

Northumberland National Park Authority



The Policy and Practice of Protected Area Management: Partnership Working in Northumberland National Park

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This thesis is dedicated to a true fan of the great outdoors, Gem, who passed away on 6th September 2010. Her loving friendship will always be remembered.

Abstract

This is a thesis on partnership working in Northumberland National Park, England. This protected area is one of ten national parks in the country, each with its own public sector management body, the national park authority. The national park authorities have two statutory purposes: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public. In pursuing these purposes the authorities have a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national park. Every national park authority has a statutory five-year management plan that details the strategies upon which the two purposes and duty will be delivered, and all require the resources and co-operation of various partners. Although, rural partnership working is a well-researched area, less attention has been paid to the particular challenges of partnership working in protected areas, such as national parks, which have become important models for sustainable development. This qualitative research was conducted through documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews with a sample of 23 stakeholders involved in the management of Northumberland National Park. The researcher drew upon over ten years of experience as a local government employee, including seven years at Northumberland National Park Authority. The case study examined Northumberland National Park, which was found to have a convoluted history that has shaped, and is continuing to shape, the present day approach to its management. The processes behind rural partnership working were understood as a range of interlinking controllable and uncontrollable factors and it was found that even though partnership working was between organisations, there was an unwritten acceptance among actors that success was dependent upon a range of personal factors. These findings are important for all IUCN Category V protected areas, which are collectively termed as living, working landscapes, reliant upon working in partnership to achieve their objectives. It was therefore recommended that the respective management bodies could benefit from fully understanding the discrete processes that underpin this form of governance. With regards to the case study area, it was found that after a decade of the Action Areas approach, Northumberland National Park Authority has an emerging level of support from local communities for the delivery of its management plans. It is argued in the thesis that it is an opportune time to reassess what Northumberland National Park and Northumberland National Park Authority would like to achieve from the Action Areas approach.

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List of Workshops and Conferences Attended

Date	Details	Location	Type
20/05/2009 – 21/05/2009	School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: Postgraduate Conference	Newcastle University	Conference
15/10/2009	National Park Forum: The Future of the Uplands	Wooler	Public Forum
21/10/2009	Library (Information Literacy): Finding Research Information	Newcastle University	Workshop
26/10/2009	Library (Information Literacy): Writing for Publication	Newcastle University	Workshop
26/10/2009	Communication Skills: Conferencing	Newcastle University	Workshop
06/11/2009	Personal Effectiveness: Introduction to Personal Development Plans and e- Portfolio	Newcastle University	Workshop
25/11/2009	Library (Information Literacy): Government Publications	Newcastle University	Workshop
04/12/2009	Communication Skills: Getting Yourself Published and Writing a Literature Review	Newcastle University	Workshop
15/01/2010	PhD Management: Writing Your Thesis and Preparing For Your Viva	Newcastle University	Workshop
02/03/2010	Northern Rural Network: The Future of the Uplands	Barnard Castle	Networking Event
18/05/2010 – 19/05/2010	School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: Postgraduate Conference	Newcastle University	Conference
14/05/2010	National Park Forum: Community Engagement	Bellingham	Public Forum
11/06/2010	Northern Rural Network: The Rural Development Programme for England, Taking Stock and Sharing Knowledge	Kendal	Networking Event
12/04/2011	Professional and Career Development - Strategies for Research Success	Newcastle University	Workshop
14/09/2011	Northern Rural Network: Uplands	Newcastle University	Networking Event
31/10/2011	An Introduction to Sustainable Development in Northumberland National Park	Newcastle University	Teaching

04/11/2011	Professional Conduct and Your Project: How to Protect Your Results and Your Interests	Newcastle University	Workshop
08/02/2011	Self-Management: Stress Management	Newcastle University	Workshop
23/05/2011 – 24/05/2011	School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: Postgraduate Conference	Newcastle University	Conference
13/10/2011 – 15/10/2011	Protected Areas as Tools for Regional Development – Perspectives for Research and Management	Saint Pierre De Chartreuse, France	Conference



Protected Areas as Tools for Regional Development: Perspectives for Research and Management, Saint Pierre De Chartreuse, France. Photograph used with kind permission of Elena Maselli, ALPARC.ⁱ

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ⁱ Attendees: Richard Austin, Stefano Balbi, Kristian Bjørnstad, Valerie Braun, Gregor Danev, Michel Delmas, Maurizio Dissegna, Peter Fredman, Gérard Hanus, Fabien Hoblea, Birgit Hornsteiner-Reutz, Günter Köck, Elena Maselli, Marius Mayer, Olivier Monsegu, Isabella Pasutto, Guido Plassmann, Marion Regli, Emma Salizzoni, Bernhard Schmidt-Ruhe, Brigitte Scott, Laura Secco, Knut Bjørn Stokke, Susanne Stoll-Kleemann, Dirk Strijker, Michael Vogel, Andreas Voth, and Andreas Weissen.

Date	Details	Location	Type
16/11/2011	Who Should Run the Countryside? Celebrating the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme	Gateshead	Conference
07/12/2011	Living, Working Landscapes: Delivering Sustainable Development in National Parks	London	Policy Seminar
12/03/2012	Analysing and Writing-up Qualitative Data, and an Introduction to NVivo	Newcastle University	Workshop
26/03/2012 – 27/03/2012	Writing Across Boundaries: Explorations in Representation, Rhetoric and Writing in Qualitative Research	Durham University	Workshop
17/05/2012	Cognitive Abilities - Critical Thinking	Newcastle University	Workshop
22/05/2012 – 23/05/2012	School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: Postgraduate Conference	Newcastle University	Conference
30/07/2012 – 01/08/2012	XIII World Congress of Rural Sociology	Lisbon University, Portugal	Conference
08/11/2012	National Park Forum: Redeveloping Once Brewed National Park Centre and Youth Hostel	Haltwhistle	Public Forum
20/05/2013 – 21/05/2013	School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: Postgraduate Conference	Newcastle University	Conference
17/06/2013	Northern Rural Network: The Rural Economic Growth Agenda in the North East	Hexham	Networking Event

List of Abbreviations

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
CAA	Comprehensive Area Assessment
CLA	Country Land and Business Association
CNP	Campaign for National Parks
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NCC	Northumberland County Council
NFU	National Farmers Union
NPAPA	National Park Authority Performance Assessment
NPE	National Parks England
NPUK	National Parks United Kingdom
NPO	Chief Executive (National Park Officer)
NNPA	Northumberland National Park Authority (also referred to as “The Authority”)
OTA	Otterburn Training Area
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas

Chapter 1: Introduction

“The reason we have this duty is to give us an alibi to get engaged with the social and economic development forces. My conclusion was if you get the economy right, if you get the community behind you, you would automatically deliver national park purposes. That was a Damascene conversion.” Former National Park Officer (NPO).

1.1 Northumberland National Park

Northumberland National Park, in the North East of England, is a rich, cultural landscape, encompassing the central section of the stunning World Heritage Site of Hadrian’s Wall, part of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire, the valleys of the North Tyne and Redesdale, the sandstone ridges of Coquetdale, the moors and grasslands of the Cheviot Hills, right up to the Scottish Border (Figure 1).

It was designated in 1956 by the then Conservative Government, following the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. Northumberland National Park was the seventh and last English national park to be designated during the 1950s. The two statutory purposes of these national parks have changed very little since 1949, with the two objectives of conservation and recreation/tourism:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public.

Despite the designation of national parks during the 1950s, it was not until the 1972 Local Government Act that every national park authority was required to publish a national park management plan within three years of reorganisation in 1974, and to review it thereafter at least every five years. The 1995 Environment Act saw the creation of freestanding, independent national park authorities and the introduction of a statutory duty, to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national park. Many people are involved with the management of the national parks, whether as individuals or representatives of organisations, across the public sector, the private sector and the voluntary/community sector.



Figure 1. Map of Northumberland National Park in 2013, one of the four areas with a high level of protection in Northumberland. The national border between England and Scotland straddles the English Cheviot Hills and the Scottish Cheviot Foothills. The headquarters of Northumberland National Park Authority is at Hexham. Source: Northumberland National Park Authority.

This thesis examines perceptions of partnership working in Northumberland National Park¹ and Northumberland National Park Authority² from the perspective of 23 participants. It will explore their experiences, their values and their understanding of what it means to work in partnership in the protected area, using semi-structured, in-depth interviews, guided by a visual tool to stimulate discussions. The methodological approach places the emphasis on the participant's own narratives of their encounters with Northumberland National Park and the Authority.

1.2 The Evolving Management Plans of Northumberland National Park

Academic research on Northumberland National Park has largely focussed on either the wildlife or archaeology, most notably in the latter instance, around Hadrian's Wall. This is hardly surprising considering the uniqueness and history of the World Heritage Site. However, research on how national parks are managed is crucial for the successful achievement of the statutory purposes.

The 1972 Local Government Act legislated that each national park must appoint a chief executive (national park officer) and a professional team to develop a management plan with the exclusive remit of the planning and management of each national park. Since that time, Northumberland National Park Authority has published the following management plans:

- 1977 Northumberland National Park Plan
- 1984 Northumberland National Park Plan: First Review
- 1994 Northumberland National Park Plan: Second Review
- 2003 Northumberland National Park Management Plan: Third Review
- 2009 Northumberland National Park Management Plan

Each management plan sets out the overall management objectives, with a noticeable hiatus around 1991 when the role and remit of the national park authorities was reviewed, culminating in the publication of the *Fit for the Future* report (see Chapter 2). Over the years the management plans have evolved. One of the most noticeable ways in which they have changed is how the national park authority viewed local communities. The language of the 1977 Plan stated:

¹ The terms 'Northumberland National Park', 'the national park' and 'the protected area' refer only to the landscape and the features therein. Although 'the park' is used in the terminology in the present 2009 Management Plan for Northumberland National Park, this thesis does not refer to the place as 'the park'.

² The terms 'Northumberland National Park Authority' and 'the Authority', and the abbreviation 'NNPA', all refer only to the same principal management body for Northumberland National Park.

“As the Authority are not primarily responsible for the services and facilities provided from the local community or for dealing with the problems of population decline and lack of job opportunities, it is essential that they work in close conjunction with the agencies that have such responsibilities, including district councils, the departments of Northumberland County Council and the Community Council of Northumberland” (NNPA, 1977: 77).

Notice how the wording says “...they work in close conjunction”, implying that it is role of the local communities to work with these agencies, and not Northumberland National Park Authority. Almost the same text, word for word, was reproduced in the subsequent First Review (NNPA, 1984: 99), with the added recognition that “some development control decisions taken by the Park Authority have some bearing on the social and economic well-being of the Park.” The First Review goes on to acknowledge the difficulties of community development work in Northumberland National Park:

“In the particular circumstances of Northumberland National Park it is difficult to make a case for the Authority to be given stronger powers or wider responsibilities in this field, since the national park is remote, thinly populated and has no large settlements there. The national park boundary was delineated on landscape grounds and does not encompass a distinct social or economic unit. Clearly the national park is not a suitable geographical area on which to base separate and special policies for social and economic development” (NNPA, 1984: 99).

Despite the above assertion, the national park authorities were given a socio-economic duty through the 1995 Environment Act. However, the 1994 Plan once again did not see community development as a function of Northumberland National Park Authority, repeating almost the same text, word-for-word, from the 1977 and 1984 Plans, with the addition of:

“The social and economic problems it has are shared with the remainder of rural Northumberland and any solutions are only likely to exist at the periphery. In these circumstances the most appropriate role for the Authority must be one of liaison, collaboration and support for others” (NNPA, 1994: 107).

Somewhat contradictorily, the 1994 Plan goes on to state, “The active involvement of the local community in the work of the Park Authority is considered to be of vital importance” (1994: 110). This could almost be interpreted as a one-way relationship, with local people helping Northumberland National Park Authority, but not vice-versa.

By the early 2000s a sea change in policy had taken place, following the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (Chapter 2) and the Otterburn Public Inquiries (Chapter 5). In his foreword to the 2003 Management Plan titled 'Towards a new model for managing a national park', the chair, John Riddle, opened with, "We have concluded that the best way to achieve national park purposes is by putting the economy and the community at the heart of our work." The Management Plan also stated:

"We can also see how to better achieve new life and greater security for national park communities if we can see that their knowledge, culture and traditions are part of a heritage and the social capital for rural development. We all need to adopt new ways of working if our goal of sustainable development is to be achieved." (NNPA, 2003: 6).

Sustainable development is considered therein to include: the economic value of tourism, local services and farm businesses; the high quality environment; and thriving local communities. One of these 'new ways of working' was to create a halo-effect around Northumberland National Park where the Authority would actively work with those gateway communities directly outside of the boundary. This approach continued in the 2009 Management Plan, which was titled 'Inspiring Landscapes, Thriving Communities', with two of five strategic aims being focussed on economic and community development. Outcome 4.1 stated:

"The communities in and around the national park will have a strong connection to, and appreciation of, the national park and be fully engaged in shaping its future."

Therefore with regards to community development, this represented a complete transformation in language from the original 1977 Plan. Likewise, presentation of the management plans changed from lengthy black and white documents with a handful of photographs (NNPA, 1977; NNPA, 1984; NNPA, 1994), to concise and colourful pieces of work littered with high quality images (NNPA, 2003; NNPA, 2009), all the while designed to be user-friendly and accessible, developed and co-written with the management plan partnership.

Just as community development has evolved since the 1977 Plan, so has the way in which partnership working was considered. Each management plan listed a range of key partners, from 15 organisations in 1977, to 16 in 1984. By 1994 the approach was to narrow the list down to just seven key partners, detailing the exact nature of the working relationship with each one.

The 2003 Plan devoted a page to 'The Nature of Key Partnerships' (NNPA, 2003: 58). This said that Northumberland National Park Authority would, "Work closely with our key partners" to "see how their own work might contribute to national park purposes." It also stated that the Authority would, "Seek to play our part through partnerships to deliver integrated programmes of work." A whole range of partners and types of partners was listed, including for the first time, the parish councils.

Partnership working was a prominent over-arching principle of the 2009 Management Plan. It stated:

"The Northumberland National Park Management Plan is a plan for the national park not just the Authority. It will, therefore, take collective effort to achieve its objectives" (NNPA, 2009: 10).

The key partners in 2009 were: Northumberland County Council; Natural England; the Environment Agency, English Heritage; the Forestry Commission; One NorthEast; the Ministry of Defence; Northumberland Tourism Limited; the Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum; the Country Land and Business Association; and the National Farmers' Union.

Of course, the way partners perceive the national parks differs from one organisation to the next. This thesis focuses on better understanding those perceptions, concentrating on their ideas of what Northumberland National Park means to them, how partnership working operates and how people and organisations can be brought together to work towards that common goal of sustainable development.

1.3 From Academic, to Practitioner, to Practitioner/Academic

The story of my thesis really began in 2000/01. My Masters degree at the University of Manchester allowed me to prepare a thesis comparing anthropocentrism to ecocentrism in policy formation, concluding that whilst environmental awareness had increased dramatically in modern times, human needs still ultimately took priority if there was a conflict between the two agendas. Shortly after graduating, I accepted the offer of a Ph.D. at Durham University in 2002, where I stayed for a year. During this time I developed my interest in environmental governance, the emerging concept of sustainable development in UK national parks, and had a view on undertaking some research at the newly created Loch Lomond and the

Trossachs National Park in Scotland. However, due to funding constraints, the proposed project was placed on-hold after 12 months. I sought employment and worked in the regeneration unit at Darlington Borough Council until late 2006, when the opportunity to work for Northumberland National Park Authority arose. Ever since I left Durham University, the project had been at the back of my mind as something that I wanted to return to and complete just as soon as the time was right. I spent two years at the Authority, firstly restructuring their sustainable development fund, and secondly, successfully bidding to bring the New LEADER Approach to the entire protected area (since the previous iteration, LEADER+, only covered the Northern part, leaving the most remote and rural part of England outside of a LEADER area). With a developing track record, I asked my employers at the Authority if they would consider sponsoring me to complete the course that I first started in 2002. After several months of negotiations, we reached an agreement. Although the case study area would move from Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park to Northumberland National Park, the scope of the research would largely stay the same. Furthermore, due to the existing and excellent working relationship between the Authority and Newcastle University, it was decided that I would transfer to the Centre for Rural Economy, to complete my Ph.D., between 2009 and 2013, on a part-time basis.

The case study of Northumberland National Park was chosen for pragmatic reasons but proved to be a sound choice. As will be shown, it is unique in the national park family³ with a significant history, just waiting to be examined. It should be noted that I had no personal experience of Northumberland National Park prior to 2006. This gave me a fresh pair of eyes from which to examine the case study.

Undoubtedly a larger challenge for the project was not so much personal attachment, but professional involvement. Since starting work at the Authority in 2006 I had already developed a professional network across Northumberland, meeting many people, who, at a later date, would go on to become research interview participants. This meant that they knew me as an employee of the Authority, prior to meeting me as a researcher from Newcastle University. Of course, an employee studying the organisation that they work for is not anything new, but it does require reflexivity. As Bryman (2012: 39) explained, “there is a growing recognition that it is not feasible to keep the values that a researcher holds totally in check.” It is significant that the researcher is also involved in a professional capacity, and this affected the choice of research area, formulation of research questions, analysis and

³ In this thesis, the term ‘national park family’ is used to describe all of the English national parks and national park authorities, collectively together as a group protected areas and respective management bodies.

interpretation of data, and conclusions. Bryman summarised that it was important “to recognise and acknowledge that research cannot be value free but to ensure that there is no untrammelled incursion of values in the research process and to be self-reflective and so exhibit reflexivity about the part played by such factors” (*ibid.*). This will be discussed further in Chapter 4, which will explain the methodology of the thesis.

1.4 My Interest in Partnership Working

Independent national park authorities are relatively young organisations, and in the case of Northumberland, operate with a very slender resource. It was therefore obvious from when I joined the Authority in 2006 that in order for the organisation to fulfil its statutory purposes it required the assistance of other organisations. When the interests of the Authority were expanded from recreation and conservation to include local socio-economic development as well, it became apparent that the partnership working activity had the potential to get quite complicated. As the months passed, and I became aware of more and more organisations interested in the work of the Authority, I started to think about the mechanics of this new mode of governance. It seemed that working in ‘partnership’ had become something of a buzzword. The Northumberland National Park Management Plan stated that the Authority’s objectives will be achieved through work to:

- “Involve partners in developing and sharing ownership of the Plan and its priority actions;
- Co-ordinating action, pooling resources and avoiding duplication; and
- Building strong partnership agreements which foster trust and an understanding of each partners’ strengths and abilities” (NNPA, 2009: 10).

There was no explanation provided as to how these intentions would be achieved, who would be responsible and to what extent, and how trust and understanding were indeed fostered. It occurred to me that in this highly delicate area of protected area management, a lot of assumptions were being made around partnership working, with very little understanding as to what it would entail in practice. What if, for example, the Authority’s understanding of partnership working was very different to other organisations? How would these affect aspirations, the dynamic processes at work, and relationships between organisations?

As if to further strengthen the importance of this line of enquiry, the *English National Parks UK Government Vision and Circular* (Defra, 2010), which was published after my research on Northumberland commenced, provided updated policy guidance on the English national

parks, prepared and written to be relevant to those bodies with appropriate statutory functions, and aimed to be of interest to public, private and voluntary/community sectors. It dedicated one whole section to 'Work in partnership to maximise benefits and minimise costs', explained thus:

"The national parks' purposes cannot be achieved by any one organisation acting in isolation. Partnership working should therefore be the underpinning philosophy of all these bodies and individuals with an interest in the achievement of the national parks' purposes." (Defra, 2010: 24)

With this in mind, even though the case study is of Northumberland National Park, the findings of the thesis will be of national importance, since every national park authority has agreed on the importance of working in partnership. With an international interest in the way the English national parks are managed, the discussions will also be of use to those further afield.

1.5 Research Aims

The research aims to examine ideas, meanings and values relating to partnership working in a protected area. There are various definitions of what partnerships mean (see Section 3.3 for further consideration of this). Van Huijstee *et al.* (2007) drew a distinction between partnerships at an organisational (or institutional) level, and how the term is perceived from the perspective of the actors (or stakeholders) that engage in partnership working. The organisational level understands partnership working as a form of governance. Typically, this entails the coming together of multi-sector representatives with public sector, private sector, and voluntary and community sector interests, to address a specific common objective or set of objectives. Partnerships can operate at a very high, strategic level, or they can be very focussed and localised at the delivery-level (Derkzen and Bock, 2009; Shortall and Shucksmith, 2001). From the perspective of actors, the understanding of partnership working is more concentrated around the rich set of skills, knowledge and experience that individuals co-utilise during the course of a partnership (Scott, 2012). Although the term 'partnership' does not have a neat definition because it varies upon the context of its particular usage, for the purpose of this thesis it means the coming together of different organisations and the actors that engage in the dynamics of working in partnership.

The research questions will set-up the case study area to allow me to explore the larger question of rural partnership working:

- How has the protected area management of Northumberland National Park evolved since the 1972 Local Government Act?
- What are the processes of rural partnership working?
- How is partnership working practiced in Northumberland National Park?

This research will explore these issues using in-depth interviews with a selection of participants from a range of partner organisations. The participants were encouraged to describe the significance of partnership working through their own encounters with partners in Northumberland National Park (attributing their own levels of significance to their own examples) thereby creating their own narrative contribution.

The timing of the research was particularly affected by the current economic and political climate, most notably:

- The global recession of 2009 to 2012;
- The change of UK Government from Labour to a Conservative/Liberal Coalition in May 2010;
- The focus on austerity measures that arose from the spending review in 2010; and subsequently;
- The national closure of the English regional development agencies by March 2012, which for the past decade, were relatively large, influential and strategic organisations.

It was therefore a good time to examine the value of partnership working during these significant societal changes.

1.6 Thesis Structure

The remainder of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter 2 introduces the field of international protected area management. It details the evolution of the national park movement in the UK, and considers several case studies from abroad. The chapter looks at how learning lessons are shared, and concludes by setting the scene for the research.

Chapter 3 provides a literature review on partnership working. It discusses the approach taken to make sense of the vast array of information on partnerships across a multi-disciplinary field. The chapter also considers academic attempts to create a checklist for partnership working.

Chapter 4 explains the methodology underpinning the research. This details the way in which partners were selected to be part of the project, and the approach used to identify suitable actors within those organisations to interview. It justifies the decision to use semi-structured interviews and explains how a visual tool was used to stimulate discussions.

Chapter 5 addresses my first research question. It provides a detailed narrative on the history of Northumberland National Park, told by participants who had been actively involved since the 1972 Local Government Act. The story tracks the creation of the Countryside and National Park Department of Northumberland County Council, through to the creation of the freestanding national park authority in 1997 and the immediate years that followed. Some of the main issues are considered, including the Otterburn Public Inquiries and discussions over the New LEADER Approach (2008-2013).

Chapter 6 addresses my second research question. It uses the partnership working literature review to provide the framework from which to analyse the results and discuss what makes for successful partnership working in a national park.

Chapter 7 addresses my third research question. It looks at the practice of modern day partnership working with and for Northumberland National Park Authority. Many participants sought to use the research as an opportunity to feedback their thoughts on Northumberland National Park Authority, as the guardian of the protected area. These thoughts are collated and recorded here.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by bringing together the various themes that have been generated. This chapter begins by revisiting the 2010 *English National Parks UK Government Vision and Circular*, to see if the approach to working in partnership has changed since the 1990s. It then discusses the findings of the thesis by addressing each research question in-turn. Amongst the conclusions drawn, it is suggested that Northumberland National Park Authority prepares a road map for the Action Areas. The chapter finishes with a consideration of the limitations of the thesis and opportunities for areas of future research.

Chapter 2: A Literature Review of Protected Areas

“Haskins’ produced a very critical analysis and assessment of rural policy and rural development. His analysis was, ‘Too many organisations, too much overlap, too much confusion, too much bureaucracy, and too many funding streams – the whole thing’s a shambles, and it needs to be rationalised’.” Former deputy National Park Officer (NPO).

2.1 Introduction

Protecting specific geographical areas from human interference is not a new occurrence. Mose and Weixlbaumer (2003) recalled that in Europe during the 8th and 9th Centuries there is evidence of forestry conservation orders used to protect hunting and timber production. The story of protected area management really started during the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th Centuries. With rapid urbanisation across towns and cities came recognition of the value of rural landscapes and a desire to preserve them as the antithesis of industrialisation. Inspired intellectuals and artists were drawn to these environments, with William Wordsworth’s *Guide to the Lakes* (1810) an early example of a traveller’s handbook on the Lake District, made up of observations and poetry. Despite these appreciations in England, the first national park designation did not take place until 1872, at Yellowstone National Park in the USA. As concern grew in England for establishing a legal system to safeguard the environment, one of the most long-lasting and influential campaign groups formed in 1889, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Momentum gathered pace and Europe’s first national parks were designated, starting in 1909 with Abisko National Park in the sparsely populated North of Sweden. Other European countries followed soon after with the high mountains of the Swiss Engadin Valley (1914), the Picos de Europa Mountains in Northern Spain (1918) and the Italian Gran Paradiso area (1922).

The conservation of the landscape and its flora and fauna were not the only motivation for its protection. A further reason behind the growth of the conservation movement in the 19th Century was the interpretation of natural landscapes as God’s creation (Foucault, 1970; Smith, 1984) and the belief that nature was worth looking after in its own right (Lovelock, 1979; Smith, 1998). Harrison *et al.* (1986) and Curry (1994) considered some the human values associated with the countryside, including: the sense of freedom, away from the rules and regulations of the town; the solitude and feelings of aloneness; and the nostalgic value from childhood experiences. Harmon and Putney (2003) attempted to clarify some of the other intangible values placed on natural protected areas: recreational; therapeutic; spiritual; cultural; identity; existence; artistic; aesthetic; educational; peace; and scientific research

and monitoring. Different attitudes towards the value of landscape have been identified, which create intrinsic and incomparable senses of worth. Even within those categories, there are also groups within groups, for example the Centre for Leisure Research (1986) made further sub-classifications around exclusionary groups that aimed to restrict access (e.g. the RSPB), and participatory groups aimed to increase access (e.g. The Ramblers). Whatever the reasons for having an interest in the management of protected areas, today many stakeholders are actively involved in these landscapes (Curry, 1994).

It is this involvement, and the diversity of interests, which creates these 'contested landscapes' where simultaneous social, economic and environmental influences operate (Winter and Lobley, 2009). There are two main reasons why partnership working is particularly interesting in the context of protected areas. Firstly, these particular landscapes are underpinned by statutory designations designed to guide the management practices. The legislation varies from country-to-country, and contestations arise around the meanings, values and politics within protected area management, which quite often test the strength of the designations (for example, see Chapter 5 which explores competing national interests). Secondly, and as Lockwood (2010: 754), explained:

“Governing norms by which to steer traditional government functions are well established and understood; however, this is not the case for the new multi-level and collaborative approaches that characterise protected area governance. This is a largely new territory that makes novel demands on governance institutions and policy.”

Partnership working is a new and emerging form of governance in protected area management. Although there have always been a variety of organisations engaged, this recognition and focus on co-operative approaches is still a relatively novel way of working. It is for these reasons that it is an opportune time to consider partnership working in a protected area.

Chapter 2 will firstly examine the UK national park movement and will detail how these protected areas came about and some of the challenges that they have faced since their designation. This will help to provide the historical context on which this thesis is founded. It will then consider a range of modern international case studies, to demonstrate some of the issues that these contested landscape are experiencing in the 21st Century. Chapter 2 will then look at how the management bodies for these protected areas are working together,

before concluding by focussing in on one of the key emerging changes to the way in which they are governed – that of working in partnership.

2.2 The UK National Parks Movement

The movement to create English and Welsh national parks did not really gather momentum until after the Second World War. Four influential organisations in particular helped to bring these designations about. These were: the aforementioned RSPB; the National Trust (established in 1895); the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves (established in 1912, and changing its name to the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts in 2004); and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (established in 1926, and changing its name to the Council for the Protection of Rural England in 1969, and then to the Campaign to Protect Rural England in 2003). These four organisations helped to stimulate debates about the creation of possible protected areas in the UK. In 1929 the Addison Committee studied the feasibility of national parks, with the briefing:

“To consider and report if it is desirable and feasible to establish one or more national parks in Great Britain with the view to the preservation of the natural characteristics including flora and fauna, and to the improvement of recreational facilities for the people; and to advise, generally, in particular, as to the areas, if any, that are most suitable for the purpose” (cited in Mair and Delafons, 2001: 293)

The Addison Report of 1931 recommended three objectives for national parks in the UK (Addison, 1931):

- To safeguard areas of exceptional national interest against disorderly development and spoliation;
- To improve the means of access for pedestrians to areas of natural beauty; and
- To promote measures for the protection of flora and fauna.

Whereas the National Trust felt that preservation should be the main purpose of the national parks, L.P. Abercrombie (an architect and regional planner of the time) said the national parks should exist primarily for recreation. Meanwhile in 1936 a fifth organisation was established, the Standing Committee on National Parks⁴, which set out an ambitious

⁴ In 1977 the Standing Committee on National Parks became the Council for National Parks, and in 2008 changed its name to the Campaign for National Parks (CNP). Their national park interests are around promoting protection and conservation for the benefit of the nation; the quiet enjoyment and appreciation of natural beauty by the public; advancing education and understanding; and promoting and undertaking research. CNP are also able to lobby government, unlike the apolitical national park authorities.

agenda, that everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy the finest countryside, and that these landscapes should be protected permanently. The Scott Report of 1942 declared that recreation and conservation could harmoniously work together, saying, that there was no antagonism between use and beauty. With that foundation in place, the motions for the 1949 legislation followed (MacEwen and MacEwen, 1987; Thompson, 2008).

As indicated by the Addison Report's first recommendation, there was a degree of urgency to take action sooner rather than later, not least because England and Wales were falling behind the rest of Europe with their protected area designations, but also because the need for protection was becoming more apparent. Mr. Silkin, the Minister of Town and Country Planning referred to the range of factors that were contributing to disfiguring the countryside:

“Shacks, ribbon development, unsightly coastal development, mineral workings, quarrying, power stations, gas works, poles and pylons supporting overhead electricity, telegraph and telephone wires, radar and radio establishments, reservoirs, outdoor advertisements, nissen huts, hutments, hangers and other Service buildings” (National Parks Bill, 1949: 1461).

The history of the UK national parks movement can be understood by a series of milestones. Since my case study area is in England, the story will principally focus on the English context, notwithstanding the inevitable overlap in places with the Welsh and Scottish national parks.

The first significant piece of legislation was the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. The longevity of this Act was reflected some sixty years later in the 2010 *English National Parks UK Government Vision and Circular*, which begins by stating:

“The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 not only enabled the creation of the national parks, but also ensured that the UK's most beautiful and unique landscapes have been, and will continue to be, protected in the future” (Defra, 2010: 4).

A definition of a national park that was applied to the UK was given by the Dower Report (1945), and accepted by the Hobhouse Committee (1947), as:

“An extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation's benefit and by appropriate national decision and action, (a) the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved, (b) access and facilities for public open-air enjoyment are amply provided, (c)

wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historical interest and suitably protected, while (d) established farming use is effectively maintained” (Smith, 1978: 2).

A key provision was the word ‘national’, which implied that they existed for everyone to enjoy. However, in the UK at least, most of the national parks that were subsequently designated were privately owned and privately controlled (Smith, 1978). This in itself created a perception problem since it could be seen that in designating a national park there would be an expectation that they were nationally owned and controlled (MacEwan and MacEwan, 1987). Furthermore, as Mr. Silkin noted during the preparation of the 1949 National Parks Bill, the use of the word ‘park’ was also misleading, because by its definition, a park is “a large, enclosed piece of ground, usually with woodland and pasture, attached to a country house or devoted to public use; [and] an enclosure in a town ornamentally laid out for public recreation” (National Parks Bill, 1949: 1464). Therefore even before the debate about the conflicting purposes of the English and Welsh national parks commenced, it was noted that the proposed ‘national parks’ were neither ‘national’ nor ‘parks’; the name was simply adopted from the so-called American ‘wilderness’ national parks, which are entirely different entities to the largely private landscape of the UK.

The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act passed, with the purposes of national parks defined as:

- To conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the national parks by the public.

With the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act pre-dating the 1949 Act, there were concerns about whether the 1947 Act would be devalued (Sheail, 1984). Indeed such arguments questioned whether the 1949 Act was needed at all, and if the 1947 Act could have been simply amended to cover the new detail (National Parks Bill, 1949).

Further problems cited at the time included the lack of powers under the 1949 Act, the range of authorities involved, and the lack of resources committed to actually deliver the purposes (MacEwen and MacEwen, 1987). The 1949 Act established two separate conservation agencies, the Nature Conservancy, responsible for flora and fauna, and the National Parks Commission, responsible for the landscape matters. This arrangement differed from the recommendations made by John Dower, in his report on the proposed national parks in

England and Wales in 1945, which advised that the two functions should be brought together. The National Parks Commission was given powers to provide advice on potential areas to designate as national parks or areas of outstanding natural beauty, and to plan for the establishment of long-distance footpaths and bridleways. Other than this advisory role, its executive powers were minimal. Once designated, each national park would be administered by the local authority or authorities of the area.

Sir Arthur Salter, a politician and academic, expressed his view that the more important purpose of the two was the preservation and enhancement of natural beauty, because if this was not achieved, the destruction may be irremediable (National Parks Bill, 1949). Such thinking would later become recognised through the Sandford Principle, which was first proposed in 1974, but not ratified until 1995.

Cherry (1975) reflected on the way the 1949 Act was constructed, saying that in hindsight it was unsurprising since a range of state and commercial objectives had to be balanced and defined, leading to a tale of compromise and expediency. Although the changing political climate of the time provided new opportunities, and aforementioned pressure groups advocated the preservation of the natural environment, Sheil (1984: 31) noted that legislative progress would have counted for little had it not been for “the complex web of personal initiatives and relationships.”

The 1950s saw the designation of ten national parks in England and Wales, starting with the Peak District, the Lake District, Snowdonia and Dartmoor in 1951, Pembrokeshire Coast and the North York Moors in 1952, the Yorkshire Dales and Exmoor in 1954, Northumberland in 1956, and finally the Brecon Beacons in 1957. These and the rest of the present UK national parks are detailed in Table 1, along with a selection of key facts and figures, along with a location map for them shown in Figure 2.

Some of the most notable findings from the comparative table are:

- 10.7 per cent of the land area of England is designated as national parks;
- Geographically, the Cairngorms is the largest national park, and the New Forest is the smallest;
- The greatest population is in the South Downs National Park and the smallest is in Northumberland National Park;

- The truncated mean population of the UK national parks (excluding the highest and lowest figures) is 22,140 persons, which rises to 25,860 persons for the same figure just in England.
- The Lake District is the most visited and thereby receives the most recreational/tourism income; and
- With the exception of the Broads in 1989, some 45 years passed between the first round of designations and those that followed from 2002 onwards.

UK National Park	Des.	Area (square miles)	Pop.	SAMs	CAs	Visitors Per Year (Million)	Visitor Days Per Year (Million)	Visitor Spend Per Year (Million)
Dartmoor	1951	369	33,596	1,208	23	2.4	3.1	£111
Lake District	1951	885	40,770	275	21	15.8	23.1	£952
Peak District	1951	555	37,905	457	109	8.4	10.4	£356
Snowdonia	1951	827	25,702	359	14	4.27	10.4	£396
North York Moors	1952	554	23,380	846	42	7	10.7	£411
Pembrokeshire Coast	1952	240	22,644	279	14	4.2	13	£498
Exmoor	1954	268	10,273	208	16	1.4	2	£85
Yorkshire Dales	1954	683	19,761	203	37	9.5	12.6	£400
Northumberland	1956	405	1,993	196	4	1.5	1.7	£190
Brecon Beacons	1957	522	33,344	333	4	4.15	5	£197
Broads	1989	117	6,271	13	18	7.2	11.3	£419
Loch Lomond and the Trossachs	2002	720	15,600	60	7	4	7	£190
Cairngorms	2003	1,748	17,000	60	4	1.5	3.1	£185
New Forest	2005	220	34,922	61	18	/	13.5	£123
South Downs	2010	634	112,343	741	165	/	39	£333

Des. = Designated; Pop. = Population; SAMs = Scheduled Ancient Monuments; CAs = Conservation Areas.

Table 1. Comparative facts and figures about the UK national parks for 2011. The Broads is not technically a national park due to its additional interests in navigation, but it is accepted in the national park family as an equal equivalent. Source: <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk>.



Figure 2. Map of the UK national parks in 2013. This thesis will principally concentrate on the English national parks. Source: Northumberland National Park Authority.

The 1945 Ramsey Committee Report (which paralleled the Hobhouse Committee Report) recommended national park status for the mountain environment of the Cairngorms in Scotland. However, fears over the impact on the local economy and the loss of local democratic accountability provided insurmountable hurdles, and it wasn't until the 2000 National Parks (Scotland) Act that Scotland's first national parks could be designated (Illsley and Richardson, 2004). In Northern Ireland, the Department of the Environment issued a consultation on the designation of national parks in 2011. As of 2013, no national parks have been designated in this part of the UK.

The 1932 Town and Country Planning Act gave local authorities power of control over development throughout the countryside, and the ability to preserve places of natural interest or beauty. However, as Sir George Stapledon wrote in 1937, there was a need for ‘the right sort of experts with the right sort of knowledge’. He said:

“Voting people into authority can do none of these things. A properly appointed [national park] authority should consist of social biologists, psychologists, agriculturalists, foresters, architects, engineers, land agents, chartered surveyors, and such people. Experts all.” (Sheil, 1975: 45).

The 1949 Act did not harmonise the governance structure by which the national park authorities would operate. Only the Peak District National Park and the Lake District National Park were given appointed boards with executive powers independent of the local authorities. With the other designated areas, Joint Committees of the local authorities were appointed when a national park lay within the area of more than one local authority (for national parks wholly within the area of a single authority, like Northumberland, a planning committee or sub-committee of that authority was appointed). To ensure that the national interest would be represented on each committee, one-third of the Authority Members would be appointed by the Minister of Town and Country Planning, in consultation with the National Parks Commission. The central government would also provide grants to the local authorities to cover up to 75 per cent of the expenditures of the national parks, with the remaining 25 per cent from the local authority or authorities.

During the infancy of the first national parks, some of the most contentious issues were the use of protected areas for military training, reclamation of heather and grass moorland for agriculture and afforestation, overgrazing by sheep, and excessive trampling of fragile soils and vegetation by humans (MacEwen and MacEwen, 1987).

As the years unfolded, the strength of the 1949 Act was tested on several occasions, most notably at Exmoor National Park, where the uneasy combination of nature conservation, agriculture, recreation and tourism were brought into question. Loblely and Winter (2009: 236) recollected an interview undertaken with what they called a “far sighted farmer”, who was willing to enter into a land management agreement during the 1960s. Ministerially appointed Authority Member Malcolm MacEwen, gave evidence to raise the profile of the crisis at Exmoor:

“He made it into a simple single burning issue that these farmers were destroying the moorland and government was paying them an 80 per cent grant to do it while another government department was trying to preserve it” (Lobley and Winter, 2009: 236).

This was not the only example of conflicting national interests, with military training also present in Dartmoor, the Brecon Beacons and Northumberland National Park, leading to concerns about both environmental damage and restricted access for recreation. Selman observed that, “Measures that had seemed entirely sufficient in the 1950s began to emerge as seriously inadequate” (2011: 106).

The 1968 Countryside Act attempted to introduce some statutory regulation of agricultural development in environmentally sensitive areas. The National Parks Commission became the Countryside Commission, with the remit of rural recreation, landscape and the whole countryside, and five years later, the Nature Conservancy became the Nature Conservancy Council, with a greater policy and advisory role. These changes attempted to address the growing concerns about developmental pressure, the impact of the leisure boom, the intensification of farming, and the need integrate of government and governance structures, acknowledging that it was irrational to separate landscape, wildlife and other land uses.

The 1972 Local Government Act resulted in the appointments of a national park officer (chief executive) and a professional team to develop a management plan with the exclusive remit of the planning and management of each national park. The 1974 Sandford Committee report also recommended toughening-up development control, paving the way for the voluntary management agreements with farmers as a way forward, later to be realised through the 1981 Wildlife and Access to the Countryside Act. The 1981 Act was an ambitious, complex and diverse piece of legislation, which was put-together after an unparalleled number of amendments in UK Parliamentary history (Leonard, 1982). Its aim was to protect the wildlife and countryside of the UK. Its implementation and effectiveness was substantially undermined by insufficient funding and understaffing, with Cox *et al.* (1987: 66) describing it as nothing less than “a bureaucratic as well as a financial nightmare.” Just as the Exmoor case study had tested the 1949 Act, the case of the Halvergate Marshes in the Norfolk Broads really tested the effectiveness of the 1981 Act, because in this instance it proved impossible to find a solution through management agreements (O’Riordan, 1986).

The national park authorities were simply not equipped to fight these battles. Their funding was consistently less than what was required and their powers were also somewhat

restricted by unworkable legislation. Therefore the national park authorities relied, almost entirely, on persuasion, negotiation, influence, public relations, and a form of moral encouragement – after all such fine landscapes were worth preserving in their own right (Lovelock, 1979; Smith, 1998).

To make matters worse, the pressures that the national park authorities faced were also largely financed by public funds and promoted by public agencies. MacEwan and MacEwan (1987) said that there was a lack of commitment to national park objectives and policies, which were often seen as obstacles to be got around, or in some cases ignored, rather than as necessary constraints that had to be accepted. This implied both a lack of respect for national park authorities and a devalued treatment of the protected areas whenever a conflict of interests arose. MacEwan and MacEwan (1987: 199) stated that, “Conflicting government policies place serious obstacles, sometimes insurmountable obstacles, in the way of integration at the local level.”

The government’s partisan approach, often in opposition to the national park authorities, was a major hindrance in their fundamental ability to meet the objectives of the 1949 Act. What made the situation a great shame was that the national park authorities were not resource intensive, large bureaucracies; but in the words of MacEwan and MacEwan (1987: 125), “They are inspired to an exceptional degree by a commitment to, and enthusiasm for the cause they serve.”

2.3 Introducing Sustainable Development

Following the 1972 Act, all the national park authorities developed management plans with a descriptive and comprehensive view of their area, and were thereafter much better placed to address any issues, looking for solutions that were compatible with the purposes for which national parks were designated. The *World Conservation Strategy* was launched by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1980. It called for a new partnership between conservation and development to meet human needs, without jeopardising the future. In the UK, a consortium consisting of the World Wildlife Fund, the Royal Society of Arts, the Council for Environmental Conservation, the two Countryside Commissions and the Nature Conservancy Council was formed to take this proposal forward, led by John Elkinton, an advocate for sustainable development. His subsequent report, *The Conservation and Development Programme for the UK* was published in 1983. A year later, the Countryside Commission undertook a nationwide survey and published a report called *A Better Future of the Uplands*. Its message was to integrate conservation with development, reconciling the

conflicts between competing government policies. The emerging concept of sustainable development prompted the national park authorities to rethink how the countryside could be managed. 'Sustainable development' was a different language from the notions of 'preservation' that helped shape the 1949 Act. Whilst preservation may have implied safeguarding a particular natural resource by setting it aside and preventing change, this new and dynamic approach implied self-perpetuating progress with an element of resource use. At its simplest level, sustainable development sought to integrate social, economic and environmental interests.

With a good knowledge of environmental interests through the first purpose of the national parks, and with economic interests centred around the second purpose of recreation and tourism, there remained a need to better understand the societal benefits that national park designation brought. In bidding for supplementary funds during 1986/87, each national park authority was asked to show how much they had financially supported local communities. Whilst most claimed to have invested between £10,000 and £49,000 per year on community development, at the top end of the spectrum was the Peak District National Park Authority that had invested £158,000, whilst at the other was Northumberland National Park Authority, which reported that it had not invested anything at all in this area of work. With the smallest population, this was perhaps unsurprising; however a further reason for this difference could have been the comparative levels of experience. Whereas the Peak District National Park Authority had 30 years of experience of an appointed board with executive powers independent of the local authorities, this was in stark contrast to Northumberland, which dealt with national park business as a sub-committee of Northumberland County Council. One authority was mature and confident in managing a national park and bidding for funds, whereas the other simply a sub-committee of a larger authority preoccupied with broader regeneration issues. Nevertheless, the impending implications of sustainable development would go on to affect all of the UK national park authorities.

Although the term 'sustainable development' was introduced in the 1980 World Conservation Strategy, it was not until the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) publication, *Our Common Future*, (WCED, 1987: 37), that its usage became mainstream. Sustainable development was defined therein as:

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The Bruntland Commission report gained high political acceptability partly because it built on the work of previous reports such as *Common Crisis* (Brandt Commission, 1983) and *National Parks, Conservation, and Development: The Role of Protected Areas in Sustaining Society* (McNeely and Miller, 1984). It also offered a positive way that competing groups could unite to support. This aligned to the IUCN stance that recognised the importance of developing inter-agency partnerships and joined-up management approaches (Baker and Stockdale, 2006).

Despite this political acceptance, the introduction of sustainable development as a policy discourse was not universally welcomed. Critics spoke of how the word 'growth' had simply been replaced by 'development' (McManus, 2000), environmentalists wanted a greater focus on conservation, and the WCED was questioned because of the lack of clarification around their own definition of sustainable development (Sachs, 1993). Such debates as to the meaning of sustainable development continued across academic literature in the subsequent years (for example, Middleton *et al.*, 1993; Adams, 1995; Kirkby *et al.*, 1995; Eden, 1996; Johnston; 1996; McManus, 1996; Drummond and Marsden 1999; Sneddon, 2000; Adams *et al.*, 2001; Martinez-Allier 2002; and O'Riordan, 2005). The national park authorities were on the verge of a significant period of change that would see sustainable development placed at the heart of their operations.

2.4 Fit for the Future

Towards the end of the 1980s, it was becoming increasingly apparent in the UK that the two purposes of national parks, that of conservation and recreation/tourism, were difficult to reconcile (Curry, 1994). In 1989 the Countryside Commission set up the National Parks Review Panel with the brief:

“To identify the main factors, including likely developments in the future, which affect the ability of national parks to achieve their purposes; to assess the ways in which these purposes might most effectively be achieved in the future; and to recommend how these ways should be put into practical effect” (Edwards, 1991: 1).

The Panel was chaired by Professor Ron Edwards and over the space of several months collected evidence from all the national parks, hearing the views of local interest groups, local authorities, the officers and Members of the national park authorities, and through meetings with 50 national organisations interested in the national parks. The ensuing report, *Fit for the Future: Report of the National Parks Review Panel*, ran to 90,000 words and was

published in 1991, with 170 recommendations to change and modernise the national parks and the national park authorities. Some of the most notable recommendations were:

- To redefine the purposes of the national parks;
- To legislate for the fostering of social and economic well-being of the communities within the national park;
- To raise the importance of archaeology and the historic environment;
- To seek to influence land management that is in accordance with national park purposes;
- To encourage appropriate and quiet recreation;
- To improve the rights of way network;
- To reduce and eventually remove military activity;
- To establish independent national park authorities for all national parks;
- To empower the national park authorities to have a greater role in tourism;
- To establish an Association of National Park Authorities; and
- To designate the New Forest National Park and establish the New Forest National Park Authority.

With the 1992 General Election subsequently taking priority, it was not until 1995 that some of the findings of *Fit for the Future* made it into legislation. Section 61 of the 1995 Environment Act updated the two purposes of national park designation thus:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the national park; and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of (the) areas by the public.

Section 62 of the 1995 Act related to the application of national park purposes and placed a new duty on the national park authorities:

- To seek to foster the social and economic well-being of the local communities.

Circular 12/96, which implemented the 1995 Act, explained that this was not a third purpose and must be used only in pursuit of the two purposes, in co-operation with those who

themselves have a rural development purpose and without significant expenditure (although there was little guidance for what this actually entailed).

The 1995 Act brought about independent and freestanding national park authorities for every national park. The authorities became the sole planning authorities for these protected areas. The national park authorities continued to be governed by appointed authority members with the remit of looking over and guiding the management of the authority so that it delivered benefits to the nation and its local communities in accordance with national park purposes and aims. The national park authorities would also now be 100 per cent funded from central government.

Although *Fit for the Future* recommended the eventual removal of military activity, this was not accepted and instead public bodies were encouraged to work together. Section 62 of the 1995 Act also placed a duty on all public bodies and public utilities to have regard to the purposes of designation in carrying out their work. Circular 12/96 (Department of the Environment, 1996: 5) explained:

“Relevant authorities will be expected to be able to demonstrate that they fulfilled their duty. They will wish to consider whether they could usefully make reference to it in their annual reports. It may sometimes be the case that the activities of certain authorities outside a national park may have an impact within the park. In such cases it will be important to ensure mutual co-operation across national park boundaries, particularly in planning and highway matters.”

Sustainable development also emerged in the Circular 12/96 (Department of the Environment, 1996: 5) document:

“The Government is committed to the principles of sustainable development as the cornerstone of policies to reconcile the needs of economic development with those of environmental protection. The Government believes that the national parks are in a strong position to influence the way in which we care for our countryside, to be models for the sustainable management of the wider countryside, and to help to further general understanding and appreciation of the means by which development and conservation can be better balanced. The national park authorities will have regard for the principles of sustainable development as they undertake their duties. Sustainable development is an important principle in achieving the well-being of local communities while aiding the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.”

The 1995 Act took the opportunity to finally legislate on the Sandford Principle. It was called the 'Sandford Principle' after Lord Sandford, who chaired the National Parks Policy Review Committee that reviewed the national parks of England and Wales between 1971 and 1974 (Sandford, 1974). It was explained in the Circular 12/96 (Department of the Environment, 1996: 4):

“...The “Sandford Principle” is now enshrined in Section 62 of the 1995 Act. ...The national park authorities in particular will be expected to encourage mediation, negotiation and co-operation, but there may be instances where reconciliation proves impossible. In those cases, the conservation purpose should take precedence.”

The 1995 Act established that in cases of conflict, conservation must take priority. With recognition that sustainable development could not be achieved in isolation, the Government passed legislation to make it a requirement to work in partnership. Circular 12/96 (Department of the Environment, 1996: 6-7) explained:

“The national park authorities will be expected to work closely with the Countryside Commission, which has statutory responsibilities in respect of national park designation and boundary variation procedures and in advising the Secretary of State on national parks on financial and membership matters. They will also be expected to draw on the knowledge and expertise associated with the statutory responsibilities of national agencies: in particular, in the light of the revised national park first purpose, of English Nature and English Heritage; and in the light of the second purpose, of the Sport Council, the Central Council for Physical Recreation and the regional Tourist Boards. They will also be expected to work in close co-operation with the Environment Agency established under Part I of the 1995 Act, all relevant Government organisations including Ministry of Agriculture, Farms and Fisheries and the Forestry Commission, and appropriate commercial bodies and non-governmental organisations.”

The Circular 12/96 continued to outline the importance of two-way partnership working with the local authorities, “The Government in-turn looks to all these agencies and organisations to involve the national park authorities fully in their activities as they affect the national parks” (Department of the Environment, 1996: 7).

The wheels were set in motion for a new future for the national parks underpinned by sustainable development. As recommended by *Fit for the Future*, the Association of National

Park Authorities was also established in 1996. Its membership was the 15 chairs and convenors of the UK national park authorities, advised by the 15 national park officers (chief executives). The name of this organisation recently changed to National Parks United Kingdom (NPUK) with the retained remit of providing with the function to share experience and manage joint training projects, public relations activities and special events. According to the NPUK website⁵, its role includes:

- Engaging with the public and answering queries about national parks as a group;
- Promoting the national parks as special places;
- Promoting the 15 national parks in the UK as beacons for sustainable development;
- Helping to raise their profile and deepen the public's understanding and relevance of these protected landscapes;
- Facilitating training and development for NPA members and staff; and
- Fostering closer working with the growing international family of protected landscapes.

With a renewed impetus on national parks, in 1999 the New Labour Government declared its support for proposed national parks at the New Forest and the South Downs, and instructed the Countryside Agency to begin the public consultation process.

With the foundations laid and the new and independent national park authorities just beginning to find their feet, nobody knew that a nationally significant event was on the horizon that would once again change the way the UK rural landscape was managed.

In February 2001, a national crisis hit the UK countryside with the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. Foot-and-mouth disease (*Aphthae epizooticae*) is an infectious and sometimes fatal viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals, including domestic and wild bovids. The first cases were reported on 19th February 2001 in pigs from Buckinghamshire and the Isle of Wight. As occurrences gathered momentum, on 21st February 2001, the European Union imposed a worldwide ban on all British exports of livestock, meat and animal products. On 23rd February 2001 a case was confirmed in Heddon-on-the-Wall, Northumberland, from where the pig in the first case had come; this farm was later confirmed as the source of the entire national outbreak. On 24th February 2001 a case was announced

⁵ About National Parks UK. [Online]. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013.
Source: <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/aboutus/about-the-association-of-national-park-authorities>

in Devon, with North Wales soon following along with Cornwall, Southern Scotland and the Lake District, where the disease particularly became prevalent.

The disease was finally halted in October 2001, by which time the crisis was estimated to have cost £8 billion. With over 2,000 cases of the disease reported, around seven million sheep and cattle were killed in a successful attempt to halt the disease. Following the General Election, the newly re-elected Labour Government announced a re-organisation of their departments (Curry, 2002). Foot-and-mouth was the catalyst for institutional change in response to the perceived failure of the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to respond to the foot-and-mouth outbreak quickly and effectively (Donaldson *et al.*, 2002; Ward *et al.*, 2004). The Ministry was merged with elements of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions to form the current department, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The crisis gave the national park authorities a central role in dealing with the issue, as Thompson found during her research (Thompson, 2003: 145) when interviewing an officer from a national park authority:

“I think our particular role has grown in the region as a result of foot-and-mouth. We (the national park authority) have been able to sit at the table at the regional task force and the regional land management recovery group and play a role in influencing what came out of those groups.” (officer, national park authority, August 2001, cited in Thompson, 2003).

The foot-and-mouth crisis presented the national park authorities with a sense of importance and value at a time when they needed to show strong leadership in helping the UK get through the national emergency.

As part of the sweeping changes of the time, in 2002 Lord Haskins was asked to review arrangements for delivering Defra’s rural policies in England, and to make recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the delivery mechanisms. The review included an assessment of the roles of English Nature and the Countryside Agency, and was published in 2003. The Haskins’ Review stated (2003: 12):

“In creating Defra in 2001, the government brought together three groups of policy objectives which had previously been the responsibility of different departments – Food and Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs. Having established the new department, with its main

objective of promoting sustainable development, government also needed to review the arrangements for delivering its policies.”

The Haskins’ Review continued (2003: 65-68):

“Partnership working is desirable where organisational roles complement each other, but it can become a source of unnecessary bureaucracy where they overlap. National park authorities are expert in showing how economic development of a suitable nature can enhance the environment and can show the way forward for sustainable development in the wider countryside.”

In total, the Haskins’ Review had 33 recommendations, including the need for a better level of clarity around policy and delivery, a greater level of local accountability, and a reconsideration of the role of some of the public sector funded rural organisations. Defra accepted the key recommendation to establish a new integrated agency dealing with biodiversity, natural resource protection and landscape issues; however, the proposal to abolish the Countryside Agency altogether was rejected, in favour of a reduced overall remit (Defra, 2004). Meanwhile, the plans of the government to designate new national parks were coming to fruition, and after a protracted period of boundary negotiation, the New Forest National Park was established in 2005. Discussions about the South Downs were still ongoing at this stage.

The 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act followed and saw the creation of Natural England from the amalgamation of English Nature, the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service (previously part of Defra). In the same year, the chairs of the English national park authorities established the English National Park Authorities Association, following a process of devolution. The name of this organisation recently changed to National Parks England (NPE) with the retained remit of providing a collective voice for the ten English national park authorities. According to the NPE website⁶, its role includes:

- Providing a collective voice for the views of the English national park authorities;
- Raising the profile of the work of the authorities to policy makers, Parliamentarians and other decision makers;

⁶ About National Parks England. NPE. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. [Online]. Source: <http://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/home/about-national-parks-england>

- Facilitating discussion amongst national park authorities on issues of common concern;
- Supporting the development and capacity of the national park authorities to effect change; and
- Working in partnership with other bodies where this adds value.

NPE works closely with the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) and NPUK, while also providing the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on National Parks within Parliament. The remit of NPE also extends to work closely with Natural England and National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and with the EuroParc Atlantic Isles. Indeed, NPE played a key role in updating and publishing the *2010 English National Parks UK Government Vision and Circular*.

On 1st April 2010, legislation was finally passed to officially designate the South Downs National Park. The following month the UK undertook a General Election that saw the Labour Government replaced by a new Conservative-Liberal Coalition Government. Soon after that, one of the first publications by the Defra was the *2011 Uplands Policy Review*, which stated the intention to:

“Consult widely on a possible change to the legislation on the role of national park authorities to reflect the importance of sustainable development” (Defra, 2011: 5).

Debates about the extent to which the sustainable development role of the authorities should be reflected in legislation have been discussed in academic and practitioner circles ever since the 1991 *Fit for Future* report, which at the time concluded that a new socio-economic duty would be more appropriate rather than a third purpose. More recently, on 7th December 2011 I attended a National Parks England workshop in London, which was titled, ‘Living, Working Landscapes: Delivering Sustainable Development in National Parks’. Many different stakeholders attended this event, in preparation for Defra’s proposed consultation.

However, the emerging top priority for the new Coalition Government was to respond to the global financial crisis by introducing a series of austerity measures. Defra, the sole funder of the national park authorities, went on to have its budget cut by 40 per cent⁷, and the implications of this, along with the publication of the *2012 National Planning Policy*

⁷ Jowit, J., Carrell, S. and Vidal, J. (2010) Plan to sell off nature reserves risks ‘austerity countryside’. The Guardian. [Online]. Last updated: 23:08 on 13th August 2010. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/aug/13/plan-sell-nature-reserves-austerity-countryside>

Framework (DCLG, 2012), resulted in a u-turn by Defra on the sustainable development consultation:

“The Government has decided not to consult on the sustainable development role of national park authorities. We do not consider that there is a problem with how national park authorities currently deliver sustainable development. We feel the existing socio-economic duty on national park authorities and existing guidance as well as the new provisions under the *National Planning Policy Framework* makes it clear how national park authorities should deliver sustainable development. Sustainable development is already at the heart of their decision making” (cited by a policy officer, National Parks England, Appendix 1).

With the closure of that discussion, the emphasis of Defra was firmly on dealing the austerity measures. Soon after, this resulted in cuts to the English national park authorities of around 30 per cent to 35 per cent over a four-year period, equating to the biggest reduction of resources in the history of the national parks. As of 2013, many of the English national park authorities have been through a process of redundancies and restructuring, resulting in leaner and more focussed organisations, yet ill equipped to deliver some of the wider sustainable development objectives that they had built their management plans around since the foot-and-mouth crisis.

With the current Government focussing on economic development, National Parks England commissioned and published a report called *Valuing England's National Parks* (Cumulus Consultants, 2013). The report detailed the collective contribution that the English national parks make to local and national economies with a range of challenges and opportunities for supporting sustainable economic growth in the future. It was found that the English national parks contribute between £4.1 billion and £6.3 billion to the economy every year. With Defra facing a further £37 million budget cut by 2015⁸, it will be interesting to see whether the report will mitigate, or even exempt, the national park authorities from additional cuts.

With an understanding how the UK national park movement has evolved, it would be useful to next consider the international context including some case studies of protected areas and how they are managed, by way of a comparison to the UK.

⁸ Nichols, W. (2013) Budget 2013: Defra facing £37m budget cut by 2015. The Guardian. [Online]. Last updated: 10:28 on 20th March 2013. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/mar/20/budget-2013-defra-cut-2015>

2.5 The IUCN and Category V

The World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) is one of six Commissions of the IUCN, which was founded in 1948. In 1992, the WCPA developed seven international categories for protected area management (IUCN, 1994), after scientists from 181 countries came to an agreement to rationalise around 140 global terms for protected areas (Curry, 2009):

- Ia Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area;
- Ib Wilderness Area
- II National Park;
- III Natural Monument;
- IV Habitat/Species Management Area;
- V Protected Landscape/Seascape; and
- VI Managed Resource Protected Area.

This thesis will primarily concentrate on partnership working for an IUCN Category V Protected Landscape/Seascape, which is where Northumberland National Park was categorised. Despite the relatively simple six forms classification, which has gained international recognition, it is a system that has been criticised for neither being legally binding nor having due regard for local circumstances (West *et al.*, 2006).

The diversity of protected areas that fall into Category V is substantial. For example, classifications according to national law include: parco naturale regionale (Italy); parc naturel régional (France); parque natural (Spain and Portugal); naturpark (Austria and Germany); regionaler naturpark and naturerlebnispark (Switzerland); nationaal parks (the Netherlands); and areas of outstanding natural beauty and national parks (UK). Despite these different labels, as Curry expressed, “If there is one commonality across [protected areas] in practice, it relates to conserving special places for human benefit” (2009: 230).

Category V designations include those with an emphasis on human-influenced landscapes within protected area management (Dower *et al.*, 1998; Ogden, 2003), seeking to concentrate on places where (IUCN, 1994: 22):

“...the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity.”

Although not intended to be prescriptive, the IUCN guidelines attempted to promote the integration of sustainable development principles within the planning and management of Category V protected areas.

2.6 International Contested Landscapes

Designating an area as protected does not necessarily mean it is safe from harm (O’Riordan, 2002; Petrosillo *et al.*, 2009). Indeed, Dryzek (1997) stated that environmental problems are often found at the intersection of ecosystems and human social systems. Protected area management in Europe differs from North America due to the comparatively smaller number of wilderness areas (Janssen, 2009). This resulted in a greater focus on the Category V areas that have come to be dependent on human intervention. However, even comparing landscapes within the same category is a hazardous task due to differing geographic, historical and cultural characteristics, the various social and political structures, and the implementation of planning policies. Section 2.6 will examine a range of international examples of protected areas, introducing some of the varying challenges to their management. This will help to demonstrate the complexities of these contested landscapes.

Since the late 1990s, the French central government committed itself to the idea that its *parcs naturels régionaux* were appropriate units for sustainable development (Fédération des Parcs Naturels Régionaux, 2007), performing a key role in contemporary regional rural development by applying the principles of sustainable development, simultaneous social, economic and environmental advancement. In Germany, nature parks are also seen as model landscapes that can contribute to sustainable regional development (Leibenath, 2007). In Austria, although nature parks have a broad acceptance amongst the population, there are differences in size, staff, equipment, finances, and voluntary contribution. The Department of Geography and Regional Research at the University of Vienna investigated nature park with a two-year project entitled ‘The Nature Park Ötscher-Tormäuer in the Minds of the Local Population – Chances for Attempts of Regional Development’ (Gamper *et al.*, 2007). The conclusion was that the structure of governance was overburdened with responsibilities that could not be fulfilled. Despite this, Phillips (2002, 2003) argued that the concept of sustainable development encourages policy officials to think on three levels and that Category V protected areas could become pioneers in society’s search for a more sustainable future.

One of the most famous historical advocates for national parks was the Scot, John Muir (1838 – 1914), who helped to preserve Yosemite Valley, Sequoia National Park and other

wilderness areas in the USA. His own homeland though did not designate national parks until the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs (2002) and the Cairngorms (2003), over 50 years after those in England and Wales. Illsley and Richardson (2004) explained that just as the 1949 Act was passed amidst a wave of national pride, so to did the Scottish national parks follow the heels of devolution as one of the first legislative acts of the new Scottish Parliament, the 2000 National Parks (Scotland) Act. The Scottish national parks have four aims:

- To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- To promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public; and
- To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

Like the English and Welsh national parks, the first aim is conservation, which takes priority over the aims if a conflict arises. However, the sustainable use of natural resources became the second purpose, with recreation and tourism third, and socio-economic development fourth. This was a different set-up not just to the English and Welsh national parks, but also to those across Europe because the Scottish national parks were founded on the principle of sustainable development (Barker and Stockdale, 2008). This new model for Category V protected area management was described by Scottish Natural Heritage (2002: 3):

“The modern approach to conservation recognises the importance of achieving social and economic development alongside the proper protection of the natural and cultural heritage. It should also provide the opportunity to test new approaches to achieving sustainable development. ...Because of the model of national parks that we have developed in Scotland to suit our particular circumstances, much will depend on the commitment, skills and resources of others.”

However, as MacLellan (2007) was aware, expanding the aims of the protected areas, while at the same time having a budget that is significantly less than that elsewhere in the UK, may result in artificially raised aspirations, no matter how good the intentions are.

Designating an area as protected is only as good as the way it is managed and governed (Dearden *et al.*, 2005). Prior to the formation of the Great Basin National Park in Nevada in 1986, Achana and O'Leary (2000) recalled that many local people feared a loss of grazing,

mining, and recreational opportunities as a result of designation. History showed that those fears proved ill founded: visitors doubled; there was little disruption of local lifestyles; demands on infrastructure were not excessive; and concessions were made whereby grazing and mining were permitted. This case study showed that if aspirations are raised, and delivered upon, environmental protection and economic development can work simultaneously.

There was a similar case study at Müritzer National Park in Germany, which was created in 1990, the same year that East and West Germany reunified after 41 years of separation. Leibenath (2007) explained that due to the unique circumstances of the political climate, the designation process was perhaps not given the full attention it required, and was driven forward over a period of nine months, principally by some committed ecologists. In hindsight, it was felt that the population did not have a chance to fully reflect on the virtues of being a national park. This resulted in various forms of local resistance, with the new designation being made a scapegoat for unemployment and other problems that were not necessarily caused by it. It took several years until it was recognised as an asset for the region.

Most protected area management case studies focus on instances where learning lessons have arisen through trial and error, rather than showcasing instances of best practice. Examples include: controversial natural resource use at Alaska (Johnson, 2000); a lack of community consultation and subsequent vandalism at Cape Cod, (Kornblum, 2000); competition between differing protected areas hindering progress in Austria (Gamper *et al.* 2007); and serious administrative failures in Mexico (García-Frapolli *et al.*, 2009), and likewise in Greece (Oikonomou and Dikou, 2008). In the latter example, the case study was of the Marine Park of Alonissos, in Northern Sporades, Greece. Oikonomou and Dikou found a catalogue of administrative errors, starting with unrealistic raised expectations, and proceeding to a lack of consultation on the management plan, an unequal distribution of wealth, a lack of partner support, a lack of funding, and ultimately an organisational reputation left in pieces. These so-called “paper parks” (García-Frapolli *et al.*, 2009: 715) were found to be lacking in management and political support after their designation (Dudley *et al.*, 1999; IUCN, 1999; Chapin, 2004; Haenn, 1999). These case studies demonstrate that protected areas are specialised cases, requiring competent and sufficiently funded management alongside the support of other organisations and local people.

In some of these instances, it was the view of the researchers that it would take a generation to resolve the conflicts, such was the severity of the issues encountered. The importance of

using open communication to resolve the issues collectively was a common lesson. However, as Smith (2000: 234) pointed out,

“In an ideal world, the decision makers would sit around a table, invite the public in for consultation and comment, and make decisions based on the greatest good for the greatest number. There are certain demographic, technological, economic, and political trends, however, that make this kind of conflict resolution extremely difficult.”

In Slovakia, Nolte (2007) investigated whether tourism could help to stimulate regional economic development. Her research showed that there was an uneven spread of development, with the Slovensky Kras area benefiting more from tourism than Polana. Both areas demonstrated a poor tourism product compared to other European countries, with little investment in the services and limited information about the actual biosphere reserves, even though they were established to aid environmental education. Nolte concluded that regional benefits would only come about if the networking between all the relevant organisations was vastly improved, and if there was a better understanding of the differences between tourism, sustainable tourism, eco-tourism, and educational tourism.

Mauz (2007) investigated Vanoise National Park in France, where the protected area is divided into a central zone, focussed solely on environmental protection, and a periphery zone, where socio-economic development is permitted. The local people formed a ‘Friends of Vanoise National Park’ group when it became apparent that they had been largely excluded from the planning process and that most human and financial resources were directed towards the central zone, while the periphery zone and its communities were left largely ignored. Disputes followed surrounding the proposed creation of a ski resort and three dam pumping stations, which took almost 20 years to resolve. Mauz’s research showed how the zoning policy promoted a negligent attitude in the periphery zone. As a direct result of hosting the 1992 Winter Olympic Games, the periphery zone was left in an over-developed state, becoming a case study of the damage that can be quickly caused by a lack of development control. Mauz found that by focussing attention solely on the central zone, the peripheral zone developed the highest concentration of ski resorts in Europe, if not the world. Many of the issues that arose in this case study could have been avoided with effective communication and appropriate level of boundary management, perhaps with a buffer zone between the central and the periphery zones, to help manage the rate of development.

In Spanish national park areas, a high level of local acceptance is an indispensable condition (Voth, 2007). The National Park of Ordesa was designated in 1982 and brought new income opportunities able to slow down depopulation, which had affected most valleys of the Spanish Pyrenees. The declaration of the National Park of Cabañeros was a demand of the local population therefore its acceptance was largely uncontested when it was designated in 1995. The Atlantic Islands of Galicia National Park was also widely accepted in 2002 because traditional fishing was recognised as a compatible activity and the interests of the coastal population were not affected. This demonstrates that even potentially conflicting environmental and economic interests can be brought together if the process of designation is handled sensitively, and local people are engaged in the discussions and understand what the issues are.

Jarvis (2000) stated that if protected area management was going to be effective, then the protected areas must function as part of their communities, reaching beyond their boundaries to engage with those affected by its presence. Kah (2007) detailed a best practice case study of where such an approach has worked, at the Cinque Terre in Italy. The Cinque Terre are a 10 kilometre stretch of land along the Ligurian coast that was declared a protected marine area in 1997, and both a national park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999. The Cinque Terre consists of the five villages of Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola and Riomaggiore. In this case study, Kah described how the problems of a declining population and a lack of land maintenance during the 1970s were overcome, transforming the national park into vibrant and sustainable locations with carefully managed schemes that were supported by the local people.

Management bodies perform a central role in the development of protected areas, no matter how they are structured or where they are located. Although in many cases they are also primarily responsible for administrative matters, their participation in regional development processes is seen as essential, regardless of their legal status, financial resources and staffing. They have a facilitating role that helps to shape the image of the area, and are typified by their willingness to co-operate with other important actors in the region (Mose, 2007). Machlis and Field (2000) argued that because of the role of management bodies in facilitation, there is a need for learning and best practice to be better shared internationally. Organisations like the IUCN and the EuroParc Federation are trying to apply some form of consistency and create an environment where learning can happen.

2.7 The EuroParc Federation

One umbrella body that helps to bring protected area managers together is the EuroParc Federation, which was established in 1973. The aims⁹ of the organisation were then, and still are today, to:

- Promote good practice in the management of protected areas;
- Facilitate the establishment of new protected areas;
- Raise the profile of protected areas as a vital means of safeguarding many of the continent's most valuable natural heritage assets, and thereby to increase support for their future protection; and
- Influence the future development of public policies and programmes, especially with the European Union, to the benefit of protected areas' objectives.

With representation from 430 protected areas, governmental departments, non-governmental organisations and businesses across 35 countries, since 2000 their annual conferences have had dedicated themes related to conservation and socio-economic development since 2000 (Table 2).

Year	Theme of the Annual EuroParc Conference
2000	Young People in Protected Areas: A Living Heritage for Europe
2001	Protected Areas and the Challenge of Tourism
2002	Sustainable Development in the Protected Landscapes
2003	Striking the Balance Between Nature Conservation and Local Economic Development
2004	Conservation and Opportunities for People
2005	Our Landscapes: Space for Nature, Opportunities for People
2006	Pillars of Sustainable Development in Protected Areas
2007	Nature – Bridging Borders
2008	High Conservation Values, High Management Standards
2009	100 years of National Parks in Europe: A Shared Inheritance - A Common Future
2010	Biodiversity and Human Activities: A Challenge for the Future of Protected Areas
2011	Quality Counts – Benefits for Nature and People
2012	(Re)Connecting Society with Biodiversity
2013	40 Years of Working for Nature

Table 2. Themes from the annual EUROPARC Federation conference, 2000 to 2013. Source: <http://www.europarc.org>.

Although the IUCN recognised protected landscapes as living models of sustainable use in the 1980s (Lucas, 1992), it was not until the 2002 conference at Snowdonia National Park

⁹ Who we are: the voice of Europe's protected areas. EuroParc. [Online]. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: <http://www.europarc.org/who-we-are>

that the challenge was put-forward to view Category V protected areas as living landscapes, thereby reconciling conservation and human use.

2.8 Conclusion

The sustainability of protected areas depends on those responsible knowing whether or not their approach to management is effective (Moore and Walker, 2008). Chapter 2 firstly provided a literature review on English national parks by detailing the potted history of area protection since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. Professor Ron Edwards' 1991 *Fit for the Future* report was a pivotal moment, resulting in a whole raft of changes realised through the 1995 Environment Act. The period of growth continued up until 2010, when funds were cut and the national park authorities had to once again concentrate on their core functions. Chapter 2 also considered several international protected areas, and some of the difficulties experienced in their management, particularly in the IUCN Category V areas that sought to balance conservation with development. Learning lessons in protected area management are shared in the UK through NPUK and in Europe through the EuroParc Federation.

When the two parts of Chapter 2 are brought together, there are some fundamental conclusions that can be drawn as a whole. A range of management issues were discussed, which included the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (UK), insufficient and inconsistent budgets (UK, Greece, Mexico), raised local expectations which were not delivered upon (Greece, Mexico), boundary issues (France), the management of natural resources (Alaska, USA), competition between protected areas (Austria), and the absence of a joined-up approach to protected area management (Slovakia). However, Chapter 2 has also demonstrated that if the local community is fully engaged in managing the protected area, the chances of the management objectives being fulfilled are a lot greater (Italy, Spain).

Ten of the UK's national parks were designated in a 'top-down' style, following recommendations by various central government advisors. Therefore these original national parks never had the chance to fully engage with the local people in the designation, in the same way that the Spanish national parks, and more recently, the Scottish national parks have.

In Northumberland National Park, since the turn of the 20th Century, the Authority has attempted to reverse this 'top-down' approach. As the organisation matured, so did its management plans, as demonstrated in the gradual change of wording from, what can be

interpreted as a disassociation and a lack of responsibility for local people, through to the eventual acceptance that local communities were indeed crucial to the successful fulfilment of the national park purposes and duty. This move towards a 'bottom-up' approach took place alongside the introduction of sustainable development, a way of working that has become common in IUCN Category V protected areas. The management of protected areas in this category typically involves multiple stakeholders. The next chapter in this thesis will consider the rural literature on partnership working, to examine what it means and how it is realised in practice.

Chapter 3: A Literature Review of Rural Partnership Working

“I don’t think partnerships are easy, I don’t think they are at all. I think we have to recognise that everybody has an agenda. I think there is always a danger, or a possibility, that as an organisation grows and has resources at its disposal that it will try and do everything itself. I think that’s an easy route to take in terms of control and management. But it’s far more fruitful if organisations can work together in the interests of sustaining each other.” Community development trust participant.

3.1 Introduction

In the UK and beyond, partnership working really emerged as a governance tool during the last 30 years (Stöhr, 1981; Barke and Newton, 1997; Scott, 2004; Derkzen and Bock, 2009; Wilson *et al.*, 2009), and has since become a “significant vehicle for the implementation of rural development policy in Britain” (Edwards *et al.*, 2001: 289). This “novel form of governance” (Jones and Little, 2000: 172) soon became a requirement of regeneration programmes and initiatives operated by the local and national government and the European Union. The popularity of partnership working partly arose due to the perceived failure of the ‘top-down’ approach to stimulate progress, whether in urban centres or across the rural landscape. This change of process has been linked to the ‘hollowing out of the state’ (Milward, 1996; Hall, 1999; Jessop, 1999; Jessop, 2006) and growing interest in the concept of governance as a means of explaining the changing ways in which society is governed (Rhodes, 1997), that of partnership working. Such a transformation attracted much interest from researchers, however relatively few studies focussed on the ‘new’ partnership processes that were being created (Selin and Chavez, 1995; McAreavery, 2006; Derkzen and Bock, 2009).

For a while, partnership working stood as an almost completely undisputed mode of governance. During the 1990s, Peck and Tickell (1994: 251) observed that talk of partnership was “seen exclusively as positive currency”, to work in partnership was compared to ‘apple pie’, which meant, as Jones and Little explained, “undeniably a good thing” and “utterly safe ground” (2000: 171). Examples of past research around partnerships include some general best practice observations (Gray, 1989; Jamal and Getz, 1995; O’Donnell and Thomas, 1998; Roberts and Simpson, 1999; Selin, 1999; Balloch, 2001; Moseley, 2003a; Scott, 2004), and specific to rural areas, a wealth of interest around the four iterations of the LEADER initiative (1991 to 2013).

3.2 A New Form of Governance: Partnership Working

Stoker (1995: 4-15) identified five major propositions around the reasoning behind partnership working as an emerging form of governance. These were: the complex set of institutions and actors that are drawn from, but also beyond, government; the blurring of the responsibility boundaries between multi-sector partners; the shared-power world of collective action that this entails; the autonomous self-governing network of actors; and the ultimate creation of these new tools to steer and guide progress in the form of the empowerment of actors to get things done, without the government in command.

The growth of partnership working really came to the forefront in Britain in 1997 when Tony Blair and the New Labour Government swept into power on the promise of a new 'joined-up' approach governance. In rural areas, this was realised through initiatives such as the local action groups for LEADER, Rural Challenge, Rural Development Boards and Development Areas, Training and Enterprise Councils, Enterprise Agencies, Economic Partnerships, Local Enterprise Companies and Vital Villages. Although it created a complex web of interdependence, it soon became the favoured mechanism of rural policy formulation at all strategic levels (Goodwin, 1998). The 2000 Rural White Paper identified small towns of 2,000 to 20,000 people as critical sites for rural regeneration with recognition that market towns were vital nodes in the wider rural economy and society (MAFF, 2000). Commentators viewed the shift towards 'joined-up' partnership working in this context as a pragmatic response to the challenge of governing areas typified by local differences and a desire for self-governance (Temple, 2000). Questions also arose around the extent that these new partnerships really added value to local development and the need for further research into their formation, operation and effectiveness (Moseley, 2003a; 2003b). Furthermore it was noted that partnership working was not always practically effective. For example, in trying to address rural youth and poverty issues through partnership working, in one case study it was found that progress was hindered by the lack of direct involvement of the youths themselves in partnership deliberations; therefore the actors that participate on the partnerships are crucial to its success (Essex *et al.*, 2005).

This reassessment of governance in the UK came about for a variety of reasons. Firstly, there had been a crisis with the Keynesian post-war welfare state and its associated modes of economic and political co-ordination. Jessop (1995: 312) summarised these as "tripartite macro-corporatism", and by the late 1970s the state was coming under increased fiscal and political pressure for reform. This was compounded in rural areas with faltering agricultural markets and the emergence of the competing rural factions of conservation, recreation and

tourism (Woods, 1997). Secondly, the established system of governance came into question alongside the new right political ideology of Margaret Thatcher and the three successive Conservative terms of office, which attempted to roll back the state in its search for new forms of intervention and control. There was a gradual realisation that policy goals did not, and could not, simply rest on the authority of the government. Aligned to this was a desire to facilitate private sector thinking into the public sector (Atkinson, 1999; Clarke and Newman, 1997; Hastings, 1999). Thirdly, local political actors were starting to form new coalitions and partnerships to further local socio-economic interests, through a portfolio of new enterprises and initiatives, such as those previously mentioned in Section 3.2. With such blurring of responsibilities it was no longer clear who was in control and who was ultimately responsible. British rural communities were soon typified by, “many linked organisations operating at local, regional, national and supranational levels ...with governance responsibilities now shared between a range of private, public and voluntary sectors, operating through a variety of structures” (Goodwin, 1998: 8). This messiness raised questions around legitimacy and effectiveness, with no-single organisation having overall accountability and control.

The new governance structures sought new ways to reverse the trend of rural decline, through re-skilling programmes, venture capital investments, training, innovation centres, and by utilising the emergence of information technology, by creating industrial parks, and by undertaking food marketing promotions and tourism initiatives, etc. (Goodwin, 1998). However, the new forms of intervention were found to be highly localised; what worked in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire for example, would not necessarily be transferable to Northumberland and Cumbria. Furthermore the new partnerships were not constructed on a blank canvas; rather the landscapes were already imprinted with territorial divisions, stretching from the government bodies through to the parish councils and beyond (Edwards *et al.*, 2000).

A further push in the direction of partnerships came from the European Union. In order for rural areas to qualify for European Structural Funds under Objective 1 or 5b, partnership working was fundamental. Yet the reasons why this form of governance found its way into European Union policy agendas was not exactly the same as it was in the UK. Smith (1995, 1998: 227) recognised that there was a top-level perception that European programmes of the early 1990s were “financing the wrong actors.” Partnerships were subsequently discursively positioned away from exogenous development towards the encouragement of

locally-driven, endogenous development. Such a shift takes time to settle down though, as Murray explained from a local case study in Ireland:

“In short by the end of 2002, the local group had moved some considerable distance. From being initially quite passive and uncertain, it now welcomed its responsibilities to engage as a full and open partner in the strategic planning process. The key insight here is that it took considerable time to evolve” (Murray, 2010: 100).

The increased use of partnerships in rural policy challenged the traditional way in which rural areas are governed, forcing a change in attitude. However, the rolling back of the state did not exactly work out as was envisioned by either Margaret Thatcher or Tony Blair. The state may no longer be as visible in partnerships, yet behind the scenes, there is recognition that there is a continuing role for the government bodies in initiating, structuring, financing and regulating partnerships. The way in which the public sector exerts its authority has undoubtedly changed, but it was not the sudden leap that was forecast. In the UK, the change is best understood as a shift in the strategies employed by the state to render these emerging partnership mechanisms governable (Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1993; Rose, 1996; Gardner, 2008). It would be wrong to perceive the growth of partnership working as a diminution of the state because in many instances the agencies continue to control this method of governance. Therefore it would perhaps be more accurate to reflect upon the changing mode of state intervention, rather than a ‘rolling back’ of the state *per se* (Gardner, 2008).

More critical studies of partnership working have been generated by academic analysis of its practice (MacSharry, 1992; Kearney *et al.*, 1994; Mannion, 1996, Barke and Newton, 1997; Ray, 2000; Shucksmith, 2000b; Kovacs Katona *et al.*, 2006; Böcher, 2008, Furmankiewicz *et al.*, 2009; Nardone *et al.*, 2010). Investigative methodologies utilised a mixture of techniques, including narrative policy document analysis (Namara, 2006; Derkzen and Bock, 2007), questionnaire surveys (Barke and Newton, 1997), various types of modelling (Selin, 1999; Nardone *et al.*, 2010), depth interviews (Saxena, 2005; Derkzen and Bock, 2009; Wilson *et al.*, 2009), and longitudinal studies (Derkzen *et al.*, 2008). The latter sought to track the evolution of a partnership over-time, rather than as a snapshot of any given moment. Almost all research on rural partnerships has entailed the identification and evaluation of a previously established partnership.

With the results of this new interest in partnership working starting to emerge towards the end of the 21st Century, researchers began to scrutinise if they really were like 'apple pie'. Whilst Roberts and Simpson (1999: 316) described them as complex and "often beset with difficulties," Selin (1999: 260) appreciated that "like other social forms, partnerships can be a force for good or bad." Edwards *et al.* (2001: 296) summarised why partnership working was so persistent:

"Although partner representatives and partnership coordinators may half-joke that it would be 'easier' to things done without partnerships, very few would seriously suggest that partnerships are the wrong method. However, this almost blanket acceptance of partnerships indicates a certain lack of interrogation of what partnership means."

After more than a decade of examining various rural partnerships, relatively few studies sought to better understand the complex processes at work (McAreavey, 2006). With this in mind, the aim of Chapter 3 is to lift the lid on the processes behind partnership working in rural areas. This will be achieved through content analysis of a range of literatures, all the while extracting and recording findings that contribute towards the understanding of rural partnerships. I will first explore how partnership is defined. After that I will explain the aforementioned context analysis and how I set about focussing a wide-range of literature into thematic categories. From these, I will explore each area in turn, before reflecting on some relatively recent and more detailed attempts to create a checklist for partnership working. Chapter 3 will conclude by laying the foundations for my own research in this highly complex field.

3.3 Defining Partnership

In attempting to define what a partnership means, it is useful to track various attempts by researchers over the years. One of the first references refers to partnership as a voluntary pooling of resources (labour, money, information, etc.) between two or more parties to accomplish collaborative goals (Gray, 1985). There are two problems with this simple definition. Firstly, Selin and Chavez (1995: 845) recognised that not all partnerships are 'voluntary', saying, "They may be highly structured, characterised by legally binding agreements, or may be quite unstructured verbal agreements between participating organisations." Secondly, the use of the word 'collaboration' stood out for Hall (1999: 276) and Wilson *et al.* (2009: 270), who observed terms like collaboration, co-ordination, network, relationship, partnership and joint management were used interchangeably in practice, even though they are acutely different in what they actually mean.

Edwards *et al.* (2000: 2) also made an attempt to define partnerships as, “An arrangement which deliberately draws together the resources of specified partners in order to create a capacity to act with regard to a defined objective or set of objectives.” The same authors added to this rather simple definition the following year, saying that partnership “is neither a neutral term, nor one with a fixed definition; rather the meaning of ‘partnership’ is discursively constructed and contested through political rhetoric, policy documentation, programme regulations, and grassroots practice” (Edwards *et al.*, 2001: 294-95). From this point on, the measures of success shifted from the outcomes of partnerships, towards a greater scrutiny of the processes at work. In order to get to that stage, researchers sought to try and encapsulate what working in partnership actually meant.

The first definition of partnership shown in Section 3.3 (Gray, 1985) was seemingly expanded by Moseley *et al.* (2003a: xvi) thus:

“[A rural development partnership is] a voluntary alliance of organisations from at least two societal sectors ...with a clear organisational structure, with ongoing and long-term activities that include more than one project, and which show an integrated approach to the promotion of the development of rural areas with no more than 100,000 inhabitants.”

This definition was of course developed for their own research, therefore they must have excluded the statutory imposed partnerships, those of a short-term nature and those that were informal, which would have obviously ruled out quite a few more. From this definition we can also add ‘alliance’ to the list of interchangeable partnership words.

Wilson *et al.* (2009) defined ‘partnerships’ in greater detail than earlier efforts from Bramwell and Lane (2000) and Laing *et al.* (2008), to propose:

“[Partnerships are] regular, cross-sectoral interactions over an extended period of time between parties, based on at least some agreed rules or norms, intended to address a common issue or to achieve a specific policy goal or goals, which cannot be solved by the partners individually and involving pooling and sharing of appreciations or resources, mutual influence, accountability, commitment, participation, trust and respect and transparency” (2009: 271).

This definition goes beyond ‘more than one organisation’ and ‘shared outcomes’ to awareness of some of the underlying notions and processes at work. Use of words like

'trust', 'respect' and 'transparency' became recognised factors of successful partnership working, even though as Chapter 3 will explain, Wilson *et al.* (2009) only touched upon some of the overall complexities.

The “cross-sectoral interactions” can include arrangements around co-operative marketing initiatives (Witt and Moutinho, 1989), inter-governmental coalitions (Selin, 1993), inter-sector planning (Gunn, 1994) and most commonly, public-private partnerships (Murphy, 1985), the latter of which can aim to “foster inter-connections between government, civil society and economic sectors” (Nardone *et al.*, 2010: 64). In protected area management, Hodge and Adams (2012: 475) also saw environmental protection as a reason for organisations to come together, saying, “Private conservation trusts have taken the lead in bringing together networks of public and private actors to collaborate in large-scale conservation schemes.”

Lorange and Roos (1993: 44-50) classified the types of partnership into four categories:

- An ad-hoc pool alliance consisting of a large organisation and a small one;
- A consortium strategic alliance, where there are lots of smaller partners;
- Project-based joint ventures, typified by a small investment of resources to a project; and
- A full-blown joint venture, with a strong strategic match reflected in a business plan, attracting significant investment because of its high priority.

There will obviously be many more ways of classifying partnerships in the business literature, ranging from the micro-level, local partnerships, through to the regional, national and macro-level, international partnerships.

Section 3.3 has considered what partnership means and how its definition has evolved over the last 30 years. It has been demonstrated that from fairly humble origins along the lines of different organisations working together (Gray, 1985), it has developed through a realisation of its complexity and multi-faceted nature (Edwards *et al.*, 2001) through to including notions of power, respect and constructive action (Wilson *et al.*, 2009). There has also been some understanding of the cross-sectoral organisations that actually constitute many partnerships (Laing *et al.*, 2008) and an awareness of the different types of partnerships that operate (Lorange and Roos 1993). Section 3.3 will introduce the approach to the content analysis that I undertook in order to understand and uncover some of underlying processes at work in rural partnership working.

3.4 Content Analysis: Rural Partnership Working

There is a wealth of literature on partnership working. This is not surprising considering the multi-disciplinary nature of the topic, particularly encompassing traditional social sciences and humanities, as well as the professional and applied sciences. This presented a challenge for writing a literature review for this thesis. The approach I took was to focus on partnerships with a rural element (quite often conservation or tourism/recreation) that fit comfortably into the sustainable development agenda (e.g. LEADER and cross-sectoral partnerships). I also concentrated on articles published within the last 15 years and drew information from international case studies so as to learn from experiences from outside of the UK. This filtering narrowed the field down to 30 publications. I then analysed these to extract the key factors for successful partnership working. Although very few articles specifically addressed this, they all indicated certain features as either being very important (e.g. a good level of administrative support), or conversely, a potential pitfall notable for its absence (e.g. a lack of co-ordination).

I then created a table to allow me to broadly identify the common themes that arose into six categories for analysis (Table 3). Use of the table was a helpful tool to guide and structure my research. However, it does come with a health warning since I am conscious that the analysis was completely my own interpretation of each article, and I am obviously drawing conclusions that the authors may not have intended, i.e. many articles were not on rural partnership working *per se*, but involved it as part of the case study.

It was my intention to draw the partnership working elements out of each article. These elements were broadly categorised under two themes: governance and behaviour. There is undoubtedly some degree of overlap between the different themes; nevertheless, Table 3 served to illustrate just how complicated partnership working can be.

What I have termed 'governance' is a largely controllable area of partnership working, compared to the behaviour of actors, which is more uncontrollable. For example, in appointing actors, the initiating body usually decides how this process will be undertaken. This could be anything from identifying specific actors and only recruiting them to the partnership, or a structured approach whereby a number of organisations are identified and then they are asked to nominate an individual to represent the organisation, or even an open advert in the press that anyone can apply to. The point is that these are all processes that can be controlled to a large extent.

			Controllable				Uncontrollable				
			Governance				Behaviour				
			Appointing Actors and Defining Roles	Shared Priorities and Pooling Resources	Governing Document and Evaluations	Leadership	Actor Interactions	Personal Factors			
01	Selin and Chavez	1995									
02	Bark and Newton	1997									
03	Shortall and Shucksmith	1998									
04	Hall	1999									
05	Roberts and Simpson	1999									
06	Selin	1999									
07	Gbadegesin and Ayileka	2000									
08	Jones and Little	2000									
09	Balloch and Taylor (Eds.)	2001									
10	Chatterton and Style	2001									
11	Edwards et al.	2001									
12	Shaw and Kidd	2001									
13	Stoll-Kleeman and O'Riordan	2002									
14	Ryan	2003									
15	Scott	2004									
16	Dearden et al.	2005									
17	Saxena	2005									
18	Namara	2006									
19	Hovardas and Poirazidis	2007									
20	Larsen and Valentine	2007									
21	Barker	2008									
22	Derkzen et al.	2008									
23	Laing et al.	2008									
24	Böcher	2008									
25	Derkzen and Bock	2009									
26	Furmankiewicz et al.	2009									
27	Wilson et al.	2009									
28	Nardone et al.	2010									
29	Bryan	2012									
30	Hodge and Adams	2012									
		Total References	23	23	11	17	12	15			

Table 3. Comparative table developed to rationalise the literature on rural partnership working. The black shaded cells show the areas of partnership working that were featured to some extent in each article.

The behaviour of actors is a largely uncontrollable area of partnership working. Even if a sound protocol is followed in establishing the governance framework, whether or not the partnership is a success will still depend on a range of factors that are more difficult for an organisation to have influence over. For example, the effectiveness of actor interactions on a partnership is affected by the ability of people to co-operate, to get on with each other, to build a sense of rapport, and to genuinely work together for the good of the partnership. Although there are various ways that positive interactions can be encouraged, it is largely based on one-to-one relationships and on a hope that actors will show goodwill towards each other. These processes are uncontrollable to a large extent.

The rest of Chapter 3 will explore each theme and category, providing a framework for analysing my own research later in the thesis.

3.5 Governance

Section 3.4 will examine some of the key rural partnership themes that I categorised under 'Governance' in Table 3. It is acknowledged that governance in itself is a much wider subject for researchers than the level of depth that I will explore here. Although I have tried to provide some sort of chronological order to Section 3.4, no such boundaries occur in real life with many overlapping factors at work.

Appointing Actors and Defining Roles

Partnerships come about for a variety of reasons, whether as a legal requirement, to access external funding, or to fix a problem that has arisen. Whatever the reason for the creation of a partnership, at some stage someone will need to decide how actors are appointed to the partnership. For the purposes of clarity, 'actor' refers to the individual person, and 'partner' refers to the organisation from which they originate. The type of partnership and the membership is often decided by the initiating body, which may provide some start-up funding to help get things moving (Craig, 1995; Mannion, 1996). For instance, Derkzen and Bock (2009: 79) found that for partnerships involving the public sector, membership was "usually selected by the government body."

If we take the example of the New LEADER Approach (2007-2013), which in the UK required a minimum membership of the local action groups of 50 per cent from the community, voluntary and private sector, after a domination by the public sector in the previous iteration, LEADER+. In this sense, the New LEADER Approach partnerships were legally mandated (Selin and Chavez, 1995). Despite good intentions, in reality actors do not

always fall into one of three different sectors. For example, if an actor is appointed to represent the National Trust, then this particular organisation is a national charity, a membership body, and has commercial operations; therefore it has community, voluntary and private sector interests. Derkzen and Bock (2009: 80) said, "It is not [always] obvious who defines what is 'relevant' and what factors influence the selection of members for the partnership." Derkzen and Bock go on to comment (2009: 83):

"There are other partnership members who 'represent' a private business, individuals representing 'the community', and individuals from... public bodies. On whose behalf do these people speak and whose interests to they represent?"

These are important questions that Derkzen and Bock pose, which other researchers have addressed as well. Shortall and Shucksmith (1998) noted the problem with the short-timescales associated with funding conditions, meaning that partnerships have to be assembled relatively quickly. This damages the foundations because they are often unprepared and raise issues of representation, "While partnerships can be inclusive and representative, they are not necessarily so" (Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998: 78). Furthermore, Jones and Little (2000: 18) found that if there is success with a funding bid, cracks would only appear later down the line:

"The partnership suddenly has a commitment to fulfil a set of declared intentions which were formed in far from ideal circumstances. For those who win, it is a common cry that this is when the problems really start, and the potential difficulties which may well have been intentionally or otherwise glossed over in the bid start to emerge."

When it comes to choosing actors, it is also worth acknowledging a less obvious issue. In the episode of the BBC comedy series, *Yes Minister*, called 'The Official Visit' (first broadcast on 2nd March 1980), the characters were trying to determine the role that their special visitor was going to adopt, when Bernard, the Principal Private Secretary said, "It's all a matter of hats, Minister," resulting in some literal confusion (BBC, 1980). Likewise actors on a partnership rarely arrive with one single 'hat' on, and often have interests outside of the obvious: where they live, what other partnerships they are involved with, what their hobbies and interests are, etc. When trying to ensure cross-representation during the appointment of actors, it is important to be aware of the range of interests that some actors have, and whether or not those will cause a problem with accountability.

There is no magic number of actors that any-given partnership requires in order to be successful. As a general rule of thumb, the involvement of too many actors can be counter-productive. The White Paper on Rural England (MAFF, 1995: 4) also said that in the case of the Bishop's Castle Rural Challenge Fund project in Shropshire, 25 board members was:

“...too large a number to be able to progress decisions quickly... however, this was considered to be essential in order to achieve a wide representation, both sectorally and geographically.”

It is a shame because in some instances efforts to ensure cross-representation result in a cumbersome partnership; finding a balance is not an easy task.

A further issue is the process by which actors can join a partnership. This can change the group dynamics, as Jones and Little, (2000: 177) explained, “The process of enrolling other (more powerful) partners to provide resources often results in a choice between risking the viability of the project or losing control of it.”

Lorange and Roos (1993) warned against actors getting too comfortable in any given partnership, because it may lead to too much dependence on specific individuals, who, after some time, may become irreplaceable. They advise of the importance of allowing other members of staff to meet new people to build contacts in the partnership. Whether consciously or not, some actors may avoid this as Lorange and Roos explained (1993: 215):

“Particular managers may be so fond of their strategic alliance that they more or less unconsciously reject the participation and involvement of other members of the organisation. Too often particular members of strategic management may be the bottleneck by managing the strategic alliance as a personal activity on the side. It is the senior management's responsibility to ensure that no-one be allowed to monopolise the management of the strategic alliance.”

It is therefore the responsibility of every partner organisation to ensure that the actors involved do not monopolise any given partnership.

A number of researchers appreciated that one over-riding reason to collaborate is as a means to access funding, which has been the case with the LEADER local action groups since 1991. It was interesting just how quickly the political move towards partnerships during the later Conservative Government era quickly found its way through to becoming a pre-

requisite for funding, with little guidance offered to the end user in some instances. Jones and Little (2000: 176-180) examined the Rural Challenge Fund projects from 1994 to 1996, and found that although it was the opinion of the Rural Development Commission that partnership working “is critical in any bid’s chance of success,” there was no explanation of how to go about creating partnerships.

Jones and Little also critiqued the necessity for the community and private sectors to work together, becoming uncomfortable bedfellows in the process, with tensions around (unrealistic) community aspirations and the (limited) amount of participation time from these actors on the one hand, and the economic drivers of competitiveness, speed of delivery, opportunism, flexibility and value for money on the other. Another advocate of partnership working was the international governmental advisory body, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which also seemed to side-step complications in favour of this undeniably good outcome (OECD, 1993, 65):

“Local partnerships are increasingly recognised as an appropriate policy response, particularly as a result of their ability to bring together the full range of interest groups in developing a coherent and socio-politically inclusive planning approach.”

Although many organisations like the OECD supported cross-sectoral involvement in partnerships, few evaluated the attempts made to achieve it (Simmons, 1994).

From the literature that I looked at, researchers tended to concentrate more on the efforts to involve the community and voluntary sector in partnerships, rather than the private or public sector, for example, Jones and Little (2000: 178) stated:

“Perhaps most importantly, mirroring concerns about urban partnerships are questions about what sections of any community become incorporated into partnership process, and to what degree the needs and views of any community can be seen as homogeneous.”

There seems to be a real concern, for various reasons, that ‘bottom-up’ endogenous rural development is simply not taking place as effectively as many partnerships would claim. Edwards *et al.* (2001: 306) found from their surveys that state institutions remained the dominant partners within the partnerships that they examined, concluding that, “The state is only willing to tolerate local diversity so far as it does not threaten the core interests of the state.” Is decision-making really taking place at the local-level, or are predetermined courses of action simply realised through the mirage of partnership working (Moseley, 2003a: xxii)?

Can the power of the state really be diffused when they have such an important role to play?
Edwards *et al.* (2001: 306) explained:

“It has become commonplace for analysts to position the partnership approach as part of the ‘hollowing out’ of the state, as a mechanism by which powers and responsibilities are taken away from the state and invested in the hands of private and voluntary sector actors. However, such analysis underplays the continuing role of the state in initiating, structuring, financing and regulating partnerships.”

Put simply, it is typically harder for other sectors to readily invest resources to set-up and maintain partnerships; therefore the role of the state, the public sector, is vital, even if questions arise as to how that role is exercised.

Derkzen *et al.* (2008: 462) found that efforts had been made to try and reduce the dominant public sector image of a partnership, since officers, “avoided meetings taking place in local authority establishments and tried to remove the paperwork to give the rural partnership ‘less of a public sector image’ – even though a third to sometimes half of the people who were present in the early meetings were officers of the local authority.” It is a difficult situation because typically the public sector has the resources to set-up and facilitate many partnerships, yet actors must play down their role accordingly. As Derkzen *et al.* indicated, once the groundwork is complete, the sectoral balance should ideally quickly level out, and in doing so, public sector actors must be prepared to give up some power and accept the risk that goes with it, for instance allowing shared decision-making (*ibid.*).

Namara (2006: 45-55) said that it is imperative:

“To recognise local [non-public sector] institutions as legitimate actors in the governance of natural resources and to empower them to manage. To some park staff, increased powers in local community hands threaten their own basis of authority and power. Attempts to decentralise effective decision making over natural resources management are usually resisted by those institutions or individuals who will lose power in the process. This leaves communities confused, as the rhetoric and practice do not tally.”

Therefore if the policy is to seek partnership with the community and voluntary sector as a way to achieve inclusive governance (Derkzen *et al.*, 2008), then it must be realised in practice. Furthermore, Nardone *et al.* (2010: 63) believe that the risks of losing control are exaggerated, and that long-term empowerment is crucial; they say that, “social capital as a

public-owned key resource” enables “sustainable development.” Shucksmith (2000) and Kovacs Katona *et al.* (2006) agreed with these sentiments, as did Furmankiewicz *et al.* (2009: 52):

“At the heart of the concept of area-based partnership is the idea that territorial integration, the bringing together of different sectors and interests, is critical to achieving a more socially inclusive approach to rural development.”

So far we have considered how actors are appointed, the implications of the size of a partnership, the need for partners to be conscious that an appointed actor can monopolise partnership involvement to the detriment of others, and public sector domination.

It is worth noting that the roles of each individual actor/partner are also inconsistent. There are many levels of involvement, ranging from tokenism to full participation (Amstein, 1969; Burns *et al.*, 1994; Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998), and taking part is, in itself, a dynamic process (Edwards *et al.*, 2001). Just as there is confusion around the partnership terminology of networks, collaborations, etc., Derkzen and Bock (2009: 76) found ambiguity around the roles that partners undertake on partnerships.

“Partnership members use these concepts too in their everyday language to talk about how they view their roles and responsibilities – they say that they represent *and* participate” (emphasis in original).

Likewise, actors may fully ‘engage’ with other actors during meetings, or they take more of a backseat ‘observatory’ role, or somewhere in between these active and passive scenarios. Derkzen and Bock (2009) realised that those more likely to take a leadership role were those with a high and direct organisational interest in the partnership, driving the partnership forward do so because they have the most self-interest in doing so. Derkzen and Bock (2009: 85) also warned of passive partners, those “only focussed on taking information from the partnership.” These partners do not fully participate on the two-way flow of resources and this self-interest may not be evident at first.

Although there was a “fragmentation of local government responsibilities” in the UK, arising from the New Labour Government of the late 1990s (Roberts and Simpson, 1999: 317), partnership working does not always automatically result in real participation and inclusion. A further example of public sector dominance was found with a European LEADER+ case study in Poland. Furmankiewicz *et al.* (2009: 54-60) said:

“That local government was frequently the dominant partner with the local state able to exert its influence through mobilising financial and human resources. The most significant finding from our study of Poland is that local government has overtly and unapologetically sought to dominate the LEADER partnerships of the 2004-2007 period.”

LEADER is an abbreviation of a French-titled programme, ‘Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Économie Rurale’, which translates in English to ‘links between actions of rural development’. This European Union initiative started with 1991 with the original LEADER, and was followed up with LEADER II, then LEADER+, and now the recently concluded New LEADER Approach. All variations were designed to deliver a ‘bottom-up’ approach to rural development, and therefore it was not the aim that any LEADER programme should be dominated by the state. The LEADER Approach Fact Sheet (European Commission, 2006: 5) described LEADER as:

“A method of mobilizing and delivering rural development in local rural communities, rather than a fixed set of measures to be implemented. LEADER encourages rural territories to explore new ways to become or to remain competitive, to make the most of their assets. It contributes towards improving the quality of life in rural areas both for farm families and the wider rural population [encouraging] socio-economic players to work together.”

The process of appointing actors to the local action group partnerships is central to the New LEADER Approach (European Commission, 2006: 10):

“A local action group should associate public and private partners, and be well-balanced and representative of the existing local interest groups, drawn from the different socio-economic sectors in the area.

Clarity over the roles and responsibilities of partners is obviously important, and that is why the expected roles should be addressed and detailed at the start. Involvement is a dynamic process; therefore re-visiting the individual roles and responsibilities every so often would probably be a sensible and accountable arrangement.

Shared Priorities and Pooling Resources

It almost goes without saying that most organisations expect to get more out of a partnership than what they put in, otherwise it would be hard to justify their involvement, “The basic underlying rationale, of course, is that one plus one should be more than two” (Lorange and

Roos, 1993: 1), a point also made by Selin and Chavez (1995: 849), “The benefits must be perceived to outweigh the costs of participating in the partnership.” However, what may be a beneficial outcome to one organisation (e.g. an improved reputation) may not necessarily be the same as another (e.g. the realisation of a project), as Wilson *et al.* (2009: 282) expressed, “It is expected that the public and private sectors may have differing goals.”

Shared priorities often bring organisations together. Although the terminology used in the literature includes words like aims, objectives, goals, and vision, they are all essentially referring to the same thing: a unifying reason to co-operate. This approach rose to prominence in the UK during the mid-1990s when the then New Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, spoke of a “joined-up” approach to multi-faceted deprivation that could not be resolved by any one specialist agency, but required partnerships involving public, private and not-profit agencies (Blair, 1996: 207). The OECD (1997: 33) backed this methodology, saying that, “Recognition of a shared problem [was an] opportunity for each of the partners to benefit from its resolution.” Furthermore, O’Donnell and Thomas (1998: 122) did not see a Plan B either, “Partnership is necessary because no party can achieve its goals without a significant degree of support from others.” This was reiterated by Selin (1999: 262), “As society has become more complex and economics more inter-dependent, organisations are finding it increasingly difficult to act unilaterally to achieve internal objectives.” This “added value” (Roberts and Simpson, 1999: 316) of partnership working over, “a common vision and common interest” (Derkzen *et al.*, 2008: 461), can certainly be eased if the organisations at the table share commonalities.

The foundations for this rise to prominence of rural partnership working commenced long before the New Labour Government came into power, with the aforementioned LEADER initiative starting in 1991:

“Rural development is only possible if all local partners share a common aim which is rooted in the geography, culture or local society... This is what marks LEADER out from the wider programmes... drawing directly on aspirations and projects born at local level” (MacSharry, 1992: 1).

Shared priorities have also been found to provide the basis of longer-term foundations with initiatives that, “will result in sustainable outcomes” (Selin, 1999: 261). Interestingly, Selin and Chavez (1995: 849) found that some actors in the USA were quite coy about what benefits their organisations would get from working in partnership:

“It is highly unlikely that a partnership will be successful unless there is a perception that partnership outcomes will result in benefits to each partner. Predictably, subjects were self-effacing on this issue. Many talked of the potential benefit to the state or to the community; but most did acknowledge that their organisation would benefit from the partnership.”

Despite this, having shared priorities was the most obvious reason to engage in partnership working (Jamal and Getz, 1995; Shortall and Shucksmith, 1998; Jones and Little, 2000; Balloch and Taylor, 2001; Nardone *et al.*, 2010). It is certainly helped if the organisations share some common interest and there is a degree of openness as to the aspirations of each partner when the partnership is initiated.

Getting more out of a partnership than what an individual organisation puts in is also about pooling resources. Laing *et al.* (2008: 1) said, “Partnerships can be a vehicle for tapping into additional resources, such as labour, funding or skills/expertise.” Edwards *et al.* (2001: 289) explained thus:

“The attraction of partnerships results from their apparent potential to bring interested local organisations and agents of government together to pool their resources (material, human, and financial), leading to the development of consensual strategies. Partnerships ...can offer a blending of resources from the public, private, and voluntary sectors which adds up to more than the sum of the parts.”

Quite often, the incentive of funding is a reason to form a new partnership, with organisations having to work together in order to access money. By the late 1990s this financial motivation was apparent, with one local authority newspaper observing that an increasing numbers of funding bodies were starting to require evidence of partnerships working in order to qualify for a grant (Banes, 1998).

The danger with this imposition is that the often hastily put-together partnerships are neither built on good foundations, nor are the actors genuinely interested in working together. It is also worth remembering that arms-length funding organisations are not normally part of any given partnership; their priorities are usually more strategic and developed to address wider and topical issues. As (Jones and Little, 2000: 181) expressed:

“[Funding] bids are also inevitably built around schemes which are seen as likely to win rather than which necessarily address the most pressing problems of an area.”

Organisations pool resources in an effort to achieve so-called “win-win” situations (Böcher, 2008: 375). If actors do not get along though, the perceived organisational benefits of working in partnership might be lost. Saxena (2005: 281) found this outcome in her research at the Peak District National Park. Behind the partnership that she investigated she found a “deep divide between different actor groups which had an impact on their perceptions and expectations of each other and consequently on the relationship building and networking process.” Therefore, as will be discussed further in Section 3.5, even if there are shared priorities and pooled resources it is no guarantee of success.

Pooling resources also includes social capital, which is, the sharing of knowledge. The very essence of the supposedly endogenous New LEADER Approach (2008-2013) is capturing a variety of local knowledge and empowering local people to prepare a unique local development strategy to oversee the rollout of funding. This wisdom is primarily what the community and voluntary sector can most bring to the table, as recognised by Derkzen and Bock (2007: 202), “The community representatives are proud of their experiential knowledge,” a sentiment also found by other researchers (O'Donnell and Thomas, 1998; Jones and Little, 2000; Moseley, 2003a).

Namara (2006: 40-41) went further to say that local knowledge is essential, “In practical terms, the conservation and management of protected areas can only be effective through considering the rights, knowledge and aspirations of neighbouring populations.” Once this is achieved, partnerships can “create a sense among communities that they are important stakeholders.”

Jones and Little (2000: 177) also explained that other types of knowledge are required on partnerships, “Resources include local and national political knowledge, extensive local commercial knowledge and contacts as well as economic, legal, and technical expertise.” When these skills come together, the partnership can consider “strategic, long-term thinking” (Roberts and Simpson, 1999: 316). Kearney *et al.* (1994) also spoke of a strategic approach, in an environment that facilitated co-ordination, integration, innovation and networking.

Shared priorities bring organisations together, and by pooling resources the total can add up to more than the sum of its parts. Yet this way of working can be problematic as the priorities of one organisation or sector take a higher level of priority than others. Complications can also arise if there are expectations that the pooled resources from each organisation should

be equal, with an emerging sense that community members should be viewed as worthwhile stakeholders in their own right. In many instances, the long-term success of the partnership is dependent on the acceptance of actors and their contributions.

Governing Document and Evaluations

A further controllable area is that of the governing document and the extent that the partnership will be evaluated. For short-term, relatively straightforward collaborations, with a minimal perceived risk, both processes of may be counter-productive and delay the delivery of the actual project. Dallen (1999: 202) found this to be an issue, where the bureaucracy was a bottleneck to progress, “Partners, in some instances, delay action as participating parties have to muddle through complex partnership procedures.”

However, for mid-range or long-term projects, with financial implications and a degree of risk, some form of governing document should be a necessity. The governing document would detail the following:

- Why the partnership has been brought about;
- Who the lead partner is;
- Who the other partners are;
- How actors are appointed to the partnership and for what duration;
- The roles and responsibilities of each partner; and
- The resources that each partner has agreed to contribute.

This list is by no means definitive, but it gives an indication of the range of factors that can be simultaneously discussed, agreed upon, and then committed to by all the partners. At best, the governing document is a reason to celebrate the creation of a new partnership. At worst, if a partnership breaks down, it provides a reference point from which grievances can be assessed.

References to a governing document in the rural partnership literature were few and far between. Selin and Chavez (1995: 850) simply said, “Goals are established, ground rules set, and subgroups organised to examine specific issues,” whilst not really explaining the “ground rules” to which they refer. Likewise, although Scott (2004:58) discussed “rules of engagement” it was not in terms of this aspect of partnership working.

The governing document can either be a legally binding contract, or alternatively a non-legally binding agreement of goodwill. Namara (2006: 60) found acceptance complications with the goodwill arrangement. In this case study, the initiating organisation of the partnership was the protected area management body. Firstly, local people perceived that the goodwill arrangement “favours park management” and secondly, they felt that it “can be revoked at any time.” Therefore whilst it might be simpler to utilise goodwill instead of a firmer commitment, it might undermine the enthusiasm of local people if it is ultimately unenforceable.

The governing document was rarely specifically cited in the rural literature. This may be because it was not an area that the researchers wanted to concentrate on, or it could be because of an oversight. For this thesis, it will be interesting to ascertain just how my participants identify the importance of this document.

If used, the governing document commits actors to return to their respective organisations and then actually undertake agreed actions. When this does not happen, it is one of the common stumbling blocks of partnership working (Roberts and Simpson, 1999; Jones and Little, 2000; Balloch and Taylor, 2001; Saxena, 2005; Derkzen and Bock, 2009; Wilson *et al.*, 2009).

The perception that the decisions arrived at will be implemented, strongly relates to notions of trust, which is a personality factor. Saxena (2005: 279) described these actions as the “mutual fulfilment of promises,” therefore it is equally important for partners not to agree to undertake work that they will not be able to fulfil. Scott (2004: 58) warned of an “uneven degree of ambition among the various partners” as a potential problem, with no right or wrong approach; there are merits to being both realistic and ambitious.

It is also worth noting that working outside of partnership meetings suits some sectors more than others. For the public sector, the partnership work is usually integrated into their normal work hours. For the private sector, it is often over and above normal business duties, and can be seen as a distraction from the day-to-day operations that must be fulfilled. For the community and voluntary sector, partnership work can result in excessive duties that they simply cannot fulfil. In the latter instance, Jones and Little (2000: 178) found that “[Brookenby Parish] Councillors were reluctant to take on the burden of extra work elements and overseeing their delivery.” Therefore expectations must be realistic.

When it comes to fulfilling agreed actions, the public sector is in a position to lead by example, as paid professionals with time allocated for working in partnership. These actors should be sensitive to what the private and community and voluntary sectors can realistically provide to ensure that no sector is over-burdened with administrative work arising from the partnership.

The governing document might recognise the importance of building momentum quickly and sustaining it over time. This can be achieved with the assistance of so-called 'quick wins', those short-term ventures with immediate outcomes. These build confidence, lay the foundations for success, and start the partnership portfolio of achievements, as explained by Lorange and Roos (1993: 209):

“A guiding principle is to develop self-confidence by selecting achievable targets during the early phases. In the early phase, it is also important to rely on individual's known as doers, experienced persons who are familiar with getting relatively unstructured work done. Early success is thus a critical factor for gaining and maintaining operating momentum.”

Jones and Little (2000: 178) agreed and said that even outside of a partnership there is also “an expectation of immediate action.”

The governing document defines what the aspirations of the partnership will be. Since these aspirations may take a long time to be realised, it might be necessary to regularly evaluate the overall performance of a partnership. As shown in Table 3, this was also not widely discussed in the literature. What was considered included how actors were performing in a partnership, with Urban and Vendemini (1992: 177) saying that, “The commitment to partnership, like any other strategic decision, presupposes an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, drawing up an inventory of the particular assets and competencies of partners.” Derkzen and Bock (2007: 192) also point out, “The extent to which partnership members see themselves and are perceived by others as capable in that particular social setting is equally important, because this determines how their contributions will be evaluated.”

Early attempts to evaluate cross-representative partnerships were seen as 'laboratories' typified by a “willingness to learn” (Lorange and Roos, 1993: 213-214). Evaluations often led to a broadening of purposes, but with that came a risk of partners losing interest or a split coalition developing (Selin and Chavez, 1995). By the late 1990s researchers sought to

better understand why some partnerships were seemingly more fruitful than others. These included identifying barriers to formation and growth, understanding motives for participation, and outcome-based assessments of accomplishments (Selin, 1999).

It was also noted that partnerships founded on a single common overriding interest (for example, tourism) generally resulted in more sustainable outcomes (Selin, 1999). Where partnerships were granted funding to realise certain goals, success would generally be measured by the extent to which the partnership achieved these pre-set objectives. This preoccupation with traditional measures of success have been criticised because they excluded “less measurable, but more fundamental, factors critical to sustainability” (Roberts and Simpson, 1999: 328). In addition, learning from issues that arose from unforeseen problems could also be argued to be an indicator of a successful outcome, with future ventures benefiting as a consequence.

In a related matter, Snowdon and Slee (1997) said that an adequate time-scale must be in place to make progress, which could lay the foundations to “establish longer-term, cross-institutional frameworks” (Roberts and Simpson, 1999: 316).

The frequency of partnership evaluations will depend on the scope of the partnership. Chapter 6 will consider the process of evaluations again, but from a different perspective; that of local government performance.

Section 3.4 has focussed on the more controllable aspects of partnership working, centred on the governance arrangements. Even though they are largely controllable, that does not imply that there are simple processes at work; quite the contrary. Appointing actors, identifying shared priorities, pooling resources, detailing the agreement in a governing document, and establishing a framework for evaluations is highly complex and time-consuming work, fraught with potential difficulties. That is before individual personalities are factored in, which will be considered next.

3.6 Behaviour

Human behaviour is a multi-disciplinary field of research that has become increasingly popular with social scientists, particularly across anthropology, psychology, and sociology (Hutchinson, 2010). Zastrow and Kirst-Ashamn (2012: 49) discussed how human behaviour is shaped by the overlapping factors of family, work groups, social groups, organisations and communities, concluding that, “Human behaviour is difficult to define and measure”. It is an

area of research that is far greater than the scope of this thesis, therefore it is important to state that my analysis will examine behaviour only in the context of rural partnership working. Table 3 classified behaviour as a largely uncontrollable field. Whilst it is accepted that actors can enrol in training courses to refine and improve their own behaviour, whether that is successful or not in practice is another matter, as is the fact that not all actors in a partnership will exhibit the same types of behaviour. In order to understand some of the more important aspects of behaviour on partnership working, the area of research was simplified into leadership, actor interactions and personality factors.

Leadership

One of the first tasks most partnerships undertake is the appointment of a chair. The skills required of the chair are greater than the other actors, because they have a responsibility to provide leadership for the whole partnership. Selin and Chavez, (1995: 849-854) describe this as a “critical role” and that “special facilitative skills are needed.” Saxena (2005: 283) attempted to classify four distinct types of actor that get involved with partnership working. These categories are summarised as:

- The enthusiasts, who always try to be that one step ahead;
- The activists, who are those that are campaigning to make a difference;
- The pragmatists, who view networking and multi-agency partnerships as a necessary part of the new funding environment and adopt an instrumental view of their purpose; and
- The opponents, who perceive networks and partnerships, especially those initiated by the public sector bodies, as an attack on local democracy.

Even within this simple classification, depending on which category the chair fits into, it can determine the whole direction and focus of the partnership.

The chair will need to consider the importance of equity, which is creating an environment that is fair and impartial to all of the actors in the partnership. This means being inclusive of a range of values, opinions and interests, and providing space for public argument and debate (Smyth, 1994, Hall, 1999). According to Hall (1999: 278), the benefits of an equitable approach outweigh the costs:

“[Equity is] recognising that the opinions, perspectives, and recommendations of non-industry stakeholders are just as legitimate as those of the planner or the ‘expert’ of industry. Such an

approach may be more time-consuming than a top-down approach but the results of such a process will have far greater likelihood of being implemented because stakeholders will likely have a greater degree of ownership of the plan and the process.”

Urban and Vendemini (1992: 186) agreed with this:

“An effective partnership requires having respect for the partner, taking into account its constraints and objectives. There is therefore no question of giving priority to the choice of just one of the partners; rather, the common advantages must be maximised, possibly by sacrificing particular privileges on one side or the other.”

Partnerships require combinations of consultation, negotiation and bargaining skills (O'Donnell and Thomas, 1998), with trade-offs both between and within interest groups (Scott, 2004).

The culture of a partnership is another key component to success. In essence, this describes the spirit that underpins the work, including what is acceptable and what is unacceptable practice by the actors. For example, positive, acceptable practices are to give credit where it is due, to take collective ownership of any problems that may arise and solve them together, and to celebrate success within the partnership. Conversely, examples of negative, unacceptable practices, could be when one actor bullies another, is over-critical on a personal level, or when an actor seeks to apportion blame when problems arise.

At the start of any given partnership, the chair might ask the actors, ‘What sort of working environment would this partnership like to operate in?’ Actors could then prepare a culture and values statement reaffirming the approach. This will help to enthuse and inspire the actors to work together, and allow unacceptable practices to be challenged.

As a relatively small organisation, Northumberland National Park Authority defined its own culture and values in 2007 through a series of staff workshops. Since it is a relatively niche and emerging area of partnership working, it was unsurprising that there were no explicit references to culture and values in the rural partnership working literature.

However, some broadly related themes were found. For instance, Derkzen and Bock (2009: 84) found a sense of partnership spirit in their research:

“Respondents saw participation as something that is about more than just self-interest. It is associated with a sense of common good and with contributing to the goals of rural development and to the partnership as a whole.”

This spirit can be developed if the initiating body is sensitive so as to create an even, equitable environment, even if it was not the case (Derkzen *et al.*, 2008: 461-62):

“The local authority was able to mobilise most resources in terms of staff, expertise and time. Most likely for the sake of the joined-up spirit and expected benefits of co-operation, though the local authority actors were careful not to dominate the proceedings, but to downplay their strength and manipulate the image and importance of their stake in the partnership.”

In the USA, the National Park Service developed what they call ‘partnership parks’. These are when organisations come together to share power and make consensus-based collaborative decisions, for example the Friends of the Tallgrass and the Prairie National Preserve (Bryson and Crosby, 1992). Just as partnership working was emerging as a governance tool in the UK during the mid-1990s, in the USA this ‘shared power world’ methodology (*ibid.*) was finding its way into protected area management (Hamin, 2001: 132):

“From the [National] Park Service’s perspective, managing through collaboration requires a different sort of park manager than in traditional parks where the superintendent has a significant control over the resources within the park unit’s boundaries – it requires a superintendent who is comfortable operating in a shared power world.”

Derkzen and Bock (2007) argued that the community and voluntary sector actors were the most disadvantaged because they lacked the professional identity of an employee (from the public sector) and the experience of being a board member (from the private sector). Therefore if power is to be truly shared, this disadvantage must be accounted for and equity must prevail. It is important to identify and appoint an appropriate leader for any given partnership. Once that actor becomes the chair, the individual should consider the overall direction of the partnership, how actors portray power and respect for each other, and the role the chair has in managing those relations.

Actor Interactions

Roberts and Simpson (1999) said that an understanding of the interaction of institutions and stakeholders was crucial to a successful outcome. Towards the end of the 20th Century, Selin and Chavez, (1995: 850) felt that the management of stakeholder interactions was

increasingly being dealt with in a “systematic manner,” made difficult because it is a “dynamic rather than static process” (Selin, 1999: 262).

Nardone *et al.* (2010: 64) said that if the actors were brought together at an early stage, this would assist with their interactions during the remainder of the partnership. They said, “Common activities such as participatory project design, preparation of the plans, and evaluation of the processes” will naturally create “languages and visions which are shared by the group’s members” to help “stabilise behavioural norms within the group.” Two such activities that can be collectively prepared and written have already been discussed, the governing document and the statement of culture and values.

When interactions are ineffective, actors can complain about any one of a variety of factors (Scott, 2004: 58):

“Common criticisms by board members related to: the unequal availability of information among partners; the style of board meetings, including the rituals of policy discussion, language, and location of meetings; and mechanisms for selecting board members (which varied considerably).”

In the research undertaken by Jones and Little (2000: 177) on the Rural Challenge scheme, they criticised, “the format and language” of the partnerships because it was “very much in the private/public sector mould.” McCabe *et al.* (1997) found that plain language is important both inside and outside the partnership.

Meanwhile, Hall (1999: 285) warned of the dangers of inadvertently becoming static, contrary to the dynamic nature of partnerships. “These groups, used to each other’s needs, may become increasingly preoccupied with each other, insensitive to the needs of outsiders, and impervious to new recruitment and to new ideas.” It is an area that the chair would have to monitor to ensure that the partnership stays on track, remains flexible, and is an environment where actors learn to embrace change (Derkzen *et al.*, 2008: 460):

“Change happens within the field with which a partnership is concerned, it happens to the individuals within the partnership, and it happens to the regulatory environment within which the partnership and its individual actors are situated.”

Partnerships can also break down because of “adversarial conflicts” between actors (Saxena, 2005: 278). The chances of this happening can be reduced though as Wilson *et al.*

(2009: 282) said, “The key lies in sustainable management of that tension.” This implies creating a friendly atmosphere, adhering to the statement of culture and values, and channelling the tension productively so that it results in progress.

The way actors interact was not covered in most of the rural partnership working articles that I considered. Nevertheless there were some important observations, like the format of the meetings, the use of language, the need to embrace change and to be aware of and meditate any potential differences between actors.

Personality Factors

Personality factors broadly describe a whole host of interacting features that each individual actor demonstrates. Wilson *et al.* (2009: 81) were aware that a lot depended on this aspect of partnership working, saying, “Success was largely determined by the personality.” Saxena (2005) spoke of the need for trust, commitment, honesty and open communication. Assessing the effectiveness of these four areas is not an easy task, as Clegg and Hardy (1996: 678) reminded, “We cannot ignore that power can be hidden behind the façade of ‘trust’ and the rhetoric of ‘collaboration’, and used to promote vested interest through the manipulation of, and capitulation by, weaker partners.”

Roberts and Simpson (1999: 328) explained:

“The most easily measured criteria are often the most commonly used in established monitoring and evaluation processes, and contribute a great deal to the popular and politically perceived success or failure of a partnership. Whilst it is the very immeasurability of some factors that has led to a lack previous attention to them, they are critical to the overall sustainability of collaborative processes.”

Derkzen *et al.* (2008: 459) make a similar argument, “If we want to know what constitutes effective rural development we need to develop a greater understanding of the politics and processes within partnerships.”

Power relations flow through partnership working because each actor brings something different to the table, and each is mindful of maximising what their own organisation is going to get from working together. Scott (2004: 55) observed that at the start of a partnership there is often “a large degree of mistrust” and this may result in “unevenness in terms of power within the partnership” (Jones and Little, 2000: 180-181). The solution, according to

Urban and Vendemini (1992: 189) was to be open, “The motives of each of the partners must be known and explicit and these must relate to the philosophy of joint interests.”

Power will always flow through partnerships (Mouffe, 2000), but it may take different forms. Derkzen *et al.* (2008: 459) provide an indication of how it can manifest itself through, “authority, inducement, coercion, seduction, manipulation, persuasion and negotiation.”

The importance of individual personality factors came across as something of an open secret in that it is accepted that forces are at work, but they are neither discussed in partnership meetings, nor have rural social scientists developed a framework for analysing their impacts, perhaps due to the nature of their immeasurability. For my thesis, it is not my intention to develop that framework; what I will explore is just how important participants felt that personality factors were to successful partnership working.

3.7 A Check List for Partnership Working?

In order to bring Chapter 3 to a conclusion, I will give some special consideration to three attempts that have been made to develop a checklist for partnership working. It is a notoriously difficult job partly because of the complexities involved, as will be elaborated upon, but also because no two partnerships are exactly the same. Selin and Chavez (1995: 855) appreciated that, “It is difficult for social scientists to describe with precision how to achieve success in all situations.” Indeed, Mandell (1998: 8) cautions against a “one size fits all” approach because the concepts need to be of use “in the real world.” Whether social scientists should even try to frame this is another argument. However, a checklist of some fundamental pre-requisites, collated from various case study experiences, could still become an extremely useful tool for learning and best practice purposes.

Edwards *et al.* (2000: 43) developed a 23-point checklist as part of their research, shown below. This checklist only showed the chronological stages of the partnership development, and not the underlying processes that are at work:

1. Pre-training to engage in partnership working
2. Adequate lead-in time for bidding
3. A clear focus, objective and mission for partnership action
4. Non-overlapping role with other agencies
5. A precise agenda for action
6. Definition of timescales for implementation

7. A selection of appropriate partners
8. Commitment and informed understanding from *all* partners
9. Effective commitment and dissemination within partner organisations to support representatives
10. Clear leadership from the chair
11. Mutual trust between partners
12. Effective delivery at officer level
13. Clear roles and respect between partners
14. Inclusive processes and shared expectations
15. Adequate funding contributions
16. Recognition of non-funding contributions
17. Minute meetings, define actions, set fixed delivery dates
18. Achievable and appropriate targets
19. A simplified auditing process
20. Flexibility in implementation strategy
21. Adequate time to achieve specified goals
22. A defined exit strategy
23. Long-term commitment

Balloch and Taylor (2001: 108-120) also put-together a short checklist of partnership working. Their prerequisites for a successful outcome were:

- Honesty
- Good time management
- Face-to-face contact
- Training sessions
- Clear objectives
- Reciprocal contribution of money and resources
- Clarity over roles and responsibilities
- System of evaluation
- Good communication

Once again, it is understanding the processes behind all these prerequisites, how they affect each other and how they interact, that is challenging for researchers. A similar list, this time linked to understanding protected area tourism partnerships, was also proposed by Laing *et al.* (2008), from categories first proposed by Bingham (1986), and is reproduced in Table 4.

Laing *et al.* (2008: 26) acknowledged the same complications already noted in Chapter 3, i.e. “not all the success factors identified are easily measurable.”

Category of Factors	Individual Factor	Theoretical Approaches							
		SE	ADI	EDR	SR	NT	ST	SC	IAD
INDIVIDUAL PARTNER – related Factors	Leadership								
	Empathy towards partners								
	Presence of innovation/openness to change								
	Distribution/balance of power								
	Participation of stakeholders								
	Membership composition								
PARTNERING AND PROCESS – related Factors	Scope of partnership								
	Shared vision/purpose								
	Information quality and quantity								
	Commitment								
	Interdependence								
	Trust								
	Adequacy/transparency of process								
	Structured process								
	Flexibility								
	Open internal communication								
	External communication								
	Dealing with conflict								
PARTNERSHIP CONTEXT – related factors	Adequacy of resources								
	Adequacy of time/duration of partnership								
	Legislative framework								
	Administrative setting								
	Enforcement of behaviour/ Decisions								
	Benefit/incentive								

Key: SE = Social Exchange Theory; ADI = Adoption/Diffusion of Innovations; EDR = Environmental Dispute Resolution; SR = Social Representation; NT = Network Theory; ST = Stakeholder Theory; SC = Social Capital/Community Capacity Theory; IAD = Institutional Analysis and Development.

Table 4. Factors contributing to the success of protected area tourism partnerships (categorised after Bingham, 1986). Source: Laing *et al.* (2008). The black shaded cells show the areas of partnership working that are considered with each theoretical approach.

In brief, the theories shown in Table 4 refer to: social exchange theory, a type of cost-benefit analysis whereby actors consciously or subconsciously determine if their involvement (in this case, in a partnership) is worth their own investment (Emerson, 1976); adoption/diffusion of innovations, a theory that seeks to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas and

technology spread through cultures, firstly by the individual partner (adoption), and then the rest of society (diffusion) (Rogers, 1962); environmental dispute resolution, the way in which partners come together to address environmental concerns (Bacow and Wheeler, 1984); social representation, a stock of values, ideas, metaphors, beliefs, and practices that are shared among the actors of groups and communities (Susskind and Weinstein, 1980); network theory (or social network analysis), which examines the structure of relationships between social entities (Barnes, 1954); stakeholder theory, a theory of organisational management and business ethics that addresses morals and values in managing an organisation (Freeman, 1984); social capital/community capacity theory, focussing on the networks facilitating collective actions for mutual benefits (Lin, 2001); and finally, institutional analysis and development, which considers the structural variables that are present, to some extent, in all organisational arrangements (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991).

The purpose of including these three examples of checklists in Section 3.7 is to really emphasise the crosscutting nature of partnership analysis.

3.8 Conclusion

Chapter 3 set out to provide a literature review on rural partnership working. It started with the unanimous praise for partnerships as a tool for society to use, and how partnership working is actually defined. The content analysis of the literature followed, firstly around the themes of the more controllable field of governance arrangements, then secondly around the more uncontrollable side of human behaviour. It was found that research was more prominent in the governance side of rural partnership working, than the human behaviour side. Collectively, it has been demonstrated that partnership working is exceptionally complicated. Bryan (2012: 81) described this as an assortment of interacting of “symbolic/conceptual, social, cultural, spatial, material or anthropomorphic” factors operating in a dynamic environment, from which they “proliferate as they endlessly move, blur and fold in space-time.” Chapter 3 also looked at some efforts to create a checklist for partnership working, and noted several attempts to categorise partnerships theoretically. It can be concluded that partnerships are largely incomparable, concurring with the findings of Edwards *et al.* (2001: 307):

“It would be erroneous to regard rural partnership working as a homogenous process. The implementation of partnership working in any locality is affected by locally specific factors, which will vary between different rural locations as well as between rural and urban environments.”

This means that no-two partnerships are exactly the same. One of the newer terms established to analyse partnerships is “institutional blending”, which Hodge and Adams (2012: 481) described as a “complexity of the processes” that give way to partnerships “with a mix of public and private characteristics” drawn to together to support “the conservation of rural land.” Wilson *et al.* (2009: 282) concluded that, “Maintaining long-lasting and sustainable partnerships can pose a serious challenge for the protected area managers.”

Despite all the attention that partnership working has attracted in the last 15 years, prior to that interest, Lorange and Roos (1993: 1) made a useful reminder that partnerships “should be strictly seen as a means to an end – not the end itself.” Ultimately it is what they do and achieve that will have the greatest and longest-lasting impact.

Chapter 2 examined some of issues in protected area management, and Chapter 3 sought to understand the complex processes of working in partnership. Chapter 4 will describe the methodology that is used to assess partnership working in the protected area of Northumberland National Park, England.

Chapter 4: Methodology

“I’m positively surprised there are so many organisations involved with Northumberland National Park that seem to have an interest. At the same time there are too many organisations and it is unlikely that they can work together in a mutually beneficial way.” Academic participant.

4.1 Introduction

This thesis explores partnership working in Northumberland National Park. The methodology needed to be able to reflect a wide range of stakeholders’ interpretations of operating in this protected area. It therefore required research techniques that would enable the participants to share their experiences, detailing their opinions of partnership working in this protected area. The qualitative research method used, the semi-structured interview, allowed me to gain in-depth information from a wide range of participants. All participants were interviewed in an environment of their own choice, and were asked pre-prepared questions, with scope to probe responses where necessary. All participants were shown two organisational collage maps during the interview. These visual tools were designed to stimulate and focus discussions on the research topic.

Chapter 4 will detail the methodology of this thesis. It will start by introducing the qualitative approach, before explaining and justifying the design of the research. It will then detail the semi-structured interview technique that created the primary data for this thesis. Chapter 4 will then explain how this data was analysed, concluding with a summary of how the methodology unfolded.

4.2 Preparing for Qualitative Primary Research

Northumberland National Park covers 405 square miles across 20 per cent of the land area of the county of Northumberland. Inevitably, there are a lot of stakeholders with an interest in how it is managed. As my preparatory research into partnership working unfolded, I started to note down the names of organisations that had an interest in sustainable development in Northumberland National Park. Over several months, the list grew until I decided to stop recording these names when it reached 250 organisations. The list was then equally split between those with a more local, Northumberland focus, and those operating nationally. The list could have been expanded further, however I felt this was sufficient to demonstrate a good range of partners. Please see Appendix 2 for the full list of organisations that I identified.

Image-Elicitation

All Ph.D. students in the School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development are required to complete a research poster during their second year. With this task in mind, I started thinking about how I could pictorially express the range and diversity of my research on partnership working. My approach was to design two pseudo-3D maps, one of Northumberland and the second of the UK. I then overlaid each organisation that I had identified onto one of the two maps, by way of their logo, pointing towards the location of their headquarters or where their main geographical area of interest lay. This created two interesting collage maps (Figures 3 and 4), each with 125 logos shown. Finally, I decided to add the date to both of the images, 2009-2013, so that I could explain that one of the criteria for selection was that the organisation must have been present and active at least some point during this four-year period.

Such was the interest from my colleagues at Newcastle University during the 2010 Postgraduate Conference, I realised that the collages could act as a focal point during my actual research, stimulating discussions around partnership working. I therefore decided to re-use the images as an A4 visual stimulus during the subsequent research interviews.

'Photo-elicitation' was defined by Harper (2002: 13) as, "The simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview." Like the photographs, the collages act as a stimulus for questioning. Participants were asked to discuss their reactions to the collage maps, the range of organisations represented, and to identify the ones that they felt were most important to their work.

Harper (2002) argued that visual media has a few useful roles. The images may help to ground the researcher's interview questions, providing both interviewer (researcher) and interviewee (participant) with a meaningful context for their discussion. Using a visual tool may help to engage participants with familiar settings and objects, helping them to think about things they could take for granted. Furthermore, the use of images may stimulate the interviewee to remember people or events or situations, which they might otherwise have forgotten about. However, Harper also warned that use of visual media did not necessarily result in a superior interview. From an instance of his own research, he said his photographs, "Did not evoke deep reflections on the issues I was interested in" (Harper, 2002: 20). Nevertheless, I decided to use the collage maps during my research interviews, which a selection of reactions from the participants recorded in Section 6.3.

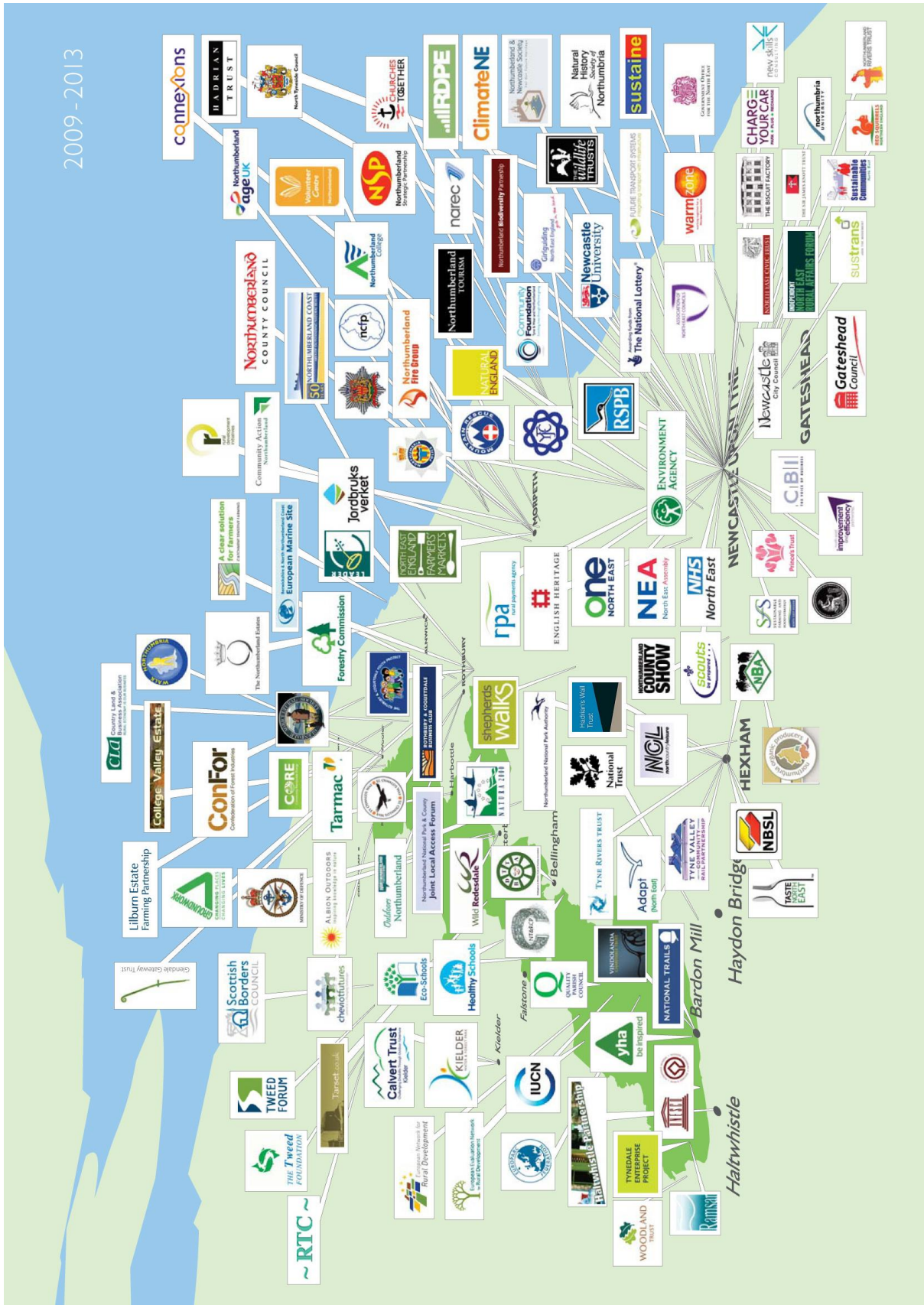


Figure 3. Northumberland Collage Map, showing a range of 125 different stakeholders, each with an interest in the management of Northumberland National Park.

Categorising Organisations

With 250 active stakeholders identified, I needed to decide a methodology to elicit information about partnership working in Northumberland National Park. It was necessary to choose a sample of stakeholders to enable the identification of interviewee participants. This involved a process of relatively loose categorisation, to create the overview shown in Table 5.

I describe the categorisation process of ‘relatively loose’ because in some instances it was down to my interpretation of how to classify an organisation. For example, the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) is a charity that helps to educate people about national parks, has a large paid membership base, and receives funding from national government for some of its work. Therefore I needed to decide which category to classify it under, and in this instance I choose membership organisation. This decision was made because the educational side of their work tended to be more projects-based, as was the funding from national government. Notwithstanding, membership organisations can also be of a very different nature.

Category	Number of Organisations			Percentage of Organisations
	Northumberland	National	Total	
Community, Voluntary, Charity	36	18	54	21.6%
Educational Organisation	4	6	10	4.0%
Local Government	15	6	21	8.4%
Local Partnership	18	3	21	8.4%
Membership Organisation	7	29	36	14.4%
National Government	23	19	42	16.8%
Non-Departmental Public Body	2	17	19	7.6%
Private Sector	18	9	27	10.8%
Special Purpose Local Authority	2	18	20	8.0%
Total	125	125	250	100%

Table 5. The categorisation of organisations from the two collage maps.

Although it is set-up as a charity, the CNP is somewhat dependent on its income from membership fees, hence my decision as to where it would slot in. No organisation was included in more than one category.

Identifying Interview Participants

With an understanding of the composition of the key organisations interested in Northumberland National Park (Table 5), the next task was to determine which organisations to approach, and therein, the actors that would become the interview participants. For a thesis of this nature, I felt that 15 to 25 semi-structured interviews would generate sufficient

depth and breadth of material from which I could draw my findings, based upon past social science research of a similar nature (for example, of varying interview durations, Selin and Chavez (1995) undertook 23 interviews; Saxena (2005) 45 interviews; Larsen and Valentine (2007) 24 interviews; and Leach (2010) 30 interviews). Each category was carefully considered in-turn. Taking the example of the private sector, the organisations that I identified in the category is shown in Table 6.

Acknowledging that the private sector contributed to 10.8 per cent of the organisations on the images, I decided to interview actors from two private sector organisations. It was not a straightforward task to determine which these organisations would be. The guiding principle was their known level of current involvement in Northumberland National Park. Whilst many of the national organisations had an interest in the area, this was only part of their remit; what I was really after were organisations where there was a significant involvement, beyond being a partner on a specific project or venture. With this in mind, I decided to choose two private sector organisations from Northumberland.

A Sample of Private Sector Organisations interested in Northumberland National Park	
Northumberland	National
Albion Outdoors, Bellingham and District Trade and Tourism Association, The Biscuit Factory, College Valley Estate, The Confederation of British Industry, Future Transport Systems, Lilburn Estate Farming Partnership, National Renewable Energy Centre, New Skills Consulting, Northumberland Business Service Limited, Northumberland Estates, Rothbury and Coquetdale Business Club, Rural Development Initiatives, Shepherd's Walks, St. Oswald's Way, Tarmac, Walk Northumbria, Youth Hostels Association (England and Wales)	Beta Technology, Elektromotive, Farm Stay UK, Landuse Consultants, North East Chamber of Commerce, Northumbrian Water, Tadea, The Camping and Caravanning Club, The Central Association of Agricultural Valuers

Table 6. Private sector organisations from the two collage maps.

In deciding which two organisations to contact, I had to think about each one in turn, as shown in Table 7. After careful consideration, I decided to interview one private estate participant, since large estates are significant stakeholders in Northumberland National Park. From those on this list, I picked the Lilburn Estates Farming Partnership as the most appropriate, due to their active involvement in preparing the present Northumberland National Park Management Plan (NNPA, 2009). I felt that as a long-term and established stakeholder, this organisation would be well placed to contribute towards understanding the practical management of a protected area. Incidentally, two other significant participants

from estates were also interviewed, albeit defined under different categories. These were the National Trust and the Ministry of Defence.

Sample of Private Sector Organisations in Northumberland	
Albion Outdoors	A new business start-up offering outdoor learning experiences for the educational sector. Unlikely to have been established long enough to comment on partnership working.
Bellingham and District Trade and Tourism Association	A partnership of tourism businesses focussed on North Tyne and Redesdale. A relatively small geographical area of focus.
The Biscuit Factory	Host of a Northumberland National Park photography exhibition in 2011. Otherwise, of no relevance at present.
College Valley Estate	A large estate in Northumberland National Park. Did not significantly contribute towards the present Northumberland National Park Management Plan.
The Confederation of British Industry	A regional body with its headquarters in County Durham. Limited involvement with Northumberland National Park Authority.
Future Transport Systems	Involved with the emerging electric vehicle market. No real interest outside of this area.
Lilburn Estate Farming Partnership	A long-term large estate and partnership in Northumberland National Park. Very active in contributing towards the present Northumberland National Park Management Plan.
National Renewable Energy Centre	Based in Blyth and specialising in wind turbines. No real interest outside of this focus.
New Skills Consulting	Based in Newcastle upon Tyne. Commissioned to prepare and publish an economic impact assessment for the proposed redevelopment of Once Brewed National Park Centre and youth hostel.
Northumberland Business Service Limited	Following the change of government in 2010, this new business support service replaced Business Link.
Northumberland Estates	A long-term large estate in Northumberland National Park. Did not significantly contribute towards the present Northumberland National Park Management.
Rothbury and Coquetdale Business Club (recently renamed Rothbury and Coquetdale Business Network)	A conglomerate of businesses in Coquetdale. The partnership is presently dormant, following discussions between the businesses involved and other local people. About to be re-launched as of 1 st April 2013.
Rural Development Initiatives	A small business principally focussed on the wood fuel industry. No real interest outside of this focus.
Shepherd's Walks	A micro tourism business focussed on walking and hiking. No real interest outside of this focus.
St. Oswald's Way	This walking route was recently promoted via a new website, funded by several partners, and is being marketed by various tourism bodies. Those involved are unlikely to have been established long enough with this venture to comment on partnership working.
Tarmac	A large quarrying company located a couple of miles outside of Northumberland National Park. Limited involvement with Northumberland National Park Authority other than a donation for barn owl boxes in recent years.
Walk Northumbria	A micro tourism business focussed on walking and hiking. No real interest outside of this focus.
Youth Hostels Association (England and Wales)	A significant partner for the forthcoming proposed redevelopment of Once Brewed National Park Centre and youth hostel.

Table 7. The sample of private sector organisations in Northumberland.

The second private sector organisation I choose to speak to was the Rothbury and Coquetdale Business Club. I picked this one because it represented (or was supposed to represent) a range of businesses working in partnership. After making the initial contact with the secretary, I learned that it had encountered some problems and was dormant. I decided to speak with a participant from that organisation anyway, and in doing so, to uncover the problems that arose in this particular partnership. The interviewee from the Rothbury and Coquetdale Business Club is referred to as the tourism business participant.

I used a similar process for the other categories, and in total I identified 23 actors from 19 different organisations from which to draw my research. As the management body for the area, I decided to speak to four different current actors in varying roles from Northumberland National Park Authority, hence the greater number of actors than organisations.

I was conscious from the literature review that partnership assumptions and values may not be shared by all employees within any given organisation (Ashforth, 1985; Selin and Chavez, 1995; Larsen and Valentine, 2007). Therefore the extent to which any one individual could feasibly 'represent' a medium or large organisation is obviously somewhat limited. Interviewing a cross-section of employees from a single organisation involved of partnership working could nevertheless be a direction for a subsequent piece of research after this thesis is complete.

In the meantime, the actors I targeted for interview were required to have certain characteristics. Firstly, they needed to be actively involved in partnership working in Northumberland National Park. Secondly, they needed to have been involved for a number of years, so that they would have experience to draw upon. Thirdly, the actor needed to be well placed to be able to contribute their thoughts and feelings about partnership working. In order to decide whom best to approach, I drew upon my own experience as an employee of Northumberland National Park Authority, and listened to suggestions from my supervisors at Newcastle University, who in particular were active through the Northern Rural Network - a regular learning-based forum of many rural stakeholders in Northern England, facilitated by Newcastle University.

This type of non-probability sampling is called purposive sampling, defined by Black (2005: 124) as when, "The researcher hand-picks subjects on the basis of specific characteristics, building up a sample of sufficient size having the desired traits." Bryman (2012: 201-202) explained further:

“Certainly, in the field of organisational studies it has been noted that convenience samples are very common. Social research is also frequently based on convenience sampling. [However] ...the data will not allow definitive findings to be generated, because of the problem of generalisation, but they can provide a springboard for further research or allow links to be forged with existing findings in an area.”

There are advantages and disadvantages with every type of sample method (Black, 2005: 118). Although purposive sampling is typically inexpensive compared to other types of sampling, the trade-off is that to an extent the results can be unrepresentative. For this thesis, it is therefore advisable not to view the results as definitive; it is an exploratory piece of research that will produce some indicative findings of partnership working in Northumberland National Park.

The final list of interview participants was as follows:

- An academic working in the field of protected area management;
- A volunteer from the Northumberland Uplands New LEADER Approach;
- A parish councillor from a parish in Northumberland National Park;
- A private estate participant in Northumberland National Park;
- A former deputy national park officer at Northumberland National Park Authority;
- A former chief executive (national park officer) at Northumberland National Park Authority;
- A actor on the Sustaine partnership board; and
- An owner of a local tourism business operating in Northumberland National Park.

In addition to these, an actor was also drawn from:

- A community development trust operating in Northumberland National Park;
- The Campaign for National Parks (CNP);
- The Country Land and Business Association (CLA);
- The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra);
- The Environment Agency;
- The Ministry of Defence in Northumberland National Park (MoD);
- The National Farmers Union (NFU);
- National Parks England (NPE);

- The National Trust in Northumberland National Park;
- Natural England; and
- Northumberland County Council (NCC).

With regards to Northumberland National Park Authority, four present day actors were interviewed:

- NNPA participant #1;
- NNPA participant #2;
- NNPA participant #3; and an
- NNPA Member.

Qualitative Interviews

This thesis is a subjective piece of research that attempted to understand part of modern society and culture. In this sense, the research does not seek right or wrong in any absolute sense. The reality of partnership working can therefore be best understood through narrative representations. With an awareness of the types of stakeholders interested in Northumberland National Park, I needed to decide on an appropriate way to elicit data from these actors.

Bryman (2012) defined three main strands of qualitative methodology:

- Ethnography/participant observation, where the researcher is immersed in the social setting for some time, in order to observe and listen to the view of a particular group;
- Qualitative interviewing, which broadly covers a range of interview techniques used to engage with participants; and
- Focus groups, where several participants are engaged together in a group interview situation.

To an extent, as an employee of Northumberland National Park Authority, I have already undertaken a significant degree of ethnographic observation, albeit unwittingly. I did not keep a research diary outside of this thesis though, therefore my impressions of the organisation, its employees and other actors were formed by way of my own memories.

The use of focus groups could have been a valid methodology for this thesis, whether speaking to several actors from a single organisation at the same time, or several actors

from a range of organisations. Whilst it would have been interesting to observe the group dynamics of such an approach, I decided to use qualitative interviewing as my principal research technique. Bryman (2012: 469-71) explained that this approach was often attractive to researchers because of the flexibility of its direction and its capacity to provide insights into how participants viewed the world. The one-to-one setting also allowed participants freedom to 'ramble' (often resulting in very interesting anecdotes), and the interviewer has the chance to probe responses where appropriate. Furthermore, the researcher gets what they are after – rich and detailed answers that can be analysed by comparing and contrasting responses and expectations.

There are essentially three different types of interview. These are commonly classified as follows:

- Structured, where there is a script of predetermined questions, with no scope for expansion (more commonly used in quantitative research);
- Semi-structured, where there is a script of predetermined questions, with scope for expansion;
- Unstructured, where there is a theme used to guide a completely open discussion.

All styles of interview have their uses in social research. For my first two research interviews, the style was fairly unstructured. In each instance I wrote to the participants and explained who I was, what I was researching, why I had contacted them and what I would like to talk about (Appendix 3). There were no predetermined questions though; the participants only knew the theme was around partnership working at Northumberland National Park within the context of sustainable development.

The first pilot interview lasted 2 hours and 16 minutes, and the second for 1 hour and 56 minutes. At the end of the second interview, the participant described the interview style as "rather organic", acknowledging the relatively unstructured approach that was adopted.

Both the pilot interviews were invaluable in testing the format and providing me with experience as an interviewer. I undertook all the transcribing myself so I could really get to know the data. The ratio of interview time to transcription was approximately 1:4, so for every one hour of interview time, it would take me four hours to transcribe. This was an important process, because logistically I needed to manage both my time as a researcher, and the time of my participants, so as to not take up too much of their day.

Whilst I rather liked the organic approach of the unstructured interview, I realised that a little more structure would help to focus the research questions and cumulatively save a significant amount of time. I therefore decided to change the interview style to semi-structured, which resulted in a different covering letter (Appendix 4). I decided to keep the predetermined questions to myself until the interview. This decision was taken so that each participant had to think on their feet during the interview, rather than have the opportunity to practice any responses beforehand. I felt it also kept the interview fresh; if the participant knew what was going to be asked I feared the whole process may have become something of a formality with just standard narratives on partnership working expressed. This would have drawn it more towards a structured approach and could even have been comparable to undertaking a survey. To reiterate, my objective was to uncover a rich and varied data set, therefore I needed a methodology that would allow that.

The predetermined questions are described by Bryman (2012: 471) as an interview guide.

“The researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply. Questions may not follow on exactly in the way outlined on the schedule. Questions that are not on the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees. But, by and large, all the questions will be asked and similar wording will be used from interviewee to interviewee.”

I used an interview guide for the rest of the interviews (Appendix 5). In order to keep each interview to around one hour, I tried to cover as much material as I could before the formal interview started. This entailed a longer off-the-record introduction and after the interview started, just one preparatory question to help put the participant at ease.

Each interview was structured around three themes:

- Knowledge and understanding of sustainable development;
- Factors important in partnership working; and
- Experiences of working in partnership with/for Northumberland National Park Authority.

Since sustainable development is an underlying principle of the management of English national parks, the first theme sought to frame the rest of the interview. I aimed to encourage participants to think about what sustainable development meant in practice and what it meant to their organisation. I also wanted to distinguish protected area management as a form of partnership working from any other form (for example, health care, education, urban regeneration, etc.), so that the participant fully understood the context of my rural research.

After considering sustainable development, I introduced the visual images, and allowed the participants adequate time to look through them. This led into discussions about what they felt were important values in partnership working, and using the images as a prompt, they could highlight case studies of partnerships which have either worked well, or not so well, and consider the reasons for the outcomes in each instance. By introducing the images mid-way through the interview, it was also my intention to reinvigorate the participant with this new material. The visual tool gave energy to the participants and retained their focus on the subject matter for the rest of the interview.

Each interview was then rounded off by looking at the state of the present partnerships, and what they felt could be improved from their perspective. This gradually brought the interviews to a close, with all the main areas of investigation covered.

The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Under the terms of the interview, I agreed to send each participant a copy of their transcript within two weeks of the interview, so that it was still relatively fresh in their mind. Participants were permitted to make factual corrections to their transcript, but I urged them not to make significant changes and thereby lose the spirit of the interview. This option for them to edit the text was a genuine concern for me because I felt it ran the risk of diluting the rich data set that I had acquired. For instance, if a participant was open and honest, yet quite critical of any given organisation, my worry was that in hindsight this opinion would have been edited out of the final transcript. However, in practice only five participants made any changes to their transcripts, and in each case with minimal corrections, therefore it proved to be an unnecessary concern.

The approach of initially contacting the participants with a letter, then arranging an appropriate date, time and venue that suited them, keeping the interview to around one hour, and then agreeing provide a transcript to them within a fortnight, proved to be a successful

strategy. No participant refused the invitation of an interview, and without exception, all stated their interest in learning about the overall findings of the thesis.

Reflexivity

Social scientists tend to emphasise the notion of reflexivity, which was referred to in Chapter 1. Bryman (2012: 393) explained thus:

“The term carries the connotation that social researchers should be reflective about the implications of their methods, values, biases, and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate. Relatedly, reflexivity entails a sensitivity to the researcher’s cultural, political and social context.”

Reflexivity is a crucial aspect of my research. This meant that it was important to show an awareness of my background as an employee of Northumberland National Park Authority, how this affected the way I perceived the social world, and how other people perceived me. From the list of 23 participants that I interviewed, ten already knew me as an employee of the Authority, and would therefore be most likely to associate me with this role, rather than as a student from Newcastle University. I was aware that some participants may have withheld their views because of my association with the Authority therefore I consciously took some small steps to try to reassure people of the role in which I was speaking with them and thereby reduce the impact of this association.

- All written communications with the participants used official Newcastle University letter-headed paper in the first instance, and then my Newcastle University email account thereafter, rather than my email account at the Authority.
- The venue for each interview would be determined by the participant, in an environment that they felt comfortable in. Although some participants suggested meeting at the headquarters of the Authority, where possible I steered them away from this venue towards a more neutral location, so the participant did not feel affected by the surroundings.
- I changed the way I presented myself during each interview. At work, where I spend my time in an office environment, I typically wear a suit with a shirt and tie. For the interviews, I wore a branded Newcastle University jumper or fleece, so there was a visual reminder throughout the interview as to the capacity that I was there, with the presence of the Newcastle University badge.

- With the exception of the two pilot interviews (both of which were for developing my understanding of the history of Northumberland National Park), the rest were undertaken with relative anonymity. This meant that instead of using the names of each participant, they would either be attributed to an organisation (e.g. the National Farmers Union) or a type of organisation (e.g. a community development trust). In the latter instance, if an organisation only had a handful of employees, referencing the exact name of the organisation would have narrowed the list of possible participants down considerably, and could thus be seen as compromising their anonymity; hence using a type of organisation instead. I felt that this relative anonymity reassurance was crucial in order to encourage participants to be honest and open with me. However, Northumberland National Park is nevertheless a close-knit community, and despite the removal of the names of participants, it would not take a knowledgeable, local individual a great deal of deduction to make measured guesses as to the sources of some of the quotations used in this thesis. As explained though, each participant had the chance to edit their own transcript, and with that, the opportunity to reword any part of the semi-structured interview.
- I was honest and transparent with everyone in the covering letter that I was simultaneously an employee of the Authority and a student. During the introduction at each interview I explained that there were no hidden agendas, no trick questions, or any other motivations behind my research; my primary objective was to better understand the role of partnership working in protected area management. This approach quickly established a sense of trust that this was a genuine investigation, and their participation was helping to improve this aspect of society.

The final preparation that I undertook was to acquire a research diary. A diary as a log of the researcher's activities can act as a valuable aide-mémoire (Bryman, 2012: 240). Whereas the interview transcript recorded spoken words, the hand-written diary would be used to collate other forms of data, such as the participant's body language, the tone of their voice, and any important insights revealed before or after the voice recording.

I decided to keep a hand-written research diary, which I completed straight after each interview (an extract is reproduced in Appendix 6).

4.3 Creating Data

With the preparatory work complete, I undertook two pilot interviews as previously mentioned. This helped to refine my interview style. Bryman (2012: 12) explained the value of creating data from semi-structured interviews:

“Semi-structured interviews are used so that the researcher can keep more of an open mind about the contours of what he or she needs to know about, so that concepts and theories can emerge out of the data.”

I harmonised my approach to securing the appointments with the participants. Each one involved a formal letter of invitation, and then a follow-up by telephone or email, in order to secure the date and time.

The majority of the participants followed the set protocol that the covering letter detailed. One participant asked for a copy of the questions in advance. Despite this request, I did not provide the questions; I did however explain a little more about the thesis and the themes of the questions, which the participant accepted and did not repeat the request for the questions.

Most of the interviews followed the same format. On one occasion a participant asked me questions, for example, “I don’t know, what do you think?” after they had shared their views. In this instance I was keen to subtly address this role reversal, so I either built upon the last comment that the participant made to expand the discussion, or I simply smiled and reflected that the investigation would shape my thoughts in due course, and then move on to the next topic. This role reversal was unexpected, but it did not prove to be a difficult obstacle to overcome.

The research diary recorded that several of the participants were quite nervous at first, including one participant that held a senior position within a major stakeholder organisation interested in Northumberland National Park.

In all of these instances, the nerves seemed to clear after the first few questions, and their enthusiasm for the research especially took over once the visual image was introduced to the interview. This unforeseen outcome of settling the nerves of a participant through the use of an object to focus their attention was not recorded as a benefit of image elicitation in the methodology literature that I had read.

One of my first interviews took place in the late afternoon. The research diary recorded that the participant seemed tired before the interview had even started, having left one meeting beforehand in order to join this one. The participant yawned on more than one occasion during the interview and drank two cups of coffee to help maintain their attention. The content that was provided was still extremely interesting and useful, however I decided after that to consciously try and arrange meetings in the morning as a preference, to ensure that the participants were not tired after a busy day at work.

There was also one instance of a participant requesting to be interviewed (from the CLA), after learning about the project from a different participant that I had previously contacted (from the NFU). I decided that since this was a one-off, my methodology was flexible enough to grant the participant's request and therefore made arrangements for the interview to take place.

4.4 Analysing Data

The decision was taken to record and transcribe all the interviews for several reasons, as outlined by Bryman (2012: 482).

- “It helps to correct the natural limitations of our memories and of the intuitive glosses that might place on what people say in interviews;
- It allows a more thorough examination of what people say;
- It permits repeated examination of what people say;
- It opens up the data to public scrutiny by other researchers, who can evaluate the analysis that is carried out by the original researchers of the data;
- It therefore helps to counter accusations that an analysis might have been influenced by a researcher's values or biases; and
- It allows the data to be reused in other ways from those intended by the original researcher – for example, in the light of new theoretical ideas or analytic strategies.”

There are reservations about transcribing though, with the principle issues being around the time it takes to transcribe, and the sheer volume of paper that results from this exercise.

23 interviews took place, with a combined duration of 26 hours and 40 minutes. The average interview duration was therefore 1 hour and 9 minutes. This resulted in a total of 285 pages of interview transcripts. All interviews were transcribed in full, including instances where the

participant may have seemingly gone off at a tangent. In these instances, on the chance that there was a valid point behind the rambling, I opted to transcribe the data rather than take the risk of losing something that may have proved its value at a later date.

After each interview, the participant had the chance to make factual corrections to their own transcript within a two-week window after I had emailed them their own interview. For deliberate unease of use, I consciously decided to send them a PDF version of the transcript rather than a Word document, so as to reduce to temptation of simply opening it up and easily editing what they had said. A few participants emailed me back and requested the Word document, which I then provided, whereas some simply provided a few corrections by email. No-one made significant changes to their transcript; the majority did not make any changes at all.

Coding

I made sense of the data generated from the interview transcripts using a form of thematic analysis called coding. Coding is a tool for systematically handling large amounts of data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), in this instance, by labelling sections within the transcripts with specific predetermined themes (Charmaz, 2006), thereby forming a 'coding frame' (Bryman, 2012: 248). The themes for this thesis included: understanding sustainable development; views of partnership working; examples of partnership working; views of the Authority; views on other partners, etc. For each topic, the passages were subdivided into further groups, so that responses could be directly compared and contrasted between participants.

Davies (1999: 205) was aware that, "The codes themselves [and] the relevance of the materials produced by a given code are entirely dependent on the researcher's thought and care in doing the initial coding of data." I took the decision to manually undertake this task rather than use a software package like NVivo. This was essentially a personal preference since I prefer to work with hard copies of data. The process of coding for this thesis was thorough, consistent and time-consuming; each transcript was read and re-read many times.

Coding goes beyond comparing and contrasting participant responses. Charmaz (2006: 45) explained, "Coding is more than a beginning; it shapes an analytic frame from which you build the analysis." Coding is therefore not analysis in itself; it is a tool that will assist with the analysis once the process is complete.

The research used one form of triangulation. Although traditionally this would entail a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, the transcripts were supplemented by the observational data recorded in the research diary.

4.5 Conclusion

For all of the detailed preparation and planning that a social scientist can undertake, nothing can account for the impact of contemporary political changes and how they are portrayed in the media. For my thesis, my research interviews were particularly affected by the global recession of 2009 to 2012, the change of UK Government from Labour to a Conservative/Liberal Coalition in May 2010; the focus on austerity measures that arose from the spending review in 2010; and the notification of the closure of the regional development agency, One NorthEast, by March 2012.

These topics were inevitably discussed during the research interviews and all had varying levels of impact on partnership working. Although my strategy each time was to patiently let the respondent share their views before focussing back on the questions in the interview guide, in actuality these topical matters all had an impact on the policy and practice of protected area management, and therefore they were all important considerations for my research.

Chapter 4 has explained the methodology of this thesis. Partners were determined by a logical process of filtering, justifying decisions by the known level of present involvement in partnership working, and then using local knowledge to identify a suitable actor within that organisation to interview. The interviews used a series of predetermined questions with two images presented to help stimulate discussions. A research diary recorded information that the digital recorder could not collect, and all interviews were transcribed in full. The data was then analysed with the results presented in Chapter 5, 6 and 7, respectively addressing my three research questions.

Chapter 5: A Case Study of Northumberland National Park

“Protected area management is a massive job. You can never really have enough resources to do it, even if people kept pouring money in, you would still find things to do.” NNPA participant #2.

5.1 Introduction

On 6th April 1956 Northumberland National Park was designated as the ninth national park in England and Wales. In keeping with the government’s ambition to designate a national park near to all the major urban areas, Northumberland National Park was located relatively close to the major built-up areas of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sunderland, Gateshead and South Shields (Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1947). Its creation followed a prolonged wrangle between the National Park Commission and Northumberland County Council, with the former wishing for the Hadrian’s Wall area to the South of the county (Plates 1 and 2) to become the national park (Figures 5 and 6), while the latter the English side of the Cheviot Hills to the North (Figure 7). The compromise reached was to include both areas, bridged together by the rolling uplands of North Tyne and Redesdale and Upper Coquetdale (see Plates 3, 4, 5 and 6). As a consequence of these successful pre-designation negotiations, Northumberland National Park was created with relative ease compared to some of the other national parks (MacEwan and MacEwan, 1986). When considering the policy and practice of partnership working, this thesis utilises a case study approach to understand the complex processes involved. The case study area has a long and detailed history, which will be explored in Chapter 5. It is important to appreciate this background because the series of events and critical points that are included have all helped to shape the modern day approach to partnership working in Northumberland National Park. In short, in order to fully understand the contemporary approaches to this new form of governance, it is critical appreciate why such a shift has come about.

This chapter will consider several key events that have shaped the history of Northumberland National Park (the place) and Northumberland National Park Authority (the management body), with a focus on the evolution of partnership working in Northumberland National Park. This historical account has been created from a combination of known factual data alongside narrative commentary as recalled by several respondents during their interviews. A chronological format has been deliberately chosen because there is a direct correlation between the outcomes of some occurrences and those that subsequently took place. Figure 8 shows a grid reference of Northumberland National Park so that the locations

of the photographs can be placed. Although the captions reveal some of the natural environment designations, all the areas include cultural environment designations as well, for example scheduled ancient monuments.

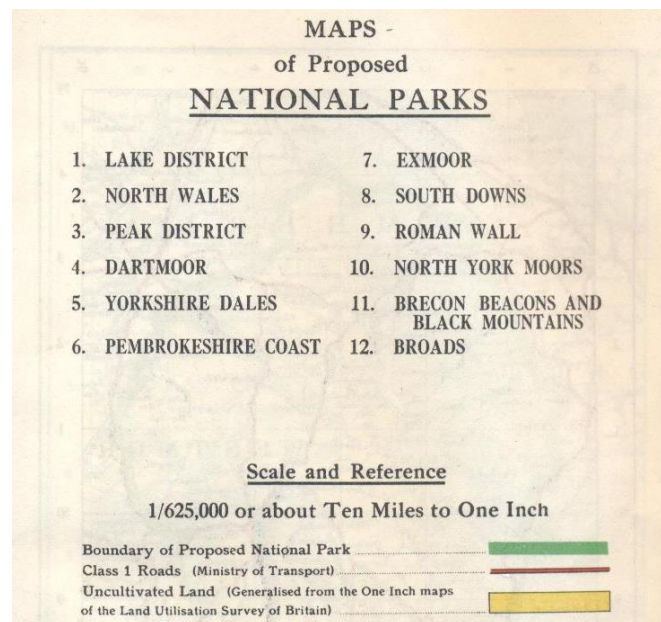


Figure 5. Maps of proposed national parks in 1947. North Wales became Snowdonia National Park; the South Downs did not get designated until 2010; the English side of the Black Mountains in Herefordshire was eventually excluded from national park designation; and the Broads did not get designated until 1987. Source: Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1947: 135.

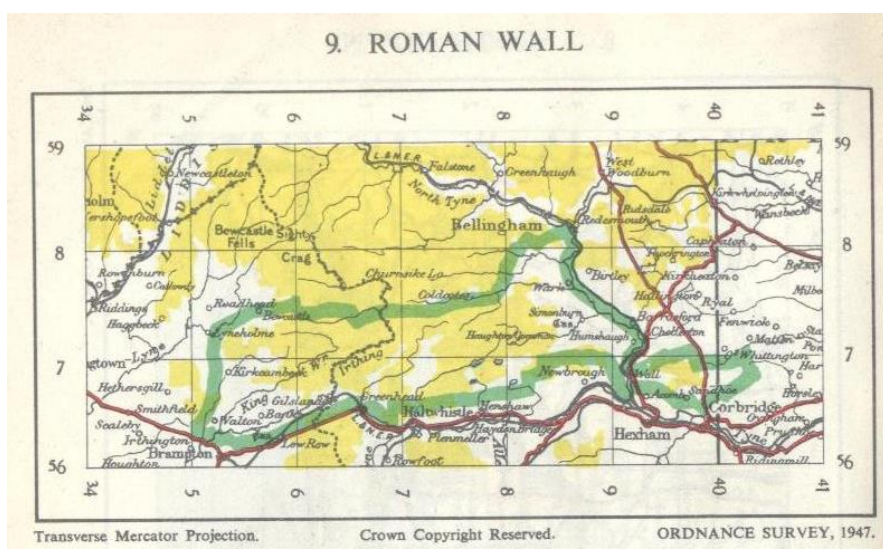


Figure 6. The proposed Roman Wall National Park in 1947. The boundary was similar to the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site in Figure 8, even though in this suggestion it went beyond Hexham to the East. Source: Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1947: 144.

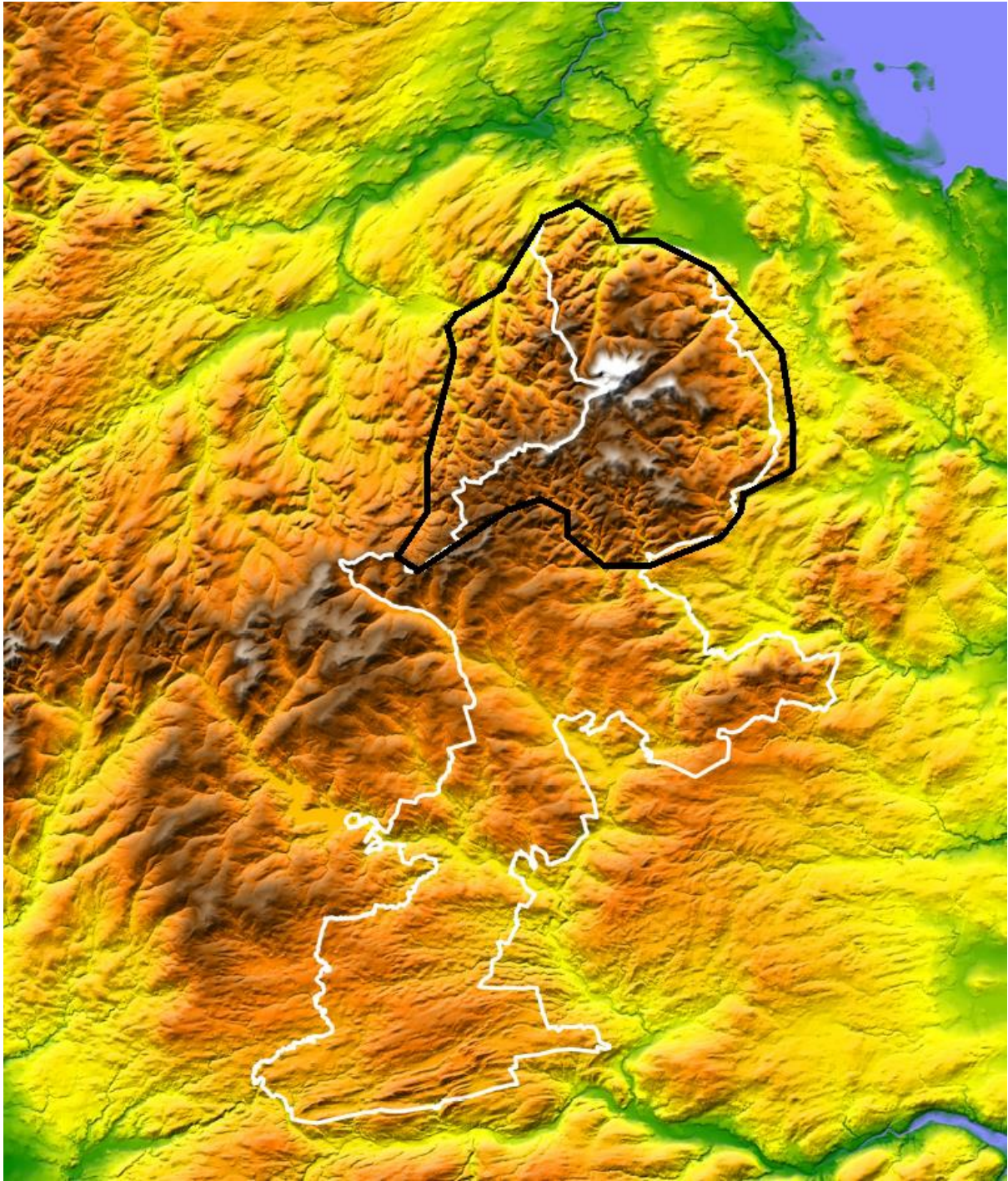


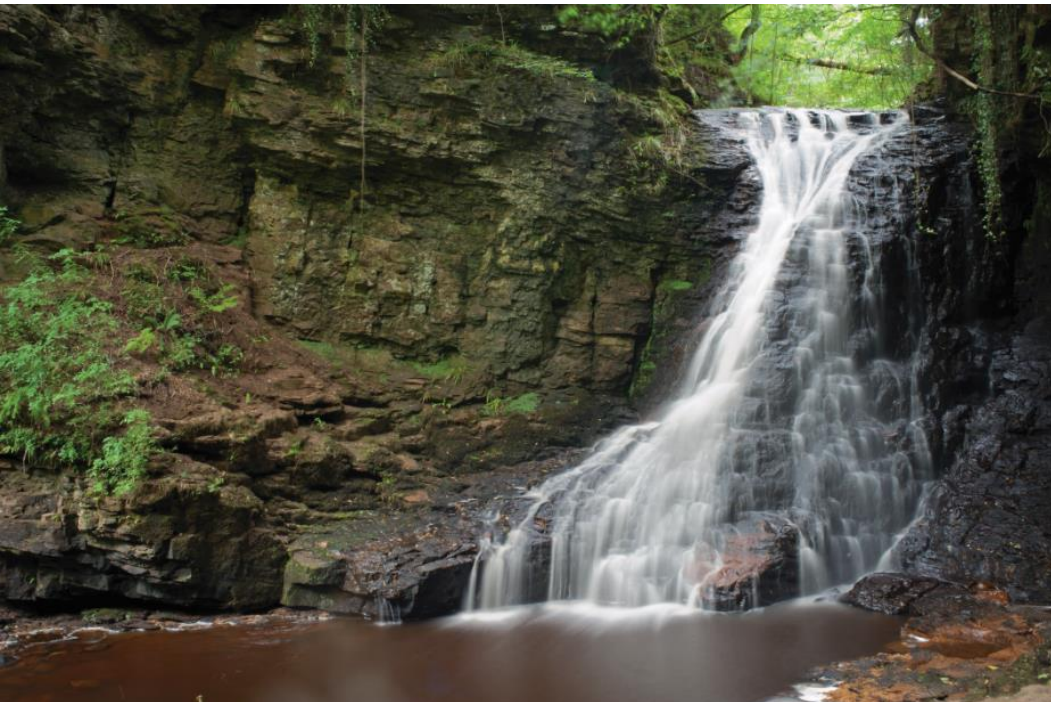
Figure 7. Shaded relief map of Northumberland National Park (white), showing the range of the cross-border Cheviot Hills (black). The North West national park boundary runs along the English and Scottish border (see Figure 8), separating the Cheviot Hills of Northumberland National Park from the Cheviot Foothills of the Scottish Borders. Source: © Crown Copyright and Database Right 2012, Ordnance Survey: 100022521. Map used with kind permission of Northumberland National Park Authority.



Figure 8. Plate Grid Reference for Northumberland National Park.



Plates 1 (top) and 2 (bottom), Hadrian's Wall and South Tyne in Northumberland National Park. Plate 1 shows the central section of Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site: Frontiers of the Roman Empire, which lies within Northumberland National Park, (Grid Reference B6). Plate 2 shows the remains of Thirlwall Castle, built during the 12th Century and later reinforced with stones from Hadrian's Wall. The site started to fall into disrepair during the 17th Century, and today it is protected as a Grade I listed building with scheduled ancient monument status. (Grid Reference A6). Source: Photographs used with kind permission of Northumberland National Park Authority.



Plates 3 (top) and 4 (bottom). North Tyne and Redesdale in Northumberland National Park. Plate 3 is a view of the disparate community of Tarsset, with hay meadows designated as special areas of conservation and sites of special scientific interest (Grid Reference B5). Plate 4 shows the Hareshaw Linn waterfall at Bellingham, a site of special scientific interest (Grid Reference C5). Source: Photographs used with kind permission of Northumberland National Park Authority.



Plates 5 (top) and 6 (bottom). Upper Coquetdale in Northumberland National Park. Plate 5 shows soldiers at the Otterburn Training Area, an area that has sites of special scientific interest (Grid Reference C4). Plate 6 shows a view of Rothbury, a ‘gateway community’ to Northumberland National Park, from the Simonside Hills, a designated special area of conservation and a site of special scientific interest (Grid Reference D4). Source: Photographs used with kind permission of Northumberland National Park Authority.



Plates 7 (top) and 8 (bottom). Cheviot and Glendale in Northumberland National Park (Grid Reference C3). Plate 7 shows a remote farm in the Cheviot Hills. Plate 7 shows a view of the Cheviot Hills and Glendale. The Cheviot is the highest hill in the range at 2,674 feet (815 metres), and is a site of special scientific interest. Source: Photographs used with kind permission of Northumberland National Park Authority.

5.2 1972-2001: Flying the Nest

Despite its designation in 1956, the history of any dedicated public sector role in the management of Northumberland National Park did not really start until the mid-1970s. The former national park officer (former NPO) shared why there was this gap of 20 years, when nothing seemed to happen, “Having designated these national parks in the first decade after the Second World War, we [the government] just left them. There was no sense of purpose.” There was a gradual realisation in the ensuing years that a further examination of the role of the national parks was necessary, culminating in the 1972 Local Government Act. For Northumberland, the revised two-tier system of local government saw a separation of functions between the six local authorities¹⁰ and their over-arching body, Northumberland County Council (NCC). Responsibility for leading the management of Northumberland National Park fell to Northumberland County Council. Northumberland National Park is entirely inland, covering 1,048 square kilometres. To the East lies Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, designated in 1958 and covering 138 square kilometres. Stretching for 120 kilometres across Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and Cumbria, is Hadrian’s Wall, which was made a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site in 1987, and in 2005, it became part of the transnational ‘Frontiers of the Roman Empire’ World Heritage Site, which also includes sites in Germany. Finally, to the South is the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, designated in 1988. Although it covers almost 2,000 square kilometres, only 20 per cent of the area is in Northumberland.

Establishing the National Parks and Countryside Department

The first research interview I undertook was with a previous deputy National Park Officer (former deputy NPO), who was one of the initial dedicated national park staff that was hired following the 1972 Act. The participant directly worked in various roles for Northumberland National Park Authority for over 25 years, and was therefore extremely well positioned to provide long-term background commentary for my case study area. The interview started with a recollection as to what the individual found upon arrival, “Prior to 1974, the Northumberland National Park operation was a man and a dog. It was threadbare.” One of the changes in legislation that was passed at the time was the mandatory requirement for each national park authority to create a management plan, outlining activities in support of the conservation and enhancement of its special qualities, as well as guiding the allocation of resources:

¹⁰ Alnwick District Council, Berwick upon Tweed Borough Council, Blyth Valley Borough Council, Wansbeck District Council, Castle Morpeth Borough Council, and Tynedale District Council.

“I was hired for the principal purpose of producing the first Northumberland National Park Management Plan. It was with the national parks and countryside department, a committee of Northumberland County Council, but it was semi-independent because it had a third of its Authority Members appointed. It was unique [in terms of national parks] insofar as it had countryside functions and by that it was developing and managing four country parks that Northumberland County Council had acquired and developed; and responsibility for the management of the whole of the rights of way network in the county.”

The requirement to produce a management plan was part of the process of getting to know the area a lot better (see Chapter 2). The participant continued:

“Very soon afterwards the organisation had a national park officer, an information officer, it had a bit of administration, it had a cartographer, a designer, a head warden – but very little other staff. No more than a dozen. We needed to recruit a conservation team [and] people on the interpretation, recreation side. I was involved in appointing the first upland farm liaison officer, the first ecologist, the first archaeologist. It was very basic staff appointments to do the basic tasks of the national parks and countryside department.”

Looking more broadly at the time the participant spent working for Northumberland National Park, the general view was that, “The whole period through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s was a period of onwards and upwards – there were peaks and troughs. Spending restrictions came and went but overall it was a period of growth.”

Yet, even during periods of growth, it was obvious that it was an anomaly in the national park family:

“Northumberland National Park was always different because it had the smallest budget, the smallest staff, and some would say, the fewest problems – 70 planning applications a year, mostly householder ones – so the national parks and countryside department didn’t need a planning team. The fewest visitors, so it was a kind of... I wouldn’t say backwater. It was distinct and it had these countryside functions. It was atypical.”

The first Northumberland National Park Management Plan was published in 1977, and was logically structured around the two purposes of the national park. It was possible that when seeing this collection of dedicated policies in print, which broadly outlined how the protected area was going to be formally managed, that a realisation occurred that the national parks

and countryside department simply did not have the resources required to satisfactorily deliver this document, as the participant explained:

“There was recognition that in order to do a proper job, more resources were needed. No-one gave any guarantees, but unless a sound case was made, there would be no expansion. Collectively the managing bodies weren't very good at making the case, and so, if the case were made better, the government would be more disposed towards allocating more resource.”

In 1984 an independent management consultancy, Arthur Young McLelland Moore, published a study to advise on a way forward for the managing bodies to access more resources. The findings, as described by the former deputy NPO, were that, “The management plans are all very well, but alongside the management plan the management bodies need to do financial planning and the assessment of resources needed to be much more sophisticated. So that led to functional strategies.” The functional strategy has gone through various incarnations since then, with its modern day equivalent called the corporate plan, which is now a mandatory annual requirement for publication by all English national park authorities.

Fit for the Future: Report of the National Parks Review Panel

In 1989 the Countryside Commission chose the 40th anniversary of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act to review the context in which the national parks could be taken into the 21st Century. Professor Edwards and his team were accordingly invited to conduct the review and report their findings to the Countryside Commission in 1991. The former deputy NPO submitted evidence to the National Parks Review Panel, as it was known, along with the outgoing national park officer for Northumberland, who, for purposes of clarity would shortly afterwards be replaced by the individual known throughout this study as ‘the former NPO’, who was also interviewed for my thesis.

The former NPO jokingly shared some telling first impressions with me:

“When I was head of the national parks branch at the Countryside Commission, we got this campaign going in the mid-1980s. We gave each of the national park authorities £10,000, a pot they could match themselves, to do promotional activity, projects etc. We would want to know what you've spent it on, but we said, ‘It's up to you what to do with it’. Somebody said in Northumberland National Park, you could send all the residents a fiver! Which I think is a rather neat way of encapsulating the issue.”

The issue was that Northumberland National Park was indeed “atypical” as the former deputy NPO had described it, because of its small resident population. Nevertheless, the decision by the Countryside Commission to award this funding can be interpreted as an early example of a neo-endogenous approach. The former NPO continued:

“When I went to Northumberland National Park Authority in 1990, the nickname was ‘Slumberland National Park’ because nothing ever happened! My predecessor was good at many things. He had laid excellent foundations with the residents and the organisation had good standards and was thoughtful and consistent. But we were not particularly interventionist or ambitious. He was very conscious that resources were slender and the Authority had a limited range of powers, and so it was prudent to be fairly modest. The Authority did the things it did, very well.”

The period 1989 to 1991 was a very difficult time for the national parks and countryside department of Northumberland County Council, partly because of the scrutiny that the Edwards Review brought, and also because of the impending general election in 1992. Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) participant #1 recalled that even though the national park and countryside department employees were specifically asked not to individually contribute to the National Parks Review Panel these instructions were ignored by some members of the management team. The participant said:

“I think you have to remember that being in a politically restricted post kind of limited what you could say on those matters. I think if any employee had come out with a view that was contrary to their employers, Northumberland County Council, that wouldn’t have been a career move... forward!” (*Laughs*)

NNPA participant #1 said that the very process of submitting evidence to the National Parks Review Panel was a political hot potato, which Northumberland County Council attempted to control by, “Making sure that the committee of the national parks and countryside department gave its own, rounded view, knowing that it could not take a contravening view to Northumberland County Council.” I asked NNPA participant #1 what the environment was like to work in. “Yes, it was challenging” was the reply.

As previously indicated, the ‘single voice’ approach of submitting evidence to the National Parks Review Panel that Northumberland County Council tried to manage was undermined by at least two individuals who provided interviews directly to Professor Ron Edwards. The

former deputy NPO confirmed, “Oh yeah... got me into trouble! Tony MacDonald was the NPO at the time and he and I were interviewed by Ron Edwards.” The individual was seemingly quite proud of the rebellious act of defiance, which was all about acting for what was felt as the greater good:

“Going back, the national park management bodies certainly were not freestanding. But the national parks and countryside department was still treated as a kind of committee of Northumberland County Council, although there were these one third Authority Members who had this strange status and came to County Hall for the meetings. There was an assumption that the Secretary of State appointed Authority Members wouldn’t interfere too much with the countryside stuff, because that’s not what they were there for. But they were very sound people, and so their participation in discussions on countryside issues was helpful and no-one got too precious about it.”

The participant went on to indicate an early finding from the National Parks Review Panel:

“What Ron Edward’s was saying, was that the management bodies should become free of all the bureaucratic controls of their parent authorities; they needed to be freestanding. I seem to remember the wording at the time was ‘fleet of foot’. Much more independent, much more focussed on national park purposes and free to do the staff appointments, the budgets, and all the things to manage and support the Authority Members. The management bodies shouldn’t have to go through the personnel, the treasury, and the other checks and balances that were perceived at the time to be constraining, unduly.”

I asked the former deputy NPO what specifically caused the trouble:

“Why did we get into trouble? Well, we were asked by Ron Edwards, ‘What [governance] model would be best?’ And me, in my naïvety at that time, said, ‘a third County Council Members, a third District Council Members, and a third Secretary of State’. Of course, I was employed by Northumberland County Council. Northumberland County Council did not want to lose control of Northumberland National Park and they thought the existing arrangement worked perfectly well. So this was a kind of political issue, very sensitive amongst the leadership of Northumberland County Council. When Northumberland County Council discovered that the national parks and countryside department officers produced evidence to the Edward’s Inquiry effectively saying the national parks and countryside department wants to separate itself from Northumberland County Council. ...How would you describe it? Yeah, I thought about well, where’s my loyalties here? There’s the Northumberland National Park case but then there’s my obligations and responsibilities to my employer, and the employer is

making it very plain that they didn't go along with the Edward's thinking. The political leadership were opposed, because it was a political issue of control. Did Northumberland County Council want to give up and lose its national parks and countryside department? No."

The former NPO identified that the whole culture of the organisation was a stumbling block, including the perceived resistance to any form of change:

"Northumberland County Council was like a jelly mould. It didn't matter what you poured into it, when it set, it was a rabbit. They had their own culture and way of doing things, which is one of the key weaknesses in trying to do sustainable development."

The sustainable development agenda would go on to become of fundamental importance to the national park authorities.

The report by Professor Edwards and his team, *Fit for the Future*, was published in March 1991. It was detailed and wide-ranging with no less than 170 specific recommendations. In September 1991, on the occasion of the National Parks Conference, Ministers announced their intention in principle to go forward with the proposal to make all the national park authorities independent bodies on a similar basis to the Peak District and Lake District National Park Authorities. The former NPO inherited the aftermath of this review:

"When Northumberland County Council learned that the government intended to create freestanding authorities, they were really quite upset. 'You appear to have decided that you think that Northumberland County Council has been doing a bad job. We think that we've been doing a good job. We work closely, but not in an interfering way, so we're a bit miffed with all of this, so we're going to take our bat and ball home.'"

This implied that it was the view of the participant that there was an unreasonable reaction by Northumberland County Council. The proverbial divorce papers had been filed, setting in motion the chain of events that Northumberland National Park Authority is still addressing in 2013, as will be explained further.

Discontentment, Asset Stripping and Independence

NNPA participant #1 explained the legislative delay between 1991 and the actual creation of the freestanding authority in 1997:

“So from 1991 to 1997, before the national park authority became independent, we were still part of Northumberland County Council, as a very small department within a larger directorate, but self-contained and semi-autonomous. The reason it took until 1997 was that in that period the Conservative Government found it very difficult to get legislation through Parliament. It was a time when John Major had a lot of problems with his backbenchers, as the Government became smaller and smaller, in terms of its majority, the national park legislation kept getting put back from one year to the next. So eventually it was legislated in the 1995 Environment Act, one of the last acts that the Government passed before the election in 1997.”

However, Northumberland County Council wasted no time after 1991 in preparing for the eventual separation. The former NPO recalled, in rather a regretful tone:

“Years before Northumberland County Council needed to, they decided to disentangle the national parks and countryside department, which to some extent meant that some of the economies of scale were lost. Northumberland National Park Authority lost the rights of way management, Northumberland County Council kept that as a highway authority. So Northumberland County Council actually lumbered themselves with additional costs that had been previously borne by the Authority. Possibly Northumberland County Council actually shot themselves in the foot.”

NNPA participant #1 provided an example of the discontentment during the interim years:

“We even got money off government to renovate a visitor centre, and it got taken off us to give to social services to cover overspend on one of their social care homes. So even money that was given by government for a particular national park purpose, in Northumberland National Park, that was part of Northumberland County Council, it could be used for other things, and was.”

The NNPA Member told a similar story, “If Northumberland County Council had to make a cut, they would make they would make the cut to the Northumberland National Park Committee and the National Park staff.”

The former NPO completed his recollections with an amusing, but very serious anecdote:

“Nobody within Northumberland County Council would have any institutional memory now of all of that. Nearly everybody who was involved with the rather bitter episode has gone. It was the Labour County Council feeling sore at the Conservative Government. I remember the

Leader of Northumberland County Council saying, 'You will leave in your underpants!' Well, it wasn't quite like that! There was silly behaviour."

At the time of the research interview, I did not really understand what the former NPO had meant by this reference. By chance, the NNPA Member quoted the same line in a later interview, and then it was explained to me what it meant.

"If I give you another little flash back to the day of the former NPO" the NNPA Member started, "When we became a freestanding Authority, the Leader of Northumberland County Council told him that he would leave in his underpants! They stripped all the assets they could back to Northumberland County Council before they allowed us to become freestanding." The consequences of the actions would be long-standing:

"To be honest that's partly to blame for where the budget is now. Because that budget kept getting cut and cut and cut, and then historically it ended up a low budget when we became a freestanding Authority. When Defra took over the budgets, 'Well that's your base' because it had been hammered down. That's an issue going way back. There was always 'us and them' with Northumberland County Council and the districts and it's not surprising that there was an 'us and them' when Northumberland National Park Authority became freestanding. We were very much seen as being taken away from them."

One asset that wasn't stripped was Powburn Caravan Site, which, as the NNPA Member told me, was accidentally overlooked, "Obviously the former NPO wasn't going to tell them, because it was worth quite a lot of money!"

In 1997 Northumberland National Park Authority finally became a freestanding organisation. Over the next three years, NNPA participant #1 said that administration duties were priority, "It was about making sure the organisation worked properly." The participant continued, "I guess from the turn of the century, 2000 onwards, Northumberland National Park Authority gained in confidence, as an Authority and took on a role of how it wanted to stamp its own way of working and deliver its own priorities for the people who visited and lived and worked in Northumberland National Park."

In February 2001, a national crisis hit the UK countryside as the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease took precedence (Chapter 2). Rural issues were forced up the political agenda, as the former deputy NPO said:

“Foot-and-mouth disease certainly had the effect of doing that because suddenly rural was in the public eye, because the countryside was closed, there was economic meltdown in rural areas, and it was costing an absolute fortune to sort out. A general election postponed; all of sudden rural was politically, very important.”

Northumberland National Park Authority played a pivotal role for the area during this crisis, and in many ways, it was platform that the organisation needed to come of age. The Authority was able to assert itself as a key organisation, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with other stakeholders in the region.

In summary, it is well-worth remembering that I have only presented one side of the story; no former Northumberland County Council non-national park employees were interviewed as part of my research. Nevertheless, it has been shown that Northumberland National Park Authority went through a very difficult gestation period when the organisation appeared to have been treated with a degree of contempt. The most significant impact of this was the asset stripping, which resulted in an artificially low baseline figure for the National Park Grant to start from, which, as will be discussed later, continues to be a problem in 2013. Prior to the outbreak of foot-and-mouth, Northumberland National Park was the centre of a different national crisis. At the very time that the Authority going through its re-organisation, the Ministry of Defence was targeting this protected area for a major development, which would go on to strenuously test the ultimate value of these competing national interests.

5.3 1991-2001: The Otterburn Public Inquiries

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) own 23 per cent of Northumberland National Park. During the last 30 years, this entire area has been referred to as the Otterburn Camp, the Otterburn Firing Ranges, the Otterburn Ranges, the Otterburn Military Training Area, and the Otterburn Training Area. Although all four names are still used today, for the purposes of this thesis, it will only be cited as the latter. The Otterburn Training Area (OTA), shown on Figure 9, is the second largest live firing range in the country and has been used for military training since 1911, some 45 years before Northumberland National Park was designated. Although the OTA covers over 242 square kilometres, almost half is set-aside for dry training, i.e. non-live firing (117 square kilometres) with around 30,000 soldiers using the area each year, spending several weeks training with the latest infantry weapons, artillery and helicopters. There are two main live firing range areas at Otterburn for artillery, demolitions, all infantry weapons and restricted armoured vehicle firing.



Figure 9. Map showing the Otterburn Training Area. It is owned by the Ministry of Defence and is entirely within Northumberland National Park.

Fighter aircraft also practice ground attack firing, and there are parachute-dropping zones. A wide selection of live firing ranges provide facilities for weapons from 5.56mm calibre small arms to 155mm artillery and 30mm guns on armoured reconnaissance vehicles.

The OTA is a contested landscape principally because of the competing national interests of security, environmental protection and recreational access. Those involved with the founding legislation were well aware of this need for compromise, for example, Lord Silkin said of the second reading of the National Parks Bill in 1949, "It may be necessary in future, as it has been in the past, to permit some part of the national park areas to be used for the purposes of national defence" (1949: 1484). Such an argument was supported by Baroness Sharp's findings from her 1977 inquiry into military use at Dartmoor National Park, despite her belief that military training was 'discordant, incongruous and inconsistent' with national park purposes, thus, "They must be balanced against other objectives of national policy. There may be circumstances in which the proven needs of defence must take precedence" (Cmnd 6837, 1977: 1).

Competing National Interests

Following the end of the Cold War in 1991, the MoD started a rolling programme of restructuring called 'Options for Change', which involved the closure of the Soltau/Luneberg military training area in Germany, the relocation of certain artillery regiments in the UK, and a general reorganisation of training lands by the armed forces (MoD, 1995). The future of the OTA was debated in the Houses of Parliament with Lord Cranbourne's reaffirming that "The Government's declared policy in respect of national parks recognises that training in them remains essential to military preparedness" (Hansard, 1992: cc85). As speculation grew as to how the OTA would be used, the MoD declared that it needed to enable its artillery regiments to train at the OTA using the Artillery System 90 (AS-90) and the Multiple Launch Rocket System.

The MoD argued that the OTA was the only viable option, since Salisbury Plain was already being used to capacity, and the British Army Training Unit Suffield in Canada was too expensive. It was all a question of size, with the OTA having the necessary space to test the new artillery systems.

The proposals were finally submitted to the planning authority in 1996 as a collection of developments and an expansion of the road infrastructure, constituting what is known as a 'major development'. In the spring of 1996, the planning authority, then part of

Northumberland County Council, rejected the plans in order that a full public inquiry could take place. There were eight reasons for the objection, which included a damaging impact on the national park, the failure to strike a balance between the two national purposes and an intensification of military usage, which was contrary to the local plan policies (for the full explanation, see Woodward, 1998). A consortium¹¹ of conservation bodies, led by the Council for National Parks (now known as the Campaign for National Parks, or CNP), stated a further 11 reasons in their objection, including the direct conflict with both the first and second purpose of national parks.

On 22nd April 1997, the Otterburn Public Inquiry began, with the ensuing six months raising “much broader and more abstract issues about land use in the countryside and even the very nature of rural areas” and how different groups view and understand them (Woodward, 1998: 3). For the purposes of simplifying what became a very complicated public inquiry, there were three main contributors. Firstly, there was the MoD, who vigorously put their case forward for their proposed new developments. Secondly, there was Northumberland County Council and Northumberland National Park Authority (NCC/NNPA), who based their argument on their planning objections to the proposals. Thirdly, there was the CNP-led consortium, which raised their conservation and recreation arguments as an objection to the proposals. To provide an example of the complexity of the case, all three parties outlined what they felt was the history of the area. The MoD played upon the Roman origins and how the OTA was seeped in Roman tradition, from AD 43 until ca. AD 410. Meanwhile NCC/NNPA argued that was not the case, and the real history was of the Border Riever conflicts, from the late 13th Century to the beginning of the 17th Century. The CNP-led consortium took an ecocentric approach, stating that the natural environment and the wildlife was there long before either of those cultural recollections. Woodward’s (1998) account of the first Otterburn Public Inquiry considered all of the pertinent arguments that were portrayed over the 57 working days, detailing how the OTA was shifted from “a corner of remote, windswept Northumberland to being a central element in the UK’s national security strategy.”

The result of the Otterburn Public Inquiry was initially expected in 1998, however, following the publication of the Strategic Defence Review in the summer of 1998 (MoD, 1998), concerns were raised by CNP and others that new proposals might have further impacts on

¹¹ Youth Hostels Association (England and Wales), the National Association of Voluntary Countryside Wardens, the Northumberland Natural History Society, the Northumbria and Newcastle Society, the Northumberland and national branches of the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Ramblers Association.

the OTA unanticipated at the time of the original inquiry. The second Otterburn Public Inquiry commenced and the case was re-opened between March and June 1999.

After a decade since its inception, the decision for the development to go ahead was announced in October 2001, with the Inspector ruling in favour of the MoD. The plans involved the construction of infrastructure required to support artillery-training, improvements to roads on the OTA, and the provision of related facilities:

- 46 gun spurs and associated echelon areas, to be grouped into the equivalent of six gun deployment areas;
- Three technical and 18 tactical observation post positions;
- A central maintenance facility;
- A regimental replenishment point;
- Troop accommodation; and
- A network of roads and tracks linking these various facilities and permitting movement in all weathers.

The construction work began in 2003 and was completed in 2005. The Inspector imposed many conditions and undertakings for the period up until 2012 to mitigate the possible environmental impact of the development, including several conservation schemes, improvements to public access and some restrictions on the frequency of future artillery firing.

Memories of the Dispute and its Implications

So far, we have considered the dispute behind to the Otterburn Public Inquiries and the eventual outcome. Since it was a key moment in the history of Northumberland National Park, directly affecting both how the Authority operates today and its relationship with some significant partners, four research interview respondents were keen to share their recollections of this period.

The former deputy NPO, who, to reiterate, was working for Northumberland National Park Authority at the time, explained an important aspect of the public inquiry that was not directly taken into consideration, but would have undoubtedly had an impact on proceedings. The conversation started with a statement, “I was very heavily involved in the Otterburn Public Inquiries” before the revelation “At that time, this major development in a national park had 95 per cent of the local population in favour.” The consequence, as was shared, was that for

Northumberland National Park Authority, “composed, constructed and constituted” the way it was, it was very hard to object with such strong local support:

“There was a campaign against Northumberland National Park Authority, at that time. I was public enemy #1! I was on the television trying to explain why Northumberland County Council and Northumberland National Park Authority were objecting to the proposals.”

The vocal protest group was called ‘Campaign Against the National Park’ and they had a presence at many local agricultural shows at the time to help garner support. Northumberland National Park Authority was not convinced, “But if you say ‘No’ and object to a proposal which may have strong social and economic merits, you are very likely to make yourself unpopular with local opinion.” Meanwhile, the former NPO said that a compromise was almost reached:

“We got to the point really, where we were prepared to do a deal, we were close, with a sound and reasonable outcome. The whole thing fell apart because the local commandant was very concerned to maintain the good jobs up there. They were told that if this didn’t go ahead, the OTA could wind down and lose its value, fewer people would come, employment would go down, and all the rest. We were trying to strike a deal between two national purposes.”

Perhaps surprisingly, the respondent also felt that the public inquiry was also favoured by the MoD with the belief that even they were “not fully behind it.” In any event, the Otterburn Public Inquiries were described by the former NPO as, “bruising and totally preoccupying” and, “It was doing enough damage to us and we weren’t ever going to win.”

What really hurt Northumberland National Park Authority was that, in the words of the former NPO:

“Local people couldn’t see any virtue in having a national park. They couldn’t see any jobs or economic value in the things we stood for and did. They couldn’t see the benefit of national park designation, only a threat to a valued local institution [the Ministry of Defence].”

Even though the research interview participant from the MoD was not present at the time of the public inquiries, when the individual started work at the OTA several years ago, an internal briefing did take place on this matter:

“I think one of the things we found in the past, certainly with the AS-90 development, and we had the two public inquiries, was that Northumberland National Park Authority who challenged us on that development and took us to the Public Inquiries, they underestimated the contribution [we] made to local communities, and the buy-in the local communities had with the OTA.”

In order to test this assertion, I asked the parish councillor for a view of the MoD. Rather unexpectedly, the respondent started with an environmental recognition, “Probably good conservationists of the OTA.” It was explained that this was the reason why local people have the affection that they do for the MoD, tolerating the actual military training practices:

“The public doesn’t go wild over it, gun firing, shells, flares and all of this sort of thing. I think all the evidence is that, in terms of wildlife habitat, the MoD is probably successful. I think generally they are regarded as a very positive part of the community. The range commander is coming to the Rochester and Brynness Parish Council meeting a week on Thursday. I am pretty certain he will have a warm welcome – and I don’t mean a firestorm. Yeah, the MoD is regarded as being pretty good.”

If the conflicting national purposes could not find some form of compromise, then an ultimatum was also discussed as an option. At the time, the opposition to Northumberland National Park Authority was so great that the NNPA Member said, “I was actually the lone voice that called for national park status to be removed from the OTA.” For differing reasons to the local people, MacEwen and MacEwen offered the same solution:

“The OTA may be compatible with a nature reserve, but they are incompatible with a national park and should be phased out. But if the military refuse to go it would still be possible for England and Scotland to co-operate over the creation of a Cheviot National Park on both sides of the border, from which the OTA would be excluded” (1987: 230-231).

In theory, the proposed ‘Cheviot National Park’ would encompass parts of five of the grid squares from Figure 8, Grid References B3, B4, C2, C3, and C4. However, this hard-line stance was not voiced at the two Otterburn Public Inquiries, as Woodward (1998: 92) recalled:

“In opposing the development proposals, the two main opposition groups faced a peculiar difficulty. They did not (and perhaps could not) oppose the principle of the use of the OTA for military training, but did oppose the idea of further development and possible intensification of military use.”

The participant from the CNP was also heavily involved in the two Otterburn Public Inquiries, saying the time was “difficult for everyone concerned.” Despite the eventual outcome not in favour of the CNP-led consortium, the participant appreciated the long-lasting ramifications:

“We like to think of Otterburn as an example of where we didn’t win the battle, but hopefully, it helped to win the overall war – no pun intended. I don’t think the MoD would attempt an intensification project of that scale in a national park again, because they had such a headache during the two public inquiries. Ultimately that has to be a good outcome.”

During the course of the interview, the former deputy NPO became visibly upset as the story was being shared with me, especially with the benefit of hindsight:

“Now, five years after it was built, at colossal cost, how many times have AS-90s trained at regimental level on the OTA? Not once. Are these AS-90s going to be phased out because they are obsolete? Well, probably. What use are they in Afghanistan? I am not claiming wonderful vision and wisdom, but I do think that the questions that we asked at the Otterburn Public Inquiries were perfectly legitimate.”

The whole ordeal was clearly a source of continued frustration and disappointment, especially since the participant was so intricately involved at the time, “It’s another one of these, when push comes to shove, the military versus the national park, or quarrying versus national park, or road scheme versus national park etc., landscape and biodiversity usually ends up in second place. The economic imperatives are always stronger.”

At the end of the public inquiry, the former NPO was left with some severe problems to overcome. Regardless of the aforementioned anticipated loss at the Otterburn Public Inquiries, the whole ordeal was a public relations disaster for Northumberland National Park Authority, from which the organisation would require a radical restructuring in order to reposition itself:

“Northumberland National Park Authority had to do something to make sure that never again, when the Authority was in that position, would things get so polarised. It was a completely futile and stupid argument wasn’t it? It was an episode and it couldn’t be allowed, in my view, to colour everything the Authority did ever again, or to drive a policy agenda. The Authority decided for the next management plan that the sustainable development agenda had to be the way forward.”

Many learning lessons arose from the two Otterburn Public Inquiries. Northumberland National Park Authority realised that sustainable development was the way in which it could bring people together and thereby exert a greater level of influence in its partnership working. Although relations with the MoD were strained, it was the loss of public support that meant the Authority needed to modernise its approach to the management of this protected area, starting by rebuilding trust in the value of Northumberland National Park and Northumberland National Park Authority.

5.4 2003-2009: A Secure Future for the Land of the Far Horizons

The Third Review of the Northumberland National Park Management Plan was subtitled ‘A Secure Future for the Land of the Far Horizons’. It was published in 2003 and marked a step-change in the way Northumberland National Park Authority was going to operate. Although the former NPO insinuated that the Otterburn Public Inquiries had caused the shake-up, NNPA participant #1 was less convinced of its relevance, “I think the ten-year gap was too tenuous to say that (a) was followed by (b) because there was too much happening in-between: a change of management team; a change of Authority Members; a change of government; and a complete change in the way the region works.” The NNPA Member recalled a further influence that resulted in this new direction:

“The former NPO and the chair went away on to the mountains in Italy and until that period, I think the words of the former NPO were, ‘We used to spend money on wrinkly sheds’ in other words farm sheds and things like that. When they were there they saw community participation and involvement in creating employment but also delivering national park purposes. The former NPO brought the idea back from the EuroParc visit to Italy. That was clearly where it came from originally. Northumberland National Park was unique in the national park family then in going down that line.”¹²

Whatever the exact reasoning, likely to be a combination of several factors, Northumberland National Park Authority embarked on a new direction with its 2003 Management Plan. The chair of the Authority, in his foreword titled ‘A New Model for Managing a National Park’ started with what reads like a closing statement, “We have concluded that the best way to achieve national park purposes is by putting the economy and community at the heart of our work.” The chair finished his foreword (NNPA, 2003) with an awareness of three tests for implementing the new approach:

¹² EuroParc (2000) *Young People in Protected Areas: A Living Heritage for Europe*, Conference, The Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini: Italy.

1. To convince others that Northumberland National Park Authority is a natural partner in rural development;
2. To agree with partners how to regenerate the economy using the special qualities to the benefit of the widest community, while seeking consensus on resisting those developments which undermine the special qualities and distinctiveness; and
3. To work in a practical way towards sustainable development in Northumberland National Park.

The first point could be interpreted as recognition of the breakdown in community relations arising from the Otterburn Public Inquiries. The second point, which is an even more explicit reference, could be seen as a learning lesson from the approach taken with the public inquiries, specifically in how the Authority positioned itself and the consequences of that. The third point is the overarching way forward, the universal goal that everyone can unite over and work towards, so that such problems do not happen again.

The former NPO described this sudden and complete change of approach as a Damascene conversion, which was also brought about by the introduction of the socio-economic duty for the national park authorities:

“The reason we have this duty is to give us an alibi to get engaged with the social and economic development forces. My conclusion was, if you get the economy right, if you get the community behind you, you will automatically deliver National Park purposes. That was a Damascene conversion.”¹³

It can therefore be concluded that inspiration behind the new focus of the 2003 management plan was a combination of experience gained from the Otterburn Public Inquiries and the change of policy with a responsibility to deliver the new socio-economic duty.

Embracing Sustainable Development

2002 saw the introduction of the sustainable development fund across the English national parks, following a successful trial in the Welsh national parks the year before. The then Minister of State for Rural Affairs, the Right Honourable Alun Michael, who helped to launch the new programme, said in the prospectus (Defra, 2002: 1):

¹³ In etymology, a ‘Damascene conversion’ described the conversion of St. Paul to Christianity on the road to Damascus. The term has come to mean a sudden and complete change in direction, which is the sense in which it was used in the quotation from the former National Park Officer (NPO).

“The sustainable development fund reflects Defra’s objectives of sustainable development, partnership and social inclusion. It will aid the achievement of national park purposes by encouraging individuals, community groups and businesses to cooperate together to develop practical sustainable solutions to the management of their activities.”

The sustainable development fund was established as a pool of funding worth £200,000 per year, per national park authority, which local communities and businesses could access to undertake innovative, ‘test-bed’ projects that would showcase sustainable development in action. Although welcomed, the dilemma it gave the Authority was that with just 2,000 residents, it was impossible to entirely allocate the funds to projects taking place inside Northumberland National Park.

With the desire to place socio-economic development at the heart of their work, the Authority realised that the only way it could achieve its new aim was to work outside of its designated boundary. A new artificial boundary was drawn-up and a new way of working was introduced, called the ‘Action Area’ approach (see Figure 10).

The former NPO explained:

“We began to use different language. We were never going to consult again, we were always going to engage in advance. We would develop policy with people rather than consulting on it. Adopting a new agenda is not just about doing a bit of joined-up thinking, so that policies are well articulated and well integrated, but also getting the culture of the organisation right. The culture the Authority began to adopt was one of enterprise, adding value, seeing an opportunity, genuine partnership working.”

According to the 2011 Census, the total population of the four Action Areas is 28,760 persons (Office for National Statistics, 2012)¹⁴, which if the area was the actual designated national park boundary, would make the population of Northumberland National Park slightly greater than the truncated mean population of the total English national parks, which is 25,860 persons (Chapter 2).

¹⁴ 2011 Census. Office for National Statistics. [Online]. Last updated: January 2012. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>.



Figure 10. The four Action Areas of Northumberland National Park. Each Action Area included a main settlement. From South to North, there are: Haltwhistle, in Hadrian's Wall and South Tyne; Bellingham, in North Tyne and Redesdale; Rothbury, in Upper Coquetdale; and Wooler, in Cheviot and Glendale.

The new approach enabled the Authority to legitimately work with local communities and allocate grants from the sustainable development fund as part of the new 'bottom-up' approach to rural development.

The Action Areas themselves would provide the focus for groups of communities to appraise their own surroundings and to decide what they value and how it should be protected. A small grants fund of £25,000 per Action Area per year was also established to help local people to determine and undertake work that they would like to see happen in their locality.

The former NPO explained:

“My view is that these are not economic islands; therefore if Northumberland National Park Authority was going to pursue sustainable development, the Authority couldn't regard the boundary as the boundary for its activity.”

The former deputy NPO agreed:

“If the Authority is pursuing a rural development agenda, a sustainable development agenda [whilst excluding the gateway communities], it's an arm behind its back. So you have to operate outside of the Northumberland National Park boundary.”

So far so good, but in legislative terms, Northumberland National Park Authority was moving into a grey area. The 1995 Environment Act, Part III, Section 62 (1) clearly stated:

“A national park authority, in pursuing in relation to the national park the purposes specified in subsection (1) of section 5 of this Act, shall seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national park” (Environment Act, 1995: 1351).

The Third Review of the Northumberland National Park Management Plan carefully quoted the legislation thus:

“Section 62 also places a duty on the national park authority to 'seek to foster the social and economic well-being of the local communities'” (NNPA, 2003: 12).

The quotation in the management plan deliberately cut short of the final four words of the original text in the Environment Act (“within the national park”), presumably so as not to undermine its new Action Area approach, if the law were stringently applied. The NNPA

Member admitted, “We are not strictly meant to spend money outside the national park boundary. There is a grey area there really.”

Speaking from my experience as an employee of Northumberland National Park Authority, a popular counter-argument is that sustainable development does not recognise administrative boundaries. For instance, if a local tourism business is located just outside of the boundary (as the majority of them are), and wished to install renewable energy, the benefits of the low carbon approach would be felt inside the national park in the long-term, whilst in the short-term the owners could market the new green credentials to potential visitors. This is a very pragmatic, common sense approach to successfully delivering national park purposes within reason of, and with respect to, the official national park boundary.

A Change at the Top

The next major development in the re-imagining of Northumberland National Park Authority was the retirement of the former NPO and subsequent introduction of a new NPO in 2005. After a short settling-in period, the present NPO reviewed the progress that had been made with the Action Areas approach, and then restructured the Authority to further enable its realisation. The new look organisation was better supported with frontline staff, in particular four new community enterprise staff and four farming and rural enterprise staff, which would have a positive presence across the four Action Areas.

NNPA participant #2 was asked to recall the reasoning behind the Action Areas.

“The Authority did have this view of sustainable development which was quite sophisticated, in terms of integration and doing it in a way that actually engaged local people. So I think that the vision was there, and that was part of why the Action Areas existed. I think where the Authority had got to [in 2005] was that it wasn’t quite sure how to take the next step, because the next step on needed to be a brave one. It needed to be about changing the way things had been done in the past, so it wasn’t just about having a vision it was about being able to implement that vision.”

However, and as explained in Section 5.2, the Authority was still perennially under-funded. If the Authority wanted to pursue this new way of working, it was going to have to do so within its already limited budget, as NNPA participant #2 explained:

“We took very liberal decisions when setting up the integrated teams and having this area-based working approach, the Action Areas approach, that was going to be our priority.

Protected area management is a massive job. You can never really have enough resources to do it, even if people kept pouring money in, you would still find things to do. So it was about setting priorities and making choices.”

In summary, the Authority had formed its own interpretation of the legislation in order set-up these new Action Areas to enable sustainable development, and restructured itself to work within those areas, thus putting the communities at the heart of the organisation. Crucially, in the eyes of Defra with the National Park Grant, none of this mattered. Northumberland National Park Authority would still get its overall settlement based on its designated boundary of 1956, its 2,000 residents, and its comparatively small level of planning applications that it had to process each year.

5.5 2008-2013: The Northumberland Uplands New LEADER Approach

There is a wealth of academic research on LEADER I, LEADER II, LEADER+ and the New LEADER Approach (Kearney *et al.*, 1994; Barke and Newton, 1997; Ray, 2000; Shucksmith, 2000a; Scott, 2004; Kovacs Katona *et al.*, 2006; Böcher, 2008; Furmankiewicz *et al.*, 2009; and Nardone *et al.*, 2010). According to The LEADER Approach Factsheet (2006: 5), LEADER “promotes sustainable development in Europe’s rural areas addressing economic, social and environmental concerns.” Local people form a ‘local action group’ and subsequently publish a ‘local development strategy’, which, within the broad principles of LEADER¹⁵, identifies local priorities from which this European Union funding can be directed, over the course of the programme. LEADER areas must have sufficient coherence and critical mass in terms of human, financial and economic resources to support a viable and realistic local development strategy. They do not have to correspond to predefined administrative boundaries. The bottom-up approach meant that local actors could participate in decision-making about the local development strategy and in the selection of the priorities to be pursued in their local area. Furthermore, for the latest round, called ‘the New LEADER Approach’ (2008-2013), local action groups were required to have at least 50 per cent representation from the community, voluntary and private sector.

In 2007, the regional development agency, One NorthEast, acting on behalf of Defra, determined that there would be an open-bidding round for LEADER areas across the North

¹⁵ The key principles of LEADER are: area-based local development strategies; bottom-up elaboration and implementation; local public-private partnerships; integrated and multi-sectoral actions; innovation; co-operation; and networking. The local LEADER area must have: between 10,000 and 100,000 inhabitants; small size; homogenous and cohesive; common traditions and identity; shared needs and expectations; coherence and critical mass; and no pre-defined boundaries. The LEADER local action groups must have: external networks and research; professional organisations and unions; citizens, residents and their local organisations; environmental associations; local institutions and administrations; and cultural and community service providers. Source: The LEADER Approach Factsheet (2006).

East of England. Under the previous round of LEADER, called LEADER+, only the Northern part of Northumberland National Park was in a LEADER area (called North Northumberland LEADER+). For the first time, Northumberland National Park Authority bid to become the accountable body for the New LEADER Approach.

I asked two NNPA participants why this decision was taken. NNPA participant #1 said:

“The positioning was because we learned that when you looked back at LEADER+ and the way it was administered, it didn’t help Northumberland National Park because it was dividing Northumberland into two administrative areas. One was very much focussed on the North Pennines, and very few initiatives washed into Northumberland National Park, so we were the Northern extreme. The other was very much based around the coastal area around Berwick and Alnwick, so again, very little washed upstream into Northumberland National Park. It also meant that not one single, cross-cutting project across the two areas was achieved, in the five year to six year period.”

The Countryside and Community Research Unit at the University of Gloucestershire conducted a study, published in June 2006, entitled an ‘Evaluation of LEADER Activities within the North East Region’. It indicated that despite the £1.76 million investment on rural development, many of the communities that should have benefited failed to do so, leaving pockets of deprivation in the remote communities of the Northumberland Uplands. The study reported that the North Northumberland LEADER+ area had a problem with its area, since it was, “Perceived by some as being defined, somewhat pragmatically, by administrative boundaries rather than natural, cultural and geographical characteristics” (University of Gloucestershire, 2006: 48). The strategic direction was also criticised since, “The North Northumberland local action group consciously chose not to support individual enterprises. We remain unconvinced that this was the optimal strategy” (University of Gloucestershire, 2006: 27). The private sector input was also limited, “The links with the business and agricultural sectors are weak. In relation to business, this is suggested to be linked to the high opportunity cost of involvement and the relatively slow perceived pace of progress [which was] an issue in North Northumberland” (University of Gloucestershire, 2006: 57). As for the local action group, the dominance of the public sector was a further problem, with the report saying that “Social and economic partner involvement in North Northumberland has been less than ideal” (University of Gloucestershire, 2006: 68). Whilst the public sector should not be excluded, LEADER should have been about a bottom-up, rather than a top-down, approach to rural development. Finally, the bureaucracy was identified as a barrier to success:

“In North Northumberland, the necessary involvement of the Government Office for the North East in the project appraisal process is seen to result in a number of effects, which compromised the effective functioning of the LEADER approach. Issues that emerged were the direct influence on local action group decision-making, the reduced speed of response, a perceived constraint on innovation and a diminution of local ownership and decision-making. This was seen to have a negative effect on the credibility of the programme and the local action group’s ability to act” (University of Gloucestershire, 2006: 46).

So, in a nutshell, the first main reason why Northumberland National Park Authority chose to take an active interest with LEADER because of the chance to intervene where the market had failed. NNPA participant #2 explained the second main reason:

“Our experience of running Action Areas and the sustainable development fund had shown us that they were the most effective way of working in an area like Northumberland National Park. When we looked at what LEADER+ has done in the past, again, very little, I think Northumberland National Park Authority itself was the organisation that had benefited most. That was telling us a story that unless you were quite sophisticated and you were very clear and were willing to fight for this, you weren’t going to get very far. So when the new bids for the LEADER programmes came out, we felt it our duty to deliver what was coming through the management plan at that time.”

This view was the same as NNPA participant #1, “At that point, not only were we learning from our experience and success in Action Area working, and building on that, we were also learning from what was working through the sustainable development fund, and in particular, its arm-length decision-making grants panel” since a new local action group would have to be formed. This was exactly what the regional development agency was looking for, as the NNPA participant #1 recalled:

“The only other thing that probably helped us quite a bit was the fact that One NorthEast was looking for a new way of delivering LEADER. So they were not actually looking for inherited bodies to just carry on, so that meant that the window was open. There was an opportunity, there was a need, and there was a good basis from which we could take things forward.”

Even if the reasoning was sound, Northumberland National Park Authority knew that it still needed an independent partner to ratify the proposals. NNPA participant #1 shared how this was undertaken; “We sought external validation and research on that from Newcastle University. We asked them to say how wide and how tight they would draw the boundaries.”

NNPA participant #2 verified the response, “We got the Centre for Rural Economy to come in and verify, if you like, putting an evidence base around what we thought we knew.”

Competing LEADER Bids

After taking independent advice from Newcastle University, in July 2007 Northumberland National Park Authority set about preparing an Expression of Interest to make its case for a LEADER area, which would be loosely based on the wider Action Area boundary. Meanwhile, a rival bid to run a Northumberland-wide LEADER programme was also being prepared by Northumberland Strategic Partnership, a subdivision of Northumberland County Council. Northumberland Strategic Partnership formally asked the Authority to withdraw its bid and support their bid instead. The Northumberland County Council (NCC) participant explained:

“There was an issue around moving from LEADER+ to the current New LEADER Approach. I was involved in the LEADER+ local action group, but I know when the bids were going in for the current phase of LEADER, there were definitely tensions there in terms of Northumberland National Park Authority going off and doing its own thing and not playing the partnership game with others. I was moving back from it then, as we were moving into this new arrangement with a unitary authority. But there were some ruffled feathers because of the way the Authority went around doing that. I can’t think of any other specifics, but just on occasion, yes, ruffled feathers.”¹⁶

I asked NNPA participant #2 about the tensions that were brought about because of the bidding process:

“Northumberland National Park Authority had to stretch some of its partnerships, and stretch its relationship with some of its partners, to take this course of action. We had to stretch some of our individual working relationships, at the highest level, but not be afraid to stand on our own, if we thought we were doing the right thing. So at that time, yes, we were out on a bit of a limb, individually, and corporately. We did stretch partnership working at those levels to the limit.”

The aforementioned ‘jelly mould’ culture of NCC was apparent. NNPA participant #2 suspected that at NCC there was “a master plan of how this was all going to move and be delivered, to suit an organisational structure that existed.” This was contrary to the ‘bottom-up’ approach of LEADER. The participant continued:

¹⁶ The participant used to work for Alnwick District Council before being relocated to Northumberland County Council in 2009.

“My view was very clear that the New LEADER Approach was about meeting the needs in rural areas, and if at all possible, uncovering those needs, because we knew they were only scratching the surface. Hindsight, yes, we didn’t have 20/20 vision at the time and we went on our gut feeling about what we thought was right, and we pushed it to the very highest levels, including taking it to a vote at Northumberland Strategic Partnership, which wasn’t a very pleasant exercise to go through, but it was the right thing to do.”

The Authority, with the backing of its Authority Members, decided to submit its own bid in September 2007, leaving the relationship between the Authority and NCC somewhat strained once again. The attitude was very black and white because partners across Northumberland were divided between those that supported the Authority and those that supported NCC. No matter which organisation won the two-horse race, the victor would have to consider the wider partnership working implications, and rebuild trust all round.

At the end of October 2007, One NorthEast announced the outcome. The Authority-led Northumberland Uplands LEADER Expression of Interest was invited to progress to the next round to prepare the full local development strategy. The Northumberland-wide bid from Northumberland Strategic Partnership, was rejected. I asked the Defra respondent to reveal a little insight behind the scrutiny process of the two competing bids:

“I thought Northumberland National Park Authority got it, and that came out well and truly in the bid. They had obviously done their research and understood the patch and the agenda, and the philosophy of LEADER. It was very much an opportunity to develop a clear strategy that fit with the aims and objectives of the Rural Development Programme for England as well. That came out incredibly strongly. If I was going to say something about the Northumberland-wide bid, it was probably too big and incoherent. It was probably their Sustainable Community Strategy, and it almost felt like, and I’ll probably get criticised for this, but it almost felt like a wish list of projects that couldn’t be funded from their [own resources]. As we know, LEADER is not intended for that, it is for the customer and the community. I actually think that what the Authority did was a genuine people and place-led Expression of Interest.”

The next phase involved recruiting a local action group and writing a local development strategy, which had to be submitted by May 2008. This target was duly achieved, and shortly afterwards One NorthEast announced that the Northumberland Uplands would officially become a LEADER area in the North East of England, receiving around £350,000 per year to allocate to local projects during the five years of the programme.

NNPA participant #1 summarised the strengths of the Authority's influence on the local development strategy:

"I think the fact that we did our research, and also the fact that we went on the road and recruited people to join a shadow local action group, as well as going around and getting lots of support and comment from the public and businesses, and community groups in and around Northumberland National Park. I think that showed that the proposition we put forward, from a sort of theoretical/research-based approach, had a lot of support with people on the ground."

Figure 11 shows the LEADER areas in Northumberland. After public consultation, the actual LEADER area became slightly larger than the Action Area boundary, with a population of 33,373 persons, according to the 2011 Census (Office for National Statistics, 2012).¹⁷

Although the Authority was successful in bidding for LEADER, there was something of a sting in the tail when One NorthEast decided that NCC would become the accountable body, much to the frustration of the Authority. Firstly, it was the Authority's LEADER bid that was successful, yet NCC were empowered to deliver it; therefore secondly, additional financial resources of running a European funding programme would pass to NCC; thirdly, the decision was considered to undermine that status of the Authority as being large enough and responsible enough, to deliver a multi-million pounds project; and fourthly, most importantly of all, along with Defra, this meant that four public sector organisations had a direct involvement in running the New LEADER Approach in Northumberland (the Authority, NCC, One NorthEast and Defra).

Defra authorised One NorthEast to make Northumberland County Council responsible for project appraisals and paying grants, which left the Authority as the lead partner, responsible for administering the local action group through a newly created local action group-co-ordinator position. Despite the best efforts of the Authority to make a fresh start, due to the number of public sector organisations involved, there was an expectancy that the bureaucratic problems that plagued LEADER+ were set continue.

¹⁷ 2011 Census. Office for National Statistics. [Online]. Last updated: January 2012. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>.



Figure 11. The three New LEADER Approach areas in Northumberland (2008-2013). The North Pennine Dales LEADER area extended into County Durham.

To summarise Section 5.5, I have decided to consider an academic's view of LEADER and that of the former deputy NPO. The academic opinion was thus:

"Making use of LEADER, which is not particularly a programme for protected areas, but making use of this rural development tool for the protected areas, by connecting the goals for rural development with the functions and objectives of the protected area, I think that is very clever."

The academic participant implied that sustainable development was a key part of LEADER, and was also a goal for protected areas; therefore the two could work together very well:

"I know of a number of biosphere reserves, and also nature parks and national parks in Germany where they have been quite successful to combine and be very flexible in using the different instrument and thereby form coalitions. There are not only your protected area actors, but also your wider range of actors that are involved. Which makes it more complicated to some extent, but at the same time you have a greater number of stronger partners. I think that is something that should be utilised more than it has to-date."

The academic concluded:

"In the end, the development of protected areas can only be conducted in a wider context. They are not on an isolated island, but they relate, and are situated, in a wider context, therefore these instruments that are available should be used more for the purposes of the protected areas."

The former deputy NPO agreed that LEADER was a useful tool for delivering sustainable development. However, it was not so much about LEADER being a success of the Authority; it was more about the inability of NCC to position itself accordingly, at the time when it mattered:

"I think Northumberland National Park Authority should be congratulated for running with it, for saying 'We need a Northumberland Uplands LEADER', and for taking the lead, but it's the tail wagging the dog. It's only because NCC was so weak and didn't have the vision or the capacity or give rural sufficient priority. I think it abdicated. I think they should have been running with that agenda, not the Authority. There are less than 2,000 [residents] in Northumberland National Park. How many people are in the LEADER area? It's the tail wagging the dog. I applaud the Authority for running with it, but they ran with it in the absence of the people who should have been running with this agenda."

Aside from the number of inhabitants, the former deputy NPO saw economic development, of which LEADER encompasses, as a key function of NCC, not a national park authority. For better or for worse the Authority still successfully bid for the Northumberland Uplands New LEADER Approach and was appointed as lead partner for the 2007-2013 programme, which ended on 31st March 2013. During this time the Northumberland Uplands New LEADER Approach allocated £1,983,164 to 76 projects, leveraging in £1,922,102 of match funding. Although the former deputy NPO did not believe the national park authorities should be involved with fostering rural and economic development to any significant degree, if anything since the 2010 UK general election, the importance of this remit has increased every year, and continues to be a priority of laid down by Defra. On 27th June 2013, Environment Minister Richard Benyon MP reinforced this role, “National parks play a key role in rural economic growth, as they are home to thousands of businesses and provide benefits to local communities.”¹⁸

5.6 2005-2009: A New Unitary Authority for Northumberland

Northumberland County Council was established in 1889. Following the 1972 Local Government Act, the structure changed in 1974, after which there was one over-arching body, NCC, and six second-tier bodies, Alnwick District Council, Berwick upon Tweed Borough Council, Blyth Valley Borough Council, Wansbeck District Council, Castle Morpeth Borough Council, and Tynedale District Council. The system remained until the Labour Government wished to make some efficiency savings after the turn of the 21st Century. The implications of these protracted changes affected the extent to which NCC could effectively operate its own partnerships, which in-turn had an impact on Northumberland National Park Authority.

One Northumberland – Two Councils

A Northumberland referendum was held in 2005 to gauge local opinion on a proposal to replace the two-tier system of local government with either one single-tier local authority or to retain the existing structure. Although local opinion favoured the two-tier approach, when it became apparent that despite the outcome of the referendum, a change was on the horizon, the local strategic partnerships put-together a new proposal with the slogan ‘One Northumberland – Two Councils’. Local opinion was once again sought, and 121,961 votes

¹⁸ Love Your National Parks, Defra. [Online]. Last updated: 27th June 2013. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/2013/06/love-your-national-parks>.

were cast (a 40 per cent turn-out rate) and from that, 56.2 per cent favoured the creation of two new authorities, leaving 48.8 per cent favouring a single unitary council.

The idea was for one urban council, to serve the heavily populated parts of Northumberland in the South East (where 80 per cent of the population were) and one rural council, to serve the disparate rural communities of North and West Northumberland. A presentation to Tynedale Local Strategic Partnership in 2007 outlined the reasons behind the preference for two councils approach (Figure 12) and was supported by a 119-page submission to government, put-together by the six second-tier bodies (Paul, 2007).



 Rural Northumberland		 South East Northumberland
Above England's Average	Education	Below England's Average
Above England's Average	Health	Below England's Average
Above Northumberland Average	House Prices	Below Northumberland Average
Lower Than South-East Northumberland	Crime	Higher than Rural Northumberland
Below England's Average	Unemployment	Above England's Average
3 Super Output Areas in Worst 20%	Deprivation	31 Super Output Areas in Worst 20%
Access to Services	Priorities	Regeneration
Market Towns		Worklessness
Tourism		Education Attainment
Low Pay		Health Inequalities
Affordable Housing		Crime and Disorder
Environment		

Figure 12. Evidence base for the proposed One Northumberland – Two Councils. Extract adapted from a presentation to Tynedale Local Strategic Partnership on 14th May 2007. It attempted to show that there were distinct differences in the performance of rural and urban communities and in the priorities for each area. Source: Paul, 2007.

Despite the strong local support for 'One Northumberland – Two Councils' the then Labour Government rejected the majority vote and created a single unitary authority for Northumberland, which would retain the name of its predecessor, Northumberland County Council, whilst also assuming the responsibilities of the six former district councils. The new organisation came into being from 1st April 2009. However, the period of change did not end with the creation of a single unitary authority. On 6th May 2010 a new Coalition Government was elected from the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrat Party, which soon after, dawned the start of national period of austerity that has had, and is continuing to have, a significant impact on local government.

The Northumberland County Council participant offered some insight as to what the organisation was going through in 2011:

“Somebody asked me the other day, in the street, how we were getting on in local government. I said, ‘Well, we had to make a lot of savings when we merged, those were the easy savings. In the following year or two, we had to make more savings, 20 per cent per year or so, and those were difficult. We’re down to the painful stuff now, the properly painful stuff.’”

To put a figure to the savings, the Northumberland County Council website¹⁹ reported a news item in January 2012 stating that the organisation had to “save more than £30 million over the next three financial years, while delivering first class service for residents in Northumberland.” The policy and practice of this particular piece of local government rhetoric did not quite come across as coherent in this article. Nevertheless, these significant structural changes, and the delivery of subsequent savings programme, may help to explain why NCC “abdicated” from taking control of the New LEADER Approach (2007-2013), in the words of the former deputy NPO. It will be interesting to see the extent to which the public sector will be involved in the governance arrangements for the next round of LEADER in Northumberland, five years after the 2010 austerity measures.

5.7 2009-2014: Inspiring Landscapes, Thriving Communities

The current Northumberland National Park Management Plan was launched on 6th October 2009, at the Hesleyside Estate in the North Tyne Valley. It was dated from 2009 to 2014, and was subtitled ‘Inspiring Landscapes, Thriving Communities’. Its publication followed over two years of partnership engagement. The Vision therein presented a strong focus on sustainable development:

“Northumberland National Park will be a truly welcoming and distinctive place, easily accessible to all. It’s inspiring and changing landscapes, characterised by open spaces, tranquillity, diverse habitats, geology and rich cultural heritage, will be widely recognised and valued. The living, working landscape will contribute positively to the well-being of the thriving and vibrant communities in and around the national park” (NNPA, 2009: 17).

The Authority issued a press release to celebrate the launch event of the management plan, when Tony Gates, the chief executive (NPO) of Northumberland National Park Authority, said, “This is a plan to enable today’s action by all the partners to make a real difference for

¹⁹ Council savings proposals approved today, Northumberland County Council. [Online]. Last updated: 9th January 2012. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=6270&id=1763>.

the future.” Rob Aubrook, Natural England’s former North East regional director, shared his view:

“Having a healthy natural environment is indispensable to current and future economic prosperity in the North East. Natural England welcomes this ambitious and forward-thinking management plan for the Northumberland National Park. We congratulate everyone involved in drawing up the management plan, for showing the vision and leadership that sets the standard in the North East that others will follow.”

A series of key partners were identified by the Authority in the management plan (NNPA, 2009: 52-53) as: Northumberland County Council; Natural England; the Environment Agency; English Heritage; the Forestry Commission; One NorthEast²⁰; the Ministry of Defence; Northumberland Tourism Limited; the Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum; the Country Land and Business Association; and the National Farmers’ Union. This partnership working approach was explicitly recognised as a guiding principle of the management plan to:

- “Involve partners in developing and sharing ownership of the management plan and its priority actions; and
- Co-ordinate action, pool resources and avoid duplication; and
- Build strong partnership agreements that foster trust and understanding of the strengths and abilities.” (NNPA, 2009: 10)

The role of sustainable development as a guiding principle for the management plan was strengthened, with the aim that Northumberland National Park would serve as a model of sustainable development for the whole of the North East region.

The present governance structure of Northumberland National Park Authority consists of 18 Authority Members, determined thus:

- Six Authority Members are appointed by Northumberland County Council following local elections, with no maximum term;
- Six Authority Members are elected parish council representatives, with no maximum term; and

²⁰ One NorthEast, the regional development agency, ceased to operate on 31st March 2012.

- Six Authority Members are appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to represent local, regional and national interests, for a maximum period of eight years.

All the Authority Members are collectively accountable as an Authority to the legal delivery of the two national park purposes and duty. Therefore Authority Members are not accountable by their route into the Authority or individually; they are only accountable as a whole.

In addition to the Authority Members, as of 1st April 2013 there are 46 full-time equivalent, core-funded, members of staff, including the chief executive (NPO), across four separate departments, with the numbers of these staff per department shown in parentheses:

- Corporate Services (18), the administrative duties, including: finance and information computer technology, and the leading department for the proposed redevelopment of Once Brewed National Park Centre and youth hostel;
- Operations (14), the outward-facing side, including: rangers, community, business and farming staff, and the management of the Once Brewed National Park Centre;
- Programmes and Conservation (8), the specialists including: funding, climate change, ecology, the historic environment, visitor development and rights of way.
- Planning and Communities (5), the principal statutory functions, including planning, performance and policy work.

In addition to these members of staff, there are a number of externally funded employees on fixed-term contracts.

The present management plan reiterated support for the Action Area approach that was initiated in its previous incarnation:

“Action Area working seeks to use this local distinctiveness as a framework for engaging communities and other partners in the planning, care and management of local landscapes. It harnesses the knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm of local people and supports them with expert technical advice, help and funding to nurture and strengthen local connections between people and place. The national park authority sees this approach as a corner-stone of its activity during the management plan period and will seek to pursue this further, locally and regionally, through our partnership working” (NNPA, 2009: 8)

A year after the launch of the management plan, it was time for the Authority to review its overall performance.

The Northumberland National Park Authority Performance Assessment

Towards the end of 2010, the Authority had its independent national park authority performance assessment (NPAPA), which takes place every five years. This is the national park authority equivalent of the local government comprehensive performance assessment that the Audit Commission introduced in 2002. The aim of the NPAPA is to enable each national park authority to better understand its strengths and weaknesses, thereby helping in its continual process of improvement.

The NPAPA was led by the Yorkshire-Based Solace Enterprises, a public service improvement company. Since the NPAPA review had a wide remit, for the purposes of my study, I will focus on their findings around partnership working, sustainable development, and the overall performance of the organisation.

The results were encouraging:

“Partner involvement in developing the management plan was impressive. Partner involvement and public engagement in developing the management plan was extensive and inclusive” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 5).

“The Authority has been ambitious in setting its objectives wider than just the national park boundaries. The Authority has a very clear view that its ability to deliver its statutory purposes is highly dependent on the social and environmental well-being of communities outside its boundary and, to a lesser extent, within the wider region” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 6).

A steering group oversees the implementation of the management plan. The ambitious intentions of the latest management plan were significantly compromised by the policy direction of the newly elected Coalition Government in 2010. Like Northumberland County Council, the national park authorities were not exempt from the austerity measures that would soon be imposed. Solace Enterprise reported:

“The Management Plan Partnership remains alert to the risk in delivering a [management] plan that was conceived and produced before the current financial and economic constraints and of the need to keep it under review. They also appreciate the possible impact on the

partnership and its delivery because of organisational or structural changes as a result of the current economic and financial situation” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 5-6).

Nevertheless, as of the time of the NPAPA:

“The Management Plan Partnership, established to oversee the delivery of the management plan, now provides a strong guiding and monitoring role. The Partnership has an extremely high level of ownership and connection to management plan priorities and to the wider environmental and socio-economic agenda in the sub-region” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 5).

However, as was expected the NPAPA was not all positive, and this will be explored further in Chapter 7:

“The role and connection of some key partners is not clear. There are organisations whose role as defined key partners, or as delivery bodies, is not clearly translated to activity and there may be a mismatch in organisational expectations that could benefit from clarification. This includes organisations that do not have an obvious contribution to the delivery of the wider objectives, and organisations who feel they could do much more to connect with the work of the Authority and in the achievement of its priorities” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 8).

“Partner contributions were not always secured to best effect. On a small number of occasions the Authority managers are so clear about what they want from discussion that they seem less likely to want to hear other partners’ positions. This can cause frustration with partners who prefer, and are used to, Authority staff being more collaborative in their working” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 9).

The NPAPA divided the success of the partnership working between the two statutory purposes, and found differing outcomes. On the one hand:

“Strong delivery partnerships exist for conservation objectives and the relationship with partners such as Natural England, the Forestry Commission, and English Heritage are all excellent examples of delivering the management plan outcomes through shared responsibility. The Authority is seen by others as a strong environmental partner who understands well the outcomes that partners want to see in conservation projects” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 8).

Whilst on the other hand:

“Partners with a tourism interest feel more could be achieved. The tourism focus [was found to be] too local and more concerned with what is in the national park and not making the connections with what is outside the national park” (Solace Enterprises 2010: 11).

The overall constructive advice on partnership working was to, “Clarify the Authority’s expectations from key partners and delivery bodies” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 18).

The NPAPA team took a broad view on the achievement of sustainable development across the working of the Authority, with the assertion that, “Partners have strong recognition of the value and importance of the Authority’s socio-economic role” (Solace Enterprises 2010: 12). Furthermore, they found that:

“Action Area working was extremely effective in engaging communities. The Action Area approach has empowered local communities and businesses to deliver national park purposes by building networks linked to support and funding. Where effective locality groups already exist the Authority has successfully supported, rather than duplicated, their work. The Action Area approach is well regarded by communities, partners and managers. The small scale initiatives have built trust, capacity and initiated actions that over [the last] four years have produced many local sustainable development initiatives” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 11).

Whilst this was good recognition, the NPAPA team went on to say:

“Action Area working could be refined. The Authority has identified that it could make continuous improvement changes to aspects of Action Area working, including: governance; boundary definition; maintaining community contributions; securing consistent contributions and outcomes; and the assessment of the benefits produced” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 13).

As for the implementation of the Authority’s premier grant programme, they concluded that:

“Sustainable development funding is being used well. There has been improved take up of available funding over the last four years due to the Authority’s own initiatives and a willingness to try new ideas. The Authority’s work on wider sustainable development is an exemplar. Delivery of social and economic benefits is generally linked to the national park authority purposes” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 12).

As previously stated, the overall findings from the NPAPA were mostly positive. The ‘Quality of the Vision’ and the ‘Achievement of Wider Sustainable Development’ were found to be

performing excellently. The 'Setting of Priorities', 'Conservation', 'Management of Resources', and 'Leadership' were found to be performing well. The 'Promoting Understanding of Service Delivery' category was only rated as performing adequately, while no areas were assessed as performing poorly (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 20).

The NPAPA assessment team were only too aware that the winds of change were fast approaching, signalling a new period of austerity across the public sector. Forewarning the impacts, a local newspaper called *The Journal* published an article on 17th November 2010 titled 'Budget cuts will hit our national parks'.²¹ The article said, "National parks such as Northumberland are likely to be hit with multiple budget cuts because few people in government understand how they operate." Citing research by the Centre for Rural Economy, the article quoted Dr. Nicola Thompson thus, "She said that despite the fact that national park authorities work effectively with local community partners and volunteers – a key element of the government's plans – they are still in the firing line for significant budget cuts" (Thompson, 2011).

Cutting the National Park Grant

Despite this plea for greater understanding and leniency, the full extent of the impending cuts was revealed the following month. A letter from the Permanent Secretary to the chief executive (NPO), dated 20th December 2010, said:

"The period since the General Election has been an unsettling and challenging to say the least, and I would like to pay tribute to the huge efforts you and your staff have made to respond positively and professionally to the pressures and challenges we've faced. The current financial climate and the Government's clear commitment to tackle the deficit resulted in a tough spending review for all Departments, but we were prepared for this and were able to negotiate a fair and reasonable settlement. The parameters for Defra's settlement will be a real terms reduction in resource spending by 29 per cent over four years to March 2015 compared to 2010/11."

The letter from Defra is enclosed (Appendix 7). The immediate impact was a 5 per cent mid-year cut during 2011/11. All the figures shown in Table 8 have been rounded-up. An anomaly is the Lake District settlement for 2010/11, which increased because the mid-year

²¹ Henderson, T. (2010) Budget cuts will hit our national parks. *The Journal*. [Online]. Last updated: 17th November 2010. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: <http://www.journallive.co.uk/north-east-news/todays-news/2010/11/17/budget-cuts-will-hit-our-national-parks-61634-27667800>

reductions were less than the previous agreed annual increase, unlike most of the other national park authorities. The South Downs was designated on 1st April 2010, and its increase in grant is reflective of the organisational costs of establishing the national park authority and its planning service, in what is another atypical national park, but at the other end of the spectrum, with a population of 112,343 persons.

	English National Park Grant							
	2007/ 08	2008/ 09	2009/ 10	2010/ 11 ²²	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15 ²³
Broads	£4.1m	£4.3m	£4.3m	£4.2m	£4.0m	£3.7m	£3.5m	<i>£3.3m</i>
Dartmoor	£4.5m	£4.7m	£4.8m	£4.7m	£4.5m	£4.2m	£4.0m	<i>£3.7m</i>
Exmoor	£3.8m	£4.0m	£4.1m	£4.0m	£3.8m	£3.5m	£3.3m	<i>£3.1m</i>
Lake District	£6.6m	£6.9m	£7.0m	£7.1m	£6.5m	£6.2m	£5.8m	<i>£5.4m</i>
New Forest	£3.7m	£4.0m	£4.3m	£5.0m	£3.8m	£3.6m	£3.4m	<i>£3.2m</i>
Northumberland	£3.2m	£3.3m	£3.4m	£3.3m	£3.1m	£3.0m	£2.8m	<i>£2.6m</i>
North York Moors	£5.2m	£5.4m	£5.5m	£5.4m	£5.1m	£4.8m	£4.6m	<i>£4.3m</i>
Peak District	£7.9m	£8.3m	£8.5m	£8.3m	£7.9m	£7.4m	£7.0m	<i>£6.5m</i>
South Downs	/	/	/	£8.5m	£11.3m	£11.0m	£10.6m	<i>£10.2m</i>
Yorkshire Dales	£5.2m	£5.3m	£5.5m	£5.4m	£5.1m	£4.8m	£4.5m	<i>£4.2m</i>
Total	£44.2m	£46.2m	£47.4m	£55.9m	£55.1m	£52.2m	£49.5m	<i>£46.5m</i>

Table 8. English National Park Grants, 2007-2015. Forecasted figures are in italics. The overall figure has increased only because of the designation of the South Downs National Park. Sources: National Parks England (2007/08-2009/2010) and Appendix 7 (2010/11-2014/15).

While Northumberland National Park Authority considered its position with the cuts, I interviewed NNPA participant #1 to gain some insight the history of how the national park authorities have been, and continue to be, funded:

“When the national park authorities were created as independent authorities in 1997, they had come from two separate routes. For a generation, the Peak District National Park Authority and the Lake District National Park Authority had been special planning boards. By 1996, they accounted for half of all National Park Authorities funding. Because they were stand alone authorities, they were much more confident about bidding for more resources from government. They were much more single minded in what they needed their money for, so they could put more coherent bids together.”

The separation from Northumberland County Council had a profound effect on Northumberland National Park Authority:

²² The 2010/11 figures are the actual figures after the mid-year 5 per cent cut that was imposed.

²³ The 2014/15 figures are an indicative projection from Defra made in December 2010.

“Northumberland National Park Authority had been through a period where it had lost confidence. So most of the money, historically, had been skewed in favour of some national park authorities, but not others. You then get to the position where it just looked crazy. You get Exmoor National Park Authority [responsible for Exmoor National Park], which is half the size of Northumberland National Park, with fewer visitors, getting more money than Northumberland National Park Authority, and that didn't seem fair.”

NNPA participant #1 continued:

“Around 1997, one of our first external audits by PricewaterhouseCooper, looked at Northumberland National Park Authority as a standalone national park authority, which we get every year. They said that the Authority was quite vulnerable in terms of the amount of funding that we had, going forward.”

Even though the national park authorities which received the least funding were keen to try and get a more equal share of the overall National Park Grant, “the national park family themselves couldn't agree.”

Seeking a means to address the feelings of discontentment, in 2004 Defra appointed its own consultant, a member of its own staff, to review how national park authorities were funded and come-up with a workable ‘funding formula’. NNPA participant #1 revealed some of the complexity the eventual calculation:

“It looked at what would you fund in a national park. What were the proxy measures of resources that you need? The area of the national park is one. Another was the likes of number of scheduled ancient monuments. So it was looking at a number of key features, and putting them into a formula, and then weighting them, until it looks about right. When it came to recreation, it was obviously length of rights of way, but also number of visitors. When it came to characteristics of the national park, it would be population, number of parishes and unitary councils, and the complexity of working across different bodies. A number of things were put into the equation.”

NNPA participant #1 said that one factor that the approach would not favour Northumberland National Park Authority was recognition of, “The number of planning applications to be dealt with, but obviously that is direct correlation to the number of people living in the national park.” Another was the number of visitors, which Defra treated as a need for resources, rather than an opportunity for income, “The Lake District National Park Authority benefitted

again from that rather generous assumption that you need money for visitors. One car park at the time in the Lake District was taking £800,000 in income, per year.”

In 2005 Defra finalised a funding formula that “identified those national park authorities that were being subsidised (i.e. were overfunded), and those which were underfunded.” However the decision was taken not to implement the formula at the time, because it would have had too greater impact on those national park authorities that were currently overfunded. Defra decided not to take any immediate action, except with the newly designated New Forest National Park Authority that received its budget based on the new funding formula. NNPA participant #1 was not impressed:

“New Forest National Park Authority was given the funding formula in full. In fact, the Defra made a mistake of not giving them the full amount that they deserved. They apologised, gave them the money the following year, and backdated it. Whereas Northumberland National Park Authority has not had the funding formula, nor had a sniff of any backdate. So you’ve got something there that starts to look like a perverse decision, where government is funding New Forest National Park Authority differently, to the likes of Northumberland National Park Authority. So the problem we are left with at Northumberland National Park Authority is that the issue has not been addressed by Defra.”

On 16th February 2011 Northumberland National Park Authority decided to take legal action, instructing its solicitors to issue a letter of claim to the Secretary of State for the Environment for a proposed judicial review. The Authority accepted that cuts had to be made, but rejected the approach of “Each Authority is being treated in the same way” as the Permanent Secretary explained in her letter of 20th December 2010 (Appendix 7). The press release on Northumberland National Park’s website said the following:

“Defra’s decision in December 2010 was to ‘salami slice’ the budget cut across all ten of the English national park authorities regardless of:

- Their varying abilities to finance activities from other forms of income, like car parking charges or sales of assets; and
- The fact that Defra’s own funding formula has identified that some national park authorities receive over £1 million more than they should whilst others like Northumberland National Park Authority are under-funded.

Furthermore, Northumberland National Park Authority is aggrieved that Defra failed to hold any meaningful consultation with the Authority before taking its decision on how to allocate

the 21.5 per cent cash cuts in government funding over 4 years (over 28 per cent when allowance is made for inflation) across the ten English national parks.”²⁴

The chief executive (NPO) explained:

“The action my Authority Members are taking is borne out of frustration. Northumberland has to cut proportionately more services and staff than any other national park authority, yet the latest assessment of national park authority found us to be efficient and highly effective. It is unlikely that Defra will change its mind.”

The prediction proved to be correct and on 18th March 2011 the Authority decided to withdraw its proposal for a judicial review. From having 65 full-time equivalent, core-funded, members of staff at the time, over the course of the next two years, 19 people left the organisation, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, resulting in the present 46 full-time equivalent, core-funded, members of staff.

I sought the thoughts of some research interview respondents on the way the cuts had been handled by Defra and of the Authority’s decision to go to judicial review. I asked NNPA participant #1 if Northumberland National Park Authority was treated worse than the other national park authorities, for an arbitrary reason. The participant replied, “Yes, it’s not treated fairly, absolutely. What is also nauseating is that it isn’t a level playing field.”

Several months later in the year, after the business of the judicial review had settled down, I interviewed NNPA participant #2 and asked for thoughts on whether they felt Defra had treated Northumberland National Park Authority fairly. “No, we [the Authority] don’t, I don’t. I think the simple reason is that a number of years ago, government realised it wasn’t being fair.” This was a reference to Defra’s 2004 move to appoint a consultant to examine the way national park authorities were funded and come up with a more widely accepted system. The respondent continued:

“The then Secretary of State acknowledged that some national park authorities were under-funded and decided that they weren’t going to redistribute funds from national park authorities that were over-funded to the under-funded national park authorities, because that would be too much of a shock, a one-off shock to the over-funded national park authorities, in terms of

²⁴ Northumberland National Park Authority challenges Defra on irrational funding decision. NNPA. [Online]. Last updated: 17th February 2011. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: <http://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/parklive/news/news-pages/northumberland-national-park-authority-challenges-defra-on-irrational-funding-decision>

losing resources. But what they were going to do was that as new money became available, they would top-up the under-funded national park authorities to the level where they should be funded. That never happened.”

In the meantime, the New Forest National Park was designated in 2005 and the South Downs National Park in 2010, two moves which were not lost on NNPA participant #2:

“When new monies did become available, two new national parks were designated, which for me is a positive thing, I’m all for more national parks. So I don’t begrudge that in any way, I think it was a real positive thing, the more national parks, the better. But it meant Northumberland National Park Authority was still under-funded. For me, the real, real unfairness came when Defra were considering cutting national park authority budgets by 33 per cent in real terms.”

The participant continued with this passionate appraisal of the situation:

“They didn’t look at the fact that some national park authorities were over a million pounds over-funded, whereas some were over half-a-million pounds under-funded. They just applied the same level of cut. Of course the proportion of cut if you’re being over-funded is bigger, but it’s still leaving you over-funded and it was grossly unfair to Northumberland National Park Authority. So, we’re on record as saying that. We said it in the public domain [and] we make no secret of it. This national park authority is not resourced in the way it should be. That’s a matter that should be of concern to anyone who believes in the purposes of the national parks. Whether it is the national park they work in, visit, or otherwise, if you’re interested in national parks, you should be concerned by the fact that one national park is significantly under-resourced.”

I also asked the NNPA Member if Northumberland National Park Authority was not being treated fairly by Defra with the spending cuts. The participant smiled, as if to imply I was asking a silly question, “Of course I do! We wouldn’t have gone to judicial review if we didn’t think that Richard. I don’t believe we are [being treated fairly].”

Northumberland National Park Authority’s decision to propose a judicial review was an extremely unpopular move with the other English national park authorities, none of which were prepared to challenge their National Park Grant settlements. NNPA participant #2 reflected, “National park authorities are very good at working together when we’re all potential winners. When there may be some potential winners and some potential losers,

they are not as effective.” The NNPA Member was a little more explicit when I asked if the national park authorities worked well together:

“On certain issues. They don’t agree on all issues and that’s come out clearly with our challenge on the funding. We did have an understanding among all the chairs that if need be we would sit on our hands if we didn’t agree with something, but it wasn’t [like that]. That came back to bite us with the funding because when we tried to go to judicial review. Because we agreed that the family were generally happy, to take that cut, and others felt that they could manage that cut, we disadvantaged ourselves. There is now a clear understanding in the Terms of Reference, that’s been agreed, just recently, that there will be times when NPE and the NPUK cannot speak on everybody’s behalf, and we’ll have to agree that that’s the case.”

For the final thoughts on the judicial review, I decided to reflect on the position from the National Parks England (NPE) participant, when I enquired about how well the national park authorities work together:

“I still feel that there is a willingness to come together, to work together, to understand that collective action, ‘We can speak louder with one voice, rather than ten disparate ones’. It does feel different. When money was more available, when we had a real interest in the part of the Secretary of State, in Hilary Benn, with national parks, there was an enthusiasm and a motivation and we can do a lot together. Now, it feels there is still the willingness there, to work together, but arriving at common positions takes a longer time. Some of the issues which we are being confronted with are very challenging, or are of a political nature.”

As for the change to the NPE Terms of Reference, the response was somewhat weary, “However, with every decision you are coming to, if each national park authority thought ‘I’ve got a veto card’ it can quickly really reduce the effectiveness of the NPE.” I asked how national park authority disagreements affected the ability of the NPE to perform its role. The NPE participant said, “Occasionally, or more than occasionally, I do feel the need to say ‘Don’t shoot the messenger here.’ So sometimes we get in cross-fire, but it comes with the nature of the job.”

A Strategic Partnership Engagement Plan

In April 2011, the Authority drafted the latest version of the Northumberland National Park Strategic Partnership Engagement Plan (NNPA, 2011). The original document was put-together after two workshops in 2008 to help determine a partnership engagement strategy

for the organisation. Despite the five-year hiatus after the workshops, the document remains unpublished as of 2013.

It was developed by the chief executive (NPO) with the four heads of department, Authority Members, and a small selection of key partners. Since the strategic partnership engagement plan has not been published on the Authority's website it is an internal document, which I have accessed as an employee. It is "Intended as a guide for the use of corporate communication resources" (NNPA, 2011: 15). The document identified 17 organisations, defined a 'relationship action' for each of them and assigned a lead officer to work with each organisation. There were six different types of relationship action: higher priority; medium priority; lower priority; build; maintain or review.

Since Chapter 5 has already identified two significant partners for the Authority, that of NCC and the MoD, Table 9 shows the approach towards these organisations, which is an extract from the Northumberland National Park Strategic Partnership Engagement Plan.

The obvious omission is a column that considers what the Authority thinks it can offer each partner. Furthermore, in some instances, the text reveals some insights into the perceptions of each partner. In this example, the MoD is portrayed as having a recreational focus, which at the time was imposed by the Inspector as part of the conditions and undertakings for the OTA arising after the Otterburn Public Inquiries. However, and as will be explored further in Chapter 7, recreation is not a priority for the MoD.

Aside from these comments, what is really interesting is that the document has been in draft format for over five years. I suspect there are two fundamental reasons for this. Firstly, partnership working is a dynamic and constantly changing process. Thus publishing a plan, or a strategy, is a difficult task since it will inevitably be out-of-date sooner, rather than later. Secondly, I expect the document has not been published because there is no need for it. In an organisation of 46 employees, it is probably a structure that is unnecessary. Staff at all levels regularly work in partnerships. A strategic partnership engagement plan is not going to change that. Nevertheless, the Authority should be commended for recognising the importance of partnership working through undertaking the workshops in 2008 and subsequently considering how best to realise the outcomes.

	Key Messages	Outcomes Sought or Asks
Northumberland County Council (Build)	Can align approaches to planning and local service delivery to deliver Government's localism agenda and greater community empowerment. The Authority is able to contribute significantly to the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy for Northumberland and to specific countywide priorities such as climate change, connectivity and broadband, and overall quality of life.	Seek to share services to offer efficiency for public expenditure and better level of service for residents in the county. To align the key strategic policy documents, i.e. the management plan, local development frameworks, neighbourhood planning to support delivery of effective customer services and the Sustainable Community Strategy. Work together to better promote the national park as an asset for visitors and local communities. Deliver effective value for money. Be a trusted and valuable partner for the local delivery of specific services, e.g. rights of way. Receive assistance to develop key areas of work but also provide good practice models for the region.
Ministry of Defence (Maintain/Build)	Aim to minimise the impact of military activities and engage in landscape scale environmental management in order to make a key contribution to the special qualities of the national park and national priorities. The Ministry of Defence can provide enhanced recreational opportunities such as walking, cycling and riding in the national park, with the potential for significant economic benefits for local communities from hill farming activities.	Land management operations to improve and protect biodiversity and cultural heritage. New and improved recreational opportunities for the public to access and enjoy. Support tenanted hill farms and the future of hill farming. The current and future military training use is carefully assessed, planned and implemented to minimise the impact on the national park.

Table 9. Extract from the Northumberland National Park Strategic Partnership Engagement Plan. This shows the Authority's ambitions for partnership working with NCC and MoD. Source: NNPA, 2011: 5-8.

I took the opportunity to ask NNPA participants #2 and #3 and the NNPA Member what they thought of the document. NNPA participant #2 said:

"We actually go about this within a structured way within the Authority. You only have to look at your collage maps to say, 'If we going to do that with 46 members of staff, you are going to have to be very selective and you going to have to know why you are doing it.' We look at which parts of the management plan we are best placed to deliver. We then look at the priorities we have, and say, 'How much of this can we deliver ourselves and who do we need to work with us to deliver it?' It is very important to have a strategic approach to this, to have a strategic partnership engagement plan, where the objectives for working in partnership with the organisation are not just understood by one individual, but they are understood by the whole organisation, so that individuals understand what they are representing the organisation for."

After sharing these views, I challenged the participant whether it was appropriate to have a plan for such a dynamic area or work. NNPA participant #2 considered my view and subsequently agreed:

"I think you're right about the strategic partnership engagement plan because once you write it, it's almost out of date, because once you engage with a partner, the world moves on. So it

can only ever be a snapshot, because the world moves on. You look at the strategic partnership engagement plan now and we've got more important partners who don't even sit on that."

Although NNPA participant #3 described the overall strategic partnership engagement plan as "really important," the participant raised a further issue with its use:

"Yes, one could say it is simplistic. NCC, for instance, as I was saying before, we have an interest in all sorts of very disparate things, so you might want somebody who leads with their relevant and respective lead on highways, on rights of way and access. You might want a very different lead on our side, and their side, in terms of rural development. They are a very different."

NNPA participant #3 showed an awareness that there are multiple layers to organisational partnership working. Finally, I spoke to the NNPA Member about the strategic partnership engagement plan. The participant acknowledged, that with the advent of the austerity measures, the partnership working landscape had significantly changed, and therefore the Authority needed to review its approach:

"I think that the Authority needs to sit-down and do a roadmap of what partners there are that are presently engaged. Are there any that are missing? Are there ones that we've got to say 'Well you're a partner, but you're a back seat or second tier partner' or whatever you want to call them."

I think this was a very constructive suggestion, which goes back to the workshops of 2008 that considered how and why the Authority is working in partnership.

Section 5.7 has shown that the Action Areas, like the sustainable development fund, have both stood the test of time and have now been in operation for almost a decade. Indeed, the approach was praised by the NPAPA assessment, although like with partnership working, there were areas that could still be improved. The austerity measures imposed by the Coalition Government really brought the under-funding to the forefront of the Authority, and in an act of defiance at the perceived injustice, the threat of a judicial review was raised. Although this was subsequently withdrawn, the precarious funding position has not been resolved to-date. Finally, the strategic partnership engagement was also considered. It would be wrong to be too critical of a draft document, nevertheless, I was left unconvinced that it was needed in practice. The way the document came about, through a series of series

of workshops, should be commended, and it is certainly a good time to undertake those facilitative exercises again and reconsider how the Authority is approaching its partnership working, perhaps without over-formalising the outcomes through a strategic partnership engagement plan.

5.8 Conclusion

Chapter 5 has provided a comprehensive review of the history of Northumberland National Park Authority, in particular drawing attention to a number of key events. Although these events were chronologically structured, in practice they were overlapping and simultaneously impacted upon each other.

The first conclusion that can be drawn from Chapter 5 is that the Authority has come of age. From starting out as the national parks and countryside department of NCC, through to eventually becoming freestanding national park authority, the separation from the parent body was a difficult time that strained relationships and left the Authority with an artificially low baseline budget from which the Government worked out and issued subsequent National Park Grants. Despite hindrance, the Authority grew in confidence through foot-and-mouth crisis, and in experience from the two Otterburn Public Inquiries, to embrace the sustainable development agenda. This culminated in the organisation successfully bidding to run the New LEADER Approach in 2008. What is important is just as the Peak District and Lake District National Park Authorities were benefiting from years of experience, for the first time Northumberland National Park Authority bid for, and brought in, almost £2 million of external funding, which it could now add to its own portfolio.

The second conclusion that can be found is that a combination of factors resulted in the creation of the Action Areas and the need to pursue sustainable development in Northumberland National Park. These factors included: the contrasting landscape character boundary designated in 1956, which forced the Authority to disregard it from the 2003 management plan onwards; the introduction of a socio-economic duty on national park authorities in 1995; the polarisation of local opinion following the two Otterburn Public Inquiries; and the visit of the former NPO and chair to a EuroParc conference in 2000, where they learned about the merits of the 'bottom-up' approach. In 2003, the Authority needed to be ambitious and set new targets whilst establishing a new culture within the organisation. The incoming chief executive (NPO) structured the organisation accordingly, and reiterated support for the Action Areas in the 2009 management plan.

The third conclusion is focussed on the Authority and how it is funded. It has been shown that NNPA participants and the NNPA Member believe that it is under-funded by Defra. Although Defra acknowledged this, there was no effort to correct this deficit. With notice of the impending national austerity measures at the end of 2010, the Authority, out of frustration, attempted to take legal action against Defra, which ultimately was unsuccessful, partly because the other national park authorities were willing to accept the funding cuts. In 2013, over 15 years since the Authority became freestanding it is still the least funded of all the English national park authorities. This suggests that the Authority should reconsider how it is making its case for a sustained and greater level of financial support, which will be discussed again in Chapter 8.

The fourth and final conclusion is that the Authority appreciates the importance and need to work in partnership in order to fulfil its purposes and duty (NNPA, 2009). Evidence from the NPAPA (Solace Enterprises, 2010) and the latest draft of the strategic partnership engagement plan (NNPA, 2011) suggests that the organisation could benefit from a greater appreciation of the finer aspects of partnership working for protected area management.

Chapter 6: Partnership Working in a Protected Area

“I do a lot of work where I get asked repeatedly to be an independent chair of things, which is partnership working. I think I get asked because I am alive to the challenges of it, but also I am able to make it work. The reason I can make it work is because of the personal relationships, you’ve got to get people’s trust. You’ve got to take people seriously, and look them in the eye, and listen to what they say, and respond. The human level of it is a sine qua non of effective partnership working.” Sustaine participant.

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 detailed a literature review of rural partnership working. It concluded that whilst, in policy terms at least, there was universal praise for working in partnership (Peck and Tickell, 1994; Jones and Little, 2000), there was the potential for further in-depth research on the actual processes that underpin this form of rural governance (Selin and Chavez, 1995; McAreavey, 2006; Derkzen and Bock, 2009). Furthermore, the success of modern protected area management was largely dependent on creating long-lasting and sustainable partnerships (Wilson *et al.*, 2009). Yet in practice, this is not straightforward, since each individual partnership is affected by many social, cultural and spatial influences (Edwards *et al.*, 2001; Bryan, 2012). This thesis sought to better understand those influences in the context of partnership working in a protected area. Chapter 6 will start by briefly examining what participants understood by sustainable development. This was important because sustainable development is the agenda upon which rural organisations have become united in working together, particularly the national park authorities (Chapter 5). It will then reflect on the participants’ responses to the collage maps (Figures 3 and 4), which were introduced during each interview to focus the discussions on partnership working. Using the framework established in Chapter 3. The chapter will then analyse the extent to which the participants concurred with the governance and behavioural sides of partnership working that arose from the literature review. Participants were not shown this structure; it was entirely left up to them to share what they felt were important criteria for working in partnership. Chapter 6 will conclude by summarising findings from the practice of working in partnership in Northumberland National Park.

6.2 Understanding Sustainable Development

2012 marked the 25th anniversary of the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report, *Our Common Future*, which introduced and broadly defined what sustainable development meant (WCED, 1987). This concept would later become the fundamental approach of the UK national park

authorities, and especially Northumberland National Park Authority (Chapter 5). It was therefore interesting to ask participants what they understood by sustainable development so that I could examine participant views on this way of working and their long-term vision for the protected area.

Several participants expressed their opinion that the practice of sustainable development pre-dated the 1987 Bruntland Commission Report. The former deputy National Park Officer (NPO) said:

“We’ve always had sustainable development. It’s in the first Northumberland National Park Management Plan. It wasn’t called sustainable development, but that’s what the national parks and countryside department practiced in those times.”

The NNPA Member and all three Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) participants said that sustainable development had been practiced in Northumberland National Park long before the term became mainstream. The Environment Agency participant also said sustainable development pre-dated the 1970s, and likewise so did the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) participant:

“The whole concept of sustainable development is really what estate owners have been doing since the year dot. It’s a long-term business and they have got to make enough money to keep that business going and meet their other objectives. The majority of them, but perhaps not all of them, are very much aware of their long-term responsibilities, in the environment, in terms of their community, and in terms of the landscape and heritage and everything that goes with it.”

I asked participants to specifically tell me what sustainable development meant. It was a difficult question and several participants gave fairly nondescript responses. Seven of the participants started their answer by acknowledging the ambiguity of the term, for example the Environment Agency participant said, “Sustainable development is a fairly nebulous term, it’s a hard to define concept,” while the Defra participant said, “I think sustainability can mean different things to different people, so you have a number of perspectives from partners [and] customers have a different perspective.” The former NPO saw an innovative angle to the term, “Sustainable development is about enterprise. It’s not about bureaucracy, and you might want to underline that several times.”

Other participants spoke of sustainable development being “a big subject” and “very broad” whilst the National Farmers Union (NFU) participant said some of their members saw it as a “buzzword.” Despite claiming sustainable development had an extensive history, the CLA participant was not actually sure what it meant:

“Yes, well, sustainable development, sustainability, it’s banded around willy-nilly, and most of the time people don’t really know what it means, or have their own idea of what it means. It is one of those phrases that can mean anything to anybody. I think that’s one of the difficulties behind it. There is no hard-and-fast definition provided to what we are all meant to be working towards.”

The academic participant understood the confusion around the definition of sustainable development, and stated that it was far from the only term that is debated in academic communities:

“There are so many implications [of sustainable development]. Even within the scientific community we sometimes have difficulty to define exactly what we mean; there are so many different definitions competing with each other.”

Even without an accepted and recognised definition, almost all of the participants had an appreciation that sustainable development involved the simultaneous coming together of social, economic and environmental considerations, in the form of a holistic management approach. Whether that was understood as a balance between the three tiers (as described by eight participants), or an integrated and embedded approach (as described by 13 participants), was beside the point; the overriding finding was that participants had a similar appreciation of sustainable development at a basic level.

The NCC participant said, “I suppose sustainable development is a long-term goal. It’s not something you decide to deliver next year; it is something you plan for.” The academic agreed with this, saying that sustainable development is:

“A light, a vision, something that will take you into the future. Something that is not achievable today, but something we want to achieve and need to achieve.”

Section 6.2 has shown that although there is some ambiguity around sustainable development, generally participants understood the social, economic and environmental dimensions and that it was a long-term goal. This implies, at least in Northumberland

National Park, that the practitioners were quite pragmatic, dealing with sustainable development, based on practical application. By way of a comparison, in academic communities, the definition of sustainable development is a lot more contested and analysed (Elliot, 2013).

After discussions around sustainable development were complete, I presented the participants with the collage maps (Figures 3 and 4) to move discussions on to the subject of partnership working in a protected area.

6.3 Responding to the Organisational Logo Collage Maps

Chapter 2 considered the historical context of the national park movement in England, including the publication of the 2003 Haskins' Rural Development Review, which was part-inspiration for the focus of my thesis. The former deputy NPO discussed the findings of the Haskins' Review:

“Haskins produced a very critical analysis and assessment of rural policy and rural development. His analysis was, ‘Too many organisations, too much overlap, too much confusion, too much bureaucracy, and too many funding streams – the whole thing’s a shambles, and it needs to be rationalised’.”

It would be interesting to see if this analysis was still the case a decade after the Haskins' Review. Chapter 3 provided insight into why partnerships are important in protected area management and what they mean in practice. In order to help focus the conversations on partnership working in Northumberland National Park, I showed the participants the two collage maps to start the discussions. Section 6.3 will briefly consider their responses to the collage maps, with the remainder of the chapter scrutinising the process of working in partnership.

During each of the interviews, I informed the participants that I was going to present them with two images for their consideration. I said that I would allow them some time to look at them, after which I would like to hear their first impressions. Initially, every participant paused for a few seconds to consider his or her response. The overall reactions showed a large degree of differentiation ranging from an enthusiastic and methodical review of every logo presented, through to a visible sense of shock and a negative realisation of the complex ramifications that managing such a large number of organisations would inevitably involve.

The academic participant provided this analysis:

“I’m positively surprised there are so many organisations involved with Northumberland National Park that seem to have an interest. At the same time there are too many organisations and it is unlikely that they can work together in a mutually beneficial way. I wonder if all of these organisations know each other enough and co-operate and have developed networks. It seems very confusing and overwhelming by the variety and the amount of organisations. I have immediate doubts whether these can really work together and how they interconnect in a practical way.”

This means that whilst there are many different stakeholders in this protected area, this results in the use of the landscape being contested, with opinions divided.

The National Trust participant acknowledged the volume of logos and said, “I would say we work closely or at arm’s length with a lot of them.” The Northumberland County Council (NCC) participant gave a similar response:

“I would say that we have contact with pretty much 95 per cent of all of them, if not 100 per cent. I can see if you wanted to make it really complicated you could start drawing lines from who works with whom, it would just be a mess of black lines. I bet there is a lot of interconnectivity between these organisations.”

The CLA participant built upon this point about the visibility of networks, “You can’t really see the network quite often, but it is widespread and pops up in various places, often unexpected.”

The LEADER participant said, “Some of these partners will bear fruit and some won’t” and that the approach to collage maps, “Would actually work on a map of Europe as well.” This point was also expressed by the participant from the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) participant:

“I guess the collage maps could be replicated with whichever national park that you took or you dissected. It’s a complicated world, partnership working.”

This lack of surprise was shared by others. When the Ministry of Defence (MoD) participant saw the collage maps, the response was one of expectancy:

“Not surprised, not surprised at all. It highlights the huge range of partnerships out there, and stakeholders, and it doesn’t surprise me at all. Probably about two-thirds of the organisations on these maps I have regular discussions with about our day-to-day management of the estate. So, yes I am not surprised at all.”

The participant then revealed how the MoD classified partners:

“We either work with them on a statutory basis, which is Northumberland County Council, English Heritage, and Northumberland National Park Authority, and on a non-statutory basis, with the likes of the Kielder Partnership, the National Trust, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, and the RSPB.”

The explanation behind this approach to classifying partners will be considered later in Section 6.3.

The Natural England participant said that the organisations shown were only an indication of the entirety of the picture, “You can probably add a load more as well,” and as the individual looked closer at the maps, the digital voice recorder picked-up the participant saying, “Interesting, yes, very interesting.” The participant from the CNP actually said, “If you were to create collage maps for Natural England, I think it would be even more complicated.”

The Environment Agency participant gave a similar response to the Natural England participant, “Yes, it’s interesting. They clearly show a lot of activity, a wide range of organisations. It’s a colourful and interesting representation.” Incidentally, this participant was the only one who questioned the actual size of each logo, saying, “I am not sure why some are bigger than others?” I explained that was unintentional and just a matter of how it was designed.

The participant from the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) was quite taken aback by the collage maps:

“Good grief! There are just so many organisations there. It’s very confusing, incredibly confusing, and even for somebody like myself who has been involved in the agenda for a quite long time, it does come as a shock to see something like that with so many different partners and stakeholders. It’s very confusing for the customer, and for partners and stakeholders.”

The language used in this particular quote was revealing. The word “confusing” was used three times, preceded twice by “very” and once by “incredibly,” and this confusion was thought to affect the “customer,” “partners” and “stakeholders.”

This assessment was confirmed by the parish councillor who provided a very forthright response:

“Oh God, it’s even worse than I thought! My first impressions are horror, horror. Allied to the fact that, ‘What do these organisations bring to the table?’ Good wishes? Yes. Glory seeking? Undoubtedly. Resources? Forget it.”

The Sustaine participant provided a similar reaction:

“Confusion. Bewilderment. God, it’s complicated, isn’t it? Most of these organisations I have heard of and some of them I am even a member of. It’s just the natural complexity of it. It’s paralysing, really.”

The community development trust participant said there were, “More than I thought, actually,” while the NFU participant commented, “Very diverse, isn’t it?” The CLA participant said, in a light-hearted sarcastic manner, “Nice and simple!” before saying, “It’s a very good depiction of the complexity of organisations that we try to deal with.”

The most visible reaction came from the tourism business participant:

“It kind of upsets me a bit really. It makes me realise why the country is in the state that we’re in. All these great and mighty organisations, it kind of upsets me really, it does. All those logos, I just see them at the bottom of leaflets all the time. It’s lovely to see them all on two pieces of paper! It is quite an eye-opener. I’m dumbstruck when you all those logos in one go. It’s made me realise what there is around us - a massive amount of organisations.”

The former deputy NPO gave a more historical view on the present partner maps:

“The partners now are not significantly different from the very beginning. I don’t think anything has fundamentally changed. We’re still left with the bewildering array of organisations. It’s a crowded pitch, basically, and I think that weakness still exists.”

The participant went on to provide a recent anecdote of a colleague who had recently visited a Roman Fort on Hadrian's Wall:

"A researcher, from the Centre for Rural Economy, took his family to Housesteads and got completely confused. He is a National Trust member, it's a national park authority car park, it's English Heritage at the top of the hill, and it's National Trust at the bottom of the hill. Totally confused as to who did what, who they paid the money to, did they need to pay money, etc. That's always been the case on Hadrian's Wall."

The former NPO also spoke about the implications of the number of organisations:

"You've got those collage maps there with all those different bodies that have got a finger in the pie. Every one of them has some sort of legitimacy. Who's in charge? God only knows! Because sure as Hell, if you put all that lot in a room you'd never reach a conclusion, would you? I would hope all those organisations you identified in your diagrams, the collage maps, could be persuaded to do deals, work together in partnership, and try to set-aside their own interests and listen carefully, rather than trying to spin."

The private estate participant only glanced at the collage maps and said, "The more organisations you have in a particular project, the harder it is, and the slower it is, to make progress."

The National Parks England (NPE) participant said, "Some people might look at these collage maps and think 'Oh that is terribly complicated, why can't it all be a bit more streamlined?' Whereas actually, if we are all promoting sustainable development, I don't see that as a problem." NNPA participant #2 reflected, "It's a pretty crowded landscape, isn't it?" The participant continued:

"But when you look at that very crowded environment it just shows how you careful you have to be terms of choosing your partners because all these organisations will be potentially in the market for partners. They will all be looking for things to be delivered."

The NNPA Member interpreted the collage maps in terms of their relative value of each one:

"It looks cluttered. There are a lot of partners there, but some partners are a lot more important than others. Most of the partners on here I would recognise, yes. There are some of them that are more important than others."

Meanwhile, NNPA participant #3 said:

“My first impression is that there are no surprises. Lots of different agencies and organisations, from all sorts of different backgrounds and interests, all potentially influencing Northumberland National Park or wanting something from the Authority. It’s a good representation of the world we live and work in. It’s a complicated picture.”

Since my approach was to allow each research interview participant time to react to the collage maps in their own way, without any guidance, I noticed different ways of analysing the images. The responses ranged from a brief glance at the collage maps, to studying them for a couple of minutes, and even repeatedly looking at them for the rest of the interview. Using a pen, some participants ticked-off the organisational logos as they analysed them. For example, the Defra participant went across the collage maps marking each logo and saying whether the organisation was a close or distant partner (see Table 10).

Close Partners Frequently work with	Distant Partners Some experience of working with
Northumberland Strategic Partnership, Government Office for the North East, Natural England, Northumberland County Council, Business Link, Rural Payments Agency, North East Assembly, Northumberland National Park Authority, Lantra.	Northumberland College, The National Renewable Energy Centre, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Sustaine, National Farmers Union, Newcastle University, ConFor, Tweed Forum, Tasset 2050, Kielder Partnership, Woodland Trust, North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Youth Hostel Association (England and Wales), Cheviots Futures, Groundwork, Northumberland Estates, Forestry Commission, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Northumberland Federation of Young Farmers, Northumberland Fire Group, Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Fire and Rescue Service, Northumbria Police, Local Government Association, Department for Communities and Local Government, Visit England, Department for Energy and Climate Change, Farm Crisis Network, Commission for Rural Communities, Campaign to Protect Rural England, The Ramblers.

Table 10. Close and distant partners of Defra, as identified by the Defra participant.

To confirm, the participant was not asked to classify each partner at all, so there was some insight in how people subconsciously construct and make classifications in order to better understand the world we live in, just as the MoD participant had done previously, in separating statutory and non-statutory organisations.

The NCC participant offered another way in which organisations could be classified:

“What I think you could do is sort them out into leaders and followers. Probably some of the community organisations would be the followers, rather than the leaders, but that’s not to

degrade what they do, because some of them do some really good work on sustainable development.”

Meanwhile the MoD participant explained a little more about the statutory and non-statutory approach to partnership working:

“We have a set of inner circle, and outer circle. Primarily your statutory organisations are your inner circle. Your Natural England, your Northumberland National Park Authority, your English Heritage, Environment Agency, etc. etc. Because those are ones with teeth, those are the ones that can really bite and hurt you if you get something wrong. You need to keep them on-board. Outside of those you’ve got the non-statutory ones. Now they are the ‘nice to haves’. They have got some nice aspirations, [and we] can do a lot of partnership working with them. We would like to work with them to achieve their aims, but really, if we don’t include them, they might be upset, but they are not going to come after us and punish us for doing so.”

Although the initial responses to the partner collage maps were varied, there were some consistent views that were shared. Overall, it was thought that the pictorial portrayal was interesting, successfully demonstrating the complexities of partnership working. Participants said they knew or were actively working with many of the organisations featured, although the way in which they classified their importance differed. Once the initial reaction to the two collage maps was completed, I moved the discussion on to the broader topic of partnership working.

Sections 6.4 and 6.5 will utilise the rural partnership working framework established in Chapter 3, reproduced in Figure 13.

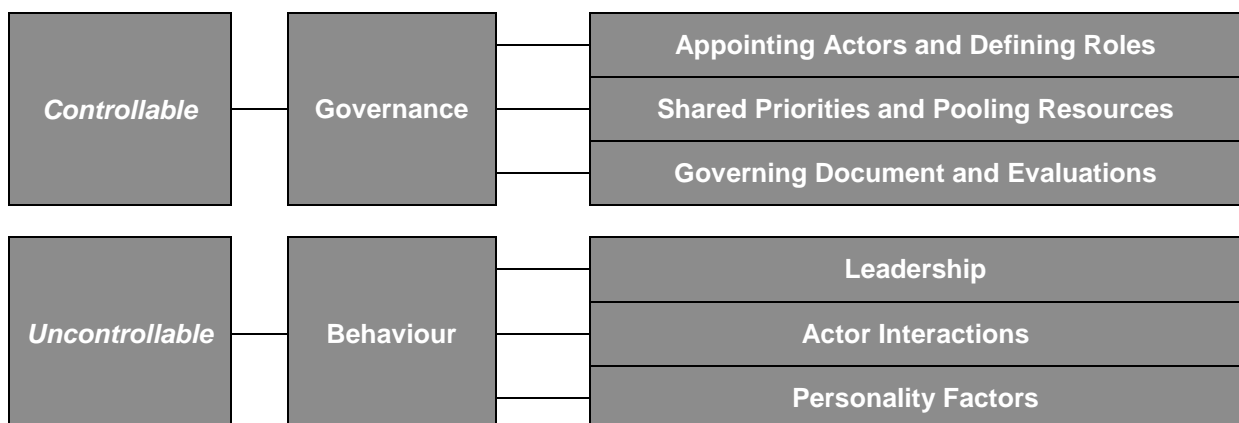


Figure 13. Diagram developed for this thesis to understand the key factors of partnership working in rural areas.

The responses of the participants will be assessed across these two broad areas, to establish linkages between the rural partnership working literature and the views of practitioners in Northumberland National Park. To reiterate the methodology, the structure shown in Figure 11 was not shared with any of the participants during the interviews.

6.4 Governance

The first broad area of rural partnership working that arose from the literature was loosely classed as governance, with three different subcategories within that. It was concluded from Chapter 3 that whilst many of the aspects of governance are controllable, that does not imply that there are relatively straightforward and simple processes at work. Appointing actors and defining roles, identifying shared priorities, pooling resources, detailing the agreement in a governing document, and establishing a framework for evaluations is highly complex and time-consuming work, fraught with potential complications. Section 6.4 will consider the extent these aspects of partnership working were discussed by the participants.

Appointing Actors and Defining Roles

The way in which actors become involved in partnerships was considered in the literature review. Chapter 3 found that partnerships can be legally mandated (Selin and Chavez, 1995), initiated by the funding body (Craig, 1995; Mannion, 1996), and are often led by the public sector (Derkzen and Bock, 2009).

In this thesis, none of the participants started their analysis from the beginning, i.e. how actors are brought on to any given partnership. Without exception, all participants discussed partnership working from the perspective that the arrangements were already in place and the partnership was therefore up and running. Some participants did, however, discuss getting actors involved with sufficient authority, the requirement for actors to turn-up for meetings, the benefit of a range of personalities, and a preference for relatively small and focussed workgroups. These were all findings that were not given a great deal of attention in the literature.

The CLA participant stated the importance of actors' authority and their personal time commitment to the partnership:

“The people around the table have to be at the right level, in order to deliver what they are supposed to be doing, because there is no point having people around the table who aren't in

a position to make decisions. People have to buy-in to what it is they are doing, and have a commitment to that partnership, to actually turn-up and do things.”

Since this was raised, I then asked the participant, who by their own prior admission was the only representative of the CLA in Northumberland, how they managed to keep-up with all the organisations that were identified as CLA partners from the collage maps:

“Occasionally with difficulty! It all goes in fits and starts, so you get periods when you have lots going on, and then you have periods of inactivity. You have to be selective about what meetings one goes to. You can get completely bogged down, so you have to prioritise a bit.”

The NFU participant realised that time commitments could also be quickly stretched:

“On a day-to-day basis, for us to attend all of the many meetings, it would just be impractical. Commitment is always very difficult. We have a finite resource of staff and/or time. But as you can imagine there are countless partnership groups, countless partnership meetings.”

The CLA and the NFU participants were really saying that partnerships are competing entities, at the very least, for the attention of actors to participate in meetings. With limited staff resources, it is no doubt difficult for organisations like the CLA and the NFU to attend and offer a valuable contribution all the time, therefore they have to prioritise. It is up to both of these organisations to relay this message to their prospective partners, so that non-attendance is not interpreted as a lack of interest, or a rejection of the value of that particular partnership.

The Environment Agency participant noted the need for actors to be realistic with their own time capacity:

“I think people need to have the time to devote. So, you sometimes see people with good intentions, but realistically they can’t deliver much because they are flat out busy on other things.”

This is about actors not agreeing to undertake activities that they cannot later deliver. Actors need to be very careful what they sign-up for.

Meanwhile, on the question of delegated power, the parish councillor said that for a partnership:

“It needs to be lean and have considerable delegated power. It’s no good if everything has to be referred to all partnership members and only happens in the event of unanimity. I think the people who are put into the partnership to run it have to be given quite considerable authority.”

In practice, it would be impractical to only utilise senior management staff in partnership working, even if they came with “considerable authority.” Therefore when initiating a partnership, it would make sense to try and gauge the level at which the partnership is going to operate. For example, this could be very practical, with officers in attendance; or it could have practical and strategic implications, with middle management in attendance; or it could be entirely strategic, and therefore suitable for senior management.

Even within this pooling of actors, the Environment Agency participant also spoke of the value of “a variety of approaches,” saying that “you need some people that are quite delivery focussed” and “you need some creative-thinking.” It is difficult to balance because partnerships often require a good mixture of actors around the table.

So, are there an optimum number of actors from which the good mixture can be drawn from?

“I wouldn’t necessarily broaden it more than three or four people, in the short-term.”
Environment Agency participant.

“The more people you have in a particular project, the harder it is, and the slower it is, to make progress.” Private estate participant.

“I think there were as many views around the table as there were people. I thought, ‘This must be a permanent nightmare trying to forge a way through this’.” LEADER participant.

The dangers of trying to cover too many bases are that too many actors get involved, and as these examples illustrate, that can slow progress down. The Defra participant said, “You’ve got to get the right people around the table and at the right level,” whilst also preferring the mixture:

“There’s a degree of entering into something enthusiastically, with vim and vigour. That is positive because that really gets the creativity going and builds the rapport. The idea there is

that you can bounce and share and shape, and that's the motherhood and apple pie of partnerships.”

Therefore the “right people” demonstrate this enthusiasm and willingness to add value during partnership working. Interestingly, the “motherhood and apple pie” reference was the same phrase used by Peck and Tickell (1994) to describe partner working as undeniably a good thing (Chapter 3).

The participants from Defra, NFU, NPE, and Sustaine, and NNPA participant #3, raised the same point about actors appreciating the reason for their inclusion:

“People probably need to understand why they are at the table and what they can bring.”
Defra participant.

“An understanding of the partners that are coming together. An understanding of what those organisations want to get out of it. A clear understanding of what the remit is, so if you're bringing them together, what is it that you are wanting them to get out of it?” NFU participant.

“Being really clear about what your expectations are, that those are shared. That you've got a clear aspiration in terms of what you are going to deliver, so it is not some woolly statement.”
NPE participant.

“Clarity about what you are trying to do and having a clear remit. There's normally a specific thing where the interests of a number of different partners come together that needs to be addressed.” Sustaine participant.

“Openness and transparency in terms of the relationship, and clarity of objectives. If you are all being a little bit cautious and you are keeping some things hidden, then it's difficult to get the clarity of objectives. So the approach has got to be very open, it's got to be transparent.”
NNPA participant #3.

All of these participants themselves are under considerable time pressure to attend many meetings, therefore it is not surprising that, from their experience, they have highlighted this need to be clear from the start about which actors are involved, why they are involved, and what they expect to get out of it. The NFU participant continued:

“It is also important to say what you need to temper with, ‘Well, we can't do X, Y and Z. What we can do is this ...but what we can't do is X, Y and Z'. So you're managing expectations.”

This was a further reason why clarity was important, because it affects how actors are going to formulate expectations. If the ambitions are too great, then it can cause disappointments at a later date. If they are too narrow, then that “vim and vigour” that the Defra participant referred to may lose its momentum.

None of the participants spoke about the importance of cross-sectoral representation on a partnership, despite this prominence in the rural literature on partnership working. Although some participant’s classified organisations in their analysis of the collage maps, nobody specifically said it was a prerequisite for partnership working. There are two ways to interpret this omission. Firstly, it could have been an oversight. If I had asked, “What do you think about the involvement of different sectors in partnership working?” the responses may have spoken of inclusion. Alternatively, and secondly, the omission may be because it had now become instinctive to involve a range of sectors. If this is the case, then it would indicate that government’s partnership working agenda of the last 20 years has become embedded to the extent that it is now second nature. Whilst there is insufficient evidence in this thesis to draw either conclusion, it could warrant an area of further investigation in the future.

The Defra participant and the tourism business participant considered issues around the extent to which actors can represent others, but with different perspectives:

“We would use the NFU and the CLA quite a lot as a sounding board, rather than talking to hundreds of customers. The former chief executive of One NorthEast would say, ‘What you’ve got to try and do is talk to people. Have one handshake the represents one thousand handshakes’.” Defra participant.

“Organisations like the Authority and Northumberland Tourism, and to a lesser extent, One NorthEast, don’t want to speak to individuals. They want to speak to an individual who is then going to cascade that information down. If that individual is at a meeting and then keeps 50 per cent of that information to themselves, and only cascades down the other 50 per cent, that you get problems.” Tourism business participant.

Whilst it may be more cost effective for large organisations to use an individual as a conduit for information transfer, it is the responsibility of those organisations to ensure that the individual is both trusted and a good communicator, since many of other people will be dependent on them.

With regards to the individual actors who are appointed to any given partnership, the MoD participant said, “Over the years, you know, it’s the same people.” Whilst I am sure this is quite the case, the LEADER participant was aware of how important change was:

“There is a churn, people that come on-board and people that drift away. That is the strength, I think, of these partnerships. You’ve got the cycle of going through setting it all up, doing your main strategy, doing the delivery and then winding it up and packing up. Different people from those different sectors come on and go off as and when appropriate. So the whole thing is kind of dynamic.”

The findings so far in this thesis add further insight to the practical process of appointing actors. The participants spoke about the individual authority that actors have, the types of actor (e.g. deliverers, creative thinkers), the frequency of meetings, the size of the partnership, the need for clarity around why actors are involved, the potential shortcomings of representation, and the dynamic environment of partnership working. However, participants did not discuss how actors are appointed, the role of the state in establishing partnerships, or that many partnerships are often brought together in order to access funding.

Shared Priorities and Pooling Resources

Chapter 3 found that shared priorities were the single biggest reason why organisations engage in partnership working. When I asked participants, ‘Why do you engage in partnership working?’ this was also the most common response, even if the language used was not always the same. The community development trust participant said, “There has clearly got to be a synergy and a common goal” before pausing for a few seconds, and then saying:

“I don’t think partnerships are easy, I don’t think they are at all. I think we have to recognise that everybody has an agenda. I think there is always a danger, or a possibility, that as an organisation grows and has resources at its disposal that it will try and do everything itself. I think that’s an easy route to take in terms of control and management. But it’s far more fruitful if organisations can work together in the interests of sustaining each other.”

The National Trust participant took the approach a little further:

“Mutual understanding, vision, aims and objectives of our organisation, and whoever it is that we’re looking at forming that partnership with, and then developing from that, developing trust,

I guess between each other. If you've got those, those are the building blocks from which you can form a positive working relationship. I think they [partnerships] have to be mutually beneficial. I think those are the best projects, where everyone gets something out of them."

The LEADER participant agreed, "Mutual benefit. So [for] every partner, there has got to be something in it for them, so they've got to receive as well as give." These words were repeated by the Natural England participant, who simply said, "It's for mutual benefits." The private estate participant provided a slightly more convoluted answer, but nevertheless the principles were the same:

"Yes, I think everything works well with give and take. A partnership only works when there is stuff for everybody. Everything in life is like that. If people feel like they are getting something out of a particular scheme, then they will work better to make sure that that scheme works properly. So it only works well when everybody gets something out of it."

The tourism business participant gave a similar response, "There has to be something in it, totally, for both parties." The CNP participant said, "A desire to achieve the same outcome really. A lot of the partnerships that we form are for mutual benefit." The NPE participant echoed this, saying, "shared outcomes."

NNPA participant #2 explained the same in more detail:

"You've got to make sure that there's a fit on both sides, so in other words, it's not just a one-way partnership that 'The national park authority wants this and we are a worthy organisation so of course people should help us do it'. It's, 'What will the partners gain by working with us? Are there key elements of their objectives that they'll meet?'"

The NCC participant made a similar statement:

"You've got to think carefully before you set up a partnership. The parties entering into a partnership may well have quite different aspects of the outcome of the partnership that they are interested in. But the two can actually coexist."

Not all participants spoke of mutual benefits as a priority, nor a driving force behind the reason to engage with partners. The MoD participant explained a slightly different approach to partnership working:

“I think the first step would be to ask myself [some questions]. ‘What was it I wanted to do? What do I want to achieve? Does that involve using our partners?’ If it does, I would then identify which partners would be most suitable to come on and support me for that project. The key to finding out which partners you want is to really look through their organisational aims, and say, ‘Well actually that matches ours, we can do a lot of partnership working here’. So we need partners who are going to support us, who are going to ask difficult questions, but ultimately have the same aspirations as we do.”

The participant explained that ultimately every actor has a need to further their own organisational aims to justify their participation in a partnership. The NFU participant reinforced this view:

“So, we engage with them [partners], because what they are doing impacts upon our members, and will have a benefit, and we can see [that]. It’s like any partnership, you have got to have an understanding of where they are going, but also they have to have an understanding of what your remit is and what you are trying to do as well, and there have to be compromises.”

The parish councillor didn’t specifically say ‘compromise’, but it was certainly insinuated:

“Deciding the outcomes and accepting that the outcomes of the partnership may require a sacrifice of certain cherished aims of the individual partnership members. There’s no point forming a partnership and deciding its outcomes if it’s immediately going to be in conflict. So I think there has to be a willingness to sacrifice individual aims for the benefit of the partnership.”

This motivation for participation angle was picked-up by the CNP participant, who explained, “Not every partner is interested in the same issue; you have to almost form tailor-made partnerships.”

Two participants outlined a different approach to forming partnership working. The community development trust participant described how they would develop a project, and then look for partners, whereas the Environment Agency participant would shape the project to suit the needs of partners:

“We would contact the appropriate organisation with a project or a programme outline, and try and encourage them to buy-in to it. I think we have done quite well in setting-up partnerships

or being part of partnerships in the past. As long as everyone understands the principles to which we are working to, and buys-in to it.” Community development trust participant.

“I would see trying to fit what the project’s aims were with the types of organisations I knew who were out there. I think the value in a partnership is that by working together you can deliver more, effectively, easier, you can tap into more money, get different ideas, shared learning. I think it’s a better way of working, that’s my view.” Environment Agency participant.

Shared priorities came across as a very clear reason to engage in partnership working. Participants spoke about all the organisations getting something out the partnership, and being prepared to compromise about that. There was also an acknowledgement that organisations may need to form tailor-made partnerships depending on what the priorities were. Finally, it was found that there are different ways to develop shared priorities. One example was to create a project and then look for organisations to help deliver it; whereas another was to shape a project to meet the priorities of particular organisations.

Once shared priorities have been established, negotiations for the pooling of resources can take place. The pooling of resources is usually around providing funding and/or staff time. In the latter case, this usually takes the form of dedicated time to provide experience, professional expertise and specialist skills to the partnership, which will be paid for in-kind by the organisation from which they originate.

The MoD participant considered what partners had provided to the OTA, aside from a financial contribution:

“They bring skills, skills that we don’t have, and specialisms, and I’m always conscious that they give those for free, in exchange for something else. So there is a trade-off in that when we’re creating partnerships, we’re opening the door slightly, to a very special area, and allowing somebody in. [The] payment for letting them in is that they provide some support, not necessarily money.”

NNPA participant #2 revealed an expectation that all organisations would have to pool some resources in any given partnership:

“As well as wanting something out of a partnership, you’ve got to look for partners who are willing to get involved and put something in. So they are willing to commit time, resources, knowledge, whatever it is they bring that’s unique to the partnership.”

Several participants debated the influence on the direction of the partnership that can be secured through pooling resources. Opinions were divided.

The parish councillor, the NNPA Member and Environment Agency participant felt that influence could be secured by financial means:

“Yes, influence comes out of the chequebook. A very cynical view, but I’m afraid it’s true.”
Parish councillor.

“I go back to what I have I always said, and that is ‘them that pay, say’. I think that if you’ve got an equal payment, you’ve got an equal voice.” The NNPA Member.

“We are quite a big funder, and I think people do see that as bringing with it some degree of being able to set-out what it is we are doing and how. I would hope that we don’t make it too kind-of blunt. I would hope that it has been merit based. But I would think if you are a majority funder you probably do have some influence.” Environment Agency participant.

Conversely, the LEADER participant and the community development trust participant did not feel that the financial contribution should bring influence with it, whilst the MoD participant said that even if a lot of funding is invested, it does not always result in a successful outcome:

“Equity. Now equity is not the same as equality. Equity means a right to be at, and to speak at, the table. Irrespective of whether you’ve got a lot of money or other powerful resources.”
LEADER participant.

“I think there are a lot of organisations with a significantly higher turnover than us. We are a small community organisation with £250,000 turnover per year. By comparison with the Lilburn Estate Farming Partnership, which is probably £12 million or £15 million or more. But I do sense that [although] we may be a small player, we have been invited to sit around the table, and I think people have respected that we have a part to play, and delivered to such a degree, that they have taken notice of our views.” Community development trust participant.

“Money isn’t a big driver for us. We can achieve a lot more by managing, rather than throwing lots of money at things. We’ve thrown lots of money at things before and it hasn’t made a ha’porth of difference. I can think of black grouse. We’ve thrown hundreds of thousands of pounds, not just us, but a lot of the organisations have thrown hundreds of thousands of pounds at black grouse, and they are still disappearing.” MoD participant.

The Defra participant was aware that one of the reasons why Defra was perceived differently to other organisations was because they were a funding distributor. Defra was responsible for allocating European funding through the Rural Development Programme for England (2007-2014). Nationally, this was a seven-year programme worth £3.7 billion.

“It was difficult. It was a combination of lots of people coming and asking for money, but it was also a case of trying to be proactive, and manage relationships, and go out and speak to people, and talk to them about their programme, and also gauge about what their priorities were, how they saw things operating, what sorts of things that they would like to see. If you took everybody’s view from your collage maps, you couldn’t accommodate [them all]. The whole programme [in the North East] was £42 million. All of the expectation in one year was well over that. So it was a case of bringing together everyone’s views and opinions, and trying to get that into a plan and an open and transparent delivery mechanism, as well as getting it embedded, which was very difficult. I can’t understate that actually.”

Funding certainly came across as a contentious area of partnership working. This may have been because at the time of the interviews budgets were being particularly scrutinised.

The National Trust participant told me about how their approach to funding and partnership working had changed:

“I am putting this paper together at the moment for what we call our properties and acquisitions in Swindon, and we are questioned within that paper on who we are working in partnership with, and which funding streams we’ve looked at. Again it’s all about if we as an organisation, are going to put money into this, is there any other money we can pull in, to make it go further, and do more? It is embedded within the organisation, clearly needing to work in partnership and to seek whatever external funding we can find as well, on the more mercenary side.”

Likewise, even though the Environment Agency participant said they were “a big funder,” at the same time they did not want to pay for everything, “Yes, we need people who have access to funding or at least ideas as to how we can get money.” The final aspect of pooling resources is making sure that commitments are fulfilled, NNPA participant #2 explained, “You’ve got to look at what it is each side is gaining from the partnership and make sure that it’s delivered, and that you pay attention to that.”

The pooling of resources is an interesting aspect of partnership working. Chapter 3 highlighted how partnerships are often hastily convened to access funding, and how local people were proud of their knowledge contribution. The participants did not discuss partnerships formed in order to access funding. However, the value of local knowledge was raised by both the LEADER participant and the community development trust participant. Both participants came from 'bottom-up' delivery organisations that have no choice but to seek non-financial influence because they do not have their own significant funding resources. It was also shown that funding does not guarantee success for any given venture, and even large organisations, like the National Trust and the Environment Agency, are still keen to utilise the funds of other organisations. As a side note, the Defra participant reported how the availability of funding impacts on expectations, and how those expectations can make the task of allocating money a lot more difficult than what people realise.

Governing Document and Evaluations

Chapter 3 did not place a great deal of weight on the value of the governing document; it was rarely mentioned in the rural literature. For this reason, I was interested to find out if participants preferred partnership working under a formal agreement. There are generally two ways of making a formal agreement. The first approach would be to create a legally binding contract to determine the exact role that each partner performs and the amount of resources that they will commit to invest. This more formal approach is perhaps best suited to large projects with a significant amount of funding involved. The second approach would be to create a non-legally binding document outlining the direction of the partnership. This may take the form of a memorandum of understanding, showing a bilateral or multilateral agreement on a course of action, or a memorandum of agreement, which is similar, but often only arises as a means of dispute resolution. When discussing partnerships as part of my research, several participants spoke of the use of unifying document, or at least, revealed thoughts on what might happen if its publication was overlooked, or it was not effectively used.

NNPA participant #2 warned of the dangers of not having some form of contract in place, saying, "If you enter into a partnership and something goes wrong, and you turn around and you're on your own, you haven't got a partnership." The parish councillor made the point that, "Good wishes, etc. ...waste of time." The Sustaine participant agreed that partnerships could get derailed without a good grounding. This participant joined the Sustaine partnership, only to find, "Plenty of goodwill, plenty of pious wishes, but no concrete commitment of any sort."

I asked participants what action they would take to get commitment from the partner organisations. The Sustaine participant said, “Pretty much, some sort of memorandum of understanding.” The Natural England participant said the same:

“I’d make sure we had a memorandum of understanding, but we would then put it in the draw and forget about it, before the thing actually comes alive in our daily work. It works for everyone. It’s good for the staff to see it. By actually putting it in the draw, I mean that people know the memorandum of understanding so well.”

The same participant also spoke about a “joint action plan” which would be a more detailed document than the overarching memorandum of understanding. Meanwhile the CNP participant revealed, “We have a memorandum of agreement with Natural England, which sets out [the terms] because they give us a grant each year.”

The Environment Agency participant came across as very interested in this part of the interview. The discussion prompted the participant to realise that not all Environment Agency partnerships have a unifying document:

“We have a partnership agreement with the Authority and one with the Tweed Forum, because we have put money towards those organisations. With Natural England, with the Forestry Commission, with the MoD, Scottish Borders Council, no it is purely goodwill. Yes, it’s good in a way, because it keeps it less formal. But in some ways I wonder whether it might be good just to do something so it is clear what that partner is bringing to the party? I think we sometimes see people who come along but they don’t actually deliver anything nor do anything. They don’t actually contribute much. So maybe... just be a broad document ...might just help for some projects.”

The participant then thought a few seconds, before discussing Cheviot Futures, a present cross-border climate change adaptation partnership across Northumberland National Park, North Northumberland and the Scottish Borders.

“Yes, a unifying document, setting out who brings what to the table and who’s got which expertise. I mean for example, I think somebody from English Heritage came to Cheviot Futures for a while and they could obviously provide some advice about some of the archaeological interest in the area. So if you just had a document saying, you know, ‘English Heritage will provide advice and expertise on this aspect and possible other links to other work that’s happening’. It’s as simple as that. As I say, I think we do have a partnership

agreement with the Authority which I think is probably legally binding [but] we would never get to that stage. We would never start to quote 'Clause 2 Paragraph 4' you know what I mean? I think we should recognise that we would never want to get into a legal dispute with the Authority."

Although this is quite a lengthy quotation, it revealed the thought process of the participant. This started by stating where there are formal arrangements, then highlighted where they were absent, then the potential risks of that, then back to the formal arrangements, with the desire never to get into a legal dispute around those.

The thesis has showed that the participants give the governing document a significantly greater consideration than the literature suggests. In many ways, this elevation of importance has been brought about because of negative experiences of partnership working. It is a tool to detail the sharing of priorities and the pooling of resources, so that the goodwill at the initiation stage is not lost once the implementation commences, or difficulties arise.

It is not a straightforward process though, as the NFU participant warned. Put simply, the governing document must have all-round acceptance:

"From a blunt point of view, if the actual estate managers, the people on the ground, aren't going to implement it [the decisions of a partnership], it is very difficult, no matter how much shouting goes on in the committee meeting. Unless it is implemented on the ground, it is very, very difficult [to make progress]."

The community development trust participant even gave me an example of a partnership that continued despite having a governing document that was not universally agreed:

"With the Housing Association, we drew up a formal partnership document, which some organisations signed-up to and some didn't. I think some just didn't like the formality of it."

This is a potential danger of a governing document. If it is too detailed, too definite, too formal, it can be counter-productive. The Environment Agency participant warned, "Yes, you could over formalise it, you could put people off, you would just get bogged down." The NPE participant likewise said, "I tend to like light-touch rather than massive documents," indicating that partnership agreements may work best if they are fairly precise and not too lengthy.

On the subject of the governing document, this thesis has indicated disparity between the literature review and importance given to it by the practitioners. In the literature, its role was largely overlooked. For the participants, only too aware from experience of when partnership working has been unsuccessful, the governing document became a fundamental requirement. When it works well, it is published, but then put to one side, allowing actors to concentrate on the implementation and delivery side of the partnership. When it doesn't work well, it can be because key stakeholders have been excluded or it is over-formalised to the extent that it is counter-productive, actually discouraging people from agreeing to it. There is no single template for a standard governing document. Each one depends on the complexity of the partnership working arrangements.

Once the governing document has been agreed and published, the actual work of the partnership commences. At certain stages, it might be necessary to review the progress that is being made, with reference to the ambitions of the governing document. Evaluations measure the performance of the entire partnership. In the literature, it was found that evaluations tended to work best if they were focussed in their ambitions and involved like-minded people from the same industry (e.g. tourism). The participants did not consider either of these to be important to a good evaluation. Instead, participants discussed the mechanics of the evaluation process and why evaluations take place.

A number of participants said that it was important to remember why any given partnership was formed, and to stay true to that original vision. The community development trust participant said that partnerships require, "Constant servicing. I think everybody needs to be brought back to the reason why we are sitting around the table - what our objectives are."

NNPA participant #1 was aware that there had been instances when the partnership had moved off in a different direction to what was originally envisioned:

"In the past there were lots of projects that you were delivering in partnership, but not necessarily delivering what your strategic aims were. Whereas now, you are more likely to have greater agreement on the strategic aims."

A similar point was also made by NNPA participant #2:

"One Authority Member said, 'You might be very good at doing the wrong things'. Sometimes you get into partnerships, which are effective, which deliver outcomes, but they are not really

the outcomes that you need anymore. So you're happily, and visibly, and really effectively, delivering the wrong things."

The NCC participant was keen on reviewing progress:

"We took the opportunity of doing a partnership evaluation to really assess whether we wanted to carry on working with some organisations, and whether we walked away from some. So I think it is a useful tool, partnership evaluation. The methods available that are written down can be a bit overdone at times, but as a general process it is a useful thing to do, and I don't think we do enough of it."

These contributions are insightful because it shows how partnership working has matured since the 1990s. Organisations have learnt how to better engage in partnership working to meet their own strategic objectives. Evaluations may also result in partners ceasing their involvement in any given partnership, as NNPA participant #2 said:

"...And you can be big enough at times to say, 'Actually, I think your priorities have moved on, ours have moved on, I don't think we need to be committed to this as much anymore'."

The NPE participant was conscious of how evaluations were carried out and who performed them:

"You've got some review mechanism, in an ideal world. There is a balance there because some people, some organisations, are very good at tick boxing and continuous monitoring. That is great, but not if the same staff are doing the tick boxing, rather than getting on and doing it."

Aside from the time they take, there is a difference between an independent evaluation (perceived to be free of bias) and self-evaluation (which may be less critical).

The Environment Agency participant had a lot to say about evaluating progress:

"I think it has to deliver things, it has to be current. It has to be delivering things, checking that it is still relevant, but having an eye to the future as to where it's heading. For me those are the key things. To do it properly, it does require quite a bit of investment."

As the participant thought more about the evaluation process, some further thoughts were shared, for example how evaluations can affect the actors involved:

“I think you have to keep it warm. I think you have to keep it moving and make it keep it clear where it is heading towards. So there needs to be on-going discussion. I think it needs to evolve. I think partnerships can quite quickly become stale, so they need to stay current. Maybe the membership around the table has to change, as things develop.”

The need to make steady progress, engage actors and meet shared priorities as the partnership unfolds was considered important by the MoD participant:

“Keeping people involved, perhaps letting them do elements of the project, making them feel as though they have contributed to it, and also, making them feel as though they are getting something out for their own organisational aims.”

Just as the Environment Agency participant indicated that the membership may need to change, NNPA participant #3 considered the implications of this:

“That raises more questions about continuity and how you sustain that, because people come and go, quite naturally, and so there is a consideration there about how do you maintain that relationship as individual people change and roles change?”

For example, if there is a partnership of ten actors, and one decides not to continue. If a replacement is found, just as the remaining nine actors will need to form a relationship with the new recruit, that individual will also have to form relationships with the nine existing actors as well. The whole dynamics of the partnership will have changed, especially if the new individual arrives with their own ideas and a sense of enthusiasm.

The tourism business participant emphasised that evaluation was important because of the time and financial implications of private sector involvement:

“As a business, if you are wasting too much time in a partnership, you have got to question what you are getting out of it.”

The CLA participant went into more detail about this concern, and shared experience of how the private sector can quickly get disengaged from working in partnership:

“Most of the people around the table will have a day job and there will be one or two like me, from the private sector, which are able to attend those meetings as part of their job, but we

are very few. Where private sector representatives are brought in they will have to fit it in around their own work commitments. They need to be very clear as to what is actually going to come out of that. It has got to be worth their while to be there, otherwise they are not going to be there very long and they will just drift away. We have seen quite a few partnerships over the years that are supposed to be benefiting the private sector or have a private sector focus, and the private sector quickly just drifts away because it becomes a public sector talking shop and nothing gets done and it all falls apart.”

The need to make progress quickly will be considered in Section 6.5. The tourism business participant and the CLA participant wanted to get key points across about private sector actors. These actors are present in their own time, and this should be respected, and not taken for granted. Furthermore, if a partnership becomes more of a discussion forum, rather than being dynamic and delivering activities, private sector actors will question whether membership is a good use of their time. Therefore, actors from the public sector and the community and voluntary sector should keep this in mind when working in partnership with the private sector.

The NFU and LEADER participants saw the merits of treating evaluations as a learning experience. The NFU participant said, “There has to be an educational aspect of it.” The LEADER participant spoke about how involving independent people in existing work is a form of evaluation that can be quite revealing:

“Every time we’ve had people in from abroad and shown them around Northumberland Uplands, they learn a lot, but equally, we learn a lot as well. And similarly, when you go to them, you learn a lot about what they are up to, which impinges on what you are doing at home. But that is also reciprocal because it’s a fresh pair of eyes, ‘Oh crikey we’ve been here for 20 years and we’ve never thought of that’. So you’ve got that kind of synergy of ideas and you get more out of it.”

The evaluation process does not have to be an onerous tick-box exercise. It can be a means of engaging actors, renewing enthusiasm, being honest about what is not working so well, and giving recognition to areas that are showing signs of success. It is a highly controllable area of partnership working, not just in terms of how to undertake the evaluation, but also frequency, and what participants want to get out of it. Actors should also give some thought as to who will actually undertake the evaluation, since this has time and legitimacy implications.

The dichotomy of partnership evaluation is that the participants indicated it was both important to stay true to the original aims, whilst also reviewing and refreshing those and keeping the partnership up-to-date and relevant. This is a not a black and white area however, as partnerships can evolve and yet stay true to their overarching aims. What needs to be consistent is that the benefits from taking part must outweigh the costs of being involved, or actors may decide that it is no longer worth participating. Like the governing document, there is no template for how to undertake evaluations because they depend on the complexity and nature of the partnership.

Section 6.4 has considered the more controllable aspects of partnership working, classified under the governance arrangements. It was shown that participants are aware that the authorities of the individual actors and their personalities have an impact on their ability to make decisions and interact with other actors, building a sense of rapport. Participants noted that the size of the partnership and the frequency of meetings help to determine the effectiveness of the partnership and whether or not they will be able to participate. It was also found to be important to understand why actors are involved and that partnership working is a dynamic environment. Participants said that shared priorities are the reasons to engage in partnerships, and this would be achieved through pooling resources, typically funding, experience, professional expertise, specialist skills and local knowledge. Whilst it was not clear how these resources affect influence and power relations in a partnership, it was acknowledged that they do have an impact. Participants have learned that a governing document can provide a good foundation to a partnership, but it must not be too detailed or prescriptive as this may defeat its purpose. Finally, participants thought a great deal about the process and implications of evaluation, showing a high level of awareness of this area of partnership working. Section 6.5 will now consider some of the more uncontrollable areas of partnership working.

6.5 Behaviour

The second broad area of rural partnership working that was noted from the literature was loosely classed as behaviour, with three different subcategories within that. It was concluded in Chapter 3, that even if the governance aspects of partnership working were sound, if actors do not exhibit compatible co-operation behaviours then working in partnership would not be effective. Leadership, actor interactions, and personal factors categorise a large number of variables that affect partnership working. Section 6.5 will consider the extent to which the participants discussed these aspects of partnerships.

Leadership

The actors in a partnership will usually look to the chair for leadership. The chair is therefore a vitally important part of any partnership (Selin and Chavez, 1995). With the role comes responsibility, which goes beyond simply facilitating meetings (Saxena, 2005). A good chair will guide the direction of the partnership and motivate actors to build and maintain momentum. The parish councillor was aware that the personality of the chair affects the whole direction of the partnership:

“There are some [chairs] that are reactive, and there are others that are proactive. A lot depends on the individual chair, and this is where it might get tricky, especially if I’m speaking to a tape. Some do want to make a difference. Some believe they can make a difference. Others look at the scale of the problem and say, ‘Well, we’ll do what we can to help solve it, but we’re not even geared-up to try and start solving it ourselves’.”

As reported in Chapter 3, Saxena (2005: 283) found four distinct types of actor that get involved with partnership working: the enthusiasts; the activists; the pragmatists; and the opponents. In many instances actors will already be known to each other, and actors will have an opinion as about the categories which they and other actors fall into. However, when new actors join a partnership, it may take some time before it becomes clear what type of actor they are.

The NFU participant was aware that partnerships work well when they have good foundations and are able to get off to a good start:

“I think the setting-up of a partnership is crucial. From experience, the chair has to be independent. I have been on many groups where the chair is increasingly associated with a specific role, and isn’t independent. Invariably it leads to a certain route. If you are bringing a partnership together, the chair needs to be a very strong person, or even a rotational chair has worked in the past.”

Even if there is an ideal candidate for the post of chair, there is no guarantee that the actor wants to accept that responsibility. For example, the tourism business participant recalled the final days of the Rothbury and Coquetdale Business Club:

“At the annual general meeting nobody wanted to take any position, so I took the chair role and did it for the last few months. It was kind of on a bit of a dwindling, destructive journey at

that point. What happens with these things is that you end up with a membership base of 20 to 25 people, but you get the same half-a-dozen people attending the meetings.”

This a far cry from the enthusiasm, vim and vigour, discussed in Section 6.4. Since the methodology provided an opportunity to probe the responses of the participants, I asked the tourism business participant why no one else had put themselves forward for any of the administrative positions:

“It’s the usual thing, ‘I’ve got too much work and I don’t need any more work’. It is that, [but] we all like to sit back and criticise rather than taking control. There’s a lot of work involved that’s unpaid, and when you’re a secretary or a treasurer or something that is totally unappreciated. All you do is get is, not criticised, but, ‘Why’s that not been done?’ But these are unpaid people doing it, aren’t they? Office bearers being criticised or questioned, but actually nobody else is willing to stand-up to the plate and do it, as such.”

The Rothbury and Coquetdale Business Club found itself in a difficult position. Aside from these internal problems, on 7th May 2009, the club issued a press release around the funding of the Rothbury Christmas lights. This was intended to be a positive news story but instead provoked a fierce reaction from local people connected to two different organisations, namely Rothbury Projects and Rothbury Parish Council. Negative comments were posted online much to the embarrassment of some members of the wider community, where they can still be read today.²⁵

Although the Rothbury and Coquetdale Business Club is now in the process of re-launching itself as the Rothbury and Coquetdale Business Network, the case serves as an example of how partnership working can be undone both through a lack of leadership, and by not properly managing other stakeholders outside of the partnership. What is clear about the Rothbury and Coquetdale Business Club is that a lack of goodwill between its actors brought about the demise of the entire partnership.

The Sustaine participant discussed the need to retain interest and goodwill:

“You’ve got to retain the interest and the goodwill and there are various way of doing that. One is not to abuse people’s goodwill by doing arbitrary things, like overrunning meetings, or

²⁵ Rothbury celebrates gift for Christmas lights. The Journal. [Online]. Last updated: 7th May 2009. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: <http://rothbury.journallive.co.uk/2009/05/rothbury-celebrates-gift-for-c.html>.

changing the agenda without asking, or whatever it might be. I think a good secretariat is important to be able to do that, so that there is momentum.”

The Defra participant also said that there is an added responsibility on the chair for the whole partnership:

“[The chair] builds trust. I think that is critically important. You’ve have to got to have empathy, as far as the understanding of where you are coming from, but also where your partners and stakeholders are coming from, and what their key issues are. I think that is really important. I also think in terms of working with partners, it’s about planning together, effectively, ensuring trust, openness and clarity.”

There are various skills that the chair requires. The Sustaine participant gave an example of a common occurrence on partnerships, which should not take place during a meeting:

“You need clarity about what you are trying to do because on any one task you’ll have people around the table who have other things in common, and it’s dead easy for them to high-jack that meeting to talk about the other thing they have in common, and then the rest of the stakeholders are sat around like pints of milk waiting for someone to involve them in the breakfast party.”

A good chair will look out for this and ensure that actors understand that private conversations are inappropriate. The chair needs good communication skills, as considered by the NFU participant:

“There has to be a very strong chair because you have to make sure that everyone around that partnership has an opportunity to put their points across, and that there isn’t a preconceived path. A lot of partnerships, when they have come together in the past, have been seen by a lot of people in the rural community as maybe a rubber-stamping exercise, or a group of organisations that have come together that will always say the same thing. If there is a path, it is understanding why they have to go down that route and having the information beforehand, presented to them in a very simplistic way.”

Therefore the chair also requires a good level of administrative support. The Environment Agency participant was aware of this, “You need some administration support. A lead partner to organise meetings, to pull things together, to get some notes of meetings out, somebody who can do the [background] work, those sorts of things.” This role may be more

suited to public sector partners, rather than the private and voluntary sector, because it can be time-consuming and labour-intensive.

Both the Sustaine participant and NNPA participant #3 both understood that the chair may have to mediate opposing opinions:

“Normally when you first start a partnership you’ve got people from, not just divergent, but sometimes diametrically opposed perspectives, on the issue you are trying to address.”
Sustaine participant.

“How do we reduce the potential conflicts? How do we maximise the benefits of the partnership?” NNPA participant #3.

There is also a need for patience from all of the actors whilst the ambitions of the partnership are being established. This may mean that adversaries will be brought together for any given reason, and the chair will need to pay close attention to their interactions.

For some actors, the opportunity of being a chair is simply not for them, as the CLA participant said:

“I don’t tend to chair because if you are a chair you can lose your independent voice. It also means that you are expected to turn up, or you really should turn-up. Also in this day and age when there is less funding for secretariat type work, the chair can end up doing an awful lot of work, and I don’t want to get bogged down within one particular area, unless it is with a particular interest. So I tend to resist being chair.”

The effectiveness of any partnership is largely determined by the leadership ability of the chair (Selin and Chavez, 1995; Saxena, 2005; Derkzen *et al.*, 2008; Derkzen and Bock, 2009). The chair should consider how to retain the goodwill of the actors and avoid some of the common pitfalls. A good level of administrative support is fundamental.

Finally, It is very hard to be specific about what makes for positive leadership culture. A certain level of respect between partners is obviously fundamental, as is the understanding appreciation that you can only get from making time for face-to-face contact. The chair can cultivate an environment that goes beyond achieving a corporate goal, creating an inspirational and motivated atmosphere that actors are keen to be part of. The crucial

prerequisite for creating a positive leadership culture is having a good level of communication (Balloch and Taylor, 2001; Saxena, 2005; Laing *et al.*, 2008).

Actor Interactions

The actors in a partnership will communicate both within and outside of partnership meetings. Chapter 3 found that the language used at meetings affects the way in which actors interact, as does the availability of information. Participants shared their views on the communication practices they favoured, and did not favour. A common term used by participants to refer to the process of convincing other actors that any given project or partnership is worth investing in, was 'buy-in'. The MoD participant spoke of shared buy-in:

“Regular communication is vital. You’ve got to make them feel wanted, and that requires a lot of diplomacy. You’ve got to be pretty good at conflict resolution. You’ve got to explain things at their level, and in their language. Communications is the key one. Occasionally we have funding streams, and occasionally we will try and buy-in to some of their projects. Communicating with them regularly, giving them the buy-in, giving them the respect they deserve, making them feel loved and wanted, is the best way of managing them, I find.”

What was interesting in this quotation is that the MoD participant wanted to try to manage the spirit of the partnership, through communication and respect, making actors feel as if their contribution was necessary and important. The Environment Agency participant used the term 'buy-in' as well to set the tone for the partnership, “Unless you really get that buy-in at the start, it’s hard to change the way of working.” The National Trust participant provided some insight into their way of working:

“My own personal way of doing it would be through face-to-face communication. I would want to meet up, whoever the partner is, to spend some time helping them get to understand what we do, and then vice-versa, and then from that, looking at where the common ground is and where we can work together.”

The Defra participant echoed this approach, and re-emphasised the earlier point about having realistic ambitions:

“I think communication is about talking and listening. There’s clearly some stuff about understanding, and the ability to understand different perspectives, so you are able to transcend. So you’ve got to be able to relate, or communicate, at that particular level, that is an absolutely important skill. You’ve also got to be able to communicate effectively. There are

a couple of things here. It's about what you can do, but also what you can't do, that's also absolutely critical."

By probing a little more on the topic, I was able to better understand how some participants prefer to work. I asked the private estate participant about their partnership working arrangements with other large estates in Northumberland:

"Yes, we share information the whole time. Telephone, email, meetings, every now and again. I do a lot of sharing of information with Alnwick, and the local estates, yes. Whether it's information on contractors, or recommendations, or how they are handling a particular problem, that sort of thing. I pick the 'phone up and I say, 'Look. I've got one or two problems that I want to discuss. Next time you're coming past the road end, give us a call'."

This suggested quite informal arrangements, but also the use of a number of communication mediums. The NCC participant was less convinced that all ways of communicating should be used:

"I would say face-to-face communication. There's too much reliance put on email, to the detriment of 'phone, and 'phone to the detriment of a face-to-face meeting. Even if it's only occasionally, you don't have to be banging up and down the A1 all the time to have face-to-face meetings. It shouldn't be chucked out of the equation altogether."

The tourism business participant had the same message, "Regular meetings or telephone calls, or sitting down to see where we are at." I was also paid an unexpected compliment during this interview:

"Do you know like, I know you have come here today, and you have come to see me, rather than me going to see you. That means a lot."

This approach was part of my methodology, which involved interviewing people at a venue that suited them, so that they felt relaxed and able to concentrate on our time together (see Chapter 4). This has implications for partnership working as well, because the venue where meetings take place should also enable people to feel comfortable. Aside from the above observation, which was probably more to do with respect, few other participants considered the choice of venue or the effort put in to approach a partner to be important factors in partnership working.

The Environment Agency participant talked through various areas of communication, again showing experience as to what the individual felt worked well and what did not work so well. When initiating a new partnership, the participant said:

“I would tend to try and do it by ‘phone probably, just to say a little more about what we were hoping to do. Give them a call. I think it is important to talk. Sometimes you can slip and it is easy to fire off one email copied into six people, without actually speaking to the six people. But I think it is worth it. One of the strengths of Cheviot Futures has been the partnership approach. As I said, we’ve had really good buy-in around the table, a really good working relationship.”

The NCC participant had a particularly strong view on the importance of spending time face-to-face with people:

“Face-to-face personal contact, a little bit of time spent building up a social relationship with the person that you are going to have to spend a fair bit of time with, is time well spent. I think people sometimes ignore the fact that you’ve got to get on with people. The good partnerships are always based on a few key people having a good level of trust between them. That trust flows from face-to-face time, not necessarily diving straight into the depths of the subject that you are going to be working with them on. It is down to the social side. If you’ve got good partnership working, you can challenge and you can ask the question that perhaps you feel awkward asking, because you’ve got a good partnership based on trust and face-to-face time. When there isn’t a good partnership, the awkward question doesn’t get asked. It’s only later on when the wheels are coming off that you get into the blame game. Then it’s, ‘I want to have a meeting with the chief executive’. That’s when things go wrong. I’ve probably seen more bad partnership working than I’ve seen good partnership working.”

The NCC participant indicated that there could be several implications of making time for face-to-face contact. It helps to develop social relationships, which in turn build trust. This then allows actors to feel confident enough to challenge each other and act as a valuable critical friend on a partnership, helping to keep the objectives on track. The participant went as far as to say that if that level of trust had not been developed, then actors would not feel comfortable enough to do that, and as a consequence, potential issues would not be addressed.

The Sustaine participant took the example from the NCC participant a stage further, by explaining how to create an environment within which actors can interact and get to know each other:

“For example, I chair the River Tyne Sediment Steering Group at the minute, a classic example of multi-stakeholder. We took them all on a field visit a couple of weeks ago. There were two or three of us around the table who knew fine what we were dealing with in the upper part of the catchment, in terms of the sources of polluting sediments, but 85 per cent to 90 per cent of the people around the table had no idea. They had never seen where the stuff was coming from or what the scales of the challenges are, etc. etc. So we stuffed them all in a bus. We arranged it so we would have a meeting in Hexham beforehand, which was unusual because we would normally have the meeting in Newcastle somewhere. We kept it strictly to its allotted two hours, then we bunged them all in a bus and they were gobsmacked. Just the very process of walking around together in an unstructured activity. All of their contact hitherto had been through rather structured, minuted meetings. That made a big difference. You get the human side of people, and get the discussions about some of the intricacies of the issues that you’re never going to get in a formal meeting. So, that was an act of creating a space in which a shared understanding can grow. It’s not easy to do, it’s a challenge for people’s diaries, and again you can’t overdo it either, because people will say, ‘This is just taking up too much of people’s time’.”

The Sustaine participant was the only interviewee to provide this level of depth to the process of creating an environment within which partners can interact outside of a meeting. The way actors interact is about communication, whether by email, telephone or in-person. It encompasses the language used and how trust is developed between actors. Although the relationships between actors are still largely uncontrollable, what can be controlled are the circumstances in which actors are brought together. An unstructured field trip is an example of how time and space can be created to allow relationships to develop.

Personal Factors

The literature review of partnership working explored notions of power and trust, and some of the impacts that these have on actors (Jones and Little, 2000; Mouffe, 2000; Derken *et al.*, 2008). Although an awareness of trust, honesty and power is important (Saxena, 2005), measuring their influence is not straight-forward (Clegg and Hardy, 1996). As stated in Chapter 3, it was not an objective of this thesis to develop a way of measuring personal factors. Instead, I was interested in finding out how important personal relationships were to the participants. Participants made a very liberal use of the word ‘personalities’. This ranged from saying that personalities were important, through to the term being used as a euphemism to hide instances of distrust, dishonesty and a lack of power. For example, the

former deputy NPO recalled protected area management from the late 1970s, “Well a lot depended on the personalities,” without actually explaining what that meant.

However, partnerships should be between partners (organisations), and not between actors (people) (Balloch and Taylor, 2001). The MoD participant appreciated this distinction, but observed that whilst organisations may initiate a partnership over shared priorities, the personal side of the relationship could not be excluded:

“Yes, you try and stay away from the personal side of a relationship. The partnership should be with the organisation. The partnership should be between our aims, and their aims, and what we can do together, collectively. Inevitably, as humans, we get involved with personalities and things like that.”

The community development trust participant concurred with this view, and went further, saying that if actors get on with each other then this creates a more productive environment:

“The personal relationships help. I don’t think we should doubt that for a minute. Maybe that is not how it should work, but that is how it works. If you know people in those organisations and they have some respect for you, and you have their ear, then it’s a lot more beneficial. It is essential to foster good relationships with individual organisations, and I think that is far easier to do if you know the people personally.”

The Defra participant was also aware of the importance of personal relationships in partnership working, and like the MoD and community development trust participants, acknowledged this almost regretfully:

“A lot of it is down to individuals and personalities, which you might be surprised at. Obviously you need your aims and objectives, and people need a clear plan and strategy to be able to develop relationships, to find areas of common ground, where you can work together. That whole infrastructure stuff needs to be in place. It pains me to say it Richard, but it does depend a lot on personalities.”

What is also interesting from the last three quotations was the admission that personal relationships matter, even though they should not. Which poses the question, why do participants play down the role that personal relationships have? I suspect it is because on paper, in various strategies, the language is not about actors; it is about organisations. Furthermore, if an actor leaves an organisation, he or she will take that personal relationship

with them. The organisation is the consistent factor, which is why participants claim that partnership working should be between organisations, not actors, even though in practice this is not entirely the case (Balloch and Taylor, 2001).

The National Trust participant realised there was a kind-of 'partnership gaze', a conscious awareness of how partners are perceived:

"When you look at it as an organisation, you think differently. With the Heritage Lottery Fund, we work closely with them, but clearly they are a funding body. So you've always got that in your mind. But at the other level, it's the different personalities involved. You may think differently because of who they are as well, but I suppose that goes without saying, doesn't it? Particularly working somewhere like Hadrian's Wall, where so many organisations are involved, I think maintaining those personal relationships, in a professional way, is crucial."

This was an interesting choice of words, maintaining personal relationships in a professional way. This implies that the participant aimed to get to know other actors using some unspoken professionalism. I would speculate that this professionalism that "goes without saying" includes personal factors, like trust, honesty, and respect.

I asked the private estate participant about the role of personalities in forming working relationships. The participant explained:

"When you're covering a big, wide, rural area: a) you have to trust the people that are in those areas, working for you; and b) you have to have a relationship. We think, with the particular people that we have a good relationship, we think of it as a partnership. If you have somebody that doesn't think that way, you can't do horse-trading with them, if you understand what I mean? So there is a hurdle and a stand-off relationship. So you need practical, sensible people. Personable people, who get on with people in the positions that deal with others."

The point the private estate participant was making was that actors that are put into positions where they are required to work in partnership need to have negotiation skills. The tourism business participant likewise agreed that a two-way relationship was crucial:

"If you have a relationship with a person, once that relationship is broken, it often takes years to rebuild. You have either got a very good relationship or you have not got a good relationship. It is that two-way thing, rather than one-way. I think that is the most important thing really, the two-way relationship and two-way respect, as well."

NNPA participant #2 acknowledged that the actor chosen to work in a partnership is also trusted to accurately represent the organisation from which they originate:

“[Personal relationships are] very important, yes, because in any partnership the person they deal with is the organisation. So if the organisation says, ‘We want to work in partnership with you to achieve all these, and we’re equal partners, and we’ll put our resources in’ but the person who is representing you does the opposite of that then [there will be problems]. An individual must understand what they are representing the organisation for.”

This personal relationships approach was also advocated by the Environment Agency participant, but for different reasons. This participant said that the personal side was important for understanding how organisations operate, and because it can help to avoid conflicts arising:

“I think having personal relationships are important because I think you can get far more nuances and you can understand a little bit more about the organisation and what is going through, how it’s culture is evolving, which you wouldn’t really get if it was just a cold business thing. I think you need to have a good working relationship. The people around the table need to get on without arguing about stuff.”

As previously stated, whether actors in a partnership will “get on” and whether they will strike up a rapport cannot be controlled. What is controllable though, is managing the factors that can help to bring people together. The NCC participant understood the value of this approach, and again analysed the partnership working positively in the first instance, before concluding with a statement as to what can happen if relationships break down:

“You need to get to know the partners. That’s where you get the trust and the communication building. If you know who your partners are, as people, not as the badge that they wear, but as the person, it makes for a better partnership, if you absolutely know the people that you are working with. I just think it works better when people invest in a bit of relationship building time, rather than just trying to do things at a distance, then bringing out the big hammer when things go wrong. That isn’t partnership working. That is coexisting.”

The NPE participant provided more of an observation around scale, “The sense I get is that whether it works locally or not is rather dependent on personalities,” while the CNP participant spoke of, “trust and understanding” as being “quite important.”

I asked the Sustaine participant, “What role do personal relationships have in partnership working?” The response was:

“I think they are absolutely crucial, actually. I do a lot of work where I get asked repeatedly to be an independent chair of things, which is partnership working. I think I get asked because I am alive to the challenges of it, but also I am able to make it work. The reason I can make it work is because of the personal relationships, you’ve got to get people’s trust. You’ve got to take people seriously, and look them in the eye, and listen to what they say, and respond. The human level of it is a *sine qua non* of effective partnership working.”

Sine qua non is a Latin legal term that translates to ‘[a condition] without which it could not be’, or ‘without which [there is] nothing.’ Therefore to the Sustaine participant, without good personal relationships, partnership working is ineffective.

The importance of personalities and personal relationships was not predominant in the rural literature. Whilst there were references to power relations (Clegg and Hardy, 1996; Jones and Little, 2000; Mouffe, 2000), negotiation (Derkzen *et al.* 2008), and trust and honesty (Saxena, 2005), the participants in this thesis highlighted a dimension of partnership working that is fundamental to success, that of the personal factors. To some extent it does “go without saying,” just as the National Trust participant said. However, if it is a “*sine qua non* of effective partnership working,” at least in the opinion of the Sustaine participant, then surely it is too important to be unspoken about.

Towards the end of the interview with NNPA participant #3, the individual summarised their views of partnership working into two simple areas:

“The strength of partnership is very often made with two things. It is made with being clear about what your objectives are, and then it is about building personal relationships between individuals within the two organisations. I think fundamental to good partnership working is having personal one-to-one relationships.”

This was a similar approach to the National Trust participant. However, their analyses overlooked the other processes at work that have been considered in Sections 6.4 and 6.5, which are appointing actors and defining roles, pooling resources, the governing document and evaluations, leadership and actor interactions. This thesis has shown that partnership working cannot be this streamlined. It may well be that these two factors are more important

than the others, however establishing that would be an area for future research. In practice, it was found that partnership working is extremely complicated with many overlapping factors operating simultaneously.

Section 6.6 will next consider the issue of track records in partnership working, with particular reference to the public sector.

6.6 The Role and Reputation of the Public Sector

Several participants discussed the role and reputation of the public sector. It is worth reiterating that the interviews took place at time of widespread public sector cuts, and these organisations were still dealing with staff redundancies, change management and the new ways in which they had to fulfil their statutory purposes in future. Since it was very topical, several participants shared some views on their experiences of working with the public sector.

The private estate participant had mixed views of the dealings with different parts of Defra:

“The working relationship we have with the Authority is pretty good. Natural England, first and foremost, is reasonable. The Environment Agency, we find very difficult to work with. I find government bodies, in general, much harder to deal with than private companies. Forestry Commission, we do a lot of work with the Forestry Commission. I find them exceedingly slow, disappointing.”

In theory, all of these organisations should be working towards the same agenda since they are all responsible to Defra. Yet in the opinion of private estate participant, the way in which they operate is markedly different. This may be because of the uncontrollable side of partnership working, the personal relationships, which the private estate participant had successfully developed with the Authority and Natural England, but not so successfully with the Environment Agency or the Forestry Commission. Later in the interview, the private estate participant considered Defra and the whole public sector:

“Defra is absolutely shocking. It is in turmoil. The government bodies ...dreadful.”

The tourism business participant also shared some mixed responses to the public sector. The individual critically assessed partnership working with One NorthEast. Firstly, when One NorthEast invited the individual to attend The Outdoor Show in Birmingham, the tourism business participant had to drive from Newcastle upon Tyne with the marketing stock, work

long hours, and stay in the budget accommodation of the Travel Lodge. This was compared to the officers from One NorthEast, who flew down to Birmingham, worked their usual shift, and then stayed at the comparatively expensive Hilton Hotel. The tourism business participant explained an interpretation of how the local businesses might have collectively felt about these different ways of working:

“We feel that created a ‘them and us’ scenario. It is partnership working, but it’s not partnership working, is it? They were always perceived as a stronger partner and we were lucky to be involved with them. It’s this lack of respect and lack of understanding. Once you’ve lost that trust as an organisation, you think, ‘Why do I bother?’”

Inequalities can undermine partnership working, and in this instance, it made the tourism business participant regret making the effort in the first place. Despite this, one public sector organisation was recognised as an “us” along with the local businesses:

“The AONB officer at the Northumberland Coast AONB also came down for The Outdoor Show. He would go out for a drink with you in the evening and you would build your relationship and friendship with him.”

In analysing what had happened in this example, the AONB officer put himself into an environment that enabled personal relationships to grow. The way actors interact can either present a barrier to partnership working (One NorthEast), or build a bridge to bring people together (Northumberland Coast AONB).

A tourism business participant shared one further story of dissatisfaction with One NorthEast, this time to do with a one-way relationship:

“One NorthEast had one of their area tourism partnership meetings, and they said, ‘Can you come along? I hear you do a presentation about social networking, maybe you can help us a little bit with it?’ I said, ‘Yeah brilliant, the fee is?’ [Their response was] ‘Oh we can’t pay you. But come along and give advice. You should be honoured that we are giving you that opportunity to speak with us’. I found that very frustrating because they wanted our time and expertise for free. That is not partnership working, because they were taking and that then brings some bitterness towards the relationship.”

The participant explained that in the end the invitation was accepted without a fee on the basis that One NorthEast would pay travel expenses. Due the bureaucracy involved, even this simple task brought complications:

“I invoiced them for £32 for travelling expenses. They wrote back and said, ‘Oh we are not paying for it all. Northumberland Tourism is paying half, and County Durham Tourism is paying half’. So I had to generate two separate invoices for £16. It’s pathetic ...pathetic! As a business that turns over a few hundred thousand pounds per year, it is humiliating! It is humiliating, and that is the way you tar them all, that’s the way it is.”

These were very strong words and I am sure One NorthEast were not aware that they were not just damaging their own reputation, but that the whole of the public sector was being drawn into this negative perception. The tourism business participant did back track during the interview, in a moment of reflection:

“I am tarring them under the same brush. I do work quite closely with Natural England. I think they are a good partner, and I enjoy working with them, because I understand the way they think, which is a very, very different way than I do. It goes back to the personal relationship.”

To ‘tar under the same brush’ is a saying that implies to unjustly characterise together. The participant made this acknowledgement, and went on to say that even if organisational priorities are different, barriers to partnership working can still be overcome if the personal relationship is sound. Whilst no other participant made this assertion, it is worth remembering that only half of the rural partnership working articles in the literature review considered personality factors at all; it is no doubt of greater prominence in other literatures though, for example business and management studies.

The private estate participant also thought that personal relationships were important. In this hypothetical description, the private estate participant described how the individual working in partnership needed to demonstrate certain skills:

“I’m not going to name names, but I have one man in Natural England, and I probably have one man in the Authority, that I feel we can have a really useful conversation. He can understand the problems that the estate has, and I can understand the problems that he has. If we want to achieve something, we both want to achieve it, and he is trying to fit it into a scheme for me, and I’m wanting to do it, he can sometimes. There’s no substitute for having somebody that has practical knowledge, a bit of common sense, and doesn’t just take the

scheme as black and white. They see where we can help each other, in partnership. The practical man will wangle that somehow. That is practical, sensible experience that sometimes you don't always get from the government bodies."

This is a hypothetical example, and of course, in a real situation there may be a very good reason why a public sector organisation would not continue with a partnership, therefore it is difficult to draw conclusions from this example beyond some of the basic skills needed to work in partnership, such as patience, flexibility and negotiation.

A further consideration of the public sector was posed by the tourism business participant. The individual pointed to the collage maps and spoke about organisations that are not in the public sector, but receive government funding:

"I've got to be careful what I say, because we work for a number of these [public sector] organisations. It does worry me immensely to see how public money is being wasted. I say this in a lot of public meetings. How much public sector funding has gone into propping-up these [non-public sector] organisations, to deliver very little?"

The parish councillor went on to say that there were too many different organisations trying to deliver the same objectives, giving the example of community development:

"One of the problems is that in some ways there are too many people playing in the pool. For instance, the Authority, Northumberland County Council, the parish councils, the local community development trust, so there are four, but everyone has an agenda. There isn't one simple agenda."

The participant then pointed to the collage maps and said:

"I would endorse the view that most of this is the public sector shuffling money around, slicing a bit off for their own administration and running costs. Eventually, there's not a lot left. There's an awful overworked word called 'facilitation'. Believe me, if the money is there, it will be facilitated."

The National Trust participant explained how the track record of one organisation affected the willingness to work together:

"I think, the only organisation there that jumps out at me, is where, and I don't think alone, as an individual or an organisation in the same way, I suspect that things are being done more to

further their organisation than anybody else's, would be Hadrian's Wall Trust. What we have seen a lot over the years is that they have found it easy to take credit for other people's achievements. And when they come to you, you've always got in the back of your mind, 'What are you after here?'"

The relationship became personal when an injustice took place, and trust was lost, which then affects partnership working in the future. A new employee of Hadrian's Wall Trust who was looking to work in partnership with others would not be starting from a level playing field; the first task would be to try and repair the relationships that were already broken.

The public sector dominance in partnership working has been considered in the literature (Edwards *et al.*, 2001; Moseley, 2003a; Derkzen *et al.*, 2008; Furmankiewicz *et al.* 2009) and was also raised by the Sustaine participant, who went on to question how effective the input from this sector was:

"Sustaine had a board, which to be perfectly frank, I found a little bit unwieldy. It was definitely, excessively dominated by public sector interests, virtually to the exclusion of any private sector participation, which struck me as a little bit strange. If I am brutally honest I think for quite a few people, with a lot of honourable exceptions, it was important for their curriculum vitae to be seen to be on a board. Gag me! There was a fair bit of dead wood. The dead wood manifested their calibre by absenteeism, I have to say."

Section 6.6 has considered the role and reputation of the public sector, voiced through the opinions of the tourism business participant, the private estate participant, the parish councillor, the National Trust participant, and the Sustaine participant. Collectively, a range of opinions were shared from mixed reactions to working with particular rural organisations, the importance of personal relationships, the use of government funding, how a organisational reputation can become personal, and the dominance of the public sector in partnership working.

6.7 Conclusion

Partnership working is a highly complicated business, and success is somewhat dependent on a number of factors simultaneously operating in harmony. The MoD participant concluded, "There's no science to it, I'm afraid." If partnership working is not a science, then Chapter 6 has gone some way to show that it is most definitely an art. Several conclusions can be drawn from Chapter 6.

Firstly, participants broadly understood sustainable development was a long-term vision, with social, economic and environmental aspects, although not necessarily of equal importance. The practitioners demonstrated a pragmatic approach to the delivery of sustainable development, through policy and practice, which is in contrast to the academic community, which has debated the term since its use in the 1987 Bruntland Commission Report. For this thesis, the conclusion that can be drawn is that for protected area management, participants shared this long-term vision of sustainable development and therefore it is a good basis for working in partnership.

Secondly, the participants showed an awareness that many stakeholders are interested in Northumberland National Park. This has the potential to make partnership working difficult because of the number of organisations to engage with, or consult with, over any given matter. Participants also appreciated that partnership working is a constantly changing environment, and just as some organisations will cease to exist, new organisations will also be established.

Thirdly, it was found that the more controllable side of partnership working around the governance arrangements is highly complex in practice, with many overlapping processes at work. Participants argued that it was important to get the appropriate actors involved and that the expectations of the partnership should be realistic. The most common reason to bring actors together is to deliver shared priorities, and this is achieved by pooling resources. Participants appreciated the purpose of having a governing document, and the role of partnership evaluation in refining and improving performance during the implementation phase.

Fourthly, the results indicated that the more uncontrollable side of partnership working around behaviour is critical to success. Even though partnership working is supposed to be between organisations, in practice it is the actors within those organisations who determine whether or not it is successful. It was found that the leadership of a partnership is pivotal in determining the direction and spirit upon which it operates. The way actors interact with each other helps to determine the level of trust and respect that is shared, and it was acknowledged that it is possible to create space within which these interactions can prosper. Finally, the role of personal factors can make or break a partnership.

Fifthly, several participants shared views on the role and reputation of the public sector. They revealed a mixed response to public sector organisations and concern about the use of

government funding. There was also an example of how an organisational reputation can become personal, and how an existing partnership had become dominated by the public sector, with questionable motivations for involvement. It can be concluded that the public sector could show a greater awareness of these concerns and take appropriate action, such as evaluating their existing partnerships and how their resources are used.

Chapter 6 considered the processes that are in action when partnership working in a protected area. Chapter 7 will examine partnership working with or for Northumberland National Park Authority.

Chapter 7: Partnership Policy into Practice

“It’s all about partnerships. It’s about working proactively in positive way with farmers, with estate managers, with the agencies, and making sure that we actually act as the catalyst in the end to get a good outcome. It is proven to me certainly, that partnership working is the way forward. In the current economic situation the amount of resources we have got, and other partners have got, means that it is more important than ever.” NNPA participant #3.

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 considered the results of the 2010 National Park Authorities Performance Assessment (NPAPA) for Northumberland National Park Authority (Solace Enterprises, 2010), particularly with reference to partnership working. To reiterate, in this area it found mixed results. There was praise for the vision of co-operation in the present management plan (NNPA, 2009) and the way in which the Authority engages with other public sector partners, particularly in the field of conservation. However, there was a lack of clarity around the role of some partners as delivery organisations. Furthermore, the feedback for the Authority was that the organisation could listen to the views of partners more and there was room to strengthen existing tourism partnerships. The results of the NPAPA were accepted by the Authority. Chapter 7 will explore two distinct areas. Firstly, it will consider the local government assessment process. Secondly, there will be a consideration of the results from this thesis to see how they compare to the findings of the 2010 NPAPA, using feedback drawn from both key partners and non-key partners of the Authority. Chapter 7 will also detail views about partnership working with the Authority, before concluding with some overall observations on the effectiveness of partnership working in practice.

7.2 Assessing Local Government Performance

For 2013/14, local government in England was responsible for £72 billion (Keep and Burman, 2013), a significant sum even after the public sector cuts of 30 per cent to 40 per cent since 2010. The challenge of devising a methodology for measuring the performance of local government has been the subject of much discussion in the local government literature. This has been so particularly during the last decade after the New Labour Government introduced a series of Best Value indicators from 2000 (replaced in 2008 by the National Indicator Set) and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) from 2002 (replaced in 2009 by the Comprehensive Area Assessment). This modernisation agenda (Laffin, 2008) provided impetus for the national park authorities to develop the NPAPA to measure their own performances as special purpose local authorities. The CPA was developed by the

Audit Commission, an independent body. It approximated a performance score for a wide range of local services, using a simple to understand five-category scale (Revelli, 2010). In 2010, the Coalition Government replaced the National Indicator Set with a single and comprehensive list of data, whilst Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA) were replaced with self-assessments and the publication of performance data. Both new measures were designed to be inexpensive and transparent. Although the NPAPA methodology was refined accordingly, it essentially continued to be used to assess the performance of the national park authorities, regardless of the fact that the CPA was no longer used in other areas of local government. The NPAPA is conducted thus:

- The national park authority under scrutiny publishes a self-assessment report. This helps the external assessors to determine the focus of their work;
- An external team of five people is put together from other national park authorities and local government organisations. Documentary information is circulated to them in advance, leading up to a visit to the national park and the authority for one week. During this time they undertake a tour of the area and have various discussions with staff and partners; and
- At the end of the week, the team report back some emerging findings to the national park authority, and shortly after that, publish their report.

The comparative scores for the 2010 Northumberland National Park Authority NPAPA are shown in Table 11.

	Self-Assessment Score	External Assessment Score
Quality of Vision	4	4
Setting and Using Priorities	4	3
Conservation	3	3
Promoting Understanding and Service Delivery	4	2
Wider Sustainable Development	4	4
Use of Resources	4	3
Leadership and Improving Performance	3	3

Table 11. The 2010 Northumberland National Park Authority NPAPA scores. The ratings are: (1) performs poorly; (2) performs adequately; (3) performs well; and (4) performs excellently. Sources: Northumberland National Park, 2010; Solace Enterprises, 2010.

It suggests that the Authority felt it was performing better than the external assessors did. Although the NNPA participants spoke of insufficient central funding and significant challenges in order to perform its role, according to its own assessment it was not

performing excellently in only two out of seven areas. The rest of Section 7.2 will consider the effectiveness of the CPA as a tool to measure local government performance.

The start of the 21st Century marked the beginning of a new dawn of local government evaluation. A series of indicators, called Best Value, was developed to record data, alongside a new assessment procedure, the CPA. One of the first publications to examine Best Value was published in 2002. There were three main reasons why Best Value performance indicators were introduced: to set benchmarks and targets; to provide local electors with a basis for measuring performance; and to provide central government with a mechanism for monitoring and regulating local government (Boyne, 2000; Boyne, 2002; Nunn, 2007). Right from the start there were problems of interpretation around the word 'effectiveness', and the difficult task of satisfying the multiplicity of local government stakeholders (Boyne, 2002). Further questions arose around whether the assessments should focus on the processes at work, or the impact or effect on an area (Goodland *et al.*, 2005). Meanwhile the "plethora" of performance indicators (Gutiérrez-Romero *et al.*, 2008: 767) became the subject of 'gaming', in the sense that it was possible to hit targets, yet miss the point, or reduce performance where targets did not apply (Bevan and Hood, 2006). In their own research on performance indicators, Bevan and Hood (2006: 115) also found that a performance manager of a local government organisation prioritised "quick-win" activities because it promoted the score of the organisation without incurring too much effort. Aside from the gaming aspects, Bevan and Hood (2006: 116) pointed out the whole contradiction of government policy:

"Central government is rewarding local authorities in poor areas for their deprivation, and punishing them for their poor CPA scores. And rich areas are being rewarded for their good CPA scores and punished for the lack of deprivation. Government policy comes dangerously close to being self-defeating."

For instance, by 2005 the Audit Commission had judged almost three-quarters of unitary and upper tier authorities to be 'good' or 'excellent', although public satisfaction in local government was declining (Martin and Bovaird, 2005). It was also stressed that changes in performance take time to be realised (John, 2004; Gains *et al.*, 2005). Yet once a set of modernisation initiatives appeared not to have succeeded, central policy makers were quick to replace them with another set (Laffin, 2008).

A further critique of the CPA process was its apparent inability to take account of circumstances beyond the control of local policy makers. Whereas some local government organisations were falsely lauded for operating in favourable circumstances, others had been wrongly criticised for their performance during difficult economic times (Andrews *et al.*, 2005; Gutiérrez-Romero *et al.*, 2008; Leach, 2010). There was also an argument that was particularly pertinent to the national park authorities in that assessors were not comparing like for like (Gutiérrez-Romero *et al.*, 2008: 775):

“It is likely to be harder for authorities to provide services to a geographically dispersed area. With regards to population size, there may be benefits of having a sizeable population, because [of] the principle of ‘economies of scale’.”

It was argued that rich authorities are able to ‘buy’ better CPA scores (Gutiérrez-Romero *et al.*, 2008). For Northumberland National Park Authority, which is geographically dispersed, with a small population size, and the lowest national park grant, there is every reason to believe that the NPAPA is not based on an even playing field. Despite this unevenness, in constructing a methodology for simple performance judgements, central policy makers created a competitive spirit where similar organisations were modelled together. Rather than challenge the validity of this process, each local authority sought to maximise its CPA judgement compared to other local authorities (Davis, 2011). For the national park family, this spirit was echoed and the overall NPAPA scores between the authorities can be compared, just as local councils were compared with their CPA scores (Davis, 2011: 504):

“Local authorities may have similarities (belong, maybe, to the same “family”), but these are never – cannot and should not – be identities. League tables tend to infer an unwarranted degree of sameness.”

The national park authorities refer to the “family” of national parks (for example, Northumberland National Park Management Plan, 2009: 7). However, as Chapter 5 showed, the proposed judicial review tested the strength of that family, and in the case of Northumberland National Park Authority, it was found wanting. Northumberland National Park was also “atypical” of the national park family (according to the former deputy NPO), and as a consequence of this, the context of the organisation was comparable to David and Goliath, as the former NPO said, “Northumberland National Park Authority certainly punches above its weight.” The sense of needing to stand up against the odds has come about from being a department of NCC, and after that, the smallest authority in the English national park family.

With this comparative disadvantage, the value of league tables is already questionable therefore there must be reasons for constructing them. Leach (2010: 448) spoke of a “political concern” and how assessments have been used “to maximise the chances of future electoral success.” According to Davis (2011: 500-501), this political angle was entirely deliberate, with the threats of “naming and shaming” poorly performing authorities as much a feature as “celebrating success” of the high performing authorities, thus driving the competitive spirit even further still. In all likelihood, it was more than possible that this was one reason that Northumberland National Park Authority scored itself highly in the self-assessment. In addition, there are two other factors that may have affected the comparatively high self-assessment scores.

Firstly, the Authority was facing the largest funding cuts in its history and members of staff were only too aware of the threat of involuntary redundancies. Therefore, common sense would dictate that staff would want to present their own areas of work as worthy of support. Secondly, and as was noted by MacEwen and MacEwen 25 years ago (1987) national park authority staff still do not have comparable salary gradings to equivalent officers at local councils. Given that members of staff are under paid, to then be told that they were performing adequately or poorly could result in dissatisfaction. This could range from a general decrease in morale of those affected, to even opening discussions with union officials to challenge the validity of the self-assessment. In summary, the very process of self-assessment put the Authority in a difficult position, resulting in high scores across the board. In all likelihood, the Authority took a pragmatic view of the self-assessment process, knowing that the real results would be revealed with the subsequent independent assessment, which could always be challenged. The whole self-assessment process is multi-faceted, with implications that go beyond simply measuring performance. In the light of this, its role in the methodology of the NPAPAs should be examined.

Gutiérrez-Romero *et al.* (2008: 771) described the whole CPA process as “based on a narrow methodological format.” This was echoed by Leach (2010) who saw fundamental issues around subjective variables, such as focus, ambitions and future plans. To some extent, the credibility of measuring the effectiveness of partnership working would also be subjective, complicated by assessors looking for a “one-size-fits-all solution” (Laffin, 2008: 121) but also because different stakeholders have different reasons for engaging in partnerships. At the time, local authorities had strong incentives to engage in partnership working because it was an object of inspection under the CPA. Although the voluntary sector

may have the incentive of attracting possible grants, other statutory agencies and the private sector have little incentive to push the partnership working agenda to the same degree. Despite this, local government still witnessed an “explosion of partnerships” during the last 10 to 15 years (Jones and Stewart, 2009: 63) which is still evident today (Fenwick *et al.*, 2012: 406):

“The current Coalition Government in the UK speaks of a ‘Big Society’; inclusive of citizens, civil society and government in co-governance arrangements solving policy problems and delivering public services at a locality level. Partnership conjures up a relationship and a discourse with which it is hard to take issue: it is difficult to be against partnership.”

The legacy of ‘joined up’ working lives on, with local government still taking a “lead role in driving partnership forward” (Fenwick *et al.*, 2012: 408). Even if the CPA was flawed, the progressive intent has been acknowledged (Bovaird, 2008; Revelli, 2010; Davis, 2011; Lawless, 2012). It could be argued that the very process of examination has raised standards and led to some long-lasting changes. Indeed, if the intention of introducing assessments was to destabilise local government, to unlearn old ways and embrace the new ways of working introduced by the New Labour Government (Laffin, 2008: 119), then these objectives were achieved.

The national park authorities are still undertaking their NPAPAs, even though local councils have moved away from CPA/CAA methodologies. We can conclude that assessments have had mixed results. Flaws in the CPA process were replicated with the NPAPA. I would recommend that the usefulness of the NPAPA process be assessed to give a better understanding of its value. One organisation that would be ideally placed to lead with this review is National Parks England (NPE). As a co-ordinating body for all the national parks authorities, NPE already has a sound overview of the assessment process and how different authorities have responded to it. In the meantime, the validity of the statements in the 2010 NPAPA for Northumberland National Park Authority can be challenged, starting with the Northumberland National Park Management Plan Partnership.

7.3 The Northumberland National Park Management Plan Partnership

The Northumberland National Park Management Plan Partnership was established to oversee the implementation of the present Management Plan (2009-2014). To reiterate Chapter 5, it was an area that was praised in the NPAPA assessment.

The Northumberland National Park Management Plan identified 11 key partners committed to helping to deliver the objectives of the Authority. I spoke at length to representatives of a sample of seven of these key partners during 2010/11 to get some general views on working with the Authority after the 2009 Management Plan was published.

The Northumberland County Council (NCC) participant shared mixed views on working with the Authority. On the one-hand, there was empathy for what the organisation has to work with and recognition that they are doing a good job:

“I look at some of the things they have done and I think ‘Bloody hell, they have done well to deliver that for the size of the organisation.’ So I think it punches above its weight. For the size of the staff, it does really well, given the geography that it has to work with. Some national park areas are a lot easier than the national park area in Northumberland. So that must be a pain, organisationally, having the geography to content with. As an organisation, it puts out a good public image.”

The participant also praised the Authority for being “really good at consultation,” with reference to the Action Areas approach and the annual National Park Forum. Despite this, tensions around the bidding for the New LEADER Approach in 2008 saw a breakdown in relations between the two organisations, as was recalled in Chapter 5. These problems were not swept aside with the outcome of LEADER, or with how the NCC participant viewed the Authority as a key partner:

“In terms of how I have worked with the Authority, there have been issues at times in terms of how aggressive they have been in pursuing a particular line, perhaps unilaterally, where they could have done it with others in partnership. That might be for particular good reasons, from the Authority’s viewpoint. ‘Let’s crack on and do it and not wait for everybody to coalesce into some big partnership’. There may be perfectly good reasons to do that, but I think it has rubbed some people up the wrong way, in terms of doing its own thing regardless.”

Interestingly, the NPAPA drew this conclusion as well, that on a small number of occasions, the Authority was too single-minded in its ambitions.

The Natural England participant shared no such reservations, and immediately drew upon the importance of good personal relationships:

“It’s our duty to work with the Authority first. It’s a lot easier if you like someone. I like the chief executive (national park officer); I get on very well with him. I get on very well with the head of operations [we] have a very good relationship, and the head of programmes and conservation. The Authority is very straightforward to deal with. I have other colleagues who find it very difficult with other national park authorities.”

These sentiments were found in the NPAPA self-assessment, where the Authority described its relationship with Natural England as “a strong partnership” (NNPA, 2010: 7). The reasons for this bond could extend beyond personal relationships. Both organisations are relatively young, and both have conservation at the top of their agenda. Yet, as the Natural England participant implied, such similarities on their own do not equate to successful partnership working, as was the case at other national park authorities.

During the course of the research interview with the Environment Agency participant, the individual gave contradictory views on working with the Authority. Initially it was said that the organisation, “Do have a quite a strong appetite for working with others, and are quite keen to try new ideas, open to suggestions, quite action-oriented.” However, by the end of the interview the feedback had subtly changed, with the comment that the Authority would benefit from being “a little bit more flexible, a little bit more nimble, a little less risk adverse.”

One NorthEast was listed as a key partner in the Management Plan (2009-2014). With the closure of the organisation in March 2012, responsibility for the Rural Development Programme for England transferred to Defra. The participant I spoke to had extensive experience at both One NorthEast and Defra. I asked what it was like working with the Authority. The participant said, “I think there is an awful lot of passion and enthusiasm, and wanting to see things through. From personal experience, I think sometimes we perhaps misunderstand things from each other’s perspectives.” I asked what the individual meant by this, and the participant smiled and said, “Yes, money!” The observation was explained:

“I think Northumberland National Park Authority sometimes has unrealistic expectations; yes I do, on occasions. I think that is understandable. It is an organisation that has to deliver its agenda through others, and if they have got a clear idea, a plan and a strategy, and then they have to go cap in hand to One NorthEast or Northumberland County Council, it must be incredibly frustrating. So yes, occasionally there are unrealistic expectations, but I completely understand that.”

There is a fine line of course between “needing to punch above our weight,” as was stated in the NPAPA self-assessment report (NNPA, 2010: 4), and having unrealistic expectations.

Meanwhile Chapter 5 recalled the history of the two Otterburn Public Inquiries, and the implications these had for the way in which the Authority operates today. It was therefore very interesting to listen to the participant from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) on what the relationship was like a decade later. The participant started off by saying, “It was made very clear when I joined seven years ago that Northumberland National Park Authority was our lead partner.” The explanation that followed came across as a standard answer:

“We are a key partner and we are signed-up to the Northumberland National Park Management Plan. We attend key partner meetings, we feed in to strategies, policies, and management planning, and vice-versa. They are very heavily involved in the way we do things here, through our management planning, through using the Authority as a planning authority. So it is only right that the Authority is our key partner and they should be given the recognition and the time that they deserve really. All of our working groups, our conservation group, environmental steering group, all of that has Authority officers or Members on them, represented at those meetings. So the Authority is a big thing.”

Having known the participant through my work at the Authority, and enjoying a harmonious relationship, I was conscious that there was a chance that the participant was telling me what I wanted to hear. So, I probed a bit further, and soon enough, a critical response followed:

“We do get periods when it does get strained. We have got completely different objectives, in terms of our delivery. We are here, and the estate is here, to deliver on military training, and sometimes it is not conducive to the purposes or the duty of the Authority, the special qualities, and so we are bound to get conflict.”

There is a difference between organisations challenging each other in a constructive way, which is arguably very healthy for a partnership, and instances of genuine conflict. Just as the ‘who was there first’ argument was used during the first Otterburn Public Inquiry, so it surfaced again during this interview, “In 1911 the first bit of Otterburn was bought, down at Redesdale, and of course Northumberland National Park was designated in 1956. Sometimes Northumberland National Park Authority thinks that we came along afterwards, but just need reminding every now and again.” Even though the participant said this with a smile, I sensed that there was an opportunity for the participant to make the point.

As the interview progressed, this participant from a 'key partner' organisation of the Authority increasingly grew agitated, almost angry, with how partnership working arrangements had actually broken down over recent years. The semi-structured interview had probed the glossy, almost standard responses, of earlier in the meeting to the extent they no longer held true. The participant spoke of the Authority thus:

"You let them in, you allow them in, you want them to get buy-in, but they want you to do less, don't damage as much, provide more days when they are not firing, and things like that. You've got to then think to yourself, is it a worthwhile partnership? Is it worthwhile giving them, for what they are giving us back? I think that's where you get conflict. My priority at the moment is to get as many Afghanistan-bound troops through the door, trained sustainably, and then out the other end. It's not our job to promote an area for its recreational assets. That's the job of the Authority."

The participant revealed that the fragile relationship went beyond organisational differences.

"Yes, well, certainly to me, with all partnerships there is a trust element. What you are doing by creating a partnership is opening a door to somebody, and you are letting them put a foot in the door, so they can come in and get something from you, and you can let them in and get something from them. When you open up to somebody, and they come in and stab you in the back, then that's a partnership that you've got to be very wary of, and that has happened in the past. It's happened with the Authority, where we've been very open and very visible about things, and they've not provided the support that we wanted. It's a personality thing really."

The use of the word 'personality' to describe dissatisfaction was discussed in Chapter 6. The relationship between the Authority and the MoD has simmered since the Otterburn Public Inquiries, but there are inherent organisational differences and a deep-rooted lack of trust. This will be explored further from the perspective of the Authority in Section 7.6.

The final two actors from key partnership organisations I interviewed were both membership-based, the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) and the National Farmers Union (NFU). The responses from both participants were very brief and matter of fact. The CLA participant said, "I have a pretty good relationship with the Authority," citing infrequent involvement with the Cheviot Futures Partnership, the farming and rural enterprise officers, and the chief executive (national park officer). Meanwhile, the NFU participant was even

further adrift from having an active role in the achievement and objectives of the Management Plan:

“The only communication I have had to-date is through the Development Management Committee. For the last four months, the only communication that I have had are invites to the Development Management Committee, which is very focussed around the specific planning issues and not necessarily anything that sits within the role of the NFU remit. I have not had any contact from the Authority, other than an email communication about Development Management meetings.”

It should be noted that I went to great lengths to ensure that I was speaking to the most appropriate person from the NFU. Therefore we can assume that other NFU employees have had even less contact from the Authority than this. Indeed, the participant even printed-out the emails to show me just how inactive and disengaged the NFU were - a far cry from a so-called ‘key partner’.

In summary, Section 7.3 has challenged the 2010 National Park Authorities Performance Assessment (NPAPA) for Northumberland National Park Authority finding that:

“The Management Plan Partnership, established to oversee the delivery of the Northumberland National Park Management Plan, now provides strong guidance and [a] monitoring role. The partnership has an extremely high level of ownership and connection to Northumberland National Park Management Plan priorities. The Authority’s approach engenders this high level of ownership and encourages partners to go farther than they might otherwise have done” (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 5).

This thesis found limited support for this finding. In terms of delivering the management plan, the participants felt that the Authority: benefits from an effective partnership with Natural England; has a mixed relationship with NCC and the Environment Agency; has an enthusiastic relationship tempered with unrealistic expectations with One NorthEast/Defra; has a fragile and sometimes fractured relationship with the MoD; and has had token involvement from the CLA the NFU. These findings question just how penetrating an analysis the NPAPA process was.

Section 7.4 will consider the views of some of the non-key partners on working in partnership with Northumberland National Park Authority.

7.4 Perspectives of Partnership Working from Non-Key Partners

Aside from the sample of actors from key partners that whose views were discussed in Section 7.3, it will be interesting to assess what the actors from so-called non-key partners felt about working with Northumberland National Park Authority.

The feedback from the third sector was positive. The community development trust participant said that:

“We’ve always had good communication and a good working relationship with the Authority. There are times when there have definitely been joint projects with clear synergy, and there’s been heavy involvement. We’ve always felt there’s been a door we can knock on, or someone to talk to. We would like to see a greater Authority presence here and we believe we can play a role in that and that would be to a wider benefit of our community.”

This feedback went beyond praise from a distance. There was a real sense of enthusiasm that they wanted to work with the Authority in the future. The parish councillor was also supportive, saying that the Authority, “Does a fantastic job with limited resources.” After some explanation to justify this assertion, the participant concluded, “Yes, I would say the Authority is a force for good.” These sentiments were echoed by the LEADER participant, who was conscious of the history of the Authority. The participant said:

“There’s been a bit of a sea-change in attitudes towards the Authority, but we saw that as bonus and a benefit. When we moved into the area, it was perfectly obvious that people, farmers in particular, saw the Authority as a barrier and an obstruction, and stopped them getting on with their job type of thing, interfering.”

The Sustaine participant was also aware that the Authority had actively tried to reduce the negativity around the planning management function:

“I have a great admiration for the Authority. I think they are very effective and they do it all without getting in your face. They are not very officious. The balance they have got with how visible they are on the ground is just about right. They are there to help and give assistance. They come across as an enabler, rather than as a planning authority, and I think that is really important.”

The National Trust participant cited the proposed redevelopment of Once Brewed National Park Centre as an example of the Authority's maturing in its approach to partnership working:

"There have been several attempts to do something with Once Brewed. This time, I think it is the most sensible, and most workable, and it is an exciting concept they have come with. It is also the first time that they have involved more of the partners in it, and I think maybe the former is a result of the latter. This time, we were all brought into a working group to draw up the vision and work with the Authority and the [adjacent] youth hostel on drawing that up. I really do think the concept that they have got now, for integrating the youth hostel and the national park centre together, is creating something unique. We are a willing partner."

However, the relationship between the Authority and the National Trust goes beyond this capital project, as the participant explained:

"You look at the Authority's aims and objectives, and ours, whilst the manner in which in we deliver them may be different, because we are a private charity and they are a government body; actually we are trying to achieve the same thing. I'm not just saying this because of the interview; we've always had that trust, openness, professionalism, and respect. To be as open and honest with each other as you can be, and that's almost where your trust comes from."

Chapter 6 found that two of the fundamental necessities for partnership working were similar objectives and trust, and the National Trust participant was aware of this. Arguably, the National Trust would make for a stronger key partner than some of the organisations that were listed as key partners in the present management plan (NNPA, 2009).

The private estate participant provided more of a mixed response to working with the Authority. The interview started off quite positively:

"We work with the Authority with various different projects that might be advantageous. We're always looking at talking to the Authority. Environmental schemes on the hill ground, which is done between Natural England and the Authority."

The private estate participant also described the relationship with the Authority as "pretty good" and that there was "one man" in the Authority who was receptive to the needs of the

estate (see Chapter 6). However, the private estate participant was not so enthusiastic about the consultation process in preparing the present management plan:

“I didn’t find it particularly easy to contribute to. I think from a practical point of view it didn’t lend itself to participation by practical farmers very easily. But yes, I had loads of conversations with the head of programmes and conservation and the chief executive (national park officer).”

There was a degree of symmetry with the views of the private estate participant and the tourism business participant. On this occasion, the feedback started off negative. One speciality of this particular business was to charge for guided walks:

“As a business, a lot of these organisations compete with what we do, and actually with public money. The Authority is a classic example. Why is the Authority delivering free walks by volunteer rangers? Why is the Authority giving money on a yearly basis to the Haltwhistle Walking Festival, to employ a member of staff to provide administration? The Authority claims a partnership [with us] when there is no partnership there.”

Since this interview took place before I spoke to all of the Authority participants, I asked NNPA participant #2 to respond to this question.

“It’s very easy to defend. Our second statutory purpose is to promote understanding and enjoyment. Not everyone in society starts from the same position, whether they can access what’s available in the national park, either physically or intellectually in the same way, and therefore there are groups who may otherwise be excluded. We, as a national park authority, should try and ensure equality of access, and that’s why we run guided walks.”

Later in the interview, the tourism business participant gave some general positive feedback on the Authority, contradicting the earlier statement that there was an absence of any partnership working arrangements:

“I can’t complain because they have supported our business quite a bit, both economically and in-kind over the years. The Authority is one organisation that I believe we can and have worked in partnership with.”

This was a contradictory interview and I concluded that on several issues the participant was undecided. Nevertheless, the tourism business participant praised the annual National Park

Forum event. These started in 2009 and provide opportunities for the public to influence the direction and priorities of the Authority during the implementation of the management plan. The inaugural meeting was held at Wooler, the following year in Bellingham, and then Rothbury, with Haltwhistle in 2012. The tourism business participant was supportive of what the Authority was trying to achieve in creating an environment where feedback could be received:

“The Authority do reasonably well because they have a yearly meeting when they bring everyone together, the National Park Forum. So you can say the Authority is doing that. I am not aware of any other organisations. I am not aware if Natural England doing that, or Haltwhistle Partnership. I think [there should be] more forums, more open events where people can come along.”

The Campaign for National Parks (CNP) participant also cited the decision to undertake a public forum as a positive way to engage local people. Finally, the tourism business participant said that the Action Area approach of the Authority was an effective way for the Authority to divide its business, since it was responsible for a large geographical area. This point was also picked-up by the National Trust participant:

“Northumberland is the most sparsely populated county in England and invariably it’s always the same individuals that we’re talking to, and if we can do that in a co-ordinated, joined-up way, that makes more use of everybody’s time.”

Taking a view across all the national park authorities, I asked the NPE participant what were the particular strengths of Northumberland National Park Authority:

“In relation to how Northumberland National Park Authority may compare to others, that is always a dangerous thing, I always make the point that one of the great strengths of the family is that we have our diversity. So I think different national park authorities excel in different areas. What I would say, that is quite noticeable, for Northumberland National Park Authority, is the Action Area approach and the link-in with LEADER. Rural development is up there, and I get that sense. I’m not going to do a league table, but I think sustainable development does come through [and] the Authority brings to the family a different dynamic. I would probably say that with every national park authority.”

Although the participant was aware of the complexities of comparing national park authorities (Section 7.2), I sensed that the individual was used to trying to keep all the national park authorities content.

Section 7.4 indicated some non-key partner views of partnership working with the Authority. These findings were indicative, since only a small sample of actors from a cross-section of organisations was spoken to. It was found that the third sector values the work of the Authority, and in the case of the community development trust, actively invited a closer working relationship in future. This is a successful finding for the Authority. The objectives of the National Trust are now more aligned to the national park authorities, not just in Northumberland, but across the country, therefore the National Trust has the potential to become a real key partner. The private estate participant provided some mixed views, but on the whole, had a functional relationship with the Authority. It was difficult to interpret the views of the tourism business participant because of the contradictions between the statements throughout the interview. Nevertheless, there was support for the Action Areas way of working, and the National Park Forum, which were both noted by the national participants at NPE and CNP. In the next section, I will consider the views of the participants interviewed from Northumberland National Park Authority.

7.5 Partnership Working for Northumberland National Park Authority

Chapter 7 has so far detailed the NPAPA process and noted the high self-assessment rating of Northumberland National Park Authority. The external assessment then found that there was a lack of clarity in the way in which some partners were engaged, concluding that the respective roles were not sufficiently defined and subsequently activity was not always forthcoming. Furthermore, a small number of partners said that some Authority staff were sometimes so single minded that they did not sufficiently listen to the needs of others (Solace Enterprises, 2010: 8-9). This latter point was uncovered in Chapter 5, with regards to the bidding process for the New LEADER Approach. The views of partnership working from some present day staff working for the Authority revealed a number of different opinions.

All National Park participants spoke about the austerity measures, the impact of the public sector cuts and how this would affect the organisation going forward. NNPA participant #1 was quite rational:

“It is a big challenge and I think coming through this we’ll probably be more reliant on our partners, rather than less. If you look at it from the partners point of view, they are not immune from this, and to have two or three people sharing a problem, rather than each trying to solve it themselves, is probably a decent philosophical point of view for them to sign up to as well.”

NNPA participant #1 went on to explain that the Authority has already started to “mask the effects” of the public sector cuts on conservation by working with English Heritage on scheduled ancient monuments and Natural England on sites of special scientific interest.

The participant also questioned the validity of the Coalition Government’s plans for a ‘Big Society’.

“I do think the one challenge we will have is the idea that we can just offload a lot of what we are doing on the third sector, or ‘Big Society’, as it’s starting to be called, because I think people can see a pig in a poke. As the President of the United States of America once said, ‘It doesn’t matter how much lipstick you put on, people will still see it as a pig!’”

The ‘pig in a poke’ idiom relates to a confidence trick that dates back to the late Middle Ages, and is based on somebody purchasing a good without properly inspecting its contents first, and thus is unaware of its true value. “Just passing stuff down and expecting that the third sector might pick-up the stuff we’re not doing is going to be very difficult,” reflected NNPA participant #1.

NNPA participant #3 was also aware of the value of the third sector, and the responsibility from the public sector to offer support:

“We have also got the rise of the community development trusts. Some are hanging on because we’ve seen a few go to the wall in recent months. The really good and successful ones, particularly Glendale Gateway Trust, are organisations that we would want to continue to work with. They are likely to be some of our key partners [in the future].”

As stated in Section 7.4, the participant from a community development trust indicated that they would welcome a greater involvement from the Authority, therefore there seems to be a two-way appetite for a greater degree of working in partnership in this instance.

A further area that I was keen to find out about was how the participants from the Authority viewed the state of the present day relationship with the MoD. To reiterate the feedback from

the MoD participant, it started off as very positive, but gave way to issues of trust and a reaffirmation that their priority was training troops, and not access and recreation.

NNPA participant #2 described the relationship as “mixed” and “not as balanced as we would like,” while NNPA participant #3 described them as “one of the more challenging ones.” I sought the reasons why, a decade after the Otterburn Public Inquiries, that the partnership was in this state. NNPA participant #2 acknowledged the legacy from the public inquiries, but then told me how both organisations were able to quickly move on from that damaging time:

“In the mid-to-late 2000’s it was a much more positive time, when we were more focussed on implementing the conditions and undertakings of the Otterburn Public Inquiries. It was framed with much more structure around the relationship. Now that we are almost through that phase, I think it has become shakier again because it doesn’t have real clarity. It should have more clarity, but key documents that help to frame that have not been prioritised, such as the Integrated Rural Management Plan for the Otterburn Training Area. Over a year ago we saw a first draft of it as an Authority, an early draft, and there has been very little progress on it since. That’s a big gap.”

For this sake of clarity, this interview took place in 2011 and the Integrated Rural Management Plan for the OTA was finally published in 2013. However, it still seems unusual to have both this plan and the Northumberland National Park Management Plan. This overlap argument was not lost on the former deputy NPO:

“You’ve got an Integrated Rural Management Plan for MoD and the Northumberland National Park Management Plan. Why have two? It doesn’t make sense.”

Even if the former is concentrated on a specific geographical area in Northumberland National Park, and even if the former is more concerned with managing military training, farming and sites of special scientific interest, surely there was a supposed to be a principle that should have brought these two plans together? The MoD participant said:

“I think the profile of sustainable development has been raised, certainly over the last five years. It is becoming more and more of a term that you hear on a daily basis. It was certainly there when I joined. So people are gradually learning the language and learning what it means and incorporating it, because it’s a good thing to incorporate.”

There are two public sector management plans for the same geographical area, both founded on the principles of sustainable development. A comparison can be drawn with the 2010 Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy (NCC, 2010). The Authority does not have a standalone community strategy for Northumberland National Park. I asked NNPA participant #2 if the Authority was actively delivering the Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy:

“Yes of course we are. We have community enterprise teams working in an integrated way on the ground. Northumberland County Council doesn't have the intensity of the resource we do in Northumberland National Park. So we wouldn't be doing our job if we weren't delivering some of the Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy, if we weren't delivering some of the messages from that up to Northumberland County Council and up to other partners at a regional level.”

Therefore in this sense, the approach came across as a lot more joined-up than the work with the MoD. If organisations are properly engaged in the development of a cross-cutting strategy, then there is no need to invest resources creating in a document that duplicates that work of another.

Notwithstanding whether or not an Integrated Rural Management Plan was necessary, the thesis uncovered some inconsistencies as to how the Authority and the MoD viewed each other. NNPA participant #2 said:

“I tend to say this every time I meet the MoD, and it's not terribly popular, I say 'Look, our aims are fundamentally in conflict. We are there to protect the environment. You are doing things which damage Northumberland National Park'.”

Meanwhile I asked the MoD participant what aspect of sustainable development the organisation was most concerned with:

“I think we probably veer over to the environment. Definitely, that is the key driver. We have got 13 sites of special scientific interest, three special areas of conservation, 70 scheduled ancient monuments. We have got the highest designation of landscape protection over us, with the national park, and that is a major driver for us.”

Aside from arguments about which is the better environmental organisation, the OTA is still a contested landscape. The power struggles are around the MoD ownership of the land on the

one hand, and the Authority ruling how it is managed on the other. To conclude this example, NNPA participant #2 suggested a careful approach to this particular partnership where anything that “puts us on the same agenda” is maximised, for example, protecting the natural and cultural environment. However:

“We should also be very open and say, ‘...but here are the areas of conflict.’ Identifying potential changes, the intensification of use for military training, so that we can look at that. When we look at that we will see there will be things there, which we won’t like, but that we may have to accept it. But seeing them early, having a chance to debate them, having the chance to integrate them with what’s happening in the world, is a much more sustainable approach than having them foist upon us or come-up as an urgent need because the ability to integrate at that stage is severely limited. You’ve got to have your eye on the ball.”

The Second Reading of the National Parks Bill (National Parks Bill, 1949) foresaw problems between the MoD and the proposed national park purposes. Over 60 years later, these issues are still present, indicating that there are irreconcilable differences, and this is despite the legislating of the Sandford Principle in 1995 (see Section 2.4). From my analysis of the requirements of partnership working, I would suggest that the governance arrangements for the OTA are actually uncontrollable, because for the same area of land there is a fundamental difference of priorities between the MoD and the Authority. Several attempts at partnership working have broken down because of this, resulting in distrust and a renewal of the adversarial relationship that epitomised the two Otterburn Public Inquiries over a decade ago. The biggest difference in 2013 though, is that the Authority has had time to start rebuilding its relationship with the local communities. I will return to the implications of this in Section 7.6.

Away from the MoD, the Authority has to work with public sector organisations as well. NNPA participant #2 was keen to emphasise that the ability to influence other partners was the most important strength of the Authority.

“It’s also about us directly influencing others, such as NCC or the Forestry Commission and Natural England to work in ways which we feel are in the interests of Northumberland National Park, delivering our wider sustainable vision. Some of it is about working through organisations that will help us achieve that influence. So Sustaine, for example, the Association of North East Councils, the RSPB and Northumberland Wildlife Trust. These are organisations that have influence on others. They will influence others to adopt sustainable approaches.”

The participant notably grew in confidence as the point was being made, culminating in quite a bold statement:

“The greatest tool in our toolbox as a national park authority is influence, our ability to influence. It’s not the fact that we’re a statutory authority. It’s not the fact that we’re the planning authority for the area. It’s not the fact that we have £3 million budget from government. It’s the fact that we can influence others, is our strongest tool. How we influence others is by joining with them. Implementing things and taking their ideas and giving them the confidence to see it through. Therefore we influence their behaviour in the future. That is really for me why we work in partnership.”

NNPA participant #3 made a similar point, but also spoke of the political angle to help influence others in partnership working:

“We need to use the Authority Members better in terms of how they can influence and improve partnership working. With certainly a lot of partners, whether the local community development trusts or the national agencies, there is inevitably a political element to it and it can be very effective to bring in a political member from our side who can actually talk with the relevant person from the other. We have done it, and we continue to do it on occasions. But we could probably do more of it.”

Despite the perceived success of the Action Areas approach (at least from the perspective of participants’ from Northumberland County Council, the National Trust, the tourism business, and from NPE, as well as the former NPO, who laid the foundations), to my surprise NNPA participant #2 was quite critical of how successful they have actually been in practice:

“I don’t think our Action Area groups were terribly focussed. I don’t think we were terribly clear what we wanted from them and I think there were mixed levels of commitment. And in the end, they were all a bit of a muddle and didn’t really deliver. I think what hasn’t worked so well for me is learning corporately from the Action Areas approach.”

This was the first time in the thesis that I had received negative feedback on the Action Areas. In both the NPAPA self-assessment and the external assessment the approach was generally commended. The self-assessment report stated:

“Action Area working empowers and supports local communities and businesses to deliver national park purposes by building networks, bringing different interests together, providing

expert technical advice, challenging established practices and providing or making links to funding” (NNPA, 2010: 12).

This was quite a confident quote, yet on the same page there is an admission that “Whilst significant progress is being made, the Action Area approach is still developing” (*ibid.*), which came across as a reflective caveat ahead of the external assessment taking place. Furthermore, there is nothing wrong with the admission that there was room for improvement with the Action Areas. The whole approach was a trial to explore a new way of working. Indeed, ‘bottom-up’ rural development is typically messy, and delivery does not always work out as anticipated, therefore the Action Areas should be allowed the time and flexibility to evolve and embed as a way of working.

It is important for the Authority, just as it is for any organisation, to continually refine and improve its services; therefore some honesty about differences between policy and practice is surely a positive admission.

NNPA participant #3 understood that partnership working is a long-term approach.

“It’s all about partnerships. It’s about working proactively in positive way with farmers, with estate managers, with the agencies, and making sure that we actually act as the catalyst in the end to get a good outcome. It is proven to me certainly, that partnership working is the way forward. In the current economic situation the amount of resources we have got, and other partners have got, means that it is more important than ever.”

Section 7.5 started by reflecting on the impacts of the austerity measures. NNPA participant #1 was only too aware that the Authority was financially dependent on its partners to deliver the management plan.

“Well, we are only as strong as our partners, because what the Authority spends in Northumberland National Park is a small fraction of what other partners can spend.”

NNPA participant #3 saw partnership working as a process of continual improvement:

“I think we will continue on that journey. It’s a constant process, we have got to refine it, and we have got to improve on it. It’s definitely the way it’s going. That is broadly, what I would say is, the right approach.”

Of course, as has been established, partnership working is fundamental to the national park authorities. Not wishing to correct NNPA participant #3, it is not really whether working in partnership is the “right approach” or not, more it is the only approach, at present, if the Authority has an ambition to realise the aims and objectives of the management plan.

7.6 Conclusion

If Chapter 6 considered the theory behind partnership working, Chapter 7 was more focussed on the practical side. The timing of the thesis was affected by the national austerity measures. Public sector organisations have already started working together to join their services up and reduce expenditure, with other public sector organisations, the private sector, and the community and voluntary sector. As of 2013, there is no indication how long the austerity measures will last before returning to a period of investment. It is therefore a good time for all organisations to review their own partnership working arrangements.

Chapter 7 has considered local government evaluation, the NPAPA, and the practice of working in partnership in Northumberland National Park. There are two main conclusions that can be drawn.

The first conclusion indicates that that the NPAPA has significant flaws in its methodology. These range from the impact of political motivations in the scores, through the difficulties of self-assessment, to the actual way in which the independent reviews are undertaken. There are not one or two single areas of the NPAPA that can be easily remedied since the problems are more deep-rooted. With the abandonment of the CPA in local government, from which the NPAPA is based, I would suggest that the national park authorities duly follow suit and devise a new and credible system for measuring the performance of these special purpose local authorities. One organisation that could be well placed to lead with this review is NPE, which has had an overview of the 10 English national park authorities and their respective NPAPAs. The review should consider why the assessments are taking place, whether the process of self-assessment and external assessment is effective, and whether the findings are genuinely useful, and to whom. The review should also consider the negative implications of undertaking the NPAPAs in competitive spirit across the national park family and how this can be disadvantageous to some national park authorities when compared to others. The review should determine whether or not the NPAPA is fit for purpose, and if not, what it could be replaced with. Since NPE is intrinsically linked to the national park authorities, NPE should not undertake this review themselves. Instead, with the

support of the national park authorities, they should prepare a tender and commission an independent body to undertake the work.

The second conclusion relates to the Northumberland National Park Management Plan Partnership. With the exception of Natural England, there is misalignment between the policy of the management plan (NNPA, 2009) and the practice of working in partnership. From the participants that I interviewed for this thesis, I found that the Authority: benefited from a good relationship with Natural England; a satisfactory relationship with NCC and the Environment Agency; a sometimes difficult relationship with Defra due to mismatched expectations; a fragile relationship with the MoD; and finally token involvement from the CLA and NFU. To reiterate, all of these organisations are supposed to be key partners, or at least that is how the policy describes them. The Authority should consider how it engages with these organisations and whether they are still as relevant in 2013.

If the Authority decides to recognise in policy the reduced involvement of several of these organisations, then it would also leave space to formally engage with a new range of partners. Since the Authority is committed to the Action Areas approach and its 'bottom-up' way of working, it would make sense to strengthen its partnership working with these organisations. Specifically, these include the community development trusts, the parish councils, and the LEADER local action group. Larger organisations with a similar community-led focus, like the National Trust, also have potential to become a key partner, both for the Authority, and for the wider national park family.

There are several advantages to pursuing this realignment in favour of community-based organisations. With the admission that the Authority needs to review the governance of the Action Areas, it is an opportunity to engage with local organisations about what they would like to see out of this approach. To use the wording of several participants, local people need to 'buy-in' to the Action Areas if the approach is to effectively work in practice. This may include reviewing the all aspects of their operation, for example branding, boundaries, the frequency of public meetings, and the amount of resources that the Authority commits to them.

A key factor in the outcome of the Otterburn Public Inquiries was that local people supported the MoD. The Authority has learned the hard way that ultimately the MoD is a larger, stronger and more influential organisation than the national park authorities. The best way

that it can reinforce its own assertiveness is to continue to convince local people as to the value of Northumberland National Park and Northumberland National Park Authority.

However, there is one other very significant argument as to why the Authority should reiterate its support for the Action Area approach. Since the Authority was established in 1974, it has suffered because of the boundary designated as a compromise in 1956 (Chapter 5). In excluding the four gateway communities of Haltwhistle, Bellingham, Rothbury and Wooler, it left a national park with a comparatively small population. This was compounded by NCC asset stripping the Authority before it became independent, Defra refusing to implement the funding formula, and the ultimately unsuccessful call for judicial review.

The emerging allies of the Authority are its communities, and if the organisation wishes to redress the imbalance of funding, this is perhaps where the solution lies, as will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

“As I say, once your thesis is published, I would keen to follow it up, whether it is with the Head of Programmes and Conservation or someone else, to sit down and explore some of these ideas. We do want to develop our relationship with Northumberland National Park Authority. I think that strategic discussion would be valuable.” Environment Agency participant.

8.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 provides some conclusions to this thesis. In 2009, partnership working was emerging as a key component of the current Northumberland National Park Management Plan. This commitment to co-operation was reiterated across the national park family in the *English National Parks and the Broads UK Government Vision and Circular* (Defra, 2010: 25):

“Co-ordination between public agencies, not-for-profit and voluntary organisations and the private sector is essential to planning towards and achieving national park purposes and helping the public to enjoy the national parks. More formal partnerships and strategic alliances can also provide a way of achieving aims for the national parks and improvements in service delivery by the national park authorities. But effective partnerships need to focus; their purpose and benefits in achieving objectives for the national park must be clear. The national park authorities should produce an action plan with associated monitoring and review, and governance needs to be transparent; providing leadership, managing risk, building trust, reviewing representation, establishing exit strategies and clarifying relationships with other partnerships.”

Chapter 3 critically noted the ‘top-down’ commendation of partnership working in the 1990s (Peck and Tickell, 1994; Jones Little, 2000), without any guidance as to how success can be achieved. From the evidence in the *English National Parks and the Broads UK Government Vision and Circular*, little has changed. Working in partnership is still seen as “essential,” however the language is still about what “should” be done rather than about how to do it. At least in 2010 there was an awareness of some of the complexities of partnership working that have been covered in this thesis, with the notable exceptions of shared priorities and actor interactions. Elsewhere in the same document, what I termed as ‘pooling resources’ can be understood as “Work in partnership to maximise benefits and minimise costs” (Defra, 2010: 24), perhaps in recognition of the impending austerity measures.

This thesis challenges Defra's suggestion that the national park authorities should produce an action plan to formalise partnership-working arrangements. It was found that partnerships are dynamic environments; therefore it would go against the grain to introduce too much structure to these arrangements. Northumberland National Park Authority prepared a strategic partnership engagement plan in 2008, which was updated but never published over the following five years, and as of 2013 is still unpublished. Yet actors across the organisation continue to work in partnership, bringing into question whether the document is needed at all. However, what was more successful was the Authority undertaking an internal workshop on partnership working, prompting staff and Authority Members to start thinking about how the Authority is positioning itself in relation to its partners. This could be a useful tool in protected area management. For example, this thesis has shown that working in partnership is a multi-lateral process, therefore protected area managers should think about what they can offer partners in return. Beyond this, this thesis has understood that there are two themes discussed in the literature on working in partnership (governance and behaviour), and six different areas within those (appointing actors and defining roles, shared priorities and pooling resources, the governing document and evaluations, leadership, actor interactions, and personal factors). Protected area managers can openly discuss how these factors interact with their own staff and their own partners, to refine and improve their collective approaches to working in partnership.

The participant from Northumberland County Council used to be a partnership officer in a previous role for a different organisation. The individual observed that over the years there had been more instances of poor partnership working than best practice (Section 6.5). Therefore if partnerships are "essential to planning towards and achieving national park purposes" (Defra, 2010: 25) then it is critically important that the protected area managers fully understand the partnership processes at work, so that the policy and practice are aligned. This knowledge should not be taken for granted.

8.2 How has the Protected Area Management of Northumberland National Park Evolved since the 1972 Local Government Act?

In seeking to understand partnership working in a protected area, it is important to appreciate the background of the principal management body, Northumberland National Park Authority, including its policies, activities and aspirations. Chapter 2 laid the foundations to address this question, detailing the history of the national park movement in England and several of the milestones that shaped where the national park authorities are today.

It was demonstrated that there were significant differences between the UK national parks, in terms of their geographical area, their resident population, the number of scheduled ancient monuments and conservation areas, and in recreation and tourism visitor numbers and spend. Despite these differences, all the national park authorities embraced the sustainable development agenda as the guiding principle for managing these IUCN Category V protected areas. Ron Edwards' 1991 *Fit for the Future* report brought about sweeping changes to the way that national parks were managed. The 1995 Environment Act created freestanding national park authorities for all the national parks and introduced a socio-economic duty, to be used in the pursuit of the two purposes. The national foot-and-mouth crisis in 2001 was an early test for the national park authorities, from which they asserted themselves as important organisations in the British countryside (Thompson, 2003). The 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act saw the creation of Natural England and the English National Park Authorities Association (later renamed National Parks England), who would go on to help co-ordinate the update the 1996 Circular (Department of the Environment, 1996) with the *English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular* (Defra, 2010), which reiterated the importance of working in partnership. Chapter 2 also considered several international case studies of protected area management, concluding that those IUCN Category V protected areas that have shown the most success are those that have been accepted and welcomed by local people.

Chapter 5 specifically examined the history and evolution of Northumberland National Park, designated in 1956, and Northumberland National Park Authority, created in 1974. It was found that the boundary of the national park was one of compromise, creating an atypical protected area in the UK national park family, in terms of joining together the Cheviot Hills to the Hadrian's Wall area, and its comparatively small resident population. The national parks and countryside department of Northumberland County Council went through a period of growth during the 1970s and 1980s, culminating in submitting evidence to the *Fit for the Future* report, which supported the separation of Northumberland National Park Authority from its parent body, against the wishes of NCC. The protracted period between this recommendation of 1991 and actual creation of the freestanding national park authorities in 1997 allowed NCC to set about asset stripping the Authority prior to the separation. This set an artificially low baseline figure from which the Authority would receive its National Park Grant in future years. Attempts to challenge this through requesting the use of Defra's new funding formula in 2004 proved unsuccessful, as did the legal challenge of a judicial review in 2011.

Meanwhile, from 1991 to 2001, the Authority resisted the attempts of the Ministry of Defence to instigate a major development at the Otterburn Training Area. The long and drawn-out battle was ultimately won by the MoD. The dispute gave way to the realisation that the Authority did not have the support of the local people. A period of constructive co-operation between the Authority and the MoD followed as the conditions and undertakings were implemented, concluding in 2012. The power struggle between this estate (owned by the MoD) and the Authority renewed even before the conditions and undertakings expired, with the creation of an Integrated Rural Management Plan to sit alongside the Northumberland National Park Management Plan. It can be concluded that there are irreconcilable differences between the purposes of the national parks and that of defence training. This makes it all the more important to understand the process behind partnership working when there are two organisations that have potentially conflicting objectives. Personal factors can become of paramount importance in these instances.

Following the turn of the 21st Century, Northumberland National Park Authority was one of the national park authorities that most embraced the sustainable development agenda, partly because of the damaging reputational outcome of the two Otterburn Public Inquiries, but also because the former NPO and the chair had seen an alternative, 'bottom-up' way of working whilst attending a EuroParc conference in 2000. The Authority devised four Action Areas to enable localised community development across and beyond the national park, to incorporate its gateway communities. This new approach started to reverse the 'top-down' style upon which Northumberland National Park was designated in 1956, to a new way of working, which also allowed the Authority to allocate grants from its sustainable development fund, and subsequently to successfully bid to host the Northumberland Uplands New LEADER Approach (2008-2013), albeit in co-operation with Northumberland County Council. The present 2009 Northumberland National Park Management Plan reiterated its support for the Action Areas, which was acknowledged both in the 2010 NPAPA for Northumberland National Park Authority and by several participants. However, both the NPAPA self-assessment and NNPA participant #2 stated that there was room for improvement in the Action Areas approach, particularly in the governance arrangements. This will be considered further in Section 8.5.

The Authority's relationship with Northumberland County Council has matured in recent years, following the events of the 1990s, and the competition to lead with the New LEADER Approach in 2007/08. This is likely to be due to a number of reasons. First and foremost, as the former NPO said, the "institutional memory" has gone. Few staff who were directly

involved in the separation of the two organisations are still in post in 2013. Secondly, both organisations are dealing with the preoccupying austerity measures, and for NCC, this is in addition to trying to establish itself as the new Unitary Authority for Northumberland since 2009. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the organisations have a similar vision. Against the difficult background of public sector cuts, they are working together to deliver sustainable development, whether through Neighbourhood Planning²⁶, collectively campaigning for rural broadband through iNorthumberland²⁷, supporting the bid for the Rural Growth Network²⁸, and subsequently establishing the Rural Growth Fund²⁹, and as NNPA participant #2 pointed out, co-operating on the delivery of the Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy (NCC, 2010), and the Northumberland Economic Strategy (NCC, 2010), as well as Northumberland National Park's Management Plan (NNPA, 2009). The relationship between the Authority and Northumberland County Council has the potential to grow and further develop in the future.

8.3 What are the Processes of Rural Partnership Working?

Working in partnership is an important management tool across the IUCN protected areas. This form of governance is especially relevant in Category V protected areas because they are already human-influenced, and each has a range of stakeholders interested in their management. Therefore there are wider conclusions that can be drawn from this thesis that can be applied to Category V protected areas.

Working in protected area management differs from other industries in a few subtle ways. Examples of this are the geographical scale, the aim of sustainable development, and the amount of public interest. In Europe and beyond, the size of the protected areas means that many different organisations are stakeholders in their management. Furthermore, the sustainable development agenda is increasingly underpinning the work of the management bodies as a constructive way forward, and in the UK, it has been particularly accepted as crucial to the work of the national park authorities.

²⁶ Neighbourhood Planning. NNPA. [Online]. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source:

<http://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/livingin/planning/neighbourhoodplan>

²⁷ New multi-million pound partnership will boost Northumberland broadband. iNorthumberland. [Online]. Last updated: 17th April 2013. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source:

<http://www.inorthumberland.org.uk/new-multi-million-pound-partnership-will-boost-northumberland-broadband/949>

²⁸ Rural Growth Network. NCC. [Online]. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=15361>

²⁹ £1 million fund to support micro-businesses in rural North East. NCC. [Online]. Last updated: 29th January 2013. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=6270&article=2423>

It has been over 25 years since the World Commission on Environment and Development published *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987: 37) and defined sustainable development as:

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

I asked participants what they understood by sustainable development today and how it was practiced. The participants collectively revealed a good knowledge of simultaneous social, economic and environmental considerations and a pragmatic approach to working towards this long-term goal. It was noted that this was in contrast to the academic community, which has significantly debated what sustainable development means (Elliot, 2013).

After thinking about what sustainable development means, participants then considered the two collage maps that I designed for this thesis (Chapter 4). Whilst the use of these visual tools was not essential to the research, the maps did serve to reinvigorate the interviewees and focus the discussions on partnership working. The overall impressions were that the participants were astounded with the design, yet it also reminded them about just how many different stakeholders there are in Northumberland National Park.

Chapter 3 set-about rationalising the literature on rural partnership working to extract some key themes. These were firstly classed as a more controllable area of working in partnership, called governance, which incorporated appointing actors and defining roles, shared priorities and pooling resources, and the governing document and evaluations. The second key theme was classed as a more uncontrollable area of working in partnership, called behaviour, which incorporated leadership, actor interactions, and personal factors. Even within these six simple categories, there is a significant degree of overlap and in practice such a structure does not exist. The literature review revealed a large emphasis on appointing actors and defining roles, and the importance of shared priorities and pooling resources. This was in comparison to the governing document and evaluations, and actor interactions, which both received comparatively little attention. Only half of the articles discussed personal factors, and just over half considered the importance of leadership on any given rural partnership.

The participants collectively showed a greater degree of awareness of the six areas of working in partnership than was found in the literature review, and discussed examples from their own experience. The participants appreciated the need for shared priorities as a starting point, and how organisations can work together to pool resources. There was an

appreciation of the governing document, with the caveat that at the same time it should not be so complicated that it would hold up the work of the partnership. The participants realised the importance of leadership through the chair, how space can be created for actor interactions, and most of all, how personal factors affected the success or otherwise of any given partnership.

It can therefore be concluded that following the growth of partnership working over the last 15 years the awareness of the importance of personal factors has increased. However, personal factors are still uncontrollable and it is difficult for the social scientist to measure exactly what role they perform. Although three attempts to create a checklist for partnership working were considered (Edwards *et al.*, 2000; Balloch and Taylor, 2001; Laing *et al.*, 2008), this thesis has shown that working in partnership is not a tick box exercise and that each partnership is as unique as the actors that are part of it. It was found that even though partnership working is supposed to be between individual organisations, in practice partnerships rely on the ability of actors to co-operate and demonstrate appropriate behaviours, such as trust, honesty, respect, patience, and negotiation skills.

The participants also discussed one area of partnership working that was outside of the scope of the framework that arose from the literature review. This was the importance of organisational reputations, particularly in the public sector. This means that new partnerships do not always start with a clean slate, so to speak, because actors will carry memories with them from previous experiences of working with any given organisation. This can have both negative and positive implications, depending on the track record of the organisation in question. Public sector organisations should also be aware that in the eyes of others, their actors could represent more than just their own organisation, but the entire public sector. This representation spans across many government departments. In the case of rural England, it includes the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with its various agencies and delivery partners (including, the national park authorities, Natural England, the Forestry Commission, and the Environment Agency).

8.4 How is Partnership Working Practised in Northumberland National Park?

Chapter 7 brought the thesis up-to-date with a consideration of working in partnership whether with or for the Authority. The chapter started with an examination of local government literature on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, from which the National Park Authorities Performance Assessment is based. It was found that there were several flaws in the CPA process, and even though other areas of local government have

moved away from the CPA methodology, the national park authorities are still pursuing NPAPAs. The issues with the NPAPA process included the difficult task of self-assessment, a lack of clarity over the use of the document (whether it is a political tool or the basis for continual organisational improvement), and the way in which it fosters a competitive spirit, even though organisations in the national park family are far from comparable. The validity of the conclusions of the 2010 NPAPA for Northumberland National Park Authority can be brought into question. It is therefore recommended that the national parks authorities, perhaps through NPE, should review the NPAPA process and re-establish the role that it has.

Feedback from the key partners of the Authority on what it was like working in partnership with them was also considered in Chapter 7. Seven of the eleven key partners from the 2009 Northumberland National Park Management Plan were interviewed for this thesis.³⁰ From this sample, it was found that there was good level of support from Natural England, a satisfactory level of support from NCC and the Environment Agency, a sometimes difficult relationship with Defra, a fragile relationship with the MoD, and token involvement from the CLA and NFU. It was concluded the Authority should continue to work on these relationships, yet also reconsider whether or not certain organisations will be key partners in the next management plan, which will be published in 2015.

It was also found that a selection of non-key partners has a good level of support for the Authority. These were the National Trust, and the participants from a community development trust, a parish council, and a LEADER local action group. The 2009 Northumberland National Park Management Plan did emphasise the importance of these organisations, and in particular the role of the local communities in the Action Areas approach. What was missing was the recognition of these bodies as 'key partners' therefore there was slight disparity between the policies and the practices.

The four participants from Northumberland National Park Authority were asked about their views of partnership working for the principal management body. All of the respondents spoke about the impact of the austerity measures, and that the Authority was ill equipped to deal with a reduction in its National Park Grant. At the same time, there was an awareness that community and voluntary groups could not feasibly be expected to accept responsibilities for duties that the national park authorities, and indeed local government,

³⁰ The 2009 Northumberland National Park Management Plan refers to One NorthEast as a key partner. This regional development agency closed in March 2012, with rural responsibilities passing to Defra.

could no longer support. The participants said it was important to work with local communities, and reiterated their support for the community development trusts.

With a long history of an insufficient National Park Grant, it was found that partnership working has long been established as a management tool at Northumberland National Park Authority. The participants spoke of using their influence to work with partners, whether utilising the natural and cultural environment as stimulus, the so-called 'special qualities' that the second national park purpose refers to, or increasingly utilising Authority Members to help to garner political support, in instances where officers are unable to operate. There was recognition from the participants that partnership working helps to bring funding and other resources into Northumberland National Park, enabling the Authority to achieve its purposes and deliver its duty.

Since the Authority became freestanding in 1997, it has had to demonstrate leadership in the management of Northumberland National Park, achieved through partnership working. The organisation does not have the funding or the staff to fulfil its objectives; therefore it is entirely dependent on the support of other organisations, from 'top-down' organisations like Defra, right through to 'bottom-up' organisations like the community development trusts. Even though the Authority needs to be able to work at all levels, the realities of partnership working uncovered in this thesis remain the same.

8.5 A Roadmap for the Action Areas

The three research questions focussed the thesis into distinct directions of study. It is important to consider how the key findings of this thesis interact in the protected area management of Northumberland National Park. Chapter 5 detailed the background to the case study area, describing the history of Northumberland National Park. It was concluded that the Authority is continuing to work towards a 'bottom-up' delivery of its services through the Action Areas, and that working in partnership is of fundamental importance in order to deliver the management plan. Chapter 6 explored the key factors of working in partnership. It was concluded that although partnership working can be understood across six different factors, the personal relationships between actors largely help to determine whether or not it is ultimately going to be a success. Chapter 7 assessed the present state of partnership working in Northumberland National Park, both with and for the Authority. It was concluded that some of the key partners of the 2009 Northumberland National Park Management were not as actively involved as would be expected during the implementation phase. It was also

found that local community organisations indicated that they support the work of the Authority, signalling a turn-around from the time of the Otterburn Public Inquiries.

Having assessed the implications of this thesis and some of the issues that were discussed by participants during the interviews, a recommendation for the Authority is to refresh its Action Areas approach, as was also noted by the NPAPA assessment and NNPA participant #2. This will require a significant degree of working in partnership, bringing into the forefront the range of factors discussed in Chapters 3 and 6.

As an employee of the Authority, I believe that my colleagues (which include employees and Authority Members) do understand that they can best perform their roles if they work beyond the boundary of Northumberland National Park. What is less clear is the direction that the organisation is heading towards with Action Areas. Indeed, colleagues who joined the Authority during the last decade are also unlikely to be aware why the Action Areas were established.

This thesis identifies a series of seemingly interlinked events and factors that collectively shaped the Action Areas approach:

- The contrasting landscape character of Northumberland National Park;
- The ongoing and insufficient National Park Grant;
- The historical lack of moral and financial support from Northumberland County Council;
- The realisation through the Otterburn Public Inquiries that the support of local people is a powerful political argument;
- The learning from the 2000 EuroParc conference that the 'bottom-up' approach is an effective way to realise protected area management;
- The policy introduction of the Action Areas in the 2003 Northumberland National Park Management Plan;
- The decision by Defra not to use the funding formula at Northumberland National Park in 2005;
- The reiteration of support for the Action Areas in the 2009 Northumberland National Park Management Plan;
- The acknowledgement of the worth of the Action Areas both in the 2010 NPAPA for Northumberland National Park Authority and from the participants in this thesis; and

- The lack of moral support from the other national park authorities when the Authority legally challenged its reduced National Park Grant through a judicial review.

It can be concluded that for many years the Authority has felt that it has received an insufficient National Park Grant, yet attempts to resolve this directly with Defra proved unsuccessful, much to the frustration of the Authority. It is therefore a recommendation that the Authority creates a roadmap for the Action Areas, with an explicit final destination that staff, partners, and the local communities understand.

First of all, in reviewing that past decade of Action Area working and reconsidering the governance arrangements, the Authority should engage with the local communities to ask them about their experiences of living and working in their own Action Area. The local awareness of the Action Areas should be assessed, and most importantly, the governance arrangements for all four locations must be harmonised. All Action Areas should receive the same resources and support from the Authority, with regularity to the frequency and style of community meetings. The local people that live in the Action Areas should be empowered to make decisions as to how their proportion of funding is allocated. When the Action Areas were established, the local communities were given decision-making powers for their respective £25,000 allocation. The empowerment was soon removed by bringing the decision-making back in-house. This thesis has found that funding is important in partnership working therefore the Authority should reconsider the decision-making processes for the Action Areas. Ideally, the Authority should accept an element of risk and constructively utilise the funding to help enthuse local people about the Northumberland National Park and the Action Areas, and continue to build a sense of confidence and trust with the local people.

Secondly, the next management plan (due to be published in 2015) should elevate the importance and role of the 'bottom-up' way of working, so that organisations like the community development trusts, the parish councils and the LEADER local action group are considered as key partners in the future. This will help to reinforce the Action Areas approach that the Authority is committed to working for them, with the long-term goal of sustainable development. The Authority should continue to work with the existing key partners where possible.

Thirdly, the Authority should refine its existing long-term vision, which encapsulates sustainable development:

“Northumberland National Park will be a truly welcoming and distinctive place, easily accessible to all. It’s inspiring and changing landscapes, characterised by open spaces, tranquillity, diverse habitats, geology and rich cultural heritage, will be widely recognised and valued. The living, working landscape will contribute positively to the well-being of the thriving and vibrant communities in and around the national park” (NNPA, 2009: 17).

For the purposes of the roadmap for the Action Areas, the wording of the vision should be focussed on a medium term objective and use terminology like:

‘...so that by 2026, the local people of the four gateway communities feel as much part of Northumberland National Park as the existing residents.’

The future direction of the Authority should be explained in the next management plan, and the existing partners, including Northumberland County Council, the Ministry of Defence, and Defra should be engaged in the formulation of that direction, so that they understand what the final destination looks like.

The Authority should oversee a debate on the possibility of extending the official boundary to that of the Action Areas, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of national park designation. When there is a sense that local people would support this move, the Authority should arrange a referendum on the boundary of Northumberland National Park. For example, without wishing to be too prescriptive, this could take place in 2026 or 2031, which would respectively mark the 70th or 75th anniversaries of Northumberland National Park.

If, local people decide that they would like to extend the Northumberland National Park boundary, then the Authority should look to invoke a boundary review with the Boundary Commission. In due course, the resident population would increase to become slightly greater than the truncated mean population of the other national parks, and thereby comparable with the rest of the national park family. This will also increase the number of planning applications and the amount of visitors and tourism industry spend per year. With prior notification of this boundary change, Defra would have had time to prepare for an increase in the National Park Grant. If these series of events are realised, it will lay the foundations for the long term and sustainable future for Northumberland National Park and the Authority.

However, the significant risk is that local people may decide not to extend the Northumberland National Park boundary. In this instance, the Authority should listen to the

reasons why this decision was reached, refine its approach accordingly, and re-establish its vision to a later date. Local people should not be deserted if they decide not to become part of Northumberland National Park. In time, the following generation of local people may favour a larger national park.

Boundary reviews are common practice in protected areas. Negotiations were extensive on the proposed New Forest and South Downs National Parks, and in 2013, a public inquiry took place on the proposed extensions of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.³¹ However, in this case, five councils lodged objections to the plans and over 3,000 responses were received, whether in support or opposed.³² Although it remains to be seen how these proposals will be realised, Northumberland National Park Authority has time to thoroughly plan its own approach alongside NCC and the local communities.

8.6 Recommendations for Northumberland National Park Authority

There are five distinct recommendations that have arisen from this thesis.

- Embrace Partnership Working

Northumberland National Park Authority is actively involved in many existing partnerships at all levels across the organisation. This new way of working has become fundamental in order to undertake many staff roles, yet there has been little recognition of the skills required to work in partnership. Until this thesis, there were few attempts to understand how partnerships operate, and crucially, no narrative on why partnerships are necessary for the realisation of the national park purposes and duty. The Authority is advised to undertake regular workshops with staff and Authority Members to discuss and share experiences of working in partnership. However, attempts to detail the partnership arrangements in a written plan should be avoided because of the dynamic nature in which partnerships operate. This thesis has shown that behavioural characteristics are important in partnership working, therefore an increased awareness of this area in particular would be beneficial.

- Respect, Remember and Learn from the Past

An oft-cited quotation, attributed to the Spanish-born American philosopher, George Santayana (1863-1952) is, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat

³¹ Lakes to Dales Landscape Designation Project. Natural England. [Online]. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/new/northwestdesignationproject/default.aspx

³² June Inquiry for Lake District National Park Proposals. Cumberland News. [Online]. Last retrieved: 1st July 2013. Source: www.cumberlandnews.co.uk/news/june-inquiry-for-lake-district-national-park-boundary-proposals-1.1049398?referrerPath=news

it” (Santayana, 1905: 284). Northumberland National Park has a fascinating and insightful history that should be celebrated and recorded for the benefit of generations to come. If there is a political resistance to revisit past difficult relationships, perhaps due to a fear that old wounds would get reopened, then it should be explained that it is only by understanding where relationships have broken down in the past that the building blocks for the future can be re-established. Indeed, it is potentially a greater risk in not appreciating the past because it could increase the chances of difficulties occurring again. This thesis has shown that reputations do matter. Therefore existing and new members of staff and Authority Members should always be briefed on the history of Northumberland National Park as part of the induction process. Furthermore, other stakeholders in Northumberland National Park should also be encouraged to learn about and appreciate the history of this protected area, before they engage in partnership working.

- Strengthen the Management Plan Partnership

The Management Plan Partnership was rightly commended in the 2010 National Park Authority Performance Assessment for Northumberland National Park. The reasoning and approach were found to be sound and it was considered to be a suitable governance mechanism to oversee the delivery of the management plan. However, this thesis found that some of the key partners of 2009 were disengaged with both the delivery of the management plan and from the Authority itself. This was compounded by the 2010 austerity measures arising from the spending review, which resulted in many organisations scaling back their partnership ambitions. As a consequence of this, the Authority was left with a list of key partners in 2009 that were not actively involved in the subsequent years. It is recommended that the Authority critically appraise its current key partners, ahead of the publication of the next management plan. Furthermore, the Authority should consider elevating the potential role of ‘bottom-up’ organisations, such as the community development trusts, the parish councils, and the LEADER local action group, since they have demonstrated a willingness and commitment to assist with the delivery of the national park purposes and duty. Since partnership working is a multi-lateral process, the Authority should consider what it could offer other partners in return for their assistance in its own operation.

- A Strategic Approach to the Action Areas

Section 8.5 detailed a roadmap for the Action Areas and explained why it is an opportune time to consider whether they are a means to an end, or an end in itself. The Authority is recommended to discuss this topic with staff, Authority Members, relevant partners and those living in these gateway communities, to assess what the future direction is for this

unofficial boundary expansion to Northumberland National Park. It is possible that the Action Areas may have the potential to become part of the protected area. Alternatively, the Authority could continue utilising them as it is now, however this is with the on-going (and likely to be reduced in future years) budget restrictions. However, if it was decided to completely revert back to solely working within the existing and official national park boundary, then it may effectively result in a return to the management practices of the 20th Century.

- Assess the NPAPA

This thesis has uncovered some indicative inconsistencies with the National Park Authorities Performance Assessment. It is therefore recommended that Northumberland National Park Authority requests that an independent organisation reviews how the NPAPA operates and makes suggestions for improvements. With other areas of local government ceasing the equivalent comprehensive performance assessments, it is an opportune time to question the effectiveness of the NPAPA. Furthermore, there should be a consideration as to why the assessments are undertaken and what they are really used for.

8.7 Limitations of the Present Study

There are several limitations to this thesis that I attempted to manage throughout. First of all, as an employee of the organisation that I was studying, I needed reflexivity to try look at the thesis as objectively as I could, from the perspective of an academic. In practice, this was not particularly easy to achieve, not because I was positively biased towards Northumberland National Park Authority, but quite the contrary; I found myself becoming quite critical of this relatively small organisation. Yet, it would be unfair to criticise the Authority on some aspects of its approach given the turmoil from which it was founded, and indeed, is still dealing with in 2013. The limitation was that a completely independent person did not undertake the research; therefore I had to always be aware of how I viewed and interpreted any given matter.

Secondly, like any Ph.D. thesis, there were time constraints to undertaking the research. This meant that I could only feasibly interview a sample of actors from a range of organisations. Obviously with more time, I could have expanded the number of interviews further than the 23 that I undertook, which would have offered greater insight for analysis. This could have taken the form of interviewing a greater number of actors from specific partners that I was not able to interview in the first instance. Alternatively, with more time I

could have interviewed a cross-section of actors from the same organisation, whether individually, or through focus groups.

Thirdly, as was discussed in Chapter 4, the choice of the semi-structured interview for my methodology came with known advantages and disadvantages. This manifested itself in the time it took to interview the participants and then to subsequently transcribe each of the interviews. However the methodology was entirely appropriate for the scope of this thesis since the interviews had a level of depth necessary for my investigation.

Fourthly, and just like working in partnership, the nature of the thesis is not static either. Since my interviews of 2010/11, numerous participants have left their respective organisations or changed their roles therein. This really emphasised that the thesis was a snapshot in time. In addition, the time of the research, as noted in the introduction, was a factor that was discussed. The global recession, the change of government, the austerity measures, and the closure of the regional development agencies were all very topical. Yet none of these seemingly significant events really affected my findings on working in partnership. No matter what the state of the world is, the same overlapping and interlinking factors necessary for success in protected areas will still apply. So, for example, even if the world is a dynamic place, and people move on, and policies change, local people will still offer valuable experiential knowledge, and likewise, local businesses will still seek a return on their time investment sooner rather than later.

The fifth and final limitation of the thesis is that some of the findings are unique to Northumberland National Park and Northumberland National Park Authority. This was to be expected, since this was the case study area. If a similar project was undertaken at a different protected area, then no doubt there would be some place specific findings there as well.

8.8 Opportunities for Future Research

Some of the limitations of the current study can also be viewed as opportunities for future research. Firstly, the literature that questioned the extent to which an actor can represent the views of others was intriguing (Derkzen and Bock, 2009). For this thesis, I interviewed one tourism business participant; however, to what extent can that individual possibly represent a whole industry? To what extent can the single participant from Northumberland County Council represent the views of around 5,000 employees? An opportunity for future research would be to devise a project that considers either a cross section of micro-organisations from

the same sector or a cross-section of employees from a single organisation involved in partnerships. It could be concluded after the analysis that the more people with the same or similar views then collectively they could represent, or at least better represent, the voices of the many.

Secondly, since the thesis was focussed on one case study area only, an opportunity for future research could be to investigate partnership-working arrangements at a different protected area. It would also be interesting to see how the findings from this thesis would compare in a different location.

Thirdly, the thesis has concluded that Northumberland National Park Authority should develop a roadmap for the Action Areas to consider how they can be utilised in future years to benefit both the place and the management body. If this route is taken, then there would be numerous opportunities to look at the integration of the gateway communities with the national park, such as how they perceive the protected area and what they think should take place in the future. Future research could also suggest a new boundary for Northumberland National Park, taking into account local settlements, sites of special scientific interest, scheduled ancient monuments, etc. In time, it might even warrant investigation to look at designating the Northumberland Coast AONB as part of Northumberland National Park, and even extending the existing boundary across to the Scottish side of the Cheviot Hills. However, both of these long-term suggestions should not distract from the focus on the Action Areas at present.

Fourthly, the thesis found numerous issues with the NPAPA process, and recommended that it be reviewed, with the suggestion that NPE could help to co-ordinate this process. However, since NPE would commission the work, but not undertake it, then there is an opportunity for either an academic institution or a consultancy to scrutinise the relative strengths and weaknesses of the NPAPA process and if necessary, make recommendations for how the national park authorities are assessed in future.

Fifthly, and finally, this thesis has shown that there are many factors to working in partnership. What was not ascertained was if those factors could be ranked in order of importance. For instance, could it be the case that shared priorities and personal factors are the single most important areas of partnership working (as suggested by NNPA participant #3)? Or are the governing document and the type of leadership exerted equally or more

important? It is not for me to make this conclusion, even though I suspect that if working in partnership is to be successful, all the pieces of the jigsaw must come together in the end.

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Appendix 1: Defra Consultation on Sustainable Development in National Parks Cancelled

Confidential - Defra consultation on sustainable development in National Parks cancelled - Message (HTML)

Sent: Tue 29/05/2012 11:12

From: Amanda Brace [amanda.brace@enpaa.org.uk]
 Michael Graham; Dan James; Isobel Hall; self@broads-authority.gov.uk; Godley Richard; Claire Gingell; rdrysdale@darlmoor-npa.gov.uk; clive.widdham@southdowns.gov.uk; neil.statter@southdowns.gov.uk; Andy Brennan; Allison.Tingley@southdowns.gov.uk; peter.stockton@yorkshiredales.org.uk; Richard Austin; David Tilsley; Stephen Ratcliffe; Tim Stokes; Tony Gates

To:

CC: Confidential - Defra consultation on sustainable development in National Parks cancelled

Subject: Dear SDF officers and SD sounding board

Defra officials have advised that the planned consultation on the delivery of sustainable development in National Parks has been shelved. It will be removed from the Defra business plan when the update of that document is published at the 31st May (so this news is confidential until then). Defra officials are informing all key stakeholders of their decision this week. This includes CLA and NFU at national level – local reps may not know until after the official publication. I have just e-mailed all the Chairs and Chief Execs to advise and please tell any other staff colleagues who may be involved in this area of work but not external contacts for now – thanks.

Defra's reason for cancelling the consultation is as follows:

The Government has decided not to consult on the sustainable development role of National Park Authorities. We do not consider that there is a problem with how National Park Authorities currently deliver sustainable development. We feel the existing socio-economic duty on NPAs and existing guidance as well as the new provisions under the NPPF makes it clear how NPAs should deliver sustainable development. Sustainable development is already at the heart of their decision making.

Although the consultation is not going ahead, the work we have done to prepare for it has not been wasted and may have influenced Defra's decision. The seminar and case study publication last December demonstrated clearly how sustainable development underpins the work of NPAs and how well NPAs deliver sustainable development currently. Having the key players in the room together at that time was very useful. For those who were not at the seminar details of presentations and the case studies are on the ENPAA website at http://www.enpaa.org.uk/enpaa/whatsnew/sustainable_development_seminar.htm

Also, the list we have developed of non-legislative changes that could assist NPAs to enhance their delivery of sustainable development is with Defra and they are considering what can be done on those. The key ask is about greater involvement for NPAs of delivery of RDPE so we hope to see some movement there.

On a linked topic, we are about to publish on the ENPAA website today the 2012 update of the Evaluation of the Sustainable Development Fund in English National Parks (I will send a link later today). Thanks to you all and to the timely work of Richard Austin in particular a letter from our Chair will be going to the Minister this week enclosing a copy of the report. Defra officials have an electronic pre-publication copy.

Thank you all for your input into the seminar and discussions about this issue over the past year which helped me develop our strategy and arguments on this topic. We will carry on promoting the great work going on out there via SDF and through the rest of NPAs work to deliver sustainable development.

Regards
 Amanda

Amanda Brace
 Policy Officer
 English National Park Authorities Association

Tel: 020 7655 4812 (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday) or 07801 966084
 Fax: 020 7092 9970
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Appendix 2: List of Collage Map Organisations

Northumberland Collage Map

Adapt North East

Age UK Northumberland

Albion Outdoors

Association of North East Councils

Bellingham and District Trade and Tourism Association

Biscuit Factory, The

Calvert Trust

Catchment Sensitive Farming

Charge Your Car

Cheviot Futures

Churches Together

Climate North East

College Valley Estate

Community Action Northumberland

Community Foundation Serving Tyne and Wear and Northumberland, The

Confederation of British Industry, The

Confederation of Forestry Industries

Connexions

Core

Country Land and Business Association

Eco-Schools

English Heritage

Environment Agency

EuroParc Federation

European Evaluation Network for Rural Development

European Marine Site

European Network for Rural Development

Forestry Commission

Future Transport Systems

Gateshead Council

Girl Guiding North East England

Glendale Agricultural Society

Glendale Gateway Trust

Government Office for the North East
Groundwork NorthEast
Hadrian Trust
Hadrian's Wall Trust
Haltwhistle Partnership
Healthy Schools
International Union for Conservation of Nature
Kielder Partnership
Lilburn Estate Farming Partnership
Ministry of Defence
Mountain Rescue
National Beef Association
National Lottery, The
National Renewable Energy Centre
National Trails
National Trust, The
Natura 2000
Natural England
Natural History Society of Northumbria
New Skills Consulting
Newcastle City Council
Newcastle University
National Health Service North East
North Country Leisure
North East Assembly
North East Civic Trust
North East Farmers' Markets
North East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership
North East Rural Affairs Forum
North Tyne and Redesdale Community Partnership
North Tyneside Council
Northumberland and Newcastle Society
Northumberland Biodiversity Partnership
Northumberland Business Service Limited
Northumberland Coast AONB
Northumberland College

Northumberland Community Flood Partnership
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland County Show
Northumberland Estates
Northumberland Federation of Young Farmers
Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service
Northumberland Fire Group
Northumberland National Park and County Joint Local Access Forum
Northumberland National Park Authority
Northumberland Rivers Trust
Northumberland Scouts
Northumberland Strategic Partnership
Northumberland Tourism
Northumberland Uplands New LEADER Approach / Jordbruks Verket
Northumberland Wildlife Trust
Northumbria Organic Producers
Northumbria Police
Northumbria University
One NorthEast
Outdoors Northumberland
Parish Councils
Prince's Trust, The
Ramsar
Red Squirrels Northern England
River Tweed Commission, The
Rothbury and Coquetdale Business Club
Rothbury and Coquetdale Youth Club
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Rural Development Initiatives
Rural Development Programme for England
Rural Payments Agency
Scottish Borders Council
Shepherd's Walks
Sir James Knott Trust
Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, The
St Oswald's Way

Sustainable Communities North East
Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy
Sustaine
Sustrans
Tarmac
Tasset 2050
Taste North East
Tweed Forum
Tweed Foundation, The
Tyne Rivers Trust
Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership
Tynedale Enterprise Project
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Site
Vindolanda Trust
Volunteering Centre Northumberland
Walk Northumbria
WarmZone Northumberland
Wild Redesdale
Woodland Trust
Youth Hostels Association (England and Wales)

National Collage Map

Agricultural Development Advisory Service
Agricultural Industries Confederation
Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board
Association of Show and Agricultural Organisations
Barn Owl Trust, The
Beta Technology
Black Environment Network
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
British Association for Bio Fuels and Oils
British Association for Shooting and Conservation
British Crop Production Council
British Ecological Society
British Geological Survey
British Pig Executive

British Society of Soil Science
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
British Trust for Ornithology
Broads Authority, The
Business Link
Cairngorms National Park Authority
Campaign for National Parks
Campaign for the Farmed Environment
Campaign to Protect Rural England
Camping and Caravanning Club, The
Carbon Trust
Central Association of Agricultural Valuers, The
Commission for Rural Communities
Common Ground
Communities and Local Government
Countryside Alliance
Cranfield University
Cumbria County Council
DairyCo
Dartmoor National Park Authority
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Department for Education
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, The / European Union
Department for Transport
Department of Energy and Climate Change
Department of Health
Durham County Council
Durham University
Elektromotive
Energy Saving Trust
English Beef and Lamb Executive, The
Environmental Law Foundation
Exmoor National Park Authority
Farm Crisis Network
Farm Stay UK

Farming and Countryside Education
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
Farming Futures
Food and Environment Research Agency, The
Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development
Friends of the Earth
Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
Grasslands Trust
Green Alliance
Green Tourism Business Scheme, The
Greenpeace
Heritage Alliance, The
Home Grown Cereals Authority
Horticultural Development Company
Institute for Outdoor Learning
Institution of Environmental Sciences, The
John Muir Trust
Lake District National Park Authority
Land and Training
Landscape Institute
Landuse Consultants
Linking Environment and Farming
Local Government Association
Local Government Boundary Commission, The
Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority
Met Office
Mosaic
National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, The
National Farmers Union
National Grid
National Parks England
National Parks United Kingdom
National Rural
National Sheep Association
National Society for Clean Air
New Forest National Park Authority

North East Chamber of Commerce
North East Social Enterprise Partnership
North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
North York Moors National Park Authority
Northern Business Forum
Northumbrian Water
Office for National Statistics
Open Spaces Society
Ordnance Survey
Peak District National Park Authority
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Potato Council
Ramblers, The
Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, The
Royal Town Planning Institute, The
Rural Development Programme for England Network, The
Skill Share
Small Woods Association
Snowdonia National Park Authority
Soil Association
Solutions for Business
South Downs National Park Authority
South Tyneside Council
Sunderland City Council
Sustainable Development Commission
Tadea
Teesside University
Tenant Farmers Association
Town and Country Planning Association
Tree Council
University of Oldenburg
University of Sunderland
Visit England
Waste Watch
Wild Trout Trust
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

Wildlife and Countryside Link
World Wildlife Fund UK
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Appendix 3: Initial Covering Letter

Ref: Research Interview
Contact: Richard Austin
Date: Day/Month/Year

Title Initial Surname
Address
Address
Address
Postcode

Dear Forename,

Partnership Working in Northumberland National Park

I am a Second Year Ph.D. student at Newcastle University, studying the above course. Although my actual research will not commence until the autumn, my Supervisor, Dr. Nicola Thompson, has recommended that I contact you for a context interview. It is hoped that this will help to further broaden my understanding of the research area.

I would like to speak to you in-person this summer to hear about your opinions and experiences of Northumberland National Park Authority. The context interview can be guided by, but not limited to, three specific areas:

- a) How the roles of the national parks evolved since 1972?
- b) How changes at a national level have affected Northumberland National Park?
- c) How partnership working and sustainable development became part of the remit for the management of the national parks?

If this sounds ok with you, please can you contact me to agree a time, date and venue? As an indication, I will be available anytime between [date] and [date]. For your information, I live in Hexham and would therefore be happy to meet you at a convenient time and location in the town.

If you would like to know more about my research, my full profile can be found on Newcastle University's website by following this link:

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/afrd/postgrad/research/projects/richard.htm>

I look forward to hearing from you in due course. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Austin
Ph.D. Student (Centre for Rural Economy)

E: richard.austin@newcastle.ac.uk
T: 07765777976

Appendix 4: Final Covering Letter

Ref: Research Interview
Contact: Richard Austin
Date: Day/Month/Year

Title Initial Surname
Address
Address
Address
Postcode

Dear Forename,

Partnership Working in Northumberland National Park

I am a Third Year Ph.D. student at Newcastle University, studying the above course at the Centre for Rural Economy. I would like to draw upon your expertise to help broaden my understanding of this research area by interviewing you personally, to hear about your opinions and experiences of partnership working with [organisation name] – a key organisation operating in this area. If you would like to help me with my research, please can you contact me to agree a time, date and venue? Although I will be available from [date] to [date], our discussion can take place at a later date if that would suit you better. If I haven't heard back from you by [date], I will follow this letter up with a telephone call.

The research interview should last no longer than one hour and further details can be found on the second page. If you would like to know more about my research, my full profile can be found on Newcastle University's website by following the link below.

In addition to my studying at the University, I am also an employee of Northumberland National Park Authority. It was after discussion with [name] from [organisation] that your name was put forward as an excellent potential participant to speak to. As a matter of good research practice, the feedback provided by all the participants will remain anonymous.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Austin
Ph.D. Student (Centre for Rural Economy)

E: richard.austin@newcastle.ac.uk
T: 07765777976
W: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/afrd/postgrad/research/projects/richard.htm>

Please turn over.

Notes for Interviewees

A selection of representatives from a range of organisations operating across Northumberland National Park will be selected for interview. The feedback provided by the individuals participating in the research will remain anonymous.

For ease of use, and to allow me to fully concentrate on the discussion, the interviews will be recorded using an audio-recorder. Your transcript can be submitted for your approval within two weeks of the interview. Only factual corrections should be made, and each transcript should be signed-off by the interviewee within two weeks of receipt, unless otherwise agreed. So as not to delay my research, after this time the verbatim transcript will be accepted as the record of our conversation.

About the Researcher

I studied Human Geography (BSc) at Kingston University, graduating in 2000. My next move was to Manchester University, where I studied Environmental Policy (MA), graduating in 2001. After a year out, I took up a 12-month post at Durham University, examining sustainable development and partnership working, in a broad rural context.

My professional career started soon afterwards when I became an External Funding Assistant at Darlington Borough Council, where I stayed until 2006. I am presently employed as the Funding and Climate Change Officer at Northumberland National Park Authority, managing the sustainable development fund, working with various external funding programmes, and more recently, overseeing the statutory climate change adaptation reporting.

With the support of the Authority, I was able to undertake my Ph.D. from 2009, on a part-time basis. Newcastle University has significant in-house expertise of rural development in this protected area.

My supervisors at Newcastle University are:

Dr. Nicola Thompson
Lecturer

Mr. Guy Garrod
Director of the Centre for Rural Economy

Dr. Menelaos Gkartzios
Lecturer

The Ph.D. will be completed in 2013.

Appendix 5: Interview Guide

Date, Time, Location

Introduction

- My role as a student at Newcastle University and an employee of Northumberland National Park Authority.
- Will be interviewing 23 people.
- All responses will be relatively anonymous.

Background

1. How long have you been interested in rural development?

Sustainable Development

1. How does your organisation understand sustainable development?
2. Does your organisation particularly concentrate on any one of the three tiers of sustainable development?
3. Do you see your partners acting differently because of the need for sustainable development?
4. Would you say that sustainable development is embedded across your organisation?

Partnerships

1. What are your first impressions of the collage maps?
2. To what extent are you involved in working with these organisations?
3. Why does your organisation engage in partnership working?
4. What do you feel is important in creating a good partnership?
5. How would you initiate and maintain a partnership?
6. What are your views of partnership working with/for Northumberland National Park Authority?

Summary

1. How do you think the effectiveness of partnership working could be improved?
2. Any final comments?

Next Steps

- Will email transcript by [Date].
- Expected completion in 2013.
- Will email any journal articles arising as a result of the research.

Appendix 6: Extract from Research Diary

Community Development Trust

13/05/2011

I arrived at their office in good time. The participant asked if the research interview could take place in a local coffee shop. I said that would be ok, providing there wasn't too much background noise. There were not any highly sensitive matters to discuss either, so we agreed it was fine.

As we walked to the coffee shop I explained a little about myself and the need for reflexivity, since the participant already knew me as an employee of Northumberland National Park Authority. On the way, we passed two people that greeted the participant. Afterwards the participant joked to me that it was nice to go to Newcastle every so often for a bit of privacy.

The coffee shop was very busy with only a single table left. More people warmly greeted the participant as their eyes met. The participant was clearly a popular person in the community.

During the interview I presented my collage maps to the participant. After carefully looking at them, views were shared on several of the featured organisations. Whilst most were fairly brief mentions, the participant went quiet for a few seconds when thinking about Northumberland County Council and Northumberland Strategic Partnership. The participant was visibly upset because the recent structural changes had resulted in a loss of support from these particular partners. The community development trust was no longer held in such high regard.

At the end of the research interview I paid for the coffees and the participant thanked me for the chance to contribute.

Duration: 55 minutes.

Appendix 7: 2010 Spending Review Letter from Defra

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Telephone: 08459 335577
Email: helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.defra.gov.uk



Mr Tony Gates
Northumberland National Park Authority
Eastburn
South Park
Hexham
Northumberland
NE46 1BS

20th December 2010

From the Permanent Secretary
Dame Helen Ghosh DCB

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dear Tony,".

Further to the Spending Review announcement of 20 October and the publication of the Department's business plan on 8 November, I am writing to confirm your grant for financial year 2011/2012 and to provide indicative levels for the rest of the Spending Review period to March 2015. I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight some key developments which will have important implications for Defra-funded bodies, including the National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority, and for the way we work together in delivering the Government's priorities.

The period since the General Election has been unsettling and challenging to say the least, and I would like to pay tribute to the huge efforts you and your staff have made to respond positively and professionally to the pressures and changes we've faced. The current financial climate and the Government's clear commitment to tackle the deficit resulted in a tough spending review for all Departments, but we were prepared for this and were able to negotiate a fair and reasonable settlement. The parameters for Defra's settlement will be a real terms reduction in resource spending by 29% over the four years to March 2015 compared to 2010/11. Making these savings won't be easy, but now that we have a settlement in place and a set of priorities articulated clearly in our new business plan, we can, and must, face the future with confidence.

Since the spending review announcement on 20 October, my colleagues have been compiling the information needed to take decisions about how and where Defra's funding should be allocated. This has been a difficult process, involving some tough choices, but I am pleased to be able to confirm the National Park Grant allocations shown below:

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Broads	4,229,502	4,002,149	3,774,799	3,547,447	3,320,095
Dartmoor	4,739,642	4,484,867	4,230,095	3,975,321	3,720,547

Exmoor	3,978,580	3,764,715	3,550,853	3,336,989	3,123,125
Lake District	6,921,279	6,549,233	6,177,190	5,805,144	5,433,098
New Forest	4,028,096	3,811,570	3,595,046	3,378,520	3,161,994
Northumberland	3,311,334	3,133,337	2,955,341	2,777,344	2,599,347
North York Moors	5,428,266	5,136,475	4,844,687	4,552,897	4,261,106
Peak District	8,298,814	7,852,720	7,406,630	6,960,536	6,514,442
South Downs *	7,290,000	11,373,133	10,981,271	10,589,405	10,197,539
Yorkshire Dales	5,398,563	5,108,369	4,818,178	4,527,984	4,237,790
Total	53,624,076	55,216,567	52,334,091	49,451,586	46,569,082

* South Downs totals for 2011/12 – 2014/15 include DCLG transfer of £4.475m for planning responsibilities

Although we are asking our ALBs to only commit up to 95% of the their budgets at this stage in order to provide some flexibility for us to claw back in-year savings if necessary, we have decided to exclude the NPAs from this condition, but we will instead be working closely with you in reviewing the allocations for years 2 - 4.

Experience from previous spending reviews suggests that these year 2-4 allocations can, and in all likelihood, will need to change over the spending review period, and the current tight financial circumstances make that even more likely. So we would ask that you proceed with caution when committing against the allocations for years 2 – 4, and treat them as merely indicative for now. We will of course confirm them as soon as we can.

I'm sure you won't be surprised to learn that the Department's overall spending review settlement came with a number of conditions attached to it which also have a bearing on the allocations outlined above:

1. It's possible that Defra's settlement may be reopened at any stage of the spending review period if necessary in order to help meet the Government's deficit reduction plans. Whilst acknowledging the uncertainty this creates, it is important that you are alert to the risk that we may be required to seek further savings during the Spending Review Period.
2. Departments have been asked to take measures to minimise the impact of spending reductions on minority groups by undertaking Equality Impact Assessments for proposed budget reductions. We have also been asked to assess the impact on the voluntary and community sector, consistent with the Government's commitment to strengthening civil society. Similarly, I would ask that when taking your own allocation decisions that you consider the possible impact on civil society. The Secretary of State is committed to enhancing the role of Big Society in the delivery of Defra policies – and the letter she is sending in parallel to Chairs re-emphasises this. Our Civil Society team under Andrew Lawrence can provide further support and guidance in this regard, though I am aware of the importance you already give to finding ways of increasing community involvement, and of course the current consultation on governance will progress this further.
3. Building on the spending controls that have applied during this financial year, Cabinet Office are currently finalising a revised set of processes to drive efficiency

and reform across government (including ALB) spending; for example controls on advertising/marketing, IT spend, use of consultancy, estates and procurement. These processes are designed to provide greater visibility and control over major common areas of spending. I am aware that you are already actively engaged in identifying efficiencies both as individual authorities and across the national park family and some of these restrictions may not apply to you, but I encourage you to continue to give priority to this work so that we can have greater confidence in confirming future years' budgetary allocations earlier.

4. The Government's new Transparency Framework reflects a fresh emphasis on democratic accountability and improving the overall quality of public service. Defra's recently published business plan (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/about/what/documents/defra-businessplan-101108.pdf>) includes a commitment to make transparency a condition of funding when delegating budgets across the network, and to publish performance against impact and input indicators. As an organisation that is run along the lines of a local authority you already follow performance and transparency procedures required of Local Authorities, including publishing Authority papers and a range of performance reports and financial statements, but we will need to work closely with you to consider what else, if anything, might be required.

I appreciate that you will be disappointed with level of the reductions to the grant, but please be assured that ministers attach huge value to the National Parks and have been greatly impressed by the impact that the Authorities are having across a whole range of important issues, the steps you are taking to improve community engagement and the initiatives you have pursuing to monitor performance and achieve greater efficiencies. But every Defra body needs to contribute if we are to close the fiscal gap and restore sound public finances.

We have listened very carefully to the arguments which you have put to us in recent months and as a result have kept the reductions in the allocations as low as possible. Each Authority is being treated in the same way, ie an overall reduction of 21.5%. The reduction in 2011/12 is 5.4%.

In calculating the allocations the starting point has been the revised 2010/11 core grant, ie removing one-off items namely: new office accommodation for the South Downs and New Forest NPAs (£2m in total), repairs to flood damaged rights of way network in the Lake District (£250k) and additional start-up costs for the New Forest NPA (£200k). Excluding these items reduces the 2010/11 baseline to £53.624m.

The reductions have been applied uniformly to the 10 Authorities. The alternative would have been to use the funding formula which was devised in 2004 in consultation with yourselves, but never fully implemented as it would have resulted in significant reductions for several NPAs. We think that asking some Authorities (principally the Peak District which could lose around £1m pa in its grant if the funding formula is implemented) to absorb formula losses on top of the general 21.5% reduction, would impact significantly on frontline delivery and so we are not intending to make any further progress towards the formula over this spending review period.

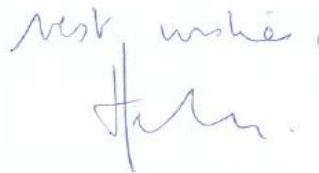
In the long-term it remains the Government's aspiration to move towards a formula distribution though, and your Sponsor team will be asking the NPAs to propose a possible way forward for us to consider.

The new South Downs NPA will become fully operational on 1 April 2011. We have used their 2010/11 transitional grant as the basis for future years and we are giving them £4.475 million each year for the 4 year period that DCLG has transferred to Defra to recognise the switch of legal responsibility for the planning service. This will allow them to make the transition to the new planning service.

The Sustainable Development Fund has been £200,000 pa per Park ever since it was introduced in 2002. It is widely regarded as a successful and valuable scheme which also engages NPAs with their communities and helps deliver the 'Big Society' agenda. We have decided to meet your request to remove the ring-fencing of the Fund to allow the flexibility you have asked for. It is therefore for each Authority to determine how much of its budget to commit to the Fund, but we would fully expect each NPA to run an SDF grant scheme of some sort.

Following the government's review of public bodies over the summer, which culminated in Francis Maude's announcement of reforms on 14 October, the Cabinet Office are developing new arrangements for setting up, managing and reviewing public bodies in order to deliver the government's desire for greater accountability. Details are still being worked up – and we are working closely with Cabinet Office to ensure any new arrangements are proportionate and fit for purpose. Your Sponsor Team will be in touch about any future reviews which may include the National Park Authorities

I am copying this letter to Helen Phillips at Natural England, and Paul Hamblin at the English National Park Authorities Association.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Ghosh', is written over a faint, illegible stamp.

HELEN GHOSH

