

Nature in the Dales:

2020 vision

The second Biodiversity Action Plan for the
Yorkshire Dales National Park

Summary of Consultation Responses

Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum, 2011

Introduction

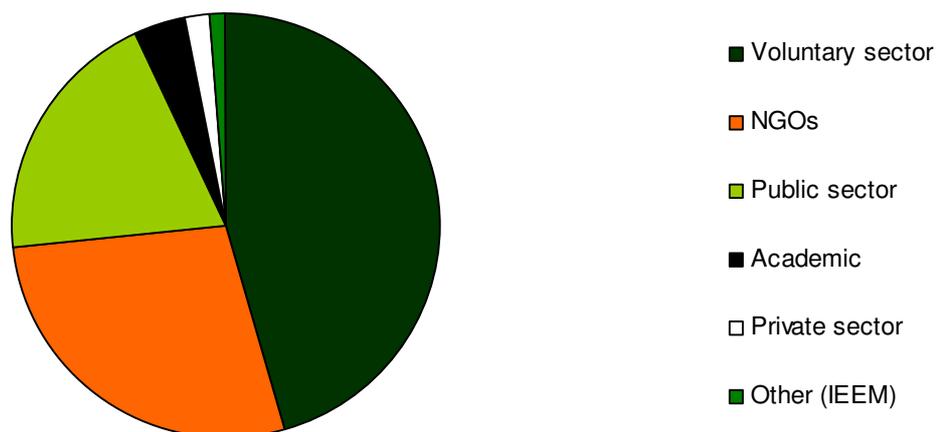
During the first half of 2010 the Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum (the Forum) drafted a new Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) for the Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP) called 'Nature in the Dales: 2020 Vision'.

This process involved several stages. Our starting point was the current UK BAP Priority Species and Habitats list. From this list the Forum identified 174 species and 31 habitats which occurred within the YDNP using various sources for example, the National Biodiversity Network (NBN), Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI) data and local specialist knowledge. With such a large number of UK BAP species and habitats within the National Park the Forum then had to decide, what the priorities for conservation work would be. They did this by using a number of criteria such as native status, the proportion of the national distribution within the National Park and the age of the biological records in conjunction with local specialist knowledge. Where there was insufficient data to be able to make an informed decision, a Species Statement was written rather than an Action Plan. Likewise, since our local actions are being guided by the national actions (which were written by national specialists), where there were no national actions that were relevant in the National Park then a Species Statement was written rather than an Action Plan.

Consultees

The Forum was keen for the draft plan to benefit from the comments of local taxonomic specialists, so these people were a key target group. There were 122 consultees (109 by email and 14 by post where email addresses were not known). The consultees can be summarised as follows: Voluntary sector (46%), Non-Governmental Organisations (28%), Public sector (20%), Academic Institutions (4%), Private sector 2% and other organisations such as IEEM (1%) (see also Figure 1).

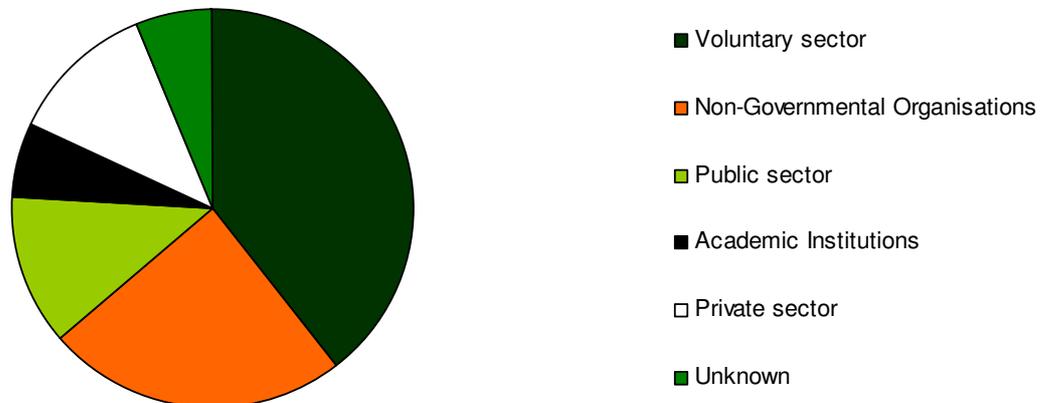
Figure 1: Summary on Consultees



Participation

The draft version of 2020 Vision including Species and Habitat Action Plans and supporting documents comprises of 46 files. If presented as a single document this would have been exceedingly cumbersome. Therefore, in an effort to make the consultation more straight-forward an online survey was devised using Survey Monkey software. This made it possible for consultees to navigate to their areas of interest and make comments with reference to the relevant files. Some guidance on how to use the software was provided. Thirty-three consultees responded (27%) through the online survey or by email. These can be summarised as follows: Voluntary sector (39%), Non-Governmental Organisations (24%), Public sector (12%), Academic Institutions (6%), Private sector (12%) and Unknown (6%).

Figure 2: Summary of Respondents



Comments summary

Of the 33 people who took part in the consultation 21% made comments on the summary document 'Nature in the Dales: 2020 Vision', 27% made comments on Habitat Action Plans and 1% made comments on the Species Action Plans. The comments covered a wide range of subjects such as the achievability of targets, data handling issues, funding, agri-environment schemes, condition assessments, the role of landowners, land managers, local naturalists groups and data centres, offers of support and interest in collaborations, the SAP status of certain species, new data from taxonomic specialists and editorial suggestions. All comments were welcomed and will help to inform the final version of 'Nature in the Dales: 2020 Vision'.

Transcript of comments and draft responses

Executive Summary: Pages 1-5

Consultee: Broadly supportive but I do question whether it is possible to achieve 95% favourability for all habitats and species within the timescale even if resources were unlimited. Within the expected constraints of the current spending round this is even less likely and even maintaining the status quo on non designated sites is likely to be challenging. [*Natural England*]

Consultee: The 95% targets are challenging. Re grouse moor management when I go on certain Open Access grouse moors for photography I am challenged within 10 minutes by Mobile "game keepers" using radio networks, shot guns and rifles with silencers. When I strike up a friendly conversation it is usually explained the rifle with silencer is to ensure certain wildlife does not get near the moors. I do not see how shooting out foxes and birds of prey can be resolved against this background. [*A Natural History Society*]

Response: *The 95% target is challenging but was chosen because it is in line with the advice of NE staff involved in drawing up the Regional Biodiversity Strategy. In addition, biodiversity is still declining rapidly and it is this challenge that needs to be met head-on, and soon. Finally, it is important to recognise what a target is - something to aim for. Using a sporting analogy getting nearer the target requires patience, commitment, training, and applying and continually updating the best techniques. The targets are more likely to be met if people are challenged to do so.*

Consultee: Section 1.7, Penultimate bullet point starting "encouraging people and visitors...etc" Plantlife and the YNU are not the appropriate bodies as neither is principally a recording organisation. Botanical recording is under the auspices of the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) not Plantlife International which is more concerned with running its reserves and now international ambitions. YNU, although running a few recording days is principally a federation of affiliated natural history groups within Yorkshire and it is the individual groups such as Bradford Botany Group, Wharfedale Naturalists, Upper Wharfedale Field Society, Craven Conservation Group etc. as well as individual recorders who do the actual recording and submit the records to BSBI. I am not a bird expert but I was told that the BTO was the principal recording organisation for birds, not RSPB. [*A local Conservation Group*]

Response: *These organisations were named purely as examples. This bullet point is about increasing participation by non-specialists by taking part in mass participation recording schemes such as Big Garden Birdwatch (RSPB), Common Plant Survey (Plantlife), bird recording (YNU recently established a bird recording project). There are many others aimed at different audiences (e.g. OPAL schemes for children). The eventual aim would be for a proportion of the participants to go on to take part in the more specialised recording schemes of the BTO and BSBI as highlighted in this comment.*

Consultee: This is all fine, except there is no explanation of where funding will be made available to achieve these worthy objectives. [*A Naturalists' Organisation*]

Response: *Agreed. One of the challenges will be to secure the funding which in recent years the conservation movement has been very good at doing. There is still a lot of funding out there but will require a more imaginative approach in order to access it.*

Executive Summary: Section A, Background

Consultee: A1 will be a difficult concept for the public to engage with using the examples given. Illustrate with fungi, trees, a flowering plant, butterflies and birds. [*A Naturalists' Organisation*]

Response: *Experience (and surveys) suggests that the public broadly know what biodiversity is now. On that basis it shouldn't be necessary to go into too much detail in this first introductory paragraph.*

Executive Summary: Section B, Implementing the England Biodiversity Strategy

Consultee: Broadly supportive but as above given the observation that many of the targets are dependant on agri-environment schemes with funding cut these may require setting to less ambitious interim and final targets. Habitats may require tighter definition as to what area qualifies as true biological target and what is fabric/ geology or 'landscape'. Some areas of habitat including blanket bog may have evolved under a different climate regime and be ecologically unsustainable in the current climate irrespective of any warming change, e.g. hydrologically non-functional bog remnant peat islands on steep slopes. Definitions of favourability within monitoring may change- I do not believe we would currently see such a high proportion of limestone pavement being in favourable condition as at the time the report was written, conversely we would not see the entirety of the habitat extent perceived by YDNP to hold true biological value. [*Natural England*]

Response: *The habitats have been defined in accordance with the UKBAP criteria. The debate about blanket bog is an interesting one. However, as a suggestion, perhaps the majority of the degraded areas mentioned are as a result of anthropomorphic issues such as burning, grazing and drainage. Blanket bog has seen many changes in climate in the Dales and it has not been fully established what the climatic optimum is, or more importantly, how resilient this habitat is to fluctuations in climate. In terms of limestone pavement, it is deemed that the condition of the majority of the pavement in the Dales is determined by grazing pressure (some sites such as the Yoredale Series will never be species rich but this is a small proportion of the whole). In terms of the dependence of the targets on agri-environment schemes this is only partially true. The LBAP sets out what the Biodiversity Forum (made up of a partnership of organisations) needs to do for biodiversity in the Dales in the next 10 years. HLS is the primary tool at present but things may change after 2013, therefore other tools and ideas will need to be considered. The targets have not been set based on the amount of funding available at the present time. The challenge is to secure funds from the best available sources.*

Consultee: Section B.3.7 might benefit from some expansion. The YNU web site identifies about 6 wildlife groups based within or close to the National Park with whom structured contact and interchange of information has yet to take place. [*A Natural History Society*]

Response: *It is unclear what expansion is needed here. The intention of the actions outlined in B.3.7. and its subsections are to widen participation. There are very few organisations that haven't had some contact or involvement with the Biodiversity Action Plan (both through the last one and through this consultation). However, if there are other organisations willing and able, then contact with them would be welcomed.*

Consultee: B.3.7.4 the text concerning limestone pavements is weakly expressed i.e. "encouraging people not to use etc". Even the RHS which exists for gardeners states in its guidance about water-worn limestone "All such usage is unacceptable and the RHS strongly advises the choice of alternative materials from approved sources etc." I would also recommend including the statement that limestone pavement is protected in law in the UK and that it is an offence to damage or remove it from areas covered by Limestone Pavement Orders. Section B.3.7.5, the bullet point about encouraging local people and visitors to participate in recording - comments as above for the Executive Summary namely that Plantlife and the YNU are not the appropriate bodies and possibly that BTO should replace RSPB. Furthermore most recording is done at a local level on a particular site or area not at "National and Regional" levels. This section should be re-worded with the emphasis on local natural history groups affiliated to the YNU which submit their records to the regional data centre or national recording schemes run by BSBI, BTO, Butterfly Conservation and others.

Response: *B.3.7.4. The wording on limestone pavement will be strengthened. B.3.7.5. This section is about wider participation by non-specialists to encourage them to then join the existing recording community when they become more confident. However, taking into account the comments, appropriate changes have been made.*

Consultee: The draft makes no comment about providing support to the local environmental records centre, which is able to hold and provide data to support these aims.

Response: *Please see section B.3.7.5., which refers to local environmental record centres.*

Executive Summary: Section C, The Habitats

Consultee: As above there may need to be a refinement of what is genuine or restorable habitat and what is not. The 2020 favourability target may not be scientifically possible, especially in difficult to manage or very slow to change habitats, e.g. blanket bog is technically unfavourable as long as the peat blanket is thin. What timescale is required to regenerate 20 cm or more peat depth? How long does it take tree species to colonise and emerge from limestone pavement in areas where tree cover and seed sources are virtually absent and achieve 5% landscape cover. I am not suggesting we shouldn't try just is 2020 really believable or SMART in old business acronym terms.

Response: *These are targets - something to aim for. They are indeed challenging, but if challenging targets are not set we will continue to see a decline in biodiversity in the Dales. Setting vague, long-term, and unchallenging targets has dogged the conservation movement over the last few decades and there is still continued decline. The SSSI PSA target was challenging and while it was not perfect it focused minds, funding and action to try to achieve it.*

Consultee: With resource protection and the new FC grant for riparian and floodplain planting there is some scope for delivering river habitat enhancement through pre-existing schemes. The Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust are presently working on two catchment scale river restoration projects with assistance from YDNPA, CPRE and others (Raydale and Coverdale). We are keen to extend these projects onto other catchments and would wish to work with the Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum to ensure targeting of work is as efficient as possible.

Response: *Your comments are gratefully received.*

Consultee: A map showing the distribution of the habitats listed in C.1 would be useful.

Response: *The production of distribution maps has been explored and unfortunately they are not very informative at a scale that would be used in this document, but will consider using them on the website (www.natureinthedailes.org.uk) in the future.*

Habitat Action Plans

Rivers

Question: Do you agree with the trends and status of this habitat?

Consultee: At present there is little data on the trends and status however the Humber Basin Management Plan (<http://wfdconsultation.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfdcms/en/humber/Intro.aspx>) offers some guidance on ecological status of the rivers within the Dales. YDRT would be keen to assist with developing information on the status of rivers and we have some data on trout, crayfish and bankside condition. We have also information on locations where fine sediment delivery is impacting on the rivers within the national park.

Response: *This information is urgently needed in order to set proper targets for rivers; therefore assistance would be gratefully received.*

Question: Do you agree with the UK biodiversity targets for this habitat?

Consultee: At present no targets set. YDRT would like to see plans that aim to restore river and catchment functions. This will involve assessing the river in the context of the catchment scale, i.e. the full upstream area of any specific impact. In order to restore rivers it is likely that fine sediment delivery and runoff rates from farmland and eroding moors (due to grips) will need to be addressed. We would wish to see a strategic plan that accounts for this by, for example, targeting woodland creation schemes alongside more localised measures. We are aware of the good work the Yorkshire Peat Partnership has been carrying out and the new woodland creation scheme is starting to work on. However in the light of cuts coming out of the strategic review it appears small charities like ourselves, with access to grant schemes, need to be working closely with the forum and YDNPA to ensure delivery is not greatly impacted by these draconian cuts.

Response: *It really does sound as though this could be the lead organisation to help with the rivers HAP.*

Question: Do you agree with the local objectives and actions for this habitat?

Consultee: Not yet set. The objectives should be driven by the WFD, even though the definitions are loose it does offer an important driver for river restoration. Again we would wish to work with the forum and YDNPA, and other partners, to ensure that objectives and actions are placed into the appropriate spatial scale and that the overarching habitat objectives are planned so as to enhance habitat for the appropriate LBAP species.

Response: *See previous comments*

Question: Do you agree with the main delivery mechanisms identified for this habitat?

Consultee: To be defined, we would wish to be included in the formulation of the mechanisms and aspire to be partners in on-ground delivery. We presently work with the EA on such plans and are running our own catchment scale projects. We see these as the best approach to river restoration except at locations where the impact is clearly arising from adjacent land use, for example due to heavy livestock poaching and stock access to watercourses.

Response: *See previous comments*

Calaminarian Grassland HAP

A large number of constructive comments, suggestions and technical corrections were provided by a consultee.

Response: *All these comments should be accepted. The J8 and J9 comments call into question the current habitat data that was provided for the consultation, therefore invalidating the targets. This HAP need to be substantially altered and turned into a single action of quantifying the extent and condition of the habitat by 2013 rather than setting specific objectives at this stage.*

Executive Summary: Section D, The Species

Consultee: We would be especially keen to work on projects involving the following species. European Eel Atlantic Salmon Brown/Sea Trout White-clawed Crayfish We are already involved with brown trout and salmon restoration projects and with the assistance of a grant have put in photographic recording equipment at the new Boston Spa fish pass that will allow us to monitor fish passage into the upper Wharefedale. There is similar equipment at the Newby Hall fish pass allowing us to do the same with the Ure system. Whilst our primary aim is to restore river process and ecosystem function many of the restorative measures will have positive knock-on effects to other species. For example gill planting to reduce fine sediment transfers and runoff can enhance habitat for black grouse and fencing out rivers to provide a good buffer strip provides wildlife corridors for species such as otter. We work from the approach that an improved habitat will be colonised if habitat connectivity is developed. Both trout and salmon have re-colonised

areas on the Tyne, for example, due to habitat and ecosystem improvements without the need for stocking.

Response: *All help gratefully received.*

White Clawed Crayfish

Consultee: There does not appear to be a SAP for the white-clawed crayfish. There was one in the last version of the BAP and considering the Ribblesdale project and the well known issues regarding plague and signal invasion within the national park I think it is important that the species is included.

Response: *Since these local BAP actions are being guided by the UKBAP actions (which were written by national specialists), where there were no national actions that were relevant in the National Park then a Species Statement has been written rather than an Action Plan. This is a consistent approach that has been applied to all species throughout the process. This does not exclude work being carried out on this important species it just means that it will not have a Species Action Plan in the BAP.*

Lichens

Consultee: A large number of constructive comments, suggestions, technical corrections and lichens records were provided by a consultee.

Response: *All comments and data were welcome and accepted. Eight species have been removed from the SAP due to no British Lichen Society records in Yorkshire. These are *Vulpicida pinastri*, *Usnea florida*, *Synalissa symphorea*, *Pyrenula dermatodes*, *Bacidia circumspecta*, *Cliostomum corrugatum*, *Collema fragile* and *Leptogium saturninum*. This leaves 7 remaining lichen species on the SAP.*

Vascular plants - Holly fern

Consultee: I am not sure that the trend for Holly fern (*Polystichum lonchitis*) is correct. Recent reductions in sheep grazing on some of the sites where it occurs suggest increasing number and size of plants. On the YDNPA's own site at Attermire and Langcliffe LNR we recorded a great increase in the number of plants over those recorded previously. Similarly the population of Moughton is also doing well. However there is a need for detailed mapping and counts on the plant population. Further trials could be done in reducing sheep grazing or replacement with cattle on sites where it occurs. A further point is that although *Polystichum lonchitis* may occupy less than 20% of the hectads in Britain, since the species is arctic-alpine in its distribution, most of the British hectads are in Scotland and hence the YDNP populations are very important in an English context.

Response: *Thank you for sharing the information and experience. The Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI) are half way through resurveying all historic sites for this species in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The survey work is expected to be completed in 2011. This information will provide a baseline for the species action plan and will inform our future work regarding management.*