The Yorkshire Dales

a National Park Authority

Introduction

The Yorkshire Dales National Park has outstanding scenery, a diversity of wildlife habitats and species and a rich cultural heritage. In 1954, an area of 1762 km^2 was designated a National Park in recognition of its special qualities. In 2016, the boundary of the National Park was extended further north and west, and now covers 2,179 square kilometres (841 square miles).

The National Park sits astride the Pennines in the north of England, in the counties of North Yorkshire, Cumbria and a small part of Lancashire. There are over 20 main dales (valleys), which differ widely in character and atmosphere. To the south, outside the National Park boundary, is a densely populated industrial area, and beyond the northern boundary, thinly settled uplands stretch across the North Pennines and beyond. Approximately, 24,000 people live in the scattered farms, villages and small towns within the National Park.

People have lived in the area for over 10,000 years and have left their mark on almost every aspect of the landscape, from ancient settlement sites and field systems, to disused mineral workings and the highly distinctive patchwork of dry-stone walls and barns. Tourism has been important to the area since the railway brought visitors. Many continue to enjoy a huge variety of leisure pursuits in this unique and treasured environment.



Wharfedale from above Starbottom: one of the largest dales in the National Park (©YDNPA)

National Parks

National Parks are large areas of countryside that are designated for the benefit of everyone, because of their natural beauty, special qualities, and opportunities for open air-recreation. Each of the 15 National Parks in the UK has its own distinctive identity, a combination of its natural and cultural heritage and human influence.

Although National Parks are of special value to the whole nation, much of the land within them is privately owned. Many people live and work within the National Parks, and balancing the needs of conservation, recreation and the local community is recognised through UK National Park legislation and in the make-up of their board of members.

Between 1951 and 1957 ten National Parks were designated, covering about 10% of the area of England and Wales. The Broads Authority followed (1989), along with the New Forest (2005) and

the South Downs (2010). Loch Lomond & the Trossachs (2002) and the Cairngorms (2003) became the first Scottish National Parks.

Further information about each of the 15 National Parks here.



The Westmorland Dales: included within the YDNP boundary extension in 2016 (©Paul Harris)

Key dates in National Park history

1872

The movement to protect outstanding landscapes from exploitation was marked by the development of the first National Park, Yellowstone in the USA, in 1872.

1894 – 1932

From the late nineteenth century, many societies formed in Britain to help protect open land and its wildlife, such as the National Trust (1894) and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (1926). Growing concern for better public rights of access to open countryside and the demand for the 'right to roam', led to a campaign, including the famous Peak District mass trespass on Kinder Scout in 1932.

1930s & 1940s

In the 1930s, these influences increased pressure for government action. John Dower, a civil servant, architect and rambler, was commissioned by the Government to report on how National Parks could work in the UK. Dower's report in 1945 and the public desire for National Parks, following the horrors of the Second World War were accepted and in 1947 the National Parks' Committee, chaired by Sir Arthur Hobhouse, proposed 12 National Parks in their Report.

1949 – Present

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, set out the dual purposes for conservation and recreation of National Parks in England and Wales and helped set up the National Parks Commission, to designate National Parks. Ten National Parks were created by 1957. The Commission's duties were passed to the Countryside Commission in 1968 (later becoming the Countryside Agency, and Natural England in 2006).

Read a more detailed National Park history here.

National Park Authorities and the Environment Act

The statutory purposes of English and Welsh National Parks are now set out in the Environment Act 1995. These are:

- **to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the national parks;**
- **to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities [of the national parks] by the public.**

The purposes are underpinned in law by the 'Sandford Principle'. This makes it clear that the first purpose should take precedence over the second in cases of irreconcilable conflict.

In recognition that National Parks are lived-in landscapes, National Park Authorities also have a duty:

- **in taking forward the national park purposes, [to] seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.**

The Environment Act also, for the first time, established independent organisations - National Park Authorities to deliver the statutory purposes for each National Park. A National Park Authority is made up of a board of members which represent local and national interests. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA), is made up of a committee of 25 members who make decisions about the National Park.

The National Park Authority approves policy and makes decisions based on recommendations from the officers (staff). The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) manages the work of the 150 (approx.) staff of the YDNPA. Staff are based in 2 main administrative centres, in Bainbridge and Grassington and a number of workshops and National Park Centre sites throughout the Park.

Most of YDNPA's funding comes from central government via the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), in the form of an annual national park grant. The YDNPA also attracts significant external funding and generates income from a variety of other sources, such as grants, interest earned on cash balances, planning application fee income, car park charges and retail services through National Park Centres.

For further information on the operations of the YDNPA visit: how we work

The National Park Management Plan

The National Park Authority is guided in its work by the National Park Management Plan. The National Park Management Plan is the single most important document for each National Park. It sets out the vision, strategic policies and outcomes for the National Park over the long term. It should also ensure that National Park purposes are being delivered.

It is a plan for the National Park - its communities, businesses, visitors and the many organisations that operate there. It requires all who have an interest in the National Park to work together to achieve its aspirations. The Government expects public agencies and authorities active within or bordering a National Park to co-operate in the development of the National Park Management Plan and the achievement of its objectives.

The National Park Management Plan 2019-24 (NPMP) is produced by a partnership - it includes environmental bodies (such as Natural England and the Environment Agency), local authorities (district and county councils), the voluntary sector, and representatives of local businesses (farmers, landowners and tourism). For more information visit NPMP Steering Group

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) undertakes many projects and tasks, working in collaboration with a range of people and external partners. A few of its main responsibilities are as follows:

- It conserves the character and beauty of the Dales landscape, including its variety of upland habitats and wildlife
- It is the development control (planning) and minerals planning authority for the area.
- It is the Highway Authority (for footpaths, bridleways and byways), managing and maintaining the network of over 2,600 km of Public Rights of Way
  It works with farmers and landowners to safeguard the conservation interest of their land
- It encourages the conservation of traditional villages some of which are designated as Conservation Areas
- It conserves the archaeological and cultural heritage, maintains the Historic Environment Record and Listed Buildings requirements
  It provides and manages a range of services for the public, including information centres, toilets and car parks (Visit: Tourism in the Dales)
- It promotes understanding and enjoyment, through education, events, outreach work and interpretation activities (Visit: Learning and Engagement)
- It is responsive to the impacts of climate change through supporting more sustainable land uses and transport

Working with others

More than 95% of the land in the National Park is privately owned and much is actively farmed. Major landowners include, the National Trust (4%), Natural England, Ministry of Defence, Yorkshire Water and private estates, such as Bolton Abbey, run by the Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement. This means that the National Park can only achieve its aims by working with others, encouraging the work of a wide range of organisations that contribute to conservation, while relying on owners and occupiers to put objectives for the National Park into practice. The National Park also relies on the help of around 250 volunteers and needs the support of every visitor too.

- Full list of organisations involved with achieving objectives in the NPMP (P.18&19)
- Volunteers



Volunteers at work (©YDNPA)

Future challenges for the Yorkshire Dales National Park

While the highly distinctive character and culture of the National Park reflects its natural qualities and continuity with the past, the area faces intense pressures for change. Below are some of the current and future challenges the National Park faces, provided with further reading to understand how the YDNPA is managing some of these challenges.

- Climate change
- Nature Emergency
  Brexit and the future of Farming (Further reading, here)
- Covid-19
- Ageing Population
- Affordable Housing

Index

- *Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority homepage*
  http://www.yorshiredales.org.uk/
- *National Parks UK homepage*
  https://www.nationalparks.uk/parks/
- *The 15 National Parks:*
  https://www.nationalparks.uk/parks/
- *Government legislation for UK, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland::*
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/
- *The Environment Act 1995:*
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/25/section/61
- *History of National Parks:*
  https://www.nationalparks.uk/the-history-of-national-parks/
- *YDNPA; how we work:*
- *https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/how-we-work/*
- *Role of National Park Members:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/how-we-work/our-people/members/
- *YDNPA staff:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/how-we-work/our-people/staff/
- *YDNPA volunteers:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/how-we-work/our-people/volunteers/
- *YDNPA; grants and funding:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/living-and-working/grants-and-funding/
- *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/
- *Habitats and Wildlife in the National Park:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about/wildlife/habitats/
- *Planning and Development Control:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/planning/
- *Public Right Of Way Network: types of paths and trails:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/things-to-do/get-outdoors/where-can-i-go/types-of-paths-and-trails
- *How does the YDNPA work with Farmers and Landowners:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/living-and-working/farming/
- *Designation of Conservation Areas:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about/heritage/cultural-heritage/conservation-areas/
- *Heritage in the National Park:*
  https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about/heritage/

- *Tourism in the National Park: https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/living-and-working/tourism-in-the-dales/*
- *Promoting understanding and enjoyment, through education, events, outreach work and interpretation activities: https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/living-and-working/learning-and-engagement/*
- *How the YDNPA is responding to the impacts of Climate Change: https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/looking-after/climate-change/*
- *Full list of organisations/partners involved with achieving objectives in the NPMP (P.18&19): https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/05/NPMP-2019-24.pdf*