising work;
- ◆ the capacity to work more closely with key agencies such as the South East Economic Development Agency, and to take advantage of and influence revisions of the Regional Economic Development Strategy and the South East Chapter of the England Rural Development Plan;
- ◆ the promotion of values which underlie significantly improved access to external funds, particularly EU funds (both structural funds and agri-environmental support) and preferential or even exclusive access to certain grants available from national agencies;
- ◆ enhanced status, locally, nationally and globally;
- ◆ opportunities for more creative use of town and country planning powers to resist damage and link new development to environmental enhancement.

5.7 The increased financial resource will mean that the NPA would have the ability and opportunity to be more pro-active in terms of shaping strategy and influencing the policies and programmes of other bodies (e.g. SEEDA).

5.8 Whilst AONBs and National Parks theoretically share the same level of protection through planning policy, National Parks are generally acknowledged as the 'top tier' designation in Britain. This added protection is partly brought about because the National Park Authority is the planning authority. It is a designation that brings with it enhanced status both domestically and globally. Whilst difficult to quantify there is evidence of National Park status being useful in attracting finance and other support. Also, our National Parks have a history of being the test beds for new policy initiatives ('greenprints' for the wider countryside) - areas that can experiment and pilot new approaches.

5.9 Public bodies must take account of National Park purposes. This provides the NPA with a powerful entry point when discussing policies and programmes. This could be used more forcefully in discussions over rules governing ESAs and in discussions (via the Association of National Park Authorities) with the new Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

Developing a comprehensive approach to environmental enhancement

5.10 From the examples of environmental enhancement that we have reviewed in this report it is possible to discern a series of principles that should underpin any environmental enhancement scheme for the South Downs:

Local 'ownership'

5.11 Local ownership and active support appear to be a critical ingredient of successful examples

of environmental enhancement especially where they involve changes to the management of private land. This does not just mean consulting on proposals but genuine stakeholder involvement in the whole process: from genesis of ideas to scheme delivery.

A partnership approach

5.12 A partnership approach is an important part of local ownership as it provides an opportunity for a range of different stakeholders (from community groups to public bodies) to be involved. The highly discretionary nature of the Rural Development Regulation and the strengthening of regional administrations should make it possible for a local partnership to be established to oversee implementation of the regional chapter of the England Rural Development Plan in the South Downs. A partnership approach can also be a key aspect of bids for external funding, with different partners providing elements of match funding.

A plan-led approach

5.13 Any environmental enhancement scheme for the South Downs will need to build upon, and link with, the plethora of existing initiatives, plans and strategies. The National Park Management Plan might provide that framework. A plan-led approach can:

- ◆ deliver value for money through effective targeting - for example, by joining up key wildlife sites to create a network of ecological corridors;
- ◆ underpin applications for finance - there is evidence to suggest that the target-led approach of Biodiversity Action Plans appeals to external funders (such as Lottery Distributing Bodies) as they provide a numeric justification of need; and
- ◆ provide the basis for monitoring and evaluation - this is an important consideration in an era of 'evidence-based policy-making' and 'performance review'.

Integration

5.14 Environmental enhancement schemes need to demonstrate economic and social benefits, as well as environmental improvements, if they are to secure funding and prove to be sustainable. Reforms to the Structural Funds and the direction of other competitive funding sources (e.g. the National Lottery) will mean that single purpose schemes are unlikely to receive funding in the future. This is likely to embrace not only landscape and biodiversity but also such interests as economically viable farming, the protection of the archaeological and historic resources, public enjoyment, and many other aspects of 'sustainable development' in the South Downs. The theme of integration also applies to the spatial dimension of any scheme: it will be important to consider the environmental, as well as the administrative, boundaries of any scheme. This means thinking about the linkages with environments beyond the National Park boundary.

Joined-up Delivery

5.15 Linked to the points about local ownership and a partnership approach, is the need for joined-up delivery by organisations at national, regional and local level. There should be a single scheme (with various options) and a single point of contact for advice, information and decision-making.

Security and flexibility

5.16 The structures and schemes that are put in place need to be flexible enough to respond rapidly to constantly changing circumstances and secure enough to offer long-term benefits. Without this flexibility and security it is unlikely that any scheme will deliver maximum benefits or ensure long-term benefits. Landowners may be unwilling to participate and the public may be sceptical about the long-term impacts.

Role of a South Downs National Park Authority

5.17 The review of initiatives in existing National Parks suggests that a National Park Authority for the South Downs should be able to fulfil a number of roles in the national, regional and local arenas in terms of environmental enhancement, including:

- ◆ effective engagement with the range of potential funders - this will involve the NPA first in leveraging-in external funding and acting as the catalyst for partnership bids, and second in being pro-active in contributing to funding strategies (e.g. the distribution strategies of Lottery Distributing Bodies, Single Programme Documents and the Regional Development Agency [SEEDA]) rather than merely reactive in terms of submitting bids;
- ◆ the design and delivery of 'in-house' environmental enhancement schemes;
- ◆ influencing the delivery of national schemes;
- ◆ achieving integration at the practical, local level, through skilled staff and the advice they provide and local knowledge;
- ◆ engage in any new opportunities to shape local policy in the South Downs which arise, such as Best Value and Community Strategies.

Recommendations for action in the short term

5.18 In the short-term the priority should be 'adding value to existing initiatives' through:

- ◆ more effective targeting;
- ◆ addressing the reasons for the low take-up of the South Downs ESA scheme;
- ◆ exploring the scope for local delivery;
- ◆ piloting a marketing initiative aimed at developing a South Downs brand that tests the market for products that come from producers farming in a manner that 'contributes to the enhancement of the South Downs'.

5.19 The review of the current ESA and Countryside Stewardship due in 2002 provides a potential opportunity to influence their short-term development, though this will take place before a National Park Authority is established in the South Downs.

Recommendations for action in the longer term

5.20 In the longer-term there is an opportunity to develop a new approach, 'made' in the South Downs, that incorporates the principles outlined above. Elements of this new approach might include:

A Whole Farm Approach

5.21 At the farm level, a whole farm approach should be adopted wherever possible to ensure integration of all relevant local issues when considering landscape and biodiversity enhancement. Tir Gofal in Wales, the Rural Environmental Protection scheme in the Republic of Ireland and the Bodmin Moor Countryside Stewardship scheme have all supported whole farm approaches, and these have worked well. The whole farm approach would not just be about the farm environment but also include consideration of how to achieve competitiveness. This might be achieved by the preparation of a development plan for the business that looked at the economic, social and environmental agendas.

Baseline Environmental Standards: reaching the parts that other schemes do not

5.22 Given that the current level of planned agri-environment expenditure within the ERDP will fall short of meeting the environmental priorities of these schemes, there is merit in introducing a new approach based upon a flat rate payment for baseline environmental management across a whole farm.

Payment for Goods and Services

5.23 There is an opportunity to

test a scheme based on payment for goods and services provided (the thinking behind schemes such as Tir Cymen and Tir Gofal) rather than cost/income foregone per hectare (the basis for the majority of existing agri-environment schemes). This could also be extended to include 'tenders/sealed bids', with landowners and managers responded to an invitation to deliver certain 'public goods and services' by submitting a tender rather than an application responding to pre-determined grant rates. Such an approach has the potential to deliver better value for money.

New markets and new products

5.24 There is a risk that environmental enhancement may be perceived as harking back to some past utopian era. It is important that any scheme includes provision to think about new markets for existing products and new products. For example, what potential new uses could be found for the wool from the sheep grazing the downland? This added value approach needs joining together with incentives and subsidy systems.

Adding value

5.25 Linked to the issue of new products and markets is the need to add value locally in order for businesses to remain competitive. The new NPA should also consider establishing a charitable company limited by guarantee and a wholly owned trading company to improve its access to sources of funds.

Demonstration

5.26 Experience suggests that take-up of new initiatives is more widespread when people have an opportunity to witness the impact of changing management practices or adopting new technologies first hand. Such an initiative would need to be based upon a working farm.

Involving the Retailers

5.27 There is much debate about the impact of the large retailers on

farming practices and profitability in the UK. Given the significance of these actors in the 'agri-food' chain there is considerable merit in opening discussions with these companies to see how they might become involved in an environmental enhancement scheme for the South Downs through local sourcing, direct contractual relationships with suppliers, sponsorship etc.

More active involvement in the land market

5.28 This would provide the basis for long-term environmental benefits. One model that could be considered would be the establishment of an organisation, with a financial endowment, that was able to purchase land on the free market and then sell it or lease it with restrictive covenants or long-term management agreements relating to environmental enhancement. Such an organisation could also develop a capacity to manage land 'in-house' through a system of registered contractors - a service that might appeal to the increasing number of 'amenity farmers' in the South Downs.

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Good practice examples and case studies

Specific examples of good practice

Funding agency programme focused specifically on National Parks

The Forestry Commission's Challenge Fund as part of its Woodland Grant Scheme is described in the main text. Exmoor NPA considers that this scheme to extend native woodland had supported probably the best enhancement project in the Park.

National Park as delivery agent for a funding programme

Snowdonia NPA acted as the agent for the Countryside Council for Wales in the delivery of the agri-environment scheme Tir Cymen in the pilot project in the Meirionnydd part of the Park. The northern England NPAs also act as agents for the delivery of MAFF's Countryside Stewardship programme.

Funding agency consultations with National Park on agri-environment grants

Snowdonia NPA is fully consulted over potential Tir Gofal agreements in the Park. This enables staff to provide information to project officers and farmers in the process of preparing the agreements; ensures that the NPA maintains an overview of the influence of Tir Gofal on the Park environment; and allows the NPA to direct its own resources to maximum effect.

Significant agri-environment funding secured outside ESAs in National Parks

A small number of National Parks still have no Environmentally Sensitive Area designated within

their boundaries, and are therefore unable to tap into what elsewhere is a significant source of funding. Countryside Stewardship funds are normally available in these other areas, but the scale of intervention by that route is much reduced. There are also many National Parks where only part of the Park is designated as an ESA, so the need for agri-environment funding outside the designated areas is important here too. The North York Moors National Park demonstrates what can be achieved in such circumstances. The NPA has a history of pioneering whole farm schemes, which have recently been extended into a Countryside Agency funded pilot Land Management Initiative project, integrating environmental, social and economic interests in the farming community. Funding through ERDF & EAGGF have both been very important.

Technology innovation

A LIFE-funded investment in an innovative fen harvester in the Broads has transformed the scope for the large scale management of the main habitat of the Broads. Traditional methods had been too expensive, hard work, and produced little economic return, but by devising this new solution the NPA has been able to expand beyond small scale management to a more effective scale. This has been accompanied by increased efforts to find markets for the products.

Recovery of open habitat by forestry removal

The Lake District NPA has entered into agreements with Forest Enterprise to restore plantations to open land. In particular there are projects in place to restore forestry

to limestone grassland habitat.

Long term agreements with landowners

Northumberland NPA has entered into long term management agreements with landowners under section 39 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act to provide one-off capital investment in farming (which would otherwise have been uneconomic) in return for a commitment to environmentally sound farming practices for 25 years without additional revenue support. Snowdonia has made access agreements with landowners in perpetuity.

Regulation of land management by purchase and resale with covenants

The Peak District NPA actively acquires small deciduous woodlands so that they can be resold with environmental safeguards: about 150 small woodlands are on the NPA's books at any one time.

Support for agricultural products with a National Park provenance

As part of a large budget from the Welsh Assembly for National Parks and AONBs, Snowdonia NPA is working with groups of local farmers to develop the market for Snowdonia lamb, partly based on its perceived environmental quality.

Measures primarily for access support landscape and biodiversity enhancement

To deal with significant problems of peat bog erosion and soil loss on footpaths in the Brecon Beacons, the NPA has developed its Meithrin Mynydd project over the last decade to reinforce upland paths with hard surfaces sympathetic to the upland environment, followed by re-vegetation of the surrounding area by re-landscaping the worst gullies & ridges, establishing grass cover, and transplanting heather

and bilberry. Local provenance plant material is used, supplied through a partnership where a local college, special needs students and path staff collect indigenous material, grow it on in greenhouses and return it for planting in eroded areas.

Benefits of high levels of public participation

Many NPAs, such as the North York Moors and Brecon Beacons, pride themselves on the high level of public involvement they have achieved in their activities. Snowdonia NPA has been involved in a long term consultation and education programme to establish support for rhododendron clearance in the face of tourists' enjoyment of rhododendrons when in bloom. This has paid off with the establishment of the local Beddgelert Rhododendron Group which is seen as a locally-owned initiative capable of developing a consensus on the way forward. The NPA is now turning its attention to feral goats....

Visitor payback scheme to fund National Park enhancement

The 'Exmoor Paths Partnership' was a project funded by the EU until August 2000 which linked the businesses and local tourist service providers with the quality of the landscape round about by funding physical work on erosion control. The project aimed to raise voluntary financial support for repair work on and associated with footpaths in the National Park, supported by a project officer, promotion, newsletters, etc. Various hotels and pubs had joined in, adding optional supplements to bills (which had been more effective than collection boxes), and other firms had provided sponsorship (e.g. the clothing and boots for the staff to wear on site). The project had been reasonably effective but had wound down after the EU money ran out. There is still some active

support amongst hoteliers, but the level of erosion control activity is much reduced.

CASE STUDY 1: NORTH YORK MOORS MOORLAND REGENERATION PROGRAMME

**Northern Uplands Objective 5b
Programme 1994-1999**

Background

The North York Moors National Park contains 50,000 hectares of heather moorland, an internationally rare semi-natural habitat type which is a nationally designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a potential SPA. The moorland is traditionally maintained by extensive grazing and management for grouse shooting. In recent decades, the heather moorland has suffered from a decline in active management due to depressed farm incomes and labour shortages. This has led to a reduction in heather cover, the spread of dense bracken, and an increased risk of disease associated with sheep ticks, which thrive in unmanaged vegetation.

Programme Aims and Content

The Moorland Regeneration Programme sought to address this decline by identifying the links between sheep farming, grouse shooting, good moorland management, landscape, nature conservation and tourism. Once these links were understood, the sustainable commercial management of the moorland habitat could be promoted.

Farmers and landowners were offered initial financial aid to improve the quality of the moorland vegetation and the health and quality of sheep and grouse. Commercial incentives to continue moorland management were created through improved marketing for both grouse and sheep, and

increased knowledge of best practice and new techniques. This involved the development of a mobile game larder to maintain grouse in optimum condition after shooting, and the formation of the 'North York Moors Quality Sheep Association', to market quality, hardy, healthy and traceable stock with a strong regional identity.

One of the most valuable features of the project was the success of the NPA in bringing together public and voluntary conservation interests with commercial users. In this way, they jointly identified the future threats to their continued management and developed strategies which should combat these threats and improve the economic and environmental sustainability of the Park

Total budget for the Moorland Regeneration Programme was 3.8 million Euros, of which 1.38 million was secured through the EAGGF. Other major funding sources included MAFF, private business and the NPA. Government agencies and the RSPB also made small contributions mainly to fund survey work.

Results

By 1999, the programme had:

- ◆ brought the management of 48,000 hectares of moorland under new agreements;
- ◆ improved the health of sheep by dipping and improved lamb survival rates by 10 per cent;
- ◆ increased the yield of grouse from the moorland by 11 per cent;
- ◆ offered training through eight courses and ten information/communication events for farmers and gamekeepers;
- ◆ undertaken economic and environmental surveys and marketing feasibility studies for grouse and sheep;
- ◆ designed and promoted mobile game larders and helped establish a quality sheep marketing association;
- ◆ created four full-time and 15

part-time jobs and helped sustain 331 existing jobs.

CASE STUDY 2: YORKSHIRE DALES MILLENNIUM TRUST

In May 1995 the Yorkshire Dales became the first National Park in England and Wales to appoint a full-time Development Officer with a remit to raise extra funding for the National Park. His appointment was a result of the widening gap between the NPA's financial needs and the funds made available through what was then called the National Park Supplementary Grant - a £1 million shortfall was forecast by 1997/98 (Yorkshire Dales NPA, 1996). The objectives of the Development Officer were:

- ◆ identify potential sources of external funds;
- ◆ identify suitable NPA projects and raise funds to carry these out;
- ◆ set up a charity to maximise funding opportunities; and
- ◆ set up appropriate accounting systems and databases.

Funding was secured through the Northern Uplands Objective 5b Programme for a variety of projects including a visitor centre at Reeth, station waiting shelters on the Settle-Carlisle line, conservation of historical features, village enhancement schemes and the Dales Countryside Museum. The NPA has secured finance from the National Lottery for: the purchase a limestone pavement (a grant of £120,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund); development at the Dales Countryside Museum (£750,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund); the Sports Council provided Lottery funding for Phase 1 of the Three Peaks Restoration Project (£85,000); and the Millennium Commission awarded £4 million for an umbrella project called EnviroNet. The Authority has also benefited from corporate sponsorship: the Royal Mail sponsored a woodland planting and nature con-

servation area; Yorkshire Electric have sponsored events leaflets; and companies such as Crown Paints and Tarmac have given contributions of materials to particular projects.

A Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust was established in April 1997 as a company registered by guarantee and a registered charity. The Trust was established to:

- ◆ protect and conserve the Yorkshire Dales for public benefit including any buildings of architectural, historic or educational merit and also the flora and fauna; and
- ◆ to further such other charitable purposes for the benefit of residents of the Yorkshire Dales.

The Trust provided a way of securing the EnviroNet funding as it meant that the Millennium Commission was not seen to be funding a statutory agency to carry out its statutory functions. The Trust also has a trading arm - Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust Consultants - which carries out the project management for EnviroNet and offers a profitable consultancy service.

Workshop participants

List of participants in Chichester workshop on 15 December.

Martin Beaton - Sussex Downs Conservation Board
Jane Cecil - Countryside Agency
Merrick Denton-Thompson - Hampshire County Council
Vicki Elcoate - Council For National Parks
Sarah Dawkins - RSPB
John Goring - Local Farmer
John Simpson - National Trust
Emma Loat - Council For National Parks
Becci May - WWF-UK
Chris Passmore - Local Farmer
Richard Reed - Society of Sussex Downsmen
Adrian Phillips - Chairman (IUCN, Uni of Cardiff)
Bill Jenman - Sussex Wildlife Trust
David Taylor - ex SDCB, Local Farmer
Kevin Bishop - Uni of Cardiff

Others were intending to come but had to turn back on the roads to Chichester because of flooding.



The Council for National Parks is the national charity that works to protect and enhance the National Parks of England and Wales, and areas that merit National Park status, and promote understanding and quiet enjoyment of them for the benefit of all.

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English Nature is the Government agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and natural features throughout England.

www.english-nature.org.uk

The mission of WWF – the global environment network – is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

Taking action for a living planet

www.wwf-uk.org