Eryri Local Development Plan Review

Background Paper 8

Landscape

July 2016
1. Introduction

1.1 Snowdonia is renowned for its dramatic and varied landscape. The landscape is the predominant reason for its designation as a National Park and why so many people visit and revisit the Park.

1.2 Snowdonia offers the most spectacular mountain scenery in Wales but, in addition, encompasses coastline with sand dunes and estuaries, extensive moorland, dramatic glacial valleys with remnant broadleaved woodland, lakes and enclosed farmland on the lower foothills and coastal plain. Significant areas of the National Park appear within the Register of Historic Landscapes.

2. Update

2.1 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) - Landscapes and Seascapes of Eryri Most of the landscapes and seascapes in Snowdonia are of outstanding quality, justifying its designation as a National Park. The SNPA commissioned studies to define and describe landscape and seascape character areas (see more detail in Background Paper 2: Coastal and Marine Update - Nov 2014) along with their individual characteristic qualities. Furthermore the studies were required to identify influences which may lead to changes in character. The main purpose of this SPG is therefore to:

Define the boundaries and name individual Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and Seascape Character Areas (SCA's) in Snowdonia National Park and;

Identifying their key characteristics and valued attributes. These are included as separate documents for each LCA and SCA;
Identifying forces for change which are likely to influence changes in the landscape both for the individual LCA’s and SCA’s and the National Park more generally; and
Identifying landscape strategies for each LCA, setting out how they should be managed and protected in the future.
Identifying the sensitive factors for each SCA

2.2 In so doing, the information contained in the SPG will enable the National Park Authority to effectively apply the relevant policies in the ELDP and actions set out in the National Park Management Plan in order to manage and mitigate against any adverse impacts on the landscape and the seascape. It will also assist developers and others gain an appreciation of the special landscape and seascape qualities and characteristics of Snowdonia thereby enabling them to design schemes which better respect their locations.
2.3 The Landscape Character Assessment, which forms the basis of this SPG, draws on LANDMAP\(^1\) as a significant part of its evidential underpinning, along with a wide range of other information available that describes the natural, cultural and aesthetic/perceptual qualities of the National Park.

2.4 Following the findings of a desk-based assessment – which included a review of LANDMAP and other spatial data – a field checking exercise was undertaken to confirm the boundaries and information provided for the 25 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) which had been defined. The LCAs are designed to represent geographically discrete areas of Snowdonia’s landscape, recognised for their local distinctiveness and sense of place. Essentially they form a spatial framework to describe and classify the landscape and, ultimately, to assist in decision-making on how it should be planned and managed to retain or enhance its defined special qualities.

2.5 In the future, the framework provided by the LCAs could also be used as the base line for monitoring landscape change in more detail. A methodology to assess the sensitivity of the landscape and its capacity to accommodate change will be developed in a further SPG (see below).

2.6 A map of the National Park’s LCAs is shown in Figure 2.1, (see below) Within the SPG each LCA is described separately using the following common structure,

- **Summary of LCA location and boundaries, including a map and representative photographs**

- **Key characteristics**

- **Forces for change affecting landscape character**

- **A landscape strategy for the future**

- **Guidelines for managing future landscape change (with cross-reference to Chapter 4 of this SPG).**

2.7 As stated above, the principal purpose of this guidance is to provide an evidence base to assist the National Park Authority in helping to guide the right types of development into appropriate locations; using the information to inform its siting and design in ways that protect and enhance the special qualities of the Park.

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\(^1\) LANDMAP is an all Wales geographic information system based landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated into a nationally consistent dataset. It is comprised of five ‘Evaluated Aspects’; Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual and Sensory, Historic Landscape and the Cultural Landscape.
2.8 The remainder of this SPG includes a chapter outlining the generic forces for change impacting on the landscapes of Eryri, followed by high-level landscape guidance. Both of these chapters form an accompaniment to the detailed information that is provided for each of the 25 LCAs.
3. Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study

3.1 This study was a joint commission by Gwynedd Council, the Isle of Anglesey County Council and the Snowdonia National Park Authority. Its aim was to provide a robust evidence base for determining planning applications, informing the development of Supplementary Planning Guidance, helping to protect sensitive and distinctive landscapes from inappropriate development and encouraging a positive approach to development in the right location and at an appropriate scale.

3.2 The study specifically considers the following five development types (not all were applicable to the National Park) as well as also briefly touching on small scale hydro energy developments

**Renewable Energy Developments**

*Wind Energy (focusing on smaller scale developments)*

*Field-Scale Solar PV Energy (not in NP)*

**Other Developments (Transmission Infrastructure and Tourism)**

*A 400 kV National Grid Overhead Line (Electricity Transmission Infrastructure)*

*Mobile Phone Masts (Telecommunications Transmission Infrastructure) (study in NP only)*

*Static Caravan/Chalet Parks and Extensions (Tourism)*

3.3 The main objectives of the study with regard to Snowdonia were to:

*Provide a strategic assessment of the relative sensitivity of the landscapes of the Snowdonia National Park to the different developments using a defined set of landscape and visual criteria that includes both physical and perceptual aspects as well as a consideration of landscape value.*

*Identify the key landscape, visual and perceptual sensitivities of different areas.*

*Provide broad guidance on those areas where development of different scales is potentially most acceptable and those areas where there are likely to be significant adverse landscape and visual effects; bearing in mind the capacity limits.*

3.4 The Study concludes that many of the landscapes of the National Park typically have a high sensitivity to renewable energy, transmission infrastructure and/or tourism developments due to the fact that they comprise a diverse mix of
landscapes; most of which are highly valued for their outstanding natural beauty and qualities of tranquility and/or remoteness and wilderness.

3.5 Gillespies, the landscape consultants who undertook the work, won a Strategic Landscape Planning Award awarded by the Landscape Institute in 2015 for the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study

3.6 Following consideration of comments received during consultation Supplementary Planning Guidance on Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity will be adopted by the Authority.

4. LANDMAP Monitoring

4.1 In July 2013 Natural Resources Wales (NRW) commissioned White Consultants to undertake the first stage of monitoring of change for the LANDMAP Visual & Sensory aspect for Powys and North Wales, excluding the Isle of Anglesey.

4.2 As part of the process a report setting out the site verification of the desk study (Stage 2c) in Snowdonia National Park has been published in draft form. This report is prepared for comment/approval by NRW, the NRW QA assessor and the SNPA. These changes will then be implemented by entering the amended data through LANDMAP Portal (the online survey) and revising the GIS aspect polygons as necessary. Within the study area the key changes include:

*Felling and broadleaf plantings which change the character of the extensive conifer forest plantations.*

- *Removal and eradication of rhododendrons around areas such as the Mawddach estuary and Beddgelert/Nant Gwynant*
- *Management plan agreements on uplands eg Migneint which may change the character over time*
- *Expansion of quarry- Penrhyn.*
- *Expansion of caravan parks/leisure facilities in places.*
- *Recreational pressure on coastal dunes eg Llandanwg dunes and lagoon*
- *Storm damage to stretches of coastline*

*The site visit resulted in changes being noted including the additional aspect areas:*
SNPVS 002 Aberdovey coast; SNPVS 038 Morfa Harlech; SNPVS 091 Foel Goch uplands and SNPVS 130 Barmouth

Once agreed the changes to the LANDMAP Aspect Layers will be applied to the SNPA’s GIS.

5. Recommendations
5.1 Where relevant refer to, and insert cross references to the Supplementary Planning Guidance on Landscapes and Seascapes of Eryri in ELDP Revision

5.2 Investigate how, in the future, the framework provided by the LCAs could also be used as the base line for monitoring landscape change in more detail.

5.3 Where relevant refer to, and insert cross references to the proposed Supplementary Planning Guidance on Landscapes Sensitivity and Capacity in ELDP Revision

5.4 Draw on the findings of the Landscapes Sensitivity and Capacity Study to provide guidance on the sensitivity of the landscapes of the Snowdonia National Park to different development types and its capacity limits to inform policy revisions.

5.5 Once agreed make the relevant changes to SNPA’s GIS LANDMAP Aspect Layers.