



# Local Nature Reserve Management Planning Guidance



## The Process and the Plan

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## Introduction

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are areas of land designated by a local authority under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. They provide protection for sites of special local interest for nature and offer opportunities for both environmental education and community involvement, and for delivering a wide range of benefits to local communities and to visitors.

The SNH/CoSLA policy guidance on Local Nature Reserves (2000) recommends that, within three years of an LNR being designated, a reasonably comprehensive management plan should be prepared, with a subsequent monitoring and review programme.

The SNH commissioned report on the Evaluation of Local Nature Reserves (2006), which reviewed the performance of the policy guidance, highlighted the fact that few Scottish LNRs have up to date management plans, or in many cases, any management plans at all.

SNH considers that the key to an LNR, or any site, fulfilling its potential is good management, and that a management plan is the essential basis for this. We have therefore produced this guidance to support the good management of LNRs in Scotland.

There is an existing body of very good work describing the recommended contents and format for management planning, notably the CMS (Countryside Management System) Guide to Management Planning. This sets out the rationale for developing management plans. We do not reiterate this here, nor prescribe layouts and formats. Each organisation will have its own formats for management plans, which can be used in conjunction with this guidance.

This guidance therefore sets out what SNH expects to see in terms of the management planning *process*.

A management plan should

- explain how the site will be managed, and why.
- describe responsibilities
- evaluate the current situation
- set outcomes and evaluation systems
- identify resources.

A good management plan will be of a size that can be easily updated and referred to as a working document. Management plans can also be used to support grant applications.

Management plans should be visionary and imaginative, and should make links to areas such as health, access for everyone, and social objectives on which your LNR could deliver. Making these links highlights the importance of the reserve and will assist you in applying for funding and winning resources.

## 1. The Process

Local Nature Reserves are valuable places because they combine protection of the natural heritage with opportunities for people to enjoy, learn about and experience nature close to their homes. SNH expects partners to identify sites which are, or could become, LNRs as part of the process of developing and maintaining:

- An open space audit or greenspace strategy,
- and/or
- A Local Nature Conservation Sites system.

Management planning is a process, the output of which will be a 'fit-for-purpose' management plan. Plans should always be as concise as possible, although naturally a large, complex site will have a lengthier plan than a small site.

It is important that the process is inclusive, with stakeholders being given the chance to input into the plan. In many ways, the process can be as important as the plan itself, and can be a good way of engaging the community.

**SNH recommends the engagement of stakeholders during the management planning process. This can usually be achieved through the LNR management group, which will be made up of representative stakeholders. If your LNR does not have a management group, we would strongly advise setting one up.**

Further consultation can be undertaken if necessary. This can be a good way of engaging the community and enthusing people about the LNR. You could consider a community consultation event or invite comments on a draft plan on display in the local library. Remember to keep these consultations focused, and to be clear and specific about what questions you are asking.

**Remember that, before any wider consultation, you must have the support of your organisation for the planning process, as well as a commitment to implement it.**

## Presentation

You will have to decide how to produce and present your management plan. Expensive, bound documents are usually inappropriate, being costly to update and unwieldy to refer to.

Ideally, the plan should be stored and presented as a document on computer. Relevant sections can then be printed out as necessary, and updating is easy.

If you manage more than one site, try to ensure that all the plans follow a standard format.

The purpose of the management plan is to set out what management will be undertaken and how this will be achieved. A well-written plan will set the site in context with regard to green networks and access strategies, and will operate in much the same way as a business plan in terms of attracting funding.

## 2. Vision Statement

You should begin your management plan with a short statement outlining how the site will look once you have achieved your objectives. This is particularly useful where a significant amount of reinstatement will take place, but is a valuable tool for all sites. This is the section you can use to generate interest in the site to attract funding or engage the local community. You could include maps and sketches to give an impression of how the site will look.

## 3. Site Description and Assessment (What have you got and how important is it?)

Your management plan should include a **description** of the characteristics of the site. LNRs are for people as well as wildlife, so the site description should refer to both of these. Examples of what to include in the site description are –

- Land tenure
- Biological and geological data
- Current usage
- Interpretational, educational and other facilities
- Surrounding communities and relationship to other greenspaces – set the site in context

Remember to keep the description an appropriate length. ***“More time has been wasted on descriptions than all the other sections of the plan put together”*** (CMS Guide to Management Planning, 2005). It is better to refer the reader to other documents and data than to include too much detail in the management plan.

## Use maps

Maps are very effective tools for presenting information such as land tenure details, habitat information and site context. Using maps will cut down the length of your document and will make the plan easier for a wide range of people to understand.

You should follow the description with an **assessment** of the site. This is where you explain why the site is important, and why management is needed to ensure it continues to be so. This table is designed to help you carry out a comprehensive assessment.

Criteria	How to Assess
<b>Physical Environment</b>	
<b>Environmental</b>	You should assess the degree of 'naturalness', hydrology, soils (contamination?), microclimate, noise abatement and air quality factors if appropriate (especially in large, built-up areas). How do these factors relate to the environmental context within which the LNR sits?
<b>Natural Heritage</b>	Assess species present, habitats present, trends, landforms and processes, geology, landscape (including cultural significance).
<b>Biodiversity</b>	How important is the site in local, regional and national terms? How does the site contribute to LBAP, UK BAP and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy?
<b>Local distinctiveness</b>	How unique is the site in a local context? Does it stand alone or is it one of a series of sites forming, for example, a green network?
<b>Benefits to People and Communities</b>	
<b>Quality of Life</b>	How does the site contribute to people's quality of life, and how involved are the community in the site? Assess the potential for informal recreation, social interaction, relaxation and experiencing nature.
<b>Individual well being</b>	Think about how the site can contribute to people's well-being (e.g. by being an attractive, safe place to spend time).
<b>Individual physical health</b>	Look at opportunities for physical exercise and volunteering on the LNR
<b>Involving people and building stronger and safer communities</b>	Assess the current and potential involvement of individuals and communities. Individuals may become involved through volunteering, while communities could become involved through management groups, action groups, and 'Friends Of' groups.
<b>Environmental education and lifelong learning/understanding and awareness of the natural heritage</b>	How well does the site contribute to people's understanding of the environment? This should include an assessment of the availability of guided walks, talks, signs, leaflets, audio, visitor centres, public events, rangers etc.
<b>Access</b>	Evaluate transport links, amenities, cultural and other equalities barriers (including perceptions), perceptions of safety, disability provision, information for potential visitors on accessibility, and visitor profile.
<b>Economic Regeneration</b>	Does the site attract tourists, or contribute to the local area being an attractive place for investors and employers?



*Ask people to comment on the results of your assessment.*

#### 4. Aims and Objectives (What do you want?)

Now that you have carried out an assessment, it should be easy to develop your aims and objectives. What do you want out of the site? What roles do you see the site fulfilling?

Don't be afraid to make your aims aspirational and exciting but your objectives should be specific. You need people to commit to them. They will lead directly onto the sections on implementation.

**For example...**

**Aim:** The LNR contributes to local education

#### **It's never too early to think about evaluation!**

Evaluation is your assessment of whether you have been successful in meeting your objectives. Evaluation should be built into the management planning process at the very start.

For each objective you identify, define how you are going to measure its success. This will ensure you gather this information throughout the period of the management plan, allowing you to properly evaluate each objective.

For example, if one of your objectives is to encourage local people to invest time and energy in improving the LNR, you could define your measure (or indicator) as the number of hours of volunteer time spent on site. You will now be able to build the gathering of this information into your work plan. When the time comes to evaluate, you will have all the data you need.

**SNH would want to see that evaluation has been built into the planning process.**

**For example...**

**Aim:** The LNR contributes to local education

**Objective:** Six schools to make visits to the site

**Measure:** The number of school groups using the site per year.

Think outside the box - your objectives should link the LNR to wider policy areas you or your organisation want to deliver on. This is a good way of demonstrating the relevance of the LNR in the wider community, and it can help you win funding both from within your organisation and from external funders.

**Most LNRs should be able to identify objectives which relate to the following key policy areas:**

<b>Policy Aim</b>	<b>Ways that this could be achieved</b>
<b>Physical Environment</b>	
<b>Biodiversity</b> The LNR contributes to biodiversity targets	The LNR is identified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and plays a key part in the recovery of a priority species through habitat management, research and monitoring.
<b>Benefits to People and Communities</b>	
<b>Quality of Life</b> The LNR contributes in a demonstrable way to the quality of peoples' lives	The LNR is well used for informal recreation, social interaction, relaxation and the experiencing of nature.
<b>Individual well being</b> The LNR contributes to people's well being	The LNR contributes to people's well being by providing a well-managed and interesting natural heritage site which is accessible to all.
<b>Individual physical health</b>	The site manager has entered into an arrangement with the local doctor's surgery, where patients are encouraged to participate in organised health walks run by the ranger.
<b>Involving people and building stronger and safer communities</b> The LNR regenerates and invigorates the local community	The LNR brings the local community together through volunteer days, open days and management committees. The LNR is well managed, and the onsite ranger and voluntary staff, as well as an increase in members of the public, increase the safety of the area.
<b>Environmental education and lifelong learning/understanding and awareness of the natural heritage</b> The LNR plays a key role in education	The LNR has good relationships with local schools, with rangers making school visits and schools visiting the LNR for guided walks and activities. The guided walks programme encourages a wide range of people to visit and learn about the site and its natural heritage.
<b>Access</b> The LNR contributes to enabling all members of the community to access the natural heritage	The LNR links with the Core Path network. Well-managed facilities ensure that everyone can access and enjoy the site.
<b>Economic regeneration</b>	LNR managers have made contact with tourist information offices, local b&bs and have promoted the LNR through these channels. The LNR increases the attractiveness of the area, encouraging business and economic growth.

**Demonstrating that your LNR can deliver on these varied areas will highlight its relevance within both the local community and your organisation and will enhance your potential to win funding and resources.**



*Ask people to suggest any other areas the LNR could contribute towards*

These are just some suggestions of areas to which LNRs can contribute. Remember to identify a **measurable indicator** for each objective. This will allow you to assess whether you are achieving your objectives.

### **5. Methods (How will you get what you want?)**

Once you have identified your objectives and indicators, you will need to set out your methods for achieving these. For each objective, identify the action to be taken, and the resources that will be needed to achieve this.

Describe the methods and resources for each objective in this way.

#### **For example...**

**Aim:** The LNR contributes to local education  
**Objective:** Six schools to make visits to the site  
**Measure:** The number of school groups using the site per year.  
**Methods:** Develop links with local schools  
Ensure suitable facilities are available  
**Resources:** Ranger  
SNH grant

### **6. Work Programme (A Plan of Action)**

This is where you set out your costed and time-related proposals for each objective. You have already identified what you want to do, how you will do it and how it will be resourced. You should now bring together all this information, prioritise each objective and set everything out in a **clear plan of action**.

Prioritising your objectives will allow you to target your resources. Separate your objectives relating to the ongoing management of the site from your objectives relating to improvement and making wider links.

#### **For each objective, identify:**

- **WHO** is going to do it
- **HOW MUCH** it is going to cost
- **WHERE** these resources will come from
- **WHEN** this will happen

## 7. Reporting and Evaluation (How will you know if you've succeeded?)

Having invested time and involved a large number of people in developing your plan, you will want to make the most of the progress you have made on site. This could involve an annual report to a council committee, press releases or a regular newsletter. This will maintain the site's profile.

You should keep the management plan up to date and review it at least every five years. The evaluation of the last five years will be an integral part of the planning of the next five year plan. You have been gathering evidence to use in your evaluation throughout the implementation of your management plan, through your indicators. This will make it easy to evaluate how far you have been successful. Re-assess your objectives – have you achieved what you set out to do? Do you need to alter your methods or resources? Can you identify new objectives?

You should involve your stakeholders in the evaluation. You could present the results of your evaluation at a stakeholder event, and ask them to comment on their perception of the site. Discuss what needs to be done over the next five years.

### For example...

**Aim:** The LNR contributes to local education

**Objective:** Six schools to make visits to the site

**Measure:** The number of school groups using the site per year

**Data gathered on this measure:** 15 school visits to the site from 3 primary schools in year 1. 50 visits by 6 primary schools by year 5. Half the schools in the LNR's local education authority's area are now using the site on a regular basis.

**Evaluation:** This aim has been achieved. There is the need to sustain action and reach all schools in the area. The success has meant that there are greater resource implications for this aim. This will be addressed in the new plan.



***Involve the local community in your evaluation. Take the opportunity to publicise your successes, which you can back up with evidence***

## 8. Conclusion

LNR management planning should be an inclusive process which results in a user-friendly, fit-for-purpose document. We have set out here the steps we would want to see in the planning process, but, just as each LNR is different, so each plan will be different. It is important to remember that the ultimate objective of the exercise is to ensure a well-managed, well-used and well resourced LNR.

## **Appendix One – Further Reading**

Alexander, M. (2005) The CMS Guide to Management Planning. Talgarth, CMS Consortium. Available at <http://www.esdm.co.uk/downloads/CMS%20Plan%20Guide%202005.pdf>

English Nature. (1994) Managing LNRs

Eurosite Management Planning Toolkit. Available at [http://www.eurosite-nature.org/IMG/pdf/toolkitmp\\_en.pdf](http://www.eurosite-nature.org/IMG/pdf/toolkitmp_en.pdf)

Scottish Natural Heritage/CoSLA. (2000) Local Nature Reserves in Scotland – A Guide to their Selection and Declaration. Available at <http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/lhrs/finquide.pdf>

Scottish Natural Heritage (2006). Evaluation of Local Nature Reserves. Commissioned Report No. 174 (ROAME No. F05AB03). Available at [http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned\\_reports/F05AB03.pdf](http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/F05AB03.pdf)

Urban Forum of the UK Man and the Biosphere Committee. (1998) Local Nature Reserves. A time for Reflection: a time for new Action

## **Appendix Two – Further Support**

For further support in developing your management plan, please contact your local SNH office.

SNH supports LNRs through grants schemes, and grant applications for the development of management plans are welcomed. Please visit <http://www.snh.org.uk/about/ab-grants01.asp> or contact your local SNH office to find out more.