National Park purposes in the UK

Current purposes in England and Wales (Environment Act 1995):

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

In pursuing the statutory purposes, National Park Authorities have a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities."

If it appears that there is a conflict between the two purposes, then greater weight must be given to the first (Sandford Principle 1974).

The Act places duty on public bodies to “have regard” to national park purposes.

Current purposes in Scotland (National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000):

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

Section 9 (6) ‘if, in any matter, it should appear that there is a conflict between the four park aims, the Park Authority must give greater weight to the conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage’.

There is currently a review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England