

Special Qualities of the North York Moors

1. The National Park purposes in the Environment Act 1995 require us to promote opportunities for the '*understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks*'. The special qualities distinguish the National Parks from each other, and other parts of the United Kingdom.
2. The Department of the Environment Circular 12/96 gives guidance on what is meant by 'special qualities'; The Government believes that individual National Park Authorities are best placed to identify the nature of the special qualities of their Parks. These qualities will be determined within the context of each Park's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and the national purpose of the Parks to conserve and enhance them.
3. Through a special edition of Moors Messenger in 1996 we asked people for their views on the special qualities of their own village, dale or local area the most important special qualities of the North York Moors National Park as a whole. As part of the review of the National Park Management Plan in 2004, the Authority sought gather opinion again as to what are the 'special qualities' of the area that contribute to its character.
4. It is impossible to list everything that makes the National Park special. The qualities and characteristics of the area comprise a diversity of landscapes, habitats, recreational opportunities and communities, each of which is 'special' in its own right, but which together creates the mosaic of opportunities and experiences that makes the North York Moors 'unique'. The following are, however, all key elements:

Great diversity of landscape
Sudden dramatic contrasts associated with this

Wide sweeps of open heather moorland
Distinctive dales, valley and inland headlands

An abundance of forest and woodland
Ancient trees and woodland rich in wildlife

Special landforms from the Ice Age
Exceptional coastal geology

Majestic coastal cliffs and sheltered harbours
Distinctive coastal headlands

A special mix of upland, lowland and coastal habitats
A wide variety of wildlife dependent on these

Settlements which reflect their agricultural, fishing or mining past
Locally distinctive buildings and building materials

Long imprint of human activity
A wealth of archaeology from prehistory to the 20th Century

A rich and diverse countryside for recreation
An extensive network of public paths and tracks

Strong religious past and present
Ruined abbeys and ancient churches

Strong feeling of remoteness
A place for spiritual refreshment

Tranquility
Dark skies at night and clear unpolluted air

Distinctive skills, dialects, songs and customs
Strong sense of community and friendly people

A place of artistic, scientific and literary inspiration
A heritage of authors, artists, scientists and explorers