

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

- Businesses in the National Park had a gross turnover of £422m in 2016, providing £400 million 'gross value added'¹;
- The National Park is a significant contributor to the regional economy, with tourism alone accounting for around £350 million of expenditure each year. Businesses in the three national parks in Yorkshire support over 34,000 jobs².
- Almost half of all employment is provided by 4 dominant sectors: wholesale/retail (12.5%) education (12.3%), accommodation and food services (11.3%) and agriculture (10.2%). These sectors account for less than a third of the nation's employment. Agriculture is the most highly represented sector in the National Park compared to the national situation (0.9%). Employment in sectors such as wholesale/retail, administration, information/communication, health, transport, utilities, manufacturing and financial sectors are under-represented in the Park³.
- Food production remains the predominant land use in the National Park, with 66% of the area being classified as 'utilisable agricultural area'. Around 2,700 people are employed directly in agriculture. However, the value of the food produced is only significant at a local scale and, for many upland sheep farms the core agricultural business is operating at a loss⁴.
- Defra has assessed that in 2014/15 half of the UK's farmers failed to cover their costs of production. Even after all support payments are included in farm revenue almost 20% of farms failed to achieve a farm business income. This figure will be higher on hill farms.
- The value of grouse shooting across the Yorkshire Dales is estimated at about £6m per annum, with c50 full time equivalent grouse keepers and c100 fte employed on shoot days⁵.
- The value of commercial timber production is low (less than 1% of the England total)⁴
- 66% of the working population (aged 17-74) is in full- or part-time work. This is 8% points above the national average and includes a significantly higher proportion of self-employed people (23% versus the national average of 9%). The National Park's non-working population is made up of a higher percentage of retired people (as opposed to unemployed, full time students, sick/disabled or those looking after the home/family, all of which are under represented)³.

¹ Employment-based GVA estimates, Cumulus Consultants (2016)

² *Prosperity and Protection*, Council for National Parks (2007)

³ 2011 Census, Office for National Statistics

⁴ *Ecosystem Service Provision in the Yorkshire Dales National Park*, D. R. Shaw Consultancy Ltd (2017)

⁵ Moorland Association (2017)

- Only around 1% of the working population are claiming benefits, compared to the regional average of 5%.
- The economy is highly reliant on self-employment and micro businesses. 23% of the working age populations are self-employed (far higher than the national average of 10%). 78% of all businesses employ less than four people⁶.
- There are an estimated 2,430 businesses, employing over 11,000 people. Over 90% are ‘micro-businesses’ employing less than 10 people⁷.

Policy context

[National Planning Policy Framework](#), Department for Communities and Local Government (2018) – sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

[Valuing England’s National Parks](#), Cumulus Consultants (2013) – estimated that England’s National Parks provide between £4bn and £6bn in gross value added to the national economy, and that many of these economic benefits were underpinned by the environmental quality of the protected landscapes.

Identifying Employment and Business Land Needs and Opportunities in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, Arup (2013) – analysed the economic context in the National Park and identified opportunities to develop specific business sites and improve the function of local centres.

Employment Land Development Capacity of the Upper Dales (2015), Edge Economics – makes recommendations on how to improve the economic prospects of Wensleydale and Swaledale with a particular focus on business opportunity sites.

[Yorkshire Dales LEADER Local Development Strategy 2014-2020](#), Yorkshire Dales Local Action Group (2014); [Cumbria Fells and Dales LEADER Local Development Strategy 2014-2020](#), Cumbria Fells and Dales Local Action Group (2014) – strategies that set out the economic needs and aspirations for the rural areas.

[Special Qualities, Special Experiences](#), Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (2010) – sets out the framework for sustainable recreational and tourism development in the National Park.

[York, North Yorkshire, East Riding and Hull Spatial Framework](#), (2015) – sets out broad overall strategy for development across the sub region including priorities for development in the two National Parks (natural capital; regional place-making; health and recreation; sustainable tourism; natural flood management; local needs; long term sustainability of local communities and the Park’s special qualities).

[High Nature Value Farming in the Northern Upland Chain](#), European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (2014) – assessed the extent of High Nature Value farming, and its traditions and culture in the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership area. It identifies the key economic pressures facing HNV farming, and makes recommendations for tackling those pressures.

⁶ *York and North Yorkshire Economic Development Strategy, (2010)*

⁷ Office for National Statistics (2017) – data as at March 2016

Issues

- Potential climate change impacts on the economy of the National Park in the future include: boosts to the local economy through increased visitor numbers and increasing potential for businesses to adopt renewable energy. How can businesses be supported to respond to these opportunities?
- There are a range of themes currently being promoted ('getting away from it all', wildlife tourism, food tourism, outdoor activities and challenge events) as part of the National Park's tourism 'offer' – what other unique selling points of the Park are there that need to be clearly set out. Many of the Dales tourism businesses are lifestyle/micro businesses, how can we ensure they make the most of the National Park's tourism offer, and help generate economic prosperity and employment. At the same time how can responsible tourism best be promoted in the Park?
- The National Park has some fantastic opportunities for tourism based on 'slow travel' (where the journey is the experience): long distance walks such as the Pennine Way, Coast to Coast and Dales Way as well as long-distance cycle routes such as the Pennine Bridleway, Way of the Roses and Walney to Wear routes have economic significance at a local level. Could more be made of these opportunities as well as the Settle to Carlisle railway line?
- Brexit and potential further cuts in public sector funding will have significant implications for the viability of the smaller, more traditional upland farming businesses. What can be done to help farmers and landowners prepare for and build resilience?
- Does Brexit provide opportunities to develop a more locally-tailored, results-based, approach to agri-environment schemes that can secure a more robust economic future whilst delivering more environmental benefits?
- There is an increasing awareness of the 'environmental goods' provided by farmers and landowners (carbon storage, drinking water, flood management etc). What can be done to exploit opportunities for Dales' farmers and landowners to gain economic benefit from the range of environmental goods they provide?
- What are the opportunities for food producers in the National Park to capitalize further on branding 'locally sourced' products? What else can be done to develop and promote this market? Are there opportunities to create business growth by developing agriculture and food supply chain?
- How can farming enterprises be supported to improve their 'margins' by increasing income (high value, branded produce; processing; direct sales) and reducing costs (e.g. improving energy efficiency, reducing fertilizer use, switching to more hardy breeds that need less inputs).
- What can be done to encourage entrepreneurship and attract new businesses into the Park? What are the current barriers?
- Improving broadband access is absolutely critical to attracting new businesses. How can the potential for live-work; home working; micro-business be developed?
- What kinds of businesses are attracted to the remoteness and tranquillity of the National Park? What other services would help to support this sector (finance, business support, transport links? Shared office spaces?)

- What opportunities are there to develop a more resilient and broader economic base, which goes beyond a dependence on tourism and agriculture but does not conflict with them? Can the 'natural capital' of the Dales be better exploited to support a distinctive and vibrant local economy?
- What can be done to support the retention of countryside and heritage skills that are essential to managing the Park's special qualities, as well as the skills needed for the wider sustainable development of the National Park (e.g. renewable energy technologies; "ecosystem services")?
- How can we attract investment in the cultural 'offer' of the larger villages and the wider heritage landscape? How can the contemporary culture of the Park (shows, festivals, arts) be further developed to support the local economy and attract younger people to live and work here?
- The emerging sub-regional Spatial Framework identifies the 'Airedale Corridor' (Keighley-Skipton) as a potential 'Strategic Development Zone'. How could this be used to create a stronger southern 'gateway' into the National Park, improving access from West Yorkshire and Lancashire?
- How can meaningful and measurable economic objectives be set specifically for the National Park when its boundaries form part of 5 districts and 3 counties?
- There are 12 allocated employment sites in the National Park but their relatively small scale means that they rarely become priorities for development. How can these sites be more effectively promoted for development?
- There are still many traditional farm buildings that are under-used. With a new, more-flexible set of planning policies in place, could more of these now be turned to new economic uses?
- How can more employment opportunities be created for young people through local apprenticeships when so many of the local businesses are so small?