

RTPI North West: Rural Update 2010.

PROTECTED LANDSCAPES.

The Midland, Morecambe, Lancashire. 9th June, 2010

Workshop led by Paul Tiplady, Craggatak Consultants.

Protected Landscapes – Fit for purpose?

Three options for discussion were offered as follows:-

- 1. The role of Protected Landscapes.*
- 2. The governance of Protected Landscapes.*
- 3. Policy conflicts in Protected Landscapes.*

Three groups chose option 3 and one group chose option 1.

Policy conflicts in Protected Landscapes.

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The role of Protected Landscapes.

Group 3. Contact: Chris Woodley-Stewart, North Pennines AONB Partnership. T: 01388 528801 E: chris@northpenninesaonb.org.uk

Policy conflicts in Protected Landscapes.

The following points were made by the three groups considering this issue:-

- 1. Potential conflicts are numerous and include those between affordable housing and Protected Landscape status; between protecting and managing landscapes; between policy change and natural change; and between over-encouraging change and a more gradual adaptation to it.*
- 2. There is an emerging conflict between the 1940s vision of Protected Landscapes; the Sandford Principle and current wider measures for sustainable development. Within the Protected Landscapes, sustainable development may be a little different in having more emphasis on the environmental leg of the three-cornered stool, in particular the mitigation of*

- climate change. The Sandford Principle needs to be reviewed since it does not sit easily with the 'ecosystems services' approach now being advocated.*
3. *Although planning policy and practice reflect a clear strengthening of the socio-economic duty within the Protected Landscapes, there is a widely held perception that planners and the designation of Protected Landscapes hold back change within them, especially developments such as renewable energy. Are housing policies within the Protected Landscapes, such as barn conversions, actually sustainable?-*
 4. *The Protected Landscapes are very much living landscapes that are created and maintained by human activity.*
 5. *Looking ahead it may be that conflicts can best be resolved through a joint network of more closely integrated Protected Landscapes, sharing resources and considered at a regional level. They could develop as saleable commodities, earning income as champions, exemplars, consultants and enablers, both within and outside the Protected Landscapes.*
 6. *There is some feeling that the local view seems to broadly pedal the national interest and that therefore there is no serious conflict between the two. However, there may well be clear conflicts at policy level between wider national policy (e.g. PPSs) and what it is that people might want to see in Protected Landscapes. More widely, this might be seen as potential conflict between what is **wanted** in Protected Landscapes versus what is actually **needed** in Protected Landscapes.*
 7. *Stronger marketing of the Protected Landscape brand is likely to be one way forward, with Management Plan implementation becoming a more dominant element of their work.*
 8. *It is important to gain a better understanding of the public perception of just what is special and valuable about Protected Landscapes. There is an educational role in determining this and recognising what they are being protected from. How might a name change help? Would Protected Landscapes be more easily understood if they were renamed 'Scenic Areas'?*
 9. *Protected Landscapes are often considered to have arbitrary boundaries and yet these clearly delineate the planning policies that apply within them. Are boundary reviews needed?*
 10. *Given a worsening availability of resources to manage and maintain Protected Landscapes, it is hard to see how they can be seen by the new circular as exemplars in areas such as renewable energy or climate change.*
 11. *Priority should be given to 'ecosystem services' when it comes to jobs and the restoration of degraded areas, with importance given to finding appropriate ways and means of carbon capture and storage.*
 12. *Understanding the past within the Protected Landscapes is seen as crucial to planning for the future, particularly where landscape change is likely. Reduced grazing and more tree planting would change the landscape. Is this what people want to see and might it influence the all-important tourist industry? Or are changing expectations likely to play an important role?*
 13. *How far will the emerging localism agenda strengthen the 'Nimby' attitude within Protected Landscapes? Who will emerge to dominate localism in the absence of regional and national influences? Who will fill a potential regional vacuum?*
 14. *Protected Landscape policies are needed that will accept and allow necessary change to be built in, but is this possible?*

15. *Has tourism become too dominant within the Protected Landscapes and what affect is it having on community cohesion and services?*
 16. *The conservation versus preservation argument remains relevant in some Protected Landscapes, when it comes to managing change. Just how positive is the planning system and planners in general when it comes to Protected Landscapes?*
 17. *What conflicts are present between National Parks and AONBs and could they work better together? The regions may be able to assist through sharing best practice and partnership working. The retention of a strategic dimension is important here.*
 18. *Perhaps it is important to see potential conflicts as potential positive opportunities?*
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The role of Protected Landscapes.

The following points were made by the one group considering this issue:-

1. *Protected Landscapes do have a future but perhaps their purposes will become different over time, with an increasing emphasis on food production and housing provision?*
 2. *The pressures on life in the UK in 2010 suggest that Protected Landscapes will become even more important for many of the population to enjoy.*
 3. *There are concerns over how far people will be able to live in Protected Landscapes, or will they continue to be heavily serviced by people having to live in adjacent areas outside the Protected Landscapes, as in the case of the Lake District National Park?*
 4. *The regional dimension might ironically become more important when considering meeting our future needs for Protected Landscapes.*
 5. *More live/work opportunities are likely within the Protected Landscapes.*
 6. *Might it become necessary to pay more for what we want from our Protected Landscapes, for example to retain food production or support particularly important forms of land management?*
 7. *It seems highly likely that Protected Landscapes will continue to be defended as we go forward.*
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Comments by the workshop chair (Paul Tiplady):-

Given the make-up of the meeting, I was not surprised that the groups did not discuss the governance issues raised by Defra and Natural England. However, this is a topic that could have a significant impact upon our protected landscapes during the next few years. The policy matters discussed were treated realistically though the discussions in each group were forthright and imaginative. This bodes well for the period of constraint fast approaching. The future role of the protected landscapes is a little uncertain; the call seems to be to widen that role but not at the cost of degrading the landscape. Stakeholders do not believe that new approaches will be listened to sympathetically and there is a need to improve our communications.

Comments by the event chair (David Alexander):-

In hearing the feedback reports based on the above points, I felt that delegates had been very positive in looking at conflicts and the future for Protected Landscapes, set against uncertain times for the planning system and especially the regional planning framework. Somehow or other, being faced by adversity seems to bring out the best in us and in what is a period of flux and uncertainty, now might be a good time to review the whole issue of Protected Landscapes and to identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, with a view to assessing how we might manage them more effectively and efficiently as a more integrated and interlinked family.

Listening to the speakers across the day made me wonder how the national parks and the AONBs might work together more closely and possibly even share resources that could give them strength in numbers? There will be research opportunities here for both Planning Schools and Centres for the Rural Economy.

One thing is certain and that is change itself. Now is the time for fresh thinking to influence the important direction of that change.

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