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# Regenerative Tourism in UK National Parks



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# Our Vision

UK National Parks will be leaders in regenerative tourism – managing tourism in such a way that we don't merely minimise its impact but strive towards tourism making a net positive contribution to our National Parks. Regenerative tourism is a step further than sustainable tourism, which seeks to minimise negative impacts.

## We will:

- Champion and support tourism development that contributes to the enhancement and regeneration of the places and communities in which it operates.
- Support tourism activity that helps reduce carbon emissions and increases nature-recovery, whilst ensuring National Parks are relevant to everyone's needs.

This paper is a collective ambition for UK National Park Authorities, illustrating a shared experience of developing and promoting regenerative tourism. UK National Parks are world-class landscapes, designated as national assets on behalf of the nation because of their special qualities, with the power to inspire. National Park Authorities are the organisations dedicated to looking after our National Parks, working with partners to keep them special and accessible to all.

# Tourism in UK National Parks

UK National Parks are loved by millions for their beautiful and unspoilt scenery, their wildlife, and their richly diverse cultural and natural heritage. They act as breathing spaces for the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of the nation, as well as providing opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to have exceptional outdoor experiences.

These iconic and protected landscapes are rightly regarded as national treasures, attracting around 90 million visitors from the UK and the world, estimated to be worth £7.9 billion to the UK's visitor economy (STEAM 2022). In 2019, UK National Parks won VisitEngland's 'Outstanding Contribution to Tourism' award.

# 1

*“Iconic and protected landscapes are rightly regarded as national treasures”*



© Andrew Locking

Lake District

Exmoor



© Jim Johnston



Northumberland

**“National Parks face significant challenges”**

# 2

## Redefining Sustainable Tourism

For many years, UK National Park Authorities have led on the development and promotion of sustainable tourism within their respective National Parks – as a critical means of achieving our statutory purposes and duties.

Managed well, tourism has the power to transform people and places. It can have a positive impact on host communities, generate community wealth and connect people to nature, inspiring them to care for our most precious landscapes.

Yet National Parks face significant challenges. Our landscapes must work harder to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. They need to lead nature’s recovery, ensuring that 30% of our land is protected for nature by 2030. They need to be more inclusive and provide equality of access for everyone. Whilst tourism can be a positive force, enabling more people to experience and engage with National Parks, high volumes of visitors, in specific locations, can have a negative impact on local communities and the environment.

Tourism can deliver even more benefits to National Parks and their respective communities in the future, without compromising the special qualities of these places. To achieve truly positive transformation, we need to move from minimising the impacts of tourism to ensuring visitors leave our National Parks as better places.

‘Regenerative Tourism’ describes activity that is shown to be able to contribute more towards the enhancement and regeneration of the places and communities in which it operates. It requires us all to find ways for tourism to generate ‘net-positive’ impacts in carbon reduction and biodiversity, as well as enhancing the vitality and integrity of host communities, whilst ensuring that National Parks are relevant to everyone.

Simply, tourism development needs to move from a position of ‘doing less harm’ to ‘helping give back more than it takes’.

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Cairngorms

The Broads



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Pembrokeshire



Yorkshire Dales

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## Our approach

UK National Parks can show how tourism contributes to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, in line with the UN's regenerative tourism principles:

- **Holistic understanding and living systems approach** – by understanding the tourism ecosystem within our National Parks and how businesses impact on one another.
- **Collaborative** – by developing partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders to deliver the best facilities, services and information and experiences for our visitors.
- **Diverse by nature** – by encouraging the diversity of the visitor offer, so as not to be too reliant on any particular segment or market and seek to strengthen business resilience within our communities.
- **Inclusive and equitable** – by involving local people and communities and striving to make National Parks more relevant and accessible to all.
- **Transformational and inspirational** – by creating experiences for visitors that are memorable and life-changing.
- **Environmentally responsible** – With our partners, taking good care of the environment through the management of natural resources and biodiversity and the protection of fragile landscapes and wildlife.
- **Cultural stewardship** – by working with local people and communities to care for our natural and cultural heritage.

*“Developing partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders”*

# Future Focus

## Measuring our impact – data, evidence and intelligence

- Using quantitative volume and value data, spatial data and other research to measure tourism and its impact on user-experiences, carbon emissions, nature and residents' quality of life.

## Developing more resilient rural businesses

- Developing new events and experiences that support a year-round visitor economy e.g. developing new experiences around our dark skies, opportunities for observing wildlife in winter.
- Developing and promoting better local B2B and B2C supply chains.
- Exploring and demonstrating the 'circular economy' in rural tourism development and promotion.
- Supporting businesses and tourism stakeholders to mitigate and adapt their own operations in response to climate change.

## Supporting and promoting low carbon and carbon-free travel

- Integrating and promoting public transport and active travel in the development of visitor experiences and destination marketing.
- Supporting and promoting public transport provision in autumn/winter months for both residents and visitors.
- Encouraging and facilitating electric vehicle travel.

## Developing fully accessible and inclusive destinations

- Developing audience-led experiences for health and wellbeing, connecting with nature etc.
- Developing new active travel and visitor experiences that appeal to a broader and more diverse audience.
- Proactively removing hard and soft barriers, ensuring everyone is welcomed and has the opportunity to experience our National Parks.
- National Parks recognised and valued as a 'Natural Health Service'.

## Developing nature-benefitting and low carbon experiences

- Supporting and promoting businesses that contribute to the restoration of nature and low carbon land management e.g. visitor giving schemes, visitor volunteering in conservations activities, community volunteering and micro-volunteering activities. Encouraging businesses to be directly involved in supporting nature recovery projects e.g. tree planting, pond creation, conservation volunteering.
- Nurturing the creation of low-carbon visitor experiences.

## Celebrating local distinctiveness and sense of place

- Developing new authentic experiences that help visitors connect with local traditions and heritage, and to be able to contribute to the care of the natural and cultural heritage of the place e.g. developing local ambassador schemes, visitor-giving.
- Further promoting the links between landscape management, farming and sustainable food production to visitors, increasing the uptake of local produce.

# 4

### Loch Lomond and The Trossachs



© Michael McGurk



© Vox Multimedia

### Peak District



© Jonny Gios

### Lake District

*“National Parks represent excellent value for money”*

## Our asks

- Maintain an ongoing strategic dialogue with national and regional tourism agencies including VisitBritain.
- National tourism agencies to recognise:
  - and promote National Parks as champions for Regenerative Tourism.
  - the unique role of National Park Authorities in destination management.
  - the opportunities for National Park Authorities, through their place-based facilitation role, to test and undertake pilot projects in rural areas.
  - the value of National Parks as national assets to be cared for and enjoyed by all.
- Encourage Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) and Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) to actively involve National Park Authorities in their planning and work.
- Recognition of the disproportionate importance of tourism to the economy of rural areas, including our National Parks.
- As national assets, it is important that National Park Authorities have sufficient resources so that they can fulfil their twin purposes of looking after these special places, while helping people to enjoy and understand them sustainably. National Parks represent excellent value for money, delivering innumerable benefits for nature and for the many millions of people who visit and experience these wonderful places. A little investment goes a long way – for every £1 the government invests in National Parks, they lever in additional funds and generate significantly more health and wellbeing benefits.

Bannau Brycheiniog



The Broads



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New Forest

*“A collective ambition for UK National Park Authorities, illustrating a shared experience of developing and promoting regenerative tourism”*



Lake District  
National Park



Northumberland  
National Park



North York Moors  
National Park



PEAK  
DISTRICT  
NATIONAL  
PARK



Parc Cenedlaethol  
Arfordir Penfro  
Pembrokeshire Coast  
National Park



South Downs  
National Park Authority



YORKSHIRE DALES  
National Park Authority

Cover images clockwise  
from top left:  
North York Moors  
Pembrokeshire  
The New Forest  
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***[nationalparks.uk](http://nationalparks.uk)***