

North York Moors National Park Authority

Response to Glover Review of Protected Landscapes

Summary of Recommendations to the Panel

Principles for Governance

- A variety of routes to the Board is good.
- Retain local and national level appointments.
- Emphasise all Members are appointees *not* representatives and are required to pursue the interests of the National Park.
- No one block of Members should dominate.
- Increase diversity.
- Retain independence of the National Park Authority from central government (eg not nationally appointed Chairs) within the appropriate level of scrutiny.
- Make clearer that there is a high level of national/central government expectation on Members to deliver ambitiously in terms of Park purposes.
- Increase ability to appoint to secure particular skills.
- Ensure National members are appointed in a timely fashion and provide interview panels with the ability to make specific recommendations on individuals to the appointing minister.

Wildlife and Conservation

Initiate a debate on the implementation powers of National Park Management Plans related to wildlife

- Review the wildlife powers of organisations working in National Parks and consider how they should be shared with or transferred to National Park Authorities
- Provide National Park Authorities with the remit to deliver the new Environmental Land Management Schemes
- Consider whether National Park Authorities should ultimately have the powers to deliver measures that clearly benefit conservation by creating **National Park specific legislation** for encouraging more wildlife and better habitats.

Purposes and Duty

- Maintain the two National Park purposes as they are.
- Widen the socio-economic duty to include the health and well-being of the public.
- Strengthen the existing duty of relevant authorities (S11A (2) 1949 NPAC Act) to “further National Park purposes” in exercising or performing any functions in relation to or so as to affect land in a National Park (with a wider definition of relevant authorities to cover those operating in the public realm).
- Introduce a “Duty to Cooperate” for public authorities including the production, promotion and implementation of National Park Management Plans.

New National Parks

- The priority is to raise expectations for existing National Parks; the standard for designation should not be lowered.
- Link existing National Parks via National Trails and green corridors
- Designating new areas while reducing resources to existing ones would not be an overall improvement.

Finance and Funding

- Maintain the real level of DEFRA grant to National Parks
- Recoup costs of planning enforcement
- Support / promote the National Lottery
- Secure full cost recovery for planning fees
- Investigate options for optimising the benefits from all visitor car park income to National Park visitor infrastructure and conservation goals
- Recognise volunteer value in return requests

Rights of Way and Highways

- Transfer the legal responsibility and resources for the practical management of rights of way to National Park Authorities
- Strengthen National Park legislation to remove mechanised rights for green lane users where special qualities are suffering unacceptable impacts
- Establish a requirement for Highways agencies to adopt a more sympathetic approach to signage and road management within National Park boundaries

Portrait of the North York Moors National Park

The North York Moors National Park mostly lies within North Yorkshire with a small northern part of its area in Redcar & Cleveland. Its total area is 1,436 sq. km, (143,608 hectares), which is 17% of the land area of North Yorkshire. The National Park is home to 22,976 residents who are essential to the culture, communities, economy and upkeep of the National Park.

The distinctive landscapes of the North York Moors are the result of a complex geological past. The upland moor plateau is separated by deep narrow dales. To the north is the edge of the Cleveland Hills which drop down to the Tees lowlands. To the east, dramatic coastal scenery including tall cliffs dominates, with tight-knit historic fishing villages nestling into the coastline. To the south the Tabular Hills punctuate the landscape and offer views over the Vale of Pickering. To the west, steep scarp slopes some 300 metres high afford a vantage point to enjoy expansive views over the Hambleton Hills and Vale of Mowbray, including a view from Sutton Bank once described by author James Herriot as the finest in England.

The main characteristic of the National Park is one of deep rurality, which belies its rich cultural heritage. Most of its modern day settlements lie on the edges of the National Park, meaning its more central areas are often very remote. The central block of moorland is managed for grouse and supports other distinctive wildlife, especially breeding waders. Farming is relatively varied, and there is a large area of woodland adding considerably to the area's biodiversity. Tourism is the largest industry.

Introduction

1. 65 years on from their first designation we agree with the Secretary of State's analysis that the English National Parks have been a significant national achievement. They have given inspiration and recreation to many millions, conserved wonderful landscapes and have done this while nurturing their communities and, against expectations perhaps, delivering strong rural economies.
2. The North York Moors National Park Authority (NYMNPA) welcomes both the opportunity to respond to this review and the positive response to the request of the English National Parks for such a review to be carried out. This reflected a view put to Ministers by the National Parks that the time was right for a review which could help forge a revitalised vision for the English National Parks to inspire them for the next 65 years. The NYMNPA welcomes this approach and aspires to a bolder remit for our National Parks that is fit for the 21st century, with the right powers and resources to respond to the urgent issues affecting these treasured landscapes.
3. We know that now more than ever our residents and visitors value these beautiful spaces, because they tell us so. We have a duty to meet their expectations and secure the precious qualities of our National Parks for future generations.
4. We want to address any hint of complacency by urging the review to put substantial asks to Government that support major changes in the significance and contribution of National Parks to our national identity. This submission is being made following considerable local comment and discussion. We expect however to receive further local comments and for groups such as the Local Access Forum to make their views known to us. The NYMNPA may therefore submit further views, including in response to proposals for boundary changes. But first let us record some of the achievements of the North York Moors National Park Authority and its predecessor Committee.
 - Our routine education programme covers all the National Park and all surrounding secondary schools, including from Teesside south of the Tees, allowing contact with children during their education.
 - The Farm Scheme ran for 25 years and eventually covered all the main dales in the National Park; it was hugely influential in the evolution of agri-environment schemes. It has left a stunning visual legacy of positive change and good farming relations.
 - We have shown you can metaphorically “eat the view”. Despite predictions of gloom the combination of protective planning policies and positive conservation action have delivered a stunning environment alongside a strong economy and stable¹ communities that gain direct economic benefit from landscape beauty.
 - Every £1 of Defra money we spend generates at least £7.21 of social value.
 - We have a 7,000 hectare native woodland planting programme, not far from as much broadleaf woodland as you can find in the New Forest.
 - We have trained more than 120 apprentices since 2002, way beyond the national average, have won numerous national awards and are Defra's leading agency in this field. Most of these young people have then found full time work in the local area.
 - Until the reductions in funding after the 2008 financial crisis we ran the Moorsbus network described as ‘arguably one of the best recreational bus networks in a Protected Area in Europe’.²

¹ NYMNP population today is almost identical to 1960s population despite the national drift to the cities.

² The service continues excellently but in sadly much reduced form run by a community interest company.

- We have also received, as far as we know, more awards and endorsements under Chartermark and Customer Service Excellence than any other organisation in the country.
 - A dynamic approach to planning has approved a legacy of brilliant new buildings for future generations to admire and we have restored much of historic importance. We have delivered 125 high quality affordable houses over the past ten years.
 - Volunteers now contribute more than 13,000 days to the National Park each year, 108,000 over the last ten years.
 - We have improved the quality of Rights of Way in the National Park by around 20% since 2001.
 - We were the first planning authority in the country to introduce comprehensive enforcement cost recovery.
5. Our track record sets a baseline – with stronger powers and long term committed resources we can and should set the bar much higher. But the immediate future is precarious and the last few years have not been without significant problems. Large cuts in funding from central government have led to criticism of the Authority for withdrawing some services, especially Moorsbus. The transfer of the local Farm Scheme to national Countryside Stewardship has led to a reduction in contact with farmers; and the ability/ambition of National Park Authorities to lead a resurgence in wildlife in the National Parks has been questioned. Key local services continue to decline and have not been replaced with comprehensive, fast broadband and telecommunications networks. Looking forwards, rising temperatures and extreme weather are bringing unprecedented change as they interact with pests, diseases and invasive species resulting from increased movement of goods around the world. Despite our outreach work many people and especially young people are increasingly disconnected with the natural world.
 6. In view of our ability to deliver, and these important issues to address, we hope the Government acts swiftly in response to ambitious proposals from the Panel.

Governance

7. Governance issues have too often been the focus for interest on National Parks at a national level. In this National Park, with 20 thrifty Members, support for them and their direct costs, at only about 1.5% of total spend, is modest.
8. We appreciate that the Panel will receive a mix of views on governance and that the size and nature of NPA Memberships vary. For the North York Moors we firmly believe that a mix of local and nationally appointed Members is essential and that principal local authority appointments should continue. We would draw the Panel's attention to the simple system we use to *elect* Parish Members, and how we encourage residents to become parish councillors, pointing out that this is a route to becoming a National Park Authority Board Member. Our Parish Members are an invaluable direct link to local communities.
9. The manner in which the Membership of the English National Parks Authorities combine elements of local and national appointment, while originally seen by some as a weakening compromise, is now in line with developing good practice in the Protected Areas movement worldwide. So, without denying that elements could be improved, we see merit overall in the current arrangements.
10. It would be easy to spend much time changing the make-up of the Membership without noticeably improving things. It would be easy to create a sense of distance or distrust

with local communities. And there are dangers in some of the suggestions that have been made of introducing national government influence of the unhelpful kind. (It can be argued that where National Park Authorities have been at their most successful/influential is where they have been able to operate independently of established national structures/thinking - *but* it is of course acknowledged that, since the National Park Authority spends national money and involves a national interest, national overview exists and continues to be necessary. What has sometimes been lacking is an evident determination to achieve National Park purposes within central government structures and policies. In this context greater national involvement could be retrograde if not carefully directed).

11. Governance cannot alter fundamental facts about the National Park as a place and the legal powers and resources it has. The main determinant of how far-reaching the impact of the National Park Authority is, is the overall political and policy context in which it operates.
12. One aspect of the current system which should be improved is that it does not tend to produce a group of Members reflecting the diversity of the population as a whole. Partly to address this point representatives from under-represented groups regularly address full Authority meetings directly. We would support changes within the current system which would help to ensure a more representative cross section of the country as a whole and the local area in particular.

13. On Governance , we commend the following principles to the Panel:

- A variety of routes to the Board is good.
- Retain local and national level appointments.
- Emphasise all Members are appointees *not* representatives and are required to pursue the interests of the National Park.
- No one block of Members should dominate.
- Increase diversity.
- Retain independence of the National Park Authority from central government (eg not nationally appointed Chairs) within the appropriate level of scrutiny.
- Make clearer that there is a high level of national/central government expectation on Members to deliver ambitiously in terms of Park purposes.
- Increase ability to appoint to secure particular skills.
- Ensure National members are appointed in a timely fashion and provide interview panels with the ability to make specific recommendations on individuals to the appointing minister.

Purposes, Duty and Designation

Conservation

14. This review presents an opportunity to restate a commitment to the current National Park purposes and duty, which should not be 'diluted', or changed in priority. We believe that National Parks are distinct in having conservation at their heart, and this distinction must not be eroded: conservation should continue to be the first of two equal purposes of National Park Authorities. If we do not conserve the things that make National Parks special there will be nothing special to understand and enjoy.
15. The importance of this purpose needs however to be matched by appropriate powers and resources, particularly with regard to wildlife, where, in terms of the National Park Authorities' powers, it is currently weak. This is important in its own right, but all the more

so because the public who pay for the National Parks now expect it. There has been a significant shift in public perception of the role of National Parks in England. This is shown by our own local surveys as well as national research. Gone are the days when the public simply saw the National Parks primarily as wild and beautiful places for recreation. This perception is still (thankfully) strong but the predominant view from the public is to see them as places which look after Nature and specifically wildlife.

16. National Park Authority *powers* however are largely provided under the Planning Acts. This means we have extensive and strong powers which allow us to look after villages, protect the landscape visually and care for Listed Buildings, but in terms of wildlife there is very little (TPOs and planning related elements of the EU Habitats Directive legislation being exceptions). All of these powers are exercisable by all planning authorities – there are *no* powers relating *specifically* to wildlife in National Parks. This matters not just because of the public perception that we are active in this field but *because there is wildlife of value across the whole of the Park* not just in SSSIs and nature reserves, reflecting the more benign land management practices within them. Indeed, this is the particular biological value of the National Parks – they are *large* areas of importance for wildlife. Looking at the North York Moors in particular, it is noteworthy that, while the moorland is almost all SSSI and supports rare species of particular importance, the greatest amount of biodiversity is often found in the farmland and woodland surrounding it, but there are no special measures to protect it.
17. A lack of powers to ensure positive change happens means that, even if, say, after twenty years of the most extensive consultation it was agreed by all parties bar one that a certain activity should take place to save a critical species, the National Park Authority has, in general, no power to make the activity happen. This contrasts with, for instance, the powers other local authorities have to deal with matters even including abandoned shopping trolleys where there is specific statutory provision!
18. It might be argued that such powers are held by other bodies, but where powers do exist elsewhere they may be held by bodies whose aims conflict at least in part with the National Park, or which have other priorities, or which do not understand local conditions or which do not have the resources to act. In reality, it is quite common for one or more of these situations to exist.
19. We would encourage the panel to promote further debate related to caring for and protecting wildlife and habitats. Specifically we think there are two issues that should be debated. The first relates to specific powers to implement the National Park Management Plan with respect to wildlife, in very specific and limited circumstances, subject to the normal rights of appeal. Second, the panel should consider a review of the powers of other organisations with respect to wildlife and how they could be transferred / shared with National Park Authorities and the resource implications of this
20. The National Park Authority does *not* argue that the National Park Management Plan should become a Plan to be imposed on people, but there should be *some* mechanism to allow certain elements to occur in very specific circumstances. The current contrast between our extensive and accepted powers under planning legislation and our lack of statutory powers to protect wildlife is extreme.
21. In line with the Authority's former Farm Scheme and the National Parks England paper 'Farming in the English National Parks', the National Park Authority should be provided with the remit to direct and deliver the new **Environmental Land Management** Schemes in the National Park. This would be an important step towards improving wildlife and habitats in the Park. Building on experience, relationships rooted in rural communities and a commitment to conservation through active management, this would help to ensure positive outcomes for nature and those who work the land.

22. Recommendations

- Initiate a debate on the implementation powers of National Park Management Plans related to wildlife
- Review the wildlife powers of organisations working in National Parks and consider how they should be shared with or transferred to National Park Authorities
- Provide National Park Authorities with the remit to deliver the new Environmental Land Management Schemes
- Consider whether National Park Authorities should ultimately have the powers to deliver measures that clearly benefit conservation by creating **National Park specific legislation** for encouraging more wildlife and better habitats.

Promoting Understanding and Enjoyment

23. The ‘promoting understanding and enjoyment’ second purpose should remain with the same level of priority attached to it on the basis that it is ultimately dependent upon the successful pursuit of the first purpose.
24. In fulfilling the second purpose for National Parks the North York Moors has made significant contributions to the Government’s 8-Point Plan for National Parks – engaging with up to 18,000 young people each year, taking the lead on delivering apprenticeships (15% our workforce is made up of apprentices) and offering more than 13,000 volunteer days each year.

Socio-Economic Duty

25. Although this is often spoken of as ‘the’ duty, National Park Authorities have many duties, under planning and other legislation. We believe the socio-economic duty for National Park Authorities should remain – with the same level of priority attached to it, that is, it is a duty to ‘*seek to foster*’ which is to be achieved *via the purposes*. It is not however the critical piece of legislation/policy it is sometimes portrayed as.
26. This is not least because National Park Authorities have extensive powers and plenty of flexibility *as local planning authorities* to deliver social and economic as well as environmental goals, which can be, and sometimes are, used imaginatively and/or on a large scale. We believe the NYMNPAs have achieved significant social successes here and would point to our recent record on affordable housing, employment and tourism related development, care homes and surgeries as examples. This suggests more than sufficient power to address these issues within the overall context of existing National Park purposes.
27. We have also made appropriate contributions to support economic growth through direct grant support to businesses and communities that *look after and promote the special qualities* of the National Park. This sits alongside broader work on economic growth and development carried out by a wide range of other organisations in National Parks.
28. We would however support a broadening of the 1995 (S11A (1) of the 1949 Act) duty to include the *health and wellbeing of visitors* to National Parks. It would not be appropriate to make this a *purpose* (this is the NHS’s job, National Park Authorities do not have the resources to tackle health issues directly) but it would be appropriate if National Park Authorities had an explicit duty to seek to foster the health and wellbeing of visitors *via their purposes*. This would give impetus to the variety of existing initiatives in this field and increase awareness of the health benefits of National Parks. This could be widened

to cover residents, but this may not be necessary as health and wellbeing are already covered as a component of the socio-economic duty.³

Sustainable Development Purpose

29. For the reasons given above concerning the socio-economic duty, we do not believe that it should become a statutory “third purpose” as this is not necessary in view of our existing planning powers. The very lengthy and inconclusive debate about a legal definition for sustainable development, its inclusion in its current form in the National Planning Policy Framework and the fact that enabling sustainable development is the very purpose of the planning system, along with our experience of the use of the term elsewhere, lead us to the view that an additional purpose of this nature would be likely to confuse and undermine the conservation remit of National Parks. We would not support its adoption.

Section 62 and Furthering National Park Purposes

30. The efforts of other public (**and similar**) bodies in National Parks should focus more strongly on achieving National Park purposes whilst recognising they have their own priorities up to a point. The existing legal requirement for any ‘relevant authority’ to ‘have regard’ to National Park purposes is weak. A duty to ‘further’ National Park purposes, wording used elsewhere in legislation, will deliver a more appropriate, effective and integrated approach. This implies that significant weight should be attached to Park purposes and that on balance the organisation must help achieve them even if on occasions it chooses not to. Endless neutrality would not be defensible but nor would a total skewing of priorities be required.

31. National Park Management Plans should carry more weight so their Vision and objectives are implemented on the ground with a duty on public authorities to promote them, to co-operate in their production and implementation, and for National Park Management Plans to be a required input into key strategic documents prepared by Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships for example.

32. Recommendations

- Maintain the two National Park purposes as they are.
- Widen the socio-economic duty to include the health and well-being of the public.
- Strengthen the existing duty of relevant authorities (S11A (2) 1949 NPAC Act) to “further National Park purposes” in exercising or performing any functions in relation to or so as to affect land in a National Park (with a wider definition of relevant authorities to cover those operating in the public realm).
- Introduce a “Duty to Cooperate” for public authorities including the production, promotion and implementation of National Park Management Plans.

Designation of New Areas

We believe that it is crucial **not** to ‘lower the bar’ on the standards for National Park designation. There has to be something particularly special about the nature of the places designated for the brand and values of National Parks to maintain their integrity.

³ Recent research completed by the York Management School estimated that ‘every £1 invested by DEFRA generates approximately £7 of health and well-being benefits’ (Linsley, P & McMurray, R (2018). North York Moors National Park Authority: Measuring Health and Well-being Impact. York: The York Management School.)

33. We would recommend that all parties should be working together to:
- raise expectations for the highest standards in existing National Parks
 - link National Parks for recreation and wildlife (for example by an integrated National Trails network and green corridors)
 - transmit better the positive experiences and practices in National Parks to the wider countryside
34. If there are new National Park designations they should be made in this context. Designating new areas while reducing resources to existing ones is not an overall improvement.

Funding

35. The NYMNPA receives around £4.3 m from Defra each year, similar to the average budget for a secondary school of £4.6m. Real terms central government funding for this Authority was reduced by around 40% between 2010 and 2015.
36. The Authority expects to deploy resources of around £10.6m in 2019/20. This has been achieved by a resolute focus on where extra resources can be found *without incurring disproportionate costs in doing so*. The key factor has been understanding the staff-time cost of the supposed resource-generating activity. Many ways of increasing resources have been rejected because of the staff cost involved, but this still leaves a great diversity of income sources. We believe that this diversity is key to maximising the resources that can be added to the essential core Defra grant.
37. Commercial sponsorship has been the subject of much discussion and effort but has so far proved to be a very poor way of generating resource, This maybe inevitable as a result of us being a regulatory body. External funding, as grants from many different sources, but particularly the Heritage Lottery Fund, has been hugely beneficial and is on an altogether different scale. As such the decline in Lottery income is a significant issue for the National Park and any steps that can be taken at a national level to address this would be welcome.
38. It should be noted that funds from Section 106 planning agreements are limited by law to activities which are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms – they must relate fairly in scale and nature to the development and any impacts resulting from it. They do not provide income to improve conservation or enjoyment and understanding but are by definition net nil *not* net gain.
39. The National Park has had a large volunteer workforce for decades – indeed, volunteers worked for the Park before staff did. There are currently in excess of 13,000 volunteer days worked a year on projects led or directly in partnership with the National Park Authority. This is a significant element of the resources we deploy and is recognised in our Medium Term Financial Strategy. Defra/MHCLG should explicitly recognise volunteer value in their return requests.
40. In terms of fees and charges, the Authority's initial view is that a tourism tax is unlikely to be a viable vehicle in the North York Moors, at least for the foreseeable future. The Authority is an active proponent for the Destination Business Improvement District in the coastal part of the Park and believes there would be value in considering how this or a similar mechanism might contribute better to securing the infrastructure and promotion of National Parks.

41. All visitor car parks in the National Park generate some income. An investigation into the options for ensuring this income helps to deliver National Park-appropriate visitor infrastructure and conservation goals would be useful.
42. Local Authorities should be enabled to secure full cost recovery for planning fees where these benchmark satisfactorily.
43. There should be legislation which explicitly allows local planning authorities to recoup the costs for which there are no other recovery regimes of enforcing against harmful unauthorised development from the small minority of people who choose not to adhere to planning regulations. The ability of the small minority to use lengthy court processes and other delaying tactics to thwart the conservation of the National Park, and to shift the cost of correcting this onto the majority who do follow the rules, is a cause of continued frustration to the great majority of the public.
44. The National Lottery is a vital source of funds for conservation and public enjoyment work in the National Park and should be supported and publicised. Its income is reducing – this should not be allowed to diminish further in the face of less benign competition for custom.
45. From the figures at the start of this section it should be clear that the Authority has been successful at diversifying its income. It is imperative however to appreciate that *this has only been possible because of the continued existence of core Defra grant.*
46. As the ratio of diversified income to core grant has increased it has become apparent that there are very real limits to how far this model can be stretched - and this National Park Authority is very close to or has reached them. External grants require support from rangers and specialists to implement them, even if project staff are appointed. Volunteers need organisation and Health and Safety cover even if they lead their own tasks. Very few if any services generate a surplus, so more income comes at a cost. Our in-house financial modelling shows the limits to the stretch but the basic point is that you can't run a large organisation on the infrastructure of a very small one.
47. This means not just that there are limits to expansion, *but that any decrease in Defra grant will jeopardise the large superstructure resting on the whittled-down base. We would have to cease activity disproportionate to any reduction in core grant.*
48. Recommendations
 - Recognise volunteer value in return requests
 - Investigate options for optimising the benefits of car park income to National Park visitor infrastructure and conservation goals
 - Recoup costs of planning enforcement
 - Support / promote the National Lottery
 - Secure full cost recovery for planning fees
 - Maintain levels of DEFRA grant to National Parks

Rights of Way

49. The Rights of Way network plays a pivotal role in delivering the second purpose of National Parks, as it is critical in allowing people to walk in the National Park, the most common single thing people do when they visit. It is vital for cyclists and horse riders too. Without a decent network the economic as well as social value of the National Park

would be jeopardised which was all too clearly demonstrated during the “closure” of Public Rights of Way in the 2001 Foot and Mouth crisis. Indeed, for this National Park to be enjoyed to its full potential Rights of Way need to have consistent and long term levels of investment above the current level.

50. At present the maintenance and promotion of Rights of Way rests with upper tier local authorities (County and Unitary Councils). The priority which they have attached to this role historically has varied widely, but with the current financial pressure they face, in particular from social care, they are likely to lack the ability to deliver an acceptable standard in National Parks for the foreseeable future. It is unsatisfactory that this National Park Authority is funding the statutory functions of another body while central Government support for the activity, such as it is, is directed elsewhere.
51. We therefore urge the transfer of **legal responsibility for the practical management of Rights of Way to National Park Authorities, alongside the allocation of resources, directly to National Park Authorities to allow this to happen.**
52. An issue which continues to cause harm to the National Park is the legal but harmful use of some Rights of Way ('green lanes') by mechanised vehicles. This absorbs considerable resource in both managing the surface of the ways and in dealing with public complaints. A process for removing such mechanised rights exists but can be complicated and is resource hungry, especially given the determination of some mechanised users not to lose those rights. The Authority believes that within this National Park legislation should make it easier to remove the mechanised rights where it can be shown that the special qualities of the NP are likely in practice to suffer unacceptable impacts from mechanised use.
53. Recommendations
 - Transfer the legal responsibility and resources for the practical management of rights of way to National Park Authorities
 - Strengthen National Park legislation to remove mechanised rights for green lane users where special qualities are suffering unacceptable impacts

Highways, Boundaries

54. Many National Parks around the world (including Scotland) have very well identified entry points on the main roads. In England proposals for such large signs fall foul of highways regulations. While respecting the need for good taste and restraint, it should be possible in the right circumstances for the National Park Authority to establish appropriate signage for the national asset.
55. National highways regulations should also make specific reference to the need to consider the special nature of National Parks in carrying out the highway works and signage carried out within them.
56. Recommendation
 - Highways agencies should be required to adopt a more sympathetic approach to signage and road management within National Park boundaries

Joint National Park Working

57. There is overall considerably more joint working between the National Park Authorities than occurred twenty or ten years ago but this masks important areas where it has declined. There *is* a good deal of officer to officer contact on a widening variety of issues. The current Discover England tourism programme is the first occasion in which there has been a joint bid for funds and this is bearing fruit in a common programme of promotion and product development.
58. There will be limits to national initiatives given the different conditions in each National Park. For instance the number of visitors and their impact on the environment and local residents varies hugely between National Parks. A rational set of actions in terms of tourism will therefore likely lead to significant differences in what each National Park Authority does, and wants to happen.
59. This and other differences should not prevent more joint working in the future. This is to be welcomed wherever it delivers greater achievement of National Park purposes.
60. In terms of reductions in common activity, the role that was once fulfilled by the Countryside Commission, of promoting National Parks as a national level, is not currently filled by that body's successor, Natural England. Joint working between the National Parks only partially fills the gap.
61. The level of inter-Park Member contact has decreased very significantly over the last ten years, particularly through changes to the national conference and workshop programmes, partly in response to austerity. It is within the National Park Authorities' gift to remedy this, and this should be done.

Sharing Best Practice

62. Other areas where joint activity has decreased over time is the formal sharing of best practice between groups of staff and the organisation of subject specific workshops. There is considerable contact between professional officer groups such as rangers, ecologists and planners, which has grown over the years, but there is no longer a co-ordinated programme to share best practice.
63. There would be merit in re-instituting such a programme and extending it to cover bodies other than National Park Authorities working in appropriate sectors (eg rural, environment and outreach).