

What difference would National Park designation make? A Dales' perspective

1. Many people wonder what difference living in a national park might make. For 95% of the time, for residents and/or those working in the area, being in a national park does not affect their daily lives. However, behind the scenes, the national park authority is involved in a range of projects and initiatives that support the area and its communities. The purpose of this document is to outline how we carry out some of the following activities in the Dales National Park:

1. Agriculture and land management
2. Wildlife conservation
3. Historic environment and building conservation
4. Rights of way and open access
5. Visitor management
6. Sustainable tourism
7. Sustainable development and the rural economy
8. Planning

2. It goes on to explain our membership, how we undertake our role in planning, how as the National Park Authority we also tackle issues such as affordable housing to help ensure the long term sustainability of local communities.

3. The very last section explains our relationship with other organisations in the area, who has responsibility for what, and how this would or would not change should the proposed extension areas become part of the Dales National Park.

1. Agriculture and land management

4. The Dales Authority is passionate about the role that farmers and land managers have in the National Park. As food producers and custodians of the landscape they are the backbone of the Park. Currently some 80% of the land in the National Park is in agri-environment scheme agreements, both Environmental Stewardship (ELS & HLS) and classic schemes (Environment Sensitive Area and Countryside Stewardship Scheme). Virtually the whole of the Dales National Park is within a target area for the Higher Level Stewardship scheme. However, most of the proposed western and northern extensions to the National Park are not currently within HLS target areas, although the Orton Fells proposed extension is. National Park designation of the northern and western extension areas in the future, together with lobbying from the National Park Authority, could enable these areas to become HLS target areas at the next review.

5. Farmers who are currently within the Dales National Park benefit from having a Farming and Rural Economy team. We currently employ a specialist team which works with farmers to provide advice and support in applying and implementing agri-environment schemes. The team also compiles Farm Environment Plans, as part of a national agreement, to assist farmers to enter HLS. Importantly this is at no cost to the applicant.

6. During 2009/10 the Dales National Park Authority has worked with Natural England on the launch of Uplands Entry Level Stewardship, enabling local farmers to set up and successfully seek funding to set up a Dales Farmer Network, and advising farmers on

accessing Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) funding from the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs).

2. Wildlife conservation

7. Over the years, a number of wildlife conservation projects have been set up to benefit farmers and landowners, and wildlife conservation. The most significant of these is the Limestone Country project. This scheme grant aided 18 herds of traditional cattle breeds (see www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/index/looking_after/partnerships-2/limestonecountryproject/lcp-whatprojectdid/lcp-cattleherds.htm) to help maintain the biodiversity of limestone pasture. (The herd bought through the project for Natural England's reserve at Ingleborough also graze the limestone areas near Great Asby in the Orton Fells).

8. The National Park Authority has funded and provided assistance for the 'Hay Time' Project to enhance or restore hay meadows (51ha enhanced or restored in 2009/10). It has also contributed to the delivery of the Yorkshire Dales Black Grouse Recovery project, organising a farmer demonstration event at Newby Head and using agri-environment scheme applications to improve habitat for range extensions.

9. The National Park Authority is also working with Natural England and others to carry out a programme of works to restore areas of degraded peat, through the Yorkshire Peat Partnership in the Yorkshire part of the National Park. In Cumbria restoration can be part of agri-environment scheme proposals.

3. Historic Environment and Building Conversation

10. A characteristic feature of the Dales is its barns, and walls landscape. The network of drystone walls which can be seen throughout the area stretch over 8,689 km and there are more than 6,000 stone built field barns in the National Park. Between 1998 and 2004, a number of initiatives brought in £6.7 million for their maintenance. During this period over 517 traditional farm buildings and 19.1 km of drystone walls were restored. The National Park Authority's Historic Environment and Building Conversation team helped facilitate the delivery of a substantial part of this work.

11. Without the injection of funding, over three quarters of the traditional farm buildings repaired were otherwise likely to become derelict. Prior to restoration, a third of the buildings were not used. After restoration an estimated usable floor space of over 40,000m² was available with 95% of the buildings repaired returned to productive use mainly for agricultural purposes, especially the housing of livestock and fodder crops. Building and walling work was carried out by local firms and is estimated to have created 74 jobs in the National Park and its wider local area. This year we have worked with Natural England to advise on and oversee works to restore over 100 field barns within agri-environment schemes.

4. Rights of way and open access

12. The National Park Authority is responsible for rights of way in the National Park area, on behalf of Cumbria and North Yorkshire County Councils. Approximately £650k a year

is spent on the management of rights of way within the National Park. The Dales National Park area achieves a consistently high 'ease of use' national performance indicator figure. The National Park Authority does not receive any funding from Cumbria County Council towards this work. Instead the money comes from the National Park Authority's grant it receives from Defra, paid for by national taxation, rather than local authority council tax.

13. The National Park Authority's ranger service works with landowners and farmers to manage and improve the network of public rights of way (PROW). Access rangers undertake routine maintenance of stiles and gates and smaller bridges. The National Park Authority does not have 'estate' teams; instead it uses local contractors for larger bridges and rights of way restoration contracts – managed by the ranger service. Making the PROW and network of open access land easier to use has advantages to the farmers and landowners both in the provision of better access 'furniture' (as this is provided by the National Park Authority free of charge on their behalf) and the Rangers help in managing access issues on the ground, preventing problems arising in the first place.

14. Approximately 62% of land in the National Park is open access land. This forms one contiguous band from the National Park into the proposed western and northern extensions and the Orton Fells. Approximately 40% of open access land in the National Park is grouse moor. Our rangers understand the access issues around moorland management for grouse shooting, and the importance of grouse shooting for land management, biodiversity and the local economy.

5. Visitor Management

15. The National Park Authority has recently finished reviewing its recreation and tourism strategy – 'Special Qualities, Special Experiences'. This seeks to balance the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities with understanding, promotion and enjoyment of the area. Across the National Park there are quiet and busy areas, which for the most part reflect the relative remoteness and accessibility of different areas. Distinctions can be made between these areas. Broadly:

Within the National Park:

- Key service centres and market towns where a wide range of visitor facilities should be available (e.g. Reeth, Hawes, Settle, Grassington, Sedbergh, Ingleton);
- Main Dales - sympathetic development that builds on the tourism offer in the area (e.g. villages of Bolton Abbey, Malham, Horton-in-Ribblesdale, Clapham, Aysgarth, Kettlewell, Dent);
- Tributary or Secondary Dales – low key development (e.g. B&Bs or group accommodation units for those walking together such as bunk barns) that avoids the need for 'over-management' and is unobtrusive within the surroundings (e.g. Raydale, Coverdale);
- Open countryside and wildlife designated sites - minimal signs of human activity.

In the area surrounding the National Park:

- Gateway Towns – with all-weather activities and/or attractions (e.g. Skipton, Harrogate, Leyburn, Richmond, Kirkby Stephen, Kirkby Lonsdale).
- Conference facilities and holiday parks - mainly located outside the National Park.

6. Sustainable tourism

16. Since the early 1990s the National Park Authority has worked in partnership with the local authorities in the area promoting the Dales and its surroundings as a visitor 'destination' and this has been widely recognised as an example of good practice in partnership working. The current partnership - the Yorkshire Dales and Harrogate Tourism Partnership - promotes tourism in the local authority areas of the Craven, Richmondshire, Harrogate, Eden and South Lakeland. The National Park Authority is part of the partnership because it recognises the importance of tourism to the economic well-being of the area, though it is ultimately the district councils (Craven, Richmondshire Eden and South Lakeland) and county councils (Cumbria and North Yorkshire) which have the responsibility for tourism and economic generation within the National Park.

17. Tourism in the Partnership area has a total value of approximately £575m per annum. Of this 42% or £247m is spent by staying visitors and 53% or £309m by day visitors to the area.

18. Key themes in the Tourism Strategy for the partnership are:

- To build a sustainable visitor economy;
- To promote local distinctiveness, making the most of high quality local produce, food, beers from micro breweries and crafts;
- Promotion of the local culture and heritage of the areas, including festivals and events, and traditional skills such as drystone walling and weaving. Not forgetting the built environment and the landscape shaped by years of human influence;

19. The majority of visitors to the Dales are repeat visitors, some 79%. They come to enjoy the natural beauty, landscape, peace and tranquillity and to 'get away from it all'. The type of experience on offer in the National Park is very much based on the special qualities of the area, and the opportunities for quiet enjoyment. Visitor numbers are low compared to neighbouring areas to the west.

20. The National Park Authority has recently been awarded the European Charter on Sustainable Tourism in relation to the National Park and the wider tourism partnership area (which also covers some of the proposed extension areas for designation). Tourism promotion is in-keeping with the charter principles see <http://www.europarc.org/what-we-do/european-charter>.

21. The approach to tourism in the National Park area appears to fit with that developing in the proposed extension areas and Orton Fells. Fundamentally many of the sustainable tourism products in the form of local produce, accommodation, and long distance routes cross these areas and the National Park, so opportunities for combined promotion could benefit all.

7. Sustainable development and the rural economy

22. The National Park Authority supports local organisations, businesses and individuals in action that brings economic, social and environmental benefits to the area e.g. support for the Leader programme. The main (current) mechanism, available to the Dales Authority, is the 'Sustainable Development Fund'; the table below gives the breakdown of grants, by Dale/area, awarded since the fund was launched in 2002.

Sustainable Development Fund grants by area (2002-2009)

Area	Grants awarded (£ '000)	Number of projects
Swaledale	152	5
Wensleydale	195	18
Dent & Sedbergh	120	19
Wharfedale	200	20
Malham & Three Peaks	158	23
Park area as a whole	360	33
TOTAL	1.185m	118

23. So far 118 projects have received £1,185,000 of cash from the National Park Authority with the recipients spread right across the National Park. The total value of these projects is £4.041m, including the contributions from the project operators and other agencies, so there is £3.40 of spending on sustainable development for every £1 the National Park Authority spends.

24. This funding has supported 218 community groups and 464 local businesses. It has funded a number of projects with benefits to farmers, including the Fell Farming Apprentice Scheme, Dentedale Heritage Centre, Sustainable Farm Energy project, the Yorkshire Dales hedge laying competition, together with a current application for the Dales Farmer Network. (A full list of all projects is available).

25. The National Park Authority also supports the Cumbria Fells & Dales Leader programme, which is a wide ranging and well funded programme which uses the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) with funding aimed at economic benefits for farmers and landowners. The majority of the proposed extension areas would fall within the Cumbria Fells & Dales area, except for a small area of the Orton Fells which would be within the Solway, Border & Eden Leader programme, which has similar methods of delivery and funding.

8. Planning

26. The national park authority is also the planning authority for the area. This is sometimes cited as being a restriction for residents in a national park. However, the similarities in planning restrictions within and outside national park areas are much greater than the differences. The following points try to give a flavour of the effect National Park status has in terms of planning within the National Park.

27. Permitted development, that is development that can take place without the need for planning permission, is very similar in areas with national park status as it is in those surrounding a national park. In fact, planning restrictions on permitted development for householders can sometimes be greater in some Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites than in areas designated national park. In terms of agricultural buildings, again there is little difference between the proposed extension areas and the National Park. This is because much of the proposed extension areas are already considered of 'special landscape importance' in planning terms. This has the effect of a minor tightening of agricultural permitted development, the same as within a national park. So in these areas (the main parishes in the proposed Western and Northern extension areas) national park designation would not result in any added restrictions on the size of farm buildings.

28. The Dales National Park Authority has a high rate of approval of applications, when compared to other National Parks or other Planning Authorities in the rest of England.

**Planning Application Approval Rates – England, National Parks & YDNPA.
Source: CLG/ONS Statistical Releases; YDNPA Records.**

Quarter	England	National Parks	YDNPA
Apr – Mar 2007*	82%	84%	89%
Apr – Mar 2008*	82%	85%	89 %
Apr – Mar 2009*	82%	84%	86%

NB *These figures are for all types of development and applications including advertising.

29. Significantly there is a 93% planning application approval rate for agricultural buildings, farm diversification schemes and residential/holiday lets on farm holdings. The Dales' Local Planning policies are very supportive of local communities, tourism and agriculture. Most policies are criteria-based and afford flexibility for negotiation:

- The vast majority of new housing approved in the National Park is focused on local occupancy or affordable needs;
- Diversification of farm holdings eg farm shops, equestrian ventures, bunk barns etc including allowing conversion of barns to holiday and residential lets on farm holdings (subject to a legal tie with the farm business);
- New agricultural buildings are looked on favourably provided they are well-sited and necessary for agriculture;
- a range of visitor facilities and tourist ventures provided they do not cater for peak demand or generate unacceptable levels of traffic etc.

NPA's involvement in Affordable Housing

30. The NPA has adopted a facilitation role in relation to delivering affordable housing and, as the designated planning authority, have never refused an affordable scheme.

31. In the past 7 years, 54 affordable homes, in 8 schemes, have been completed within the National Park at a cost of around £6m.

9. Other factors to consider

The National Park Authority's Membership and Resources

32. The membership of the Authority is made up of 6 County and 6 District Council representatives. 4 members are elected by local parish councils and the remaining 6 are appointed by the Secretary of State. These Members are appointed for their experience and expertise in specific areas such as agriculture, archaeology, access etc and to bring a 'national' perspective to the authority's work.

33. Funding for the national park comes as an annual grant from central government. In addition the Dales authority is very successful in securing additional funding for specific projects increasing our annual spend by approximately 40%.

Changes to services and functions in a national park

Service and function	Cumbria in the National Park (existing)	Cumbria in the proposed extension areas (existing)	Cumbria in the proposed extension areas (If designated)	Change?
Regional Development Agency	North West Development Agency and/or Yorkshire Forward (if a Dales wide project)	North West Development Agency	North West Development Agency and/or Yorkshire Forward (if a Dales wide project)	No
Regional Planning	Yorkshire and Humber region	North West Region	No decision as yet	Unknown
Local planning	National Park Authority	South Lakeland or Eden DC	National Park Authority	Yes
Housing	South Lakeland DC	South Lakeland or Eden DC	South Lakeland or Eden DC	No
Building control	South Lakeland DC	South Lakeland or Eden DC	South Lakeland or Eden DC	No
Education	Cumbria County Council	Cumbria County Council	Cumbria County Council	No
Waste collection	South Lakeland DC	South Lakeland or Eden DC	South Lakeland or Eden DC	No
Rights of way and recreation	National Park Authority (on behalf of Cumbria County Council)	Cumbria County Council	National Park Authority (on behalf of Cumbria County Council)	Yes
Local Access Forum and open access	National Park Authority	Cumbria County Council	National Park Authority	Yes
Highway Authority (maintenance of roads)	Cumbria County Council	Cumbria County Council	Cumbria County Council	No
Transportation Authority (public transport)	Cumbria County Council	Cumbria County Council	Cumbria County Council	No
Destination Management (tourism)	Dales and Harrogate Area Tourism Partnership Cumbria Tourism	Dales and Harrogate Area Tourism Partnership (except Orton Fells) Cumbria Tourism	Dales and Harrogate Area Tourism Partnership Cumbria Tourism	No (except Orton Fells)
Pollution Control	Environment Agency	Environment Agency	Environment Agency	No
Forestry	Forestry Commission	Forestry Commission	Forestry Commission	No
Agriculture	Defra	Defra	Defra	No
Wildlife	Natural England	Natural England	Natural England	No
Historic environment	English Heritage	English Heritage	English Heritage	No

For further information:

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