This document sets out our current thinking on how we may develop new planning policy for conserving and enhancing three of the North York Moor’s National Park’s Special Qualities - Tranquillity, A Strong Feeling of Remoteness and Dark Night Skies. It asks for your views on the approach we could take to each.

December 2017
Cover Photo Credit: Steve Bell.
A Sense of Tranquillity, A Strong Feeling of Remoteness and Dark Night Skies

“Yet it is just because this is a densely populated and highly industrial country that the need for National Parks is so pressing. Four-fifths of the population dwell in urban areas, many of them in the smoke-laden atmosphere and amid the ceaseless traffic and bustle of our industrial towns and larger cities. They need the refreshment which is obtainable from the beauty and quietness of the unspoilt country.”

The 1947 Hobhouse Report which led to the creation of National Parks in England.

1. Why have we produced this document?

1.1 All national parks in England, Wales and Scotland share a statutory purpose or aim to promote understanding and enjoyment of the ‘special qualities’ of their area. Twenty eight special qualities of the North York Moors have been identified and are set out in our Management Plan. Three of the identified qualities are:

- Tranquillity
- A Strong Feeling of Remoteness
- Dark Skies at Night

1.2 We are now preparing a new Local Plan for the North York Moors National Park, which will be the document we use to help decide applications for planning permission in the future. We asked people what they value about the National Park through a public consultation in September 2016. Protecting the beauty and tranquillity of the countryside and its dark night skies were all mentioned as important for the new Local Plan.

1.3 We’ve been thinking since as to how our future planning policies can best protect and enhance these three special qualities. The rest of this paper explains the background to our thinking on a possible way forward, to help illustrate why we are proposing a particular policy approach. We would now like to ask for any views on our conclusions so far.

1.4 These particular special qualities are being considered together as they are mutually reinforcing, hence policy will need to take an integrated approach to each.

2. How to respond

2.1 Please give us your views, ideally by sending them by email to:

policy@northyorkmoors.org.uk

Comments and responses can also be sent to:

The Planning Policy Team,
The Old Vicarage,
Bondgate,
Helmsley,
York
YO62 5BP.

Please respond by 26 January 2018.
3. **Why introduce new policies?**

3.1 The National Park’s special qualities are currently protected in Core Policy A of the 2008 Core Strategy and Development Policies Document. This supports development that *will not have an unacceptable impact on the wider landscape or the quiet enjoyment, peace and tranquillity of the National Park.*

3.2 We are now developing new policies. Our work started with the First Steps consultation in September 2016. We asked people what they value about the National Park and what issues were important for the new Local Plan. Conserving special qualities for future generations was one of the main themes that came out of the consultation - protecting the beauty and tranquillity of the countryside and its dark night skies were all mentioned as important for the new Local Plan.

3.3 In addition to an overarching approach to protecting and enhancing special qualities, we are considering introducing three specific policies covering tranquillity, ‘remote areas’ and dark night skies. The new policies would:

- Support the aim of the Management Plan that ‘The North York Moors will continue to be a place of tranquillity, with a strong feeling of remoteness and dark night skies, all providing opportunities for spiritual refreshment’.

- Strengthen the policy position to address future challenges to these qualities by giving clear control over inappropriate development.

- Raise awareness of the importance of these qualities and ensure they are given appropriate weight when considering individual development proposals.

4. **A Sense of Tranquillity**

4.1 Tranquillity can be defined as a state of peace and calm which is influenced by what people see and experience around them. Tranquil places may be remote areas where the natural or semi-natural environment is experienced without the intrusion of human structures or activity but villages and groups of buildings can also be tranquil, especially where the built environment is pleasing and the pace of activity is calm. Tranquil places usually include natural elements such as trees, grass or water. They are likely to be quiet places with little traffic where there is an opportunity to sit and be still. Such places foster a sense of ‘belonging’ and being connected to nature and history. They are important to people’s wellbeing and many consider them to have a spiritual quality.

4.2 A study of tranquillity carried out in 1996 and updated in 2006 by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England used Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to identify anything that could add to or disrupt tranquillity over a series of 500 square metre grid squares across England. Each grid square was scored against the weighted criteria. A map of the results across the country is set out at Appendix 1. This showed that that the North York Moors National Park has been measured to be one of the most tranquil areas in England, even compared to other National Parks. Almost 90% of the National Park can be classed as relatively tranquil. Our own experiences and feedback from visitors also tell us that the tranquillity found in the North York Moors is a special quality that is very highly valued. Figure 1 shows how tranquillity is graded across the North York Moors National Park.
Figure 1 – Relative Tranquillity in the North York Moors National Park (CPRE)

Source: National Tranquillity Mapping Data 2007 developed for Campaign to Protect Rural England and Natural England by Northumbria University. OS Licence number 1000018881

4.3 The CPRE maps are designed to show relative tranquillity (how tranquil one area is compared to another) rather than showing tranquil areas per se. The study therefore concluded that it allows a comparison of tranquillity relative to anywhere else in England only. The study is therefore very useful in demonstrating that the whole of the National Park is a relatively tranquil place; however it does not (and was not intended to) form a basis for a spatial approach to policy making around tranquillity.

We drew two key conclusions from this work and work carried out elsewhere:

- Tranquillity is a matter of perception and different people will have different perceptions of what they find tranquil – for example some people may find comfort and relaxation from the enclosure of a forest, others may find they are unsettled by wide expanses of open moorland. Furthermore there can be elements that add to tranquillity, others that may detract. This makes any objective assessment of tranquillity complicated.

- Desk top studies measure tranquillity relative to elsewhere – this means that the least tranquil areas of the National Park may still be considerably more tranquil than an urban environment outside the National Park - 90% of the National Park is

A Sense of Tranquillity, A Strong Feeling of Remoteness and Dark Night Skies March 2017.
‘relatively tranquil’ when compared to the rest of England. We are therefore starting from a ‘high bar’ meaning that any attempt to weight tranquillity within the National Park risks losing the message that almost all the National Park is, relatively speaking, tranquil.

Protecting tranquillity in the North York Moors

4.4 To start developing policy we started by questioning the purposes of any policies. As it is cited as a special quality, and one which is particularly applicable to the North York Moors we considered how best to develop planning policy to ensure its continuing presence. Discussions so far have focused on a developing a policy approach which would:

- Conserve existing tranquil areas to ensure their retention for future generations;
- Enhance and expand tranquil areas where possible;
- Support and deliver the tranquillity policies within the Management Plan;
- Give clear control over development which is potentially harmful to the conservation of tranquillity, so that we have a strong policy position from which to address the challenges identified in the Management Plan.

4.5 We then identified a series of attributes which we think contribute to tranquillity in the North York Moors. These include:

- A sense of openness or remoteness;
- Presence of natural or semi-natural habitats;
- Extensive/high quality views;
- Dark skies at night;
- Absence of disturbance from noise and activity;
- Absence of major built features including roads, overhead electricity cables, industrial structures;
- Natural sounds such as birdsong, water, waves or breezes.

4.6 We also thought about a number of challenges which may affect the National Park’s tranquillity in future years including:

- Increasing levels of traffic and the demand for road improvements;
- Pressures for housing development;
- Growing visitor numbers and the demand for large scale tourism developments;
- The intensification of grouse and pheasant shooting activities.

4.7 There are also certain locations which are particularly vulnerable to a reduction in tranquillity, for example, the coastal strip where the Woodsmith Mine is currently under construction and areas around tourism ‘honeypot’ locations such as Goathland, Rosedale Abbey and Dalby Forest.
4.8 We also recognise that some of the strongest detractors from tranquillity are beyond the control of the planning system including noise from motorbikes travelling through the Park and military aircraft carrying out low-flying training or practice exercises. However, planning does have a role to play.

Our current thinking is that we should introduce a criteria based policy that would apply throughout the National Park.

4.9 A tranquillity policy would state that all development proposals would be assessed in relation to their impact on tranquillity and the criteria to be considered would be listed, for instance, visual intrusion, noise, activity levels and traffic generation. There would be additional explanation in the supporting text on how different locations are more or less sensitive to harmful impacts on tranquillity. The Authority would consider potential harm or benefits to tranquillity as part of its assessment of all development proposals. This conclusion was made as it recognises that almost all of the National Park is tranquil in comparison with areas beyond its boundary. This conclusion also reflects the possible introduction of 'remote areas' (see next section).

4.10 Alternative approaches that we have considered are in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current thinking</th>
<th>Pros/Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce a criteria based tranquillity policy that would apply throughout the National Park.</td>
<td>Straightforward approach that ensures specific assessment of tranquillity is made in relation to all development proposals and recognises that the whole of the National Park is tranquil in comparison with areas beyond its boundary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative approaches</th>
<th>Pros/Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep the existing approach as contained in Core Policy A and do not introduce a specific tranquillity policy.</td>
<td>Would not raise the profile of tranquillity in the development management process nor strengthen the policy position for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce a spatial tranquillity policy based on zones identified within an updated Tranquillity Map of the National Park, setting out a different approach to development in different zones.</td>
<td>Practical difficulties updating Tranquillity Map. Concern that policy based on Tranquillity zones implies some areas of the National Park are more highly valued than others. Would lead to pressures on areas identified as least tranquil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt a combined approach using a criteria based policy that would give additional protection to remote areas.</td>
<td>More complex approach but still ensures all development proposals assessed in relation to tranquillity. Recognition that remote areas are among the most tranquil in the National Park and may be appropriate if remote areas policy is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.11 In considering our future policy approach, we recognise that the aim to enhance and expand tranquil areas may be in conflict with other objectives identified for the Local Plan, for instance those which encourage new employment opportunities, tourism development or support the installation of better communications infrastructure. As with all planning decisions there will be a balance to be struck between competing objectives.

5. **A strong feeling of remoteness**

5.1 One of the elements of tranquillity we identified was that of remoteness. A strong feeling of remoteness is a special quality of the North York Moors in its own right and we consider it to be especially important in this National Park as it is one of the few areas in England that contain large tracts of open moorland and forests and a patchwork of very small and dispersed settlements. Remote undeveloped areas of open moorland and woodland across the North York Moors are among the most tranquil places in the National Park and, without the intrusion of man-made structures, they have a quality of ‘wildness’ which is rarely found elsewhere. These remote locations foster a sense of being close to nature and getting away from the stresses of modern life and are a finite resource which, once lost, cannot be regained.

5.2 Although we are proposing to introduce a Park-wide approach to the protection of tranquillity the Authority therefore considers that the strong sense of remoteness could benefit from a more spatial approach to its protection. This paper seeks your views on whether this is desirable and, if so, how it could be defined, mapped and protected through policy.

5.3 Remoteness can be defined as the state of being located far away from everyone or everything else and can be objectively measured as distance away from places where people live and work.

*Our current thinking is that we should introduce a policy that development will only be permitted in remote areas where it is essential for environmental conservation or land management purposes and where appropriate mitigation measures have been taken to minimise any harmful impact on tranquillity.*

5.4 Our preferred definition for mapping remote areas is places at least 1km away from the nearest postal address point or A or B class road. These are areas of open moor, woodland and other landscape types, mostly in the central part of the Park, where by definition there are no villages or scattered farmsteads. The advantage of this definition is that a restrictive approach to development that would protect the area could be consistently applied within it. Legitimate development proposals that may be needed to sustain existing families and small farm businesses would not be affected.

5.5 Figure 2 below shows the remote areas that would be identified using this definition.
Figure 2 – North York Moors Remote Areas. Current Thinking - using proposed definition that excludes isolated farmsteads
5.6 Using this definition, the remote area covers 290 kms$^2$ or 20% of the National Park.

5.7 The following table shows how different types of development would be treated in principle (unless any specific material planning considerations of each case outweighed the policy position) within and outside remote areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Proposal</th>
<th>Open countryside within Remote Area boundary</th>
<th>Open countryside outside Remote Area boundary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications mast</td>
<td>Refuse</td>
<td>Support if appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead cable</td>
<td>Refuse</td>
<td>Support if appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock handling pen (where permission is needed)</td>
<td>Support if essential and small scale</td>
<td>Supported if appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New agricultural or forestry track</td>
<td>Refuse</td>
<td>Support if essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement to existing agricultural or forestry track</td>
<td>Support if essential and appropriate</td>
<td>Support if essential and appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public art(^1)</td>
<td>Refuse</td>
<td>Support if appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Development</td>
<td>Refuse</td>
<td>Support if appropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alternative ways of mapping remote areas**

\(i)\)  **Include isolated farmsteads**

5.8 One comment on the proposed definition for mapping remote areas is that it would miss out some dale head areas - because they have a scattering of isolated farmsteads - but these areas still have a strong sense of remoteness. An alternative definition that overcomes this concern would be to show remote areas as those

\(^1\) The ‘Seated Figure’ at Castleton Rigg is c. 0.3 km from a farm (there are seven farms and three houses within one kilometre) and 1.7 km from Westerdale.

_A Sense of Tranquillity, A Strong Feeling of Remoteness and Dark Night Skies_ March 2017.
places at least 1km from any settlement which has more than 5 address points. This is shown at Figure 3 below.

5.9 This would include more of the isolated farmsteads and would result in a large proportion of National Park - 982 kms² or 68% - being included in the remote areas designation.

5.10 With this definition exceptions to the restrictive policy approach would need to be made in order to continue to support those living and working in farmsteads within the remote area. The policy wording would restrict development to essential environmental conservation or land management except for cases where development is required to meet the essential needs of existing households, farms or businesses. This would give those living or working in the designated area access to policies that apply more generally in open countryside locations, permitting development such as new agricultural buildings, changes of use, house extensions or small camp sites which may be requested as a farm diversification proposal.
Figure 3 – North York Moors Remote Areas using definition that includes isolated farmsteads
**ii) Use graduated shading to represent remoteness**

5.11 Another option would be to represent remoteness by graduated shading rather than as a designated area within a defined line. A map would show greater and lesser degrees of remoteness across the whole of the National Park. With this option the policy wording would be more general, saying that all development proposals would be considered in relation to their impact on the character of remote areas, taking into account the scale, nature and location of the proposal. Figure 4 below shows how remoteness would be represented across the National Park.

![Figure 4 – North York Moors – Remoteness represented by graduated shading.](image-url)
The advantages and disadvantages of our preferred approach and the alternatives we have considered are in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current thinking</th>
<th>Pros/Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce a policy that development will only be permitted in remote areas where it is essential for environmental conservation or land management purposes. Mapping definition of remote areas to <em>exclude</em> isolated farmsteads (Figure 2).</td>
<td>Strong protection for remote areas which can be consistently applied in a clearly defined area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative approaches</th>
<th>Pros/Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep the existing approach as contained in Core Policy A and do not introduce a specific remote areas policy.</td>
<td>Would not recognise the specific value of remote areas within the National Park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce a policy that development will only be permitted in remote areas where it is essential for environmental conservation or land management purposes. Mapping definition of remote areas to <em>include</em> isolated farmsteads (Figure 3).</td>
<td>Includes dale heads in remote areas designation. The need to allow exceptions to restrictive approach to development (particularly for essential agricultural uses) undermines the policy and indeed the very concept of &quot;remoteness&quot; – little difference between policy applied to remote areas and wider open countryside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce a policy that all development proposals would be considered in relation to their impact on the character of remote areas – based on map which uses graduated shading to represent remoteness (Figure 4).</td>
<td>More flexibility regarding how restrictive an approach to development should be taken in individual cases, based on the location and specific circumstances of proposal. Less certainty for applicants and land owners. Weaker protection for remote areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Larger scale maps can be seen on our website at [www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/localplanspecialqualities](http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/localplanspecialqualities)
6. Dark night skies

6.1 Dark skies at night have long been recognised as a special and important feature of the North York Moors and are a resource that is becoming increasingly rare throughout the country. The ability to experience dark skies is enhanced by the open nature of the moorland skyline, the presence of several large forest plantations within the National Park and the dark expanse of the North Sea to the east. These natural characteristics combine so that it is possible to experience dark and starry skies from many locations within the National Park.

6.2 As well as being an intrinsic part of the quality of the National Park landscape, dark skies at night are important for wildlife species such as bats, moths and nightjar and help maintain biodiversity within the National Park. They are also important for recreation – there is a growing interest in star gazing which in turn has benefits for local communities and the local tourism economy. There are now three ‘Dark Sky Discovery’ sites in the National Park at Sutton Bank, Dalby Forest and the Moors National Park Centre at Danby. Preliminary work has also started which may lead to an application for the North York Moors to be recognised by the international Dark Sky Places programme.

6.3 Work carried out in 2016 (the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England’s ‘Night Blight’ Mapping\(^2\)) revealed that the North York Moors was one of the areas in the country that was most free of light pollution. Figure 5 below shows the area of the North York Moors compared to its neighbouring areas in terms of levels of light pollution and dark skies.

\(^2\) http://nightblight.cpre.org.uk/

Figure 5 – North York Moors – CPRE/LUC Light Pollution and Dark Skies Mapping.
6.4 We therefore think it is appropriate that planning policy does all it can to protect this asset, as planning is a key area which can influence the quality of night skies. It can do this primarily by refusing development in inappropriate locations and by controlling the amount and type of external lighting on new developments.

Our current thinking is that we should introduce a policy that requires applicants to demonstrate that all proposed new external lighting is essential and meets the Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidelines for outdoor lighting in Environmental Zone E1. New external lighting would not be permitted in remote areas.

6.5 The policy would state that all development proposals would be expected to minimise light spillage through good design and lighting management. It would distinguish between villages listed in the Authority’s settlement hierarchy, open countryside and remote areas (see above). No external lighting would be permitted in remote areas. In open countryside locations applicants would need to demonstrate that new external lighting is required for safety or security reasons. In village locations, applicants would need to demonstrate that it is required for safety, security or community reasons.

6.6 The policy would also require all lighting installations associated with new development requiring planning permission to meet the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidelines for outdoor lighting in natural, intrinsically dark environments including National Parks (Environmental Zone 1). Where proposals involve works to an existing building, applicants would be encouraged to bring existing lighting installations up to the same standard.

6.7 Alternative approaches that we have considered are in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current thinking</th>
<th>Pros/Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce a spatial policy as follows: No external lighting permitted in remote areas In open countryside new external lighting must be shown to be required for safety or security reasons. In villages within the settlement hierarchy new external lighting must be shown to be required for safety, security or community reasons. All installations to meet the ILP Guidelines for Environmental Zone E1.</td>
<td>Sets a recognised standard for all new external lighting installations throughout the National Park. Gives extra protection to remote areas where the darkest skies are experienced. Recognises there may be community needs for external lighting within villages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative approaches</th>
<th>Pros/Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep the existing approach as contained in Core Policy A and do not introduce a</td>
<td>Would not promote conservation and enhancement of dark night skies in the National Park nor strengthen the policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific dark night skies policy.</td>
<td>position for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce a non-spatial policy which would permit external lighting in all locations where required for safety, security or community reasons provided it meets the ILP Guidelines for Environmental Zone E1.</td>
<td>A simpler approach. Would not give additional protection to remote areas where the darkest skies are experienced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB**The Authority is considering commissioning a Lighting Management Plan for the National Park which would contain detailed guidelines for external lighting installations. If this document is prepared and adopted by the Authority at a future date, it would be appropriate for the Dark Night Skies policy to refer to it rather than the ILP guidelines.

7. **Next Steps**

7.1 Please submit any comments you have to us by the 26th January 2018 using the contact details set out at paragraph 2.1 of this paper.

7.2 We are hoping to produce a ‘Preferred Options’ version of the new Local Plan for consultation in the spring of next year, which is likely to include draft policies on tranquillity, remote areas and dark night skies. If you would like to be kept in touch about the new Local Plan please complete the Mailing List Form if you are not already being notified or email us at policy@northyorkmoors.org.uk

Thank you for your time.
Appendix 1 – The Campaign for Rural England’s National Tranquillity Map.


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If you would like further information, please contact us:

Planning Policy – policy@northyorkmoors.org.uk
Development Management – planning@northyorkmoors.org.uk

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The text of this document can be made in large print. Please contact the Planning Policy team using the contact information above.

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The Old Vicarage, Bondgate, Helmsley, York YO62 5BP