

8-Point Plan for England's National Parks

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Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



National Parks
England



Environment
Agency



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Introduction

Covering nearly 10% of the country, containing some of our most memorable landscapes and almost 30% of our internationally important wildlife sites, National Parks are national treasures at the heart of our national identity. When we also consider our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), nearly 25% of England is designated as protected. These are living, working, iconic landscapes, cherished at home and admired overseas.¹

“National Parks can be inspiring landscapes for everyone. I want more young people to experience these natural wonders. My ambition is for the generation growing up now to be better connected to nature than my own.”

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP,
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

This plan sets out our ambition to put National Parks at the heart of the way we think about the environment and how we manage it for future generations. We want as many young people as possible to learn about and experience the natural environment. National Parks are a great way in: inspiring environments that can be lifelong sources of wellbeing, identity, adventure and pride.

The special qualities that can be found in these landscapes underpin the economic activities—from traditional upland farming to tourism, food and other businesses—that thrive in our National Parks. As more and more tourists from all over the world visit our country, we want the numbers who experience the natural wonders of our National Parks to grow. As drivers of the rural economy, National Parks can also provide a route for young people into work, with National Park Authorities leading in developing new standards for apprenticeships.

As well as being important for the rural economy, people value National Parks for their special qualities. National Parks and AONBs are home to strong communities producing some of the nation's best food and drink. People love these national treasures: 90% of the public, for example, say that National Parks are important to them.² People visit National

¹ This plan is focused on England's ten National Parks. The Government recognises the valuable work also undertaken by AONB Partnerships, and values closer working between National Park Authorities and AONB Partnerships.

² Data from *UK National Parks Awareness Survey (2012)*, commissioned by UK Association of National Park Authorities.

Parks for recreation: to volunteer their time, to encounter history, to be outdoors in these invigorating spaces. National Parks are national assets in which everyone can share.

“National Parks are the soul of Britain. They are the centre of our imagination. When people think of Britain, wherever they are, they imagine these landscapes. I’d like to make sure that everyone in Britain and more visitors from around the world have the unique experience of going to our National Parks.”

Rory Stewart OBE MP,
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs

Funding for National Park Authorities³ was protected in real terms in the Spending Review 2015, in recognition of the vital role they play as stewards of these landscapes. The ambitions in this plan will be delivered by Government working closely with all 10 National Park Authorities and National Parks England, reflecting our shared priorities and passion for these special places, through the course of this Parliament.

This plan forms part of our wider ambition to make our environment the best anywhere in the world. This will be delivered through the Government's 25-Year Environment Plan, which will be published later this year.

“Our National Parks are the jewels in the crown of our beautiful countryside and something to be very proud of. They are living, working landscapes that need careful stewardship, for the benefit and enjoyment of all. I look forward to working with the Government on delivering this exciting Plan for England’s National Parks.”

Jim Bailey,
Chair, National Parks England

³ The Broads is a member of the National Park family. The Broads Authority was established under the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988 and has the same statutory purposes as the English National Park Authorities with additional responsibilities relating to navigation. Reference to National Park Authorities in this document includes the Broads Authority.

Summary: 8-Point Plan for England's National Parks

Inspiring Natural Environments

1. **Connect young people with nature**

- Double the number of young people to experience a National Park as part of National Citizen Service by 2020.
- A new package of teaching materials for schools based on National Parks.
- National Park Authorities to engage directly with over 60,000 young people per year through schools visits by 2017/18.

2. **Create *thriving* natural environments**

- National Park Authorities, with the Environment Agency and Natural England, to champion integrated management of the natural environment, showcasing the benefits that designated landscapes can bring.

Drivers of the Rural Economy

3. **National Parks driving growth in *international tourism***

- Promote National Parks as world-class destinations to visitors from overseas and the UK.
- Increase annual visitors from 90m to 100m, generating an estimated £440m for local businesses.

4. **Deliver *new apprenticeships* in National Parks**

- Develop three new apprenticeship standards led by National Park Authorities.
- Double the number of apprenticeships in National Park Authorities by 2020.

5. **Promote the *best of British food* from National Parks**

- National Parks will be known for, and visited as, great food destinations.
- Work with National Park Authorities and the Great British Food Unit to deliver more Protected Food Names for National Park products and increase exports.

- The Government will celebrate National Park produce.

National Treasures

6. *Everyone's National Parks*

- Complete the designation to extend the boundaries of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.
- Encourage more diverse visitors to National Parks.
- Promote volunteering in National Parks.
- Celebrate the 70th Anniversary of National Parks' creation.

7. *Landscape and heritage in National Parks*

- Work with the Heritage Lottery Fund to achieve their objective of encouraging more fundable projects in the Natural Heritage sector.
- Enhance people's involvement in the interpretation of the historic environment and natural beauty in National Parks.
- Support the Lake District's bid for UNESCO World Heritage Status.
- Tell the story of cultural landscapes in England's National Parks.

8. *Health and wellbeing in National Parks*

- Promote innovative schemes for National Parks to serve national health.
- Realise the immense potential for outdoor recreation in National Parks.

Inspiring Natural Environments

The environment in National Parks is phenomenally rich. Over 30% of sites in England that are recognised and protected because of their international conservation importance can be found in National Parks. National Parks have a vital role to play in connecting more young people with nature, through learning and volunteering. National Parks form part of our wider ambition for Britain to have the best natural environment anywhere in the world, to be delivered through the Government's 25-Year Environment Plan, which will be published later this year.

1. **Connect young people with nature**

Today, just 10% of schoolchildren have access to outdoor learning. Furthermore, recent research suggests that up to 12% of children (1.3 million) of children UK-wide did not visit, or rarely visited natural places in the last year.⁴ In contrast, 96% of people say they want every child to experience a National Park for themselves.⁵

The Government's ambition is to connect more young people with nature. UK-wide - National Park Authority education teams are making nature more accessible to young people by improving connections with our nation's most iconic landscapes, wildlife and heritage; and through providing outstanding learning experiences that inspire people to treasure National Parks for the future. They can also help young people to make connections between food, farming and the environment.

We want to engage young people with national parks at every stage of their education. As part of this we will work with the National Citizen Service (NCS) to increase exposure to National Parks for young people. NCS brings together young people from different backgrounds to learn about responsibility and serving their communities. It's open to all 15-17-year-olds in England, and the Government has committed to providing a place for every young person who wants one. NCS participants take part in a four week full-time programme, which includes two residential weeks (one outward bound experience and one tackling life skills generally in a University context), as well as two weeks planning and delivering a social action initiative in their community.

National Parks already play an important part in NCS, as they provide an environment for adventure, reflection, experiencing the outdoors, and learning more about the natural

⁴ *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: a pilot to develop an indicator of visits to the natural environment by children* (2016).

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/498944/mene-childrens-report-years-1-2.pdf

⁵ Data from *UK National Parks Awareness Survey* (2012), commissioned by UK Association of National Park Authorities.

environment. Last year, 10% of NCS participants – over 8,000 - experienced a residential week within a National Park.

Our ambitions:

- **Double the number of young people to experience a National Park as part of National Citizen Service by 2020.** So far, 10% of all NCS participants have graduated from the NCS scheme with experience of a National Park. We will work hard alongside NCS and National Park authorities to ensure that young people get the best possible experience from undertaking their National Citizen Service in National Parks.
- **A new package of teaching materials for schools based on National Parks.** National Parks offer great potential for learning in core concepts across the curriculum, including sciences, geography and the arts. We will work with National Park Authorities to develop a new package of materials for schools, to enable teachers and parents to connect children's learning with National Parks. This will be promoted by the Department for Education and will be accessible through the National Parks UK website. We will support National Park Authorities in their ambition to produce a range of imaginative and relevant materials for every child, in order to fire young people's imaginations about what National Parks offer and what they can learn and experience there. National Park Authorities will work in partnership with the private sector and philanthropic donors to achieve this ambition.
- **National Park Authorities to engage directly with over 60,000 young people per year through schools visits by 2017/18.** Seeing a National Park is the best way for children and young people to learn about and be inspired by National Parks. National Park Authorities have ambitious plans to scale up already successful education programmes. By 2017/18 National Park Authorities will deliver more than 60,000 learning experiences directly to schools and others in learning and training through expert National Park Authority staff. A further 20,000 experiences in National Parks will be delivered through other partners involved in education, learning and training.

Case Study: Dartmoor NPA Europarc Junior Ranger Programme

Piloted in 2015, the Junior Ranger Programme enables 12 young people to work alongside NPA Rangers to gain their Junior Ranger Badges and the John Muir Explorer Award. The focus was specifically to reconnect children with the natural world and their cultural heritage, whilst also providing opportunities to undertake conservation activities, engendering a spirit of 'care for the natural environment'. Some of the Junior Rangers learnt new skills whilst making a film about young people's perspectives on National Parks. Such schemes demonstrate clear social, health and wellbeing benefits for participants, and positive engagement in the local community.

Case Study: South Downs Curriculum

The South Downs National Park Authority has actively engaged with 290 schools in and around the National Park area, as well as many more further afield. The South Downs Curriculum has been developed as a result of both this school engagement and in conjunction with the many outdoor learning providers working across the South Downs. The original National Curriculum document has been annotated to suggest ways that schools can use local resources to bring learning to life. Hyperlinked annotations on the curriculum document include: direct links to the NPA's resource bank on the South Downs National Park Learning Zone; notes on local examples and case studies; suggestions of where to find specialist information; links to outdoor learning providers through an online Learning Map; images, animations and videos; plus many more ideas. A simpler overview can be accessed through curriculum jigsaws, which show ideas for topics and places to go for each key stage.

This South Downs Curriculum has been very well-received by local schools and is a dynamic, living document, growing as more content is added by the local education sector to create an online learning hub for all curriculum-linked information about the South Downs National Park

2. Create *thriving* natural environments

National Parks are amazing natural assets. They are havens for native plants and animals, containing almost 30% of the land in England that is recognised as being of international importance for wildlife.⁶ 23% of the land in the National Parks is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its natural attributes. 27% of England's lowland fen, 41% of its upland hay meadow, 80% of its upland chalk grassland and over a third of the lowland heathland in England is found in National Parks. These are amazing stores of natural capital: peat soils in National Parks hold 119 megatons of carbon, equivalent to England's entire CO₂ emissions for one year.⁷

National Parks are also working landscapes, supporting farming and other crucial parts of the rural economy. How we work together to manage the natural environment is important for everyone: National Parks support livelihoods, food and timber production and deliver important environmental services keeping our water clean and lowering the risk of flooding. Each National Park has its own distinctive character and qualities; each continues to be shaped by its weather, its geology, its soils, its water, its natural habitats, its land uses and its people.

⁶ Data from Natural England - *TBG Partner T1A Analysis* (March 2014).

⁷ *Estimating carbon storage in peatlands within England's National Parks*, Natural England (2009).

Conserving and enhancing these precious areas, for the benefit of current and future generations, is a vital role of the National Park Authorities. The Government recognises the skill and knowledge that National Park Authorities, the Environment Agency and Natural England bring to the local management of these environments—from river catchments, to historic landscape features, to rare species. We will harness this local knowledge to strengthen our resilience in the face of continuing environmental threats such as flooding, while preserving the vital essence of National Parks as treasured working landscapes.

Our ambition:

- **National Park Authorities, with the Environment Agency and Natural England, will champion integrated management of the natural environment, showcasing the benefits that designated landscapes can bring.** National Park Authorities and the communities they work with will provide leadership, in this locally-led model of environmental management. This will mean National Park Authorities are at the vanguard of delivering the Government's new 25-Year Environment Plan.

Case Study: Moors for the Future Partnership

The Moors for the Future Partnership has the ambition to bring life back to the South Pennine Moorlands Special Area of Conservation which includes the moorland landscape of both the Peak District National Park and the South Pennines. Lying next to the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, this area has suffered from 150 years of atmospheric pollution, leaving substantial stretches of exposed and degraded peat.

In 2010 the Peak District National Park Authority led a private-public-voluntary sector partnership to deliver the biggest moorland conservation project in Europe. Since launch, the partnership has spent £20 million restoring approximately 900ha of badly damaged bog and protecting 2,500ha of active blanket bog. This work has halted centuries of degradation, saved 2,000 tonnes of carbon entering the atmosphere, delivered elements of three water company Asset Management Plan outputs for this area and reduced peak storm discharge from headwaters by as much as 30%. In October 2015, the Peak District National Park Authority through the Moors for the Future Partnership gained support from the EU LIFE Programme to deliver further work worth £12 million over the period 2015-2021. This programme is also supported by £3 million direct cash funding from three water companies (Severn Trent Water, United Utilities and Yorkshire Water), making it a pioneering public-private partnership.

Drivers of the Rural Economy

People cherish National Parks for their natural beauty, opportunities for open air recreation and cultural heritage. But National Parks also offer tremendous economic benefits. More than 50% of businesses in National Parks believe their performance is improved by being in a National Park.⁸ There are also opportunities to market premium goods and services linked to National Parks. The special qualities in National Parks' and AONBs' iconic, protected, often deeply rural landscapes have unique economic potential, and can be an important part of delivering the Government's [Rural Productivity Plan](#).

National Parks already receive 90 million visitors every year.⁹ We think this number can be increased, offering more people the benefits of visiting a National Park without damaging their special qualities, with a greater number of international visitors and those from the UK discovering all the great things National Parks have to offer. As well as fantastic landscapes and natural beauty, National Parks are home to many quality British food and drink products, and six Michelin-starred restaurants. Food tourism can provide a real economic boost in these rural areas.

National Parks are at the heart of the rural economy in their regions. We are working to ensure that the rural economy works for people of all ages, with opportunities for young people to develop the right skills. Apprenticeships are an effective way to provide training and develop skills, benefitting both young people and businesses. National Park Authorities will play a leading role in supporting the development of the skills necessary to enable young people to be part of the rural economy in the twenty-first century.

3. National parks driving growth in *international tourism*

Worldwide, tourism is a growing industry. The number of tourists worldwide passed 1 billion for the first time in 2012; the figure is set to rise to 1.4 billion in 2020 and 1.8 billion by 2030.¹⁰ These trends are reflected in visitors to the UK. Through its [Five-Point Plan for Tourism](#), the Government is committed to spreading the benefits of tourism across the country. The unique attractions of National Parks have a vital role to play in making this happen. National Parks are a draw for overseas visitors — 7% of overseas visitors who

⁸ Various studies: e.g. SQW (2008), *Contribution of the Peak District National Park to the economy of the East Midlands*, and Campaign for National Parks (2006); *Prosperity and Protection - the Economic impact of National Parks in the Yorkshire and Humber region*.

⁹ *Valuing England's National Parks* (2013).
http://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/338361/Valuing-Englands-National-Parks-Final-Report-10-5-13.pdf.

¹⁰ *UNTWO Tourism Highlights* (2015) <http://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284416899>

come to Britain on holiday visit a National Park.¹¹ However, this is just a tiny fraction of the 90 million annual visitors to our National Parks.

Our ambitions:

- **Promote National Parks as world-class destinations to visitors from overseas and the UK.** The new £40 million Discover England Fund was announced by the Government in November 2015 and will be open for bids in summer 2016. It will support the development of world-class tourism products on a regional or thematic basis that respond to market trends and consumer needs. We will work with the National Park Authorities, VisitBritain and VisitEngland to make the nation's most inspiring landscapes more accessible to visitors from the UK and the rest of the world. We will utilise the successful GREAT Britain campaign to promote the National Parks.
- **Increase annual visitors from 90m to 100m, generating an estimated £440m for local businesses.** There are currently an estimated 90 million visitors to our National Parks every year. Visitors to our National Parks are hugely important to the rural and national economy. Working together and implementing the measures in this plan, our long-term ambition is to reach 100 million visitors to National Parks per year. Increasing the number of annual visitors in this way could generate £440m extra tourism revenue for National Parks and the surrounding areas.¹² We will work with National Park Authorities to continue to promote sustainable tourism which is good for the rural economy and safeguards the environment.
- **Extend the National Parks tourist season.** To maximize the potential for visitors to National Parks, we need to encourage activities and attractions that are open for business all year round. Projects such as the Northumberland National Park 'Dark Skies' initiative can keep businesses open and viable throughout the year. The Government will work with National Park Authorities to make this possible.

¹¹ *Inbound Tourism to Britain's nations and Regions* (2013) https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/Regional_Activities_report_FINAL_COMPRESSED.pdf

¹² Assumes £44 per visit based on 90m visitors and £4bn of tourism revenue. Data from National Parks England: http://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/338362/3209-NPE-INFOGRAPHICweb.pdf.

Case Study: Northumberland International Dark Sky Park

All our National Parks have dark skies relative to urban areas. Northumberland has the darkest skies in England and secured International Dark Sky Park Status in 2013. The impact of this designation is making a positive impact on the local economy, and residents' quality of life. Exmoor has experienced similar benefits since it became a Dark Sky Reserve in 2011.

Last year, more than 18,000 visitors flocked to Kielder Observatory. Its continuing success spurring other businesses locally to follow in their footsteps. Battlesteads Hotel, built a new observatory in their own back-garden and winter bookings this year look to exceed 70% occupancy. Smaller accommodation providers are also welcoming visitors from all over the UK, travelling long distances to experience something special and memorable in the depths of winter.

Other National Parks are seeing the potential of astro-tourism. Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors hosted their first joint Dark Skies Festival in February and Dartmoor is hosting its own Dark Skies Exhibition at Princetown.

Star gazing in our National Parks creates good memories that increasing numbers of people want to experience. Securing investment for National Parks to become year-round visitor destinations can reap rewards for England's rural visitor economy.

4. Deliver new apprenticeships in National Parks

The Government has committed to delivering three million apprenticeships by 2020. National Parks, as drivers of the rural economy, are willing to play a crucial role in developing new standards to help young people find a path to employment in rural areas.

Our ambitions:

- **Develop three new apprenticeship standards led by National Park Authorities.** National Park Authorities are leading the development of new apprenticeship standards for careers in countryside land management under the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' Trailblazer scheme. There are also plans for National Park Authorities to be Trailblazers in new rural tourism and built heritage conservation apprenticeship standards. We will support National Park Authorities in this ambition and engage other partners to increase participation in these standards.
- **Double the number of apprenticeships in National Park Authorities by 2020.** As well as using their expertise to drive new standards, National Parks are a great place for apprentices to train. We will work with National Park Authorities to double their apprenticeship numbers by 2020, comfortably exceeding the Government's target of a 2.3% apprenticeship rate in the public sector.

Case Study: North York Moors Apprenticeship Programme

The North York Moors has worked with apprentices for the last 13 years and they now make up 14% of the park's workforce. The Authority makes use of apprentices' enthusiasm and skills to continue to deliver low-cost, high-quality services at the same time as providing excellent training. It has consistently committed core funding to apprentice programmes and reshaped services to make apprenticeships an integral part of several teams.

The Authority is not training apprentices to go into its own workforce—most are snapped up by the private sector, while some go on to set up their own businesses and others use the experience as a vocational route into higher education.

The work of the North York Moors has been recognised as exemplary—in recent years it has twice been named in the Top 100 Apprentice employers in the country, as well as winning the Yorkshire and Humber regional award. National Parks can deliver brilliant apprenticeships, and the real proof is in what young people say about how working in the role changes their lives. They consistently say how much they value the friendly, supportive environment of National Parks as a place to learn new skills.

5. Promote *the best of British Food* from National Parks

Increasingly, visitors to National Parks come to sample the delicious food and drink farmed, grown and produced in these beautiful landscapes. Over 17,000 people are employed on commercial farms across the English National Parks.¹³ National Parks are increasingly prioritising food and drink products and experiences to further enhance their tourism offer and develop the rural economy. This can help to attract more visitors to National Parks, from the UK and around the world. Through the Great British Food campaign we will promote premium products from National Parks, establish food tourism as a core part of the visitor experience, and support the growth of rural food businesses to ensure that great British food from National Parks is at the heart of a dynamic rural economy.

Our ambitions:

- **National Parks will be known for, and visited as, great food destinations.** We want visitors to our parks to sample the UK's great food heritage surrounded by the landscapes and traditions where these foods originate. Through Defra's [Great British Food Unit](#) and the Great British Food campaign, we will work with National Park Authorities and their food producers to develop a strong programme to promote food tourism and build food as a core part of the tourism offer. We will also work with National Park Authorities and their food producers to help consumers to identify premium local produce from National Parks.
- **Work with National Park Authorities and the Great British Food Unit to increase the number of Protected Food Names from National Parks and increase exports.** Over one third of England's foods with Protected Food Name status are produced in our National Parks. National Park Authorities will use their local knowledge to work with the Great British Food Unit to seek more products eligible for Protected Food Name status. Through the work of the Great British Food Unit and implementation of our Export Action Plan, we will work with National Park Authorities to promote their products overseas. Unique premium products originating from National Parks, attractive to overseas consumers, will be championed and promoted in key export markets.
- **The Government will celebrate National Park produce.** Government receptions will feature and showcase food and drink from National Parks as part of a wider initiative to celebrate and promote the best British products.

¹³ *Valuing England's National Parks* (2013).

http://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/338361/Valuing-Englands-National-Parks-Final-Report-10-5-13.pdf .

Case Study: New Forest Marque

National Park Authorities have been supporting local producers through schemes such as the New Forest Marque. The New Forest Marque is an accreditation scheme that helps to support local businesses and recognise high environmental standards. This scheme was set up in 2004 as a way to develop and promote the production, processing and distribution of local produce from the New Forest.

The New Forest Marque is supported by the New Forest National Park Authority, which provides professional resources and staff support. There are now dozens of accredited producers, ranging from small-scale food and craft businesses to farm shops, vineyards and boutique hotels and restaurants.

Farmer Jamie Burgess, of Swallowfields Farm and New Forest Wild Boar, says of the scheme: *"The New Forest Marque has been a great help to our business in terms of providing advice, promotion, contacts and marketing support."* The [New Forest Marque website](#) provides a directory of accredited producers and businesses, helping New Forest residents and visitors to make choices that benefit their local environment and economy.

National Treasures

National Parks hold a unique position in the history of our country, its people and its landscape. They tell the story of our nation, from the outstanding bronze-age landscapes of Dartmoor, to the Roman heritage of Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland, to the World War II oral history recollections gathered in the New Forest. National Parks have inspired some of our greatest artists, writers and musicians; it was Wordsworth who first presciently described the Lake District as 'a sort of national property in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy'.

Case Study: Going the Extra Mile, Broads National Park

'*Going the Extra Mile*' is for people who seldom or never use their local public space or venture out into the countryside, for a variety of economic, social, environmental and health reasons. The project aims to facilitate engagement and dialogue with these groups, and provide a way to overcome current barriers that prevent people from benefitting from what the National Park has to offer.

The scheme creates Gateways to the landscape by using local parks and formal reserve sites within easy reach of urban populations as places for activities, experiences and first points of contact. *Going the Extra Mile* encourages people to go on to explore outwards beyond the urban park boundaries into the wider 'wilder' National Park landscape. Working with partners, the scheme offers a range of complimentary experiences from social activities, creative arts, wildlife appreciation, volunteering, fitness activities, citizen science and countryside skills. It aims to reshape participants' perceptions of the countryside, facilitating the creation of new self-sustaining groups. The project is about everyone having the opportunity to appreciate National Parks.

6. Everyone's National Parks

National Parks contain many accessible landscapes. They are special places for everyone to enjoy. This is why we are increasing the area of the country that National Parks cover. We will also work with National Park Authorities to scale up projects to reach visitors from a diverse range of social groups, and to alleviate any barriers that stop more people from enjoying National Parks. We would also like to see appointments to NPAs match the Government's ambitions for diversity.

Our ambitions:

- **Complete the designation to extend the boundaries of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.** In 2015, the Secretary of State announced the extension of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. This will happen in August 2016 and will mean an extension of the boundaries of the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Parks, which will grow by 24% and 3% respectively.
- **Encourage more diverse visitors to National Parks.** As well as attracting more overseas visitors, we want to ensure that everyone here in the UK can benefit from visiting National Parks. As nationally significant—and free—sites for heritage and spaces for wellbeing, National Parks should be enjoyed by all. National Park Authorities will work to build on existing successful programmes, including those that encourage and support under-represented groups. We will support the National Park Authorities to forge partnerships in order to meet their aspiration of removing barriers that can inhibit those without access to transport from visiting National Parks.
- **Promote volunteering in National Parks.** National Park Authorities and AONB Partnerships do a fantastic job of inspiring thousands of volunteers every year, sustaining sometimes fragile landscapes so that more people can enjoy their beauty. We will work with National Park Authorities to make sure that we are doing all we can to promote and enable volunteering.
- **Celebrate the 70th Anniversary of National Parks' creation.** 2019 will mark the anniversary of the Act of Parliament that enabled the creation of National Parks. We will support the National Park Authorities to celebrate this special moment in the life of National Parks, drawing on the successful *Love Your National Parks* initiative.

Case Study: Extending the boundaries of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks

Yorkshire, Cumbria and Lancashire will share the largest area of almost continuous National Park land following the decision to extend two of England's most celebrated National Parks. This will happen in August 2016, creating some 188 square miles of new National Park land, boosting rural tourism in the area, supporting rural businesses and potentially adding millions more to the £4 billion already generated by the 90 million visitors to our stunning National Parks each year. The extension of the National Parks will bring the boundaries of the two National Parks closer together, bring more of England's environment under designated landscape status, and offer important benefits locally.

Case Study: public transport and the South Downs National Park

To enable and inspire people to get out into the National Park, the South Downs National Park Authority worked with bus operators and the local council to make more bus services available, helping people understand what they can see and do, and showing how easy and affordable it is to get to the park by bus.

Open top 'Breeze Bus' services ran on three National Park routes out of Brighton. Supported by partner funding, annual passenger numbers grew from around 64,000 in 2007/8 to more than 99,000 in 2014/15.

The authority worked with the operator on a themed bus with designs on the outside and ideas for exploring the National Park inside. In 2014, more than 500 people took up free or half price bus tickets on Brighton and Hove buses to travel to the Sussex Festival of Nature.

The authority brought together bus operators across the National Park area and beyond, enabling the creation of a multi-operator the Discovery Ticket.

An online Discovery Map features National Park visitor attractions with links to public transport information for each location. A series of car-free itineraries ensure that visitors travelling from population centres outside the National Park can plan days out by public transport and take advantage of discounts offered by attractions to those travelling by public transport.

7. *Landscape and Heritage* in National Parks

Long before their formal designation, National Parks and AONBs were recognised as special places, providing rich inspiration for visitors through their natural beauty and the traditions and culture of rural life that contributed to this. Sustaining these historic, often fragile features of our landscapes is critical to ensuring that they remain some of the best places to visit in the country. Evidence shows that heritage is better protected in National Parks and AONBs than elsewhere.¹⁴ We want more members of the public to experience these national treasures. The Government's forthcoming White Paper on culture will fully recognise the importance of National Parks and AONBs.

Our ambitions:

- **Work with the Heritage Lottery Fund to achieve their objective of encouraging more fundable projects in the Natural Heritage sector.** The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), which on average invests between 20 and 25% of its National Lottery funding in landscape and nature projects, is a key partner for National Parks and AONBs. It has provided approximately £62m in funding for projects in National Parks, and £91m for AONBs since its inception.¹⁵ National Park Authorities and AONB partnerships will work to continue to generate high-quality project proposals that can attract HLF funding, enhancing the natural and cultural heritage offer to the public.
- **Enhance people's involvement in interpretation of the historic environment and natural beauty in National Parks.** National Parks and AONBs are home to sites of global cultural significance, and deep importance for our national culture. National Park Authorities and AONB Partnerships will work with Historic England and Natural England to explore ways to enhance the understanding, conservation, management and interpretation of the historic environment and cultural heritage in designated landscapes. As part of our ambition to get more people connected with the natural environment, National Park Authorities will provide people with 'hands on' experiences with the historic environment, such as through volunteering, community archaeology projects, heritage at risk projects, and young archaeologists' programmes. The National Park Authorities will also produce a regular review of relevant work undertaken in each park on the state of its historic environment to ensure that the public is experiencing the best heritage National Parks have to offer.
- **Support the Lake District's bid for UNESCO World Heritage status.** A group of local, regional and national organisations, led by the Lake District National Park

¹⁴ Statistics provided in relation to the Heritage At Risk Register, Historic England (2015).
<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/>

¹⁵ Data from Heritage Lottery Fund to end March 2015.

Partnership, are working together to make the Lake District a World Heritage Site. This partnership is seeking inscription under the cultural landscape category. The spectacular landscape of the Lake District has been shaped by farming, industry, picturesque landscape design and the conservation movement. It has stimulated poets and artists of the Romantic Movement from the late eighteenth century and conservationists from the nineteenth century. If successful, the Lake District National Park would join Egypt's pyramids, the Taj Mahal and Hadrian's Wall as an internationally recognised heritage site.

- **Tell the story of cultural landscapes in England's National Parks.** England's National Parks are shaped by the people who have lived and worked on the land. The Government will work with National Park Authorities to help tell the story of these special cultural landscapes. This will aim to increase appreciation of the part different people have played in creating and sustaining these beautiful areas.

Case Study: Northumberland National Park - The Sill National Landscape Discovery Centre

The Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre will create the first all-weather, year-round visitor facility in Northumberland National Park, offering 30,000 activity days and attracting more than 100,000 visitors every year. It will widen the visitor offer in the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site area of the National Park to focus on the natural environment and all 10,000 years of human life in Northumberland.

The Sill will transform how people of all ages understand and explore the landscapes, history and heritage of Northumberland and the wider North East. It will open up the landscapes of Northumberland National Park and surrounding AONBs to a broad range of people from all backgrounds, including children, families, disabled people and those less confident at exploring natural places, with retail, café and information services.

The Sill will be a gateway to Northumberland's landscapes and people with its own exhibition space and a leading education and research facility to develop conservation, countryside management, leisure, and tourism skills. The Sill's comprehensive activity programme will inspire people to participate in, value and conserve Northumberland's unique natural and cultural features.

The Sill will also deliver substantial economic benefits to the area, supporting over 120 new jobs per year in a rural economy—including a Rural Growth Hub to support twenty rural enterprises and a range of opportunities for local businesses, ensuring an impact across the whole of Northumberland and beyond for many years to come.

Due to open in June 2017, the Sill demonstrates that National Parks can be an engine for economic growth as well as being the source of inspiration and recreation.

8. Health and Wellbeing in National Parks

There is growing evidence that green spaces have a vital role to play in better public health. National Parks can make a central contribution to our national wellbeing. Parks, sports grounds and other green spaces that are shared by lots of people have an enormous benefit to the physical and mental health of local communities. National Parks—the nation’s breathing spaces—have an important role to play in national wellbeing. 82% of National Park residents describe themselves as being in good or very good health, above national average—implying higher wellbeing.¹⁶

The Government is committed to combatting obesity, and will publish a Childhood Obesity Strategy this summer. The Government has also committed to placing mental health on an equal footing with physical health. The Mental Health Strategy, [No Health without Mental Health](#), makes clear that participation in physical activity is one of the ‘[Five ways to wellbeing](#)’. We know that exercise is moderately more effective than therapy for reducing symptoms of depression. It may also help people with generalised anxiety disorder, panic attacks and stress disorders. The published implementation framework for the strategy outlines how local authorities can take a leading role in improving the mental wellbeing of people in their area, for example, by providing leisure facilities and green spaces.

National Park Authorities have already worked with Clinical Commissioning Groups to trial innovative schemes in mental health treatment. National Parks have a role to play in providing innovative solutions to these health challenges.

Our ambitions:

- **Promote innovative schemes for National Parks to serve public health.** National parks have been at the forefront of trialling innovative schemes to promote wellbeing, such as the ‘green prescriptions’ trial in Dartmoor; the ‘Moor to Enjoy’ scheme in Exmoor; and the Broads Authority’s work with school children at risk of exclusion, and in the rehabilitation of offenders. We will support further such innovations, and develop trials that have been successful in order to mainstream them into public health practice. We will support National Park Authorities in their ambitions for further engagement with local Clinical Commissioning Groups to grow the evidence base on green prescriptions.
- **Realise the immense potential for outdoor recreation in National Parks.** In 2015, the Government published its new strategy on sport and physical activity, [Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation](#). The strategy recognises the importance of ensuring that people have the opportunity to get active outdoors as well as the need to support initiatives that encourage this kind of activity and the infrastructure to facilitate it. Later this year the Government will publish its first Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

¹⁶ *Characteristics of National Parks* (2011). Office for National Statistics
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_300668.pdf.

National Parks afford unrivalled opportunities for outdoor recreation in unspoilt landscapes. When people come to the countryside, they come to get active. For example, over three quarters of people's visits to the countryside involve walking¹⁷ — and there are lots of opportunities to go walking in the National Parks, with the South Downs alone containing 3,000 km of paths. From multiday hikes to gentle strolls between tea rooms, walking is an activity available to many, including those with poor mobility. Walking is one of the easiest, cheapest and most ubiquitous ways of keeping fit. National Parks also offer opportunities in activities such as cycling, caving, canoeing and riding, all in beautiful settings.

Case Study: 'Moor to Enjoy' project, Exmoor National Park Authority

This project is hosted by Exmoor NPA and jointly funded by Health and Wellbeing Boards for Somerset and Devon. A project officer is proactive in making contact with health groups and GP practices to encourage visits to the National Park as part of the treatment patients receive. Sustainability is achieved through training health professionals, community organisers and volunteers to equip them to lead groups on follow-up visits.

Initial evidence from the Moor to Enjoy Project surveys (based on the Edinburgh—Warwick Health and Wellbeing survey model) indicate that on the day of the visit:

- 30% of participants are more physically active than on an average day;
- 71% reported having been more sociable than on an average day;
- 79% said they were more relaxed after visiting Exmoor National Park;
- 88% said visiting Exmoor National Park had lifted their spirits.

Moor to Enjoy takes as its starting point the '*Five Ways to Wellbeing*' (developed by the New Economics Foundation, commissioned by Government Office for Science Foresight team):

Connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give.

As one of the participants said, 'None of this would have happened had we not been introduced to [your project officer]—every experience has had positive and profound impacts on the health and wellbeing of our families, albeit just through shared laughter and getting out...we have been allowed to explore an area of beauty with security and are now becoming independent users of Exmoor as a school, as individual families and as a community. Thank you!'

¹⁷ *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: a pilot to develop an indicator of visits to the natural environment by children* (2016).

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/498944/mene-childrens-report-years-1-2.pdf