

# *Landscape for Visitors*

## Sustainable Tourism in the North York Moors National Park

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*Sustainable tourism is a way of positively managing tourism for the benefit of visitors, residents and the environment in a way that does not prejudice the long term survival of the environment and its enjoyment by future generations.*

### **1. THE NATIONAL PARK AND YOU**

Every successful business needs to look after its assets. The tourist industry is no different - except that its assets also include whatever motivates its customers to become visitors. Research shows that, in the North York Moors, this motivating force is the landscape. And whilst you may think that you have little control over the landscape, this publication explains that by working together we can protect and enhance our greatest asset.

This publication is for people who have a tourism enterprise or who are thinking of developing one. It aims to give some practical advice in order that we can all work towards a system of 'sustainable tourism' which manages tourism for the benefit of all - visitor, resident and the environment - and for future generations.

It also aims to explain the role of the National Park Authority, its tourism policies and the reasoning behind them.

**When tourism's good for the environment - it's good for business too.**

### **2. WHERE TO START**

Developing a new tourism enterprise, or expanding an existing one can be exciting and rewarding. But there are many pitfalls along the way and it is helpful to talk through your initial ideas with a specialist who will be able to take a more objective view.

For most people the regional tourist board will be a useful first point of contact.

Prior to working up your proposals, or considering extending or changing the use of a site or buildings, discuss your ideas informally with staff at the National Park Authority.

You should also seek advice on market requirements and the overall viability of the project.

Various organisations and consultants can advise on these matters. An understanding of the background to tourism in the National Park may help you to see how your enterprise could fit into a tradition which goes back many years and which will help sustain the landscape and cultural heritage of the area for many years to come.

### **3. TOURISM IN THE NORTH YORK MOORS**

The North York Moors have attracted visitors for centuries. Early visitors came as pilgrims, staying in what was probably the first purpose built tourism accommodation - the great abbeys. Last

century they came to marvel at 'nature's wonderland' of cliffs, valleys and waterfalls. Writers put pen to paper, creating whole libraries of guide books for walkers and cyclists in the Moors. By the 1930s the Moors welcomed thousands of holiday makers from the West Riding, Hull and Teesside. As a result of intensified interest in walking in remote and beautiful places, the National Park movement was born, later supported by governments who saw the need, especially following the Second World War, for a healthy workforce, recharged physically and mentally by a visit to the countryside.

Designation of the North York Moors as a National Park in 1952 made little difference to the millions who saw the Moors as a destination, but it was an important milestone in protecting the landscape of the area.

The industry which serviced these visitors was comprised mainly of inns and farms which offered jugs of tea, bed and breakfast or a field in which to pitch a tent. The 'attractions' of the National Park were the moors, dales and villages, plus a few historic properties.

The last twenty or thirty years have witnessed change on an unprecedented scale for the Moors: change which is enmeshed in a complex web of changing awareness and expectations.

Tourism has become a vital part of the lives of many people, sometimes as a sole means of income, more often as an important supplement or alternative to traditional employment in, for instance, farming or fishing.

#### **4. NATIONAL PARKS**

During this period of growing interest and access to the countryside, the world wide National Park movement was developing.

In 1870 American conservationists and politicians sat around a campfire in Yellowstone and decreed that the area should become a National Park 'for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.'

Europe's first National Parks were designated in Sweden in 1909

Most countries followed the pattern of North America with National Parks being owned by and for the nation, or in some cases, by states or special authorities.

They were largely wilderness areas, barely altered by man. But they did have the dual role of protecting the environment and providing for recreational experience. National Parks in England and Wales are very different from this world wide pattern. Most of the land in our National Parks is privately owned and man's impact on the landscape is to be seen everywhere.

##### **NATIONAL ROLE**

The North York Moors, like Britain's other National Parks, was established following the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. Its designation in 1952 brought no change in ownership of the land. Instead, the new status recognised a national role:

*'National Parks should be for people of every class and kind and from every part of the country, indeed of the world. They are not for any privileged or otherwise restricted section of the population.'*

National Park purposes, originally laid down by the 1949 Act, were revised by the Environment Act of 1995 and are the same for all the Parks. They are:

*to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area; and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.*

In addition, the National Park Authority has a duty to ensure that, in pursuing these two purposes, it should *'seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities.'*

Since 1974 it has been national policy to give priority to conservation interests if irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment.

#### **5. TOURISM POLICIES IN THE NORTH YORK MOORS**

The tourism policies of the North York Moors National Park Authority aim to support the overall purposes of the National Park - conservation and provision of quiet recreation.

But tourism is not solely concerned with recreation: it has an important relationship with

conservation and the social and economic well-being of the local communities. The Park's tourism policies will therefore be of long-term benefit to residents, visitors and the tourism industry itself.

## **FRAMEWORK**

General policies on tourism are incorporated in the National Park Management Plan which sets the overall management framework for the Park and is reviewed every five years. The Plan's tourism policy is *"to ensure that the management, maintenance and development of tourism sustains the special qualities of the North York Moors, promotes opportunities for the understanding of them, and provides sustainable benefits to the local community and its economy."*

The Plan's overall policies reflect the need for change, but at a scale and rate which is both *appropriate* to the National Park and *accessible* to its visitors.

(Detailed policies affecting tourism can be found in the *National Park Management Plan*, especially section 4.3, Facilities and services for Park users. Copies of the Plan are available from the National Park office).

## **6. APPROPRIATE TOURISM**

For tourism to be 'appropriate' to the North York Moors, it should relate to the special qualities and strengths for which the Park was designated.

The Park is made up of many different communities and different landscapes: so one type of tourism may be appropriate in one place, but out of keeping elsewhere.

This distinctiveness and diversity is a key part of the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Moors and appropriate tourism will reflect this.

Tourism has an impact on many aspects of the local environment:

### **BENEFITS**

- Conservation support
- Environmental education
- New life for rural buildings
- Job creation
- Diversification of economy
- Support for local services
- Support for local customs
- Increased demand for local produce

### **COSTS**

- Physical damage to landscape and pollution
- Increased development pressure
- Labour competition
- Threat to existing activities
- Competition for housing
- Change in local traditions
- Inappropriate range and price of goods

These impacts are determined by a number of factors:

- *Number of visitors*
- *When and where they come*
- *Types and expectations of visitors*
- *Physical size of area*
- *Fragility of environment*
- *Accessibility*
- *Economic level and change*
- *Strength of local tradition*
- *Marketing and image of area*
- *Tourism policies and opportunities*
- *External forces*

It can be seen that tourism is a complex issue with its costs and benefits interwoven into the fabric of the North York Moors.

## **BENEFITS**

The aim of appropriate tourism should bring benefits:

### **FOR LOCAL PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

- *Satisfying jobs*
- *An industry which does not dominate the local economy*
- *Support for local services and products*
- *Local decision making*
- *Gradual and organic growth*
- *Support for conservation of natural history, buildings and the cultural heritage of the area*

### **FOR VISITORS**

- *Good value*
- *Satisfying experiences*
- *Growing understanding and respect for the area*

### **FOR THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

- *Long-term stability based on repeat visits and brand loyalty*
- *Greater overall efficiency*
- *Raised quality and a better market position*

## **MINIMISING COSTS**

The aim of 'appropriate' tourism should be to *minimise* the costs, both financial and environmental.

### **LOCAL PEOPLE SHOULD:**

- *Appreciate the benefits of tourism*
- *Make tourists feel welcome in the area*
- *Help to inform and educate tourists*
- *Take pride in the local environment and work with others to protect it*

### **VISITORS SHOULD:**

- *Remember they are guests and bear in mind the interests of local people*
- *Support services and goods which benefit the local community*
- *Respect those whose livelihoods depend on the area*
- *Appreciate nature and treat it gently*
- *Use the green modes of transport (walking, cycling, horse-riding or public transport) whenever possible*
- *Understand the area, its history and its problems*

### **THE TOURIST INDUSTRY SHOULD:**

- *Seek advice on social, economic and environmental impacts which new activities may have on the area*
- *Consider the effect on the local economy, ensuring that new enterprises complement existing activities*
- *Ensure that goods or souvenirs reflect the image and traditions of the North York Moors, using local materials and manufacturers where appropriate*
- *Preserve the character of buildings*
- *Protect the landscape by preserving or planting trees and other vegetation when appropriate*
- *Use green products and recycle as much as possible*
- *Help visitors to fulfil their part in sustainable tourism*

Tourism must also have an eye to the future. Today's actions cannot be allowed to prejudice the ability of future generations to determine their own goals.

Our children and our grandchildren should be free to make their own decisions.

## **IN PRACTICE, APPROPRIATE TOURISM WILL:**

- *Emphasise local qualities and strengths*
- *Be small scale*

- *Be well-designed and adaptable to change*
- *Re-use rural buildings and local materials*
- *Produce conservation benefits*
- *Make a contribution to the local economy*

## **7. ACCESSIBLE TOURISM**

National Park purposes were founded on the principle of equality of opportunity for a wide cross section of the community.

Saying that the facilities and opportunities of the North York Moors should be available to all does not imply that the area has an unlimited capacity. Rather, no individual or group should be denied the opportunity of enjoying the countryside purely because of social or financial circumstances. National Park purposes are only indirectly concerned with economic regeneration and it should not be assumed that high spending groups would be more welcome.

The spending of a backpacker may not be as great as that of a guest staying in a four star hotel, but both are equally legitimate users of the Park (and the impact of a backpacker is probably far less).

A visitor's motivation is perhaps the best way of assessing their claim to use the National Park. Low cost, low impact tourism is central to National Park tourism and access policies.

### **RANGE**

The principle of accessibility suggests that the Park should continue to welcome a range of tourist facilities (accommodation, attractions, catering, transport, etc) offering good value.

This would include simple backpacking sites and basic accommodation, through a range of self catering and serviced accommodation to quality hotels. An overall upgrading of facilities should not be at the cost of budget accommodation.

Attractions and catering should also satisfy a wide range of expectations.

Tourism businesses can often be developed in conjunction with existing enterprises including farming, but should always be small scale and usually ancillary to the main source of income. This type of 'dual economy' is to be welcomed, especially where it helps to bring rural buildings back into appropriate use and makes a contribution to keeping a farm viable.

The Park Authority recommends that managers of accommodation and attractions should support the tourist board registration schemes and codes of practice for accommodation and attractions. However, remember that quality can also be measured by warmth of welcome.

### **INFORMATION**

Most decision making by visitors - especially regarding accommodation - takes place away from the North York Moors. It is therefore vital that accurate information on tourism enterprises should be available in order to match visitors to facilities and to bolster visitor confidence.

When producing leaflets, advertisements or press items it is of benefit to convey the image of the North York Moors as a special area, and one which needs special respect.

This can add a certain appeal to a tourism enterprise as well as remind visitors of their responsibilities. (Of course, the National Park emblem is copyright and can only be used with permission.)

There is a good network of Tourist Information Centres around the North York Moors. They are a vital interface between the public and the tourist industry and can provide information about the preferences and needs of visitors as well as a cost effective way of disseminating information about tourist enterprises.

### **ACCESS FOR ALL**

In considering an accessible Park, it should go without saying that the needs of the disabled - whether physically, mentally, visually or audibly impaired - should be considered.

Such provision should appear natural and not divisive. For example, ramps or wider doors can be of as much benefit to families with pushchairs as to users of wheelchairs. Often special provision costs no more and certain establishments within the Park have already found that high quality provision for the disabled opens up opportunities to target a niche market.

## **NON CAR ACCESS**

Access to the National Park (and within it) is possible using many means of transport. Naturally, the Park Authority favours the 'green modes of transport' which have less impact on the environment.

In planning facilities or promoting existing ones, it is as well to consider those who travel by foot, cycle, horse or public transport. For instance, mention of bus or rail services could enhance the marketability of tourist enterprises.

## **LONGER SEASON**

Accessibility is largely concerned with 'place.' 'Time' is also important and there are cases to be made for and against extending the tourist season as it affects the Moors

It can be argued that both the natural environment and the local population need time to recover from the impact of large numbers of tourists. There are also those who make a positive choice to visit out of season for special reasons or because there is more peace and solitude to be found. Their needs can often be met from existing provision by the tourism industry.

An extension of the season is unlikely to diminish the impact of the peak season, but it could aid the viability of certain businesses (and not solely those directly concerned with tourism). It could also help justify full time employment where seasonal employment is currently all that is available. On balance, an extension of the season is unlikely to have an adverse effect on the environment as the numbers of visitors are likely to be small. Nevertheless this additional trade will be of value to employment and the local economy.

## **LONGER DAY**

There is also a case to be made for the tourism industry - particularly catering establishments and attractions - to extend opening hours possibly into the early evening and particularly during the main season. This could help boost trade for individual operators, make for a more satisfied visitor and spread the time of traffic movement in and around the Park.

## **IN PRACTICE, ACCESSIBLE TOURISM WILL**

- *Offer a range of facilities for individuals and groups in differing financial circumstances*
- *Be capable of use by visitors with disabilities*
- *Be supported by adequate and honest information*
- *Bear in mind those who wish to use environmentally-friendly modes of transport*

## **8. FINALLY**

Tourism in the National Park is not new. Many of the issues it raises are not new. What has changed is the scale and the potential impact which tourism can have - for better and for worse. The tourist industry and the public sector are now more fully equipped to appreciate and understand these problems and opportunities. This knowledge can be used to improve the visitor experience, spread conservation consciousness and have a tourism business which is respected and successful.

At the same time the tourist industry can make a positive contribution to the inheritance of future generations - a healthy National Park.

Sustainable tourism is everybody's business: now and for the future.

## **The National Parks in England and Wales have adopted the following ‘Principles for Tourism in National Parks’.**

Britain’s finest landscapes have provided inspiration and enjoyment to visitors for many centuries. These visitors bring a vital source of income and jobs to the rural communities, including tourism businesses and land managers, whose activities shape the countryside. This mutually supporting relationship needs to be carefully managed to the benefit of all. Inappropriate tourism development and poorly managed visitor pressure can be damaging.

### **Special environments – special places to visit**

The purposes of National Parks are to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities by the public. National Park Authorities also have a duty to foster the economic and social well being of local communities. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) were designated to conserve and enhance their landscapes, which are seen as of equal importance to those of National Parks.

The National Parks and AONBs are cherished by the many millions of people who visit them each year, and by those who live and work there. Tourism supports hundreds of thousands of jobs and a variety of local services in these protected areas.

### **The challenge of sustainable tourism**

Tourism presents an ongoing challenge and opportunity to protected areas, requiring constant attention and improvement to ensure that it is increasingly sustainable.

Sustainable tourism recognises the present and future needs of:

- the environment, both global and local
- the economy, including tourism businesses and other local enterprises
- society, including visitors and local communities.

It seeks to benefit and integrate all of them.

Sustainable tourism entails:

#### **1 Sharing responsibility**

Local communities, local authorities, conservation and tourism bodies, tourism enterprises, land managers and visitors all have a responsibility towards making tourism more sustainable and should work together with the National Park and AONB bodies to achieve this. Many protected areas have permanent forums as a way of involving all relevant stakeholders: such approaches should be encouraged.

#### **2 Agreeing a strategy**

Each protected area should have a strategy for tourism, informed by an understanding of assets, needs, and opportunities and agreed by the various interests. This should relate to the park or area management plan. It should also take account of wider tourism strategies in the region and in neighbouring destinations and seek to influence them. It should provide the basis for joint action with partners, including agreed resources, targets and monitoring processes.

#### **3 Basing tourism on the area’s special qualities**

People choose to visit National Parks and AONBs because of their fine landscapes, natural and cultural heritage, opportunities for outdoor recreation and peace and tranquillity – often the very reasons why these areas were designated in the first place. These qualities should form the basis for the future development, management and marketing of tourism.

The level and type of tourism activity should take account of the capacity of the protected area’s environment and communities. If tourism is in irreconcilable conflict with the special qualities of

the area, then the protection of the latter must prevail. It should be recognised that some places are valued for being wild and remote.

Each national park and AONB is different. Their individual distinctiveness is part of their appeal and must be preserved.

#### **4 Providing a quality experience for all visitors**

Emphasis should be placed on maximising the quality of the visitor experience, rather than the quantity of visitors received, while recognising that some areas may actively seek more visitors. The needs and expectations of all existing and potential visitors should be understood, through regular visitor surveys and other research. Quality checking and improvement measures should be supported. Special attention should be paid to welcome, orientation and level of service. Every effort should be made to enable people from all parts of our society to access and enjoy National Parks and AONBs.

#### **5 Reducing the environmental impact of tourism**

Protected areas should not be adverse to change – their landscapes have been influenced by human activity over the centuries. However, the location, scale and design of any new development must be appropriate to the protected area and its environmental impact should be carefully assessed. Tourism enterprises should be encouraged to reduce energy and water consumption, waste and pollution, through advice, support, staff training and accreditation. The flow of visitors and traffic should be monitored and managed, with walking, cycling and public transport actively promoted as alternatives to the car.

#### **6 Raising awareness and supporting conservation**

Tourism investment and visitor spending should support the management and conservation of historic and natural sites, local traditions, events and other distinctive features of National Parks and AONBs. Accurate information and creative interpretation should deepen visitors' enjoyment, appreciation, understanding and concern for the environment, before, during and after a visit. Tourism enterprises and visitors should be encouraged to support practical conservation initiatives.

#### **7 Bringing more benefit to the local economy**

Tourism should make a positive contribution to a healthy, mixed economy, which utilises and develops local skills and resources. The proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally should be maximised. Greater use of local products and services by tourism enterprises, and their purchase by visitors, will benefit the local economy and the distinctive appeal of the protected area. Coordinated marketing and information delivery should reflect the special qualities and needs of the area, such as reducing seasonality where appropriate.

#### **8 Engaging with the local community**

Tourism can bring many benefits to the people who live in protected areas, such as improved services and more local jobs. It can also bring problems such as congestion and pressure on resources. Tourism development and management should seek to improve the quality of life. Local communities should be kept fully informed about the contribution that tourism makes to the area and be engaged in its planning and management