



YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Services, Standards and Performance

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Our standards

Our mission

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority exists to secure for the public good the conservation, enhancement, enjoyment and better understanding of the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales: its landscape, wildlife, and cultural heritage.

We will promote these purposes in the context of a sustainable and dynamic rural economy, paying special attention to the needs of local communities within the National Park.

We will work with partners and stakeholders to engage a wide audience in support for and delivery of National Park objectives.

Our aim is to be widely recognised as a centre of expertise and excellence in environmental and conservation policy and practice, and in the quality of services we deliver and in the quality of the landscape.

We strive to deliver high quality, efficient services that are effective in achieving the specific purposes for which we were established.

Our core values underpin the way in which we will achieve our mission and deliver key services and targets:

Improvement: we will continually strive to improve our performance in delivering National Park purposes and welcome feedback to help us do this.

Accountability: we will explain and take responsibility for our decisions and actions .

Commitment: we will do what we say we will do.

Integrity: our relationship with the public, partners and each other are built on honesty, transparency, equality, impartiality and consistency. We welcome and respect diversity and demonstrate equality in working relationships.

Involvement: We are open and approachable, and are proactive in encouraging wider and diverse participation in achieving our statutory purposes.

Valuing people: we value the people who work for us and will ensure that they are equipped and empowered to provide professional services to the public.

Standards of service

We aim to:

- Set an example in caring for the environment and in avoiding wasteful use of resources.
- Pursue equality of opportunity in employment and in the way we deliver our services to the public.
- Place the highest emphasis on the health and safety of the public who use our facilities.
- Treat people courteously at all times.
- Communicate promptly, acknowledging letters and emails, and responding within ten working days.
- Avoid jargon in our dealings with the public.
- Answer all telephone calls within six rings.
- Keep people informed about our work through our publications, the internet, media and direct contact with the public.
- Pay accounts within 30 days of receipt.
- Provide a friendly, helpful and efficient reception service to those who visit our offices.

About us

Established in 1954, the Yorkshire Dales National Park covers 1762 square kilometres and straddles the central Pennines in the counties of North Yorkshire and Cumbria. It is one of nine areas of England protected by national park status.

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority is an independent body within the local government structure. We provide some services that would normally be provided by district and county councils – for example we are the local planning authority, and are responsible for the maintenance of the rights of way within the National Park. However, in general, the services we provide are very different from a typical local authority. Our role is clearly defined by our two statutory purposes, as set out in the Environment Act 1995, and this is unique to national park authorities:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park, and
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public.

In pursuit of these purposes, we also:

- seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities within the National Park.

The Authority has twenty-two members. Twelve are appointed by local, county and district councils. The Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs appoints the remaining ten, of which six represent the “national” interest and four are representatives of parishes within the National Park.

The Authority employs 113 full time equivalent staff working in six departments, each of which provides a range of specialist services. The Authority also benefits from the work of 240 Dales Volunteers. Most officers are based at the two main offices, Yoredale in Bainbridge and Colvend in Grassington (see 'Contact Us' for further details).

Our funding comes from Government, rather than local taxpayers. This reflects the fact that, unlike local councils, our responsibilities extend well beyond our boundaries as we work with others to look after the National Park for the whole nation.

How the Authority works

Members of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, who meet every two months, determine issues of policy, strategy and budget, and agree and monitor programmes to implement those policies.

In all cases, members are advised by officers who implement these decisions and policies, and make decisions under delegated powers in many routine matters. Decisions are made in line with the **National Park Management Plan**, produced by the Authority and its partners and updated every five years. It sets out a series of long-term objectives that the Authority and others work to achieve.

The Authority's annual **Corporate Plan** sets out what has been achieved over the past year, how well we have done it, and what we hope to improve on and our work programmes for the coming year. These documents can be viewed or downloaded from our website www.yorkshiredales.org.uk and are available at our offices at Yoredale, Bainbridge and Colvend, Grassington.

The Authority has a number of sub-committees with delegated powers to deal with particular areas of the Authority's work as follows:

- **Finance & Resources Committee:** deals with financial management and insurance arrangements, sets personnel policies, manages the Authority's land and property;
- **Audit & Review Committee:** reviews the Authority's performance and monitors the achievement of targets, monitors compliments and complaints, receives reports from the auditors, and considers corporate governance issues;
- **Planning Committee:** makes decisions about the most significant or controversial planning applications, and applications for alterations to listed buildings; also considers taking enforcement action where planning legislation has been broken;
- **Access Committee:** deals with issues of rights of way (footpaths, bridleways etc) and public access to land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act;
- **Standards Committee:** deals with issues relating to ethics and the conduct of Authority members.

You are welcome to attend any of the committee meetings to watch the Authority at work. If you would like information on the Authority's committees, including dates and venues of committee meetings, membership, agendas, reports and minutes of meetings, or terms of reference, please contact us or visit our website

Regulating our work

All meetings are regulated by the Authority's Standing Orders, and a Code of Conduct sets out the conduct expected of Authority members. A separate code sets out what is expected of members when dealing with planning matters. Our Financial Regulations deal with issues such as the setting of budgets, custody and disposal of assets, insurance and risk management, and procurement and tendering procedures.

The Authority is subject to external scrutiny in a number of ways, most notably by its external auditors, and – every five years - through a comprehensive process called National Park Authorities Performance Assessment. To obtain a copy of the Performance Assessment Report for 2005, please contact us or visit our website.

What we do

Conservation of the natural environment

Conserving and enhancing the special landscape, flora and fauna of the Yorkshire Dales National Park is central to our work, and indeed is one of the two main purposes of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. Our main responsibility is co-ordinating the production and implementation of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) which sets out the actions that will be taken over the next ten years to **conserve and enhance the most important species and habitats** in the National Park. As 95% of the National Park is in private ownership, our work focuses on advising land managers and local communities on how best to **conserve the richness of the nature on their land**, and supporting grant schemes that assist farm conservation work and new **native tree planting**. We also **monitor and research** the condition of the National Park's **key habitats and species**.

Conservation of the cultural heritage

Much of what makes the National Park special is the result of human impact on its landscape and environment. Conserving this cultural heritage is, therefore, crucial to our remit to conserve and enhance the environment of the National Park. Our work falls into four distinct areas: conserving **historic and valuable buildings, archaeology**, conserving the **'barns and walls'** landscape, and protecting and enhancing **villages of special historic or architectural interest**.

Recreation management

Our recreation management work includes **visitor management**, with a **ranger service** as a first and focal point of contact for both local communities and visitors. We are responsible for the extensive network of **public paths and access** within the area, and we promote other appropriate **recreational opportunities**. We work closely with partners to **manage traffic and transport** to and within the National Park in a sustainable manner. We offer **opportunities for volunteers** to become actively involved in many aspects of this work of the Authority

Promoting understanding

One of our two statutory purposes is to promote opportunities for people to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the National Park. We aim to do this by **explaining our work and activities**, and issues affecting the Authority. We provide **accessible and high quality information** and initiatives, including **education activities and resources**, and in particular to target audiences including minority ethnic, urban, disabled and youth. We support **sustainable tourism** that promotes understanding and conservation of the National Park, and we aim to provide **high quality communications and services** to visitors and residents alike.

Development control

We are the **planning authority** for the National Park area, providing a **development control service** that is accessible, responsive, customer-focused, and gives the public a sound understanding of how we carry out our work. Our development control role is an essential tool in achieving our purpose to conserve and enhance the special features of the National Park, whilst supporting appropriate opportunities for economic and community development.

Forward planning

This area of our work falls into two broad categories. Firstly, our role in **preparing and reviewing plans and policy** – for example the National Park Management Plan, and the Authority's revised Local Plan and subsequent Local Development Framework – which set the framework for decisions. Secondly, the work we undertake with partner bodies such as the county and district councils and the regional development agency, Yorkshire Forward, to **support local communities and the local economy** in ways that contribute to the sustainable development of the National Park. This includes promotion of sustainability principles through operation of the **Sustainable Development Fund**

Corporate and democratic core functions

These are the 'internal' services that plan and manage all aspects of the Authority's business to enable it to deliver its aims and objectives. These functions include the provision of legal advice and services; **financial management, payroll and insurance services; information technology and communications support; health and safety advice and guidance; estate management and building services; administrative support** for all departments and **reception services** at our main offices. We also provide a comprehensive **personnel and staff development service** for the Authority's members, staff and volunteers, and we manage the **formal business** of the Authority and its committees.

What to do if something goes wrong

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority takes its responsibilities very seriously, and we do our utmost to offer the most effective and efficient services possible. However, there will be times when mistakes may be made. When things do go wrong, we will try to put them right. The whole ethos of the system is to improve our performance, to learn from mistakes, and to build trust by being open and honest in handling complaints.

If you think the Authority, or any of its officers, has done something wrong, we ask you to take the matter up with the officer concerned. If that does not resolve the problem, or you are dissatisfied with the response, you can make a formal complaint. In such cases, we would ask you to tell us about the problem in writing, to enable us to investigate and try to resolve the situation.

A copy of the National Park Authority's procedure for **Compliments, Complaints and Comments** is available by contacting us or visiting our website.

We take all complaints very seriously, and will ensure that they are dealt with promptly. The Authority's **Audit & Review Committee** receives details of compliments and complaints twice a year and also considers any potential improvements to the operation of the system.

Complaints about Members of the Authority should be made to The Standards Board for England. Details of how to do this are available from the Secretariat Administrative Officer.

Finding the right person to talk to

The section below gives brief descriptions of each department within the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, highlighting the main areas of work. All officers can be contacted via the main switchboard number. If you are not sure who the most appropriate person would be to speak to, our receptionists will be happy to help you.

Secretariat

Houses the Chief Executive's office. Provides administrative support to the Authority, its committees and sub-committees. The Secretariat is also responsible for providing or enabling a comprehensive legal service.

Conservation and Policy Department

Areas of expertise include farming conservation, ecology, trees and woodland, building conservation, archaeology and historic monuments, village enhancement, limestone pavements and other landscape features. Co-ordinates and advises on the National Park Management Plan and State of the Park Report.

External Affairs Department

Leads on the Authority's media and public relations work; develops the website plus a range of publications and interpretive materials, deals with requests for advice and information about the National Park; runs the Authority's outreach and education work along with a programme of guided walks and other events. Co-ordinates the Authority's sustainable tourism work, including managing the network of National Park Centres, Park Information Points, retail services and the Dales Countryside Museum.

Finance and Resources Department

Responsible for financial management, payroll and insurance services; information technology and communications support; personnel and staff development services, estate management and building services; administrative support and reception services.

Park Management Department

Encompasses access, recreation and visitor management, and the Area Ranger Service. Responsible for the management of the extensive network of public paths and open access land across the National Park; and for promoting other appropriate recreational opportunities. Co-ordinates opportunities for volunteer involvement.

Planning Department

Responsible for the provision of a full development control service, as well as strategic/forward planning, listed building applications, enforcements, appeals and preliminary enquiries.

Useful publications

Copies of each of the following documents, along with a range of strategies covering specific areas of work, can be obtained by contacting us or may be viewed or downloaded by visiting our website.

The National Park Management Plan

The National Park Management Plan is the single most important document for each National Park. It is the over-arching strategic document that sets out how the National Park purposes and associated duty (see page 5) will be delivered.

Our National Park Management Plan — *The Yorkshire Dales: Today and Tomorrow* — was published in 2000 following wide consultation. Much has changed since then. So, while the long-term aims set out in the Plan still hold true, it is important that the Plan adapts to take account of changing circumstances, changing ways of working and some new challenges. The Plan has, therefore, been recently updated. The process was overseen by a small ‘steering group’ comprising environmental bodies like English Nature, as well as the Chairs of the Local Strategic Partnerships from the Craven, Richmondshire and South Lakeland districts, to try to ensure that the Plan complements and supports their plans for environmental, economic and social development.

The updated Plan, is a plan for the Park, not just for the National Park Authority – reflecting the views and aspirations of the people that live here, as well as those who visit or work here. It sets out an ambitious vision for the future. It also identifies what is special about the Yorkshire Dales, a number of key issues for the future of the National Park, some principles that should guide activity within the Park, and some 70 specific objectives that many different organisations and individuals will be working to achieve over the next five years.

Yorkshire Dales Local Plan

The planning system regulates the development and use of land in the public interest. Government is committed to a plan-led system of development control.

The Yorkshire Dales Local Plan is the document that contains detailed policies against which planning proposals for development and the use of land and buildings are assessed. The Local Plan takes account of national planning policy guidance issued by government, and also reflects broader regional planning guidance and confirms to the North Yorkshire Structure Plan, as well as having regard to the statutory purposes of the National Park.

The current Local Plan, which was adopted by the Authority in April 2006 after extensive consultation and review, covers the whole of the National Park area until such time as it is replaced by the new Local Development Framework which was introduced by the Planning and Compensation Act 2004.

Corporate Plan

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority aims to deliver high quality, efficient services that meet the public's expectations and that are effective in achieving the specific purposes for which we were established.

We publish a Corporate Plan at the end of June each year. It explains the role of the Authority and what we are trying to achieve, and outlines our performance over the past twelve months and what we intend to do in the future.

The Plan is written for groups and organisations with an interest in the Authority and its work; the organisations with whom we work; members and officers of the Authority; and the government and auditors, who will measure our performance and assess how successful we have been in improving our work.

Our priorities for 2008/09 can be found in the Appendix along with details of our performance in recent years.

How to contact us

Write to, telephone or call in at our offices:

<p>Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Yoredale Bainbridge Leyburn North Yorkshire DL8 3EL</p> <p>Telephone: 0870 1 666333 Fax: 01969 652399</p>	<p>Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Colvend Hebden Road Grassington Skipton North Yorkshire BD23 5LB</p> <p>Telephone: 0870 1 666333 Fax: 01756 751699</p>
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Opening Hours

Monday to Thursday
Friday

8.30am to 5.00pm
8.30am to 4.30pm

Online Information

Further information about the work of the Authority, its services, members and staff, or information about the National Park in general can be found on our website at www.yorkshiredales.org.uk.

You can also email us on info@yorkshiredales.org.uk.

Queries relating to our committee meetings or our members should be addressed to secretariat@yorkshiredales.org.uk. Member addresses are also provided on our website.

Your query will be passed immediately to the most appropriate person who will get back to you as quickly as possible.

Our priorities and performance (2008/09)

Corporate Plan summary

Our priorities

- **Biodiversity** – ensure that 70% of the area covered by Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and the populations of all Local Biodiversity Action Plan species are stable or increasing by 2010;
- **Climate Change** – work towards the Authority becoming ‘Carbon Neutral’ by 2012, including reducing CO₂ emissions by 15% by 2009 (compared to 2005/06 levels);
- **Development control** – maintain the efficiency of the development control service, so that 65% of ‘minor’ and 80% of ‘other’ planning applications are being determined within eight weeks.
- **Farm conservation** – encourage and support widespread take-up of Environmental Stewardship and other agri-environment schemes so that 80% of the National Park is covered by agreements by 2010.
- **Green Lanes** - identify the most appropriate measures to manage the use of motorised recreational vehicles on each sensitive ‘Green Lane’, and put in place management plans for 75% of highly sensitive routes by 2008.
- **Rights of way** – manage and improve the network of rights of way so that 90% are ‘easy to use’ by 2010.
- **Sustainable Development Fund** – promote ‘sustainable development’ within the National Park as the basis for the long-term social and economic well-being of local communities including funding at least 15 innovative local initiatives each year that bring economic, social and environmental benefits.
- **Web-based services** – by 2010 at least 400,000 people use the Authority’s websites each year.

Our performance in 2007/08

Performance indicator	07/08			08/09
	target	actual	best NPAs ¹	target
Biodiversity Area of hay meadow restored through 'Hay Time' project (hectares)	50	53	n/a	45
Farm conservation % of National Park in agri-environment schemes	n/a	70%	n/a	74%
Rights of way % of rights of way that are easy to use	86%	77%	92%	88%
Green Lanes % of highly sensitive 'Green Lanes' with active management plans in place	75%	89%	n/a	100%
Web-based services No. of website users	170,000	315,135	n/a	340,000
Development control % of 'minor' planning applications determined within 8 weeks % of 'other' planning applications determined within 8 weeks	65%	76.40%	83.33%	65%
Sustainable Development Fund No. of projects supported through the Sustainable Development Fund	15	19	n/a	15
Climate change % change in energy use per head of staff in all National Park Authority buildings	n/a	-12.5%	n/a	-5%
Core functions % of invoices for commercial goods and services which were paid within 30 days No. of working days per employee lost due to sickness	97%	98.65%	98.70%	Ends
	4	4.93	4.90	4.5

¹ Shows the performance – where known – of the second best of the nine English National Park Authorities