

**EVALUATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT FUND IN ENGLISH
NATIONAL PARKS 2002-2009**

**Final evaluation report produced for
the English National Park
Authorities Association
By Land Use Consultants**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) that is operated by the eight English National Park Authorities (NPAs) and the Broads Authority¹ has been conducted for the English National Park Authorities Association.

The evaluation is based upon records of the 1,235 separate projects that have received funding from the programme since its inception in 2002 to March 2009, as well as interviews with the NPA's SDF officers, a sample of 30 grant recipients and a range of organisations with experience of the programme.

The evaluation has sought to summarise the achievements, outcomes and impacts of the SDF against the original criteria set for the programme by Defra and against subsequent policy priorities.

Introduction to the programme

Since 2003, each NPA in England has been allocated a sum of £200,000 per annum by Defra² to offer SDF grants to promote sustainable ways of living. During the first seven years of the SDF programme to March 2009, 1,235 projects have received funding and a significantly greater number of people have received advice and guidance.

The SDF seeks to promote sustainable development, partnership working and social inclusion among communities and businesses in ways that support the two statutory purposes of the National Park designation.

There is an expectation that the programme will develop models of sustainable development that could be applied more widely by other local authorities.

Each NPA operates its own SDF independently, according to its own local circumstances but within the guidelines established by Defra in its original prospectus (replicated in Appendix 2 of the report). SDF officers are employed or contracted to administer the scheme. Funding decisions are made by SDF panels comprising members and representatives of local communities including the voluntary, environmental, business and social sectors.

¹ For brevity, the Broads Authority is included in the term NPA although it has a separate legal basis.

² NPAs received £140,000 each in 2002. Regional Development Agencies have contributed funding to several of the SDF schemes. The New Forest NPA has received SDF funding since its vesting in 2006.

Key achievements

Administration: From the outset, the SDF has been designed to minimise the administrative burden on applicants, making grant aid accessible to small community-based groups and businesses. This is achieved through application processes that most applicants consider to be straight forward and appropriate to the needs of the programme.

Support to applicants: Applicants with little previous experience of undertaking publicly funded projects find the 'hands on' approach taken by the SDF officers to be particularly helpful. Many projects also value the additional assistance (such as signposting to other initiatives and advice on project planning) that is available from and through the SDF officers.

Delivering sustainable development: By requiring all projects to demonstrate a sustainable development approach (delivering a mix of economic, social and environmental benefits), the SDF encourages integrated policy outcomes and stretches the aspirations of projects that would otherwise seek narrower objectives. In this way, the programme continues to deliver the core purpose for which it was established by Defra.

Responding to new priorities: Emerging policy issues, such as climate change and renewable energy have grown to become one of the most significant topics addressed by the SDF. The experience gained from the SDF could put the NPAs in a good position (with additional funding) to deliver the Government's low carbon policies to communities in National Parks.

Providing support in small packages: Most SDF projects, and the grants awarded to them, are small compared to many other publicly funded projects. In this way the SDF supports community projects that cannot access other sources of funding. The SDF has shown that low levels of intervention can produce disproportionately high impacts.

Supporting innovation: By giving priority to innovative ideas and being prepared to take a risk on projects with no proven track record, the SDF often provides the first offer of funding from which other support, within communities or from other funders, is generated.

Drawing down funding from other sources: The SDF has typically 'unlocked' a relatively high level of matched funding from other sources (producing an

average funding multiplier of 4.3). This compares favourably with other small grant schemes operating in rural areas.

Engaging with communities: Community and voluntary groups have been the most frequent organisers of projects (accounting for just over a third of all projects). This is consistent with the original objectives for the programme set out by Defra.

Stimulating job creation: The SDF has proved effective at contributing to significant levels of job creation relative to the small amounts of funding involved, even though little attention has previously been drawn to this aspect of the programme.

Liaison within NPAs: Knowledge of the SDF and what it achieves is generally strong within NPAs, both at the level of Authority members and at a senior level amongst staff. This ensures that opportunities to link the SDF with delivery of NPAs' statutory responsibilities are generally good, leading to 'joined-up' delivery.

Changing community perceptions of NPAs: The SDF has, over its seven years, contributed to a broader change in the way many organisations and individuals view NPAs and the National Park designation. The programme is contributing (amongst a range of other work) to a view of NPAs as 'enabling' rather than 'regulating' bodies.

Challenges and opportunities

The following recommendations to NPAs are made by this evaluation:

- **Working with communities outside National Parks:** The NPAs should build upon the inspiring examples taking place in all National Parks and consider how the SDF can be more fully used to engage with communities in urban areas who experience barriers to accessing the Parks.
- **Justifying high levels of grant intervention:** It is suggested that the NPAs collectively reflect on whether high levels of grant aid are fully justified by the benefits they have produced. A standard set of 'exceptional circumstances' criteria should be agreed by the NPAs, through a working party of SDF officers, and confirmed with Defra.
- **Making more of the test-bedding role:** The SDF's success in supporting ground-breaking projects deserves to be better known so that

novel approaches and best practice can be shared between NPAs and with other bodies. More examples of innovative SDF projects should be disseminated through the ENPAA website. NPAs should do more to promote the approaches pioneered by SDF projects through regional bodies and networks.

- **Ongoing support for projects:** There is potential to add value to the achievements of the programme by providing a level of continuing support to projects on a collective basis. The NPAs should consider how they can celebrate the achievements of SDF projects, both in the year in which they receive the SDF grant and in subsequent years (potential means of doing this are suggested in the main report).
- **Connecting to the NPA's duty for social and economic well-being:** It is suggested that more attention is drawn to way that the SDF enables NPAs to deliver their duty of fostering the social and economic well-being of local communities, particularly in the context of the NERC Act 2006 allowing NPAs greater freedom to deliver this duty.
- **Connecting to National Park Management Plans:** NPAs should give more detailed reflection, at a strategic level, to the role of the SDF in delivering the priorities identified in National Park Management Plans.
- **Strengthening partnership working:** NPAs should build upon the existing relationships with other statutory organisations and the voluntary sector, both within and beyond the National Parks, so that the SDF is able to add more value to the programmes and priorities of these organisations.

Overall findings

This evaluation concludes that the SDF programme in the English National Parks continues to fulfil its original objectives. These objectives remain relevant, allowing the SDF to address emerging policy priorities and the needs of communities.

The NPAs should build on these achievements. They should seek to maximise the value from the SDF to deliver the purposes of the National Park designation and their socio-economic duty, and to support the priorities of their partner organisations.

I. INTRODUCTION

- I.1. This is the evaluation report of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) programme operated by the eight National Park Authorities (NPAs) and the Broads Authority³ in England from the programme's inception in 2002 to March 2009. The evaluation has been conducted by Land Use Consultants for the English National Park Authorities Association, with a co-ordination role provided by the New Forest National Park Authority.

BACKGROUND TO THIS EVALUATION

- I.2. The origins of the SDF lie in Wales. In June 2000 a pilot SDF programme was established for the three National Parks in Wales, and this was extended to the five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in Wales in April 2001. Following a review in 2002, the programme has been maintained in the protected landscapes of Wales (National Parks and AONBs) by the Welsh Assembly Government.
- I.3. In July 2002 the then Minister of State for Rural Affairs, Alun Michael, launched an SDF for English National Park Authorities, as a pilot programme, to provide a flexible and non-bureaucratic means of funding projects to "*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*"⁴.
- I.4. Since 2003, each NPA has been allocated a sum of £200,000 per annum by Defra (as allowed under Section 72 of the Environment Act 1995) to establish and operate the SDF offering grants to promote sustainable ways of living in their National Park⁵ (In 2002, each NPA received a pro rata SDF grant of around £140,000. The New Forest received funding for its from 2006 onwards)
- I.5. Each NPA operates its own SDF independently, according to its own local circumstances but within the guidelines established by Defra in its original prospectus for the SDF (replicated in Appendix 2 of this report). Funding decisions are made by SDF panels comprising members and representatives of local communities including the voluntary, environmental, business and social sectors.
- I.6. The SDF has broad objectives, as set out in Defra's original prospectus, and supports projects which promote sustainable development, partnership and social inclusion by:
- exploring ways of pursuing concurrently the principle of sustainability and of breaking down barriers that can act as obstacles to sustainability;

³ Although considered to be part of the 'family' of National Parks, the Broads Authority was established under different legislation and has slightly different statutory purposes (see note under Box 1.3). For brevity it is included in the generic description of National Park Authorities (NPA) used in this report. A map showing the location of the English National Parks is provided in Appendix 1.

⁴ Defra, 2002 (July) Sustainable Development Fund Prospectus – See Appendix 1.

⁵ In the two South West National Parks (Dartmoor and Exmoor), the South West of England Regional Development Agency provided an additional £600,000 to each National Park Authority over the three years 2006/07 to 2008/09 to boost jobs in line with other existing SDF criteria.

- developing models for the sustainable management of the countryside that could be applied more widely in England;
- generating greater awareness and understanding of sustainability;
- working through individuals, businesses and community groups to deliver the programme; and
- encouraging participation of young people in the scheme.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS EVALUATION

- I.7. The evaluation has been undertaken to inform the ongoing review of the programme by the National Park Authorities, as well as national and regional reviews of funding allocated to the programme. The evaluation is intended to provide a sound evidence base against which decisions to improve the funding, administration and targeting of the scheme can be made.
- I.8. The purpose of this review was set out in the brief as follows:
- To evaluate and summarise the achievements, outcomes and impact of SDF in the English National Parks (as judged against the original Defra criteria and any more recent priorities that have emerged since SDF was established in 2002);
 - To identify the strengths, areas for improvement and future opportunities for SDF in national parks;
 - To identify and share best practice from SDF experience;
 - To evaluate the extent to which SDF has represented value for money;
 - To draw lessons from the collective experience of SDF and make recommendations to the English National Park Authorities on future directions and development of the scheme.
- I.9. This evaluation covers the eight National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority but excludes the South Downs National Park Authority which is not in place at the time of writing. It reviews the operation of the SDF over the period April 2002 to March 2009.

THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

- I.10. In March 2004 an independent evaluation of the first 18 months operation of the SDF commissioned by the Countryside Agency⁶ found that the Fund had proved overall to be effective at delivering its intended outcomes. It found that good value for money was being obtained and, beyond the direct benefit of individual projects, the Fund had produced a step change in awareness, creativity and entrepreneurship on the part of local communities and businesses (see **Box I.1**).

⁶ CEPAR, 2004. Evaluation of the National Parks' Sustainable Development Fund. Research report to the Countryside Agency, Cheltenham. March 2004

Box 1.1. Headline findings of the CEPAR Evaluation (March 2004)

During its first eighteen months the National Parks' Sustainable Development Fund has proved overall to be effective at delivering the outcomes identified at its launch. Some of the projects supported by the Fund are outstanding in their impact – achieving high scores against all the principles of sustainable development.

Good value for money is being obtained. Obligated funding has secured a focus of effort and output significantly in excess of what would have been achieved if national park authorities had been allocated the same amount of money as additional core funding. Beyond the direct benefit of individual projects, the Fund has produced a step change in awareness, creativity and entrepreneurship on the part of local communities and businesses.

In the light of this evaluation it is recommended that the Fund should be continued beyond March 2005 as a three year rolling programme. Consideration should be given to selective extension of the Fund beyond national parks, to AONBs, perhaps in the form of regional pilots.

- 1.11. Since 2004 there has been no comprehensive review of the achievements and outcomes of SDF, although some of the National Park Authorities, including Northumberland, Lake District, North York Moors and Exmoor, have undertaken formal reviews of their own schemes.

Original objectives of the programme

- 1.12. When funding for the programme was agreed in 2002, Defra's prospectus included a set of criteria that were expected to form the basis for the operation of the individual SDF schemes. Defra also stated the priorities that should form the basis for the selection of projects receiving funding. These are listed in **Box 1.2** (see Appendix 2 for the full SDF prospectus).

Box 1.2. Original Defra criteria and priorities for the operation of the SDF schemes

Projects have to:

- further National Park purposes;
- be sustainable (against the test of economic, social and environmental sustainability)
- have the support or involvement of communities;
- be complementary to key local and national strategies, e.g. Local Agenda 21;
- not breach state aid rules.

Priority will be given to eligible projects that:

- involve young people and combat social exclusion;
- encourage links between urban groups and those resident in the National Park;
- demonstrate innovation or best practice;
- lever in contributions from other sources;
- add value or new dimensions to existing sustainability projects; and/or
- have little access to alternative public funding; and/or
- bring organisations together to cooperate in tackling problems or promoting new ideas.

Source: Defra (2002). The Sustainable Development Fund Prospectus – See Appendix 2

- I.13. These objectives need to be seen against the background of the two statutory purposes of the National Park designation and the statutory duty that applies to NPAs. These are shown in **Box I.3**.

Box I.3. The statutory purposes and duty of National Parks

Section 61 of The Environment Act (1995) states the **two purposes** of the National Park designation, which apply to allow public bodies, as follows:

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

Section 62 of the Act places a **duty** on the National Park Authority to “seek to foster the social and economic well being of the local communities” in pursuance of the two statutory purposes.

Note: The Broads are subject to separate legislation: the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (1988) as amended by the Broads Authority Act (2009). The statutory purposes of the Broads are similar to those of National Parks but include an additional duty on the Broads Authority to protect the interest of navigation.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE AND METHODOLOGY

- I.14. The evaluation has taken place over a 12 week period starting in September, preceded by a period in which the SDF officers gathered data on all of the projects that have received funding.
- I.15. The evaluation of the SDF by the Centre for European Protected Area Research in 2004 developed a matrix of sustainability issues against which each project was assessed. A similar approach was developed for this study although the criteria against which projects were assessed were somewhat different, following a process of discussion and comment by the SDF officers, led by Richard Austin at Northumberland National Park Authority. The sustainability matrix for each project covered by the evaluation, together with operational data about each project (such as the type of applicant, value of grant aid received, amount of matched funding), was completed by the SDF project officers.
- I.16. A meeting took place in the North York Moors National Park on 30th September 2009, which was attended by all apart from one of the SDF officers and a representative from LUC who presented to the attendees some early statistical analysis of the data that they had supplied on their projects.
- I.17. For the next stage of evidence gathering, telephone interviews were carried out with the SDF officer for each National Park. The interviews followed a similar structure and covered a range of research topics (as shown in Appendix 3), generally lasting around 45 minutes to an hour. Although some of the discussion covered issues that were touched upon in the September meeting, speaking to each SDF officer individually allowed for a more detailed discussion, highlighting particular differences between the operation of each scheme, as well as any particular issues unique to that Park.

- I.18. Following discussions with the SDF officers, a small sample of representative projects were selected by LUC as case studies and short telephone interviews were carried out with the grant recipient. Before contacting them, the SDF officers were asked to screen out any projects that they considered unsuitable for inclusion as a case study, for example where work was ongoing or where the grant recipient was no longer living in the area. Analysis was conducted by LUC on the sample of projects to ensure they were broadly representative of all projects on the basis of their size, themes, geography and the levels of grant funding received. The telephone interviews were fairly short, lasting five or ten minutes. A copy of the interview script used can be seen in Appendix 3.
- I.19. Finally, a sample of local and regional stakeholders was consulted on the draft findings of the study. This stage of the evaluation sought to address the way that the programme has contributed to the policy objectives of other organisations at a regional and sub-regional level, the extent of liaison and joint-working between the NPAs and their partners in the allocation of the SDF and the overall views of a range of bodies on the achievements of the SDF. Consultees were selected from a range of organisations including Natural England, the Environment Agency, Regional Development Agencies and local authorities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- I.20. The contract for this evaluation was managed by Stephen Trotter from the New Forest NPA and a steering group comprising six of the SDF officers. All nine SDF officers and a selection of individuals who received an SDF grant, have provided information and their opinions. The assistance provided by these people is gratefully acknowledged. Nonetheless, the study has sought to provide an independent evaluation, and any errors or omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

2. DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME

- 2.1. This Chapter provides an introduction to how the SDF schemes have been operated by each of the NPAs. It describes how the schemes' objectives have been set and how these have been communicated to potential applicants, how successful applicants are selected and how approved projects are monitored. It also looks at the staffing arrangements behind the administration of the SDF.

SETTING OBJECTIVES AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Delivery of the original Defra criteria and priorities

- 2.2. In most cases, NPAs have retained the original Defra criteria and priorities for prioritising applications (see Box 1.2 in the previous chapter) as the basis for the SDF, although these criteria have usually been adapted or amended and are often not stated in full in the guidance given to applicants.
- 2.3. Whilst the Yorkshire Dales lists the full Defra criteria on its project assessment form (along with a wide range of other social, economic and environmental criteria), other NPAs have adapted or omitted some points. The most frequently omitted part of Defra's original priorities relates to whether a project has little access to alternative public funding. SDF officers stated that this is because most NPAs actively work with applicants to sift potential projects for eligibility before they get to the SDF panel and officers have already signposted and provided advice to applicants on alternative funding sources in order to keep SDF for activities which genuinely meet the Defra criteria. However relating closely to this, some of the NPAs score projects depending on whether they have additional funding in place. In contrast, other aspects of Defra's original priorities for the programme remain strongly represented on the NPA's project assessment forms. Almost all NPAs have continued to make reference to the involvement of young people and combating social exclusion, and to the fostering of links between urban and rural communities.
- 2.4. In addition to the Defra criteria and priorities, most of the NPAs have set out a wide range of social, economic and environmental criteria against which applications are appraised. In the case of the Lake District, some of these have been highlighted as being essential for any application to receive funding. A matrix showing the appraisal criteria used by the NPAs can be seen in Appendix 4.

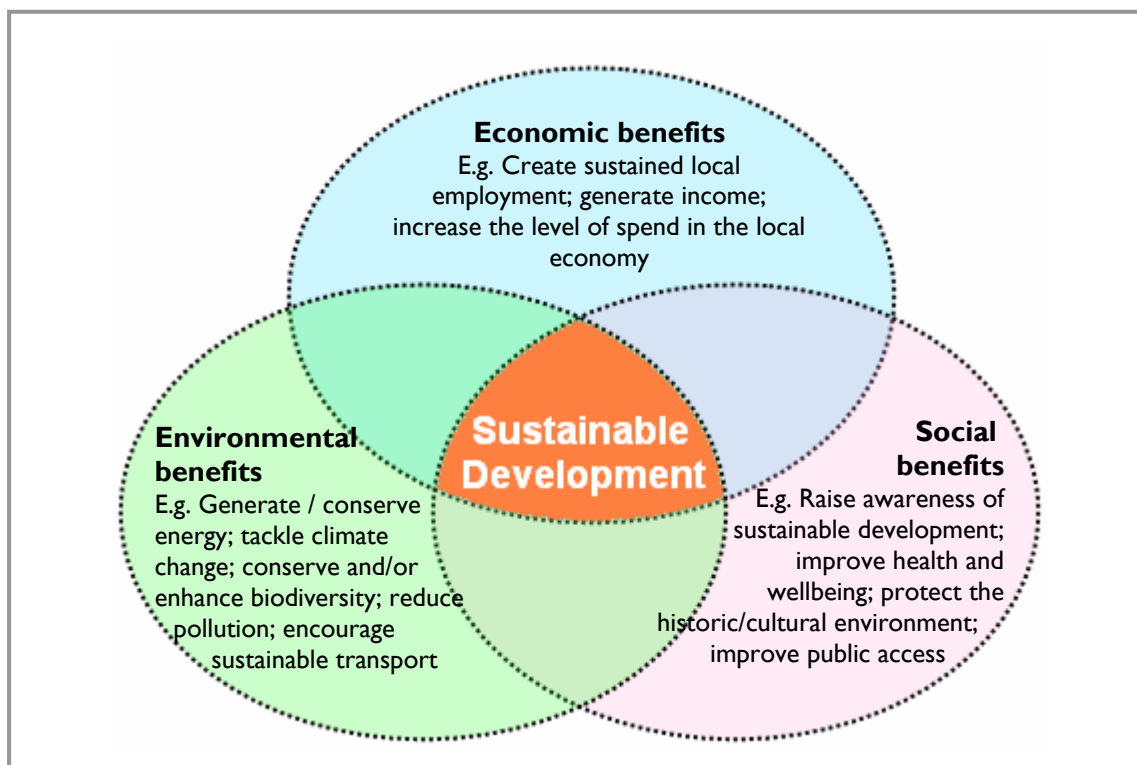
Addressing the three strands of sustainability

- 2.5. Defra's original prospectus states that the SDF programme should "*explore ways of pursuing concurrently the principle of sustainability and of breaking down barriers that can act as obstacles to sustainability*". It further states that projects awarded funding should "be sustainable (against the test of economic, social and environmental sustainability)", but how this is assessed is left to the judgement of NPAs and the SDF panels in particular.
- 2.6. All NPAs expect applicants to demonstrate that their project will target all three strands of sustainable development, with most of the NPA project assessment forms being designed in a way that clearly breaks down the appraisal criteria into these

three strands, identifying a range of individual policy areas under these headings (see Appendix 4). For instance, the Lake District assessment form requires all projects to “demonstrate a reasonable balance of long term social, environmental and economic benefits” while the Northumberland NPA requires that projects should, as a minimum requirement, receive a positive score on at least one topic under each of the three strands.

- 2.7. This means that, in some circumstances, applications that perform well on, for instance, their environmental and economic benefits, but poorly on their social benefits, are less likely to be approved for funding, with the decision usually resting on the overall balance of outcomes offered. Applicants that cannot demonstrate a significant benefit to any one of the three strands may be asked to reconsider their application before it is formally considered by the Panel for funding. An example of a project that was encouraged to provide greater involvement with local schools as a means of delivering social benefits before being approved, is the ‘Fit for a Duke’ project in the North York Moors that undertook landscape scale habitat restoration for the rare Duke of Burgundy Fritillary butterfly.

Figure 2.1. Conceptual diagram of sustainable development showing key topics identified by NPAs in the SDF application criteria



- 2.8. It is worth noting that neither Defra’s prospectus, nor any of the NPA schemes, distinguishes between personal and community aspects of the social strand of sustainable development. Personal aspects (often referred to as human capital) cover the qualities that we have as individuals that affect our personal development. Community aspects (often referred to as social capital) cover the attitude, spirit and willingness of people to engage in collective, civic activities. Social capital is one of the aspects monitored by Defra for its Departmental Strategic Objective (DSO) for

'Socially and Economically Sustainable Rural Communities'. Indicators of social capital that are being assessed by Defra include interactions between people from different backgrounds, people's sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, their ability to influence decisions in their locality; and participation in regular formal volunteering⁷.

- 2.9. The following three paragraphs assess the extent to which the assessment criteria used by each NPA address each of the three strands. A matrix of all the assessment criteria is shown in Appendix 4.
- 2.10. **Aspects of economic sustainability.** Of the 12 different economic criteria used by the NPAs, the creation of employment and training opportunities and the generation of income were the most frequently used, each being cited on many of the NPAs' assessment forms. Increasing local spending is considered by three NPAs, and the other criteria are used by only one or two.
- 2.11. **Aspects of social sustainability.** The social criterion that stood out as being most frequently used was whether a project raises awareness of sustainable development, with all but one of the NPAs taking this factor into consideration. Of the 14 criteria used in total, others that were commonly applied were whether a project improves public access to or within the National Park, whether it protects the historic/cultural environment and improves local identity, and whether it improves local health and wellbeing.
- 2.12. **Aspects of environmental sustainability.** The original Defra criteria do not lend themselves strongly to assessments of the environmental sustainability of projects. None of the NPAs use all of the environmental criteria, and there is a varied spread of which are applied. The five out of the 14 total criteria that were most commonly used to assess a project were the generation/conservation of energy, the conservation or enhancement of biodiversity, the reduction of pollution to air, land or water, the reduction of waste / encouragement of recycling and finally whether a project tackles climate change.

Other issues

- 2.13. In most cases, innovation is also a key part of the selection criteria (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (para. 4.58 *et sequ.*)).

Reviews of objectives by NPAs

- 2.14. Some of the NPAs have undertaken formal reviews to examine whether the SDF should take a more targeted approach, focussing on specific policy areas or outcomes. These reviews include formal processes of evaluation by external bodies (for instance the North York Moors and Northumberland) and internal assessments conducted within the NPA (for instance the Peak District, New Forest and Exmoor).
- 2.15. The need to address climate change by promoting measures that both enable groups and businesses to adapt to and seek to mitigate anticipated changes has been a recurring issue for debate by the NPAs in relation to their SDFs. The Lake District NPA went as far proposing that a high proportion of the SDF should be ring-fenced for projects that address climate change and the essential project assessment criteria

⁷ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/policy/dso/social/index.htm>

for that National Park includes specific reference to whether a project will address the issue of tackling climate change. As yet, no other NPAs have introduced a specific theme as an essential component of their appraisal criteria in this way, although several now place a significant emphasis on projects that address climate change issues (but not as an 'essential' criterion).

- 2.16. However, all NPAs have come to the view that the strength of the programme is its ability to support a wide range of different activities within its overarching objective of delivering sustainable development. In the case of the Lake District, it was the members of the National Park Authority who rejected the proposal of a narrower focus for the SDF. In the Peak District, the SDF officer has worked with the Grants Panel to ensure that the scheme retains a broad scope without becoming too focussed. By enabling flexibility, it has enabled the SDF to adapt to changing priorities (such as climate change). In this way, the SDF is recognised as staying relevant and current to emerging priorities.

STAFFING AND FINANCE

- 2.17. This evaluation is not required to undertake any detailed assessment or audit of the way the programme has been administered and financed, and this report does not attempt to make judgements or identify best practice in this area. However, a brief assessment of these issues is appropriate, in the context of the way the programme is perceived by beneficiaries and the way the administration has influenced the outputs.
- 2.18. The way in which the SDF is staffed varies quite considerably between the NPAs, with each having developed its own system appropriate to its circumstances. The original Defra SDF prospectus advised that *“a dedicated officer to promote and manage the project will normally be necessary and the Fund can be used to establish this post”*. Indeed, most NPAs have a SDF officer to administer the scheme, although this is often not a full time post and in most cases the individual spends a proportion of their time on the SDF and the remainder on other responsibilities. It should also be noted that a number of other NPA staff members spend time working on the SDF, and this time is not quantified or covered by SDF funds.
- 2.19. Two NPAs have operated a different arrangement, where administration has been contracted out. In the Yorkshire Dales the SDF is managed by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, subject to Terms of Reference, and a part time SDF officer is funded from this with additional administration and finance support coming from other departments within the Millennium Trust. The programme receives two days per week input from YDNPA officers. In the Broads the SDF officer is an independent contractor, working for the Broads Authority on a part time basis.
- 2.20. The original Defra SDF prospectus (see Appendix 2) also states that *“Staff, administration and promotion costs should not exceed 10% on average taken over the first two years of the Fund. It is not only accepted but desirable that expenditure on these heads may be higher in the first year when the programme is being promoted and applications nurtured”*. Again, there is considerable variation in the extent and ways in which NPAs have used this allowance. For example, in 2007/2008 the Peak District spent only 6.5% of the SDF budget on staffing and administration costs, and the remainder of the Fund went to funding projects (although in the absence of accurate information

from other years it is not clear whether this amount is typical of this NPA). However, in a number of cases, the SDF staffing and administration costs come out of core NPA funds, with the allowance being taken from the SDF budget to compensate for this. In such cases, which include the Lake District, New Forest and Exmoor, the cost of staffing and administration, relatively to the formal Defra allowance, was not readily available to this evaluation, but any shortfall is covered from Authority funds.

PROMOTING THE SCHEME

- 2.21. The majority of the promotion and marketing of the SDF is done through the National Parks' websites, as well as through word of mouth, leaflets, ongoing media activity and active promotion to the public from other staff such as rangers. Other means of promotion are varied and have included attending funding fairs (New Forest, Peak District and others) and the production of a promotional calendar for circulation to stakeholders, which features a different project for each month (Northumberland).
- 2.22. In some cases, marketing has been used to try and encourage more interest from a particular type of applicant, or for a particular type of project. For example, in the Peak District it has become apparent that the majority of applications are coming from the southern part of the Park and so marketing is being used to try and achieve a more even geographical spread, with the aim of more applications being made and approved from individuals, community groups and businesses in the northern part of the Park. Similarly, in Exmoor there have been relatively few applications from businesses; therefore marketing material is to be designed with the aim of highlighting the availability of grant funding for business applicants. The SDF officer in the Yorkshire Dales (employed by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust) sits on the North Yorkshire Funding Advisors Network which has proved useful in promoting the SDF amongst the voluntary and community sector.

ASSISTING APPLICANTS

- 2.23. The majority of grant recipients interviewed during this evaluation commented on the high level of support they had received from the SDF officers in helping them to complete the application forms and, in some cases, shaping their project. Without exception, project recipients were complimentary about this support. Many community groups stated that they had no experience of applying for public support and would have been overwhelmed without the 'hands on' approach taken by the SDF officer. For example, a grant recipient in Dartmoor (Embercombe Awe and Wonder project) stated that *"we developed a good relationship especially with the SDF officer who was very helpful and supportive throughout the process"*. Similarly in the North York Moors, one applicant (Rosedale Reading Room project) felt that *"The officers were excellent, very supportive and made suggestions to help achieve a full grant application rather than a partial application - there was even a progress with officers after the scheme was 80% complete"*.
- 2.24. The original Defra prospectus for the SDF stated that *"bureaucracy should be kept to a minimum"* and indeed the relatively simple and transparent nature of the application

and grant administration process has emerged as one of the SDF's main strengths. An applicant in Dartmoor (The Forestry Commission's Dartmoor Rehabilitation Project) reinforced this view, commenting that *"we're used to funding applications being far more complex... the beauty of the SDF is its simplicity"*, and another applicant in Exmoor (Combe Martin Learning Coordinator) stated that the scheme *"was straightforward by comparison with some of the other grant applications"*.

- 2.25. There are strong indications that the receipt of grant funding can act as a significant catalyst in securing further funding from other sources. An emphasis on innovation has meant that in many cases the SDF has been the first source of funding for projects that may appear to be higher risk, thus giving confidence to other fund administrators who may have been unwilling to be the first to commit funds. One grant recipient in the New Forest (Barbastelle and Bachsteins Bat Research project) stated that *"the SDF acted as a catalyst for other sources of funding where the money was conditional on first getting the SDF grant"*.

SCREENING APPLICATIONS

- 2.26. In line with Defra guidance, Grant Advisory Panels have been set up in each Park to screen applications and approve funding. The original Defra SDF prospectus stipulated that *"the Panels must develop working methods which allow a speedy response to requests for grants"*. As such, the way in which the process of screening applications is undertaken varies quite significantly between the National Parks. Some examples of how different NPAs have developed their own ways of screening applications are outlined below:
- In the Yorkshire Dales, the system is different from that of other National Parks in that the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) is contracted by the NPA to administer SDF grants. A formal consultation process takes place over a set period with the SDF officer supplying application forms, supplementary info (where relevant) and a summary of discussions thus far to the NPA. Appropriate NPA staff are then requested to provide comments on individual applications and a working group from the NPA then undertakes the formal assessment and appraisal of projects. This group then makes recommendations to the Trustees of the YDMT who function as the SDF panel.
 - In the New Forest, each applicant is invited to attend the panel meeting in order to present their project and answer any questions. The SDF officer felt that this enabled the panel to make better judgements regarding the likely success and value of a project, having met the project leader in person and had the chance to discuss their plans face to face.
 - On Exmoor, all applicants first complete a simple project ideas form and on the basis of this are provided guidance on eligibility and completion of the full application form. Submitted applications are initially appraised by the Sustainable Economy Officer. These appraisals are reviewed by the Authority's senior Leadership Team and the Sustainability and Economy Manager and an officer recommendation to the panel is agreed.

- 2.27. The size of the grant panels varies between National Parks, although the majority consist of around 10 members. These tend to be drawn from the local community, and consist of representatives from a range of interest areas, such as business, agriculture and tourism. In the Peak District and Broads, two young people also sit on the Panel, adding a further dimension to the decision making process. Panel meetings tend to take place on a quarterly basis, although some are more frequent, such as in the North York Moors where the Panel (shared with a neighbouring AONB) convenes every other month.
- 2.28. Defra guidance in the SDF prospectus advised that *“to speed the process, applications on the smaller grants (perhaps of up to £1000) will be put through to the Sustainable Development Officer, with these decisions being reported subsequently to the Panel”*. This guidance is applied in varying ways, with some NPAs such as Dartmoor having chosen to set a slightly higher lower limit (in that case £2000) for the value of projects that need to be screened by the panel, with smaller applications being approved or denied by the SDF officer and the Director of Planning and Sustainable Development. In Northumberland, there is a main grants panel which considers applications of over £5,000, and a small grants panel made up of NPA staff members, which deals with applications of under £5,000. Others, such as the North York Moors NPA, hold officer meetings to make decisions on small grants.
- 2.29. The process of receiving and screening applications helps to shape and improve the benefits provided by some projects, with guidance frequently being provided by SDF officers to enhance the value of the project and therefore improve the chances of funding being approved. Discussions with grant recipients revealed a number of projects where this had been the case, for example one grant recipient in the Peak District (Green Grindleford Project) stated that *“the project was expanded. We hadn’t originally planned to have a wetland area and bringing that in made the application stronger”*.

PAYMENT OF THE GRANT AID

- 2.30. In the majority of National Parks, grant aid is paid retrospectively, which can be difficult in some cases. This is particularly the case for smaller community groups who hold little working capital and have sometimes found it difficult to cover costs before being reimbursed from the SDF. One grant recipient from the North York Moors (Exploring Nature Project) stated that *“money from the SDF in advance for projects is extremely beneficial especially where there are small voluntary groups who do not have the capital to invest upfront”*. Dartmoor NPA and the Broads have adopted the unusual practice of paying grant funds in advance of expenditure as a matter of course, and recipients found this to be highly beneficial.
- 2.31. Some NPAs will, under special circumstances, release funds against proof of evidence that an order has been placed (for instance releasing grant aid to a project against a supplier’s invoice). For example, in the North York Moors again, the same grant recipient stated that for their project *“none of the individual groups had their own funds - as a consequence the National Park agreed for money to be claimed in advance for each trip as long as receipts are collected and provided”*. Some projects found that they had to juggle the receipt of invoices from suppliers and demands for payment so that

funding was received from the SDF in the interim, although in most cases funds were paid out reasonably quickly once invoices were submitted.

- 2.32. Not all applicants found the process of claiming funding straightforward. In Exmoor, one applicant (Porlock Art Festival project) stated that *“the organisation found that the financial regulations were difficult and more complicated than other application processes. Work had to be brought from local artists and receipts received before Exmoor National Park paid the bills. In contrast, with Art Life, a large proportion of funding was given in advance to other projects”*. Indeed, when talking to grant recipients, the most common area in which they felt that the SDF could be improved was funding arrangements, with many commenting that up-front funding would make things far easier for them to operate the projects. Despite this view, the majority were aware and accepting of the fact that retrospective funding is the normal way for grant aid to be administered, and appear to have managed their budgets successfully despite this.

MONITORING PROJECTS

- 2.33. The original Defra SDF prospectus stated that *“auditing will be achieved mainly by maintaining close contact with the projects as they develop and a “light touch” regime”*.
- 2.34. The monitoring and evaluation of projects has emerged as one area where the majority of SDF officers felt that improvements could be made. In most cases, any shortcomings in this area were attributed to a lack of time for more comprehensive monitoring, and to the fact that the administration of the scheme and processing applications takes priority over spending time and resources on evaluating completed projects. As such, the extent and way in which the required annual reports are made to Defra varies between the National Parks.
- 2.35. The majority of project monitoring by NPAs is carried out anecdotally on an informal basis. SDF officers seem to be generally familiar with the success or otherwise of projects, although this is not necessarily formally recorded. However this is not always the case. In the New Forest, one of the more comprehensive monitoring systems has been implemented, with grant recipients completing a short progress report at each stage of their funding claim as well as a project report to be submitted within one month of completion. Similarly, the North York Moors uses staged reports tailored to each project, plus an end of project monitoring form for all projects, and a 1 year update report in some cases. However, several SDF officers have commented that to ask the grant recipient to do too much in the way of form filling and ongoing project monitoring against set indicators would be contradictory to the idea of the SDF being an accessible and relatively simple scheme.
- 2.36. In some cases, monitoring requirements have been incorporated within the conditions imposed on a project, for example in Dartmoor, the Moor Trees Offender Training and Employment project grant applicant stated that *“there was a condition imposed that we had to produce an independent and academically robust report looking at the reduction in re-offending”*.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS CHAPTER

2.37. The following conclusions arise from this Chapter:

- The NPAs have tended to retain the **original criteria and priorities** stated in the Defra prospectus to frame the objectives for their SDF schemes. While relatively few restate these ‘verbatim’ in the scheme literature provided to applicants, SDF officers commented that these criteria and priorities continue to be relevant to the needs evident in their areas.
- In line with the Defra prospectus, all NPAs expect applicants to the scheme to demonstrate that their project will deliver a mix of **economic, social and environmental benefits**. This has meant that some projects have needed to change their focus in order to qualify for grant aid. Economic benefits sought by the National Parks are the creation of employment, training and generation of local income. Social benefits sought most frequently include raising awareness of sustainable development, improving access to or within the National Park, the protection of historical and cultural heritage and improvements to health and well-being. Frequently sought environmental benefits include the generation or conservation of energy, biodiversity, reduction of pollution and waste and the mitigation of climate change.
- Notwithstanding the common approach taken to setting the objectives for their schemes, the NPAs have developed their own systems for the **operation and administration of the SDF**, and as such there is considerable variation in the ways in which the scheme is operated, reflecting the circumstances and characteristics of each Park and its surrounding area.
- There is considerable variation between the way in which the SDF officers **screen applications and monitor projects** although the use of an independent grants panel, as set out in the Defra prospectus, is followed by all NPAs
- Most SDF officers work as full-time employees of their NPA but the SDF is only part of their role. This evaluation has not sought to quantify the full **costs of administration** but it is apparent that direct staff costs drawn from the SDF budget are within the 10% administration allowance provided for in the Defra prospectus.
- The relatively **straightforward and transparent processes** associated with applying to the SDF stands out as being a significant strength of the scheme overall. All the grant recipients interviewed during this evaluation were complimentary about the support they received from NPA staff during the project planning and grant application process. Community groups with little previous experience of delivering publicly funded projects found the ‘hands on’ approach taken by the SDF officers particularly helpful.
- One aspect of the scheme’s administration that some grant recipients, particularly small voluntary groups with little working capital, found difficult was the payment of grant aid in arrears following completion of the work. The approach adopted

by some NPAs of releasing funds against evidence that expenditure had been committed was seen as helpful, and the financial risk to the NPAs does not appear to be significant.

- The original Defra prospectus encouraged NPAs to adopt a 'light touch' regime of **monitoring and auditing of projects** and there is wide variation in the approaches taken. Most beneficiaries questioned agree that this has been achieved. The monitoring of outputs delivered by projects is done by most NPAs only at the point of the payment of grant aid and in most cases this is done simply through submission of receipted invoices to the SDF officer and a statement that the required outputs (specified in the offer letter) have been achieved. Two NPAs (Northumberland and the New Forest) require more frequent reporting of progress on receipt of claims and prior to payment of grant aid which some projects have found onerous. Several SDF officers would welcome guidance on a simple system for recording the progress and outputs of projects.

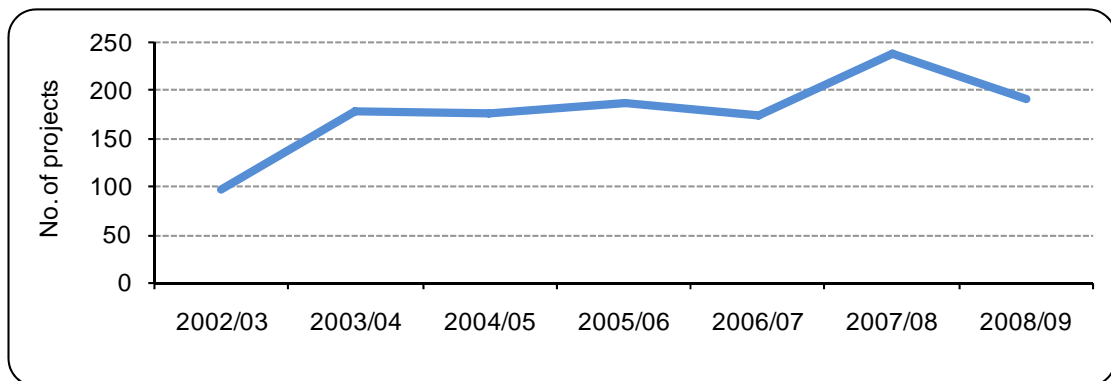
3. OUTPUTS OF PROJECTS

- 3.1. This chapter provides a factual summary of the direct outputs of the SDF programme in terms of the numbers and types of projects awarded funding, the size of grants and the types of grant holder. The broader impacts of these outputs are considered in the following chapter.

NUMBER OF PROJECTS

- 3.2. The databases of projects provided by the NPAs show that a total of 1,235 separate projects received funding support from the programme from its start until the end of March 2009. This does not include projects that were approved for funding but did not proceed. A significantly greater number (not recorded) have received advice and guidance but did not progress to funding under the programme.
- 3.3. **Figure 3.1** shows that there was been an initial rise in the number of projects that received funding as the NPAs appointed staff and promoted the scheme, with recent (but not significant) fluctuations in the last six years. Although each NPA receives annual funding of £200,000 to run their SDF, there is provision for this money to be carried over between years, particularly where funding is allocated to a project in one year but the work has not been completed until the following year. The following factors explain the variation in the number of projects completed each year.
- Activity in the first year focussed on establishing and promoting the scheme. Funding was not confirmed by Defra until midway through the year and relatively few projects had completed before March 2003.
 - There has been a gradual build up in applications, as potential beneficiaries of the scheme have become aware of it and have gathered their own resources before submitting an application. As noted elsewhere in the report, it is often the case that community groups take several months or even years to submit an application.
 - Dartmoor and Exmoor NPAs each received additional funding of £600,000 from the South West of England Regional Development Agency over the three years between 2006 and 2009. Projects funded with this additional money are included in this evaluation.
 - The New Forest National Park Authority came into being in March 2005 and did not operate their SDF scheme until 2006/07.

Figure 3.1. Number of projects funded in each year

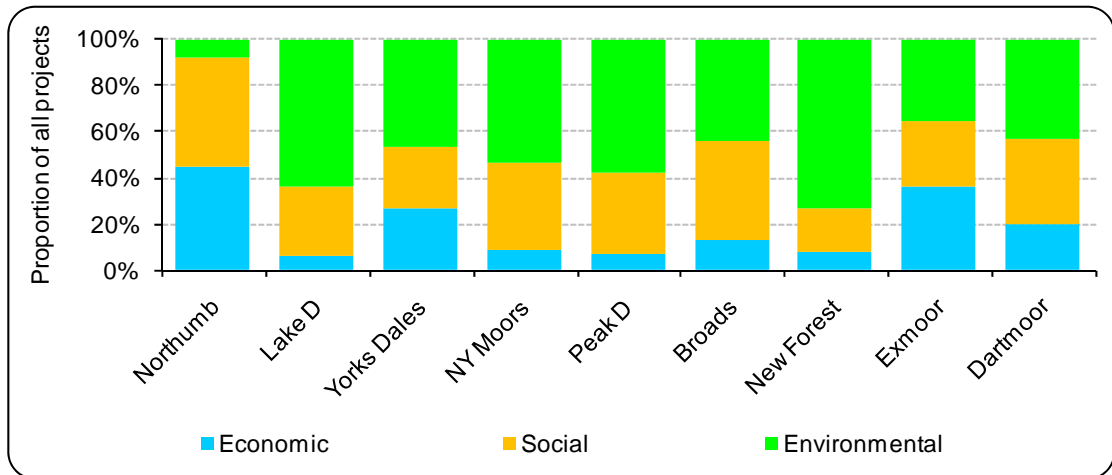


OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF PROJECTS

- 3.4. Notwithstanding the requirement that all projects were expected to demonstrate benefits across the three 'pillars' of sustainable development (para. 2.5), the database of projects assembled by SDF officers for this evaluation included a field attributing the 'Principal Focus' (either economic, social or environmental) to each of the funded projects.
- 3.5. This decision was a subjective one and discussion with the SDF officers revealed significantly different approaches. For instance, whereas a project to pilot a biomass boiler by a private business in Northumberland National Park was categorised as being an economic project, in Dartmoor it was more likely to be categorised as environmental. As a result, the detailed analysis discussed below should be viewed with caution, although the broad trends and findings are considered valid.
- 3.6. Analysis of the data provided by the National Park Authorities shows that nearly half (47%) of all projects were classified as environmental, just over a third (35%) as social and the remainder (18%) as economic. There is significant variation between the National Parks. **Figure 3.2** shows that Northumberland NPA classified nearly half (48%) of its projects as principally social, 44% principally economic and only 8% principally environmental. In contrast, the New Forest judged three quarters of its projects (74%) to be principally environmental, 19% social and 7% economic.
- 3.7. In part, these differences arise from SDF officers' interpretation of project outcomes. However, analysis of the titles and, in some cases short descriptions, of projects available to this evaluation reveal apparent differences of emphasis. For instance, the Northumberland National Park Authority has encouraged projects to deliver tangible economic benefits (within the context of sustainable development) while other National Parks have placed the emphasis on the social (for instance the Peak District) or environmental outcomes (the New Forest) that sustainable development can deliver.
- 3.8. The comparison between the most sparsely (Northumberland) and most densely populated (New Forest) of the English National Parks may reflect a difference in emphasis by the NPA, but one that is consistent with the purposes of the National Park designation. Whereas the Northumberland NPA has identified a need to

support the economic vitality of small businesses in remote communities, the emphasis in the New Forest has been on environmental issues because of local aims to lower the New Forest’s high CO₂ emissions, and realise the opportunities for the use of wood fuel in the area, plus the greater availability of other funding such as LEADER for projects of a predominantly economic and social nature.

Figure 3.2. Variation in the principal focus of projects between National Parks



THE POLICY THEMES ADDRESSED BY PROJECTS

3.9. Sustainable development can be thought of as the prism through which all human activities can be viewed, so there is a wide breadth of different policy areas that the SDF can potentially support. As noted in the previous chapter, the NPAs have deliberately not been prescriptive in the types of projects they have been willing to support through the SDF. The database of projects compiled by SDF officers identified the single ‘principal theme’ for each project from a list of 11 options, as shown in **Box 3.1** below.

Box 3.1. Principal themes allocated to each project in the database developed for this evaluation.

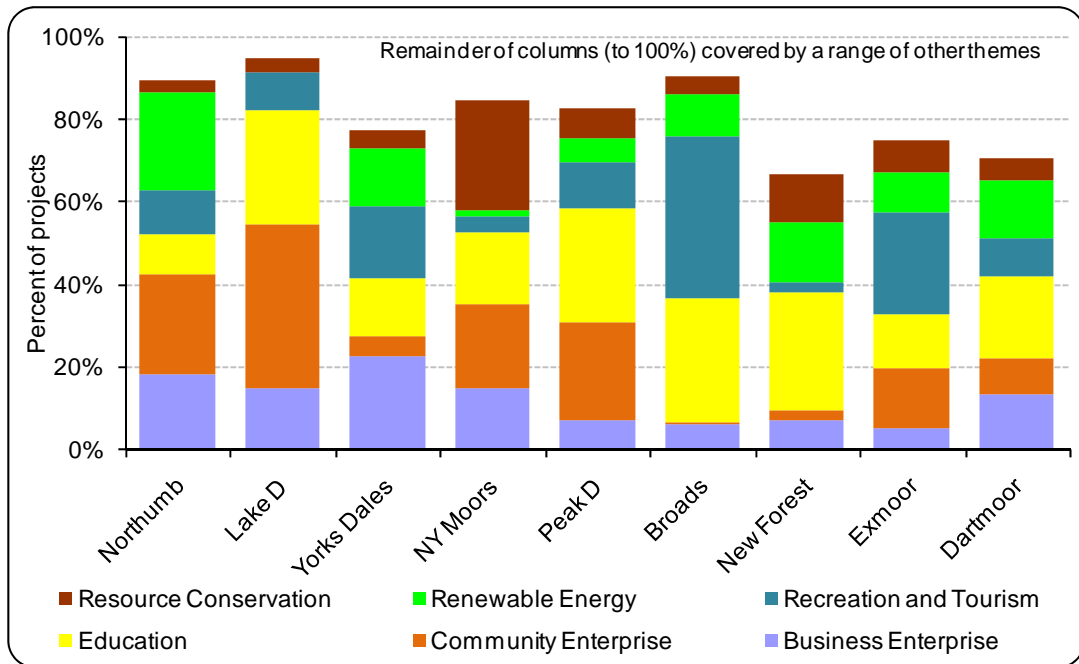
• Biodiversity	• Resource Conservation
• Business Enterprise	• Renewable Energy
• Community Enterprise	• Sustainable Transport
• Education	• Training and Development
• Recreation and Tourism	• Other
• Recycling	

3.10. Across all National Parks, the most frequently selected themes were education (21% of projects), community enterprise (17%), recreation and tourism (14%), business enterprise (12%), renewable energy (9%) and resource conservation (8%). The least frequently selected themes were training and development (6%), biodiversity (5%), sustainable transport (3%) and recycling (2%), with a further 1% of projects being classified as covering other themes.

- 3.11. Not surprisingly, generic themes that can be applied to a variety of different policy domains, such as education, community enterprise and business enterprise are amongst the most frequent. Themes with a more specific focus on the outcome (potentially where a broad sustainable development approach might be more difficult to achieve) such as biodiversity and sustainable transport were less frequent.
- 3.12. It is interesting to note that, while the previous section found that the environment was the most frequent principal focus of projects, community and economic themes emerge more strongly from the analysis in this section. Discussion with SDF officers (and analysis later in this chapter of the types of grant recipient) suggests that, in many cases, the SDF has been used to apply an environmental objective to a project that has a strong social or economic basis. Projects such as the Penruddock School Wildlife Project in the Lake District, the contribution towards the National Trust's Malham Tarn Bus Services in the Yorkshire Dales and Green Grindleford project in the Peak District⁸ provide examples of this.
- 3.13. There is significant variation between the National Parks (see **Figure 3.3** which omits the less frequently selected themes for clarity). Again it is likely that the subjective nature of the allocation of themes to projects by SDF officers accounts for much of this variation. For instance, it may be that the high proportion of projects in the Lake District categorised under the generic 'community enterprise' theme (perhaps because of the lead shown by community groups) might have been categorised under different headings, based more on the outcome, in other National Parks. Similarly, the high proportion of resource conservation projects in the North York Moors seems to be largely down to the SDF officer's judgement of what falls into this category (for instance one project classified under resource conservation due to the fact that it was an eco-renovation; "*to renovate a Village Hall to provide more sustainable and flexible community facilities*" is likely to have been classified under community enterprise in other National Parks).

⁸ See Appendix 5 for a description of the Green Grindleford project.

Figure 3.3. Variation in the principal themes of projects by National Park



- 3.14. The variation between National Parks for some of the more specific themes such as renewable energy (accounting for a quarter of projects in Northumberland and few projects in the Lake District and North York Moors) and recreation and tourism (39% of projects in the Broads and 25% on Exmoor compared to 2% in the New Forest and 4% in the North York Moors) suggests some real differences that may be in part due to differences in the character of the National Parks and their communities and in part due to the way the SDF has been promoted by the National Park Authority. The availability of other funds that may be available to support particularly project outputs also varies between different National Parks and this is likely to be responsible for some of the observed variation.
- 3.15. Comparison of the breakdown of 'principle themes' over time shows some (but not conclusive) evidence of a trend for some of the themes. **Figure 3.4** suggests that the proportion of projects classified under resource conservation and renewable energy has been rising. An increased focus on renewable energy (from 5% of projects in 2003/04 to 20% in 2008/09) is to be expected, particularly in view of the debate that has been taking place within several of the NPAs over the use SDF in relation to climate change and by increased awareness and other measures to stimulate low carbon development (e.g. match funding opportunities and changes in planning policy). (para. 2.15). **Figure 3.5** suggests a small overall decline in the proportion of projects whose principal focus is biodiversity and recycling.

Figure 3.4. Principal themes which show evidence of a rising trend

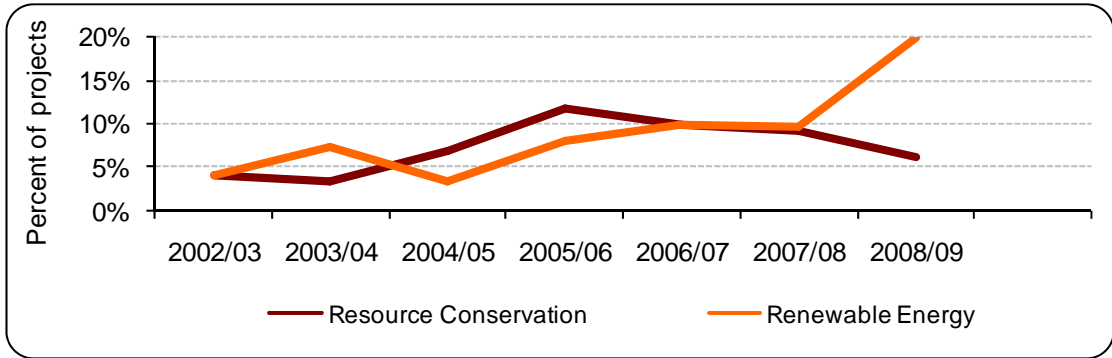
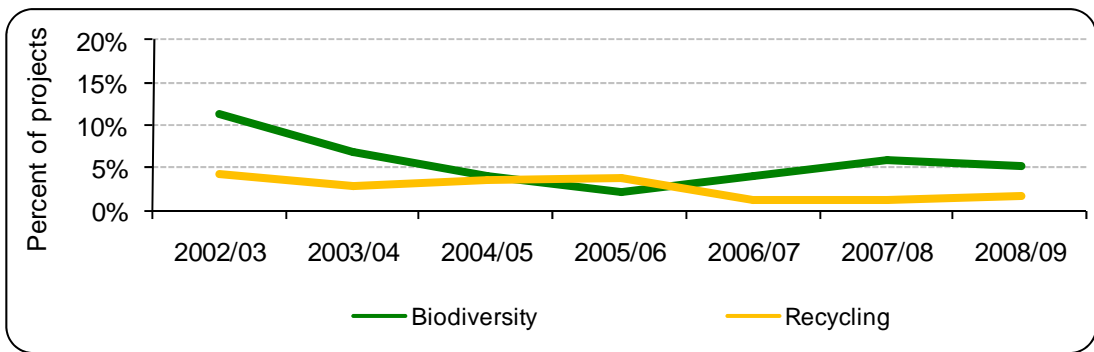


Figure 3.5. Principal themes which show evidence of a falling trend

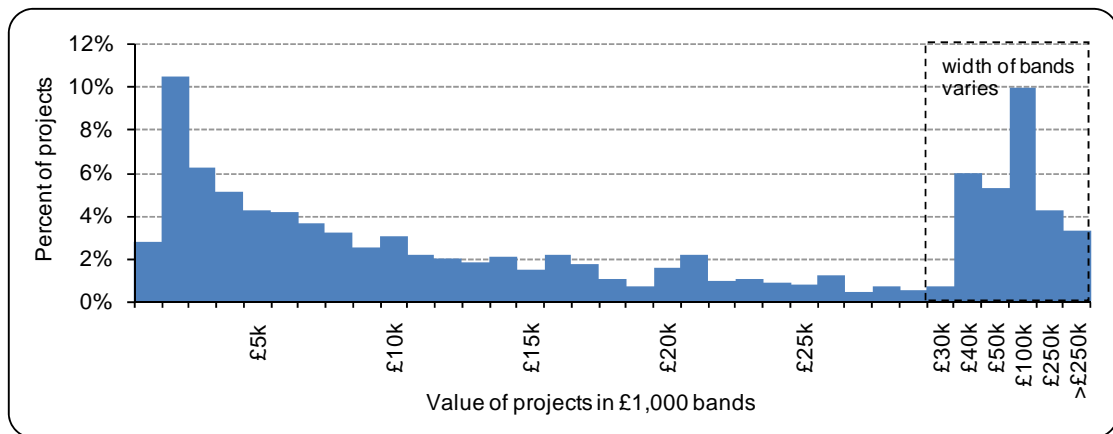


3.16. Further consideration of public benefits delivered by projects is covered in the following chapter.

THE SIZE OF PROJECTS

3.17. There is a wide variation in the cost of projects (i.e. the matched funding, including in-kind contributions and the SDF grant aid) that have received funding from the programme. As **Figure 3.6** shows, most projects are relatively small (62% cost less than £20,000 and 29% cost less than £5,000). At the other end of the scale, there are a few very large projects (which, as noted below, tend to receive low intervention rates from the SDF), with 17% of projects being worth over £50,000 and 3% (41 projects) being over £250,000. While the mean average cost is £45,389 this is weighted by the small number of large projects. The modal average of £1,000 to £2,000 gives a more representative idea of average size.

Figure 3.6. Distribution of total value of projects



- 3.18. There has been no obvious trend in the cost of projects over time. If large projects worth over £250,000 are excluded, the mean average size of projects for all National Parks has stayed relatively constant at around £24,687 in each year. The highest mean average cost (£29,327) occurred in 2008/09 while the lowest mean average cost was £22,116 in 2005/06.
- 3.19. There is a significant variation in the size of projects between the National Parks. Again excluding projects over £250,000 in size, projects in the Peak District have tended to be the smallest (with a mean average cost of £14,400 and 43% costing less than £5,000), followed by the New Forest (with a mean of £20,258 and 33% costing less than £5,000). The initial review of the Programme (CEPAR – see para. 1.10) also commented on the wide reach of the SDF in the Peak District where small grants are the norm.
- 3.20. Some of the variation in the data is due to differences in the way the cost of large projects, to which the SDF may be supporting one output of many, is recorded. In some instances, the value of the entire project has been recorded (even through the SDF is contributing a small proportion to this), whereas in other cases, it is only the value of the component part of the project that the SDF is matched funding that has been entered into the database of projects. This is likely to account for the high average value of projects in Northumberland (£37,000). It is not easy to come to a firm view on how the total project value should be recorded, although in principle it is suggested that NPAs should seek to isolate the value of the specific outputs that the SDF is supporting.
- 3.21. There is a difference in the types of activities and outputs between large and small projects. Projects classified as being principally economic tend to be larger than those classified as environmental or social. Economic projects account for a quarter (23%) of projects costing less than £50,000 but only 14% of projects costing less than £5,000. Whereas around a third of environmental and social projects cost less than £5,000, only a quarter of economic projects do so.
- 3.22. Projects that provided education or addressed recycling tended to have a low cost (around a third cost less than £5,000 and fewer than 17% cost more than £50,000). In contrast, training and development projects tended to be larger (a quarter costing

more than £50,000). Renewable energy projects tend to be polarised between large capital investment projects (27% costing more than £50,000) and smaller feasibility studies (22% costing less than £5,000).

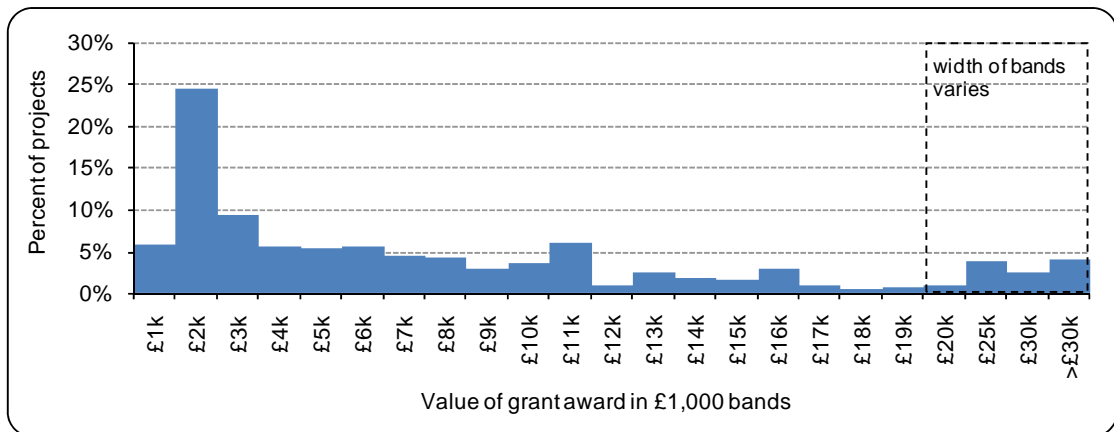
AMOUNTS AWARDED TO PROJECTS

- 3.23. NPAs are free to award the amount of grant aid that they consider necessary to enable the project to achieve its public benefits subject to upper limits in the rate of grant aid (the intervention rate) set out by Defra. Defra’s prospectus for the programme (Appendix 2) states that “the level of grant support for the voluntary sector will not normally exceed 75%. For other organisations it will not normally exceed 50%. Up to 100% will be available in exceptional circumstances and in most cases this will require contribution in kind such as volunteer time or loan of equipment, premises, land etc”. However, Defra have not set down either an upper or lower limit for the amount that can be paid.

The value of grant aid awarded

- 3.24. Nearly a quarter of projects received between £1,000 and £2,000 in grant aid and half of all projects received less than £5,000 (Figure 3.7). Compared to other sources of public funding in rural areas, this level of grant aid can be considered to be small. For instance, grants allocated under the England Rural Development Programme tend to be significantly higher (capital grants to businesses and community groups being commonly in the order of £20,000).

Figure 3.7. Distribution of the value of grant awarded to projects



- 3.25. There are differences in the type of projects receiving small and large amounts of grant aid. Community enterprise and educational projects undertaken by community or voluntary sector groups make up a relatively high proportion (about half) of projects receiving small amounts of grant aid (less than £1,000). Conversely, business enterprise and renewable energy projects undertaken by profit making businesses and charities make up a high proportion (over half) of larger projects (receiving over £20,000).
- 3.26. There are also differences in the themes of activity that received small and large amounts of grant aid. A high proportion of small grants (nearly half of projects receiving less than £1,000) were given to projects involved in community enterprises

and education. Examples include the support for a community newsletter promoting sustainable practices in the village of Horton in the Yorkshire Dales (£1,262 over two years), a sustainable transport project run by Ambleside Primary School in the Lake District (£592), a visit of the Club '99 youth group to the How Hill Nature Reserve in the Broads (£162) and an arts festival in the village of Porlock on Exmoor (£750).

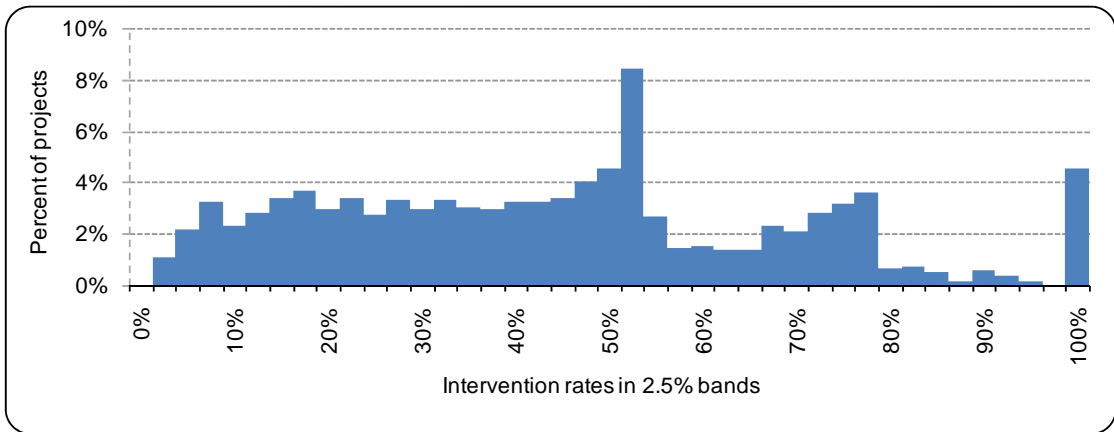
- 3.27. Conversely, a high proportion of projects receiving larger grants (41% of projects receiving in excess of £20,000) involved business enterprise or renewable energy. For instance, the Kielder District Demonstrating Heating Scheme in Northumberland received £50,000 to develop a community-scale biomass heating system, the Country lanes cycle centre near Windermere in the Lake District received £65,717 and the South West Forests project received £74,841 of which £6,155 came from the Dartmoor SDF to hold Woodfair events and make the Woodfare Network financially sustainable within 3 years.

The intervention rate

- 3.28. The most commonly received intervention rate was just over 50% but, in general, there is a relatively even spread of intervention rates between 10% and 80% (**Figure 3.8**). Given the guidance set out by Defra on the expected maximum levels of grant aid (para. 3.28), it is significant that 11% of projects were awarded more than 75% and that 18% of projects led by profit-making businesses were awarded more than 55%. Overall, 5% of projects were awarded 100% grant aid. Comparison of projects led by community or voluntary sector bodies and all other projects shows little difference in the distribution of intervention rates. However, it is apparent that many NPAs made a decision to allow intervention rates in excess of 75% for small awards. For instance, the North York Moors NPA awarded 28 projects with more than 75% grant aid, but the large majority of these were to community groups for amounts of between £250 and £800 to fund village hall 'eco-renovation' surveys and other similar small-scale projects and the remainder were for feasibility studies to test the need for further projects⁹. Overall, if awards less than £1,000 are excluded, 6% of projects received more than 75% grant aid.
- 3.29. Whereas some NPAs strictly apply the limits of 75% for projects from the voluntary sector and 50% from other sectors, other NPAs have applied more discretion. Northumberland NPA has allocated in excess of 75% grant aid to only two projects (one of which was a review of the SDF conducted for the NPA by the University of Newcastle). On the other hand, around 8% of the projects (excluding awards less than £1,000) made by the Lake District, Exmoor and the Broads Authority exceeded 75% grant aid.

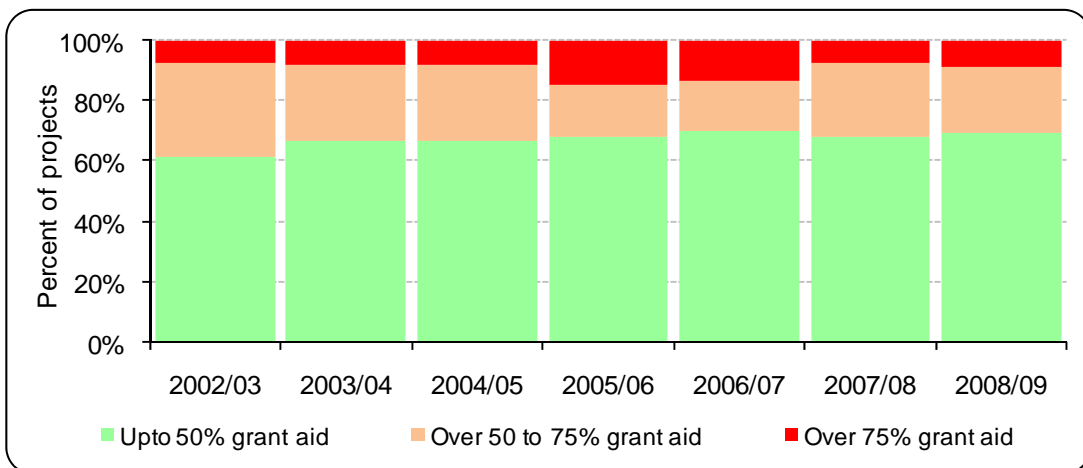
⁹ In order to clarify the use of 'exceptional circumstances' to grant funding in excess of 75%, the North Yorks Moors NPA have an additional filter of a monthly steering group meeting before projects are taken to the Panel. This provides a useful group assessment stage before the Panel deliberations.

Figure 3.8. Distribution of the intervention rate awarded to projects



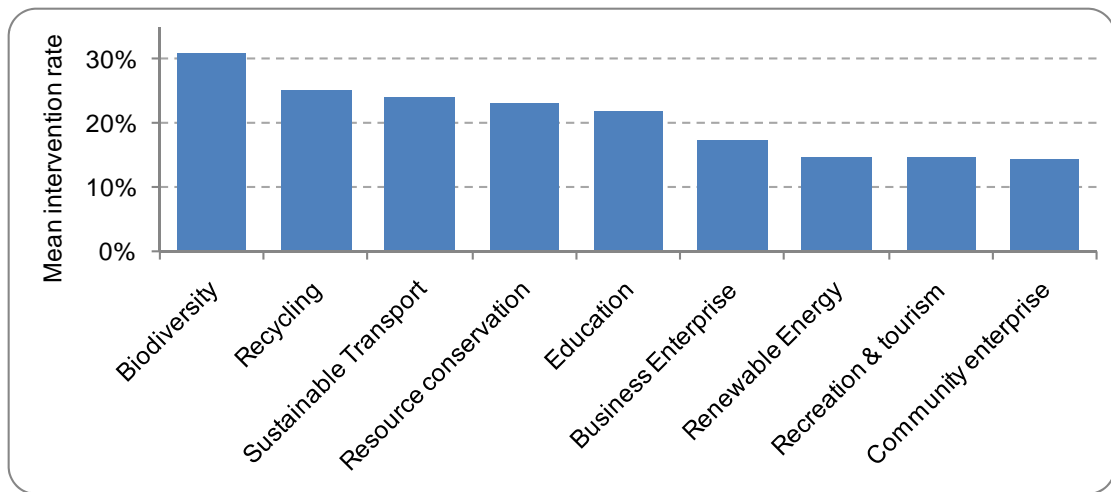
3.30. **Figure 3.9** shows that the proportion of projects receiving over 50% and 75% grant aid has varied little over the seven years of the programme.

Figure 3.9. Trend in the intervention rates awarded to projects



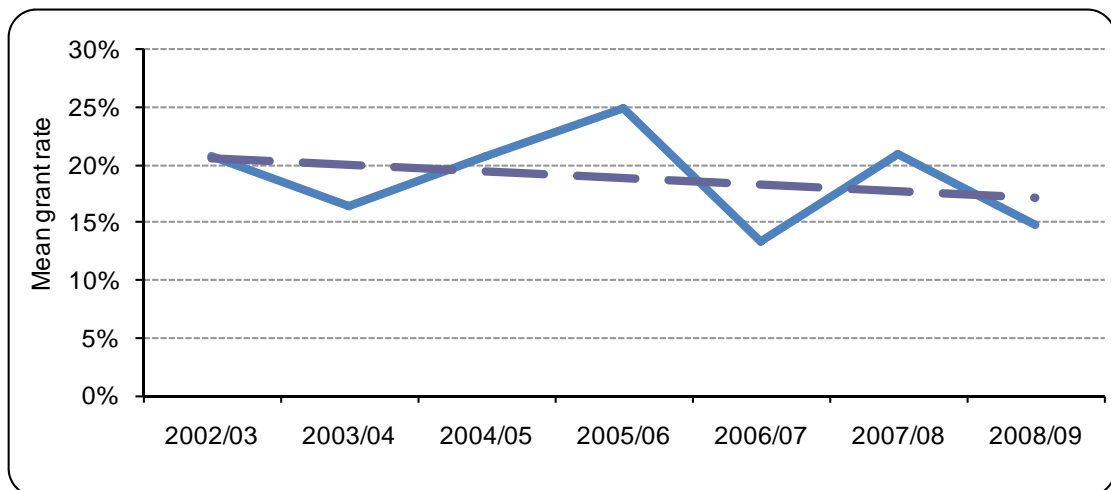
3.31. There has been significant variation between the rate of intervention according to the principal themes of projects. **Figure 3.10** shows that projects in which biodiversity conservation was the main objective received the highest proportion of grant aid (31%), followed by recycling of waste (25%), sustainable transport (24%) and resource conservation (23%). In contrast, projects involving community enterprise tended to receive the least financial support (14% of costs) followed by recreation and tourism projects and those involved in renewable energy (both 15%). It is likely that this variation is due largely to judgements by the SDF officers and awards panels about the reliance on public funding, and SDF funding in particular between the different types of projects. Those with little opportunity for a market return and therefore private sector funding (such as projects conserving biodiversity) therefore justified higher rates of intervention than those involved in enterprise and tourism. It is likely that the relatively low intervention from the SDF for renewable energy projects reflects the large size of some infrastructure projects, for which the SDF was only able to make a small contribution (but often one that has brought benefits, such as public interpretation, that would not have been funded from other sources).

Figure 3.10. Variation in mean intervention rate by principal theme of projects



- 3.32. It is important to recognise that the rate of intervention by the SDF does not necessarily indicate the level of public benefit delivered by projects, rather the extent to which SDF funding is needed to ‘unlock’ this benefit. For instance, a community enterprise project such as the Green Grindelford community allotment project in the Peak District may deliver considerable public benefit across a range of topics, but provision of in-kind costs and support from other funding sources may mean that the requirement for SDF funding is relatively low. Nevertheless, where the SDF is the first external funding received, it can be especially important in providing a ‘vote of confidence’ in the project, drawing in in-kind support from the community (such as provision of labour and materials) or from other public funding bodies. In the situations where the SDF is providing this early ‘seed corn’ funding, low levels of intervention can produce disproportionately high impacts.
- 3.33. Comparing trends in the mean intervention rate has only limited value as a measure because it can be affected by a small number of projects receiving either exceptionally high or low intervention rates. Nevertheless, the long term trend in the mean rate over the seven years of the programme is of interest. **Figure 3.11** shows that, although there has been significant variation between years (particularly the higher average rate that applied in 2005/06), there would appear to be a slight downward trend over the period of the programme.

Figure 3.11. Trend in the mean intervention rate



- 3.34. The New Forest and Yorkshire Dales have had consistently higher mean intervention rates than the other National Parks (42% and 30% respectively, though not in terms of rates exceeding the ceilings recommended by Defra), whereas the North York Moors, Peak District and Lake District have had consistently lower mean intervention rates (12%, 13% and 13% respectively). In these latter three National Parks, the SDF has often provided a small contribution to larger projects acting either as the initial ‘seed corn’ of funding that allowed the project to develop a critical mass and attract other funding, or by contributing to a specific aspect of the project that other funders were less interested in supporting. Examples of projects in the Peak District, all of which received less than 5% of overall costs from the SDF include the Cecil Sharp Centenary Event, restoration of the Bakewell Old House Museum, a contribution to the work of the Lindley Educational Trust, Kerridge Ridge Countryside Project, Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire and the Country Bookstore and Dove Valley Centre.

FUNDING MULTIPLIER EFFECTS

- 3.35. Comparing the value of SDF funding to the amount of other funding used to support projects (this is the value of matched funding in cash rather than in-kind support), gives an indication of the ‘multiplier effect’ of the SDF grant. The database of projects does not identify the source of matched funding (i.e. there is no breakdown between UK exchequer sources, EU funding or contributions from private funding), so the assessment has to be a crude one. Overall, over the period covered by this evaluation, the £9.9 million allocated from the SDF was matched by a further of £42.5 million of cash funding, giving a multiplier of 4.3 (i.e. every £1.00 of SDF drew in, on average, £4.30 of matched funding), rising to 4.6 when the value of in-kind support is included. This compares favourably with other small grant schemes operating in rural areas. For instance the Peak District New Environmental Economy Scheme which ran from 2002 to 2008 produced a funding multiplier of 1.6¹⁰ and a report into the benefits arising from work to restore historic buildings and stone walls in the

¹⁰ Land Use Consultants (2008). Independent Evaluation of the Peak District New Environmental Economy Programme. Report to the Peak District National Park Authority and partners.

Yorkshire Dales National Park calculated that the average multiplier arising from public funding was 2.5¹¹.

- 3.36. Additional analysis of the sources of matched funding has been undertaken by the Northumberland NPA on projects it has funded since 2002¹². This found that 39% of matched funding came from the UK public exchequer in one form or another (national government departments or agencies, regional and local authorities and other publicly funded initiatives), 18% came from European sources (structural or rural development funds), 23% was provided as cash by the private sector, 9% came from charitable trusts and foundations, 3% came as cash from community fundraising and 8% was in the form of in-kind contributions (such as labour).
- 3.37. It is likely that 'multi-benefit' projects that are able to attract support from a range of different sources, such as those supported by the SDF, generate higher funding multipliers for each individual source than more narrowly focussed projects which rely on fewer funding bodies.
- 3.38. It is also possible that projects with high levels of community involvement are more suited to drawing down support from voluntary sector organisations (particularly where the support is provided in kind). Evidence for this comes from an assessment of the support provided by South Somerset District Council in 2005/06 to projects in rural communities which found a multiplier (including in kind support) of 8.2 arising from the Council's own funding¹³.

TYPES OF GRANT RECIPIENT

- 3.39. The database of projects completed by SDF officers records the type of grant recipient under six categories of community or voluntary group, profit-making business, registered charity, statutory organisation, individual and others. In most cases, the definition of these different types is clear, but there is the potential for ambiguity between the categories community / voluntary groups and registered charities (particularly since the Charity Commission has enforced tighter rules on the criteria for charitable activities), and between profit-making businesses and a sole trading individuals.
- 3.40. The most common category of grant holder for all National Parks was community or voluntary group (accounting for 35% of projects), followed by profit making businesses (21%) and registered charities (19%). Statutory organisations received 15% of grant awards while individuals and 'other' grant recipients accounted for 5% of projects each.
- 3.41. In most National Parks, community and voluntary groups and the charitable sector together accounted for the majority of grant recipients (**Figure 3.12**). The proportion was particularly high in the Peak District where 59% of recipients were

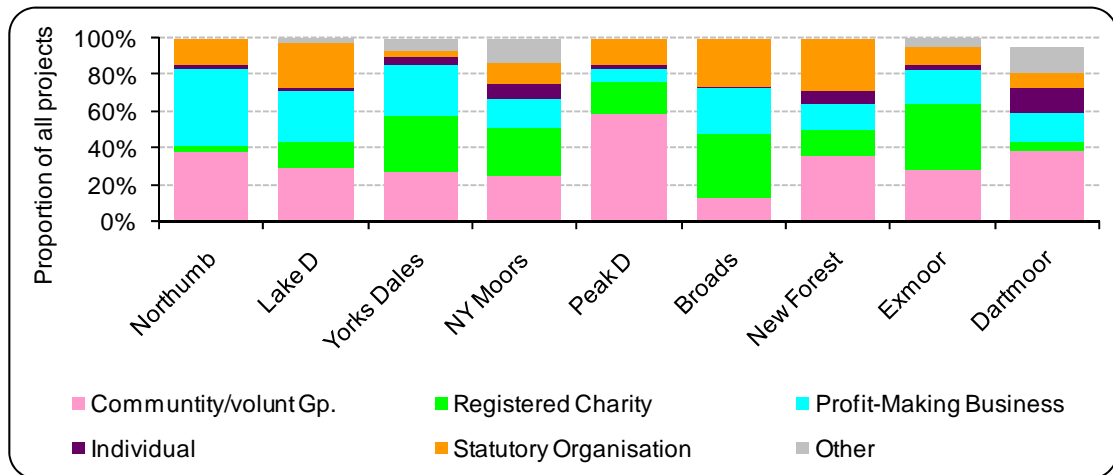
¹¹ ADAS and CCRU (2006). Building Value: Public benefits of historic farm building and drystone wall repairs in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Report to English Heritage and Defra.

¹² NNPA (2010). SDF & Valuation of National Park Authorities: Where did our SDF Match Funding Come From? Report by Richard Austin dated 13 January 2010.

¹³ South Somerset getting closer to communities case study.
www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/pdf/a/n/Regeneration_1.pdf.

voluntary and community groups and 17% were registered charities. Only in the Northumberland National Park were profit-making businesses the largest group (59%), although businesses were also significant recipients in the Yorkshire Dales (29%), Lake District (28%) and the Broads (25%). Statutory organisations accounted for over a quarter of recipients in the New Forest, Broads and Lake District.

Figure 3.12. Variation in type of grant recipient between National Parks



- 3.42. **Figures 3.13 and 3.14** show the intervention rate and value of the projects between the different types of organisation. These show that profit-making businesses have, on average, received the largest projects, but the lowest intervention rates. This would appear to be because a significant number of business-led projects have involved large capital projects of which the SDF was a relatively minor source of funding. For instance, in the North York Moors, the project 'Efficient Esk Moors Caring - Abbeyfield UK' received £40,000 from the SDF towards work with a total value of £3 million to provide living accommodation and day care facilities to the elderly population of Castleton. The SDF funding was used to install renewable energy and other environmentally sustainable features to the project.
- 3.43. In contrast, individuals tend on average to have the smallest projects, but have the highest intervention rate. Projects run by individuals tended to involve pump-priming activity or feasibility studies that justified a higher intervention rate. For instance, the Yorkshire Dales SDF paid for a feasibility study for an individual to develop a business making sheepskin rugs for babies, awarding a 38% grant of £5,061.

Figure 3.13. Variation in grant rate by type of grant recipient

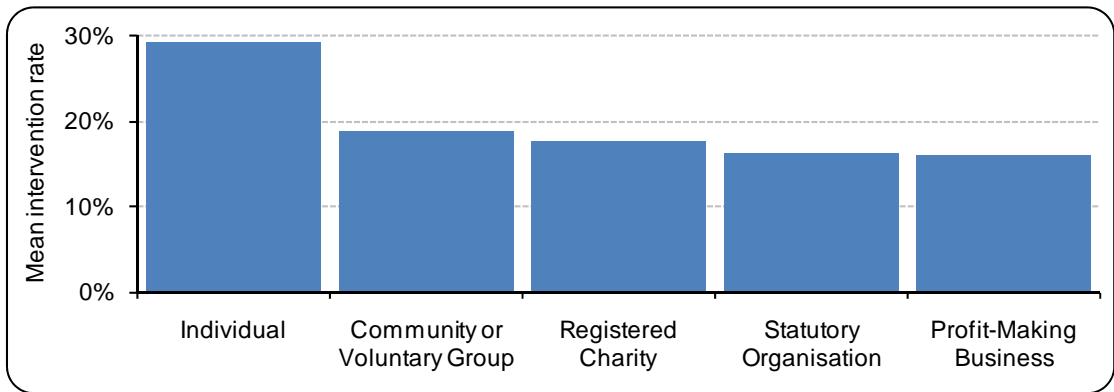
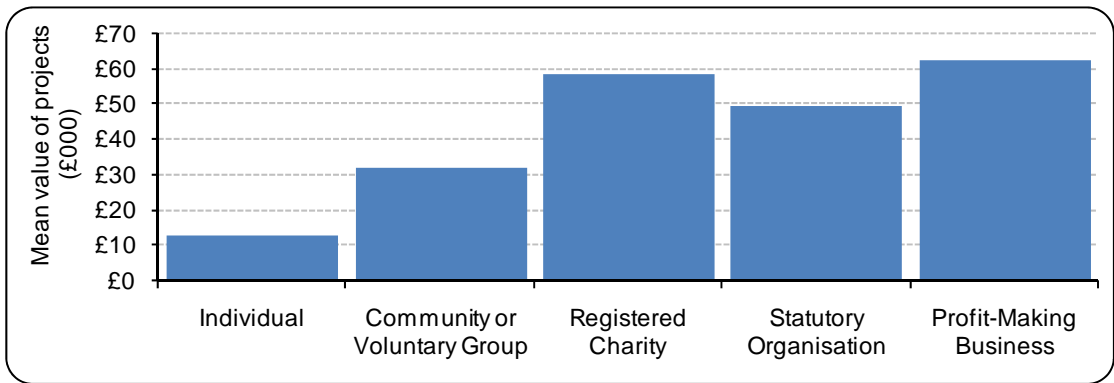


Figure 3.14. Variation in size of projects by type of grant recipient



CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS CHAPTER

3.44. The following conclusions arise from this Chapter:

- During the first seven years of the SDF programme, **1,235 projects have received funding**. This does not include a significantly greater number that received advice and guidance but have not progressed to funding.
- There was an initial **increase in the number of projects receiving funding in the first few years**, with a relatively constant number since, reflecting the lag between project development and completion, an increase in the number of parks operating the programme (the New Forest joined in 2006), and additional funding received from the two South West NPAs between 2006 and 2009).
- Although all projects are required to demonstrate benefits to all three aspects of sustainable development, assessments by the SDF officers suggests that **for around a half of projects, the environment was their principal focus, for a third the focus was social and the remaining 18% were economic**. Differences in interpretation when making this assessment are likely to account for much of the variation between National Parks.
- However a real **difference in emphasis between National Parks** is evident in the principal outcomes sought from the programme. For instance, there is a marked difference between the stronger economic focus applied in Northumberland, consistent with its remote and sparsely populated character, and the stronger environmental focus in the New Forest.
- The **breadth of sustainable development** is evident in the wide spread of policy areas addressed by SDF projects. Generic themes that can be applied to a variety of different policy domains, such as education, community enterprise and business enterprise are amongst the most frequent. More specific topics such as renewable energy and resource conservation are also well represented, particularly in the most recent years of the scheme (reflecting the rising profile of these issues in public policy).
- Although it is difficult to generalise amongst the wide variety of projects, in many cases, it would appear that the SDF has been used to apply an environmental objective to a project that has a strong social or economic basis - for instance, reducing the negative impacts of tourism to a popular site by funding a shuttle bus.
- Typically, **most SDF projects and the grants awarded to them are small** (compared to many other publicly funded projects). Nearly a quarter of projects received between £1,000 and £2,000 in grant aid and half of all projects received less than £5,000. Nearly two thirds of projects involved expenditure of less than £20,000 and nearly a third cost less than £5,000, with the Peak District and New Forest tending to fund the smallest projects and Northumberland the largest.
- Projects classified as being principally economic tend to be larger than those classified as environmental or social. Projects that provide education or support

recycling of waste tended to have a low cost and, in contrast, training and development projects tended to be larger. Renewable energy projects tend to be polarised between large capital investment projects and smaller feasibility studies.

- **The most commonly awarded intervention rate was just over 50%** but, in general, there is a relatively even spread of intervention rates between 10% and 80%. Given the guidance set out by Defra on the expected maximum levels of grant aid, it is significant that 11% of projects were awarded more than 75% (many of which are small projects). The New Forest and Yorkshire Dales have had consistently higher mean intervention rates than the other National Parks (42% and 30% respectively), whereas the North York Moors, Peak District and Lake District have had consistently lower mean intervention rates (12%, 13% and 13% respectively). In these latter three National Parks, the SDF has often provided a small contribution to larger projects acting either as the initial ‘seed corn’ of funding that allowed the project to develop a critical mass and attract other funding, or by contributing to a specific aspect of the project that other funders were less interested in supporting.
- Projects in which biodiversity conservation was the main objective received the highest proportion of grant aid, followed by recycling of waste, sustainable transport and resource conservation. In contrast, projects involving community enterprise, recreation and tourism and renewable energy tended to receive the least financial support.
- It is important to recognise that the **rate of intervention by the SDF does not necessarily indicate the level of public benefit** delivered by projects, rather the extent to which SDF funding is needed to ‘unlock’ this benefit. In the situations where the SDF is providing this early ‘seed corn’ funding, low levels of intervention can produce disproportionately high impacts.
- The SDF typically ‘unlocked’ a relatively high level of matched funding from other sources (producing an average **funding multiplier** of 4.3 in cash, rising to 4.6 when the value of in-kind support is added). It is likely that this is due, in part to the ‘multi-benefit’ nature of SDF projects, giving many of them access to a range of different funding sources.
- **Community and voluntary groups have been the most frequent organisers of projects** (accounting for just over a third of all projects, rising to 59% in the Peak District) and these groups have tended to run small projects. Profit-making businesses have led a fifth of all projects (rising to 59% in Northumberland) and their projects have tended to be larger than those from other groups, but with the lowest intervention rates.

4. IMPACTS OF THE PROGRAMME

- 4.1. This Chapter examines the results of the programme in terms of how the funded projects have affected public policy priorities. The evidence from this analysis comes from the information provided by SDF officers for each project (particularly their assessments of the sustainable development benefits addressed by each project and also the number of individuals engaged, and number of jobs created, by each project), the interviews conducted with the SDF officers and with the sample of projects and with interviews with representatives of regional stakeholders.

FRAMEWORKS FOR EXAMINING IMPACTS

- 4.2. The impacts of the SDF can be judged against three different frameworks. These are: the shared priorities of sustainable development set out in the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy¹⁴; the Government's proposed priorities for National Parks¹⁵; and the reporting criteria required by Defra in its original SDF prospectus (Appendix 2). Each of these frameworks is briefly described (paras 4.3 to 4.6) as a precursor to setting out the headings used in this chapter to examine the impacts of the SDF (para. 4.7).

The Government's priorities for sustainable development

- 4.3. The UK Sustainable Development Strategy 'Securing the Future', published in 2005, sets out four headings to distinguish the shared priorities, agreed with the UK country administrations, for the delivery of sustainable development. These same headings form the framework for the annual reporting of sustainable development indicators by Defra¹⁶. These shared priorities are listed in Box 4.1.

Box 4.1. The four 'shared priorities' for UK action in the Government's sustainable development strategy

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustainable consumption and production• Climate change and energy• Protecting our natural resources and enhancing the environment• Creating sustainable communities and fairer world |
|---|

Government priorities for National Parks

- 4.4. In November 2009, the Government published a consultative document proposing its priorities for National Parks. It sets out 23 priority areas for action that, in combination, will deliver the statutory purposes of the National Park designation. These build on earlier priorities that have guided Defra's funding of NPAs during the period under review. The latest priorities are listed in **Box 4.2**.

¹⁴ TSO (2005). Securing the Future. Delivering UK sustainable development strategy. Cmd 6467.

¹⁵ Defra (2009). Consultation on the English National Parks and the Broads. Draft Circular – revised version combining Circular 12/96 and Circular 125/77. Vision for National Parks: Government priorities.

¹⁶ Defra (2009). Sustainable Development Indicators in Your Pocket 2009. PB13265

Box 4.2. Government Priorities for National Parks

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helping people and nature to adapt to climate change• Mitigating climate change: leading the way• Increasing biodiversity• Maximising value-for-money for the taxpayer• Landscape, heritage and improving quality of place• Protecting and enhancing soils in our most valued landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promoting and delivering agri-environment schemes• Promoting better management of Commons• Access to open country• Coastal access• Ensuring an Effective Rights of Way Network Major Developments• Mineral Working in National Parks• Old Minerals Permissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contribution to Rural Economies• Health and wellbeing• Making tourism sustainable• Affordable Housing• Communications infrastructure• Sustainable transport• Navigation• Defence use of Parks• State of the Parks report• Partnership working
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- 4.5. An appendix to this document sets out the English National Park Authorities' Association (ENPAA) vision for National Parks in 2050 under six headings of: Community engagement; Health, well-being and enjoyment; Climate change; Natural environment and cultural heritage; Sustainable Development; and Community and economy.

Defra's measures of success for the SDF

- 4.6. The Prospectus produced for the SDF by Defra in 2002 (reproduced in Appendix 2) described a number of ways in which the outputs of the SDF should be assessed, in the form of questions. These are listed in Box 4.3.

Box 4.3. Output measures described in Defra prospectus for the SDF

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What have been the social, economic and environmental impacts on communities and individuals, and what added value has the scheme secured?• Has the Fund or projects sparked activity that would not have otherwise occurred?• How effectively have the local objectives set for the Fund by the National Parks been achieved?• Do the different approaches taken by each National Park affect the success of the Fund in each area?• What implications are there for replication elsewhere?• Does the Fund enable us to learn lessons from its successes and failures?• To what extent are both the successful and unsuccessful projects innovative?• What proportion of projects are innovative adaptations of existing approaches to meet changing needs?• How many sustainable management models have been developed?• How effectively has sustainable living been promoted and what has been the result?• How effectively have the National Park Projects been in facilitating the achievement of statutory purposes of conservation and understanding?
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- 4.7. Taking all of the topic areas and issues specified in these three sources into account, this Chapter considers the impacts of the SDF under the following headings:
- Contributions to sustainable consumption and production
 - Contribution to climate change and energy
 - Contributions to protecting our natural resources and enhancing the environment

- Contributions to creating sustainable communities and fairer world
- Support for innovation
- Development of partnerships
- Stimulating activity that would not otherwise have occurred
- Addition of value to other programmes and policy objectives
- Potential for replication elsewhere
- Furthering the purposes of National Parks

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

- 4.8. As noted above, this is one of the UK Government's shared priorities for sustainable development. Indicators of performance under this heading include, at a national level, greenhouse gas emissions, the use of energy and resources including water, production of waste, road transport and environmental impacts on water quality. This section considers the way the SDF has encouraged local supply chains and the way it has increased understanding of the concept of sustainable development.
- 4.9. The way that the SDF has addressed renewable energy is considered under the heading 'Contributions to climate change and energy' and its impact on natural resources is covered under the heading 'Contributions to protecting our natural resources and enhancing the environment'.

Encouragement of local supply chains

- 4.10. Several of the NPAs have supported local product initiatives, particularly the Peak District's Environmental Quality Mark (PDEQM) and the New Forest Produce and New Forest Marque project. These initiatives have received a dedicated supply of funding from external sources or from the NPA's core budget but a number of SDF projects have been used to support particular aspects of this work, particularly where these deliver wider community benefits than those from the main initiative.
- 4.11. A relatively small proportion of projects (perhaps 15%) have involved the production, processing and marketing of goods from local resources to local markets. These have been required to operate within the EU's state aid allocations. For instance in Northumberland the Hadrian's Game Larder Low Food Miles Project is considered to have been particularly effective at connecting local supply chains (although the project organiser has since moved away from the area). In the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales and Dartmoor projects have encouraged the processing of local timber while in Dartmoor a project has supported sheep farmers adding value to their wool.
- 4.12. Over half of projects are recorded in the database as increasing spend in the local economy but in most cases this is through the employment of local people or the use of local contractors on project development rather than as a key output of the project itself. Instead, it is projects that promote the environmental or cultural quality of the area that are considered to be providing a greater benefit to sustainable development and one that is more consistent with National Park purposes. The broader economic benefits of projects are considered further below under the heading 'Contributions to creating sustainable communities and fairer world'.

Support for tourism businesses

- 4.13. Tourism is a key sector of the economy in all of the National Parks and support for this sector is an important way in which the second purpose of National Parks (to promote opportunities for public understanding and enjoyment of the Park) can be fulfilled. Overall, the database of projects shows that 43% of projects have helped to support sustainable tourism and 14% of projects have recreation and tourism as their principal theme. As noted in the previous chapter (para. 3.14) recreation and tourism projects are recorded most frequently in the database of projects on the Broads and Exmoor and are less frequent in the New Forest and North York Moors (but this is influenced by the subjective categorisation of projects by SDF officers).
- 4.14. Most tourism businesses supported by the SDF appear, from the information available to this evaluation, to be small sole trader, family partnerships or small voluntary/charitable bodies and the SDF is typically used to develop new visitor attractions that are based around the environmental character or heritage of the National Park, or to market a recreational opportunity to new social groups. For instance on the Broads, the SDF supported a charity to provide sailing on the River Waveney for disabled people.

Increasing understanding of the concept of sustainable development

- 4.15. One of Defra's objectives for the schemes was "*to generate greater awareness and understanding of sustainability*" and one of the measures of the effectiveness of the programme was "*the number of training/awareness raising sessions on sustainability and the Fund to voluntary organisations, community groups and others*"¹⁷.
- 4.16. Following the initial events held to launch the SDF, NPAs have used a variety of methods to promote the scheme and its objectives to potential applicants (para. 2.21) and this has involved raising awareness of the concept of sustainable development as a whole. Some NPAs have proactively sought to raise awareness of the opportunities presented by the scheme in areas of the Park where there have been few applications, including through liaison between SDF officers with the voluntary and community sector. Northumberland and New Forest National Parks have produced fundraising guidance for local communities which specifically raise awareness of sustainability and SDF.
- 4.17. The database of projects completed by SDF officers for this evaluation records the number of sustainable development training days organised as part of project outputs and also assesses the extent to which projects educate and raise awareness of the need for sustainable development and identifies projects which can be considered as exemplars of sustainable development. These data indicate that around a quarter of projects held at least one event that qualified as a 'sustainable development training day' but the character of these events varies widely. They also indicate that three quarters of projects have raised awareness of the need for sustainable development more generally while nearly half (42%) can be considered as exemplars of sustainable development.

¹⁷ See Appendix 1.

- 4.18. A few projects have a specific objective of raising awareness of sustainability issues with particular audiences (for instance the launch of Berwick's Agenda 21 strategy in the Northumberland National Park and Exmoor Green Ambassadors project) but these represent a small minority of projects. Many more projects (up to a quarter of all projects) have held events to promote their work and, as part of this, have acknowledged the support of the SDF and its focus on sustainable development. In addition, the use of sustainable development as an underpinning 'way of working' is already present in many of the charitable and voluntary sector organisations that have used the SDF. Although not tested in detail by this evaluation, the database of projects shows that profit-making businesses and statutory organisations are less likely to have held awareness raising events than other grant holders and that projects led by statutory organisations are less likely to be considered as exemplars of sustainable development.
- 4.19. With the exception of the minority of projects for which promotion of a sustainable development approach is a main objective, a high proportion of projects (at least three quarters) have acted as advocates for a sustainable development approach in the sense that they have sought to deliver a broad range of mutually dependent economic, social and environmental objectives through their SDF-supported work.

CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

- 4.20. The issue of climate change has grown considerably in importance since the SDF started in 2002. It was not identified as an issue in the original Defra prospectus but is now addressed as one of the Defra's strategic objectives. As noted earlier (para. 2.15), the internal reviews conducted by several of the NPAs concluded that, while climate change is one of the key challenges facing National Parks that the SDF is well placed to address, through support of pilot projects, it was not appropriate to make climate change a primary focus of the Fund. However, five of the NPAs (the Lake District, North York Moors, New Forest, Peak District and Exmoor) assess the extent to which applications to the scheme will address climate change as part of the appraisal process¹⁸.
- 4.21. The database of projects compiled by SDF officers does not single out projects which mitigate or help adapt to climate change but it does identify projects which address renewable energy. Over the period since 2002 a minority of projects (9% overall) have renewable energy as their principal theme or activity. However, as noted earlier (para. 3.15) this proportion has risen significantly to 20% of all projects during the year 2008/09 and amounted to a third of all projects in Northumberland and the Peak District in that year. The database also records which projects generate and/or conserve energy in a sustainable way. This shows that over the period, 30% of projects are judged to have done this with the proportion rising to 35% in the most recent two years. The rising profile of this issue is matched by the introduction of other initiatives such as the Low Carbon Community Challenge in Exmoor, Northumberland, Lake District and North York Moors National Parks.

¹⁸ See Appendix 3.

- 4.22. There are two main types of renewable or energy conservation project supported by the SDF. Firstly there are relatively small feasibility studies or pilot projects that test a new technology or its impacts or fit energy conservation facilities into existing buildings. For instance, in the North York Moors, the SDF funded a number of eco-surveys of village halls to identify opportunities for energy conservation which cost £250 each. The Lake District, North York Moors and Dartmoor SDFs funded hydroelectric feasibility studies (costing £1,500, £567 and £600 respectively).
- 4.23. The second type of renewable energy projects involve large capital investments where the SDF played a small part overall (typically putting in less than 20% of costs). Examples include the Flegg Biomass Project on the Norfolk Broads (with an overall cost of £230,000 of which the SDF contributed 13%) and Gayle Mill Trust project in the Yorkshire Dales (with a cost of £178,000 and SDF intervention of 36%).
- 4.24. Profit-making businesses are most likely to lead renewable energy projects (they were the applicant for 41%) and very few of the larger projects are led by community groups.
- 4.25. Such has been the interest in renewable energy projects in recent years that several of the NPAs (for instance Dartmoor and the Lake District) have needed to consider screening out projects that are not considered to be sufficiently innovative. Developments in technology and its commercial availability mean that projects that would have been considered novel a few years ago are now considered mainstream and are not considered to be providing additional public benefit. Micro-hydro, wood heat and photovoltaic systems installed in private properties or business premises fall into this category and many NPAs are now requiring that renewable energy projects are able to demonstrate additional (for instance social or educational) benefits or are considered to be at the cutting edge of technological development.
- 4.26. In summary, it is clear that climate change, and particularly the piloting and installation of renewable and energy conservation facilities, has grown to become one of the most significant topics addressed by the SDF in recent years. Such is the demand that NPAs have started to be more selective of renewable projects, particularly large capital projects, to ensure that the SDF is continuing to support innovative initiatives and deliver broad public benefits. The findings of this evaluation start to suggest that the experience gained from the SDF puts the NPAs in a good position (with additional funding) to deliver the Government's low carbon policies at a community level within their areas. Further work is required to confirm this.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO PROTECTING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT

- 4.27. This section considers the extent to which the SDF has been able to address the first purpose of the National Park designation – the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. It does so under the headings of conserving biodiversity and landscape quality, sustainable use of natural resources and protection of cultural heritage. Many NPAs also consider that climate change and renewable energy projects (covered above) contribute to this first purpose.

Conserving biodiversity and landscape quality

- 4.28. Perhaps surprisingly, given the role that biodiversity and landscape quality have in determining the natural beauty of National Parks, the direct impact of SDF projects on these environmental benefits has been minor. This may be explained by the availability of alternative funding sources for biodiversity in particular and also the difficulty for some of these projects to show social and economic benefit. The commonly exploited alternative funding opportunities include agri-environment schemes, LIFE and Heritage Lottery Funding. The database of projects suggests that only 5% of projects have had a principal theme of biodiversity and a further 10% of projects (15% in total) have directly conserved and enhanced biodiversity. The impact of projects on landscape quality is not recorded in the database but it is likely that there is a similarly small proportion, with a strong overlap between the two topics. The Lake District, New Forest and Exmoor show the higher proportion of projects addressing biodiversity (around a quarter). In these National Parks, as in the others, the majority of biodiversity projects seek to conserve specific habitats and sites (for instance the Friends of Lepe Country Park project in the New Forest and the Meadow Mania project in the Yorkshire Dales, developing and promoting wild flowers of northern hay meadows and pastures). A minority of projects support the recovery of individual species (for instance the Barbastelle & Bechstein's bat research project in the New Forest and hen harriers nest protection scheme in Northumberland). There are a number of projects submitted by or on behalf of schools to develop parts of the school grounds or curriculum for biodiversity (such as Flash Primary Schools and Westwood Secondary School in the Peak District).

Sustainable use of natural resources

- 4.29. The extent to which projects have sought to improve use of natural resources is recorded in the database in a number of ways. The database shows that a quarter of projects overall have involved the sustainable management of land and a similar proportion have sought to develop a new use for an existing developed site. About half of projects are recorded as having used some element of recycling (for most this is understood to involve the use of recycled paper).
- 4.30. The number of projects for which resource conservation or recycling was their principal theme is considerably less (due in large part to many projects involving this activity being classified under other headings). Among the 8% of projects where resource conservation is the principal theme, most involved improvements to energy efficiency and conservation in community or business premises. A further 2% have recycling as their principal theme and many of these involved the establishment of community composting and waste recycling schemes. Few projects have sought to deliver benefits to water quality and water resources (8% overall, but not as their principal theme). The database does not record projects that improve the quality of air or soil but again this is likely to be small (certainly fewer than 10%).
- 4.31. While many projects have had general objectives to make more effective use of land and premises, the SDF appears to have made a limited contribution to the conservation of specific natural resources. This is perhaps because issues such as waste reduction and recycling are seen as being the prime responsibility of the waste collection authorities while pollution control is the prime responsibility of the

Environment Agency. The main activity supported by the SDF in this area has been through community energy conservation and recycling schemes.

Protection of cultural heritage

- 4.32. A third of projects are recorded as making some level of impact to protect the historic or cultural environment (but not as the principal theme of the project, which was not recorded). These include events and exhibitions to celebrate periods in the history of the National Park (such as the Pax Britannica Roman Roadshow in Northumberland), historic environment surveys and interpretation for particular area (such as the Pilsbury Castle Interpretation Group in the Peak District) and the restoration of individual sites (such as the Rydal Hall Garden Restoration project in the Lake District and Howsham Mill Restoration project in the North York Moors). In addition, many of the projects whose primary focus was not cultural heritage nevertheless had a historic environment dimension, often seeking to celebrate local cultural identity. These include projects that promote the maintenance of stone walls, the holding of environmental arts and theatre festivals and the development of farm trails and interpretation, highlighting archaeological features where they are present.
- 4.33. As well as a significant number of projects whose primary focus was cultural heritage (the precise proportion is not recorded), many other SDF projects (at least a third) take account of the historic environment as part of a larger project.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND A FAIRER WORLD

- 4.34. This third of the UK Government's shared priority areas for sustainable development covers a broad range of social and economic issues. The indicators monitored by Government include community participation (especially from both young adults and older people), crime and the fear of crime, employment, poverty, education and skills, health and well-being and accessibility to services¹⁹.
- 4.35. Putting these issues together with the priorities that Government has proposed for National Parks (para. 4.4), this section is split into the following headings:
- Involvement with communities
 - Employment
 - Health and well-being
 - Education and training
 - Countryside access and recreation
 - Sustainable transport

Involvement with communities

- 4.36. Defra's prospectus for the SDF programme stated that all projects must "*have the support or involvement of local communities*"²⁰. Most of the NPAs have included this as one of their application criteria²¹ and those that do not make clear that engagement with communities is a key objective for the scheme (for instance the Lake District

¹⁹ Defra (2009). Sustainable Development Indicators in Your Pocket 2009. PBI 3265

²⁰ See Appendix 1.

²¹ See Appendix 3.

NPA's objective for their SDF reads "*Communities, individuals, businesses and organisations working together for a sustainable future for the Lake District.*"

- 4.37. The database of projects does not record those projects where the principal theme is community involvement, but this is covered as one of the social benefits under the heading "*engages local communities / volunteers*". Overall, nearly three quarters (72%) of projects are recorded as providing this benefit. Not surprisingly, community groups / voluntary organisations represent the largest type of applicant, followed by registered charities, whereas relatively few of these projects are led by profit-making businesses.
- 4.38. In its prospectus, Defra stated that priority should be given to projects that "*involve young people and combat social exclusion*" and "*encourage links between urban groups and those resident in the National Park*". The database also shows that half of all projects involved young people to some degree and half engaged people from urban centres with the National Park. This does not distinguish projects where reaching these audiences was a primary objective of the project (as opposed to one of the benefits achieved) but the proportion of projects where this was the case is likely to be relatively low (less than 10%).
- 4.39. Discussion with SDF officers during the evaluation identified that the NPAs see work with populations from outside their National Park as essential but also a challenge. The Northumberland SDF officer stated that the low population density of the National Park makes engagement with surrounding communities particularly important. The Peak District SDF officer commented that gaining access to specific populations in urban areas (such as the long term unemployed) is time consuming and hard to sustain and this was reinforced by officers from the other Parks. Barriers include perceptions from the communities themselves, and the projects working with them, that the National Parks have little to offer their particular needs, and also the cost of transporting people to, and accommodating them in, the National Park. However, it was agreed that such projects are usually highly rewarding. The Exmoor NPA in particular (which is one of the most remote from large conurbations) has had several very positive experiences working with black and ethnic minority groups from Barnstaple, Taunton, Bridgwater and Bristol such as the Imayla Project which received £42,000 SDF funding in 2004/05. Most NPAs are also engaged with work on this issue through other programmes such as the national MOSAIC project and, in the Yorkshire Dales, projects like *Beyond the Boundary and Dales Experience*
- 4.40. At least 65 projects involved schools (based on the name of the project) and as noted above, many of these involved helping them developing their environmental assets or curriculum. Statutory bodies appear to be relatively more significant than other types of applicants as organisers of projects involving young people and urban populations, probably partly because of the involvement with schools but it may also suggest that public bodies are more effective at working with 'hard to reach' audiences than community or voluntary organisations.
- 4.41. As shown in the previous chapter (Figures 3.10 and 3.11), projects led by community and voluntary groups tend to be relatively small and, on average, have received a higher rate of grant support than statutory organisations, charities or profit-making businesses. Many of the community groups interviewed during this evaluation

commented that the SDF grant was critical to their group gaining momentum after it was started, with the 'seed corn' funding for the project giving leaders of the group confidence to get involved in other work. For instance, the organiser of the Drama in the Community Group at Bellingham (Northumberland), who received funding to purchase equipment, stated "*once we received the equipment it changed the ethos of the group – we have gone on to produce plays outside and in different villages*".

- 4.42. SDF officers commented that the SDF's ability to support community initiatives within the National Park has had a positive impact on the way the Park Authority is perceived. As stated by the Northumberland SDF officer "*The SDF has done a lot to improve the image of the National Park – it shows that we're not just about conservation and planning rules*".

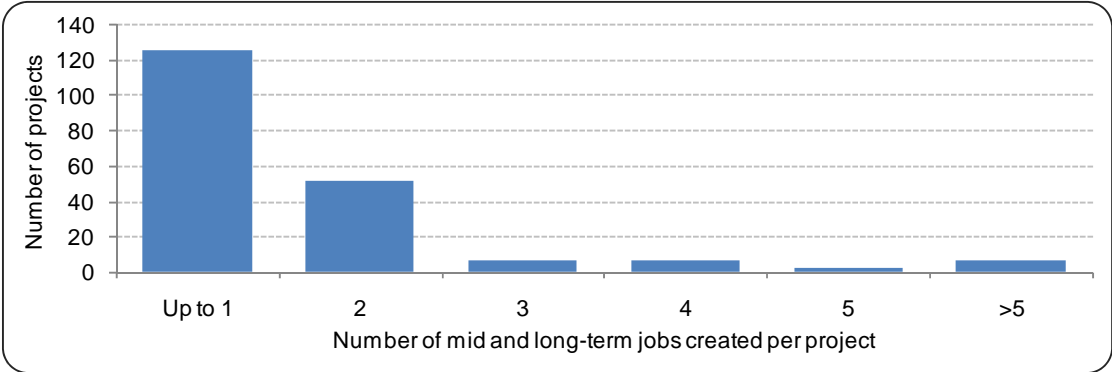
Employment

- 4.43. The maintenance and creation of jobs is one of the key impact targets of many publicly funded programmes. Although this was not set out as a requirement in Defra's original prospectus, it is one of the measures recorded in the database of projects and is an issue that is considered important by the NPAs and their partners such as the Regional Development Agencies.
- 4.44. The database of projects records the number of mid or long-term jobs created by each project. Mid-term is defined as lasting between 18 months and 36 months and long-term is defined as lasting for more than 36 months. While a few of the NPAs require the projects themselves to provide this information at the end of the project, others have estimated the data based on the knowledge the SDF officer has of the project and its outputs. These data have not been recorded for the Lake District and Broads and for Dartmoor have been recorded for the years 2005/06, 2007/08 and 2008/09 only. The database also identifies projects that have "*created sustained local employment*" as one of the potential economic benefits delivered by the scheme. No information has been recorded in the database of projects on the number of existing jobs that have been maintained in projects and businesses receiving funding, although other reports prepared for NPAs have done so. For instance, the review of the outcomes of the South West Regional Development Agency's funding of the SDF in Exmoor notes that over 40 jobs were created or safeguarded through Exmoor's scheme between 2005 and 2008.
- 4.45. The database of projects shows that a total of 340 jobs²² have been created by 198 projects (16% of all projects) as a result of SDF funding. **Figure 4.1** shows that most of these jobs have been created singly among 126 projects; 52 projects have created 2 jobs and 20 projects have created 3 or more jobs. Given that most of these projects received relatively small amounts of grant aid from the SDF (compared to 'mainstream' industrial funding programmes), this is a high level of job creation.
- 4.46. The database also shows that around a quarter of projects have created sustained local employment. For most of these, the database records the number of jobs created (as analysed above and further below).

²² Most of these jobs are likely to have been recorded as full-time equivalents (for instance on Dartmoor job numbers are recorded to one decimal place), but it is likely that some of the figures have been recorded in terms of number of employees (i.e. two new part-time employees would be recorded as two new jobs), so it is not possible to claim that all the job numbers are full-time equivalents.

4.47. Insufficient information is available to verify the extent to which the jobs were created solely on the back of the SDF funding or were the result of other public or private funding. For instance it is possible that other funding was responsible for the job creation, while the SDF grant contributed to other public benefits. However, many of the project leaders interviewed during this evaluation commented that the SDF grant was critical to the viability of whole project and it is likely that, for many projects, the grant is responsible for at least an element of the jobs created by the project. How much cannot be quantified.

Figure 4.1. Numbers of mid and long-term jobs created per project



4.48. **Table 4.1** shows that projects involved in business enterprise, training and development and recycling create, on average, significantly higher numbers of jobs than other projects. Those involved in renewable energy, resource conservation and community enterprise create, on average, the fewest jobs. The individual projects that have created the largest number of jobs have been the countryside skills training programme in Northumberland (resulting in 32 posts being created), the restoration of the Helmsley Walled Garden in the North York Moors which has subsequently led to the creation of ten new jobs, and the Dartmoor Rehabilitation Project run by the Forestry Commission to give 30 ex-offenders six months experience of practical conservation work (leading to six new jobs).

Table 4.1. Number of mid or long-term jobs created by principal theme

	Total no. jobs	No. of projects where data recorded	Mean. no. jobs created
Business Enterprise	105	111	0.9
Training and Development	50	60	0.8
Recycling	17	24	0.7
Sustainable Transport	11	27	0.4
Biodiversity	18	49	0.4
Recreation and Tourism	30	106	0.3
Education	45	161	0.3
Renewable Energy	20	92	0.2
Resource Conservation	17	83	0.2
Community Enterprise	24	135	0.2

4.49. **Figure 4.2** shows how the number of jobs created varies between the different types of applicant. Projects led by statutory organisations and profit-making

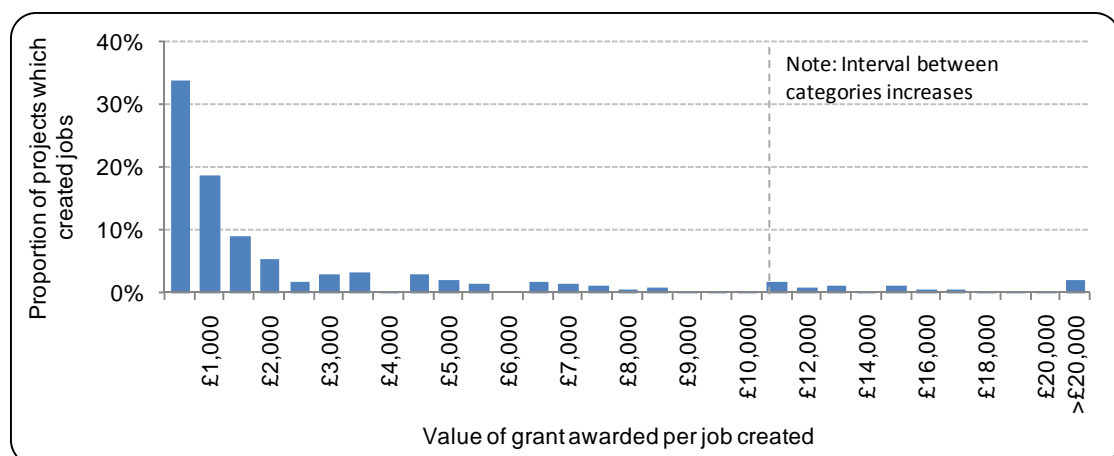
businesses have, on average, created three times as many new jobs as those led by community / voluntary groups and individuals.

Table 4.2. Number of mid or long-term jobs created by type of applicant

	Total no. jobs	No. of projects where data recorded	Mean. no. jobs created
Statutory Organisation	61	101	0.6
Profit-Making Business	100	170	0.6
Registered Charity	71	166	0.4
Community or Vol. Group	82	345	0.2
Individual	9	41	0.2

4.50. The amount of grant aid awarded to projects can be compared to the number of jobs the projects have created. The comments above (para. 4.47) about the attribution of jobs created directly by the SDF grant need to be borne in mind, but the assessment is valid provided it is not assumed that there is a direct causal relationship between the grant aid and employment creation. **Figure 4.2** shows this varies across the projects that created employment. Over half of projects that created jobs received less than £1,000 per job created. Again, as noted above, if it were the case that the SDF was directly responsible for the creation of the new job, this amount would be very low compared to other publicly funded programmes. The Mid Term Evaluation of the Rural Enterprise Scheme that operated from the England Rural Development Programme 2000-2006 found that average public investment per full-time equivalent job created was around £19,000²³. Whilst direct comparisons with these schemes cannot be made, it is possible to say that the SDF has proved effective at contributing to significant levels of job creation through the allocation of small amounts of funding.

Figure 4.2. Distribution of the value of grant awarded per job created



Health and well-being

4.51. The database of projects records that 17% of projects have addressed health inequalities. Typically these projects have improved or encouraged outdoor

²³ ADAS, 2003. Mid Term Evaluation of the England Rural Development Programme – Rural Enterprise Scheme. ADAS, Woodthorne. December 2003.

recreation, sometimes with particular social groups (such as the Access all Areas for Disabled People project in Northumberland and the Ecotherapy: Unlimited Living project on Dartmoor which provided opportunities for Plymouth residents with mental health issues to escape their normal surroundings); and a few have sought to improve diets (such as the Yorkshire and Humber Region Sustainable Food Education Officer funded by the Yorkshire Dales SDF).

- 4.52. A smaller proportion (4%) of projects is identified in the database as reducing people's fear of crime (which is one of the Government's national sustainability targets for this shared priority area). Again, these projects tend to be about encouraging access to unfamiliar countryside in ways that make people feel safe.

Education and training

- 4.53. The database of projects shows that for 21% of projects education was the principal theme and for a further 6% the principal theme was training and development. Educational projects tended to be those involved with the formal education system (schools and colleges) whereas those classified as training and development projects involved formal training programmes leading to vocational qualifications or apprenticeships. As noted previously, a number of projects assisted local schools with environmental projects.
- 4.54. A much larger proportion of projects (not recorded in the database) involve an element of personal development and improvements in skills, both by the people leading the project and also amongst audiences of the project. For instance, the Peak District SDF supported the Derbyshire County Council Educational Theatre, influencing their contact with over 6,000 people and the Broads SDF assisted the production of an information poster for anglers. The underpinning objective in the programme to promote sustainable development means that most projects have sought to change the perceptions of people who have come into contact with them.

Countryside access and recreation

- 4.55. As noted earlier 14% of projects have recreation and tourism as their principal theme (para. 4.13). In addition, 40% of projects are recorded as improving public access to the National Park. This covers improvements to physical access as well as providing virtual access over the internet and other media. Half of all projects are also recorded as involving an event that improves public understanding and enjoyment of the National Park.
- 4.56. A significant number of projects have involved promoting walks within the National Park (either in publications and websites or through events). Examples include the 'New Walks in the Lake District' and 'Birdwatching Walks in the Yorkshire Dales' projects, both run by private businesses, and the Peak District 'Moorland Walks with Children' and Water to Land project in the Broads, both run by voluntary sector bodies. Many of these projects are also recorded as delivering benefits to people's health and well-being (para. 4.51).

Sustainable transport

- 4.57. Thirty-four projects (3%) are recorded as having a principal theme of sustainable transport. Although small in number, these projects are distinctive and often

consistent in their outputs. Typically, these projects have been run by the voluntary or charitable sectors, and occasionally by public bodies. A number have involved establishing and promoting community bus services, such as the Stannage Forum Community Bus in the Peak District, or buses for tourists, to reduce car use, such as the Dales Explorer Bus in the Yorkshire Dales. A small number of projects have established car sharing initiatives (often on a pilot basis). Examples include the MOORCAR scheme on Dartmoor (with SDF funding helping the initiative expand to new areas of the Park and supporting a feasibility study into converting the dozen cars in the fleet to biodiesel) and the Endeavour Car Club on the North York Moors. A few have involved other types of transport such as horses (Henry's Hooves on Dartmoor) and boats (the Eco-boat project and support for the Green Boat show in the Broads).

SUPPORT FOR INNOVATION

- 4.58. Defra's original criteria for the scheme (Box 1.2) emphasised the role of the SDF as supporting innovation. It expected NPAs to report on the questions: *To what extent are both the successful and unsuccessful projects innovative? What proportion are innovative adaptations of existing approaches to meet changing needs?*
- 4.59. In discussion during this evaluation, all the SDF officers acknowledged the importance of using the SDF to pilot new approaches to delivering public benefits in ways that are unproven and not considered 'mainstream'. In this respect, the SDF is considered to be different from many other public and private sources of funding in that it is able to take risks in supporting projects that may prove to be unsuccessful.
- 4.60. The issue of innovation is complex and there is significant variation in the ways the NPAs approach the issue. In some Parks it is seen as an essential part of a project's eligibility for SDF funding, and all projects are required to demonstrate innovation at the application stage. Other NPAs include innovation as one of the appraisal criteria, agreeing to fund projects that have a low level of innovation if they can demonstrate high levels of public benefit in other ways.
- 4.61. NPAs have found that innovation is not easy to define in practice. Several NPAs, including the Peak District, have adopted definitions to help applicants and their grants panels²⁴. NPAs have recognised that innovation can vary spatially and over time. This means that something that has ceased to be novel and experimental at a national scale may nevertheless be innovative at a local level (as it continues to be tested under different circumstances in different locations). A case in point has been support from the SDF for renewable energy installations, where NPAs have continued to allow projects (for instance on micro-hydro generation) provided they demonstrate use of the new technology under different circumstances.
- 4.62. Some SDF officers and projects commented that a requirement for projects to demonstrate innovation for its own sake can be self-defeating. For instance an SDF officer noted that requiring organisations with 'tried and tested approaches' that are filling a valuable niche to innovate often adds unnecessary complexity and expense.

²⁴ See for instance the paper prepared by the Peak District NPA for the grants panel entitled "Definition of terms: innovation" on 1 October 2008.

Similarly, one grant recipient on Dartmoor commented that “*the project can’t get funding twice without being innovative but it’s hard to keep re-inventing the project. We get a new set of youngsters through each year and there doesn’t seem to be any need to change the project just for the sake of it when it’s already working well*” (Dartmoor, Moorskills Farming Company). Similarly, one grant recipient in the Broads (from the Upton Marshes Wind Pumps project) stated while discussing innovation that “*it may be counter-productive as it makes projects more complex than they need to be*”.

- 4.63. Closely allied to the concept of innovation is the lack of commercial viability of the project. Both contribute to the risk of the project and both can be used to justify higher levels of grant intervention where the public benefits of the project are high. However, they are different issues and it is important that they are not confused. For instance, a project may be highly innovative but, if successfully taken to the market, be highly profitable. Alternatively, it may be highly innovative but show little prospect, even when ‘proven’ of providing a commercial return. There may be good reasons to support both projects, depending on the level of public benefit provided and the requirement for SDF funding to deliver this benefit.
- 4.64. There is also evidence of confusion in some of the SDF application criteria between the concept of innovation and that of best practice. While innovative approaches may subsequently become best practice, innovative projects, by their nature, are likely to be risky and unproven, whereas best practice should be the opposite. It may therefore be difficult for projects to demonstrate both attributes (unless they apply to different aspects of the project) at the time of application. In retrospect however, an innovative approach may come to be regarded as best practice, fully justifying the approach taken and SDF support for it.
- 4.65. Analysis of the database of projects suggests that SDF projects have been able to demonstrate innovation in different ways, as follows:
- The deployment of a **novel technology**. Most of the renewable energy projects qualify under this heading although, as noted above technologies which were considered novel at the start of the programme might now be considered proven and commercially viable at a national level, requiring a different justification at a local level.
 - The opportunity to develop or satisfy **new consumer demand**. Projects that add value to and sell products (e.g. food or craft products) and services (e.g. tourism accommodation or transport) to new or expanding markets can be considered innovative.
 - The opportunity to satisfy **new policy objectives**. The introduction of new policies may require innovative solutions. For instance, projects that encourage changes in behaviour to increase recycling and energy efficiency by households and businesses are responding to new policy expectations.
 - Matching an **untried combination** of a new group of beneficiaries with an established activity. There are examples of projects that are innovative because they match the National Park’s environment with new social groups (for instance people with mental health issues, offenders or communities from deprived urban areas). The activity itself is not innovative, but the way it is used to deliver a social or economic benefit is.

- 4.66. An issue that was debated with SDF officers during this evaluation was whether the SDF is being used to maximum effect, supporting projects that are judged to be pushing at the boundaries and have a high risk of failure but a high potential public benefit if successful. SDF officers commented that there are relatively few examples of projects that have been unsuccessful, suggesting that this might not be the case. Given that Defra clearly intended the SDF to be used to test approaches that offered high potential but also a significant risk of failure, there is potential for NPAs to use the SDF in more experimental situations.
- 4.67. An approach that NPAs might take is to vary the intervention rate that is offered to projects depending on the level of public benefit, the degree of innovation they offer, and the availability of other sources of funding. Two scales of intervention could be adopted.
- Experimental in approach. Novel at a national level. Unproven outputs, but high public benefit if outputs delivered. Applicant has explored other sources of funding, including short-term market returns (if appropriate) but no other sources are forthcoming: Up to 75% (higher only justified from exceptional circumstances). This amount should be reduced where a lower level of SDF funding can be used to ‘unlock’ other sources of funding (in-kind from participants or from other external sources).
 - Application of new technology or method which, though proven elsewhere in the UK or in different circumstances, still has a level of risk associated with it in the circumstances in which it is being applied. This should include cases where the project promises high public benefits but there are few other sources of external funding: Up to 60% grant. If lower levels of public benefit (i.e. for profit making business): Up to 50% grant.

DEVELOPMENT OF PARTNERSHIPS

- 4.68. One of the original Defra criteria for prioritising project applications was whether a project has the potential to bring organisations together to co-operate in tackling problems or promoting new ideas. The majority of National Parks still include this issue in their criteria for appraising project applications (see Appendix 4).
- 4.69. NPAs make the valid point that partnership working is not an end in itself. They also stress that the SDF’s relatively small budget is not able to command the same level of interest from other organisations as, for instance, the larger programmes run by the RDAs and Natural England from the Rural Development Plan for England. It is also the case that the SDF Panels represent partnership in action and bring together a wide range of interests.
- 4.70. The database of projects assembled by SDF officers records which projects “*bring organisations together in the spirit of partnership*”. It is clear from the way this criterion has been assessed that a high proportion of projects have involved co-operation between different individuals and organisations. Overall 64% of projects have been scored as involving partnership. However, it is apparent that SDF officers have used different approaches for making this judgement. Two have scored almost all of their projects positively whereas one has scored only a few projects. The database of

projects is not considered to be a good way of assessing the extent to which the SDF as a whole has encouraged joint working between organisations to develop shared objectives and add value to each other's work.

- 4.71. Nevertheless, numerous grant recipients who were interviewed for this review found that their projects were enhanced by the opportunities for partnership working that arose from involvement with the SDF. For example, in terms of networking, one grant recipient in the North York Moors stated that "*there have been a number of areas where the SDF officers have pointed us to other organisations who may be future clients*" (Disabled Youth Sailing project).
- 4.72. The Government's consultative document on its priorities for National Parks, published in November 2009²⁵, stresses the importance of National Park Authorities themselves working with other public agencies (such as Natural England, the Forestry Commission, English Heritage and the Environment Agency and other bodies (such as the National Trust) to deliver the purposes of the designation. The SDF provides opportunities for this partnership working to operate in practice.
- 4.73. Strategically, at an organisational level, a number of different types of partnerships between NPAs and other bodies are possible. The relationship with three potential partners, Natural England, the Regional Development Agencies and with Local Strategic Partnerships is considered below.
- 4.74. **Natural England** is the national agency that has the closest links with NPAs, both operationally (for instance NPAs are often involved in helping to target Environmental Stewardship) and also in their corporate objectives (relating to natural beauty, public access and understanding of the natural environment). The third of Natural England's four strategic outcomes is '*Sustainable use of the natural environment: more people enjoying, understanding and acting to improve the natural environment, more often*'. The emphasis on personal and community involvement in the natural environment clearly complements the objectives of the SDF.
- 4.75. There are examples of close working between NPAs and Natural England over the SDF (for instance through NE membership of some grants panels and support for individual projects). However it is suggested that there is potential to increase the links between the work the SDF is already doing with communities and the achievement of Natural England's third strategic outcome. Responsibility for this will rest as much with Natural England as with the NPAs. The limitations in Natural England's involvement may be because its flagship programme, Environmental Stewardship, is focussed primarily at improving land management, which is a minor element of the SDF. It may also be because the time available to Natural England staff to contribute to the targeting of the SDF is limited. The complexity of matching SDF with some other funding sources, such as the Higher Level of Environmental Stewardship and the Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative, also constrains the practical application of partnership working at the level of individual projects. The very different scale of the schemes is also likely to be an issue (see para.5.4).

²⁵ Defra (2009). Consultation on the English National Parks and the Broads. Draft Circular – revised version combining Circular 12/96 and Circular 125/77. Vision for National Parks: Government priorities.

- 4.76. In several regions (such as the North West, Yorkshire, East Midlands and Humber and South West), **Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)** are coming to regard the NPAs as important partners in the delivery of their strategic goals in the remote rural communities that lie within the National Parks (often in the peripheries of the region). A recent report on the economic impact of National Parks in the Yorkshire and Humber region²⁶ concluded that NPAs are effective at delivering the RDAs economic objectives within the context of National Park purposes, and recommended that RDAs should match Defra's funding of the SDF. However, it remains the case that NPAs are not 'economic development authorities' and collaboration is likely to focus on the role of environmental quality as an economic driver.
- 4.77. In practice, linkages between the SDF and RDAs appear limited in most of the National Parks. Exceptions are the funding provided to the SDF by RDAs in the South West (para. 3.3, 3rd bullet) and Yorkshire and the Humber (which has previously contributed funding to the North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales SDFs) and the developing collaboration between the Peak District NPA and East Midlands Development Agency. There may be considerable opportunities to improve linkages between National Parks and RDAs through the SDF. For example an evaluation that was carried out into the economic impact of National Parks in the Yorkshire and Humber Region recommended that the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Park Authorities should ask Yorkshire Forward to match Defra's contribution to their Sustainable Development Funds.
- 4.78. **Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)** are a different kind of entity, providing a strategic role which is enacted on the ground through the local authorities and other bodies who are represented on the LSP. This means that LSPs have an important function in co-ordinating the delivery of social objectives at a sub-regional level. There are opportunities for NPAs to help prioritise the work of other LSP partners within the National Parks and there may be a role for the SDF in supporting this. Some NPAs are actively involved in this. For example, the Yorkshire Dales NPA is taking the lead for the Craven One Planet Living Group. It also needs to be recognised that individual SDF funded projects may contribute to the delivery of the Government's national indicators which LSPs are charged with targeting through their Local Area Agreements, such as NII86 on per capita reduction of carbon or NII88 on adaptation to climate change.
- 4.79. The large difference between the relatively small budget of the SDF programme and the much greater funds influenced by the LSPs may represent something of a barrier to increased joint working. Nevertheless, there may be potential to develop links and promote more joined up thinking and engagement.
- 4.80. It would appear that there is considerable scope for improvement in the extent to which the National Parks use the SDF as a medium through which to build partnership working with other key organisations. However, it is important to recognise that the SDF is not a tool for organisations such as LSPs to use as they wish; rather the underlying approach of the SDF is as a bottom up scheme, led by the

²⁶ Council for National Parks (2006). *Prosperity and Protection. The economic impact of National Parks in the Yorkshire and Humber region.* Report by SQW Ltd.

original Defra objectives and this should remain so, aside from any additional benefits that may arise from effective partnership working.

- 4.81. There are, however, individual examples of effective partnership working arising from the SDF. For instance, the North York Moors National Park and the neighbouring Howardian Hills AONB share a panel to administer SDF grants, and there are other examples of NPAs liaising with nearby AONBs regarding administering SDF funds. While this evaluation was taking place, the Northumberland NPA set up a partnership with the Community Foundation to share project ideas and the Lake District NPA started to report the outputs of its SDF to the Lake District National Park Partnership, a body of 20 key organisations who have a role in the National Park.

STIMULATING ACTIVITY THAT WOULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE OCCURRED

- 4.82. SDF officers from each National Park were asked to consider what evidence there is that projects would not have taken place without the funding provided by the SDF. Some found this question difficult to answer due to a lack of recorded quantifiable information, although they stressed that this issue was properly considered by the appraisal process and Grants Panels. An oft-quoted example is the Ridgeblade project in the North York Moors that struggled to gain financing elsewhere but has gone on to receive an award for innovation after being supported by the SDF.
- 4.83. The fact that the SDF is a particularly accessible source of funding, and one that actively promotes innovation and risk-taking means that it is an important first source of funding for projects that may have found it harder to raise support from other sources, particularly in the first instance. Several SDF officers and project applicants made the point that, once the SDF has provided the first confirmed funding for a particularly 'risky' project, other funding becomes easier to secure as funders are given confidence by evidence of backing from the SDF. As such, the SDF can be seen to play a crucial role in getting projects up and running, both through direct funding and the indirect knock-on effects of National Park involvement. In the Lake District, an applicant from the Mungrisdale Heritage Trails Book project stated of the SDF that: *"It opened the doors for other sources of funding"*.
- 4.84. Project recipients who were interviewed for this evaluation were asked what would have happened to their project if they had not received funding from the SDF. Most recipients commented that their project would probably have gone ahead, but that it would have been more restricted in its ambitions, would have delivered less public benefit and may have taken far longer to get going. In addition to the time delays associated with sourcing other funding or arranging personal finance, it is reasonable to assume that there may be impacts on the work carried out by the project if SDF funding was not provided. For instance, several individuals and businesses commented that without the SDF funding they would have had to rely on their own funds or commercially available lending such as bank loans and under these circumstances it is likely that they would have been much less willing to develop innovative or potentially risky aspects of the project. In this sense, SDF funding not only enables projects to go

ahead, but in many cases may mean that they are more innovative and groundbreaking, and therefore potentially deliver a greater public benefit.

- 4.85. The importance of the SDF in funding unusual or innovative projects, which may otherwise have struggled to get going, was widely recognised. The grant recipient from the Dartmoor Offenders Rehabilitation Project commented that few other publicly funded schemes were willing to take on a project such as theirs that worked with convicted offenders who were still under sentence. Other project applicants commented along similar lines that the SDF's unconstrained approach to working across different policy domains meant that the scheme could assist projects that frequently 'fell between the gaps' of other mainstream regional or national funding schemes.

ADDITION OF VALUE TO OTHER PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES

- 4.86. One of the original Defra criteria for assessing a project's eligibility for SDF funding was whether a project is complementary to key local and national strategies. Many of the National Parks now omit this criterion from their project assessment sheets, with only the Lake District, Peak District, New Forest and Yorkshire Dales continuing to take this into consideration when appraising project applications (see Appendix 4). The reason for this omission seems to be that NPAs consider that the objectives of local and national strategies are already reflected in the objectives of the National Park Management Plans and are thus taken into account through that route.
- 4.87. SDF officers from each National Park were asked how the SDF complements or adds value to other local, regional and national strategies and programmes. In most cases, it was recognised that links do exist as the result of active efforts by the NPAs but the evidence of these links may not always be clear from scheme literature.
- 4.88. One example that was given of the SDF scheme complementing a similar programme was in the Peak District, where the LEADER programme covers parts of the park in Derbyshire and Staffordshire, but doesn't cover the Cheshire area. As such, the SDF can be seen to bridge this geographical gap, working across the whole area of the Park.
- 4.89. Synergies and a 'fit' can also be recognised between the SDF and other funding schemes run by NPAs. For example, Northumberland National Park has a core funded small grants scheme (with most awards worth under £3k) with an annual budget of £100,000 spread across four Action Areas. The SDF may relieve pressure on other funding schemes such as this, with applicants encouraged to select the appropriate source of funding for their projects. Similarly in the Peak District, the National Park can also provide small grants from its core budget. In these cases, the NPAs are aware of the danger of 'deadweight' between schemes and have taken steps to differentiate the purpose of the SDF from the other programmes they run.
- 4.90. There are also examples of co-ordination between NPAs to use the SDF to support a regional level initiative. The primary example of this is the South West Woodfuels Initiative run by the Centre for Sustainable Energy which has been supported by the SDFs from both National Parks and most AONBs in the South West. There is scope

for this approach to be used more widely where combined efforts at a regional level will help build deeper and longer lasting relationships with other programmes. A case in point might be co-ordination between NPAs and AONBs to support SDF projects working with communities in shared urban centres or with regional programmes working across different urban areas.

POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATON ELSEWHERE

- 4.91. The SDF was conceived at a time when much emphasis in Government was placed on the role of National Parks (and AONBs) as ‘testbeds’ for approaches that could be adopted elsewhere in the country.
- 4.92. Three National Parks (Yorkshire Dales, New Forest and the Peak District) have included this issue in the appraisal criteria for potential projects (see Appendix 4), considering whether there is potential for replication of a project, either within or outside of the Park.
- 4.93. It is difficult to make a judgement about this issue based on any form of quantifiable evidence, however although certain projects may be limited to a specific location due to their nature, it would appear that the vast majority of projects may in principle be replicated elsewhere, particularly in other protected landscapes where similar conditions may exist.
- 4.94. As such, the SDF scheme could in principle be introduced within any local authority. Although the National Park purposes establish a different policy framework to that in place elsewhere, e.g. the two national park purposes, the principle of a small grant scheme, involving light touch administration, could potentially be replicated in any other local authority.

FURTHERING THE PURPOSES OF NATIONAL PARKS

- 4.95. One of the original key criteria set out by Defra to determine a project’s eligibility for the SDF scheme was that it must further National Park purposes, i.e. to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the National Parks and to promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park. All the National Parks have placed considerable emphasis on this aspect of eligibility and have retained it as a key component of their assessment of projects. All National Parks were found to score potential projects against this criterion (see Appendix 4).
- 4.96. As such, there have been cases where applicants have amended their project in order to more appropriately fit with the National park purposes so as to secure funding. For example, one grant applicant in the North York Moors stated that: *“the focus of the Project was altered and the project presented in a more integrated way with the National Park’s objectives”* (Disabled Youth Sailing).
- 4.97. It is also worth considering how the SDF relates to the duty placed on National Park Authorities to *“seek to foster the social and economic well being of the local communities”* in pursuance of the two statutory purposes. The strong social and economic focus of the SDF means that, in a practical sense, the SDF provides NPAs with a valuable resource with which to deliver this duty. This is made more significant by the change

introduced in Section 62 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which removed the previous limitation placed on NPAs not to incur significant expenditure in exercising the duty. There may be merit in NPAs make a clearer link between the SDF and the delivery of the duty in their annual reports on the SDF.

- 4.98. During the telephone interviews that were carried out with SDF project officers, they were asked about links between the SDF and the management plan for their National Park, which provides the overall framework for delivering the National Park purposes. Most considered the SDF to be complementary to the aims of the management plans, with the scheme having an implicit role in delivering the aims and objectives of the management plan even if applications are not actually appraised against them. Several officers felt quite strongly that the SDF was not necessarily intended to be a tool through which to deliver the management plan directly, although it was agreed that both are guided by National Park purposes.
- 4.99. There are cases of NPAs actively promoting links between the SDF and their management plan. For example, the Lake District NPA requires applicants to demonstrate that their project will support the Vision for the National Park (as set out in the management plan); the Peak District management plan which identifies the SDF as a delivery mechanism for certain objectives against which all applicants are measured; Exmoor where the 2008/09 SDF report lists each project against the management plan priorities they address; and the New Forest where the SDF officer advises the grants panel of the links between application and the management plan.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- 4.100. The following key conclusions arise from this Chapter. These are developed more fully in the following Chapter.
- In terms of its contribution to sustainable development, the **most significant benefits arising from the SDF** are associated with sustainable tourism, renewable energy production, the sustainable management of cultural heritage and education and training, as well as a general increase in understanding of the concept of sustainable development.
 - The role that the SDF plays in **supporting innovation** is one of its key strengths and enables particularly far reaching benefits to arise from projects.
 - There is **scope to share best practice amongst NPAs** over their partnership working over the use of the SDF with other organisations such as RDAs and Natural England.
 - SDF officers strongly believe from their experience that a significant proportion of **projects would not get off the ground without SDF support** although this is difficult to quantify. Although some projects might still go ahead if it were not for the funding received from the SDF, they would most likely take a different form, take longer to get going and may well deliver far more limited benefits.
 - The SDF is delivering **the statutory purposes of National Parks** by providing NPAs with a key resource through which they are delivering both the purposes and the duty placed on them to foster the **social and economic well-being of local communities**.

5. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. This final Chapter draws together the conclusions reached in previous chapters and makes recommendations for the future development and monitoring of the programme.
- 5.2. The Chapter starts by summarising the strengths of the programme, examining its successes and highlighting effective practices that should be considered as best practice, for sharing between the NPAs.
- 5.3. The second half of the Chapter identifies the challenges and opportunities for further development facing the programme.

THE SDF IN CONTEXT

- 5.4. Compared to other public grant schemes that operate across England, the SDF is a **relatively small programme**. The £1.8M budget of the SDF in English National Parks (£200,000 in each of the nine National Parks) compares with the £400M allocated to Environmental Stewardship and the £15M allocated to the LEADER programme each year.
- 5.5. Although not limited to applicants located in National Parks, the SDF is **spatially focussed** on delivering benefits within the English National Parks (in the context of their statutory purposes) which occupy around 8% of the country's land area.

STRENGTHS

- 5.6. The SDF programme has proven to offer distinctive and flexible support in relatively small packages of grant aid to predominantly small scale projects that seek to deliver a wide range of public benefits. This is evidenced by the following characteristics of the programme.

A. Highly accessible

- 5.7. From the outset, the SDF has been designed to minimise the administrative burden on applicants, making grant aid accessible to small community-based groups and businesses (para 4.36). It achieves this through an application and reporting process that most applicants consider to be straight forward (para. 2.26 and 2.30) and by providing officer support that is highly valued (para 2.23). The flexibility provided by some NPAs over the release of funding against unpaid invoices might be copied by other NPAs.

B. Delivers more than a grant

- 5.8. Many projects value the additional assistance that is available from and through the NPA SDF officers (para 2.23). This includes signposting to other sources of support (including other staff in the NPA, other initiatives and other funders) and providing advice and guidance on the preparation of business plans and the management of projects. These benefits rely on the NPAs providing experienced officers to manage the SDF. These officers may be part-time or have other responsibilities within the NPA.

- 5.9. The large number of projects that the SDF has supported since its inception provides a valuable reservoir of experience that could be made more accessible to new applicants and other programmes. This is considered further below (paras. 5.30 and 5.35).

C. Stretches aspirations

- 5.10. The SDF is broadly non-prescriptive in terms of the public benefits that it will help projects to provide, but with one important exception. The requirement for all projects to demonstrate a sustainable development approach that benefits the environment, communities and economies, rewards projects that are already taking this approach and stretches the aspirations of those that would otherwise seek narrower objectives (particularly some projects whose principal focus is environmental) (paras 2.5 and 4.19). In this way, the programme continues to deliver the core purpose for which it was established by Defra - to develop practical examples of sustainable development in action. While the approach is already well embedded in the individual SDF schemes, its success should give confidence to NPAs to adopt a sustainable development approach in other aspects of their work.

D. Reaches where other schemes do not

- 5.11. The non-prescriptive nature of the programme means that applicants are free to identify the needs and objectives they wish to address (para 4.84). This contrasts with most other public sector grant schemes that require applicants to meet specific objectives and means that the SDF regularly assists projects that 'fall between the cracks' of other grant schemes. This would appear to be particularly the case for community-based projects that use environmental quality to advance social and economic objectives, there being few other sources of funding for this kind of activity.

E. Provides 'seed corn' support to launch new projects

- 5.12. By giving priority to innovative ideas and being prepared to take a risk on projects with no proven track record, the SDF often provides the first offer of funding from which other support can be generated in the form of in-kind contributions (for instance labour provided by members of the community) or funding from other more 'mainstream' sources. In this way, innovative projects are able to develop a 'critical mass' of support enabling them to operate as viable initiatives (albeit they may require continuing public support).

F. Draws down high levels of other funding

- 5.13. The programme as a whole demonstrates a high 'funding multiplier' of 4.3 (i.e. every £1.00 of SDF drew in, on average, £4.30 of matched funding) (para. 3.35). This compares favourably with other small grant schemes operating in rural areas and probably reflects the fact that 'multi-benefit' projects that are typically supported by the SDF that are able to attract funding from a range of different sources, and also that projects with high levels of community involvement are more suited to drawing down support from voluntary sector organisations.

G. Helps create jobs

- 5.14. The SDF has proved effective at contributing to significant levels of job creation through the allocation of small amounts of funding to a proportion of projects (para. 4.44). Although data is only available on the creation of new jobs from 16% of projects, most of these projects received relatively small SDF grants. Over half of projects that created jobs received less than £1,000 per job created. While it is not clear whether jobs were created solely on the back of the SDF funding or were the result of other public or private funding, in many cases, the SDF grant was critical to the viability of whole project for a significant number of projects, the grant was responsible for at least an element of the jobs created by the project. Until now, little has been made of the benefits to job creation from the SDF (and data on job creation has not been kept systematically). It is suggested that greater attention is paid to recording this output of projects.

H. Involves cost effective administration

- 5.15. The SDF officers employed or contracted by the NPAs to oversee the scheme provide an essential role, and, as noted above, the assistance they provide during the application process and after the award of grant is valued by projects. All the NPAs stay within the 10% limit for administration from their SDF budget (allowed by Defra), although all NPAs incur additional costs (for instance from their finance departments and from the involvement of senior staff) from their core funds which is not formally accounted for against SDF costs. The 'light touch' monitoring undertaken by NPAs, based on site visits (as in the North York Moors) and reports received from projects, ensures that ongoing administrative costs after awards have been made are low (para. 2.20).

I. Levels of partnership working

- 5.16. The SDF officers have built up effective relationships with other statutory organisations and the voluntary sector, both within the National Parks and beyond their boundaries. Good networks are present in some regions involving liaison between NPAs and AONBs (for instance the South West, South and West Midlands) and there is sharing of information and resources between some National Parks and adjacent AONBs (particularly the North York Moors and Howardian Hills who share a grants panel). There may be merit in these arrangements being adopted in other areas (for instance the North West, North East and Yorkshire and Humber regions).
- 5.17. However in other respects, the connections between the SDF and other programmes at a regional and sub-regional level are not well developed. The scope to improve these strategic links is discussed further below (para. 5.40)

J. Is cross-cutting within NPAs

- 5.18. Knowledge of the SDF and what it achieves is generally strong within NPAs, both at the level of Authority members and at a senior level amongst staff. Reporting and liaison by the SDF officers is key to this. This ensures that opportunities to link the SDF with NPAs' statutory planning role, their conservation programmes and the promotion of public understanding and enjoyment of the National Parks is generally good, leading to 'joined-up' delivery by the NPAs.

K. Encourages a new perception of the National Park designation

- 5.19. Finally, there is evidence that the SDF has, over its seven years, contributed to a broader change in the way many community and voluntary organisations and individuals view NPAs and the National Park designation. Perceptions are still strongly influenced by the role of NPAs as statutory planning authorities, where decisions over developments receive high publicity. Although not usually of as much interest to the media as planning disputes, the support provided by the SDF for individual projects in communities is becoming better known, encouraging a view of NPAs as ‘enabling’ rather than ‘controlling’ bodies. The work done by many NPAs, through events, publications and news releases, to promote the outcomes achieved by SDF funded projects is encouraging (but is far from entirely responsible for) this change in perceptions.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.20. This evaluation has identified a number of ways in which the benefits delivered by the programme can be enhanced and in which practical challenges faced by the NPAs in its operation can be addressed.

A. Pro-active engagement with communities outside National Parks

- 5.21. One of the most distinctive features of the programme is its ability to engage at a ‘grass roots’ level with voluntary sector organisations and specific communities, particularly in terms of helping them take advantage of the high environmental quality and cultural heritage that National Parks offer. There are a number of inspiring examples of SDF projects that have successfully done this (see for instance Appendix 6).
- 5.22. A specific objective of Defra is for NPAs to proactively involve communities outside the National Parks in their understanding and enjoyment, particularly those in urban areas who experience barriers to accessing the Parks. This is not a task that falls exclusively or even primarily to the SDF. However, the purposes of the SDF are ideally matched to achieving this objective and the programme offers additional resources to those available from NPA’s core funding.
- 5.23. Although there are examples from all of the National Parks of the SDF being used to support groups based outside the Parks, there are opportunities to increase this activity. Many of the SDF officers have worked hard to develop links with urban groups and comment that developing a long term relationship is hard. It is clear that initiatives that work with disadvantaged communities in urban areas may initially not see the advantages of working in National Parks, with the physical distance and perceived cultural differences cited as barriers.
- 5.24. One way in which long term relationships could be developed at a more strategic level, with the SDF providing resources for a more sustained programme of work over several years, is through co-ordinated initiatives involving several NPAs (and, where appropriate, AONBs) and one or more voluntary or public sector organisations working in urban communities. This might require a shared pot of the SDF to be established, from which this work could be allocated.

- 5.25. While a deliberative approach of this kind is somewhat contrary to the non-prescriptive and 'bottom up' basis on which the SDF currently operates, it would overcome the issue that successful projects involving urban communities, which take considerable effort to establish, currently tend to be short-lived.

B. Defining innovation

- 5.26. While all of the NPAs acknowledge the SDF's objective of supporting innovation (encouraging new and untried approaches that promise high levels of public benefit), several have found it difficult to define this in a consistent and practical way. Activities often become less innovative over time as they become widely adopted but remain innovative in areas and at scales where they remain novel.
- 5.27. The SDF has an important role in testing new approaches and it should be accepted that this involves a greater risk of failure. It is suggested that NPAs should be prepared to accept high levels of the risk of failure from projects where there is the potential for commensurately high levels of public benefit. But, as a number of projects have commented, insisting on innovation for its own sake can prevent the SDF supporting proven activities that would not get funding from other schemes.
- 5.28. It is suggested that NPAs should vary the intervention rate that is offered to projects depending on the level of public benefit, the degree of innovation they offer, and the availability of other sources of funding. Two scales of intervention could be adopted, with projects that can be considered experimental at a national scale able to receive 75% funding but projects that are seeking to apply proven approaches to new situations receiving up to 60% funding (depending on the level of public benefit and availability of other funding).

C. Making more of the test-bedding role

- 5.29. The SDF's success in supporting ground-breaking projects deserves to be better known so that novel approaches can be shared, leading to recognised best practice. There also needs to be better exchange of information between the SDF officers and other partners (such as LEADER programmes) over the risks and reasons for innovative projects failing.
- 5.30. It is suggested that examples of innovative projects that have been supported by the SDF are put forward by SDF officers and disseminated through the ENPAA website, as a development of the webpage that currently showcases four case study projects²⁷. It will be important that this list celebrates successes as well as highlighting pit falls that less successful projects have experienced. There may also be greater potential to use other regional bodies and networks (such as local community councils, Agenda 21 bodies and regional rural affairs fora) to champion and disseminate the opportunities provided by the SDF,
- 5.31. A suitable way of cataloguing these could be to distinguish between projects that have deployed a novel technology (such as renewable energy generation); stimulated new consumer demand (for instance for products with high environmental credentials), addressed new policy objectives (for instance sustainable transport initiatives), and been innovative in other respects (such as matching new 'hard to

²⁷ See www.nationalparks.gov.uk/lookingafter/sustainable-development.htm/sdfcasestudies.htm

reach' audiences with established activities). This resource would be available to SDF officers and grants panels who could direct potential applicants to the website to learn lessons from others' experience.

D. Clarifying 'exceptional circumstances' for high levels of intervention

- 5.32. There is considerable variation between the National Parks in the proportion of projects that are awarded grants in excess of the normal maximum intervention rate for voluntary groups of 75% and for other applicants of 50% (as set out in the Defra prospectus). Nor is there a consistent set of criteria across NPAs for defining the exceptional circumstances justifying intervention over these levels. It should be emphasised that this evaluation has relied on a limited amount of information on each project and has not been able to closely examine the characteristics of projects receiving high levels of grant intervention. There will be merits in the NPAs collectively reflecting on these projects and the added benefits that high levels of grant aid have brought.
- 5.33. Looking forward, it is suggested that a standard set of criteria should be agreed by the NPAs, through a working party of SDF officers and confirmed with Defra. While discretion should continue to be given to NPAs over which projects met these criteria, it is suggested that all grants in excess of 75% should be approved by grants panels (i.e. no delegated authority to SDF officers regardless of the amount of grant) and that NPAs should report a list of projects receiving grants in excess of 75% each year, briefly outlining the exceptional circumstances.
- 5.34. It is suggested that the criteria justifying exceptional circumstances might consist of the following: the grant award being less than £1,000; the applicant having demonstrated that no additional sources of funding are available; the project having a highly innovative approach; the project promising high levels of public benefit across at least two of the 'arms' of sustainability.

E. Ongoing support for projects

- 5.35. There is potential to add value to the achievements of the programme by providing a level of continuing support to projects on a collective basis. Some projects feel that their ongoing work to deliver the purposes of the National Park designation in the years following their SDF grant is not adequately recognised. Retaining contacts with all projects on an individual basis would be prohibitively expensive and is not needed. However, it is suggested that NPAs should consider how they could celebrate the achievements of SDF projects, both in the year in which they receive the SDF grant and in subsequent years.
- 5.36. Examples of activities that might be adopted by other NPAs include:
- the calendar (500 copies distributed at A3 size in full colour) produced by Northumberland NPA where a different project is highlighted for each month and other projects are described at the back of the calendar
 - The making of an annual award for the most influential SDF project (again instigated by Northumberland NPA for 2010). Separate awards might be made for innovation, for engagement with new communities (especially those outside

the National Park) and for continuing success in the years after the award was made.

- The use of an annual awards dinner to which all SDF projects and local media are invited, including short presentations on winning and shortlisted projects (as practiced by the Peak District Environmental Quality Mark).
- Publishing profiles of successful projects through websites and leaflets. Most NPAs maintain a list of projects which is downloadable from their website but in many cases these lists give few details about projects or have not been updated recently. The proposal for examples of innovative projects to be published on the ENPAA website (para. 5.30) would be one way of doing this, but would only be able to describe a small proportion of projects. It is suggested that, to be successful and to justify the effort of NPAs maintaining databases profiling projects for each National Park, the databases should be accompanied by another means of drawing attention to successful projects, such as those listed above.

F. Connection to National Park purposes and duty and to management plan objectives

- 5.37. All NPAs emphasise the role that the SDF has in supporting the purposes of the National Park designation (using this as a criterion for awarding funding to projects) but much less is made by most NPAs of the particular role that the SDF has in helping them to deliver their role of fostering the social and economic well-being of local communities. It is suggested that more attention is drawn to this link in the annual SDF reports prepared by the NPAs, particularly given the change of emphasis introduced in the NERC Act 2006 allowing NPAs greater freedom to deliver this duty (para. 4.97).
- 5.38. Some NPAs do not make strong links between the SDF and the priorities identified in the National Park management plans (for exceptions see para 4.99 and Appendix 4). Instead, most NPAs emphasise the importance of the SDF being available to meet the 'bottom up' needs identified by communities and businesses, unconstrained by the more 'institutional' priorities in the management plan which reflect national and regional policy objectives (albeit set in the context of local consultation and engagement undertaken during the preparation of the plan). It is suggested that the lack of demonstrable connections to management plan priorities risks the SDF being seen as disconnected from the work of regional partners.
- 5.39. It is suggested that more detailed reflection, at a strategic level, on the role of the SDF in delivering the priorities identified in the management plan and the duty on NPAs may help NPAs improve the effectiveness of the programme and its relevance to the work of other regional partners. However, this should not override the principle that the SDF's purpose is to support locally identified needs that deliver sustainable development in the context of the statutory purposes of National Parks.

G. Strengthening partnership working

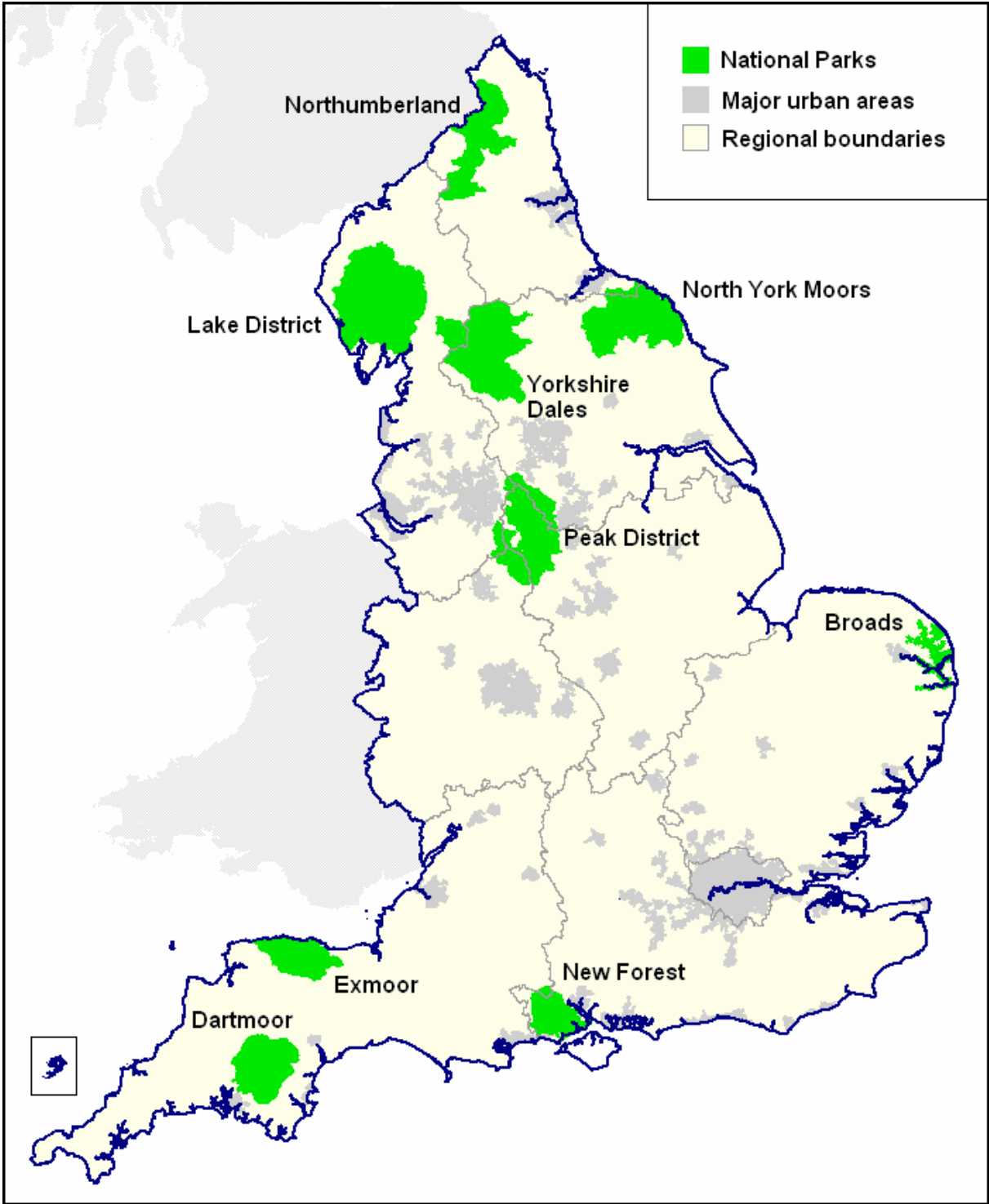
- 5.40. The positive liaison that takes place between SDF officers and staff from other organisations was highlighted earlier in this chapter (para. 5.16). However it remains the case that, in most National Parks, there is less evidence of the SDF being used to deliver shared strategic objectives with other organisations. As the examples from

National Parks where this partnership working has been taking place shows, there are specific opportunities for connections to be made between the SDF and the programmes and priorities of organisations such as Natural England, the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) (para. 4.74 onwards). As already noted in the previous paragraph this should not negate the role of the SDF as a way of responding to locally identified needs. However, it does offer the opportunity to build productive partnerships with organisations that have complementary objectives to NPAs, to ensure that the SDF is being used to add value to the work of these organisations, and potentially to draw in additional funding for the SDF (noting the recommendations of the CNP report in relation to RDAs – see para 4.76).

- 5.41. It is suggested that the NPAs should seek bilateral meetings with key regional partners (starting with Natural England, the RDA and a representative from the LSP), perhaps as additional items to grant panel meetings, to discuss how the links between the SDF and these bodies' programmes and priorities could be strengthened.

APPENDIX I

APPENDIX I: LOCATION MAP OF ENGLISH NATIONAL PARKS



APPENDIX 2

APPENDIX 2: THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND PROSPECTUS

This is the text of the Prospectus issued by Defra to the National Park Authorities in 2002

OBJECTIVES

Sustainable development is central to the proper conservation of National Parks as it integrates the environment, community and economy. It fits with the statutory purposes and obligations placed on the National Park Authorities. And from its inception DEFRA has emphasised that sustainable development - sustainability in economic, social and environmental terms - is at the heart of the Government's approach.

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. We want to develop and test new ways of achieving a more sustainable way of living in countryside of great natural beauty and diversity, which enhance and conserve local culture, wildlife, landscape, land use and community.

The statutory authority for the Fund is Section 72 of the Environment Act 1995. It will operate within each of the English National Parks; it will also operate within the Broads Authority in the same way. It will be used for projects which:

- explore ways of pursuing concurrently the principle of sustainability and of breaking down barriers that can act as obstacles to sustainability;
- develop models for the sustainable management of the countryside that could be applied more widely in England;
- generate greater awareness and understanding of sustainability;
- work through individuals, businesses and community groups; and/or encourage participation of young people; and,
- promote social inclusion.

CRITERIA

The Fund is open to individuals or organisations from the public, private or voluntary sectors from within or outside the National Park. They must demonstrate that their project meets the following criteria. Projects will have to:

- further National Park purposes;
- be sustainable (against the test of economic, social and environmental sustainability)
- have the support or involvement of communities;
- be complementary to key local and national strategies, eg Local Agenda 21;
- not breach state aid rules.

The key question is whether a proposed project will change the attitude and behaviour of individuals and communities in ways that enhance understanding of sustainable development and the role of the National Park while promoting cooperation and social inclusion.

Priority will be given to eligible projects that:

- involve young people and combat social exclusion;
- encourage links between urban groups and those resident in the National Park;
- demonstrate innovation or best practice;
- lever in contributions from other sources;
- add value or new dimensions to existing sustainability projects; and/or
- have little access to alternative public funding; and/or
- bring organisations together to cooperate in tackling problems or promoting new ideas.

PROCEDURES AND STRUCTURES

National Park Authorities are being asked to develop appropriate local procedures and structures. Diversity will help identify best practice for encouraging innovation and high levels of participation by Park communities. Bureaucracy should be kept to a minimum.

A small Sustainable Development Fund Grant Advisory Panel should be established in each Park to take decisions about allocation of the Fund. Each Park should consider whether to appoint a Sustainable Development Officer to promote and manage the Fund.

Grants

The level of grant support for the voluntary sector will not normally exceed 75%. For other organisations it will not normally exceed 50%. Up to 100% will be available in exceptional circumstances and in most cases this will require contribution in kind such as volunteer time or loan of equipment, premises, land etc.

When making grant applications, applicants will be expected to explore complementary grant sources to give added value to the Sustainable Development Fund.

The Grant Advisory Panel

The Grant Advisory Panel in each Park may include those with experience through local and regional organisations and embrace a range of interests such as community, business, environmental, wildlife, agriculture, tourism and recreational interests. However the panel should be small and the main requirement is that its members can think laterally and promote innovation. The National Park Authority will provide the secretariat for this Panel.

The Panels must develop working methods which allow a speedy response to requests for grants. They might delegate responsibility or encourage members to take a personal interest in projects. Recipients should be informed within 7 days of the grant being agreed.

Whilst the Panels will make decisions on the applications, the National Park Authority will have the power to “call in” any applications which does not meet the eligibility criteria is clearly conflict with National Park purposes, or where there is a clear risk of financial mismanagement of the project. Those applications “called in” will then be considered by the

National Park Authority itself and a recommendation made to the Minister of State for Rural Affairs whose decision shall be final.

The aim will be to reduce bureaucracy to a minimum and to encourage engagement and innovation. Application forms will have a simple and easily understood design. A high level of trust must be placed in the ability of applicants to carry forward proposed projects. Auditing will be achieved mainly by maintaining close contact with the projects as they develop and a "light touch" regime.

To speed the process applications on the smaller grants (perhaps up to £1,000) will be put through to the Sustainable Development Officer, with these decisions being reported subsequently to the Panel. It is expected that a high proportion of grants will be relatively small in order to assist a large number of groups.

A Sustainable Development Officer

A dedicated officer to promote and manage the project will normally be necessary and the Fund can be used to establish this post. Staff, administration and promotion costs should not exceed 10% on average taken over the first two years of the Fund. It is not only accepted but desirable that expenditure on these heads may be higher in the first year when the programme is being promoted and applications nurtured.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Each Park Authority and the Broads Authority will be required to submit to the Minister of State for Rural Affairs and copy to the Countryside Agency, an annual report summarising their performance against the performance indicators. It has been made clear that this must be a very light touch regime. Performance indicators to be measured will focus primarily on output measures - has it worked!

Output measures will answer such questions as:

- what have been the social, economic and environmental impacts on communities and individuals – and what added value has the scheme secured?
- has the Fund or projects sparked activity that would not have otherwise occurred?
- how effectively have the local objectives set for the Fund by the National Parks been achieved?
- do the different approaches taken by each National Park affect the success of the Fund in each area?
- what implications are there for replication elsewhere?
- does the Fund enable us to learn lessons from its successes and failures?
- to what extent are both the successful and unsuccessful projects innovative?
- what proportion of projects are innovative adaptations of existing approaches to meet changing needs?
- how many sustainable management models have been developed?
- how effectively has sustainable living been promoted and what has been the result?
- how effectively have the National Park Projects been in facilitating the achievement of statutory purposes of conservation and understanding?

Input measures as follows will also be considered:

- the number of partnerships involved and created as a result of the Fund;
- the number of community groups directly involved in projects;
- the number of training/awareness raising sessions on sustainability and the Fund to voluntary organisations, community groups and others;
- the percentage of projects which have retained community participation after year one, two and three, including those projects led by community groups, and the number of projects still operational after the three year programme, or where they are not operating because they have fulfilled their objective;
- the number of partners involved in the Fund, which are still involved at the end of year one, two and three;
- the amount of match-funding drawn down by the Fund

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

These simple reports will aid us in evaluating the overall impact of the Fund and will also help dissemination of the lessons learnt from the projects. National Park Authorities will be encouraged to promote the results to a wider rural audience. In addition, we will ask the Countryside Agency to undertake low key evaluation of the projects. We will ask the Agency to make a first report at the end of 18 months.

A LEARNING PROGRAMME

The Minister of State for Rural Affairs is keen to promote innovative thinking through the operation of the Fund and to see how it can help to provoke new ideas or good practice which may inform the wider work of bodies active in the National Parks and more widely in rural communities. He intends to host a seminar early in 2003 to take stock of progress with National Park Officers, Sustainable Development Officers and key partners including the Countryside agency and English Nature.

APPENDIX 3

APPENDIX 3: RESEARCH TOPICS USED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH SDF OFFICERS

Defining sustainable development and setting overall objectives

1. How have NPAs chosen to define the purpose and objectives of the SDF in the context of Defra's original criteria and in the context of sustainable development? How has this been communicated to potential applicants and other stakeholders?
2. Have the criteria used to score and select applications varied over the period since 2002? Has any change arisen as a result of the 'saturation' of demand on certain topics or from certain types of applicant, or has it been a response to changes in local or national policy objectives?

Relationship with the NP Management Plan

3. How is the SDF being used to deliver NPA purposes and Management Plan commitments? Has the SDF been used to as a means of delivery in specific policy areas?

The focus of outputs of projects

4. Has the SDF been used to support activities more in certain policy or topic areas than others (both between and within the three domains of community, economy and environment)? To what extent is this pattern a result of deliberate targeting by SDF officers and grants panels, or a reflection of 'bottom up' demand by beneficiaries?

Scheme administration

5. How have NPAs managed the processes of running the scheme (including promoting it to potential applicants; selecting projects; monitoring project outputs and impacts; and paying grants)? What examples are there of efficient and effective best practices (that reduce the administrative burden on the NPA and on projects and maximise value for money from the SDF) that can be recommended to other NPAs?

Monitoring project achievements

6. What types of performance indicators have been used to show how projects have been able to progress towards their expected outcomes?

Cost effectiveness issues

7. Have NPAs set different intervention rates for different applicants or types of projects? Similarly, have maximum or minimum amounts of grant aid been set?
8. How does the average rate and value of grant aid vary between the National Parks and between the type of projects, and what are the reasons for any significant variation?
9. What evidence is there that projects would not have taken place without the funding provided by the SDF? Have strategic decisions been taken to differentiate SDF funding from other programmes?
10. To what extent has the SDF been used to 'break new ground' by encouraging innovative and risk-taking projects? Are there examples of innovative approaches (which may not necessarily have been successful) from which valuable lessons can be learned and shared?

Use of the SDF to engage with different audiences

11. Are certain kinds of organizations or people more evident as grant holders and how has this changed over time? Is it a result of deliberate targeting by SDF officers and grants panels or 'bottom up demand'?
12. How well has the SDF been used to engage local and wider communities (including outside the NP) with National Park purposes and Management Plan commitments?
13. How important has liaison between SDF officers and colleagues in other NPA departments been in enhancing the effectiveness of the scheme?

Use of the SDF to work with other organisations

14. In what ways is value added to the SDF by joint working between NPAs and by leveraging in funding from other bodies?
15. How does the SDF complement key local, regional and national strategies and programmes? Can it be shown that there has been little or no overlap between the opportunities provided by the SDF and other national or local schemes?

APPENDIX 4

APPENDIX 4: SUMMARY MATRIX OF APPLICATION ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The matrix below has been completed by the authors of this evaluation based on the assessment criteria forms provided by the NPAs

Key:

✓ This criterion has been included in the project assessment form for the Park

✓✓ This criterion has been included in the project assessment form for the Park, and is considered essential for a project to be approved

Application assessment criteria	Northumberland	Lake District	Yorkshire Dales	North York Moors	Peak District	Broads	New Forest	Exmoor	Dartmoor
DEFRA CRITERIA AND PRIORITIES (See Appendix 2)									
Projects are required to:									
Further National Park Purposes	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Be sustainable (against the test of social, environmental and economic sustainability)	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Have the support or involvement of local communities	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Be complementary to key local and national strategies, e.g. Local Agenda 21		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Not breach state aid rules				✓✓			✓		
Priority will be given to eligible projects that:									
Involve young people and combat social exclusion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Encourage links between urban groups and those resident in the National Park	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Demonstrate innovation or best practice		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lever in contributions from other sources		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Add value or new dimensions to existing sustainability projects	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Have little access to alternative public funding			✓	✓		✓	✓		
Bring organisations together to co-operate in tackling problems or promoting new ideas	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
ECONOMIC CRITERIA									
Increase the level of spend in the local economy	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
Create sustained local employment	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Provide training opportunities			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Encourage sustainable tourism	✓			✓		✓	✓		
Support rural diversification	✓						✓	✓	

Application assessment criteria	Northum-berland	Lake District	Yorkshire Dales	North York Moors	Peak District	Broads	New Forest	Exmoor	Dartmoor
Generates income			✓	✓	✓			✓	
Promote green business practice			✓				✓	✓	✓
Boost local production and consumption				✓			✓		✓
Tackle local economic problems				✓					✓
Encourage sustainable purchasing and responsible business practices			✓	✓			✓		✓
Support community-based businesses and services			✓	✓			✓		✓
Add value to local products			✓	✓					
SOCIAL CRITERIA									
Improve public access to the National Park	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Increase participation in caring for the National Park				✓	✓		✓		✓
Protect the historic/cultural environment and improve local identity	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Reduce the fear of crime	✓								
Improve health and wellbeing	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	
Raise awareness of sustainable development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide opportunities for education			✓					✓	
Offer opportunities for voluntary participation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reduce inequalities in basic needs				✓					
Improve viability and/or self-reliance of National Park communities				✓			✓		✓
Help to conserve/enhance and enjoy the built environment				✓					
Meet the needs of the local community			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Empower the local community			✓	✓					✓
Improve community facilities/services			✓	✓			✓		
ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA									
Generate/conserv e energy in a sustainable way	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Encourage careful use of natural resources			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Conserve and/or enhance biodiversity	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Reduce pollution of air/land/water	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Provide a new use for an existing site/building	✓		✓	✓					
Reduce waste and encourage recycling	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Use traditional or local materials			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Use sustainable design			✓	✓					
Protect the landscape				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Application assessment criteria	Northumberland	Lake District	Yorkshire Dales	North York Moors	Peak District	Broads	New Forest	Exmoor	Dartmoor
Reduce flood risk							✓	✓	
Make use of or encourage sustainable transport			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Tackle climate change		✓✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Interact with or make use of the natural environment in a sustainable way				✓	✓		✓		
Have a positive environmental impact on the Park and local communities				✓	✓		✓		
OTHER CRITERIA									
Is the project realistically achievable?				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Are project costs realistic/do they represent value for money?			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Are the necessary other sources of funding in place/being sought?				✓			✓	✓	✓✓
Will the project go ahead regardless of SDF funding?				✓	✓			✓	
As a model, is there potential for replication inside or outside the Park?			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Does the project have an exit strategy?			✓	✓				✓	
Provides an element of public benefit				✓		✓	✓	✓	
Provides PR potential for the project, Authority and the SDF				✓		✓		✓	

APPENDIX 5

APPENDIX 5: SUMMARY DATA TABLES OF SDF OUTPUTS

The following data tables summarise the information provided in the databases of projects compiled by the SDF officers.

Headline data on numbers and value of projects and levels of grant aid awarded

National Park	No. projects	Value of Projects	SDF awarded	Mean intervention rate
Northumberland	104	£6,365,612	£1,032,346	16%
Lake District	163	£8,994,934	£1,128,733	13%
Yorkshire Dales	128	£3,912,447	£1,174,882	30%
North York Moors	128	£9,734,945	£1,178,793	12%
Peak District	226	£8,791,528	£1,121,690	13%
Broads	136	£5,356,015	£1,123,548	21%
New Forest	42	£850,844	£355,017	42%
Exmoor	122	£6,065,043	£1,469,876	24%
Dartmoor	186	£5,984,379	£1,296,895	22%
Total	1,235	£56,055,747	£9,881,779	18%

The 'Principal Focus' assigned to projects by SDF officers

Percent of all projects

National Park	Economic		Social		Environmental	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Northumberland	46	44%	50	48%	8	8%
Lake District	9	6%	50	31%	104	64%
Yorkshire Dales	34	27%	34	27%	60	47%
North York Moors	11	9%	48	38%	69	54%
Peak District	14	6%	80	35%	128	57%
Broads	17	13%	59	43%	60	44%
New Forest	3	7%	8	19%	31	74%
Exmoor	44	36%	34	28%	43	35%
Dartmoor	36	19%	69	37%	80	43%
Total	214	17%	432	35%	583	47%

The 'Principal Theme' assigned to projects by SDF officers

Percent of all projects

National Park	Biodiversity	Business Enterprise	Community Enterprise	Education	Recreation and Tourism	Recycling	Resource Conservation	Renewable Energy	Sustainable Transport	Training and Development	Other - Please Comment
Northumberland	3%	18%	24%	10%	11%	0%	3%	24%	1%	7%	0%
Lake District	3%	15%	40%	28%	9%	1%	3%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Yorkshire Dales	5%	23%	5%	14%	17%	5%	5%	14%	8%	5%	0%
North York Moors	5%	15%	20%	17%	4%	2%	27%	2%	1%	7%	1%
Peak District	5%	7%	23%	28%	11%	4%	8%	6%	3%	6%	0%
Broads	2%	6%	1%	30%	39%	1%	4%	10%	2%	3%	1%
New Forest	14%	7%	2%	29%	2%	0%	12%	14%	7%	0%	12%
Exmoor	11%	5%	15%	13%	25%	3%	7%	10%	2%	9%	1%
Dartmoor	6%	13%	9%	20%	9%	2%	5%	14%	4%	8%	3%
Total	5%	12%	17%	21%	14%	2%	8%	9%	3%	6%	1%

The type of applicant assigned to projects by SDF officers

Percent of all projects

National Park	Community or Voluntary Group	Individual	Profit-Making Business	Registered Charity	Statutory Organisation	Other - Please Comment
Northumberland	38%	2%	42%	4%	14%	0%
Lake District	29%	2%	28%	14%	25%	2%
Yorkshire Dales	27%	5%	29%	30%	3%	6%
North York Moors	25%	8%	16%	26%	12%	13%
Peak District	59%	1%	8%	17%	14%	0%
Broads	13%	1%	25%	35%	26%	0%
New Forest	36%	7%	14%	14%	29%	0%
Exmoor	28%	3%	19%	36%	9%	5%
Dartmoor	39%	13%	17%	4%	9%	14%
Total	35%	5%	21%	20%	15%	5%

Assessment of economic benefits of projects by SDF officers

Percent of all projects

National Park	Raises awareness of sustainable development	Brings organisations together in partnership	Exemplar of sustainable development	Increases spend in the rural economy	Creates sustained local employment	Involves sustainable tourism	Involves sustainable transport	Supports rural diversification
Northumberland	51%	53%	45%	50%	16%	54%	12%	18%
Lake District	85%	67%	55%	47%	42%	41%	9%	62%
Yorkshire Dales	72%	51%	44%	40%	20%	37%	21%	36%
North York Moors	97%	99%	95%	63%	29%	17%	18%	37%
Peak District	97%	99%	21%	92%	23%	78%	92%	31%
Broads	45%	2%	8%	13%	10%	32%	24%	2%
New Forest	48%	43%	45%	5%	7%	10%	12%	12%
Exmoor	63%	61%	52%	90%	37%	57%	18%	44%
Dartmoor	72%	64%	39%	40%	35%	26%	13%	33%
Total	74%	64%	43%	54%	26%	43%	30%	33%

Assessment of social benefits of projects by SDF officers

Percent of all projects

National Park	Engages local communities / volunteers	Involves young people	Engages people from an urban centre	Improves public access	Protects historic cultural env.	An event for public understanding & enjoyment of the NP	Reduces the fear of crime	Addresses health inequalities
Northumberland	86%	60%	24%	53%	63%	47%	2%	14%
Lake District	64%	48%	57%	29%	76%	42%	15%	25%
Yorkshire Dales	66%	24%	47%	18%	29%	41%	0%	6%
North York Moors	97%	66%	63%	51%	27%	58%	1%	14%
Peak District	96%	83%	92%	88%	13%	86%	1%	34%
Broads	18%	54%	18%	24%	18%	8%	0%	2%
New Forest	43%	52%	40%	29%	29%	55%	0%	26%
Exmoor	82%	38%	52%	28%	30%	59%	2%	13%
Dartmoor	69%	33%	39%	16%	18%	30%	5%	13%
Total	72%	52%	52%	40%	32%	49%	4%	17%

Assessment of environmental benefits of projects by SDF officers

Percent of all projects

National Park	Develops models that can be applied elsewhere	Involves sustainable land management	Adds value to an existing project	Generates sustainable (or conserves) energy	Directly conserves and enhances biodiversity	Protects water quality and resources (incl flood risk)	Provides a new use for an existing site	Uses recycling
Northumberland	48%	17%	82%	30%	5%	6%	28%	20%
Lake District	72%	47%	40%	74%	23%	14%	55%	93%
Yorkshire Dales	30%	26%	47%	9%	9%	6%	20%	27%
North York Moors	84%	23%	42%	53%	13%	2%	23%	53%
Peak District	17%	16%	31%	12%	8%	3%	20%	95%
Broads	4%	19%	10%	32%	13%	13%	4%	13%
New Forest	36%	26%	17%	24%	24%	0%	10%	26%
Exmoor	61%	28%	64%	14%	27%	9%	35%	85%
Dartmoor	44%	20%	38%	24%	19%	11%	30%	35%
Total	43%	24%	41%	30%	15%	8%	26%	56%

Number of projects receiving funding in each year

National Park	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Northumberland	0	20	8	7	13	17	39
Lake District	7	21	42	28	14	30	21
Yorkshire Dales	9	22	12	21	21	18	25
North York Moors	13	14	24	28	24	19	6
Peak District	29	29	39	34	32	41	22
Broads	19	17	19	20	15	26	20
New Forest	0	0	0	0	7	19	16
Exmoor	20	15	22	24	21	5	15
Dartmoor	0	40	9	24	25	62	26
Total	97	178	175	186	172	237	190

Value of SDF awarded each year

National Park	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Northumberland	£0	£162,937	£97,886	£57,816	£104,601	£97,948	£511,158
Lake District	£31,687	£184,509	£194,204	£186,389	£160,145	£207,294	£164,507
Yorkshire Dales	£96,456	£175,556	£83,445	£211,854	£174,601	£196,233	£236,737
North York Moors	£190,161	£141,616	£261,891	£137,714	£193,294	£151,360	£102,757
Peak District	£98,238	£180,186	£210,415	£144,081	£160,308	£166,758	£161,704
Broads	£0	£346,768	£100,672	£177,296	£89,262	£201,283	£208,267
New Forest	£0	£0	£0	£0	£55,561	£178,398	£121,058
Exmoor	£242,502	£107,256	£176,224	£314,031	£343,545	£109,500	£176,818
Dartmoor	£0	£207,461	£41,710	£182,194	£175,647	£462,127	£227,756
Total (thousands)	£659	£1,506	£1,166	£1,411	£1,457	£1,770	£1,911

Total value (cost) of projects in each year (£ thousands)

National Park	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Northumberland	£0	£1,289	£377	£232	£596	£301	£3,571
Lake District	£84	£1,485	£880	£871	£2,704	£947	£2,023
Yorkshire Dales	£475	£775	£287	£507	£490	£580	£800
North York Moors	£1,111	£1,278	£1,965	£921	£789	£472	£3,199
Peak District	£381	£1,376	£1,051	£628	£3,170	£1,293	£895
Broads	£0	£1,975	£256	£471	£1,542	£491	£621
New Forest	£0	£0	£0	£0	£129	£475	£247
Exmoor	£1,124	£251	£703	£1,277	£912	£1,039	£758
Dartmoor	£0	£801	£103	£778	£611	£2,900	£792
Total	£3,176	£9,229	£5,622	£5,685	£10,944	£8,496	£12,906

Mean rate of grant in each year

National Park	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Northumberland	n.a.	13%	26%	25%	18%	33%	14%
Lake District	38%	12%	22%	21%	6%	22%	8%
Yorkshire Dales	20%	23%	29%	42%	36%	34%	30%
North York Moors	17%	11%	13%	15%	24%	32%	3%
Peak District	26%	13%	20%	23%	5%	13%	18%
Broads	n.a.	18%	39%	38%	6%	41%	34%
New Forest	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	43%	38%	49%
Exmoor	22%	43%	25%	25%	38%	11%	23%
Dartmoor	n.a.	26%	41%	23%	29%	16%	29%
Total	21%	16%	21%	25%	13%	21%	15%

APPENDIX 6: CASE STUDY SUMMARIES OF SELECTED PROJECTS

The Wetland Project and its Demonstration Days at the Twice Brewed Inn *(Northumberland)*

Project Description

The Project is a wetland sewage scheme which is gravity fed with no power driven workings, delivering clean water back to the land.

Funding Provision, Support in Kind, Number of People Involved and Training

This project was awarded £43,350 from the SDF, 50% of the total project costs. A series of specific demonstrations will take place until 2013, with the number of estimated beneficiaries being 1,000, including visits from local schools and universities. The main partner have been Teeside University and Dr. Richard Lord; CLEMENTS. Advice has also been provided from the National Park Authority; Eco-Op, David Keen, English Heritage, Planning officers, The Centre for Alternative Energy and the YHA at Langton Beck.

Project Implementation

The Project commenced in September 2008 following years of research, discussion and the discovery of pre Roman sewage system. A main sewage line was constructed, joined by runoff from Inn kitchen 'fat trap', running to the first of three 11,000 litre tanks. The first tank settles solids, the second tank has a baffle to form a secondary screen and the third contains the bacteriological filtration. A further small tank is for the sloughed off dead bacteria which can be

fed back to the first main tank. The liquid then passes through the first of two reed beds resulting in clean water.

The Project has been driven by the applicant's "unfailing enthusiasm, commitment to the project, and to renewable and sustainable technology, and his desire to see the demonstration system in place" (Ruth Dickinson, Community Enterprise Support Officer).

National Park SDF and Management Plan Objectives

The Project delivers every environmental sustainability objective set out in the SDF criteria and is considered a good exemplar of sustainable development.

Awareness Raising

Due to the Project's exemplary status, awareness has spread of green issues amongst staff and the local community, and various organisations have expressed an interest in seeing the Project. The Inn's website has been rebuilt referring specifically to the Project see <http://www.twicebrewedinn.co.uk/wetlands1.htm>.

Project Outcomes

The Inn is in the process over hosting 160 seminars on the development of the project until 2013.



Project Description

The Feildbarn Project is a self funding scheme to enable the repair and conservation of field barns through temporary use. The conservation of barns in the National Park is of high importance; an estimated 4,500 barns form an integral feature of the landscape and built heritage of the area. A number of barns lie within Conservation Areas and approximately 40% are in poor or very bad condition.

The scheme proposed enables the funding of conservation repair work bringing the field barns back into commercial use through the construction of self contained, free standing "eco pods" within the structure of the barns, which can be used for short term holiday accommodation, light commercial use, office and work space. The Pod is designed to use sustainably resourced and environmentally safe materials in its construction, operate efficiently and conserve resources. The SDF funding provided the funding for a prototype based on Bolton Abbey Estate.

Funding Provision, Support in Kind, Number of People Involved and Training

The Project was awarded £15,000 from the SDF grant with match funding of £30,950. Both Fielden Clegg Bradley Architects, who designed the Pod, and workmen, worked for free so that no labour costs were incurred. The work has involved 10 people and included three sustainable development training days.

To determine the viability of the project an economic appraisal was undertaken by Five Lines Consulting Ltd between April and July 2009, commissioned by the National Park Authority. The appraisal estimated that the average capital cost for each Pod and associated services trailer was approximately £23,000, and that to restore the barns to a suitable state to install the Pod would be £8,000 depending on the current condition of the barn and the scale of restoration

required. Alongside this, there would be operating costs relating to marketing, repairs and maintenance.

Project Implementation

Construction for a pilot pod commenced in summer 2008. It will be developed and monitored for at least 12 months to determine the suitability of the pod for accommodation and/or work space. If the project is feasible, the pods will create an ultimately self-funding scheme to enable the long-term repair and conservation of field barns through their temporary re-use as short-term accommodation.

National Park Management Plan Objectives

The Project seeks to conserve field barns as an economic resource for future generations and is in line with the National Park Management objectives. In the short term the conservative repair of these buildings will provide employment and opportunities for craft skills training relevant to the conservation needs of the National Park. During the lifetime of the project farmers and / or landowners will service the barns, providing goods and services to the benefit of the local economy. They will also provide a sustainable tourism resource bringing opportunities for additional visitor spend.

In summary the Project could support rural diversification, tourism added value, land heritage value and regional image value, and generate local economic benefits.

Awareness Raising

Extensive media coverage has been generated raising the profile of the Project and also generating free publicity for the National Park.

Project Outcomes

Aside from the Economic Appraisal Yorkshire Forward is funding the monitoring and evaluation of the Project post installation.

Project Description

The Yorkshire Dales Songlines Project is a community singing project that celebrates and shares the cultural heritage of the Yorkshire Dales. The Project uses the natural and built environment of the National Park as inspiration whilst promoting sustainable lifestyles. It aims to make singing more accessible by teaching singing by ear.

The Project consists of a programme of events for singers who enjoy walking, cycling and /or the special beauty of the National Park covering weekend and week long singing events organised by Howgill Harmony.

Funding Provision, Support in Kind, Number of People Involved and Training

The Project was awarded £7,500 from the SDF grant with match funding of £18,240 and a further £200 in kind. The work has involved 260 people in organising and running of a series of events over an 18 month period and included seven sustainable development training days.

Project Implementation

A varied programme of events was run from August 2008 to July 2009. The Project has been very successful; attracting over 3,000 participants ranging from community groups to foreign choirs to over 30 weekend and workshop events that have covered seven broad themes.

Workshops and singing events were held at festivals, on farm visits, on waterfall and cave visits, on the Settle to Carlisle Railway and at Ribbleshead station and viaduct, at historic quaker meeting houses and even butchers shops and fire stations. The programme has included Haytime Harmony walks through Dales' hay meadows, singing songs on the Settle-Carlisle railway line about the building of the famous line, the "Singing Cyclists" weekend which included singing stops at Yorkshire Dales caves, waterfalls, country churches and pubs, as well as Hardraw

Waterfalls Harmony weekend, international choir meets, and the Hills are Alive events.

To create a greater awareness of sustainable tourism practices and encourage healthy exercise the Project has placed an emphasis on arriving to the workshops and/or events by public transport, lift sharing (coordinated by the organisers) and cycle hire.

The Project has generated local economic benefits to accommodation providers ranging from residential and outdoor centres, holiday cottages, bunk barns to residential schools from increased visitors to the local economy.

National Park Management Plan Objectives

The Project has assisted with delivering National Park Management community and culture objectives by strengthening traditions through the powerful medium of song and performance. It has promoted new ways to enjoy, understand and share the special qualities of the National Park, bringing people together and providing the kind of personal spiritual exercise and enjoyment that lies at the heart of National Park designation.

Awareness Raising

Details of the Project have been advertised on the National Park Authority website's Songlines Festival page which has resulted in further visitors. The Project has also established a video learning site to reduce costs of CD production and postage of written music. Videos have been posted up on www.youtube.com/Davidburbidge

Project Outcomes

As part of the final report on the Project a CD will be produced as a record of the events and activities which will provide a valuable archive of the cultural heritage of the Yorkshire Dales.

Whitby and District Credit Union Study Group (North York Moors)

Project Description

The Whitby and District Credit Union Study Group (WDCUSG) is a member led social enterprise that promotes personal financial management. The Project's aim was to develop an existing savings club into a credit union within a common bond area, offering low cost, high quality, fair and ethical loans, savings and financial advice to those suffering financial exclusion in the most rural and isolated parts of Whitby & District. This Project fell into two distinct phases (described below) which were submitted as separate applications to the SDF.

Funding Provision, Support in Kind, Number of People Involved and Training

The Project was awarded £20,000 from the SDF grant (in the form of two £10,000 grants) with match funding of £60,092 (£48,302 and £12,600) and a further £3,012 (2,612 and £400) in kind or The work has involved 162 people and generated one medium to long-term job.

Project Implementation

The project commenced in 2004/05. Phase One involved the employment of a Credit Union Development Worker to assist the WDCUSG in developing their existing savings club into a fully fledged credit union, offering fair and ethical financial services to those currently excluded due to their socio-economic status and/or rurality. This post was established in order to support the group through the registration process required by the Financial Services Agency, to support the credit union's initial development, and to develop the service throughout the National Park.

The second phase of the Project involved the employment of a part-time Credit Union Co-ordinator. This post focused on addressing financial exclusion in the most rural and isolated parts of Whitby & District by creating contact points in rural areas, to be run by local groups, organisations and individuals, and by developing internet access to the credit union's services. The Co-ordinator also provided training and a continued development plan for

credit union volunteers, developing essential skills and increasing their capacity.

National Park Management Plan Objectives

The Project supported the National Park's objectives to overcome social exclusion.

Awareness Raising

Usage of the website is increasing each month and it is proving to be a valuable form of communication to people in rural parts of Whitby & District. Evidence shows that this service is enabling people in rural areas to open new accounts online.

Project Outcomes

Over the duration of the Project 12 contact points have been created and present membership of the credit union is over 300, of which over half of members live in the rural part of the common bond area. All of the accounts are active and monthly turnover is showing a steady increase. The Directors of the credit union regularly review the business plan to compare the actual position to the forecast to ensure they are on track to reach sustainability.

School projects have been successful at both Staithes and Hinderwell, and each Monday during term time between 30 to 40 children attend the School Bank, taking responsibility of their money and passbooks. School projects are encouraging parents to take advantage of the service.

The credit union now works in partnership with a number of bodies including the Whitby & District Citizens Advice Bureau, Whitby & District Voluntary Action, Scarborough Borough Council, Whitby Network, North Yorkshire County Council, Women's Institute, Whitby Pact, Mulgrave Community Network, Time Out Women's Group, Yorkshire Coast Homes, Jet Coast Development Trust, Hinderwell Village Hall, Sure Start Children's Centre and local schools. The union is also actively supporting the Financial Inclusion programme in the Esk Valley.

Project Description

The Green Grindleford Project created a community allotment and informal meeting space by reclaiming, conserving and enhancing 1.5 acres of non productive community land on a prominent site at the heart of Grindleford village within the National Park.

Funding Provision, Support in Kind, Number of People Involved and Training

The Project was awarded £11,369 from the SDF grant over a two year period with match funding of £7,125 and £8,600 in kind. Monies from the SDF led to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund as well as support from Grindleford Parish Council, Grindleford Horticultural Society Derbyshire Community Trust and the Parish Playing Fields Committee, from whom the Project leased the land. The work has involved 106 people, supported two sustainable development training days.

A further £3,000 has been subsequently received from the SDF to support the beehive project.

Project Implementation

The Project was launched in 2006. It has sought to develop the site in a way which enhances the landscape in sympathy with biodiversity interests and ensure that local non productive land was put to good use by having over 20 fully occupied allotments in addition to a waiting list.

In total, 32 local residents/members were committed to creating a genuinely community based facility with inclusiveness and sustainability at its heart, as well as developing the allotments in ways which enable members of all abilities to take part. Gardening activities were extended to provide informal community activities focused on outdoor meeting spaces, simple exercise opportunities and sustainable environment and biodiversity interests. Work has included a barbecue, wildlife pond,

stone wall repairs/ building, community orchard, facilities for older people to use raised beds, and a community shed utilising a rainwater harvesting system.

National Park Management Plan Objectives

The Project has not only encouraged community engagement but improved biodiversity, health through exercise and healthy diets, and education.

Awareness Raising

The Project contributes to the viability of an important facet of the village calendar, the Grindleford Horticultural Show, through members exhibiting their produce and (hopefully) winning awards. Work with the Horticultural Society and the Playing Fields Association to serve mutual benefit at every opportunity is explored thus building stronger community links across different interest groups in the village.

The Grindleford Allotment Association has received advice from experts and has raised awareness of biodiversity within the area both amongst a wide segment of the village population and visitors to the site. The Association has held three open days to inform and involve the local community at key stages in the project and this work is continuing.

Project Outcomes

The Association has transformed a once derelict site beside the River Derwent into 24 mostly-organic allotments and a communal orchard, used by everyone from children to 90 year-olds. It has achieved the following outcomes:

- Skills have been developed and accredited (where appropriate) through the Project and 24 young students from Sheffield spent extended periods of productive activity in a rural environment where they mixed with local volunteers to mutual benefit.

- Ideas for educational opportunities were developed for primary and junior level children and offered to staff at the village school – this now includes bee keeping as a follow up project.
- The health of those who invest time in allotments has been enhanced through the increased exercise and the diet of at least 20 families improved through local fresh produce grown to known standards.
- The biodiversity of the area was enhanced by providing a wide range of habitat for wild species. Existing specimen

trees on the site and newly planted ones (mainly fruit) with biodiversity interests were at the heart of the planting scheme (as well as community enjoyment). A significant length of dry stone wall (over 70 metres) has been renovated.

As a result of further SDF funding, the Project has recently added three thriving bee-hives, and children from Grindleford Primary School have developed their own allotment. The Association is now exploring options to develop a small vineyard.

Project Description

The Project delivered the key infrastructure to allow Hickling Broad Sailing Club (HBSC) to maximise opportunities for young people to sail as well as enjoy exploring the Broads via dinghy sailing, in a safe and considerate manner for the participants and other Broads users. The Project enabled young people to be included in the Club's racing programme on equal terms to others who have their own sailing equipment; thus creating a key pathway of reference experience necessary to support entry into national competitions or even Olympic development squad.

Funding Provision, Support in Kind, Number of People Involved and Training

The Project was awarded £9,445 from the SDF grant with match funding of £9,596. The work has involved 100's of people.

Project Implementation

The Project commenced in 2008/09 and enabled the purchase three race specification dinghy's; two RS Feva XL Race and one Topper allowing those without access / ownership of a boat to compete equally with those with ready access to boats. The SDF has stipulated that the new dinghies should only be used by the junior members and that the club budgets to replace them within ten years.

National Park Management Plan Objectives

The Project meets the National Park's objective to develop sustainable tourism and recreation.

Awareness Raising

The Project has sought to exploit the publicity opportunity the award of a grant has provided by:

- Extending its relationship with the NSSA at Filby to actively promote the opportunity the club would be able to offer to young people through the use of literature and encouraging Filby's trainers to talk about HBSC at the end of each course. (It should be noted that many instructors at Filby are also members of HBSC);
- Promoting and operating at least one Open Day where prospective youth sailors can come and try the equipment and experience what the club has to offer;
- Seeking to gain placement of promotional material at other sail training venues throughout the region; and
- Ensuring appropriate promotion on the youth pages of the club website as well as encouraging links from other relevant websites.

Project Outcomes

The HBSC already has the framework to support this programme – the Club's location and its supporting structure of training and racing is very well established in its organisation and with correspondingly proven success. The HBSC has produced a number of young sailors who now compete at a national and international level.

Project Description

Ipley Manor is a 81 hectare farm on the eastern edge of the New Forest National Park. The farm has a small herd of red deer farmed for venison, a livery stable and the remaining grassland is used for hayage. The farm also has 27 hectares of woodland with a fair proportion of alder and hazel, which has been coppiced in earlier generations but has now remained unmanaged for many years.

The Project focused on the installation of a biomass district heating system on the Ipley Manor Estate, providing space and hot water heating to the main house and four cottages. The system was fuelled by woodchip produced from the sustainable management of the estate woodlands.

Funding Provision, Support in Kind, Number of People Involved and Training

The project was awarded £21,218 from the SDF grant with match funding of £49,505. The work has involved 10 people and included one sustainable development training day.

Project Implementation

The Project, which commenced in 2007 resulted in the installation of a 120kW wood-burning boiler along with underground insulated pipes to carry hot water to the five properties. Each occupier is recharged for the heat used as recorded by a heat meter on the house's hot water supply. The cost per kWh is less than it previously was when fuelled by oil. The heat consumed by the five houses is approximately 250,000 mWh per year.

The woodchip is obtained from the sustainable thinning and coppicing of the farm woodlands, in accordance with a woodland management plan. The cut timber is stacked in cords outside to dry over several months before being chipped and stored in the specially constructed bunker.

National Park Management Plan Objectives

The Project seeks to set an example of sustainable living and promote the use of alternative, more sustainable forms of energy.

Awareness Raising

A major benefit of the Project has been its influence on others within the New Forest. Through the SDF, the Project has demonstrated the benefits of woodfuel to both potential woodchip producers and woodchip users in the area. Site visits, seminars and workshops have taken place at the farm attended by landowners, farmers, community and activity centre managers, and schools. The Project has been instrumental in encouraging others to install woodchip fuelled heating systems (for example, Lyndhurst Community Centre) and has played a key role in stimulating the local woodfuel market.

Project Outcomes

The system has been running successfully since November 2007 and has been instrumental in reducing the carbon footprint of the farm and bringing the 27 hectares of neglected woodland back into sustainable management.

Project Description

Bracken is an important and natural part of the landscape with conservational value for a wide variety of wildlife. However bracken is now a recognised problem and several management techniques have been utilised and are currently deployed to control its growth and spread (e.g. cutting, bruising, burning or, chemical spray).

Bracken compost has been extensively researched, trialled and documented with regard to its properties and its particular advantage as a peat alternative. The Project did not seek to undertake additional trialling work, but to develop a complete management system to provide and test the commercial viability of harvesting/composting, and establish a market for the valuable end product (peat free ericaceous compost) whilst preserving and protecting sensitive habitats across Exmoor. It sought to support agribusinesses on Exmoor with a number of local partners through a series of phases.

Funding Provision, Support in Kind, Number of People Involved and Training

The project was awarded £55,429 from the SDF grant with match funding of £58,000 and a further £45,000 in kind. The work has involved 15 people and generated two mid to long-term jobs. The Project was part funded by SDF and the South West Regional Development Agency part as part of a grant offer and Aardvark EM Ltd who provided the match funding. Exmoor National Park Authority has a 40% stake in the company and return of profits (if generated).

Project Implementation

The Project which commenced in 2006/07, was initially intended to be a commercial management partnership with the major landowners on Exmoor and interested parties. However after partnership discussions in 2007 it was determined that it would not be possible to set up a management partnership at the start of the project. It was therefore decided that Aardvark EM Limited supported by Exmoor National Park Authority's SDF would take on and execute the project with the conviction that the project, once established, could be delivered for a management partnership to then be pursued.

Harvesting and composting has taken place over 2007 to 2008 and a total of 14 hectares have been harvested. In that time the process has produced compost meeting saleable and quality standards (PAS 100 standards). A number of trial users (including National Trust properties, Taunton in Bloom and local nurseries) tested the compost during the 2009 growing season and the first bags went for commercial sale in the late spring. Initial results from the trial were positive and many users expressed an interest in future bulk sales.

The potential income from sales has been valued at between £7,500 and £20,000, depending on sales of loose and bagged compost and this will be verified following the sales achieved this year.

The Project not only provides a sustainable alternative to spraying and burning to control bracken but also has the potential to create a small income for land managers in the area (and increased work opportunity for contractors). The project team has concluded that a new land Management Contractor/Farm Contractor, or a partnership, could take over the project, with Aardvark handing over the information gained during the 2006-2009 period. Once the growing trials and initial market run have been completed this year it is anticipated that an established market will be available in the greater Exmoor area.

National Park Management Plan Objectives

The Project has the potential to control bracken invasion for wildlife benefits and support the local economy through the establishment of a commercial bracken composting business.

Awareness Raising

The branding for the compost, Exmoor Red (www.exmoorred.co.uk), has been created with the involvement of local schools through a competition.

Project Outcomes

It is projected that in years 4 (2010) and 5 (2011) the Project will become cost neutral, without the need for external funding, before entering a profit-making era.

Project Description

The Dartmoor Rehabilitation Project is a unique partnership scheme between HMP Dartmoor and the Forestry Commission. The Project gives law offenders the opportunity to improve and enhance local woodlands as part of a pre-release resettlement programme. The three phased project (detailed below) was developed alongside prison officers and seeks to offer offenders skills, mentoring and work experience to improve their transition back into the community.

Funding Provision, Support in Kind, Number of People Involved and Training

The project was initially awarded £15,000 and subsequently a further £18,000 from the SDF grant. A total of £282,865 match funding was secured from the Big Lottery. The Forestry Commission and Devon Renaissance Programme provided a further £136,694 in kind. The work has involved 12 people and generated 100 sustainable development training days. One mid to long-term job has been created as a consequence of the Project.

Project Implementation

The SDF application supported two new components of the Dartmoor Rehabilitation Project, which ran from August 2007 to August 2008.

The first component sought to provide suitable, locally sourced timber for Dartmoor woodfuel projects including the Brimpts Farm, 'Demonstration Wood Fuel Hub' project for Dartmoor and other local wood fuel initiatives. Timber was harvested as a direct result of accelerated work in the creation of environmental corridors across the Dartmoor Forestry Commission forests. Key to this work was the provision of a large wood chipper to increase the workload undertaken.

The second component focused on increasing the capacity of the current project to enable four offenders, rather than three

previously from HMP Dartmoor, to take part in the programme at any one time; meeting a major demand from the prison. The Project's target was for eight offenders to complete the programme over 12 months and all to secure employment on release.

The programme included three phases; Phase 1: 6 weeks voluntary work experience, Phase 2: Up to 9 months paid work experience, mentoring and skills training and Phase 3: the option of 3 months employment with the Forestry Commission following release. It is one of the few programmes in the country offering work experience rehabilitation pre and post release. All participating offenders received training in basic woodland management, use and maintenance of brush cutting equipment, use and maintenance of a wood chipper, chainsaw maintenance and safe operation, fence erection, marking trees for harvest and first aid.

National Park Management Plan Objectives

The Project met social objectives outlined in the Management Plan as well as improving biodiversity and supporting renewable energy generation through the provision of local wood for the Dartmoor Woodfuel hub.

Awareness Raising

Awareness raising has taken place and the Project has been referred to in some publications through SDF.

Project Outcomes

By the end of August 2008 17 offenders had completed the programme and 10 offenders secured full-time employment on release (60%); recognised nationally as an exceptionally high success rate. In addition, 8,000 metres of headwater stream habitat have been cleared within the Dartmoor forests creating important wildlife corridors and ideal habitats for fish spawning, invertebrates and amphibians.

An important by-product of the environmental corridor work undertaken by

the offenders was the production of small diameter non-commercial timber, suitable for conversion to wood chip or fuel. Over the reporting period and as part of a woodfuel supply contract 250 tonnes of small diameter timber was supplied to Brimpts Farm. Forest Enterprise (Peninsula) took part in two conferences held at Brimpts Farm promoting the development of a Dartmoor Woodfuel Co-operative.

The Project has been recognised as a national exemplar for prisoner rehabilitation and securing land based employment. It has received:

- A 4 star award from the Sustainable Development Commission;
- Recognition as an “outstanding scheme” by the Howard League for Penal Reform;
- A case study feature in a major Home Office publication promoting offender rehabilitation and employment schemes;
- Promotion as an exemplar project at a national Ministry of Justice seminar in London; and

- Most recently featured as a key case study in a report by the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health.

Despite the programme’s success ongoing core funding has not been secured. Since August 2009 the programme has been reduced down to two offender places alongside a reduction in the ‘payment’ for work undertaken. The Forestry Commission has however recognised the project’s value and committed a limited resource to enable the programme to continue at this lower level of participation for the next three years. In the meantime the Project will continue to seek external funding to expand the programme and secure funding commitment from other Government Departments based on the fact that the Project has the potential to save significant sums by reducing re-offending and could be replicated nationally. The only barrier to the Project’s expansion is finance.

Other organisations such as the National Trust have expressed an interest in delivering a similar initiative and NVQ qualifications in countryside conservation are now being offered at HMP Dartmoor to participants in the programme.

Project Description

Moorcar is a not for profit car club and the first rural based car share scheme in the UK.

Funding Provision, Support in Kind, Number of People Involved and Training

The project was awarded a total of £32,800 from the SDF grant with match funding of £63,600. The work has involved 30 people and generated a part time mid to long-term job of 0.1 days.

Project Implementation

The Project was initiated in 2002 with one lease car and six members in response to rising fuel prices, inadequate bus services and parking pressures. Following receipt of the SDF in 2006 two vehicles were made available in Chagford from 1st September 2006 and over the next two years a total of 26 members joined Moorcar. Parking was secured on private land, which in turn relieved the overall parking pressure within the historic town centre.

Interest in the concept of the car club has initiated enquiries from several towns and communities around South Dartmoor and the UK, resulting in the introduction of a car to South Brent in 2007.

Limitations in available funding and the requirement for Moorcar to reach a critical mass of vehicles and members has hampered the Project's growth in the subsequent two years. Although usage and membership continues to rise, the capital costs of vehicles have constrained growth to South Brent. Although membership has remained steady at seven members, the car is used by a local authority employee for three days a week and completely covers the fixed cost of the vehicle. This is a clear demonstration of the potential of car clubs to work with local authorities and to contribute to the reduction of private cars used as essential transport. Use of car clubs by local authorities will create a sustainable business model and deliver reductions in miles driven as

employees are encouraged to use public transport or alternative means to travel to work.

In February 2009 Moorcar attracted additional funding in partnership with Dartmoor National Park Authority to add one more town in South Dartmoor, Bovey Tracey to the car share scheme. This has enabled the provision of a lease car to the National Park Authority, which is used by car club members outside of work hours in the host town.

Moorcar now has seven cars across four towns in south Dartmoor, has over the past six years persuaded nearly 120 people to try the car club and currently has eighty members.

National Park Management Plan Objectives

The Project meets the National Park's climate change for reducing carbon footprint and sustainable transport objectives.

Awareness Raising

Through the Project there has been an increasing awareness of climate change issues and the responsibilities to reduce carbon emissions has prompted more interest in the car club.

Project Outcomes

The Project has now not only achieved all the success measures outlined in the SDF application but greater outcomes than could have been foreseen in 2006. Moorcar has been awarded the Social Enterprise mark and is recognised as an organisation that aims to provide an ethical choice to consumers. The Project now seeks to help other communities set-up a car club drawing on its past experience.