Quarrying

a grey area

The quarrying industry in the Yorkshire Dales National Park dates back hundreds of years and has contributed significantly to form the distinctive landscape that can be seen today. For example, the dry-stone walls, field barns, farmsteads and villages, which are synonymous with the cultural heritage and aesthetic qualities of the area, were quarried from small local pits, that were present at every township by the 17th century. (Detailed history of quarrying in the National Park found at OutofOblivion.)

Today, quarrying in the National Park is still an important industry. The area contains large mineral reserves and quarried hard rock is important regionally and nationally. Quarries within the National Park provide local employment and benefits to the local economy, whilst also impacting on the landscape and the environment. The role of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA), as the planning authority, is to ensure quarry companies minimise the negative environmental impacts of the industry and the haulage of quarry products, whilst supporting benefits to local communities and to habitats and wildlife .

Why quarry in the Yorkshire Dales?

Rocks are the foundation stones of the distinctive Yorkshire Dales landscape. But the rocks, and the minerals they contain, are not just a part of the natural environment, they are also valuable raw materials for the construction industry. At present two distinct types of rock are quarried in the Yorkshire Dales:

Carboniferous limestone and the older, more complexly folded siltstones and sandstones within the Ordovician and Silurian age rocks that occur beneath the limestone. These older rocks are commonly referred to as gritstone.



Arcow Quarry at Helwith Bridge, Ribblesdale (©YDNPA)

What is the stone used for?

Most of the rock produced within the National Park is used in construction, either on its own or mixed with cement to make concrete, or with bitumen to make asphalt. Gritstone is used for a variety of surfacing applications, such as roads, footpaths and airport runways. One of the most important qualities of the gritstone is its ability to resist skidding. Carboniferous limestone, with its high calcium carbonate content, can be used for many purposes;

agricultural and industrial lime, building stone, flux for the steel industry and glass making, although most is used as aggregate (aggregate is crushed rock mixed with other materials to form concrete or asphalt or used alone as fill material).

What permission is needed for quarrying?

The Yorkshire Dales National Park contains important reserves of carboniferous limestone and gritstone. In many cases, permission to quarry was originally granted long ago when environmental concerns were not on the political agenda as they are now. Indeed, most of the major quarries in the area were developed in the Victorian era, with the coming of the railways. Today, in order to quarry a planning application must be approved, in accordance with the 'Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan', as with any other development within the National Park.

Policy

National planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, which is the basis that forms a Local Plan. The Local Plan is a development plan produced by the YDNPA in its capacity as Planning and Mineral and Waste Authority. It is a legal requirement under the Town and Country Planning Acts, policies on mineral working are covered in the Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan 2015-30.

Sustainable Development

The YDNPA works with quarry operators to try to minimise environmental impacts. Mineral planning considers the extent to which these environmental effects can be moderated, versus the economic and social benefits the industry brings to the area. The main issues include:

- Visible and ecological damage of the landscape, as limestone and gritstones are non-renewable resources that cannot be replaced.
- Transportation of quarried materials especially in the form of heavy goods vehicles, increased pollution, traffic and noise. Rail transport should be used wherever possible.
- Quarrying may produce pollution in various forms, such as noise or lighting or affecting air or water Modern quarrying standards must be maintained to avoid negative impacts on people or biodiversity.
- Intrusion to residents and visitors conflicting with the peaceful qualities of the National Park, from noise, vibrations, dust and increased traffic.

Quarry companies within the National Park are implementing measures to reduce the environmental impact of operations and are contributing positively towards wildlife regeneration and local communities. There are detailed final restoration proposals for all of the quarries. An objective in the current National Park Management Plan 2019-24 specifically aims to work with companies to progressively reduce road haulage and minimise carbon emissions. There are existing railheads serving Swinden, Arcow and Dry Rigg Quarries, so that minerals can be transported by rail.

Quarry companies also hold regular liaison meetings with parish councils and they have generally worked well with local communities. All of the quarries offer opportunities for schools to visit to learn about quarrying operations and proposals for site restoration and after-use.

Active quarries

Swinden Quarry

A limestone quarry, near Cracoe, that received permission in 2019 to deepen the quarry and extend operations until 2039. The agreement stipulates that the owners will invest in a Natural Environment Fund, to improve the quality of the natural environment at the quarry and surrounding area, and also to engage with local communities through education, to compensate for the environmental impacts. The quarry is also a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for geological interest. The quarry is rail linked. Restoration of the quarry is due to be completed by 2041.

Horton Quarry

A large quarry situated near Horton-in-Ribblesdale, which works both limestone and 'gritstone'. It has permission to operate until 2042. Proposals have been approved to develop a railhead to serve the quarry to further reduce road haulage.



Horton Quarry (©YDNPA)

Ingleton Quarry

A gritstone quarry that in 2021 was granted permission to extend activities until 2025. A limited amount of stone is transported by rail through the rail sidings at Ribblehead.

Arcow and Dry Rigg Quarries.

These two quarries are located close together at Helwith Bridge and quarry gritstone. They share a railhead established recently at Arcow from where stone is exported by rail, predominantly to West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester.

Restored quarries

All quarry restoration work is undertaken by the operating company in accordance with a detailed scheme approved when planning permission is granted. Restoration is mainly to nature conservation after use, with public access where possible through the creation of

new footpaths. Limited areas in some of the restored sites are allocated for future employment use. Closed, restored sites include Threshfield (near Grassington) and Cool Scar (at Kilnsey), which are limestone quarries.

Further Reading:

- History of Quarrying in the National Park
- National Park Management Plan 2019-24
- Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan 2015-30
- National Planning Policy Framework

Index

- *Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority homepage*
  http://www.yorshiredales.org.uk/
- *Heritage in the National Park:*
  http://www.outofoblivion.org.uk/
- *Short history of quarrying in the National Park:*
  http://www.outofoblivion.org.uk/stone.asp
- *Habitats and wildlife at National Park quarries:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about/wildlife/habitats/limestone/quarries/
- *National Planning Policy Papers:*
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2
- *The National Planning Policy Framework:*
  https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf
- *Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan 2015-2030:*
- *https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/06/Yorkshire-Dales-National-Park-Local-Plan-2015-30.pdf*
- *Introduction to and latest news about the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan 2019-24:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about/national-park-management-plan
- *Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan 2019-24:*
- *https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/05/NPMP-2019-24.pdf*
- *National Park Management Plan Steering Group:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/how-we-work/who-we-work-with/
- *Objective to reduce road haulage in NPMP 2019-24:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about/national-park-management-plan/d-climate-change/objective-d4/
- *Swinden Quarry Natural Environment Fund:*
- *https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/living-and-working/wildlife-conservation/swinden-quarry-natural-environment-fund/*
- *News release; example of a project the Natural Environment Fund has supported:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/quarry-fund-supports-bees-and-invites-new-bids/
- *How the Natural Environment Fund is supporting a school wildlife project:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/new-fund-supports-school-wildlife-project/