

Countryside Division  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

2005/08

24<sup>th</sup> February 2005

Dear Sir/Madam

**Duties on relevant authorities to have regard to the purposes of National Parks  
and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)**

Thank you for your invitation to comment on the above consultation (found at [www.wales.gov.uk/keypubconsultation/content/agriculture/np62guidance-e.pdf](http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubconsultation/content/agriculture/np62guidance-e.pdf)). The draft guidance has been considered by the Royal Town Planning Institute's Welsh Planning Policy Officer and as such, I can offer the following comments:-

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

1. The Institute welcomes the Welsh Assembly Guidance which attempts to explain the practical implications of the legal duties on relevant authorities to 'have regard' to National Parks and AONB purposes in undertaking their work. The Institute acknowledges that the current review of National Park Authorities (NPAs) in Wales highlights the need for new guidance to draw attention to and explain what the 'have regard to' duties actually mean and to which organisations they apply.

**DETAILED COMMENTS**

2. It is the Institute's view that the role of NPAs should be central to the present review in Wales. The current statutory purposes of National Parks – enjoyment and conservation – do not reflect current emphasis upon the principles of sustainable development and social inclusion. The integration of sustainability principles within the role of National Park Authorities would not only enhance their ability to carry out their statutory purposes more effectively but would promote a better integration of service delivery and joint working with other partners and stakeholders operating in the National Parks. This would reflect the Welsh Assembly's Sustainable Development policy as well as being in line with the principles of the Wales Spatial Plan and part of the current consultation on the merger between the Assembly, the Welsh Development Agency, Wales Tourist Board and ELWa ('Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales').

3. Whilst the guide recognises that ‘fulfilment of Park purposes ... relies on effective collaborative working’ the Institute considers that the importance of partnership working should be emphasised more strongly. For example, guidance on the integration of relevant community programmes would assist NPAs and relevant authorities in supporting sustainable communities. Furthermore, partnerships between NPAs and agencies such as the Welsh Development Agency, Wales Tourist Board, Countryside Council for Wales and ELWa could maximise opportunities to increase tourism, employment and enjoyment of the Parks. Such partnership working could also facilitate the Assembly’s social inclusion objectives. Practical guidance could focus on areas such as the dissemination of good practice, pilot schemes and demonstration projects. NPAs are well placed to provide practical examples of sustainable development – given their history of developing innovative approaches to management and development. As such, with appropriate partnership structures in place and given adequate support, they could play a role in piloting activities and promoting the positive results.
4. Partnership working could be improved through agreeing and identifying clear roles for each relevant organisation in terms of strategy development, policy formulation, delivery of services and monitoring effectiveness – thereby reducing the potential for duplication of effort. The guidance could help facilitate this.

The Institute welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation draft and has no objection to these comments being made public. I hope that they prove useful but if you require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me

Yours faithfully

**Rebecca Phillips**  
**Welsh Planning Policy Officer**