



National Parks England
Business Plan
2021/22



Lake District
National Park



Northumberland National Park



YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

Foreword

“A breathing space for the cure of souls.”

Ted Ellis’s famous phrase resonates louder than it ever has before – in a time where our country is facing a nature, climate, and health emergency – and our National Parks have a critical role to play.

The demand for contact with nature for respite and healing through the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us that as we forge a greener, healthier future, the National Park network and the teams that work for them are needed as much as, if not more than when they were when established alongside the NHS 70 years ago.

National Park Authorities (NPAs) lead and convene teams for our National Parks, teams spanning sectors, disciplines and communities, yet supporting national and globally important action. We are of and for the connected family of special landscapes across England; diverse and beautiful, living and working places. They are inspirational landscapes that support physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. They are rich in wildlife, history and cultural heritage, and the opportunities they afford for learning and engagement with the natural environment. They deliver economic growth through providing high quality environments that underpin thousands of businesses and are home to many entrepreneurs. They provide a wealth of ecosystem services and are for everyone to enjoy.

National Parks England brings the expertise found in each Authority together to the national stage. We help to raise awareness of the work of NPAs to those with an influence to bear on National Parks, and we promote the collective needs of the NPAs. National Parks England provides a forum for learning, coordination, collaboration and communication.

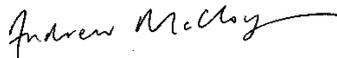
As we face a changing landscape, both in the hearts and minds of the public as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, but also through Brexit, the Landscapes Review, and critically, the climate emergency, it is vital for National Parks England to have a succinct and clear vision for how it will support NPAs. Further, because of this rapidly changing environment, this is a one-year Business Plan for NPE. We will have made progress in this plan over the next year if we see:

- NPE’s position on the **Landscapes Review** integrated into the Government’s Consultation on the Landscapes Review
- More effective and joined-up working with partners and Government
- Targeted support for nature recovery, specifically delivering on the **Wildlife Delivery Plan** and supporting the development of a **Nature Recovery Network**
- Optimising National Parks’ collaboration and collective response to **climate change** mitigation and adaptation
- Responding to the dual challenge of better **connecting people to nature and addressing issues of exclusion.**
- We have successfully delivered year 1 of the **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme**, secured funding for years 2 and 3 and can demonstrate delivery of public benefits via FiPL

Through this activity, NPE shall help ensure that the nation’s National Parks are protected, remain at the cutting edge of delivering sustainable development, are relevant to wider society, and continue to be held in high regard.

The NPAs whether working individually or collectively as National Parks England will work with a range of other bodies where we have a shared interest, including from the public, private, and voluntary sectors. We are committed to effective collaboration. The Campaign for National Parks, National Parks Partnerships, and the National Association for AONBs will continue to remain close partners.

The scale of the challenge, although considerable, is matched by our determination to ensure National Parks remain fantastic places for the country that are valued and supported. Through our collective actions and our commitment to care for National Parks over the long term, we aspire to uphold the principles that underpin national park designation and provide a legacy to future generations that all can be proud of.



Andrew McCloy
National Parks England
Chairman



Hoda Gray
National Parks England
Interim Executive Director



Richard Leafe
Lead National Parks Officer

National Parks England

National Parks England is the successor to the English National Park Authorities Association (ENPAA) that was formed on 1 April 2006. It became a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee on 3 March 2008, and rebranded to National Parks England in May 2013.

The Association was created to help the English NPAs to work together collaboratively, to represent the interests of NPAs to a range of policy makers, to facilitate discussion amongst NPAs on issues of common concern, and to work together with other bodies in partnership where this would add value. The objects of the company, as set out in the Memorandum of Association, can be summarised as:

- to promote, support and further the interests and policies of the NPAs;
- to represent and express the opinions of the NPAs members at all levels;
- to act as a forum to facilitate debate about matters of common concern to NPAs;
- to provide information to the public, decision makers and others on the activities of NPAs and any issues of relevance;
- to establish and maintain links with other organisations and partners whose activities are relevant to NPAs; and
- to work alongside other Associations representing NPAs elsewhere across the UK in order to achieve mutual objectives in the interests of all National Park Authorities in the United Kingdom.

The Association has a small office base in London in recognition that this remains where key decision makers for NPAs continue to be. It normally employs 2.5 FTE staff¹, and crucially from the expertise of the staff in the ten Authorities.

Highlights of work undertaken by NPE during the last Business Planning period National Parks England include:

- Published numerous press-releases including a piece highlighting the positive work of NPA during the Covid-19 pandemic, celebrating 70 years of National Parks, and
- Published its four Delivery Plans, which were also shared with Defra Ministers, key partners and others, and have gained a positive response
- Submitted a well-received proposal on the National Landscapes Service to Defra Ministers and officials
- Responded to over 41 consultations
- Effectively responded to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic through supporting NPAs by facilitating weekly NPO calls and liaising with Defra on key issues, but also adjusting to remote working for NPE staff
- Launched new Accord with Mobile UK with support from DCMS and Defra Ministers
- Launched new Accord with Forestry Commission at the New Forest Show with Lord Gardiner (Defra), FC, and Government's Trees and Woodlands Champion
- Launched the National Parks Experience Collection at Haddon Hall (Jan 2018)

¹ At the time of writing, NPE currently employs 2.5 FTE (Executive Director, Head of Policy, and Executive Assistant). NPE's Head of Policy has been acting as Interim Executive Director since 1 January 2021, and will continue to do so until the Executive Director Returns. NPE will also be hiring a part-time Communications Officer in July 2021.

- Increased its social media following, especially in December 2020 with a record number of impressions and profile visits

National Park Purposes and our Shared Vision

England has ten National Parks, nine of which have been designated under *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949*. In addition, the Broads was designated under the *Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988* and is managed by the Broads Authority.

National Parks have two purposes, to:

- conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
- promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the public.

In the pursuit of undertaking these functions, the NPAs have a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park. NPAs have a range of other duties placed on them from other legislation.

Work by National Parks England and the Government in 2010 led to a shared Vision for the National Parks included in *English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010*. The Circular remains the main statement of Government policy on National Parks, until revised. The Vision is written as a series of 'destination statements' for 2030. The Circular states, 'the Government wishes to see all relevant bodies with an influence on the management of these special areas working towards the achievement of this vision in accordance with the rest of this document' (para 11).

By 2030 English National Parks and the Broads will be places where:

- There are thriving, living, working landscapes notable for their natural beauty and cultural heritage. They inspire visitors and local communities to live within environmental limits and to tackle climate change. The wide-range of services they provide (from clean water to sustainable food) are in good condition and valued by society.
- Sustainable development can be seen in action. The communities of the Parks take an active part in decisions about their future. They are known for having been pivotal in the transformation to a low carbon society and sustainable living. Renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, low carbon transport and travel and healthy, prosperous communities have long been the norm.
- Wildlife flourishes and habitats are maintained, restored and expanded and linked effectively to other ecological networks. Woodland cover has increased and all woodlands are sustainably managed, with the right trees in the right places. Landscapes and habitats are managed to create resilience and enable adaptation.
- Everyone can discover the rich variety of England's natural and historic environment, and have the chance to value them as places for escape, adventure, enjoyment, inspiration and reflection, and a source of national pride and identity. They will be recognised as fundamental to our prosperity and well-being.

The Vision is wide ranging and provides a long-term direction of travel. It is specific to National Parks, though sits within wider ambitions for the country, as set out in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

Implementing the strategy

To meet the needs of this vision over the next year, NPE will be acutely focused on supporting NPA needs as Government responds to the Landscapes Review and supporting the delivery of 4 key priority areas through their associated delivery plans (see Annex 1). This will be accomplished through developing and sustaining positive, robust relationships with key partners and stakeholder, developing supportive policy, and working closely with National Park Officers and their teams, recognising people are our greatest asset to achieve impact.

National Parks England's Mission

Our Mission is intended to encapsulate what we are seeking to achieve overall. This can be summarised as:

'Government, partners and stakeholders understand, are inspired by, and value, the work of National Park Authorities in England, and provide sustained support and resources to enable them to further National Park purposes and the Vision'

How National Parks England operates

The Company comprises a small office base in London and normally employs three staff (2.5 FTE). Crucial to the success of NPE is working closely and collaboratively with the nine National Park Authorities, and the Broads Authority. Below describes the constituent parts of National Parks England that work together to achieve the company's objects.

The NPE Board

The Board is made up of Directors, each of whom is the Chair of an English National Park Authority or of the Broads Authority. The role of the Board is to champion the purposes of National Parks and provide effective strategic leadership to the Association in partnership with Chief Executives, and NPE staff. Meetings of the Board involve Directors who are supported by CEOs (see below) and NPE staff. NPE's Executive Director is the Secretary for the Company.

The Chief Executives/National Park Officers Group (E-NPOG)

This group is made up of the CEOs of the ten Authorities. It acts to provide expert support and advice to the Board and the NPE staff. As the group with responsibilities for the Executive function of NPAs, it exists to help deliver the agreed NPE Business Plan and decisions of the NPE Board. The group also provides a forum for peer-to-peer support. Meetings of E-NPOG involve the CEOs of the ten Authorities, supported by the NPE staff. The outcomes of these meetings are reported back to the Board. One Chief Executive acts in a lead capacity each year, by rotation, whilst all CEOs take responsibility for leading/ sponsoring NPAs collective thinking on a range of policy topics.

NPE Staff

Normally, the NPE Office comprises:

- An Executive Director (FT)
- Head of Policy (PT)
- An Administrator (PT)

NPE intends to hire a part-time communications officer in June 2021 for an initial 6-8 month contract.

NPE may employ others on a temporary basis, host a volunteer, and can enter into contracts. The staff provide a central conduit for information exchange; monitoring activity in Parliament/ Whitehall for NPAs; facilitating communication between policy makers and NPAs; help develop and articulate collective positions agreed by the NPE Board; and can act as a first point of contact for national policy stakeholders with the NPA family.

All Parks Professional Working Groups

A vital part of ensuring NPE is able to punch above its weight is the links made to the standing All Parks Professional Working Groups. These bring specialist teams from across the NPA family together (at England and UK levels). They vary in their format but generally help share best practice, provide support, develop collective thinking, and work with the NPE staff on delivering the NPE Business Plan. Close working relationships and mutual support is provided between lead officers, NPE staff and the professional groups themselves. NPE staff are committed to helping support collaboration and effective dialogue across the family.

Commitment to collaboration

The NPAs can be stronger and more effective through working together. NPAs (as independent bodies) may develop their own positions on the basis of their own priorities, but there is also a recognition that there is value in coming together. Collaboration enables, for example, access to senior decision makers to be increased; for the voice of NPAs to be more coherent and heard more loudly; for partnerships to benefit the entire NPA family, and for NPAs to be able to draw on the expertise and experience of others.

An important dimension to the work of NPE staff is to service the meetings of the Board, of NPOs and to engage with the leads of the All-Parks Professional Working Groups. It is this communication which 'oils the wheels' of the network and allows NPAs to work closely together through mutual understanding and respect.

NPE is also committed to working with those other organisations that have an interest in National Parks and NPAs. These include the Campaign for National Parks that provides the voluntary sector voice for National Parks; NP-UK that leads the public promotion of National Parks; and National Parks Partnerships that is spearheading the work of the NPAs on corporate sponsorship.

Monitoring and Review

The Executive Director will monitor progress in delivery of the Business Plan and will update the NPE Board at the 2022 Annual General Meeting.

Annex 1 Work Programme

England's nine National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority have come together and agreed four collective priorities that will guide our work as a family of National Parks, and in partnership with many others.

Our vision is for National Parks to be national beacons for a sustainable future, where nature and people flourish.

To help us get there, we have developed four Delivery Plans covering:

- Wildlife and Nature Recovery
- Climate Leadership
- Sustainable Farming and Land Management
- Landscapes for Everyone

Each is equally important and are inter-connected.

You can read more about them by following the links below:

[Wildlife and Nature Recovery](#)

[Climate Leadership](#)

[Sustainable Farming and Land Management](#)

[Landscapes for Everyone](#)

The four Delivery Plans set out our commitments, ambitions and plans. We are looking to Government and other agencies to help support and resource them. And to be successful we also welcome the active participation of everyone who has an influence on the places and people that make our National Parks so special.