

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 3 July 2002
Time: 2.00 to 5.00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly Building

THE WELSH NATIONAL PARKS

CORPORATE PROGRAMME 2003 - 2006

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The three Welsh National Park Authorities, NPAs, were created as free standing special purpose local authorities in April 1996 under the Environment Act 1995. Their core funding, the National Park Grant, is determined by the Welsh Assembly Government and paid to the NPAs at the rate of 75% of approved expenditure with the remaining 25% levied on their constituent Unitary Authorities. The National Park Grant encompasses both revenue and capital expenditure. Typically, the Parks lever in an additional 50% funding through grant aid from European and Lottery funds, local agencies and partnerships, as well as from fees and charges.

1.2 The National Park Grant settlement for 2002-03 totalled £8,529,000 (£11,372,000 approved expenditure) an increase of 10.06% over the previous year. A planning figure of £9,529,000 is indicated for 2003-04, the final year of the current three year funding cycle. The three year spending allocation has been warmly welcomed because it has allowed the NPAs for the first time to prepare with some confidence a long term programme of work.

1.3 The Welsh Assembly Government also funds the NPAs to deliver the Environment Development Fund. £750,000 is available each year to fund innovative, sustainable environment projects which involve local communities in the National Park. It is hoped that this grant will be extended into 2003-04.

2. OUR PROGRAMME FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

2.1 Priorities

Our programme will concentrate on improving public access in the National Parks and to safeguarding and enhancing their special qualities. In conjunction with improved service delivery, this will secure a shift to achieving a positive and sustainable future for the National

Parks and their communities. Priority over the next three years will be given to new expenditure on:

- **Improving access** - implementing effectively the Countryside Rights of Way Act and improving footpaths
- **Promoting Biodiversity** - implementing Local Biodiversity Action Plans and the sustainable management of terrestrial and marine environments
- **Regeneration of historic towns and buildings** - extending town schemes and grant aiding historic buildings at risk to safeguard the distinctive character of the Parks.
- **Monitoring performance and the State of the Parks** - develop baseline data and monitoring systems to record change and measure performance
- **Upgrading electronic and information systems** - developing existing systems to keep pace with technological advances and improve service delivery. Note separate special bid to meet e-government targets (Para 3.1).

These priorities, together with the unavoidable year-on-year commitments such as pay-awards and inflation, will be funded largely within the planning figure for 2003-04. They share objectives, and involve joint working, with other agencies. The outputs arising for additional funding in 2003-04 are summarised below.

All bid figures mentioned in Section 2 of the report include the 25% levy on the Unitary Authorities.

Priority	Improving Access	Promoting Biodiversity	Regeneration of Towns and Buildings	Monitoring Performance	Upgrading Information Systems
2003-04 Bid	£386,000	£203,000	£145,000	£75,000	£183,000
Shared objectives and joint working	CCW, UA, WTB, FC	CCW, UA, EA, FC	CADW, WTB, UA, WDA	CCW, EA, FC	UA, WDA

Outputs in 2003-04	4 new wardens, maintain 300 km PRoW, 150 finger posts and 12 bridges. Service CROW Access Forums	Increase area of habitats and species in favourable conditions by 2.5%	Implement 8 town schemes and rescue 10 historic buildings at risk	Publish annual State of the Parks report	New main servers, phone and operating systems
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CCW - Countryside Council for Wales

UA - Unitary Authorities

EA - Environment Agency, Wales

FC - Forestry Commission

WTB - Wales Tourist Board

WDA - Welsh Development Agency

2.2 Further Key Areas

The NPAs have identified further key areas of work to meet service needs and improve service delivery. These will require funding over and above the planning figure. They are detailed in the bidding document but the major areas, in order of priority, can be summarised as:

Activity 2003-04 Bid	Purpose	Outcome	Joint Working
Office Accommodation £192,000	To fund increased running costs following move of Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire to new HQ offices	Move from present wholly inadequate offices will improve service delivery and make efficiency savings	
Promoting Understanding £158,000	Following Best Value Reviews, to widen public awareness, extend information and education services and develop web- sites for people of all ages	5% increase in visits to NP Centres, 10% increase in use of NP websites, greater public participation in NP events	WTB CCW

<p>Farming and Woodlands Support</p> <p>£122,000</p>	<p>Enhance agri-environment diversification, and marketing initiatives, through advice, guidance and aid. Support implementation of "Farming for the Future" and</p> <p>"Wales Woodland Strategy"</p>	<p>Foster a sustainable, prosperous and healthy natural environment and</p> <p>rural economy</p>	<p>WDA</p> <p>CCW</p> <p>EA</p> <p>FRC</p>
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<p>Activity</p> <p>2003-04 Bid</p>	<p>Purpose</p>	<p>Outcome</p>	<p>Joint Working</p>
<p>Transport, Tourism and Community initiatives</p> <p>£84,000</p>	<p>Partnership programmes to develop sustainable and integrated transport and tourism initiatives, and to involve local communities</p>	<p>Improved access within, and to, National Parks; a better quality environment. Expanded community partnerships</p>	<p>UA</p> <p>WTB</p> <p>CCW</p> <p>WDA</p>
<p>Cultural Heritage - Archaeology</p> <p>£64,000</p>	<p>In partnership with CADW, safeguard and interpret the rich diversity of archaeological and heritage sites</p>	<p>Expanded programme of survey and consolidation of key sites. Production of interpretation material</p>	<p>CADW</p>
<p>Planning</p> <p>£178,000</p>	<p>Following Best Value Reviews, strengthen planning control and enforcement. Progress Unitary Development Plans and Park Management Plans</p>	<p>More effective and rapid delivery of development control services, a statutory responsibility of the Park Authorities</p>	<p>UA</p>

Corporate £72,000	Anticipated increase in Members development and training to meet new performance agenda. To improve scheme delivery and the sourcing of external funding	Improve Member involvement and performance. Lever in higher level of match funding.	Syniad CCW WDA WTB
Development of National Park Centres £125,000	Major developments of key National Park sites and Centres	Promote understanding of the Parks and support the tourist economy	WTB CADW

The National Park Authorities are seeking a total increase in National Park Approved Grant in 2003-04 of £2,407,000, including bids of £1,074,000 over and above the indicative planning figure.

The additional required resources in the following years, over and above the 2002-03 baseline, total £4,033,000 in 2004-05 and £5,675,000 in 2005-06.

3. SPECIAL BIDS

3.1 Special cases for funding outside the normal National Park envelope are made in order of priority by the three Parks, as follows:

E-Government

Resources to meet e-government targets comparable to that provided to other local authorities in Wales and to the English National Parks

2003-2004 : £375,000

2004 - 2005 : £825,000

Environment Development Fund

Resources to extend the very successful Environment Development Fund for a further three years

£750,000 per year

All Parks Visitor Survey

Resources to carry out an all-parks visitor survey in 2004-05

2004 - 2005 : £75,000

Snowdon Summit Building

Snowdonia is seeking, additionally, a total of £1 million match funding for a new Snowdon summit building in 2003-2004 and 2004 - 2005

2003-2004 : £400,000

2004 - 2005 : £600,000

New HQ for Brecon Beacons

Brecon Beacons is seeking, additionally, £3 million for a new HQ (in preference to leasing)

2003-2004 : £1 million

2004 - 2005 : £2 million

Brecon Beacons Unitary Development Plan Enquiry

Required to meet the estimated cost of the UDP enquiry

2003-2004 : £60,000

