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## **Executive Summary**

This document summarises the findings of a landscape character assessment of the Yorkshire Dales National Park undertaken between April and July 2001, together with the findings of the Quality of Life (QoL) Capital assessment in relation to key elements of landscape character undertaken over the same period. The study was commissioned by the National Park Authority in March 2001 and has been prepared by Estell Warren Landscape Architects.

Landscape character is defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. Patterns of geology, landform, soils and vegetation, land use, field patterns and human settlement combine together to create character. At the broad scale, landscape character makes the Yorkshire Dales distinct from other parts of Britain; at the local scale there are distinct character differences between different dales and between different areas of a single dale. The brief of this assessment has been to identify landscape character areas on a dale by dale basis in accordance with the way in which the Park is managed and the way in which the local community relates to it.

Landscape character assessment aims to record this character in an objective, value free way such that it forms a baseline assessment which can be developed into landscape strategies and guidelines, or which can be utilised to guide planning policy or inform development control decisions. This character assessment has been undertaken in accordance with published guidance.

The Quality of Life Capital Approach is being promoted jointly by the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and the Environment Agency as a means of providing a systematic way to identify what matters in the environment and how to manage it. For the purpose of this study QoL identifies factors that provide environmental benefits and disbenefits within the landscape and identifies broad management objectives for the future. The relationship of QoL to the landscape characterisation process is straightforward; characterisation describes the landscape whereas QoL evaluates and derives aims for the landscape. Within this study QoL has been applied to the distinctive range of elements which combine to form the landscape (eg drystone walls and barns, limestone outcrops), area wide benefits which the landscape may provide (such as peace and solitude, dark skies) and detractors (eg quarries which may have an adverse effect on landscape character). The QoL Capital assessment has been undertaken in accordance with guidance provided on the website ([www.qualityoflifecapital.org.uk](http://www.qualityoflifecapital.org.uk)).

This report sets out the findings of the landscape character assessment and Quality of Life Capital assessment in five sections:

An introductory section sets out the background, context and scope of study, the relationship between this study and previous studies and the relationship between this study and the studies undertaken by neighbouring authorities. The methodology is briefly described.

Section 2 describes the landscape character of the Yorkshire Dales as a whole together with the physical, historic and cultural, settlements and buildings and landcover influences that have shaped the landscape.

Section 3 summarises the landscape character types identified within the Yorkshire Dales by the Countryside Agency and the relationship between these landscape types and the character areas identified as part of this report.

Section 4, the main body of the report, subdivided for convenience into Dales and Dales Fringe character areas and upland character areas, is further divided into geographic areas as follows:

### **Dales and Dales Fringe Character Areas**

Swaledale and Arkengarthdale  
The Cumbrian Dales  
Wensleydale  
The Craven Dales

Malhamdale and the Southern/South Western Dales Fringes  
Wharfedale and Littondale

**Upland Character Areas**

The Southern Howgill Fells  
The Yorkshire Moors and Fells

This breakdown can be readily appreciated by reference to Figure 4.

For each geographic area the key influences that have led to the shaping of the landscape are described before each of the character areas are described in turn. Each of these character areas is accompanied by a summary colour sheet, showing the boundaries of the area in relation to an OS map, including photographs to convey the key visual qualities of the area and a summary of key characteristics. A summary map of the whole of the National Park is provided at the end of the report and the character area boundaries have also been incorporated into the National Parks Authority's GIS system. Section 4 completes the landscape characterisation section of the report which can act as a baseline from which to undertake further studies;

Section 5 considers the background to landscape change, recent pressures for change on landscapes and key features and forces for, and direction of, future changes. The Quality of Life Capital Assessment starts by identifying environmental benefits and disbenefits of key elements of character before evaluating them in order to identify the appropriate management priority and prescription. The results of these assessments are summarised in a series of tables at the end of the report.