Home to strong, self-reliant and balanced communities with good access to the services they need

Facts, figures, trends

- The population of 22,798[1] is dispersed across 100 villages and numerous smaller settlements. The majority of the area is classified as 'sparse' by Defra because of its distance to services and very low population density (9.6 hectares of land for every resident compared to the average for England of 0.25 hectares).
- After growing steadily since 1971, the population has started to shrink, following a trend apparent across other upland and rural areas of northern England[1]. Without intervention, the population of the National Park is forecast to decline by 9% by 2040[2].
- There is a severe and growing imbalance between the proportions of people aged over 65 (31% - compared to 19% for England and Wales) and the proportion aged under 15 (13% - compared to 19% for England and Wales)[1]. This is forecast to widen further and will require more commuting into the National Park from elsewhere, to support existing jobs and services. The proportion of adults of working age (15-64) resident in the National Park is 8 percentage points lower than the national average.
- Helping younger people to live and work in the National Park is the 5th most important issue for the public, and the 2nd most important for residents[3].
    - The average house price in the National Park is £353,000[4]. Prices are steadily increasing and are now on a par with pre-2008 (economic downturn) levels.
- The quality of life for residents is generally good with low unemployment, high skills, and low crime. 87%of residents consider themselves to be in good or very good health (the average for England & Wales is 82%)[5]. Deprivation, other than in terms of access to affordable housing and healthcare services, is low[6].
- The National Park has excess infrastructure capacity in some key areas e.g. vacant school places, under-occupied housing stock, under-used traditional buildings etc.[7]
- Since 2019 there have been 234 residential housing completions across the National Park. However, only 28 of these have been affordable homes in relation to the definition in national planning policy[8].
- Housing is expensive in relation to average household incomes (9 times average income), although no worse than the average for rural England[9].
- The number of second, holiday and empty homes accounted for 22% of the housing stock in the former National Park area in 2011. In some settlements the figure reaches

1 ONS data 2021
2 Yorkshire Dales National Park Demographic Evidence Report, Edge Analytics (2019)
3 Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan 2025-2030 - Consultation on Priorities: Summary of consultation results (2024)
4 Nationwide House Price Index, Nationwide (2024)
5 ONS data 2021
6 Index of multiple deprivation
7 Yorkshire Dales Local Plan Infrastructure Assessment (2015)
8 Annual Monitoring Report 2022/23, YDNPA
9 House purchase affordability ratios in Protected Landscapes, Defra (2024)

over 30% - affecting seasonal vitality. Reducing the impact of second homes and holiday lets it the 3rd most important issue for residents of the National Park[3].

- Mains gas is only available in Sedbergh, Grassington and parts of the area in Westmorland. Many properties still rely on inefficient heating oil and solid fuel. Fuel poverty is a significant problem.
- Much of the housing stock pre-dates 1910 and has solid walls and poor levels of insulation. Housing is often expensive to heat.
- There are 4 'local service centres' – Grassington/ Threshfield; Hawes/Gayle; Sedbergh; and Reeth. A further 55 villages have a basic level of services, such as a school, pub, shop or meeting place. Many residents have to travel an hour or longer to reach a hospital or higher education college. There are no large supermarkets or retail centres.
- There are now 23 primary schools in the National Park (3 have closed in the last 5 years). The remaining schools are some way below capacity. There are two secondary schools (Sedbergh and Threshfield) and a large private school (Sedbergh).
- The Settle-Carlisle railway is the only national strategic transport route through the National Park and provides access to large towns and cities with a full range of services.
- There are 15 larger settlements close to the National Park's boundary: Addingham, Appleby, Catterick Garrison, Gargrave, Giggleswick, Hellifield, Ilkley, Ingleton, Kirkby Lonsdale, Kirkby Stephen, Leyburn, Pately Bridge, Richmond, Settle, and Skipton. These are important centres for jobs and services for communities in the Park. Most are planned to grow over the next 10 years.
- Broadband speeds are generally slower than urban areas but in some of the western fringes fibre to the property is delivering extremely fast speeds. The larger villages mainly have services now that exceed the 24mps definition of 'superfast'[10].
- Over 20% of the National Park still has no mobile phone reception (but this is down from 45% in 2018). Most of the Dales - where most of the residents live - do have 4G coverage from at least one of the network providers. 5G services are now available in some areas around the Park but are largely unavailable inside[11].
- There are public or community transport services in most villages but outside the larger centres it is not a quality service[12].
- Road congestion is not normally a problem in most parts of the National Park but travel times can be long. There are localised and seasonal car parking issues in some villages – notably Malham.
- Communities in the National Park are vulnerable to the climate impacts of flooded roads and land and occasional storm damage causing power cuts

[10] https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/broadband-map#10/54.1809/-2.1362/allfttp/test/
[11] https://checker.ofcom.org.uk/en-gb/mobile-coverage#pc=dl84ls&uprn=100050438401&vw=map
[12] www.dalesbus.org/

Key Issues and opportunities

Transport

- How to support more and better public transport in an area with such a small and highly dispersed population.
- How to improve highway safety and reduce the impacts of traffic on residential amenity, especially seasonal and localised traffic and parking problems in some villages, in a way that also reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
- How to maximise the Settle-Carlisle railway as a gateway into the National Park and as a means of connecting residents to services outside.

Housing

- Moderate housing growth (50 new dwellings per annum) is needed to slow down the population decline and rapidly ageing population profile. However, the 'call for sites' has not brought forward enough sites to meet housing needs in the north of the National Park. A more flexible approach to 'exceptions sites' may be needed.
- There is a need to create a more varied supply of affordable housing to attract and enable younger, working age people to live in the area – this includes more one and two bedroom dwellings, and multiple-occupancy.
- Planned housing growth is relatively small but will have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions unless more innovative, low carbon housing designs are used.
- Most domestic properties are stone-built, solid wall buildings that are expensive to heat and require specialist retro-fitting techniques to improve energy efficiency without damaging the building fabric (i.e. creating damp).
- The level of under-occupied properties (second homes and holiday lets) is having a detrimental effect on community viability in many villages.
- Are there opportunities for new housing at sites just outside the National Park border?
- What scope is there for more barns to be converted to housing?

Connectivity

- How can we move quickly to complete the roll-out of hyper-fast broadband, and best use it to provide better access to services for residents?
- Are there any significant gaps left to fill in mobile phone coverage?

Demography

- Younger people are leaving because of a lack of employment opportunities and high cost of housing. Attracting and retaining younger people will require action on both these issues, as well as better transport, and access to education and training.
- As in other rural areas, the decline in the numbers of children living in the National Park is undermining the viability of local primary schools.

- The heavily skewed age distribution will require more elderly support services and appropriate accommodation, including adapting existing buildings.
- The current trend of a declining population needs to be reversed in order to sustain existing infrastructure and services. Longer-term viability is inextricably linked to retaining a flourishing economy.

Services

- How can local communities better support themselves in the context of public spending cuts and changes in delivery to the charitable and voluntary sectors? What role could parish councils play?
- How to hold onto existing services such as health facilities, meeting places, pubs, post offices etc, and support innovative new provision?
- How can the contribution of visitors to sustaining local services be maximised?
- What further action is needed to maintain resilience of local communities and services to the impacts of flooding and other potential climate change impacts?

Policy Context

Some of the key international, national, regional and local strategies that provide important context for updating the Management Plan include:

- **National Planning Policy Framework**, Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities (December 2023) - sets out the Government's planning policies for sustainable land use development.
- **English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular**, Defra (2010) - sets out national Government Policy for National Parks, including the need to foster and maintain vibrant, healthy and productive, living and working communities.
- **York, North Yorkshire, East Riding and Hull Spatial Framework**, - a framework for a co-ordinated approach to long-term growth and infrastructure planning. Includes the vision and priorities for growth and the overall spatial strategy for the area.
- **'Rural North Yorkshire: The Way Forward'**, The Rural Commission (2021) - an independent report investigating new ways to make rural life more sustainable.
- **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.
- **YDNPA Statement on Housing 2022** – sets out the National Park Authority's role in relation to housing and what it would like to see happen in the National Park.
- **YDNPA Statement on Public Transport** (2022) – sets out the National Park Authority's views about how public transport should be developed in – and to - the National Park.