

**Protected area policies and sustainable tourism:  
influences, relationships and co-evolution**

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# **Protected area policies and sustainable tourism: influences, relationships and co-evolution**

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# **Protected area policies and sustainable tourism: influences, relationships and co-evolution**

## **Abstract**

This paper explores the adoption of sustainable tourism ideas in a Park Authority's policies over a period of two decades in a developed world, Category V protected area. There is only limited research on influences encouraging the inclusion of sustainable tourism ideas in protected area policies, or on relationships between sustainable tourism policies and other policy priorities. The paper departs from an approach which considers sustainable tourism policies in isolation, because potentially they are reformulations or extensions of other previous policies, or else indirect outcomes of other policies. There is assessment of influences on the Park Authority's sustainable tourism policies, and of the co-evolution between sustainable tourism policies and other policies. Such influences as government funding reductions and rising concern for community well-being affected the Authority's adoption of sustainable tourism ideas. Incorporation of sustainable tourism ideas in policies occurred gradually. It involved re-labelling established policies as well as reframing and extending those policies. It was often an indirect outcome of policy developments not focused specifically on sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism-related policies co-evolved with, and through, policies for community well-being, actor participation, and sustainable development. The approach used here is relevant for research on policy co-evolution in other policy fields. (199 words)

**Keywords:** sustainable tourism; protected areas; socio-economic well-being; tourism policy; co-evolution.

## **1. Introduction**

Some protected areas where communities live and work are beginning to incorporate additional goals alongside those of protection and conservation (Beresford & Phillips, 2000; Hanna, Clark & Slocombe, 2008). Managers of some of these areas are becoming more likely to appreciate the interconnectedness of environment and people, to consider that both environment and society should be treated sustainably, and to seek to engage more diverse actors in policy decisions (Beresford & Phillips, 2000; Phillips, 2003). The broadening of protected area policies in some places may be encouraged by growing endorsement of sustainable development objectives (Sharpley & Pearce, 2007; Weaver, 2006). It is contended that these policy trends in certain protected areas might come to represent a "paradigmatic shift" (Phillips, 2003; Ravenel & Redford, 2005).

The International Union for Conservation of Nature recognises such broad policy goals in its Category V protected areas, where "the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this

interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values" (Dudley, 2008, p. 1; Francis, 2008). Some Category V protected areas can embrace "more people-focused" policies, combining protection goals with attempts to enhance local people's socio-economic development and to reduce poverty (Phillips, 2003). At times these areas can include a focus on "social planning and income generation" (Locke & Dearden, 2005, p. 1). Such more people-focused policies can prompt debate about whether some Category V protected areas pay sufficient attention to conservation (Dudley, Parrish, Redford & Stolton, 2010). Worldwide there are 28,320 Category V protected areas, representing the largest surface area of all protected area categories. Many of these areas are in Europe (13,780) and the USA and Canada (11,292) (IUCN & UNEP, 2014; <http://www.protectedplanet.net/search>).

The suggested increasingly diverse management goals of some Category V protected areas may encourage the adoption of sustainable tourism policies. The inclusion of sustainable development goals, for example, might encourage acceptance of tourism as a protected area activity when developed "sustainably" (Weaver, 2006). Sustainable tourism policies may also encourage protected area policies of boosting community well-being and widening actor engagement in policy-making.

There has been relatively little research to date on potential influences encouraging the inclusion of sustainable tourism ideas in protected area policies. Further, sustainable tourism policies too often are considered in isolation, when those policies can emerge through the re-labelling, reformulation and extension of established policies, and also as indirect outcomes of other policies. Consequently, this paper examines for a case study protected area the influences affecting the inclusion of sustainable tourism in its policies, the continuities and changes in those policies from previous policies, and the co-evolution of sustainable tourism and other policies. Co-evolution occurs when sub-system elements, such as sustainable tourism policies and other policies, help to shape but not determine each other, in a relationship of relative autonomy. The case study examines the adoption over two decades of ideas connected with sustainable tourism in the policies of a Category V protected area agency in an economically developed country – the Lake District National Park Authority in England. The findings have particular relevance for other Category V protected areas in economically developed countries.

The analysis, first, considers influences encouraging acceptance of sustainable tourism-related ideas in the Park Authority's policies. Second, there is assessment of possible continuities and changes between the Park Authority's policies associated with sustainable tourism and its earlier policies not identified or labelled as sustainable tourism. It is possible that sustainable tourism policies re-label already established policies, or that they entail some reframing of those policies, or else other new thinking which departs from earlier policies. The analysis examines, third, the co-evolving relationships between the Park Authority's sustainable tourism policies and other policies, in this case policies for community well-being and wider actor participation. It illustrates the need to consider sustainable tourism policies in their broad policy environment, with potentially many such policies emerging

indirectly from other policy arenas and priorities. The findings may interest researchers interested in the co-evolution of policies associated with sustainable tourism, or of policies in other policy fields.

## **Literature on trends in protected areas policies**

Some research studies suggest that policy approaches relevant to sustainable tourism have altered over recent years in some protected areas, and there have also been normative calls for such changes. Yet such trends may vary (Hanna et al., 2008; Mose & Weixlbaumer, 2007; Phillips, 2003). Sustainable development policies, for example, may be more prominent in certain category V protected areas in developed countries, while poverty reduction policies may feature more in some developing nation protected areas (Redford, Roe & Sunderland, 2013). The present literature review examines potential policy trends which may be associated with sustainable tourism in Category V protected areas. The potential trends are considered here only in relation to Category V protected areas, with some of the research publications considered here focusing on those particular protected areas. The subsequent case study is evaluated against these five potential trends in some Category V protected areas.

### ***Increasing inclusion of both community socio-economic well-being with environmental protection***

There are suggestions, first, that some protected areas are beginning to include consideration of residents' socio-economic well-being alongside concerns for landscape and environmental protection, or that this is increasingly seen as a desirable trend. According to Mose & Weixlbaumer (2007, p. 12), in the past protected areas were more likely to focus largely on nature and species preservation, and more were managed as segregated areas using a "static preservationist" approach, sometimes emphasising "fences and fines" (Michaelidou, Decker & Lassoie, 2002; Phillips, 2003). It is contended that in certain protected areas more attention is being paid to both socio-economic development for local communities and environmental protection, with more integrated policy approaches emerging (Becken & Job, 2014; Francis, 2008; Michaelidou et al., 2002). That shift can be combined with what Mose & Weixlbaumer (2007, p. 12) call a "dynamic-innovation" approach, bringing together top-down and bottom-up management through cooperation among affected parties. It is suggested that a focus on community socio-economic well-being and involvement is often also aligned to sustainable development goals (Francis, 2008; Mose & Weixlbaumer, 2007).

### ***Greater emphasis on community socio-economic well-being, potentially including through fostering tourism***

Despite longstanding and continuing concerns over tourism's environmental impacts, a growing policy interest in community socio-economic well-being in protected areas could foster encouragement of tourism. Of course, tourism has often been a significant factor in the original designation of protected areas (Butler & Boyd, 2000), for reasons such as its potential to foster awareness and support for

protection, and to encourage healthy outdoor activity (Bushell & McCool, 2007). But tourism's acceptance has sometimes been held back by understandable concern that it can entail excessive visitation, especially if it is combined with a strongly "profit-seeking orientation" and poor planning (Whitelaw, King & Tolkach, 2014, p. 585; Bushell & McCool, 2007). It is suggested by some observers that in certain protected areas tourism potentially is now more acceptable as a development tool, including for rural regeneration (Roberts & Hall, 2001; Sharpley & Pearce, 2007). Puhakka and Saarinen (2013) argue, for example, that tourism is increasingly justified in Finnish National Parks because of a rising policy priority for socio-economic development. Tourism could be encouraged in protected areas for quite specific socio-economic reasons, such as to reduce dependence on farming and extractive activities (Francis, 2008), or as a response to government funding reductions for such areas (Francis, 2008; Whitelaw, et al., 2014). Tourism's acceptability might also be encouraged by policies for sustainable development, and by increasing awareness of the sustainable tourism concept.

### ***Greater interest in wider actor engagement in policy making and management***

A third potential trend indicated by researchers is increasing interest within some protected area policies in wider actor engagement (Phillips, 2003; Scherl & Edwards, 2007). Selin and Chavez (1995) suggest that more such areas are beginning to seek to open up policy-making through more inclusiveness and consultation. Enhanced cooperation may be encouraged by rising expectations that these areas consider community well-being, including at times through tourism development, and also by growing interest in sustainable development goals (Becken & Job, 2014). McCool (2009) suggests that conventional protected area tourism planning could ignore the complex socio-economic and political environments of these areas, and he advocates greater cooperation to enable these areas to achieve their widening aims.

### ***Greater interest in sustainable development, potentially including sustainable tourism***

Fourth, it is suggested that some protected areas have a new policy interest in sustainable development. This approach has been depicted as accepting "human development that does not destroy natural resources", based on reducing the tensions between man and nature (Hammer, 2007, p. 23). It can be argued that protected areas traditionally often have policy priorities for environmental protection, and thus they may be more likely to embrace sustainable development ideas. Further, they ought to be areas inclined to ensure that economic development does not occur at the environment's expense (Barker & Stockdale, 2008; Hunter, 1997). Boyd (2000) indicate that support for sustainable development has often increased in protected area policies. He contend that sustainability policies are increasingly seen as necessary for tourism businesses wishing to accept responsibility for their actions and demonstrate environmental concern. Sustainable development opportunities might include sustainable tourism. Yet, importantly, he also asserts that parks have perhaps historically always been "managed for the most part, along the lines of sustainability, regardless of what terminology is used" (p. 181). This

might indicate there is more continuity in park policies than some may realise, as traditional concerns for environment and community are re-labelled using newer sustainable development ideas.

### ***Greater emphasis on policy integration, and potentially an associated encouragement of sustainable tourism***

Finally, there are suggestions of a trend in some protected areas toward increasing integration of policies, or at least of researcher endorsement of that as a policy direction, and potentially that can encourage a focus on sustainable tourism. In particular, when protected areas focus more on policies for social and economic well-being alongside environmental protection, then that can encourage them to seek out new development tools, such as sustainable tourism. Pegas and Castley (2014, p. 604) contend that sustainable tourism in protected areas potentially can benefit “both people and nature”, due to the environment being considered alongside economic viability and social responsibility. Similarly, Sharpley and Pearce (2007, p. 557) consider that sustainable tourism in these areas has potential for “balancing environmental and tourism needs with the sustainable socio-economic development of local communities” (MacLellan, 2007). As tourism has traditionally featured in many protected areas, it is perhaps to be expected that policymakers might look to sustainable tourism as a development tool. It is especially appealing as it might assist with multiple policy goals, such as encouraging economic growth, facilitating economic diversification, retaining local rural populations, and promoting awareness of the importance of landscape and environmental protection (Eagles, McCool & Haynes, 2002). For such reasons, sustainable tourism might be seen as useful for policy integration in protected areas.

### **Literature on policies and co-evolution**

One aim of the paper is to consider whether the case study Park Authority’s sustainable tourism policies co-evolved with other policies in the wider policy environment, and thus attention is directed to literature on policy co-evolution.

Co-evolution involves a situation “where different subsystems are shaping but not determining each other (relative autonomy)” (Kemp, Loorbach & Rotmans, 2007, p. 78). Co-evolving relationships between different sub-systems and across different scales are reciprocally inter-related and mutually constituting. Researchers have noted such co-evolution between varying sub-systems and scales, including between actors and structures (Giddens, 1984), technology and governance (Von Tunzelmann, 2003), and between ecology, economy and society (Norgaard, 1984). This paper focuses on co-evolution for a specific type of sub-system, that of policy fields or domains. Co-evolution over time of policy fields involves them helping to shape each other, but not to determine each other. Sustainable tourism policies, for example, might be affected by, but not fully determined by, policy developments not directly concerned with either tourism or sustainable development. Similarly, sustainable tourism policies can influence other policy domains. A co-evolutionary view is “important for thinking about governance for sustainable development”, due

to the complex interdependent relationships involved in this broad policy field (Kemp, et al., 2007, p. 79; Norgaard, 1984).

Public policy sub-systems and scales have a relative autonomy, and thus they are partially independent. Economic policies, for example, can co-evolve with environmental policies, where each helps to shape the character of the other. Co-evolutionary processes may also occur between specific policies and macro-scale societal events, changes and influences. With change in waste management policy, for example, Kemp, Loorbach and Rotmans (2007, p. 84) argue that this “is best understood as a process of co-evolution of the waste management subsystem and societal values and beliefs (a society growing conscious of waste problems and hostile to landfill sites)”.

Co-evolution ideas have been used to only a very limited extent in tourism research. Examples include studies by Pastras and Bramwell (2013, p. 390) of “the co-evolution of structures and practices that shape tourism policies and activities” associated with the marketing of Athens to tourists, and by Brouder and Eriksson (2013) of the co-evolution of tourism and other economic activities in tourist destinations. In the present paper the co-evolution concept is used to understand relationships between sustainable tourism policies and the policy environment.

## **Case study context and methods**

The paper explores the adoption of sustainable tourism ideas in policies of the Park Authority for the Lake District National Park, a developed world, Category V protected area, over a period of two decades (from the late 1980s to 2012). This Park in north-west England was designated in 1951, it covers 2292 square kilometres, and it is characterised by lakes, mountains and a short coastal stretch (LDNPA, 2014a and b). It has 40,800 residents and much of the land is privately owned, often by farmers. The Lake District National Park’s economy has been highly reliant on agriculture and forestry, but farming is now less dominant, directly employing only 2,500 people on 1,060 commercial farms, and with average net farm income as low as £9,594 in 2010–2011 (LDNPA, 2013a, p. 13).

Tourism is long-established in the Lake District, beginning in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when tourist accommodation was development in some larger settlements. Tourism growth intensified after 1847 when a railway into the area was opened (Hind & Mitchell, 2004; Marshall & Walton, 1981). Tourism businesses there include accommodation, visitor attractions, lake boats, and tourist-related pubs, cafes and shops. The available evidence suggests that in recent years there has been little growth in the Park’s visitor numbers, with that probably moderating concern about tourist pressures. There were around 15.7 million visitors in 2009, 15.2 million in both 2010 and 2011, 14.8 million in 2012, and 15.5 million in 2013 (LDNPA, 2013a, p. 22). In a 2012 visitor survey for the wider Cumbria region, which substantially reflects visitors to this Park, only 8% were international visitors and as many as 70% were aged over 45 years (Cumbria Tourism, 2013). Despite the recent stability in visitor numbers, available data for the Park indicates that estimated tourism income and jobs have risen: tourism revenues from £524 million



in 2000 to £1051 million in 2013, and full-time tourism jobs from 12,227 in 2000 to 15,424 in 2013 (LDNPA 2005a, p. 16; Cumbria Tourism, 2013).

The presence of people living in this Category V Park, the long-established local tourism industry and the stable visitor numbers over recent years, meant the Park Authority was perhaps more likely to have introduced some of the potential policy changes suggested in the academic literature. The Park's two strategic "statutory purposes", which are set down in government legislation, are to "to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage" and "to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public". The first "statutory purpose" of conservation must take priority when the two "statutory purposes" are in conflict (LDNPA, 2014a, no pagination; UK National Parks, 2014). The Park Authority controls land-use planning decisions, enhancing its influence on economic development. Its influence is also increased through its five-year Park Management Plans, and it also attempts to fulfil its aims by influencing the actions of others (Hind & Mitchell, 2004). Much Authority funding comes from national government, although one third derives from such sources as car park charges and planning application fees (LDNPA, 2014e). The Park Authority does not license businesses, or control prices or the opening times or ownership of businesses.

The analysis here focuses on the Park Authority's policies related to sustainable tourism, but other organisations also contributed to local sustainable tourism initiatives. The North West Regional Development Agency, for example, was established by government in 1999 to promote regional economic development, such as by building economic development partnerships and disseminating economic development advice (Fuller, Bennett & Ramsden, 2002; Sandford, 2005). The local tourism organisation, Cumbria Tourism, was closely linked to the North West Regional Development Agency, such as through the latter providing some of Cumbria Tourism's funding for sustainable tourism initiatives.

The policies relevant to sustainable tourism are not examined in isolation, rather they are examined for potential relationships with the wider policy context, including other policies. They are also considered in relation to potential trends in Category V protected areas indicated in the literature review.

Over 30 policy documents with potential relevance were evaluated, representing over 1,500 pages of text. They include Park Authority national park plans, policy discussion documents, performance reviews and economic and business reviews, as well as relevant policy and evaluation documents produced by other agencies. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 12 actors selected to represent the key agencies and interests, with individual respondents chosen as they had significant experience of the issues. These were 2 National Park employees, 2 Cumbria Tourism staff, 2 local government employees, 1 staff member of a local sustainable tourism organisation (Nurture Lakeland, previously the Tourism and Conservation Partnership), and 5 respondents working in the Park's tourism industry. Respondents were asked about issues and potential trends suggested by the review of academic literature and the Park's policy documents. The interviews

were semi-structured, they explored relevant policies and relationships in the Park, they lasted between 35 and 90 minutes, and they were recorded and transcribed.

## 5. Influences encouraging policies associated with sustainable tourism

In this analysis sustainable tourism is considered as the application of sustainable development ideas to the tourism sector. Policies relevant to sustainable tourism affect the tourism sector and they seek to meet the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. They can embrace sustainable development's varied dimensions, notably economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability. Recognition is also growing about the importance for sustainability of governance, including broad societal participation in policy-making and implementation (Bramwell, 2015; Meadowcroft, 2013).

Consideration is given, first, to influences encouraging acceptance of sustainable tourism ideas in the Park's policies between the late 1980s and 2012. According to Hanna, Clark and Slocombe (2008, p. 1), changes in protected area management reflect society's "rapid social and ecological" changes. Five such influences are discussed. In Figure 1 they are categorised by whether they are broadly more global, national or local in character, although these distinctions are blurred as global and local influences interact with each other.

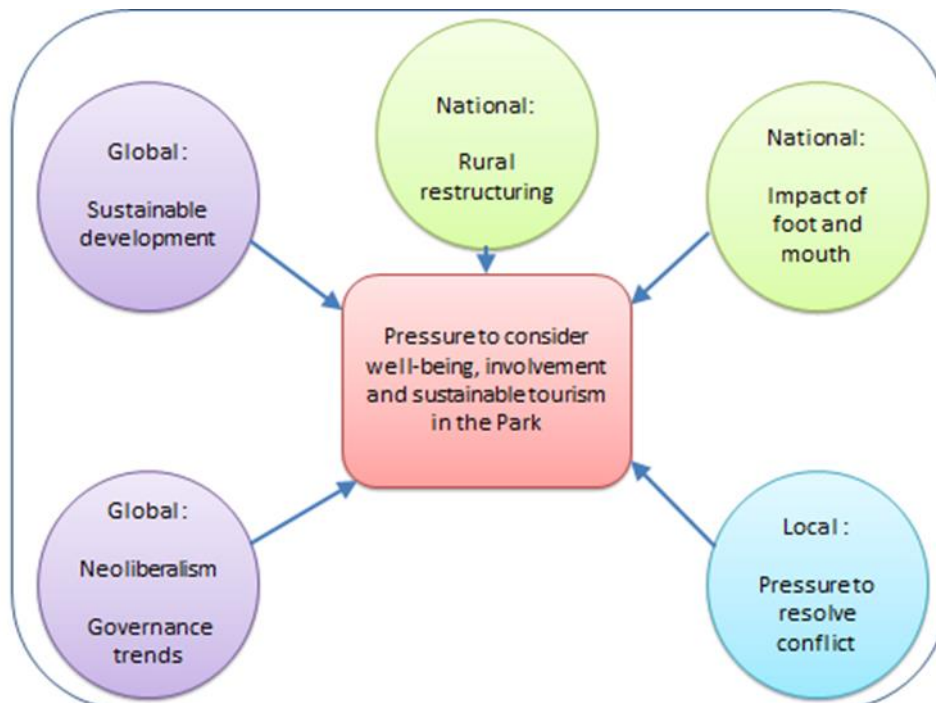


Figure 1. Influences on the Park Authority's policies related to sustainable tourism.

### ***Sustainable development***

Sustainable development ideas have spread globally, gaining in importance for English policy-makers since the 1987 "Our Common Future" report (Dredge, 2006; Hall, 1999; Hopwood, Mellor & O'Brien, 2005). These ideas formed a widely adopted management philosophy in English national parks over the study period, including in the Lake District, supporting the Park's two established "statutory purposes" (LDNPA, 2004; National Parks England, 2013; Sharpley & Pearce, 2007). Recognition has grown that sustainable development ideas can be applied to both land-use planning and the tourism industry. A Lake District National Park Authority employee suggested there had "been a gradual evolution in planning towards sustainable development over the last 15 years", and that sustainability policies had "filtered through to tourism". According to one respondent, recent tourism proposals in the Park sought to demonstrate their sustainability, and thus they "were now a lot more flexible". Sustainable tourism's increasing inclusion in the Park's policies and management emerged gradually rather than through a sudden policy change. Importantly, sustainable tourism was considered to hold out the prospect of boosting the economy while protecting the environment. Park policies for sustainable development were inter-connected and co-evolved with policies for sustainable tourism.

### ***Economic restructuring***

Another global and national influence on the Park's policies associated with sustainable tourism was agriculture's long-term economic restructuring, affected by increasingly global capitalist competition and associated agricultural mechanisation and price competition (Bramwell, 1994; Butler, Hall & Jenkins, 1998; Evans & Ilbery, 1992; Hall, Roberts & Mitchell, 2003). In England tourism has increasingly been recognised as having potential to reduce problems associated with the economic restructuring of rural economies (Eagles, McCool & Haynes, 2002; Sharpley, 2003). In the Lake District, tourism had gained acceptance "as a means of strengthening the rural economy where traditional industries were in decline" (LDNPA, 1990 p. 30). In this way the Park's tourism-related policies evolved over the study period in the context of broad economic trends.

Economic diversification into tourism among the Park's farmers has been promoted by various grants, such as to convert farm barns into self-catering accommodation (LDNPA, 1986). Areas in the Park have also received Objective 5b European Union funding, aimed to "counteract the consequences of the loss of traditional rural industries" (LDNPA, 1998, p. 51). Eligibility for this European funding was concentrated on places with low agricultural incomes, a high share of agricultural employment, and a "low level of socio-economic development" (European Commission, 2011, p. 1). However, the Park Authority traditionally had also expressed substantial concerns about tourism development. A former local government worker in the Park observed how in the past local government there had also been "really quite restrictive to new investments and new developments in the tourism industry".

### ***Neo-liberalism and governance trends***

Two trends in governance, both influenced by neo-liberalism, seem also to have affected Park policies related to sustainable tourism over the study period. First, there had been a “re-scaling” of governance in England, with central government devolving more powers for local economic development – including tourism development – to regional agencies, often working through partnerships with business. In 1999 strategic economic development agencies – the Regional Development Agencies – were launched for the English regions. Among these was the North West Regional Development Agency, with the Lake District within that region. These agencies provided new funding for tourism initiatives in English national parks, in many cases favouring sustainable tourism initiatives supporting their own sustainable development priorities. The Park Authority expressed enthusiasm “to play an active part in the delivery of the regional and local strategies” developed by the North West Regional Development Agency through its associated Cumbria Tourism organisation, and to help these agencies to deliver sustainable tourism (LDNPA, 2005a). Thus, the sustainable tourism policies here co-evolved with wider changes in the governance arrangements for economic development.

A second relevant trend in governance over the study period was a growing restraint on certain government interventions and associated expenditure, especially after the 2007-8 global financial crisis. This affected sustainable tourism policies in the Park in two ways. One was that in 2010 the government abolished England’s Regional Development Agencies. A Park employee noted that the removal of the North West Regional Development Agency led to the immediate end of funding for some projects in the Park, including some associated with sustainable tourism policies. At that time, too, there were funding reductions for other public sector organisations involved in economic development work in English national parks (LDNPA, 2013b; Hall, 1999).

Another consequence of decreasing public sector funding over many years was that indirectly it encouraged the Park Authority and other public agencies in the Park to work more closely in partnership with local communities and businesses, groups that often could still engage in activities associated with public policies (Bramwell & Cox, 2009). In 2005 the Authority had also noted how “government is placing a new emphasis on effective and co-ordinated partnership working in tourism” (LDNPA, 2005a, p. 5). Whether intended or not, the trend toward partnerships with local communities and businesses supported the principle of broad participation within sustainable development and sustainable tourism thinking. The resulting collaboration may also have helped to stimulate small businesses and the promotion of local crafts and foods for tourism, outcomes that could also be compatible with sustainable development (LDNPA, 2004, p. 57). Hence, policy trends associated with sustainable tourism co-evolved with changes in wider governance arrangements and approaches.

### ***Impact of foot and mouth***

During 2001 an outbreak of foot and mouth, an infectious animal disease, affected parts of the English countryside. Large areas of the Lake District National Park were

closed to the public in order to reduce the disease's spread, leading to tourist spending in the local economy falling in that year by 6.6% (LDNPA, 2005b). Although the outbreak and the associated economic hardship were fairly short-lived, they attracted enormous media coverage and this increased awareness levels among the public and policy makers about tourism's importance for the Park's economy (Sharpley & Pearce, 2007). The heightened awareness encouraged the Park to pay more attention to issues around improving the socio-economic well-being of communities, including through tourism development (Cumbria County Council, 2002). Thus, the foot and mouth outbreak indirectly encouraged wider policies for socio-economic well-being, including some associated with sustainable tourism.

### ***Pressure to improve local relationships***

A local influence on tourism development in the Park has been a history of some distrust between business people, including tourism entrepreneurs, and the Park Authority. A common view was that in the past the Authority could pay too little attention to economic development in its concern to protect the Park. That view was perhaps encouraged by a well-publicised conflict between the Authority and business interests regarding Authority pressure for a reduced boating speed limit on a major lake in the Park, which some businesspeople argued would reduce economic activity around the lake (Bell, 2000; Bramwell & Pomfret, 2007). According to a 2005 external review of the Authority's operations, the Authority was insufficiently active in cooperative working with the community (LDNPA, 2005b).

This 2005 external review, however, encouraged greater cooperation between the Authority and other actors. An Authority respondent suggested that improving these relationships had become a "corporate survival requirement". In 2006 the Authority responded by forming a new Park-wide partnership arrangement, involving community and business representatives, and it devised a new Park plan in 2010. The wider participation encouraged consideration to be given to community concerns, including that of tourism businesses. A senior Park Authority staff member claimed that "we have gone from the organisation that would say 'no' to businesses to one that now seriously understands what they want to do, and worked with them to find ways of achieving that within the Park". Thus, the Park Authority's tourism-related policies could co-evolve in relation to wider pressure for better relationships between the Authority and community and business actors.

### **Continuity and change in Park Authority policies related to sustainable tourism**

An assessment is now made of continuities and changes from the late 1980s to 2012 in the Lake District National Park Authority's policies related to sustainable tourism. First, there is an evaluation of any changes between the Authority's policies related to sustainable tourism and its earlier policies not identified or labelled as sustainable tourism. Consideration is given here to how sustainable tourism policies might re-label previous policies, or might more significantly reframe, extend or depart from earlier policies. The analysis also examines, second, any potentially co-evolving

relationships between the Authority's sustainable tourism policies and other policies. Policies potentially can co-evolve through reciprocally and mutually constituting inter-connections. This evaluation is made against the five potential policy trends associated with Category V protected areas as suggested in the literature review.

### ***Increasing inclusion of both community socio-economic well-being with environmental protection***

The goal of community socio-economic well-being became more prominent in the Park Authority's policy documents over the study period, and it also seemed to become more integrated with other Park Authority goals. A 2006 vision document for the Park highlighted the importance of both conservation and community socio-economic well-being objectives, and also their inter-dependence (LDNPA, 2006). The 2010 Park Management Plan explained that the 2006 vision was for the Park to "be a place where a prosperous economy, world class visitor experiences and vibrant communities all come together to sustain the spectacular landscape, its wildlife and cultural heritage" (LDNPA, 2010a, p. 5). The inclusion of both socio-economic and environmental objectives supported sustainable development objectives, and potentially also sustainable tourism agendas.

A senior Park officer confirmed that socio-economic well-being was increasingly accepted as an important Park objective:

"We take it very seriously. We've almost raised it equal to a [statutory] 'purpose' in this particular National Park...it slightly reorders things in a way that works for us here. So we don't kind of 'bang on' [constantly remind people] about 'purposes'; indeed, one of the problems that the Park got itself into was talking relentlessly with the partners about nothing other than the first two 'purposes' [of conservation, and promoting understanding and enjoyment]. You never heard anything about the 'duty' to look after the socio-economics of the communities in the Park".

An assessment in 2012 of Park Authority's performance commented that: "The balance between economic priorities and conservation and promoting understanding priorities is not fully understood by all. There are internal and external views that a priority shift has been made towards business and economy at the expense of conservation and promoting understanding" (LDNPA, 2012, p. 7).

Yet, there was little evidence to question the continuing prominence of the conservation priority for the Park Authority. The first "statutory purpose" of conservation still had to take priority when the two "statutory purposes" were in conflict (LDNPA, 2014a). Further, there was also much continuity in the Authority's recognition of socio-economic objectives, with the importance of a strong local economy long featuring in the Authority's policy documents. As early as the 1995 Environment Act, for example, it was required that English national park authorities, while fulfilling their two statutory purposes, should also have a "duty" to "seek to foster economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park" (LDNPA, 2004, p. 2; Countryside Agency, 2003).

### ***Greater emphasis on community socio-economic well-being, potentially including through fostering tourism***

The Park Authority's socio-economic and environmental protection policy objectives could encourage sustainable tourism. This could be indirect as the policies might not be focused primarily on tourism or sustainable development, but the policies were often inter-related and thus mutually constituting, and thus they often co-evolved together (Kemp, Loorbach & Rotmans, 2007). Alongside an increasing emphasis on community socio-economic well-being over the study period, greater recognition was also gained more directly for tourism, and particularly for sustainable tourism, as a useful source of community economic returns. A 2004 Park management plan, for example, identified a "buoyant sustainable tourism" sector, especially one closely linked to the farming industry, as an important contributor to economic development, and as a sector potentially that "sustains and enhances the area's special qualities" (LDNPA, 2004, p. 12).

A sustainable tourism approach was perceived as holding out the appealing prospect of improving the Park communities' socio-economic well-being while also reducing tourism's potential adverse environmental impacts. Increasing thought was given in the Park Authority's policies to including both environmental and socio-economic well-being goals, including through sustainable tourism (LDNPA, 2005b, p. 15). Thus, the Authority expressed its aim to create an "economically buoyant" tourism sector that has "shared responsibility for conserving and enhancing" the landscape (LDNPA, 2005a).

The Park Authority's policy documents have historically expressed concerns about the area's reliance on tourism, and about the industry's potentially adverse impacts on the Park's environment and character. There were concerns that tourism growth would make the Park busier and less suited to quiet enjoyment (LDNPA, 1986, Chapter 11, p. 2; LDNPA, 1998, p. 60), the industry could fluctuate substantially (LDNPA, 1990, p. 18), and that there were development pressures for additional and more sophisticated facilities (LDNPA, 1990, p. 30). A 1986 Park plan stated that its "first concerns are to maintain the character and promote the quiet enjoyment of the Lake District countryside, not to maximise the income from tourism" (LDNPA, 1986, chapter 11, p. 2).

While such concerns continued to be repeated about tourism's potential impacts, more recently there were some more positive endorsements of (sustainable) tourism and of the need to support the sector. The Park's 2010 management plan, for example, contended that "The National Park's distinct seasonal visitor pattern has changed in recent years with a trend towards a lengthening season. Visitors increasingly take short breaks throughout the year. This trend benefits employment and supports local businesses all year round" (LDNPA, 2010a, p. 39). In 2005 the Park Authority asserted that "we want to provide the conditions for tourism businesses to flourish and for visitor stay and spend to be maximised" (LDNPA 2005a, p. 12). There was also a seeming strengthening aspiration for "tourism development to deliver a high quality, sustainable tourism

experience for the diverse range of visitors to the National Park" (LDNPA, 2010b, p. 97).

Yet, there were also many continuities in attitudes to tourism over the study period. Thus, both early and later in the period the Park Authority's policy documents recognised tourism's importance for the Park's economy (LDNPA, 1986, chapter, p. 2). In 1986 it was noted how tourism was a "mainstay of the local economy", and in 1990 it was observed that "tourism has for many years been the dominant employer" (LDNPA, 1986, chapter 11, p. 12; LDNPA, 1990 p.30; LDNPA, 1998, p.69). There was also a continuing emphasis on securing good quality forms of tourism. In 1998 it was stated that tourism development would be supported as long as it did "not conflict with the special qualities of the National Park including the quiet enjoyment of the area", and it was "of a character and scale which respects the quality of the environment" (LDNPA, 1998, p. 69). Similarly, in 2010 a Park Authority document endorsed "New development and the re-development, extension and improvement of existing tourism accommodation, facilities and attractions to raise the quality of provision", provided that its "nature and scale [was not] detrimental to the character and quality of the environment" (LDNPA, 2010b, p. 98). There was also policy support in both 1998 and 2005 for tourism facilities that encouraged "good environmental practices" (LDNPA, 1998, p. 69; LDNPA, 2005a, p. 22), and for tourism projects that directly benefitted the environment (LDNPA, 1998, 2005a, 2010a).

There was also a continuing positive endorsement of enjoyment of the countryside through quiet recreation that appreciates tranquillity. In 1986 the Park Authority asserted that "Their role is to offer unspoilt countryside, peace and quiet, adventure on the mountains, intimacy with nature and quiet recreation generally on lake and fell. It follows...therefore the funfair and similar forms of gregarious entertainment will be alien" (LDNPA, 1986, Chapter 11, p. 3). In 2004 the Park continued to note the need to "'Protect and, where possible, enhance opportunities Park-wide for quiet enjoyment, and retain the character of the Quieter Areas of the National Park" (LDNPA, 2004, p. 51). The importance of quiet enjoyment was also discussed in a Park document in 2005 "promoting sustainable tourism" (LDNPA, 2005a, p. 29), where it was explained that:

"Many people value the sense of space and freedom, spiritual refreshment, and release from the pressures of modern-day life that the Lakeland fells, valleys and lakes have to offer. We cannot expect to experience quiet enjoyment everywhere in the National Park, and that is not what we advocate. But peace, quiet and tranquillity are qualities that visitors enjoy - we know this from our surveys and the surveys of others - and quiet enjoyment is one of the special qualities of the Lake District National Park".

### ***Greater interest in wider actor engagement in policy making and management***

Over the study period the Park Authority tended to seek to make policies and management decisions in more inclusive ways involving more community actors.



The Authority worked more closely with the business community, often including tourism entrepreneurs. This trend seems to have supported the developing policy focus on the socio-economic wellbeing of the Park's local communities, and also to have encouraged sustainable tourism and sustainable development as organising frameworks. These policies were reciprocally inter-related and mutually constituting, and they appear to have co-evolved (Kemp, Loorbach & Rotmans, 2007).

One catalyst for more actor engagement in the Park Authority's policy making and management was a 2005 external review of the Authority's operations, which was critical of the relatively limited actor participation activities, including with tourism business people. Despite a quite long-established emphasis in the Park on collaborative working, the external review indicated that relationships between the Authority and business community were not always positive, and that there was scope for more pro-active working with these and other actors, including for advancing sustainable development (LDNPA, 2005b, p. 15). The Authority subsequently sought to be more inclusive in its policy and management processes, notably through establishing in 2006 a new Park-wide collaborative arrangement, the Lake District National Park Partnership.

The partnership working often involved more engagement with the business community. A Business Task Force, which included tourism businesses, was formed as a Lake District National Park Partnership Sub-Group, with a remit to draw on the business community's "knowledge and expertise to help achieve the prosperous economy theme of the [Park's] Vision" (LNDPA, 2014c, p. 1). The Sub-Group sought to "build understanding, respect, trust and collaboration between businesses, the Lake District National Park Authority and other public sector organisations" (LNPDA, 2014c, p. 1). In the interviews Cumbria Tourism and Park Authority respondents commented that compared to previously there were improving relationships between the tourism business community and Park Authority.

The wider engagement of the Park Authority with other actors resulting from the new Partnership in 2006, including with the tourism industry, may have encouraged the Authority to give more policy prominence to community socio-economic well-being issues and also to related sustainable tourism and sustainable development activities. This was likely to be fostered through their mutual cooperation and the enhanced policy influence of community actors, including business people. An assessment of the Authority's performance in 2012 noted improvement in its engagement with the tourism industry (LDNPA, 2012, p. 9). It stated that there were perceptions the Authority's policies were now "delivering in a sound way for tourism interests" (LDNPA, 2012, p. 11). There were likely to be co-evolutionary relationships here between policy domains, with policies for widening participation affecting the context for policies for socio-economic well-being, sustainable development and sustainable tourism. It indicates how sustainable tourism policies could be affected by policy developments not directly concerned with tourism.

***Greater interest in sustainable development, potentially including sustainable tourism***

A fourth potential trend suggested in research literature was an increasing interest in sustainable development in some Category V protected areas. For the Park Authority there is evidence of increasing endorsement of the sustainable development notion. The Lake District National Park Partnership 2006 Vision strategy stated that its aspiration was for the Park to be "an inspirational example of sustainable development in action" (LDNPA, 2006, p. 1). According to a Park Authority employee, "Sustainable development underpins all our policies. It's very much been the driver behind how we...work with the industry", and another argued that the Partnership established in 2006 focused on collaborative working for sustainable development. There was growing acceptance of sustainable development and sustainable tourism ideas, with that encouraged by their considerable inter-connections. Park policies associated with sustainable development and sustainable tourism were inter-related and also co-evolving. Indeed, policies associated with sustainable tourism could be substantially influenced by sustainable development goals not primarily focused on sustainable tourism.

There was an early endorsement of sustainable tourism in a 1998 Park plan, which stated that: "It is important to the future of the National Park and the economic and social well-being of its local communities, that the Principles for Sustainable Rural Tourism have a considerable influence on the tourism industry" (LDNPA, 1998, p. 69). The sustainable tourism discourse directed policy attention not just to reducing the industry's negative features, but also to assisting the industry positively to provide tourist appreciation of the Park's qualities and to enhance local community socio-economic well-being. A Park official argued that: "national parks have all been on a journey with sustainable tourism...For a long time visitor numbers were seen as something that needed to be limited so as to limit the impacts on the landscape and the natural environment. But there's been a gradual move away from that position, recognising the benefits of having people visit the National Park, both in terms of their personal experience and in terms of the economic benefits that brings, and in terms of creating supporters for what we need to do to look after the National Park".

Understanding of sustainable tourism seemed to increase over the study period. There was improved appreciation that the sustainable tourism approach could be applied to all tourism's aspects and was not restricted to separate "green" products. Some earlier Park documents highlighted developing "green tourism" products, such as "working holidays" to supplement farm incomes (LDNPA, 1990). A Park employee commented how a broad view of sustainable tourism as more than specific products had gained ground, as that "only appeals to a few people, such as the green market", when the approach needed to be "embedded in the wider tourism picture".

As the Park Authority became interested in sustainable tourism it engaged with diverse actors with tourism-related interests. In 2005 the Authority recognised that promoting sustainable tourism required "real partner buy-in" in collaborative activities (LDNPA, 2005a, p. 2). That was considered to involve "sharing

responsibility through joint working” and “engaging with the local community by involving them in tourism development and management” (LDNPA, 2005a, p. 6). Interest in sustainable tourism encouraged other interactions between the Authority and tourism businesses. A Park employee involved with the Authority’s tourism planning applications noted a greater openness to discussing whether tourism proposals were likely to be suitable, and to working with tourism businesses “to make developments as sustainable as possible”. This reflected the inter-connections between sustainable tourism and wider actor participation in policy domains. Their co-evolution involved them shaping but not determining each other.

The Park Authority only gradually introduced the sustainable tourism “label” and ideas into its policy documents. It was used occasionally from fairly early in the study period. In 1998, for example, an Authority document (LDNPA, 1998, p. 69) endorsed “Principles for Sustainable Rural Tourism” developed by national agencies, as “They provide a framework within which tourism can develop its wider role with the community, and the responsibility it accepts for maintaining the special qualities of the National Park”. In 2005 the Authority issued a specific document entitled “Promoting sustainable tourism”, announced as its “first ‘tourism statement’”. It explained that it had “produced it because we believe sustainable tourism can bring widespread benefits – to our local economy, communities and environment – and we want to play an active and positive role in its future development” (LDNPA, 2005a, p. 2). By 2010 an Authority document identified the objective to “Encourage opportunities for sustainable tourism, such as visitors staying longer, spending more on local goods and services, contributing to local communities and using public transport” (LDNPA, 2010a, p. 19).

There was more continuity here than may first appear, however, as many Park Authority initiatives recently identified with the sustainable tourism label and notion were long-established and in place before the Authority used this label or notion more widely. This is apparent for many environmental policies, such as for visitor management, traffic management, improving environmental practices, and for reducing the negative impacts of tourism business. The Authority had always worked to secure environmental conservation and to manage tourist activities to reduce negative impacts, and it had long recognised the tourist industry’s importance for community wellbeing. Thus, the sustainable tourism discourse could represent, partly or substantially, “old wine in new bottles”, or the “dressing up” of long-established activities with a new label. Yet, the emerging sustainable development and sustainable tourism perspectives also appear to offer new framings for policy coherence and integration, and there is greater prominence for socio-economic and community engagement priorities.

Some tourism industry respondents also argued that they did not see sustainable tourism as especially new, considering that they had always responded to the need to protect the Park’s environment and that this made good business sense for them. Many tourism businesspeople had long accepted that their commercial success depended on the local landscapes and environment. A lake boat operator observed how

“landscape and the surroundings are what bring people here, and as a tourist operator I do not want anybody to be killing the goose that is laying golden eggs. And that has been our philosophy for a long, long time, and the same with many other businesses around this area”.

A Park Authority manager similarly noted how tourism businesses were mainly locally-owned, and thus “it’s not in their interest to do stuff that is detrimental to the National Park”, so that a sustainable tourism approach made good sense for them. Some business people asserted that for them sustainable tourism was often the re-labelling of existing practices. One commercial lake boat operator contended that:

“it would be wrong to say that in the last year or last decade suddenly the tourism sector had latched on to sustainable tourism. Absolutely not, as we’ve been doing it for an awfully long time. Perhaps in the last 10 years it has become badged as sustainable tourism, but the principles and the practices we’ve espoused for a long time”.

### ***6.5 Greater emphasis on policy integration, and potentially an associated encouragement of sustainable tourism***

A final potential trend suggested in the research literature was an increasing emphasis in some Category V protected areas on the integration of policy domains. Here the Park Authority began increasingly to see environmental, socio-economic and community engagement policies as inter-connected and that potentially benefits could follow from their integration.

That perspective was reflected in the Park Partnership’s 2006 vision statement, which saw the Park as “A place where its prosperous economy, world class visitor experiences and vibrant communities come together to sustain the spectacular landscape, its wildlife and cultural heritage” (LDNPA, 2006, p. 1). Such integration was seen as requiring collaborative approaches involving many interested parties. The Partnership concluded that work toward achieving its 2006 vision statement meant that “Local people, visitors, and the many organisations working in the National Park or have a contribution to make to it, must be united in achieving this” (LDNPA, 2006, p. 1). Integration of environmental, socio-economic and community engagement domains also supported the Partnership’s aim that “The Lake District National Park will be an inspirational example of sustainable development in action” (LDNPA, 2006, p. 1). It also encouraged a sustainable tourism approach, based on “High quality and unique experiences for visitors within a stunning and globally significant landscape...A landscape whose natural and cultural resources are assets to be managed and used wisely for future generations” (LDNPA, 2006, p. 1). Sustainable tourism depends on such integrative approaches. These relationships indicate the co-evolution of environmental conservation, socio-economic well-being, community engagement, sustainable development and sustainable tourism policy domains in the Park. A policy may lie mostly in one of these policy fields, but it can influence the specific character of the other domains.

Integration of policies in the Park Authority's broad vision, however, did not always extend to the Authority having a lead role in the associated implementation work. Many activities included in the Partnership's policy documents were not led by the Park Authority, resting instead with other organisations involved in the Partnership (LDNPA, 2010a, p. 21). Reflecting the Authority's traditional concerns, among activities set out in the Partnership's policies the Authority steered a "Low Carbon Lake District" initiative to encourage alternative transport modes, and it led work to increase participation in healthy outdoor activities (LDNPA, 2010a, p. 50). Responsibility for tourism initiatives, however, was often given to other agencies, notably to Cumbria Tourism, although its activities were reduced in 2010 (Hind & Mitchell, 2004; LDNPA, 1998). An Authority employee noted that:

"I don't see that it's our role to manage sustainable tourism as such. I mean we have a role to play in trying to ensure that new development proposals are as sustainable as they can be. And then we have got a role within the Partnership to encourage and to work with partners like Cumbria Tourism that have more access to businesses, and work more directly with them, and we do".

## **Conclusions**

This paper has explored the inclusion of sustainable tourism ideas from the late 1980s to 2012 in the policies of the Lake District National Park Authority, the Park Authority for a developed world, Category V protected area. It assessed influences on the Authority's sustainable tourism policies, and also the co-evolution between sustainable tourism policies and other policies. Influences encouraging changes in the Authority's policies associated with sustainable tourism included re-organisations of governance arrangements, government funding reductions, the impact of foot and mouth disease, rising concern for community well-being, and pressures to improve relationships between the Authority and other local parties. The inclusion of policies relevant to sustainable tourism by the Authority was often an indirect outcome of policy developments not focused specifically on sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism-related policies co-evolved with, and through, policies for community well-being, actor participation, and sustainable development.

Incorporation of sustainable tourism ideas in policies did not result from a sudden policy change, rather it occurred gradually. It involved re-labelling established policies as well as the reframing and extension of those policies. For the Park Authority sustainable tourism ideas seem to have become more accepted because there appears to have been little growth in the Park's tourist numbers in recent years, tourism was already an established and important activity for the Park community's socio-economic well-being, and because sustainable tourism as a concept was perceived to hold out the appealing prospect of socio-economic benefits within environmental constraints. Yet, some activities which became identified with sustainable tourism in the Authority's policies were actually long-established activities that pre-dated this new discursive label. This could give a misleading impression of the extent to which the policies represented a new direction. Overall, the study's empirical findings may have wider relevance for the debate, reviewed in

the paper, about potential emerging policy directions in some Category V protected areas.

The paper also makes new contributions as there is only limited in-depth research on influences encouraging the inclusion of sustainable tourism ideas in specific policy contexts, or on relationships in such contexts between sustainable tourism policies and other policy priorities. The analysis departed from an approach which considers sustainable tourism policies in isolation, because potentially they are reformulations or extensions of other previous policies, or else indirect outcomes of policies in other policy fields.

The paper particularly focused on how the Park Authority's sustainable tourism policies co-evolved with other policies in the wider policy environment, notably policies for community well-being, wider actor participation, and sustainable development. Here the analysis drew on conceptual ideas of co-evolution between different sub-system elements, which involves the elements influencing and co-constituting but not determining each other, in inter-relationships of relative autonomy. The use of co-evolution concepts highlighted the importance of considering sustainable tourism policies in relation to broad societal and governance processes. The concept of co-evolution was shown to have considerable analytical potential for researchers interested in the emergence and development of policies associated with sustainable tourism, and also in other tourism-related policy fields. The approach used here also helped to demonstrate the importance of a full recognition that tourism policy, planning and governance activities often have a broad reach and are difficult to delimit, and that they tend to require careful integration across diverse policy fields and practical activities.

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Figure 1. Influences on the Park Authority's policies related to sustainable tourism.