

Case Study 12 Putting PPAs on the map: Adding PPAs to the WDPA in the UK

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The UK was one of the first countries in the world to develop a system for assessing all nature and landscape conservation areas, covering all governance types, against the IUCN protected area definition, categories and governance type (the '2008 Guidelines'). The UK Putting Nature on the Map (PNOTM) project also created a system for the hitherto unrecognised community, private and local conservation areas to have their sites assessed against the IUCN's 2008 Protected Area Guidelines and be reported on the WDPA. This case study provides an example of how to achieve the best practices set out in Part B, Section 7 of these Guidelines.

Overview

The origins of nature conservation and landscape protection in the UK can be traced back well over a hundred years to three quite separate movements: a call for measures to protect nature on scientific and ecological grounds; a concern about the aesthetic damage caused by industrialisation; and a demand for working people to have access to the countryside for recreation. These concerns came together in the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. They also gave rise to, and have since sustained, the UK's powerful conservation movement of non-government organisations (NGOs), which has helped to protect many areas for nature and landscape through ownership of land and by exercising political influence.

The development of privately protected areas (PPAs) in the UK has been dominated by the involvement of NGOs working

for the protection of nature and landscape. Bodies like the National Trust (NT), now with more than five million members, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) with more than one million members, were founded in the 19th century. Both had begun to create nature reserves before 1900 and the number of sites that they protect for landscape and nature has grown nearly every year since. The first of the geographically-focused Wildlife Trusts was established in 1926: today, there are 47 of them in the UK (mainly based on counties in England and Wales, with a single body each for Scotland and Northern Ireland). Collectively, these Trusts have over 800,000 members and a network of more than 1,000 nature reserves. Other NGOs with a more specific focus on wetlands, wildland, woodlands, plants and raptors, for example, have also acquired and developed their own nature reserve systems. All of these are membership bodies, operating under national laws as charities, and wholly independent of government. In addition, many thousands of individual farmers and landowners are involved in site-based protection through national legislation. Communally-owned land, in particular 'commons' also provides a range of conservation benefits.

Applying the IUCN definition to UK conservation

Although recorded locally by individual organisations and to some extent by government bodies, the data on UK protected areas reported on the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) was deficient in several respects. It was not collected using the 2008 Guidelines as a standard; it was not comprehensive; it included some areas that



The National Trust has one of the largest private land holdings in the UK and manages some 600 PPAs © Nigel Dudley



The Slimbridge Wetland Centre is managed by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust one of the many NGOs managing PPAs in the UK © Nigel Dudley

might not meet the IUCN definition; omitted other areas that should be included; some areas were not categorised by the purposes for which sites were managed; and in many cases governance type was not correctly recorded. In 2010, the then Chair of WCPA challenged the IUCN National Committee in the UK to take the lead in a project to apply the 2008 Guidelines across all governance types in the UK, which could act as an exemplar to other countries which have a large number of PPAs and community conserved areas not currently reported on the WDPA.

The Putting Nature on the Map (PNOTM) project was the result. Its aims were to identify all the places in the UK that met the IUCN definition of a protected area, and to assign to them the appropriate IUCN management category and governance type. To do this, PNOTM developed a five-step process:

1. Identify all sites that might possibly be protected areas.
2. Develop UK-specific guidance based on the 2008 Guidelines.
3. Determine what is, and what is not, a protected area under the IUCN definition.
4. Assign management categories and governance types.
5. Collect and report on data, including to the WDPA.

As PNOTM developed, it became clear that there was a need to spread understanding of the project and ensure that consistent standards were adopted. To do this, the project developed three innovations:

1. **The production of a UK Handbook.** Showing how the 2008 Guidelines could be applied in the UK context (IUCN NCUK, 2012).
2. **Statements of Compliance (SoCs).** A statement outlining an assessment of protected areas against a standard set of questions to examine systematically whether individual sites or specific designations accorded with the IUCN definition. These statements were developed by the landholders in cooperation with the PNOTM project, and landholders were made fully aware that the objective was to include their data on the WDPA (Best Practice 7.1.6). This process helped identify the key

issues in deciding if an individual site or suite of sites per designation type met or did not meet the 2008 Guidelines. The SoCs are a transparent resource available on the IUCN NCUK website for any interested party to review.

3. **A National Assessment Panel.** The panel, consisting of UK WCPA experts familiar with IUCN's international standards for protected areas, reviewed each SoC in detail and recommended whether sites/designations met the 2008 Guidelines. This fulfilled the WDPA's requirement for data-verification (Best Practice 7.1.8).

Challenges

Once protected area status had been confirmed, data providers were invited to compile lists of their protected areas, with proposed management categories and governance types. In the case of government statutory nature conservation bodies, established data protocols were respected; but with the NGO data sets, which had never been included before, large bodies of new data on the UK's protected areas were collected, reviewed by the Assessment Panel and then transmitted to UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) who manage the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) (Best Practice 7.1.4).

Data collection remains challenging. WDPA data standards were new to many stakeholders and additional tasks were not always welcomed by staff already responsible for many other data management jobs. To overcome this, PNOTM invested in a pilot scheme with the Scottish Wildlife Trust to test and demonstrate the practicality of what was being asked, held face-to-face meetings with data staff from a number of NGOs and supported a UNEP-WCMC training workshop and webinar for data managers (Best Practice 7.1.3).

PNOTM has resulted in changes to the UK protected area data flows to the WDPA and provided a view of the UK protected area network that is quite different from that previously reported into the WDPA. Specifically in the context of this document, several thousand PPAs owned or managed by NGOs, protecting almost 500,000 ha have been identified and a diversity of governance types not previously accurately recorded. At a time when resources for conservation in the public sector are declining and policy commitment in some areas has weakened, understanding this contribution to conservation is particularly important (Crofts & Phillips, 2013; Crofts et al., 2014).

Summary

- Reporting PPAs is an important contribution to understanding national networks of protected areas (Best Practice 6.2.1).
- National processes run in cooperation but independently from government (Best Practice 7.1.1) can be useful in helping PPA owners/managers to understand and apply the 2018 Guidelines and these standards in a national context.
- Data collection is not always easy and close cooperation with UNEP-WCMC is necessary to help support organisations providing data for the first time (Principle 7.1).