Dales

YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

A newspaper for the residents of the Yorkshire Dales National Park

Summer 2026

New investment to support people, places and nature



Field barn in Thwaite, Swaledale: the highly successful Farming in Protected Landscapes programme continues for a further three years

Significant investment into a wide range of projects to improve access, support communities and enhance the natural environment of the Yorkshire Dales National Park has been approved by Members of the National Park Authority.

From helping young people learn outdoors to improving walking routes and supporting farm businesses, the National Park Authority has identified practical projects that will benefit communities across the National Park.

Included in the Authority's 2026/27 Action Plan are more opportunities for people to connect with the outdoors, with hundreds of young people getting the chance to learn and develop skills in the National Park. Learning activities are planned for over 2,000 students.

The highly successful Farming in Protected Landscapes programme will continue for a further three years, and there are new programmes to support farmers and land managers adopt sustainable and regenerative farming practices that can help make farms profitable while protecting the landscape.

The Plan includes new investment to create and extend important, wildlife-rich habitats and support species recovery, including expanding native woodland and hedgerows across the Dales. And it covers practical improvements to local infrastructure, including repairing footbridges and creating new accessible routes in key locations.

These actions are supported by a £1.75m Defra grant for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, and almost £1m through the new Wildlife-Rich Habitat Fund [read more on page 8].

Derek Twine, Chair of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, said: "This wide-ranging programme shows our commitment to supporting the people who live, work and visit here, with practical projects that strengthen communities, improve access and care for this special landscape.

"The Government's new three-year financial settlement provides really welcome stability, and - alongside continued capital investment - gives us the confidence to plan ahead and deliver real, long-term impact.

"By backing farmers and land managers to lead nature recovery while improving opportunities for people to enjoy the National Park, we can help ensure the Yorkshire Dales remains a thriving and inspiring place for generations to come."

All our work is guided by the vision for the future of the Yorkshire Dales National Park set out in the Management Plan 2025-30, which is structured around six key ambitions. Find out more at **www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/national-park-management-plan**

Young people discover potential through outdoor adventures



Young people taking part in the Adventures Away from Home programme repair paths at Malham Cove

This winter, 156 young people took part in exciting new adventures, from visiting a farm to an evening under the stars, as part of a Government-funded programme designed to give 11 to 18 year olds facing significant barriers equal access to outdoor experiences.

Adventures Away from Home (AAfH) - led by UK Youth in collaboration with the Department for Culture Media and Sport - ensures that young people from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds can access life-changing outdoor opportunities free of charge.

Delivered over 13 sessions in the Yorkshire Dales National Park by the Authority's Learning & Engagement Team and volunteers, four 'adventures' were on offer - Ingleborough Caves, A Grand Day Out in Grassington, a Dark Skies Evening and a Farm Visit.

The aim was for the young people to experience the joy of being outdoors and connected to nature. Even in the winter months, there is much to enjoy, from stargazing and toasting marshmallows with a hot chocolate to putting up hammocks in the woods and appreciating the silhouette of the trees in the February light.

These supported opportunities helped participants from 14 youth groups develop their confidence and well-being, discover their potential, and build skills that last a lifetime.

The cave experience proved to be the most popular choice. Ben from Foster for Bradford said it was "a great day" and that "everybody knew lots of information" to pass on.

Ruth from Wakefield SEND said of their group's visit to Hazel Brow Farm in Swaledale: "We all absolutely loved it. Our young people were so happy when talking about their experience the following week."

And Sam from The Hunslet Club said: "We have had some really positive feedback. Many of the participants wanting to do it again - and looking into different activities."

The groups are now looking forward to their next adventure and some will be joining us this summer on our Dales Action Days - environmental volunteering activity days in the National Park that support young people to help us make a difference.

Read about the Adventures Away from Home programme at **www.ukyouth.org**

If you are a young person who would like to explore the National Park and develop the skills and knowledge to help look after it at, find out about our Dales Action Days and more at **www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/youth-groups**

Welcome to the summer edition of *Dales*

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the designation of the first four National Parks in the UK: the Lake District, Peak District, Dartmoor and Eryri (Snowdonia). The need for National Parks - and the opportunities they provide for people to experience natural beauty and support their physical and mental health and wellbeing - has never been greater.

Defra - who fund National Park Authorities - has made it clear they want us to focus on making our National Parks "greener, wilder and more accessible places". We're certainly up for that challenge, and you will read examples of how we're trying to do that, in partnership with landowners, farmers and others, in this edition.

First, however, we want to acknowledge the tragic death of 13-year-old Palwasha Akbar at Burnsall. Our thoughts are with her family, friends and all those affected. The recent spate of water-related deaths across the country is a reminder that even the most beautiful places are not without risk. It is incumbent on all of us - from families and parents to organisations with responsibility for community safety and emergency response - to consider whether more can be done to help keep people safe.

We have also seen incidents of inconsiderate and illegal parking, littering, and complete disregard for the Countryside Code at a number of locations across the National Park in recent weeks. Such behaviour is unacceptable. We are working closely with partners and others to try and make things better for local communities, particularly in busy locations, and there is more on that in this edition.

Of course, it is important to recognise that visitors to the National Park are a vital contributor to the local economy, with many businesses depending on them. Striking the right balance between being a welcoming place and maintaining respect for the land, our communities and one another is crucial.

We are delighted that the Government has confirmed the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme has been extended until March 2029. This will enable us to support many more farmers and landowners to invest in their businesses, while also delivering benefits for nature, climate, people and place. Over the same period, a new Wildlife-Rich Habitat Fund will provide almost £1 million each year to local projects creating important new habitats, such as broadleaf woodland and upland hay meadows. These agri-environment initiatives are also helping to support this important part of our local economy.



Derek Twine
CHAIR

Gary Smith
ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Finally, at the end of March, we said goodbye to David Butterworth - Chief Executive of the National Park Authority for over 25 years. We wish David all the best for his retirement and look forward to the arrival of his successor - James Blake, currently the Chief Executive of the YHA (England and Wales).

Local apprentices build careers in the Yorkshire Dales



Tabitha McNicholas interviews Three Peaks Ranger Thomas Andrews as part of her Journalism Apprenticeship with the National Park Authority

Four former apprentices are celebrating career success at the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, having progressed into full-time roles across the ranger, communications and IT teams.

After completing the same Countryside Worker apprenticeship, Alfie Baines and Benedict Parkin both moved into Access Ranger roles, with Alfie based in Orton and Benedict in Hawes.

These apprenticeships - delivered through Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust's Rural Apprenticeship scheme - offer young people the opportunity to gain certificated skills, including chainsaw and brushcutter use, ATV driving, habitat surveying and species identification.

After completing his Business Administration Apprenticeship through Craven College, Jim Ingham secured a full-time role with the Authority as an IT Support Officer. He recently left to take up a new position as IT Service Desk Technician and continue his career progression.

Tabitha McNicholas successfully completed a National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) Journalism Apprenticeship through Darlington College and now works in the Authority's Communications Team.

Tabitha said: "My journalism apprenticeship at the Authority has been an incredibly rewarding experience. I've learnt so much, not just about communications, but about the place itself and the work that goes into protecting it.

"It's been really motivating to know that what I'm doing has a wider purpose, and getting to work in such a stunning place is a bonus.

"I've felt supported throughout and have grown both professionally and personally. I'd definitely recommend it to anyone looking to develop their skills and be part of something bigger."

The National Park Authority remains committed to offering further apprenticeship opportunities in the coming months, including a multichannel marketer role and additional rural apprenticeships delivered with Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust.

Julie Hutton, Member Champion for Corporate Management at the National Park Authority, said: "We have a strong track record of developing young talent within the National Park, with former apprentices now well established across our ranger, land management and communications teams.

"It brings the total number of apprenticeships offered by this Authority over the last five years to more than 25.

"In an area where opportunities for young people can be limited, offering high quality apprenticeships is essential to helping local people begin their careers, grow in confidence and build long-term futures within the rural economy."

To find out about jobs and careers within the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, visit **www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/vacancies**



‘Green prescribing’ programme marks success with further funding

A major milestone for the ‘Natural Health Service for North Yorkshire’ is being celebrated with the release of the pilot programme’s final report - and a further £550,000 of funding announced to expand this work over the next 18 months.

The regional ‘green prescribing’ programme aims to harness the power of nature-based activities to enhance physical and mental health, reduce social isolation, increase social and economic activity, and create healthier and more active communities.

The Natural Health Service for North Yorkshire is delivered by the North York Moors Trust, North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authorities, and Howardian Hills and Nidderdale National Landscapes.

For six months between October 2025 and March 2026, the partners came together to test a different approach to health and wellbeing through Protected Landscapes.

Across health, housing, employment and community services, 215 professionals were trained and 48 people completed a 10-week intervention as part of their support for a range of needs. These included long-term health conditions, individuals experiencing isolation or mental health challenges, those with caring responsibilities, and members of the armed forces community.

The Natural Health Service for North Yorkshire partnership worked across coastal, rural and urban communities, including Whitby, Scarborough, York, Skipton, Richmond and Catterick.

The results from the pilot showed a 24% improvement in mental wellbeing, a 17% increase in social wellbeing, a 13% improvement in physical wellbeing, and a 15% reduction in loneliness. Participants described the programme as helping them feel like “people, not patients” through a more person-centred and preventative approach.

The programme shows something simple, but powerful: when people are supported to connect with nature, their health and wellbeing and social outcomes improve.

For many people, this wasn’t just a programme, it was a turning point. One participant said: “It’s been my best winter for 20 years. Without this, I wouldn’t have been getting up or going out at all.”

For others, it created space and a new way to cope. And it wasn’t just about being in nature, it was about connection: “It made a big difference. Got me out of the house. Connected me with nature, but also with people.”

An Advanced First Contact Mental Health Nurse said: “I strongly believe that the National Health Service for North Yorkshire is a fantastic addition to the pathways we offer individuals as this embraces the benefits of exercise upon mental ill health and the opportunity to develop safe and therapeutic spaces which offer purpose and solace."

Another professional described the programme as providing participants with “a meaningful and motivating way to connect with nature.”

“We’ve seen people develop a renewed sense of purpose through simple activities - whether that’s spending time in their own garden, exploring local green spaces, or visiting National Parks and Landscapes. This has supported a positive shift in both physical activity and mental wellbeing, with many participants feeling fitter, more engaged, and more connected overall."

With £550,000 of new funding secured, the programme is being scaled across North Yorkshire. Over the next phase, it aims to support over 1,500 people, train and engage more professionals, embed nature-based support into health and community systems, create a bespoke ‘Nature Prescription’ for young people with the RSPB, and develop wraparound support for beneficiaries after their 10-week nature intervention.

The Natural Health Service is about more than a programme. It shows how Protected Landscapes are a vital part of our national health infrastructure and can play a direct role in improving health, reducing loneliness and supporting prevention, and deliver against national policy priorities.



A Natural Health Service: spending time connecting with nature can bring mental and physical benefits, finds new report

The programme will continue until March 2028. It is funded by the Mayor David Skaith and the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority.

To find out more about the green prescribing programmes run by the National Park Authority, visit **www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/green-social-prescribing-programmes**

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Farming grants programme extended to 2029

Nature-friendly farmers who need help to fund a project are invited to express an interest in the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) grant programme, which has been extended for a further three years.

Following five successful years of delivery, Defra confirmed in January that the programme will now run until 31 March 2029, with £1.2 million confirmed for 2026/27 in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

FiPL is administered in the Yorkshire Dales by the National Park Authority. Farmers who wish to apply for a FiPL grant will need to demonstrate that their projects will provide value for money and result in good outcomes for "climate, nature, people or place".

Since 2021, FiPL grants have supported over 513 Dales farmers, with a transformative £5.7 million committed to projects that support nature, mitigate climate change, provide opportunities for people to enjoy and learn about the Yorkshire Dales, and that protect and improve the character of the landscape.

The projects have included support for adaptive grazing management systems, pond and stream restoration, the provision of alternative water supply for livestock, educational visits, livestock handling systems, bird surveys, wildflower meadow creation, and restoration of heritage buildings.

James Newhouse, at Meg's Farm, Long Preston, is a first generation farmer who says participating in the FiPL programme has helped his farm business and supported his aspiration to be nature-friendly.

Last year, he received a grant towards setting up a frozen meat vending machine, in partnership with four neighbouring nature-friendly farmers, to sell high-welfare beef and lamb directly to the public. The vending machine is sited at The Courtyard Dairy near Austwick, a business which champions locally-sourced produce.

James said: "When we started six years ago, we were fresh into farming. The National Park Authority really helped me make connections and get the advice I needed to start us off on the right foot. A big part of this was the Pasture for Life Northern programme funded by FiPL. This project gave new entrant farmers the chance to spend time and get advice from experienced farmers alongside support and training from experts.

"From this project, a few of us made the connection and decided to look at a vending machine. Working with Andy and Kathy Swinscoe from the Courtyard Dairy - who are also champions of local high welfare produce - the new idea became a reality.

"We now have a machine stocked with quality seasonal meat. We've called it The Farmers' Larder so please come and try some for yourself. We really believe that creating a local supply chain where the customer understands where the produce comes from is very important to everyone."



Andy Swinscoe of The Courtyard Dairy (left) with farmer James Newhouse and 'The Farmers Larder' meat vending machine

Member Champion for the Natural Environment at the National Park Authority, Mark Corner, said: "One of the main points of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is to help local farm businesses during the government's seven-year agricultural transition. Farm businesses in the National Park do so much to conserve the landscape and keep local communities strong.

"I'd encourage anyone who has been mulling over an innovative idea to get in touch."

To find out more about the Farming in Protected Landscapes grant programme and how to apply, visit **www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/farming-in-protected-landscapes**

Working together to care for the Dales

As anyone who lives in or loves the Yorkshire Dales knows, the National Park is a special place - not just for its landscapes, but for its communities.

It has long been a popular destination for visitors, but at times sudden spikes in visitor numbers create real challenges for those of us who live and work here. From traffic congestion to inconsiderate behaviour such as littering, these issues add pressure for local people and organisations.

While these pressures are not new to Dales communities, it is understandable that, following particularly busy periods such as the late May bank holiday weekend, some people will ask what else can be done to ease the pressure.

Visitor management in the Dales continues to be a shared responsibility. The National Park Authority works closely with North Yorkshire Police, North Yorkshire Council and other partners to address issues such as traffic management, enforcement and public safety. Multi-agency meetings and ongoing coordination amongst partners help ensure the response on the ground is joined up, particularly during busy periods and at busy locations.



There is also a significant contribution being made by Dales communities themselves, from directing visitors and offering guidance to litter-picking and much more. Communities play a significant role in visitor management efforts. No-one underestimates what is involved, but everyone recognises the importance of this work and is deeply grateful for the support.

Visitor pressures and the nature of the issues have changed over time, and our approach has evolved - and continues to evolve - to reflect this. For example, the immediacy of social media means that a single post from a visitor, showing themselves enjoying a sunny day by the river, can quickly encourage others to follow.

So, what are we doing?

Rangers and Seasonal Rangers work across the National Park, particularly at busy locations, speaking directly with visitors, offering advice and helping to prevent problems before they arise. Volunteer Rangers add to this presence, acting as ambassadors who promote the Countryside Code and support litter collection.

Each year, tens of thousands of free information sheets are distributed to visitors on arrival, helping them to familiarise themselves with their surroundings and encouraging responsible behaviour.

Safety messages are displayed on signs across the National Park, including at National Park Visitor Centres and car parks. These are reinforced through the Authority's website and social media channels, all aimed at helping visitors understand how to enjoy the Dales responsibly.

We also support initiatives that engage people from outside the area, particularly those less familiar with rural environments. These programmes are not about increasing footfall. They are carefully designed to break down barriers to access while setting clear expectations before visits take place - ensuring participants understand how to respect landscapes, wildlife and local residents. In fact, this kind of early engagement is a key way of preventing the very issues communities are concerned about.

Through the National Park Management Plan, we, our partners and others are working to try and encourage



Safety messages - and those that encourage responsible behaviour - are displayed on signs throughout the National Park, as well as in visitor centres and car parks, leaflets and digital channels (above and left)

visitors to stay longer - not just a day trip, a stay trip - to travel at quieter times of year, use public transport and explore less sensitive areas. We recognise, however, that influencing these choices is challenging, particularly given people's natural tendency to return to places they already know and enjoy.

Ultimately, the goal is a shared one: to protect the landscapes and communities of the Yorkshire Dales while ensuring that future generations can continue to enjoy them. Our focus is firmly on how people visit, not how many come - encouraging responsible behaviour, safer enjoyment of the countryside, and greater respect for local communities.

By working together - residents, visitors and partner organisations - it is possible to strike this balance and ensure the Yorkshire Dales remains a place people are proud to call home. Thank you to everyone who plays their part in making this happen.

Museum shortlisted for national Family Friendly Museum Award

Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes has been shortlisted for the Kids in Museums Family Friendly Museum Award, recognising both the welcome and accessibility of its offer.

The charity has run a prestigious annual award since 2004, celebrating the most family friendly heritage sites in the UK. It is the only museum award to be judged by families.

From February to late April, families across the UK voted for their favourite heritage attraction on the Kids in Museums website. A panel of museum experts and young people then whittled down hundreds of nominations to a shortlist of 20.

Dales Countryside Museum is vying against four others in the Best Small Museum category.

Fiona Rosher, Museum Manager, said: "We are thrilled to be shortlisted for the Family Friendly Museum Award.

"It's especially meaningful because the award is judged by families themselves. And creating a welcoming, engaging experience for children and visitors of all ages and needs is at the heart of everything we do here in Hawes."

"It reflects the hard work of our team and volunteers, and the fantastic support we receive from our local community."

Housed in a former Victorian railway station, Dales Countryside Museum brings the rich history and culture of the Yorkshire Dales to life through hands-on exhibits, interactive displays, and family-friendly activities exploring rural traditions, farming and local heritage.

With trails, activity packs and seasonal events designed especially for children, the museum provides a welcoming - and accessible - space to learn and explore.

There are plenty of items to touch, with object handling sessions for visually impaired groups, and sound recordings for visitors with a sensory impairment. RNIB 'PenFriend' labels provide audio descriptions for objects, and listening posts are located around the site, as well as large print displays and guides.

Staff are trained to welcome people with additional needs and the museum offers quiet visiting times, as well as tailored events - such as the popular 'Accessible Mother Christmas' in December.

The museum is pushchair and wheelchair friendly, with wide aisles and lifts and ramps to all areas. There are RADAR toilets in the car park and a fully accessible Changing Places toilet, both containing baby changing facilities.

Assistance dogs are always welcome in the museum.

Over the summer, the Dales Countryside Museum will be visited by undercover family judges who will assess the shortlisted museums against the Kids in Museums Manifesto, a set of guidelines on what makes a great museum visit for all ages.



Poppy explores the model mill at the Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes, which offers an accessible space and interactive displays

Their experiences will decide a winner for each award category and an overall winner of the Family Friendly Museum Award 2026. The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony in October.

The Family Friendly Museum Award has been made possible by funding from Arts Council England.

Discover all the Dales Countryside Museum has to offer at **www.dalescountrysidemuseum.org.uk**, and visit the detailed 'Accessibility' section to help plan your visit.

Accessibility boost as new Changing Places toilet opens in Malham

A new 'Changing Places' toilet - a fully accessible facility, specially adapted for people with profound disabilities - has opened at Malham National Park Visitor Centre, adding to similar facilities already available at Grassington National Park Visitor Centre and Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes.

It forms part of a broader commitment to improving accessibility, which includes the recent addition of a second all-terrain wheelchair at Malham, which will be ready for free hire soon, helping more people experience the National Park in time for summer.

The improvements are complemented by the Authority's recently launched online Access Hub, which provides practical information to help people plan accessible visits to the Yorkshire Dales - visit it at **accesshub.yorkshiredales.org.uk**



Dales Young Rangers work towards new award

By Samantha Lightbody, Green Pathways Officer



This year was an exciting one for young people in and around the National Park. In April, we re-started our Dales Young Rangers programme after a brief pause, and immediately recruited 19 enthusiastic young people aged 13 to 17.

Dales Young Rangers supports opportunities for young people to meet professionals from our partnership organisations and landowners, and gain skills, confidence and insight into environmental careers through varied and meaningful practical task days.

The recruits will now work towards the new 'Dales Young Ranger Award', which is gained by attending the monthly sessions. There are three levels - Pen-y-ghent, Ingleborough and Whernside - and each session will be themed around our five 'competencies' - Discover, Explore, Collaborate, Champion and Conserve - while following a simple set of values known as 'The Rangers Way'.

The Award is a great achievement for the young people to add to their CV for future applications, demonstrating their commitment and supporting the Authority's wider commitment to caring for the National Park.



Samantha (front) and the Dales Young Rangers on the steps they helped repair at Beamsley

We have held three sessions so far. The first saw the Young Rangers getting to know each other and learning what a National Park is. We went for a walk along the Dales Way, spotted brown trout and both species of crayfish, and heard a cuckoo nearby.

During the second session the Young Rangers worked with National Park Ranger Adam Waters on rights of way maintenance. With supportive landowners, the group got hands-on experience using tools to replace old steps and install new ones. It was a great opportunity for them to speak to Adam about his own journey from Young Ranger to Access Ranger at the Authority.

For their third session the Young Rangers visited Tom Lord at his farm at Lower Winskill to learn about the history of farming in the Dales and what makes a good hay meadow by introducing them to surveying techniques.

We would like to thank all the staff, volunteers, landowners and partners for supporting the Dales Young Rangers so far in their green pathway.

Find out more about Dales Young Rangers at **www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/young-rangers**

New Local Plan brings major boost for Dales communities

Communities across the Yorkshire Dales National Park are set to benefit from a new Local Plan that places local people at its heart following a thorough six-year process and independent examination.



Affordable housing at Garrs End Lane, Grassington

The Local Plan is used to guide decisions on new development - setting out where homes, businesses and infrastructure should go, and how the National Park will be protected and enhanced over time. The new Local Plan for 2025-2040 sets out a clear approach for supporting local communities while looking after the qualities that make the Dales special.

One of the most significant changes is a new requirement that all new homes must be lived in as a principal residence, helping to tackle the loss of housing to second homes and holiday lets. This means new developments will directly support local people - particularly younger households and working families - who want to live and work in the National Park. The Plan also:

- meets local housing needs by allocating land for nearly 400 new homes, with at least 50 delivered each year and a strong focus on affordable housing
- supports the rural economy, by backing farm diversification, rural businesses and sustainable tourism that benefits local communities
- ensures growth is balanced with protecting the National Park, promoting low-carbon energy, better walking and cycling routes, and stronger safeguards for landscapes, wildlife and dark skies.

Derek Twine, Chair of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, said: "This Local Plan is a real step forward for the Dales and, most importantly, for the communities living and working here. It represents the culmination of years of consultation, evidence gathering and public input.

"The Plan strikes the right balance - supporting jobs, homes and investment while protecting the landscapes and special qualities that make the National Park such a unique place. It gives communities and businesses the certainty and confidence they need to plan for the future."

A Local Plan is the key document used to guide decisions on new development - setting out where homes, businesses and infrastructure should go, and how the National Park will be protected and enhanced over time.

Read more about the new Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan at **www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/local-plan-2025-40**

New investment to support Active Travel in the Yorkshire Dales

Ambitious plans to make it easier, safer and more enjoyable for people to get around the Dales under their own steam have been unveiled by the National Park Authority.

A new 'Active Travel Plan' for the National Park sets out a vision for a joined-up network of walking, wheeling (including using a wheelchair or mobility aid), horse-riding and cycling routes connecting villages, businesses and some of the National Park's most popular destinations. Developed with support from Active Travel England funding, the plan identifies a series of priority routes and local improvements designed to help people make everyday journeys in healthier, greener ways.

If delivered in full, the National Park Active Travel Plan could create 21 longer-distance multiuser routes, alongside smaller local schemes and improvements in key communities. Importantly, it also focuses on practical changes that matter most to residents, including safer routes to schools.

Proposed routes for development include new and improved connections through Wharfedale and routes linking communities with transport hubs and popular local destinations. In many places this will involve improving existing rights of way or creating 'quiet lanes', where people can travel more safely on foot, by bike or on horseback.



The new 'Active Travel Plan' for the National Park seeks to make everyday journeys, including to school, work and shops, greener and healthier

One of the first priorities is in Upper Wharfedale, where funding has been secured from York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority through the Mayor's Active Travel Fund for crossing improvements at Threshfield Primary School, which will help make the journey to school safer and more accessible for children and families.

Lizzie Bushby, Deputy Chair and Member Champion for Recreation Management at the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, said: "The Active Travel Plan is about more than leisure, it is about supporting everyday life in the Dales. It's about giving people real choices in how they travel, whether that's walking to school, cycling to work or exploring the Dales without always relying on a car.

"We're also delighted to see the Threshfield Primary School crossing improvements going ahead. These types of local schemes are exactly what our own Active Travel Plan is designed to deliver - practical changes that help communities in the Yorkshire Dales National Park to get around safely, sustainably and independently".

Finally, North Yorkshire Council's Consolidated Active Travel fund from Active Travel England is also funding improvements to the public bridleway between the village of Austwick and Clapham.

Grant fund open to applications

People or local organisations looking to improve the environment of the National Park in ways that will also benefit its communities or economy, are invited to apply to the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) - which this year has a budget of £100,000.

In 2025/6, SDF committed over £111,000 to 16 worthy and varied local initiatives.

These included a grant towards installing 12 solar panels on the roof of Austwick Parish Hall to help provide heating for this important community meeting space.

SDF helped with printing costs for a book that will allow a local breeders' association to celebrate Wensleydale Longwool sheep. With an initial print run of 475 copies, it explains the importance of rare breeds, the history of this breed, and how it links with the landscape of the Dales.

Renovating a former public toilet block in Hebden to bring the facilities back into use following a long period of closure was also made possible with an SDF grant. The facilities, managed by Hebden Parish Council, will incorporate a storeroom for use by the Hebden Environmental Action Team, while a fixed credit card reader is encouraging users to make donations to help with cleaning, power and upkeep of the facilities.

In addition, a thousand copies of a multi-media 'album-book', celebrating the special qualities of the National Park and featuring contributions from 20 artists and writers, has been published, thanks to a grant from SDF.

The booklet - 'Wild Wisdom: Songs of the Green Trails' - includes downloadable soundtrack music alongside the text and artwork, and is supported by live performances.

Musician Ben Avison, originally from Malhamdale and Ribblesdale, who alongside his father Jon was the creative force behind the project, said:

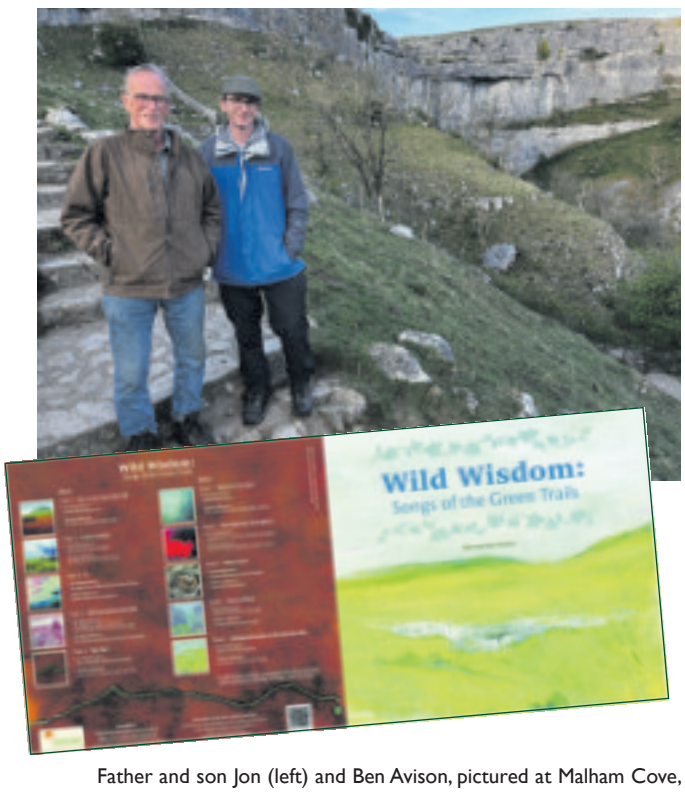
"We're really grateful to the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority for helping to make this project possible.

"Wild Wisdom: Songs of the Green Trails has involved artists, writers and musicians from Kettlewell to Kampala. The songs celebrate our relationship with the natural world, rooted in the Yorkshire Dales and the long-distance paths that cross it, while also sharing this love of landscapes with people further afield.

"It's also been great to work with my dad, a true Dalesman, on this project.

"The album is out now, including the unique 'Pocket Book' of artistic and written reflections. We're particularly excited to be bringing the album to life at Settle Victoria Hall on 25 July, with a full band, several of the contributors giving readings from the book, and artwork from the project projected on a big screen."

Individuals, businesses, community groups and voluntary sector bodies can all apply to the Sustainable Development Fund.



Father and son Jon (left) and Ben Avison, pictured at Malham Cove, received an SDF grant to produce a booklet inspired by the Dales and featuring words, art and music from 20 creative collaborators.

Find out more, including how to apply, at **www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/sustainable-development-fund** or by emailing sdf@yorkshiredales.org.uk

Authority appoints James Blake as new Chief Executive

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority is delighted to announce the appointment of James Blake, currently Chief Executive of the Youth Hostel Association (YHA), as its new Chief Executive Officer. James will take up the role later this year following the retirement of the Authority's outgoing CEO David Butterworth.

James joins the National Park Authority with an extensive background in national leadership, outdoor access, charitable development, cultural heritage and understanding of land management.



YHA Chief Executive James Blake will take up his new role as CEO of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority in September

Since 2017, he's helped guide YHA through a period of real change, modernising its operations, stewarding it through the challenges of Covid and the subsequent energy, inflation and cost of living crises - all while staying focused on its central purpose to make it easier for young people and families to get out into nature and enjoy new adventures.

During his time in charge, YHA boosted its social impact projects, supported more young people from disadvantaged areas and built strong relationships with partners across government, the youth and charity sector, as well as National Park Authorities across England and Wales.

James led the development of Access Unlimited - the coalition of outdoor youth organisations and protected landscapes that delivered the successful Generation Green programme - a £7m partnership that connected young people with nature, many from the most socially disadvantaged communities.

James is non-Executive Chair of ACRE - Action with Communities in Rural England - the national charity that supports and champions rural communities. Before joining YHA, he held senior roles in central and local government, including five years as Chief Executive of St Albans District Council.

Speaking about his appointment, James said: "It is a privilege to join the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority at such an important moment.

"The National Park is one of the country's most treasured landscapes, and I look forward to working with staff, volunteers, farmers, land managers, communities, visitors, and partners to ensure it thrives for future generations.

"The National Park has an ambitious new Management Plan, and my key priority will be to support its delivery, including working with farmers to drive nature recovery, strengthening access for all, and championing the rural communities at the heart of the Dales."

Derek Twine, Chair of the National Park Authority, said: "James brings a strong record of working collaboratively with the people who shape and care for our landscapes, alongside a compelling blend of strategic leadership, passion for the outdoors, and a proven commitment to widening access to nature.

"His experience at YHA - particularly in partnership building and in making it easier for young people and families to get out into nature - will be invaluable as we work with our many local partners to achieve the shared ambitions set out in the National Park Management Plan."

James's appointment comes at a time when the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority is advancing key priorities, including climate resilience, nature recovery, sustainable tourism, and long-term support for the farming and land management communities that shape the National Park.

James will officially begin his role in September. In the meantime, Deputy CEO Gary Smith is acting Chief Executive of the Authority.

First steps towards restoring 'Jewels of the Dales'

A major new project is starting to take shape, which aims to support Dales' farmers and landowners who are restoring the area's species-rich habitats through sustainable, nature-friendly farming and specialised conservation works.

Currently in a one-year 'pre-development phase' - which has attracted £200,000 of funding - we have begun work on 'Jewels of the Dales', supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

We will be working with farmers and local partner organisations, tapping into their expertise and knowledge of the National Park's special plantlife, in order to gauge interest, identify potential target areas, and together design the way that the project could work.

Alongside this we will be undertaking habitat surveys and developing collaborative action plans to help conserve the rare, threatened and culturally significant plant species within the National Park.

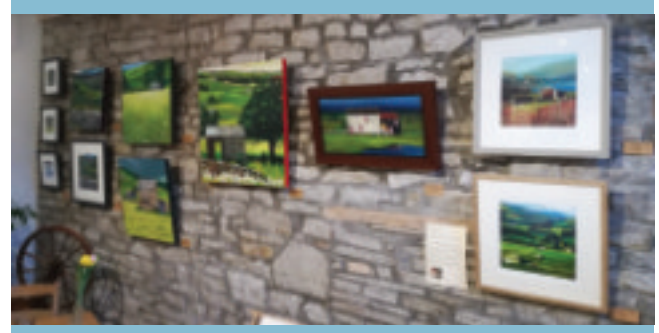
It is hoped that the work will eventually lead to a long-term programme of investment that will help to revitalise wildflower populations - and support the viability and retention of low input livestock farming - in the National Park.

'Jewels of the Dales' will sit alongside other nature recovery efforts already underway across the National Park, and which are being coordinated through the Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum.



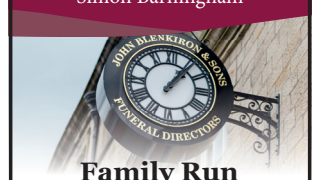
Swaledale sward: the Jewels of the Dales project will seek to support farmers in restoring wildflower populations in the National Park

CHAPEL GALLERY
Chapel Gallery, Burtersett Road, Hawes, North Yorkshire DL8 3NP



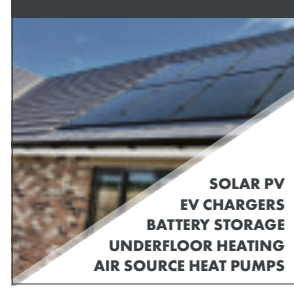
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History of volunteering in the National Park celebrated

Every year, hundreds of people of all ages and backgrounds generously give their time to work together to make the Yorkshire Dales National Park the special place it is.

Since 1963, when the first warden, Wilf Proctor, recruited volunteers to assist him in his work, this incredible force - now numbering 350 - have given an immense number of hours, skills and knowledge towards looking after the National Park, as well as helping others understand and enjoy it.

Now, two long-term Dales Volunteers, Trevor Brooks and Nick Berry, are leading on a project that aims to record the history of volunteering within the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Trevor explains below:



Dales Volunteer Mike Samworth in the research room at the Dales Countryside Museum

Volunteering in the Yorkshire Dales National Park has a great deal to celebrate and be proud of.

For over 60 years, volunteers have been associated with the National Park, and during this time there have been many highlights and changes. With this in mind, a project to catalogue the 'History of Volunteering within the National Park' is underway.

In June 1963, Wilf Proctor was appointed the first paid warden in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. At this time, he had no other staff to assist him and it was suggested that he may wish to recruit volunteers. A meeting took place at Ermysted's School in Skipton to promote the idea of a 'Volunteer Warden' team, and within a short time Wilf had recruited 160 people.

From these humble beginnings the team evolved into the 'Dales Volunteers'. Currently there are nearly 350 volunteers within the National Park, with over 140 assisting the National Park Rangers in their day-to-day work, including rights of way maintenance, signage and drystone walling.

Volunteering opportunities have continued to increase to cover a wider range of activities, with volunteers from more diverse backgrounds, including age, health conditions and ethnicity welcomed into the teams.



The Volunteer Ranger team drystone walling in Wensleydale

The expanded family now support areas such as the Young Rangers and Up Skill, Down Dale programmes, Dales Countryside Museum and education teams. They monitor wildlife and survey woodlands, and play a frontline role as 'Meet & Greet' volunteers at our visitor hubs. And the volunteer teams continue to evolve and grow.

Over the years there have been numerous highlights, ranging from assisting at the opening ceremony of the Pennine Way on Malham Moor in 1965 to the Tour de France Grand Depart in 2014.

The outgoing Chief Executive of the National Park Authority, David Butterworth, said: "Spending time with volunteers - meeting them, listening to them, and watching them work. It is almost impossible not to be impressed by what you see.

"Time and again I found myself struck by the sheer capability, commitment and enthusiasm that they brought to the National Park.

"The Authority could not achieve its strategic objectives, or deliver the ambitions of the National Park Management Plan, without the active, full support and commitment of the Dales Volunteers'.

As part of the 'History of Volunteering within the National Park' project, we are keen to make contact with any former volunteers who may have recollections or stories to tell - particularly from the very early days.

Please contact us at **volunteers@yorkshiredales.org.uk**

Applications invited to Wildlife-Rich Habitat Fund

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority has welcomed the introduction, by Defra, of the WildlifeRich Habitat Fund (WRHF), designed to accelerate the creation and restoration of vital habitats in England's Protected Landscapes.

The fund, which sits alongside - though distinct from - the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, will be administered locally by the National Park Authority, with £950,000 available to create or restore habitat such as upland hay meadows, native woodland and wood pasture, limestone grassland, and wetlands.

We are already working closely with several key stakeholders, but are keen to hear from people and organisations ready to work at scale - for example, conservation charities, farmer clusters and landscape partnerships, estates, businesses and corporate landowners.



Common frog and spawn: the new Wildlife-Rich Habitat Fund seeks to accelerate the restoration of vital habitats

Interested parties are invited to submit a short outline of their proposal as soon as they can - including details of the location, habitat type, scale, landownership, map and readiness - to **fipl@yorkshiredales.org.uk**, with WRHF in the subject heading.



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