Providing an outstanding range of benefits for the nation based on its natural resources, landscape and cultural heritage, which underpin a flourishing local economy

Facts, figures and trends

- The National Park is a significant contributor to the regional economy, with tourism alone accounting for around £427 million of expenditure in 2022[1].
- There are an estimated 2,900 businesses in the National Park, with an estimated gross turnover of £624m in 2022 (down from £656m in 2017). These businesses employ 14,259 people (up from 12,268 in 2017)[2];
- 40% of all employment is provided by two sectors: accommodation and food services (20%); and, agriculture (20%). In the last 5 years, the biggest growth in employment has been in: accommodation and food services (484 jobs); health (479) and arts, entertainment and recreation (412)[1].
- There are 1,150 farm businesses, of which 75% are upland grazing livestock[3].
- 2,800 people are employed in agriculture and land management. However, the value of the food produced is only significant at a local scale[4], and for most upland sheep and beef suckler farms the core agricultural business is operating at a loss[5].
- The value of local grouse shooting is estimated at about £6m per year, with c50 full time equivalent grouse keepers and c100 fte employed on shoot days[6].
- Supporting upland livestock farming and land management to improve business viability and provide a wider range of public benefits is the 5th most important issue for National Park residents[7].
- The value of commercial timber production is low (less than 1% of the England total)[4]
- 1.5% of the working age population are unemployed, compared to the national average of over 3%[8].
- The economy is highly reliant on self-employment and micro businesses. 19% of the working age population are self-employed (far higher than the national average of 9.5%)[8].
- The average (median) salary is £25,800[9].

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1 STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) report (2022)
2 Inter-Departmental Business Register, Office for National Statistics (2022)
3 Annual statistics on the structure of the agricultural industry in National Parks, Defra 2022
4 Ecosystem Service Provision in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, D. R. Shaw Consultancy Ltd (2017)
5 Less is more: Improving profitability and the natural environment in hill and other marginal farming systems, Chris Clark and Brian Scanlan (2019)
6 Moorland Association (2017)
7 Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan 2025-2030 - Consultation on Priorities: Summary of consultation results (2024)
8 Office for National Statistics (2021)
9 Median earnings in Protected Landscapes, Defra (2024)

Issues and opportunities

Tourism

- Tourism is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions – especially through visitor car journeys.
- The amount of serviced accommodation for 1 night stays is limited, which restricts low-carbon, 'slow travel' opportunities (e.g. Coast to Coast path and Pennine bridleway).
- The vast majority of visitors are day visitors, rather than staying visitors.
- The tourism sector has been badly affected by a range of recent issues: pandemic, rising costs, transport problems, labour supply, staff accommodation shortages etc, and there is evidence exists of pubs and cafes reducing their hours of opening.

Agriculture

- Changes to national agricultural support programmes have implications for the viability of the smaller, more traditional upland farming businesses.
- Climate change is likely to have a negative impact on agricultural businesses due to an increase in severe and unpredictable weather events.
- How to improve farm business 'margins' by increasing profitability (e.g. high-value branded produce) and reducing costs (reducing fertiliser, imported feed etc).
- How to exploit opportunities for farmers and landowners to gain more economic benefit from providing environmental goods (carbon storage, natural flood management).
- Opportunities for food producers in the National Park to capitalize further on branding 'locally sourced' products and developing the agriculture and food supply chain.
- Potential for under-used traditional farm buildings to be turned to new economic uses.

Employment and skills

- A projected decline in the labour force means employers will increasingly look outside the National Park for their labour needs and/or pay more competitive wages.
- How to retain traditional countryside and heritage skills, like dry-stone walling.
- New skills and techniques are needed to support nature recovery – for example soil management and other regenerative farming techniques.
- Local skills are needed to support the wider sustainable development of the National Park (e.g. renewable energy technologies; "ecosystem services")
- Employment is intrinsically linked with housing and access to services. All three need to be encouraged to achieve communities that are sustainable.
- How to increase young people's awareness of environmental skills, the natural world and climate change, as well as employment opportunities in the local 'Green Economy'
- How to build employment opportunities for young people through local apprenticeships when most businesses are very small.

Business development and investment

- Supporting economic growth in locations just outside the National Park is important to the wider Dales economy and provides employment for residents.
- Despite full employment, wages are low.
- Capacity for growth exists on sites next to existing businesses, brownfield land, small greenfield sites next to settlements, and through higher levels of home-working.
- Most businesses are very small, with limited capacity to undertake effective digital marketing.
- How to exploit the potential of hyperfast broadband to attract new high-value businesses to re-locate to the National Park, and support home-working?
- Can the ‘natural capital’ of the Dales be better exploited to support a distinctive and vibrant local ‘green’ economy beyond tourism and agriculture?
- How to attract investment in the cultural ‘offer’ (shows, festivals, arts) of the larger villages and the wider heritage landscape?
- Making the 12 allocated employment sites in the National Park more of a priority for investment and development.
- Limited public transport is a barrier to some residents – especially younger people – being able to access jobs, training and services.

Key policies and documents

- ***National Planning Policy Framework***, Department for Communities and Local Government (2023) – sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- **Inclusive and Sustainable Economies: Leaving No-one Behind**, Public Health England (2021) – provides a framework for local place-based action to reduce health inequalities and build back better
- ***York, North Yorkshire, East Riding and Hull Spatial Framework*** (2019) – sets out broad overall strategy for development including priorities for development in the National Parks (natural capital; regional place-making; health and recreation; sustainable tourism; natural flood management; long term sustainability of local communities).
- **North Yorkshire Economic Growth Strategy 2024-2029** and the **Westmorland and Furness Council Plan 2023** **-** recognise the contribution that the National Park makes to these areas as attractive places to work in and do business. They recognise the opportunities for growth around heritage and natural spaces and identify the Authority as a delivery partner and the role of the National Park Management Plan as a partnership strategy.
- ***North Yorkshire Economic Framework for a Combined Authority*** an emerging framework is being prepared by the North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership to support the new Combined Authority from May 2024
- ***Creating A Competitive, Carbon-Neutral Circular Economy In York and North Yorkshire*****,** York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (2019) – sets out a strategy and actions to develop a thriving economy that creates business opportunities, a sustainable environment and social wellbeing.
- ***Yorkshire Dales Local Plan 2015-2030*** (2016) - guides future development decisions in the pre-2016 National Park area. The newer area of the National Park is covered by existing adopted Local Plans – the Eden Local Plan (2017) and Core Strategies in South Lakeland (2010) and Lancaster (2008). A new Local Plan covering the whole of the National Park for the period 2025-2040 is currently being prepared.
- ***Special Qualities, Special Experiences***, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (2019) – sets out the framework for sustainable recreational and tourism development in the National Park.