

# CONNECTED

the newsletter of the  
ENGLISH NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES  
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## Affordable Housing: National Park Authorities Rise to the Challenge

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on National Parks met in February to discuss affordable rural housing in National Parks. The meeting, chaired by Clive Betts MP, provided a forum for an engaging discussion on the role of National Park Authorities in future provision of affordable rural housing, and the challenges that they face. Jonathan Shaw MP had been due to speak but was unfortunately unable to attend at the last minute. A CLG official attended in his place.

Elinor Goodman, Chair of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission, explained how the lack of affordable housing for local people in rural areas is a key issue which needs to be addressed. Affordable housing needs to be an integral part of the planning system, including Regional Spatial Strategies. Many National Parks are experiencing an intensified version of the general rural trend whereby average house prices are

proportionally far in excess of household incomes. National Parks face a particular challenge here, balancing their purpose of protecting landscape with the duty to seek to foster economic and social well-being of communities.

Jim Dixon (Peak District NPA) highlighted the important work that NPAs are doing on the ground to integrate affordable housing into local communities. Although National Parks are not locations for high volume building, they have a significant contribution to make in terms of housing design that is affordable, high quality and environmentally sustainable. Jim emphasised that affordable housing is a top priority for all NPAs, and that the recent growth in provision demonstrates the engagement of NPA planning committees with this issue.

Jim described the evidence based approach being taken by NPAs through the Local Development Framework and their working in

partnership with housing authorities. The potential for NPAs to lead by example in looking for innovative solutions and opportunities was recognised.

Following these presentations the Group discussed a range of issues including the conversion of traditional rural buildings, long term support for Rural Housing Enablers, ownership of land, second homes, and the role of planning in supporting viable communities. It was recognised that sharing of best practice between local authorities and NPAs is a valuable exercise and brings many positive benefits. The Group concluded that the ENPAA position statement on affordable housing (see page 2) will be a helpful resource.

The next APPG meeting will take place in the Autumn.

Information about the APPG, including past agendas, minutes and presentations, is available on the ENPAA website at [www.enpaa.org.uk](http://www.enpaa.org.uk)



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### WELCOME...

...to **Connected**, brought to you by the team at ENPAA.

Our quarterly newsletter will:

- keep members informed of what ENPAA is doing on their behalf;
- keep staff informed of ENPAA's activities; and
- provide support and profile the activities of the Working Groups.

We hope that you enjoy the publication and if you would like to make a suggestion for the newsletter, please email [meriel.martin@enpaa.org.uk](mailto:meriel.martin@enpaa.org.uk)

The next issue of **Connected** is due in October 2008.

## Minister Champions National Parks

Hilary Benn MP highlighted the achievements and significance of England's National Parks in a recent speech in which he committed £500,000 funding over 2 years for an 'ecosystem assessment' for England. This will draw together expertise from various organisations to give a more comprehensive picture of England's natural environments.

Speaking at the Barnes Wetland Centre in London, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said that National Parks have "conserved some of the most important and iconic of our landscapes". Quoting the NOP Poll commissioned by UK ANPA he said over 90% of people say National Parks are important to them.

Mr Benn spoke of wanting to see more people visiting National Parks, following research which has found that access to green spaces has a positive economic impact, as well as benefits for physical and mental health and nourishing of the soul. He also saw visits for children to national parks and farms as important opportunities for learning about the natural environment. Hilary Benn will be speaking at the ANPA Conference in the Lake District in September.

Full details of the speech can be found at [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

# Affordable Housing: Our Position

Affordable housing has been high on the political agenda following the rapid rises in house prices in recent years. National Parks face particular challenges both collectively and individually in ensuring provision of affordable, high quality designed, and environmentally sustainable housing for local communities.

ENPAA's position statement on Affordable Housing sets out the obstacles to provision of affordable housing in National Parks, and the solutions that NPAs are currently promoting through spatial planning and wider initiatives such as Community Land Trusts and supporting Rural Housing Enablers.

The statement goes on to explain ENPAA's position on a variety of issues:

- getting the policy framework right
- using robust information on need

- empty or under-utilised homes
- second homes
- finding and funding sites for affordable housing
- securing perpetuity and affordability
- sustainability and quality design of new housing

In the recommendations for supporting action ENPAA looks for a multi-agency response to the issue of affordable housing, with action from Government, Housing Authorities, District Councils and others.

This statement has formed the basis of discussions with the Housing Minister earlier in the year, and with officials from the Department of Communities and Local Government.

This and other position statements can be found on our website at [www.enpaa.org.uk](http://www.enpaa.org.uk)

## CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY PROGRESS

ENPAA assisted Defra in running a successful Ministerial Seminar on National Parks and Climate Change in March 2008. The seminar involved all English NPAs. Ahead of the meeting information was collated on what each NPA is doing on climate change. This paper is available on the ENPAA website at [www.enpaa.org.uk](http://www.enpaa.org.uk)

At the seminar Jonathan Shaw MP proposed a Defra/ENPAA Working Group on Climate Change. This group is chaired by Defra Director, Robin Mortimer, and had its first meeting in May 2008. The Group comprises Defra officials, NPA representatives, and members of staff from Natural England and NAAONBs. The first meeting has been successful in potentially gaining access to departmental data on carbon stores and climate change emissions.

In addition to the Defra/ENPAA Working Group, ENPAA has established a Climate Change Group of senior staff working on climate change from each NPA. This group will discuss climate change issues common to NPAs and share good practice, and will liaise with a similar group set up by WANPA.

ENPAA will continue its active engagement with climate change policy. Future plans include updating our Climate Change Position Statement and considering how NPAs are approaching the issue of climate change adaptation.

## New Staff at ENPAA

ENPAA has recently welcomed two new members of staff to the team.

Amanda Brace, Policy Officer, has joined ENPAA from CPRE. Amanda engages with senior decision makers on key policy issues, and is responsible for lobbying and campaigning as well as preparing reports and publications to further ENPAA's objectives.

Meriel Martin, Administrator, assists with the smooth running of the ENPAA office, dealing with enquiries and arranging meetings, carrying out research, and providing the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on National Parks.

Contact details for all ENPAA staff can be found on page 4.

## Sub National Review: Implications for National Parks

The Government has been consulting on how to take forward its 'Sub National Review'. This significant initiative would see responsibility for planning in the regions shift from Regional Assemblies to the Regional Development Agencies (RDA) and new structures established at a regional level. Various Regional Strategies would be rationalised into one.

The SNR will have major implications for National Parks and ENPAA has been engaging with the review. We have urged Government to ensure:

- NPAs have a seat on the proposed Leaders Forums;

- RDAs put sustainable development at the heart of the new regional strategies and recognise the benefits from protecting and enhancing high quality environments; and
- the role of NPAs in both the preparation and scrutiny of regional planning policies should be maintained.

Our response is available on the ENPAA website. Ministers have promised a Bill in the Autumn, and ENPAA shall be scrutinising this carefully.

## Professional Group Spotlight: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM OFFICERS

Co-ordinator: Cathryn Marcus (UK ANPA)

The Sustainable Tourism Officers group includes Sustainable Tourism Officers from the National Park Authorities in England, Wales, and Scotland, and meets twice a year. The group works closely with the Communicators Group and the two combine elements of their meetings to enable the sharing of best practice.

The main aim of the group is to place sustainability at the centre of tourism policy and decision-making. Current topics that the Sustainable Tourism Officers group are engaging with include achieving behavioural changes which visitors will take home to tackle climate change, and simplifying accreditation schemes for tourism related businesses to make 'green' qualities a core part of inspection and accreditation.

The group last met on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008, when guest speaker Steve Owens from International Year of Astronomy 2009 spoke about 'Dark Skies projects' and their potential for joint working with NPAs. The group plans to include guest presenters at future meetings to help expand its horizons beyond the experiences of the NPAs and to encourage positive partnerships.

The Sustainable Tourism Officers group are working jointly to roll out the corporate National Parks brand, Britain's Breathing Spaces. Members of the group recently attended a VisitBritain seminar to take this work forward, and will be reporting back at the next meeting.

English and Welsh group members also assist ENPAA and WANPA in ensuring that important messages relating to sustainable tourism are taken to policy makers. Recently this has included establishing priority issues to be raised in a meeting with Margaret Hodge MP, Minister for Culture, Creative Industries and Tourism. Members of the Sustainable Tourism Officers group are at the early stages of working with ENPAA staff on producing a Policy Position Statement on Responsible Tourism.

The group has found that there are great benefits from meeting face-to-face and sharing experiences, and is now seeking to improve communications between meetings by making use of the staff extranet area to discuss developments and circulate documents. Their next meeting will take place in September.

## CONSULTATIONS

A full list of relevant consultations, as well as past responses, is available on the ENPAA section of the Extranet.

## DIARY OF EVENTS

### Relating to English NPA's INTERNAL

- 28th July-3rd August:** National Parks Week
- 3rd September:** ENPOG
- 9th September:** Heads of Planning Group
- 11th -12th September:** Access Officers Group
- 16th September:** ENPAA
- 17th-19th September:** National Parks Conference
- 24th September:** Agriculture and Rural Development Group
- 9th-11th October:** Farm Liaison Officers Group
- 10th October:** Historic Environments Group meeting
- 4th November:** WANPA Executive meeting
- 6th November:** ENPOG
- 7th November:** JNPOG
- 12th - 14th November:** Educators Group

## DIARY OF EVENTS

### Relating to English NPA's EXTERNAL

- 10th September:** LGA Annual Rural Conference
- 24th-27th September:** Europarc Conference
- 25th September:** CRN Sustainable Leisure Travel
- 8th October:** CNP Trustees Meeting
- 17th-19th October:** National Park Societies Conference
- 4th November:** WANPA Executive meeting
- 6th November:** APPG reception Upland Farming
- 14th November:** Natural England Uplands Conference
- 18th November:** CNP Council meeting
- 18th November:** CRN Accessible Outdoor Recreation

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ENPAA (the English National Park Authorities Association) is the body that represents the National Park Authorities in England. It was established in April 2006 and provides a collective voice for the nine National Park Authorities. ENPAA is a registered not for profit company limited by guarantee, number 6521048, registered in England at First Floor, 2-4 Great Eastern Street, London EC2A 3NW

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This newsletter complements **UK ANPA eNews**, a quarterly update of the issues and innovations from around the National Parks. UK ANPA eNews at:

<http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/newsletter>