

A friendly, open and welcoming place with outstanding opportunities to enjoy its special qualities

Facts, figures and trends

- There are 2,620 km of rights of way (footpaths, bridleways, byways open to all traffic, and restricted byways) ¹, including 168 km of National Trails². In addition, there is a small network of unsurfaced, unclassified roads which provide complementary links – approximately 120 km.
- On average, 89% of rights of way are ‘easy to use’ (up from 77% in 2007/08) in the former National Park area. Within the new area of the National Park, the figure is only 67%. 92% of gates and stiles are in good condition and 90% of river crossings are in good condition in the former National Park³.
- Around 95% of the National Park is in private ownership, and 60% is designated as ‘open access’ land.
- The large karst areas, particularly in the south and west of the National Park include numerous and extensive cave systems, including the longest system in the UK and many of national and international significance. These include Kingsdale Master Cave and associated links, Gaping Gill, Alum Pot/Diccan Pot, Pen-y-ghent Pot and the Three Counties system.
- Rock climbing crags are mainly in the south of the National Park, on both gritstone edges and limestone. Many of the limestone crags include bolted ‘sport’ climbs. Some of the crags are of national and international quality – these include Malham, Gordale and Kilnsey.
- The Dales provides a range of shooting opportunities of targets, clays and game shooting - pheasant, red grouse, partridge, wildfowl, as well as specific courses are available through a number of shoots and private estates.
- Sailing takes place at Grimwith and Embsay Reservoirs and Semerwater. Whilst there are no rivers with a formal canoe access agreement, many of the Yorkshire Dales ‘white water’ rivers such as the Rawthey, Lune, Dee and Wharfe are regularly kayaked when they are in spate.
- The most popular activity is walking with around 80% of all visitors going for a short or long walk during their trip. This is followed by cycling and mountain biking at around 6%. Other activities are at 1% or less.⁴
- Many of the rivers in the Dales provide opportunities for fishing through private clubs or on a day ticket basis. Kilnsey Trout Farm and Bessy Beck at Newbiggin-on-Lune offer opportunities for all levels of anglers from beginners to experts and Malham Tarn also offers boat hire.
- The National Park has the fourth darkest night skies of any local authority area in England⁵.

¹ Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (2018)

² Natural England (2017)

³ Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (2017)

⁴ *All Parks Visitor survey 1994, YDNPA Visitor survey 2004, 2009 and 2013*

- ‘Multi-day routes’ include: two National Trails (Pennine Way and Pennine Bridleway); and, significant regional routes (such as the ‘Dales Way’ and the ‘Coast-to-Coast’). Other waymarked walks include the Ribble Way, Pennine Journey and Dales High Way.
- The busiest sections of these routes (e.g. at Malham Cove) are used by an average of over 8,000 people per month at peak times⁶. Between 3,000 and 5,000 people walk the whole of the Coast-to-Coast each year⁷, with around 4,000 people completing the Dales Way⁸.
- The National Park hosted the Grand Départ of the Tour de France in 2014. The number of first time visitors to the Dales increased from 10% to 20% attracted by the event. There is anecdotal evidence of an increase in cycle use in the area which is supported by evidence of increased cycling at a national level. The Way of the Roses long distance route is very popular - with the counter between Austwick and Clapham recording over 11,000 passes per year.
- Whilst motor vehicles are legally allowed to use byways open to all traffic (62 km) and have possible legal rights on unsurfaced unclassified roads (around 120km), use of motor vehicles on the 8 most sensitive routes in the former National Park area is prevented by traffic regulation orders. Compliance with these orders overall is very good (98%)⁹.
- The length of the rights of way network available for people with poor mobility or for wheelchair use has increased significantly but remains relatively restricted (5% of all routes)¹⁰. However, much of the Park’s bridleway, byway and unsurfaced unclassified roads network is accessible by ‘tramper’ – or similar ‘all terrain’ mobility scooters.
- 72% of visitors to the National Park are over 45 years old; 75% are in A, B, C1 social grades and 96% are from a white background. 9% of visitors had a long-standing health issue or disability. The most popular regions for visitors to come from are: Yorkshire and Humber (34%) and the North West (17%). 7% of visitors were from overseas. There is a high level of repeat visitor with only 10% of people on a first visit. 89% of visitors travelled to the National Park by car¹¹.
- The big draws for visitors are the natural beauty/scenery, the open space/freedom, the peace and tranquillity of the National Park, and its opportunities to go walking¹².
- In 2016, there were 3.8 million visitors to the National Park spending 5 million days here. 87% of people came for the day with 13% being staying visitors. The economic impact of these visitors was £252 million, which supported 3,600 jobs (FTE). Total visitor bed-space is estimated to be 12,800. Most serviced accommodation providers are small with less than 10 bedrooms (1,800 bed spaces). Over 2,000 bed-spaces are provided by self-catering holiday cottages. Over half of the bed-spaces are provided by touring caravan/camping sites and hostels¹³.

⁵ [Night Blight](#), CPRE (2016)

⁶ National Trails Partnership (2017)

⁷ NYCC (2017)

⁸ YDNPA (2015)

⁹ Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (2017)

¹⁰ Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (2017)

¹¹ Visitor Survey (2013)

¹² Visitor Survey (2013)

¹³ *STEAM report* (2016)

- 89 large scale events were recorded in the National Park in 2017 with over 28,500 participants including charity walks, cyclo-sportives and fell races. The Yorkshire Three Peaks continues to be very popular with a considerable number of smaller events, in addition to a number of high-profile ‘challenge walks’.
- There are now three Young Ranger groups in the National Park, and Dales Volunteers contributed 7,001 days of work in 2017/18¹⁴.
- 26% of people in the UK do less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity a week and 14% do 30 to 149 minutes a week¹⁵. 27% of adults in England are obese and a further 36% are overweight. Rates of excess weight are highest in the North East and Yorkshire regions¹⁶.
- 63% of tourism business grew or at least stayed the same size over the last 3 years. 25% of businesses declined¹⁷.

Policy context

[Special Qualities, Special Experiences 2010, YDNPA \(2010\)](#) – sets out the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority’s policies and principles for access, recreation, diversity, visitor management and sustainable tourism in the National Park.

[Management of the use of green lanes \(unsealed routes\) in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, YDNPA \(2017\)](#) - considers the legislation and government guidance on the management of recreational motor vehicle use of unsealed routes, and what actions should be taken to implement the policies of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

[Equality Act 2010](#) – requires public bodies when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise their functions to have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.

[Moving Cumbria Forward – Cumbria Transport Plan Strategy 2011-2026](#), Cumbria County Council; and, **[North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan 2016-2045](#)**, North Yorkshire Country Council - set out what the County Councils and their partners intend to do to address the transport related issues faced by people who live in, work in and visit Cumbria and North Yorkshire.

[8-Point Plan for England’s National Parks, Defra \(2016\)](#) - sets out the Government’s ambitions for people to learn about and experience National Parks. It includes targets to connect young people with nature, promote the best of British food, encourage more diverse visitors, promote volunteering and promote health and well-being.

[Tourism Action Plan, Department for Culture, Media and Sport \(2016\)](#)¹⁸ - sets out Government actions on changes to the tourism landscape and economy post-Brexit. It looks at opportunities for collaboration and is the vehicle for the £40million Discover England Fund. Key areas covered include: co-ordination and collaboration; skills; de-regulation; transport; and visa services.

¹⁴ YDNPA 2018

¹⁵ [Active Lives Survey, Sport England \(2016\)](#)

¹⁶ [House of Commons briefing \(2017\)](#)

¹⁷ [Tourism business survey, YDNPA \(2012\)](#)

¹⁸ [Tourism Action Plan - GOV.UK](#)

[**Arts Council strategic framework “Great Art and Culture for Everyone” 2010-2020**](#) - brings together the Arts Council’s responsibilities across the arts and the wider cultural sector. It describes what success will look like, and how the Arts Council intends to measure progress towards its goals. It provides the rationale for its investment in the arts and museums and will inform its future funding decisions.

[**UK Tourism Policy \[DCMS 2011\]**](#) - outlines the UK Government's approach to the visitor economy as a whole. It aims to take in every aspect of the visitor economy from the initial marketing process of persuading people to holiday in the UK, through the best way to manage England's enormous range of beautiful and high-quality tourism destinations, to leaving people with happy memories and a wish to return once their visit is over.

[**Sustainable tourism in the Yorkshire Dales strategy and action plan 2013-18**](#) - The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) and Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAONB), in 2008, achieved the EUROPARC Federation’s Charter for Sustainable Tourism. A re-assessment, to see if the area still meets the criteria for this award, took place in 2013. As part of this process a new sustainable tourism strategy was developed by the Dales Tourism partnership.

Prosperity and Protection, Council for National Parks (2007) - assessed the economic value of tourism in National Parks in Yorkshire and Humber region.

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Annual Monitoring report (2016) - summarises data related to visitor profiles, travelling to the National Park, seasonality, destinations and activities.

Yorkshire Dales Residents survey - shows results from research undertaken in January 2009 by CN Research for the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority into the levels of awareness of and the attitude towards the work of the Authority by residents of the Park.

Visitor Survey 2013 - survey to determine the profile and satisfaction of visitors to the Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP), as well as their perceptions and understanding of the Authority, in order to inform future plans.”

Yorkshire Regional Visitors Survey evaluate visitors – background information on the experiences and satisfaction levels of Yorkshire and Humber and its tourism destinations.

Study commissioned for Local Plan (Arup, 2013) to inform policies on visitor accommodation.

Issues

- The National Park has some of the best-maintained rights of way in the country. Is it realistic to maintain that level and, if so, how can the condition of routes in the new area of the National Park best be improved?
- The beauty and challenge of completing the ‘Three Peaks’ continues to draw large number of individuals, small informal groups, and large-scale charity events. Is any further action necessary to maintain a complete, ‘sustainable’ route and reduce impacts on local communities?
- There are a considerable number of large-scale events in the National Park, which are largely well managed and pass off with few problems (away from the Three Peaks area). To what extent should these sort of events be encouraged as part of the promotion of the area as a destination for recreational challenge?

- What more should be done to promote outdoor recreation? Do we need to step up a gear, or be focused on who we are promoting to – for instance target younger people? Do we need to be more welcoming or securing and promoting opportunities for specific activities?
- Considerable investment has been made in managing recreational vehicle use of the network of 'green lanes' (unsurfaced, unclassified roads), and the most sensitive routes in the former National Park area are all now protected. What approach should be adopted in the new area of the National Park?
- What more could be done to encourage people from disadvantaged backgrounds, non-traditional audiences and people with impairments and disabilities to visit? There has been a trend for people with mobility disabilities to push the boundaries of what we thought was possible over recent years. What scope is there now to further 'open up' routes to those with limited mobility?
- Do we need to be proactive in filling some key gaps in the rights of way network? Should we go against landowner wishes if needed? How can more visitors be encouraged to travel to the Park by public transport? What realistic scope is there to help visitors to reduce their use of private cars to get round the National Park?
- The National Park is an internationally recognised tourism destination. How can we ensure the area consistently exceeds visitors' expectations in terms of quality of environment, services, experience and visitor attractions?
- How can the local economy be boosted and capitalise on the areas distinctiveness and its local products - as unique selling points based on the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales? How can businesses and other local organisations be helped to work together to promote the Park and its special qualities?
- What scope is there to further increase the range of opportunities for volunteering in the National Park as a whole, and to 'join up' the work of many different organisations?
- People visit from many different places, with different interests and levels of knowledge about the area. How do we ensure that they gain increased understanding of the special qualities of the area and awareness that they are visiting a National Park?
- How can new technologies be used to increase visitors' and residents' understanding and enjoyment of the National Park?
- Exposure to nature, art, culture and heritage has been shown to foster psychological wellbeing and reduces the stresses associated with urban living, as well as promoting physical health. Given the Park's distance from urban centres, what are the realistic prospects for it becoming a greater 'health' asset? Could the NP increasingly be seen as a source of wellbeing for local communities and those in immediate vicinity? Could links with Primary Care Trusts be strengthened?
- How do we promote understanding and enjoyment of the National Park to those who do not visit (particularly the young and BAME communities)? So our visitor profile better reflects that of the national population and the benefits of the Park are extended to more people?
- How could the National Park be better utilised to meet the Government's current education curriculum? How can we also increase the use of the Park for informal education and outdoor learning such as the John Muir Award?

- In relation to climate change, warmer summers might make the Park more attractive to visitors. This would make the summer economy more vibrant, would support outdoor events and increase demand for public transport. It might, however, have some negative impacts in terms of more congestion, and pressure for engineered solutions to facilitate greater visitor and vehicle use
- Tourism businesses are keen to grow the tourism market throughout the year, particularly during the winter months. This has been identified as an issue in the Dales Tourism action plan. How can this be achieved?
- Should tourism businesses be encouraged to develop their offer for non-traditional audiences, particularly those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds?
- How can local food and other products be used both to help promote understanding of what makes the National Park special, and to support the local economy?
- How important are dark night skies? Would there be economic and environmental value in seeking designation of all or part of the National Park as a 'Dark Skies Reserve'?
- How best to develop and manage opportunities for recreation in the new area of the National Park?
- What are the 'must haves'? Small attractions/ interpretation, good coffee, wifi, 4G, modern expectations, etc?
- The new Local Plan provides more opportunities for tourism infrastructure development. What and where are the most pressing needs (wet weather facilities?) – and how could their development be funded?
- Several surrounding settlements are important 'gateways' into the Park (as well as hosting key visitor services). What more could be done to strengthen the links with the Park and improve the quality of the offer?
- Is there a requirement for greater signposting of the YDNP from the road network, motorway signs, A and B road signing?
- Do we need to consider promoting the Dales as an 'activity destination' – caving and activities other than walking or cycling?
- Do we need to consider promoting the Dales as a cultural destination?
- Parking is an issue at a number of sites around the park (Malham, Horton and in the, new area etc). Can these be better managed or are more radical solutions required?
- How important is tranquillity to the experience of the Yorkshire Dales? Are more measures needed to ameliorate the effects of traffic speed, noise, and development?
- The National Park has some of the finest caving opportunities in the country. How can the desire to provide better access to them be balanced with the rights of landowners and the vulnerability of some sites?