

## YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

## National Park Authority Committee

25<sup>th</sup> January 2005**INTERPRETATION STRATEGY****Purpose of report**

To seek approval for the YDNPA Interpretation Strategy 2005-2010

**Strategic Planning Framework**

The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

- ***National Park Management Plan***

AR12 Provide education and information to increase Park users' awareness of their impact

UE3 Provide visitors with clear and consistent key messages about what is special and what individuals can do to conserve the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales National Park

UE5 Unify interpretation methods and styles within the National Park to reinforce the identity and messages of the area

BH2 Make information on the historic environment of the Dales publicly available and accessible with interpretation

- ***Best Value Performance Plan***

Section 4 Objective 3 c) Raising the YDNP profile throughout the UK from 7% to 10% by March 07

Section 4 Objective 3 d) Ensuring that at least 90% of visitors within the YDNP are aware they are in a NP and that 50% have an understanding of NP purposes and/or special qualities by December 07

Target 62. Update interpretation strategy

- ***Existing policies and strategies***

Interpretation Policy

**Background**

After receiving comments from Committee during 2004, the proposed Interpretation Strategy was sent to a selection of external organisations for comment and minor changes made.

The strategy will be used directly by Authority staff when providing interpretation for the National Park. It will also be used to guide and influence partners and other groups who produce their own interpretation within the Park.

The final Interpretation Strategy is now presented for approval at the National Park Authority Committee meeting. See Appendix 1.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Authority approves the 2005-2010 Interpretation Strategy

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INTERPRETATION OFFICER

Background documents:

Appendix 1: YDNPA Interpretation Strategy 2005-2010

Appendix 2: National Park messages

Appendix 3: Interpretive tools

6<sup>th</sup> January 2005

## **Appendix 1** **YDNPA Interpretation Strategy 2005-2010**

### What is interpretation in the National Park?

Interpretation has been defined as “a communication process designed to reveal meanings and relationships of our cultural and natural heritage to the public, through first-hand involvement with an object, artefact, landscape or site” (Interpretation Canada 1973).

Interpretation helps people to understand and appreciate the heritage that surrounds them and to find their own meaning in it. It is a strong tool by which to build appreciation of the National Park’s special landscape and to alter behaviour, where appropriate. Good interpretation reflects the special qualities of the National Park, can be tailored in a sustainable way to individual sites, can engage a variety of audiences with varied learning styles and needs and can provide visitors access to learning experiences 365 days of the year.

Interpretation in the Yorkshire Dales National Park is delivered via the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and a broad spectrum of other organisations, community groups and individuals. The National Park Authority provides interpretation through a selection of tools across the geographical extent of the National Park. This includes:

- Displays at five National Park Centres
- Exhibitions at the Dales Countryside Museum
- A programme of over 200 events per year including guided walks, hands-on children’s events and demonstrations
- Being part of projects such as Private Spaces Public Places, Countryside and Rights of Way Act, Pennine Bridleway and TARGET
- Other large special events such as festivals
- Over 120 interpretation panels and village map boards throughout the National Park
- Interpretation on various websites
- A variety of community projects, artworks and installations throughout the National Park
- Travelling exhibitions including those for agricultural shows
- A variety of printed materials including The Visitor newspaper. The Communications Officer is the principle point of contact for printed materials and they are dealt with separately in the Communications Strategy.

Interpretation is not simply information but is often blended with information during projects. Interpretation does not cover areas such as signage, information publications and the running of external events such as shows and festivals.

Other park-wide interpretation providers include the National Trust, English Nature, Youth Hostel Association and Yorkshire Water. Other organisations, Parish Councils, community groups, business associations and local people tend to provide interpretation on a more localised level. Many of these consist of volunteers, business associations or private businesses. Local people and communities play an important role in interpreting the National Park on a local level usually with help and advice from the Interpretation Officer.

The launching of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 in the Yorkshire Dales National Park in 2005 will open up a considerable amount of land to the public that has not been accessible in the past. This will present new challenges and opportunities for

interpreting these areas in the future. One key role may be in the promotion and interpretation of specific routes that help to manage visitors in the National Park. However, until the Act is launched in other areas, little is known about expected visitor usage patterns. Therefore, plans for interpretation areas of new access land will not be devised until such time as visitor usage information is available.

### Delivering Authority objectives

A lead officer, the Interpretation Officer, manages the National Park Authority interpretation programme. The Interpretation Officer, other staff of the Authority, Dales Volunteers and Friends of the Museum and contractors deliver this programme.

Interpretation provided by the National Park Authority significantly helps to deliver the Authority's second statutory purpose in relation to the special qualities of the National Park:

'to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the areas by the public'.

Projects whose main purpose is to conserve and enhance the National Park such as the Limestone Country Project are assisted by interpretation.

Interpretation encourages a sense of responsibility for the sustainable use of the National Park. It is a valuable tool in visitor management and where appropriate, in altering behaviour accordingly among visitors and residents alike. It provides a resource for visitors to the area and assists in fostering the economic well-being of local communities by enhancing the visitor experience. Interpretation also forwards several national and regional plans and objectives such as the regional cultural strategy – "Special Place. Special People" (April 2002).

### Purpose of the strategy

This strategy sets out the direction for interpretation development over the next three to five years for the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and provides some guidance for other organisations and groups. At this stage, we can only wholly influence the interpretation we produce internally and will provide optional advice and guidance for other organisations. Past experience shows that we already have good working relationships and contacts with many groups providing interpretation within the National Park.

Whilst maintaining flexibility, the strategy provides focus and working practices for the maintenance of current interpretation and the addition of future interpretation. This document is also a step towards developing and implementing a common interpretation strategy for the whole National Park in partnership with other interpretation providers.

### Interpretation Objectives

#### **Objective 1 – To continue to provide high quality interpretation services.**

To encourage a consistently high quality of innovative interpretation within the National Park, the Interpretation Officer already provides professional advice and referral to other interpretation projects and relevant professionals.

Achieving effective interpretation is dependant on working with and influencing the work of a range of other bodies and community groups. There is a need to continue this co-

operation both internally and with external organisations to help achieve greater cohesion.

The Interpretation Officer will continue to provide a guidance service for all internal interpretation proposals and an optional service for interpretation planned by external organisations.

The Interpretation Officer will continue to encourage the development of community interpretation projects where ownership lies with groups and individuals in the communities themselves. Such projects have proven to help improve skills, combat social isolation and build capacity within rural communities for regeneration and community action. The Interpretation Officer will continue to provide valuable advice and contacts for communities about developing interpretation projects and events. In 2003/04 we assisted community groups in gaining over £100k funding in small grants to develop interpretation projects.

The Interpretation Officer will promote the use of consistent National Park messages (see Messages and Audiences section) that will ideally be included in as much interpretation as possible within or about the National Park. This advice service will also encourage other organisations and community groups to interpret the special qualities of the National Park in a greater variety of creative ways.

To maintain professional quality interpretation, the Interpretation Officer will have the final decision on the development of Authority interpretation projects including those that form part of wider Authority projects. The Authority will provide the best professional advice of the Interpretation Officer to external organisations. Advice could be delivered via one-to-one project contacts, by speaking at conferences and seminars, running sessions at training courses or web-based factsheets, links and information.

Timescale: With immediate effect.

**Objective 2 – Produce a baseline evaluation for interpretation** (Best Value Performance Plan future target, page 57)

Much evaluation work has already been carried out on the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority interpretation. However, the majority of this concentrates upon the events programme and National Park centres. In order to effectively evaluate the success of future interpretation, to measure the contribution interpretation makes towards the Authority's purposes and to develop future interpretation projects using the most effective methods we require a good baseline of information. For future planning purposes, it would be useful to map existing Authority interpretation and interpretation developed by other providers. The Interpretation Officer will develop a rolling programme to help maintain the quality of the interpretive provision and inform decision making.

Timescale: By end 2005

**Objective 3 – Match the tool to the message**

In past years, the majority of Authority interpretation projects have been outdoor interpretation panels, although some other tools have been used. However, in many areas a saturation point for these outdoor interpretation panels has been reached. The Authority will now seek to use alternative methods of interpretation.

The Interpretation Officer will promote the use of alternative methods of interpretation. There is a need to encourage the development of more creative, innovative approaches to transmitting the special qualities the National Park and empower positive action and responsible actions. Each project must be appropriate to the project's location, National Park messages and audience. The audience for each project should be clearly identified

maintaining an audience-focused project which appeals to a range of learning styles and where possible, hands on (interactive) learning. As the lead professional in this field, the Interpretation Officer will provide assistance and examples of models of best practice in this area.

One key area for development is interpretation that utilises the opportunities provided by new media such as the world wide web. The web provides a unique opportunity to reach audiences around the world and within our region, some of which will never actually visit the National Park. With the imminent development of the National Parks portal, there should be a concentration on production of high quality interpretative content and some future interpretation projects could be entirely web-based.

Timescale: Mid 2006

#### **Objective 4 – Increase the use of Dales Volunteers**

The Interpretation Officer will increase the participation of Dales Volunteers in maintaining, evaluating, developing, and delivering interpretation. This will be achieved by the formation of a volunteer interpretation team who will be involved in many aspects of the interpretation programme.

Timescale: Early 2006

#### **Objective 5 – Develop a Park-wide interpretation network with partners**

A network of interpretation providers is needed to sustain and constantly improve the large amount of interpretation available to visitors and residents alike within the National Park. As a National Park Authority, we only have limited resources and can therefore only provide a limited amount of interpretation. The network depends upon partnership working between the National Park Authority and with other organisations, community groups and landowners on individual projects.

In the next five years, we will work towards developing a park-wide interpretation network which will identify key areas for future development and maintenance. This will be developed in collaboration with key partners and communities. The network will be a tool for directing resources (both internally and externally) and will ensure a coherent park-wide approach to interpretation

Timescale: By end 2009

#### **Selection criteria**

Interpretive planning will be done on a park-wide or area basis, dependent on the scale of project. The following criteria will be used for the assessment of new interpretation projects and ongoing work priorities:

- contribution to National Park purposes and priorities
- resources available, value of resources required
- style, content and tools appropriate to audience, theme and location
- type of target audience and accessibility of outputs
- timescale and achievability
- sustainability and environmental impact
- creativity and innovation
- baseline information available and ease of evaluation of the project outputs
- contribution to regional and national strategies

#### **Messages and Audiences**

There is already ample interpretative provision for the National Park's traditional audiences. Researching types of interpretation suitable for non-traditional audiences will be a priority for the future. It is proposed that a rolling programme of updates and improvements be formulated to readdress this balance.

A proposed list of standard messages to be conveyed through interpretation is in Appendix 2.

## **Tools**

The National Park Authority currently uses a variety of tools to deliver its interpretation:

### **a. Dales Countryside Museum**

The Dales Countryside Museum is an important centre for interpretation within the National Park.

An interpretation strategy for the Dales Countryside Museum is under development and will be appended to this document on completion.

### **b. National Park Centres**

To complement the development of the four flagship National Park Centres at Aysgarth, Malham, Grassington and Hawes, future interpretation at each of these sites will continue to be developed in partnership with other relevant officers and centre staff, thus ensuring that the approach to interpretation is integrated with other functions and so provides the best possible visitor experience.

The life span of interpretation in National Park Centres should ideally be the industry standard 5-7 years for permanent exhibitions. Minor repairs and any problems with the day to day running of the exhibits will be identified at the end of each summer season and actioned through the winter period.

Interpretation in National Park Centres should not seek to instruct a visitor about everything in the National Park in a didactic manner but to provide a basis of exciting and interesting interpretation that will inspire visitors to explore the National Park for themselves and appreciate its special qualities first hand. Each National Park Centre should also encourage individual responsibility for sustainable use of the National Park among visitors and locals alike. Each National Park Centre will reflect its local area and will have a clear individual overriding theme, for example, Grassington National Park Centre focuses on the cultural and industrial heritage of the area while Aysgarth National Park Centre concentrates on the geology and natural history of the locality.

Where possible, we will incorporate feedback mechanisms into the displays so that once people have gone out and explored, they can feed their experiences back into the National Park Centre or perhaps via the website.

### **c. Outdoor interpretation panels**

A wide range of outdoor interpretation panels is already in situ in the National Park including: trails using either leaflets and numbered posts or sign boards; large village map boards; plaques; site or area panels.

Most of the current external panels were installed within a five year period from 1998 to 2002. The earliest will need to be replaced within a short space of time and a plan for

this must be put in place. Existing boards will be assessed every 7-10 years on a rolling programme and replaced as necessary.

A branding for outdoor interpretation panels across the National Park was developed several years ago. The Yorkshire Dales style including the distinctive green border is now successfully in use across the National Park by the Authority, several partner organisations and community organisations such as English Nature, The National Trust and Kettlewell Parish Council. To help create more cohesive interpretation, it is now policy that all outdoor interpretation panels will be produced using the Yorkshire Dales style. Some guidelines for the production of outdoor interpretation panels currently exist, however, these require further work to make them clearer and easier to use by contractors. A new set of design guidelines is currently in production and will be available in digital format by April 2005.

It is perhaps the case that the impact of outdoor interpretation panels in delivering the Authority's second purpose to visitors and residents is currently underestimated. For many visitors, it may be the only contact that they have with the National Park Authority and its messages during their visit. Research and evaluation needs to be undertaken to ascertain the level of contribution of such panels and their use and effectiveness at delivering messages. This research will be undertaken as part of Objective 2.

#### **d. Events programme**

The Authority's events programme provides a valuable tool for face-to-face interpretation and contact with the general public. It provides a mechanism by which high quality information about the National Park is disseminated to target audiences.

We will encourage the development of new and innovative events by the Authority, its projects and other organisations, in particular those aimed at excluded audiences (as identified in Recommendation 15 of the Pullen Report). We will support small events organised by external organisations and community groups. Where appropriate, we will work in partnership with external organisations to develop new small events within the National Park. We will continue to support initiatives such as the Walking for Health programme that are part of a wider regional network. The Events Officer at the Craven Integrated Rural Development Project supports larger events.

We will continue to work with partners to produce a single programme of events for the National Park through the Joint Promotions Initiative (Best Value Performance Plan target 63, page 57). We will then evaluate the effectiveness of this new events system. Along with other marketing and advertising tools, the Joint Promotions Initiative will be used to advertise our own events programme and that of external organisations within the Yorkshire Dales.

In the development of the Authority's events programme, we are committed to further utilise and cultivate the wide range of skills possessed by our Dales Volunteers. We will ensure that we continue to equip and train them appropriately. A full safety review of the Authority's events programme will be carried out, including a review of emergency procedures.

#### **e. Other tools for interpretation**

The Authority and other interpretation providers within the National Park also use a variety of other tools to deliver interpretive messages. Examples of such projects include the community inspired artwork in Freeholders' Wood and the Out of Oblivion website. Appendix 3 provides a list of some of the interpretation tools we have at our disposal.

## **Conclusions**

Over the next five years, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority will determine the effectiveness of our current interpretation and the different tools used for interpretation. Interpretation within the National Park will reflect a sense of place, inspire people and help them to see the special qualities of the National Park in their own way creating an experience that they will remember. This will be achieved by unifying interpretation methods and styles within the National Park to reinforce the identity and messages of the area

## Appendix 2

### Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority The National Park Message

#### What is the National Park?

- **a national treasure** : an asset which the nation holds in trust.
- **it has special qualities** : designated a national park because of the great natural beauty - representing the 'best' landscapes in the country - covering 10% of England and Wales.
- **it is of benefit to all, forever** : national parks were designated to assist not only with their conservation, but also so that the public can enjoy them; but not in a way that would cause their special qualities to be lost or irreparably damaged.
- **everyone has responsibility** : as a national asset, everyone has to care for the national park. The public pay for the park through taxation. We all have a stake in its future and must respect the special qualities.
- **private ownership** : the National Park Authority only owns 100ha of land: even National Trust land is 'private land' and up until now the public have had very limited rights of access to land. The introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 brings new rights and responsibilities.
- **changing landscape** : it's not static, the National Park Authority does not seek to preserve the landscape but to allow changes which keep the unique character and features; it's a living, evolving landscape because people are continuing to use it.

#### Enjoying the National Park

- **show consideration for local people and lifestyles** : resident population of around 19000; about 1000 farmers working the land; the unique qualities of the National Park depend upon a thriving agriculture and vibrant communities.
- **help the local economy** : 8m visitors bring approx. £50m to the Dales; help sustain a viable population by staying in the national park and supporting local businesses.
- **cut car use** : traffic flows at certain times reach unsustainable levels - policy aims to keep traffic levels down to 1994 levels (3% rise to 1995, then down 1% to 1996). Use public transport to get there if possible and then use it to get around.
- **tread lightly** : 2100km of paths to use but +20% are wearing out: we can build paths but it spoils those special qualities we seek to conserve; National Park Authority may ask you to act responsibly by using certain routes, avoiding soft ground in wet weather. Think before you walk.
- **appreciate wildlife** : ecology is not readily appreciated; not spectacular plants, birds, animals but subtle blend of nationally important habitats - be aware of the 'natural' beauty.

#### Understanding the National Park

- **distinctive character** : the walls/barns/meadows landscape are of international importance.

- **great scenic beauty** : admire it, write about it, photograph it, film it, paint it, the list goes on.

- **wealth of cultural heritage** : archaeological sites, listed buildings, conservation areas in villages, a very high density of features.

- **fragility of wildlife** : slight changes in land use or visitor pressure can affect the extent and health of wildlife populations; great care needed to ensure species are protected.

- **value of peacefulness** : it is what national parks are all about.

The new national Countryside Code should be used and referenced whenever necessary.

## Appendix 3

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>Leaflets</b>	Generally adult	Good existing distribution networks such as National Park Centres and Tourist Information Point. Possible income generation. Portable. Can be used for pre-visit research or post-visit learning.	Hard to update. Can be expensive to produce. Excludes those with poor eyesight.
<b>Postcard</b>	All	Good for enticing people to a particular location. Cheap and quick to produce.	This is often a one-way communication. Conveys a limited message.
<b>Guided tour</b>	All, mainly older children to adult.	Can be cheap. Involves the user in interaction with the guide. Provides more personalised interpretation.	Requires a guide. Can be expensive to produce. Excludes those with poor eyesight.
<b>Heritage trail</b>	All	Cheap to set up. Flexible. Requires some kind of map, instructions or signage to help users find their way around.	No interaction. Excludes those with poor eyesight.
<b>Paddle board</b>	Adult and older children	Cheap to produce and replace. Portable.	Lots of wear and tear.
<b>Special events such as heritage open days</b>	All	Can be very rewarding and involve the local community. Provide good media opportunities.	Only involve a limited number of people. Can be expensive to produce.
<b>Website</b>	All	Easy to update. Increasingly cheap to produce. Multimedia opportunities. World-wide access to your interpretation. Can be directly linked to other websites as sources of further information.	Requires a special skill set. Ongoing maintenance. The user must have internet access.
<b>CD Rom</b>	All	Cheap to produce extra copies. Multimedia opportunities.	Once produced you have to have access to a computer.
<b>3G or GPRS (accessible through mobile phones)</b>	Mainly young people aged 12-30 years	Reaches an often hard to engage audience. Is accessible nearly everywhere in the UK.	The user must have a mobile phone.
<b>Video or DVD</b>	All	Television is a format that is familiar to many users. Can provide limited income generation.	Expensive to produce.
<b>Display boards</b>	Adults and older children.	Easy to update and provide a flexible format.	Can look dated and damaged.
<b>Interpretation panels and display equipment</b>	Adults and older children	Look professional and can provide high quality interpretation. Long life.	Can be expensive to produce.
<b>Interactive activities</b>	Children and adults	Engages the user in a 'hands on' way. Can help to make a more memorable experience of a user's visit or provide added interest for repeat visitors. Can be cheap to produce.	Requires a special skill set. Can be expensive to produce.
<b>Children's learning resources</b>	Children and teachers	Useful to schools and can become part of children's learning in schools. Can be easily linked to the National Curriculum.	Only reaches a limited audience.
<b>Courses and workshops</b>	Specialists and interested adults/children	Can provide income generation. Offers high quality, in-depth interpretation for a particular site or topic.	Can only reach a limited number of people.
<b>Artwork</b>	All	Can provide a lasting reminder of a specific event, person or theme. Creative, rewarding and can provide a different interpretation of a site or theme. Can involve the local community.	Can be expensive to produce.
<b>Book</b>	Specialists and	Provides in-depth information.	Expensive to produce.

	interested adults		
<b>Audio guide</b>	Adults and older children	Portable and flexible. Used by many large attractions.	Expensive with hearing