

Management Plan - Consultation Questions

Thank you for providing feedback on the Northumberland National Park Management Plan. The information we collect will be used to help shape the management of Northumberland National Park for the next 5 years.

All feedback is strictly anonymous. If you have any concerns about our Privacy Policy, please visit: <https://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/privacy-policy/>

We recommend viewing our video and draft text before responding and this can be found at:

www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/dmpconsultation

Section 1. Your Connection to Northumberland National Park

1. What is your connection to the National Park – please tick all that apply from the options below:

- Resident
- Visitor
- Volunteer
- Partner Organisation
- Business
- Landowner
- Other – Please state

Representative of NGO which campaigns to protect and promote the National Park
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Section 2. Strategic Priorities

The draft Management Plan features strategic priorities and aims. Please read the aims below and let us know if you agree with them. This will help us to understand if we're moving in the right direction.

2. **Nature Recovery** - Tell us how you feel about this aim:

Aim: To restore, conserve and enhance nature at a landscape scale through a proactive nature-first led approach to sustainable land management and partnership working

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Don't agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

3. Please share your thoughts below around Nature Recovery and how we achieve this within the National Park.

For example, should we specify how much woodland, or the percentage of land which should be managed with a nature first approach? (The government has set a target for 30% of land to be managed in this way by 2030).

We support this aim and the proposed activities for achieving it. However, given the urgency of the nature emergency there needs to be a stronger emphasis on securing change as quickly as possible. This should include specifying strong, challenging time-bound targets for activities such as peatland restoration and woodland expansion. There also needs to be a clear definition of a 'nature-first led approach' to ensure that the intended aims are delivered most effectively.

In our 2018 'Raising the Bar' report, we recommended that NPAs should identify part(s) of the Park within which they would implement policies to make the area feel relatively wider and we would like to see this approach adopted as part of this Management Plan. Even if it is not appropriate to draw definitive lines around areas, it would be helpful to include a visual representation of this in the final Plan with a map indicating where the relatively wilder areas are in the Park and their relationship to each other.

The examples of how to achieve this aim are all very focused on supporting the first statutory purpose of National Parks but it would also be good to include some actions here which support the second purpose. This could include, for example, actions aimed at raising awareness and understanding of the way in which adopting a 'nature-first led approach' will affect the Park. Ensuring that both visitors and residents properly understand the significant impacts of changes in land management on the landscapes and special qualities of Northumberland is key to addressing the challenge of securing support for the measures needed to secure nature's recovery. The map referred to above would also support this by helping visitors and residents understand that there is a particular emphasis on nature recovery in certain parts of the Park. Seeing what these relatively wilder areas are like in practice would provide an opportunity to raise awareness among those less familiar with rewilding and would help alleviate some of the misunderstandings that exist about it.

We would also like to see the inclusion of a specific reference to removing conifer plantations if/where possible.

4. **Climate action** - Tell us how you feel about this aim:

Aim: Empower, enable and inspire climate action to create a net zero National Park by 2040

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Don't agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

5. Please share your thoughts below around Climate Change and how we address this within the National Park.

FC We support this aim and the proposed activities for achieving it. However, given the urgency of the climate emergency there needs to be a stronger emphasis on securing change as quickly as possible, including specifying strong, challenging time-bound targets for delivering the measures needed to achieve net zero. For example, we would like to see the inclusion of a target for all degraded peatland to be in restoration management by 2030 given the importance of healthy peatlands for both climate and nature. There should also be clear deadlines given for delivering all the other activities proposed such as the carbon baseline and the net zero holiday experiences.

Consideration should also be given as to whether it is possible to achieve a net zero National Park sooner than 2040. As we highlighted in our 2021 report *National Parks and the Climate Emergency*, there are examples of more ambitious commitments from elsewhere in the public sector. For example, the York and North Yorkshire Local Industrial Strategy sets out an ambition for the area (which includes two National Parks) to be carbon neutral by 2034 and then to become England's first carbon negative economy by 2040. Some NPAs have also set more ambitious targets for being net zero too, for example, Dartmoor NPA has committed to being carbon neutral by 2025. In addition, the Plan should specify what achieving net zero for both the Park and the NPA means in terms of the average annual reduction in emissions that will be required, and then set out the types of measures required to deliver this level of reduction. This would ensure that these objectives are not only aspirational but also deliverable.

We welcome the emphasis on sustainable tourism. In 2018 we published a report, *National Parks for All: making car-free travel easier*, which highlighted the importance of making the Parks more accessible by means other than private car. We believe this is important for both environmental and social justice reasons. We would, therefore, like to see a specific focus on encouraging, and providing funding for, car-free access. This could include a target for a percentage of people visiting by public transport and would support the aim of enabling and promoting "net zero, then carbon negative, resident and visitor experiences". There are also opportunities to consider the role of sustainable travel in encouraging people to stay longer. We know that visitors are willing to see travel choices as part of their visitor experience in a way that residents are not and so promoting sustainable means of reaching high quality outdoor recreation experiences could play a role in helping to encourage people to extend their visits and use more local services. Research has also shown that people who use public transport tend to spend more money in the local area. There are, therefore, strong economic development arguments for investing in improved public transport for the National Park.

The points we raised about activities relating to the second purpose in our response to Q3 are also relevant here, as there is a need to help both residents and visitors understand the impacts on the Park of the changing climate and the measures to address this. Our 2021 report referred to above provides further examples of the kind of actions that could be included. It would also be good to include measures not just to educate, but also to empower visitors to take action on the climate and other environmental issues.

We would also like to see the inclusion of an additional activity relating to lobbying Government to secure the national policy framework needed to achieve the Plan's aims on climate action. This should include seeking changes across a range of policy areas including planning (e.g. reducing permitted development rights) and transport (e.g. managing travel demand) and calling for NPAs to have the supporting tools and resources to enable them to take effective action themselves.

more time is needed?

6. Valuing Culture and Heritage - Tell us how you feel about this aim:

Aim: Conserve, enhance, explain and celebrate our historic environment and rich cultural heritage by connecting people and place

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Don't agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

7. Please share your thoughts below around 'Valuing Culture and Heritage' and how we might achieve this within the National Park.

For example, do you have any suggestions of areas that require specific attention? Do you feel that our historic environment is adequately cared for and widely understood?

We support the aim and the activities proposed for achieving it but as set out in response to previous questions there is a need for more specific targets and deadlines to ensure that this aim is delivered effectively.

8. Welcoming Park for All - Tell us how you feel about this aim:

Aim: To be a welcoming place, full of beauty and biodiversity, offering enjoyment and exploration of the landscape in a creative, accessible, and open way whilst acting as a positive force for wellbeing.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Don't agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

9. Please share your thoughts below around a 'Welcoming Park for All' and how we might achieve this within the National Park.

For example, do you feel there are ways to improve the visitor journey in the National Park? Is there more that could be done to support the wellbeing of people within the National Park?

We support the aim and the activities proposed for achieving it but as set out in response to previous questions there is a need for more specific targets and deadlines to ensure that this aim is delivered effectively.

If the Park is truly to be welcoming to all then consideration must be given to improving the options for those without cars to visit as discussed above. Improved public transport will be essential for achieving the Plan's ambitions to provide a warm welcome for all audiences as many of those who would benefit most from the benefits of National Parks are currently excluded from visiting by a lack of transport. We would like to see some reference to the affordability of transport options as this has an impact on the accessibility of the Park for people from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. It is unlikely to be feasible to ensure good public transport access to all parts of the Park but what would be helpful would be to identify those areas which have the greatest potential and include measures aimed at improving the opportunities for those without cars to visit these areas.

Care will also need to be taken to ensure that measures introduced to meet the needs of new audiences do not undermine other important ambitions, such as on nature recovery, or the special qualities of the National Park. For example, it will be important to develop the proposed range of opportunities and activities in a way that minimizes carbon impacts and ensures activities are available to those without private transport.

We would also like to highlight the research around people from minority ethnic backgrounds and lower socio-economic backgrounds visiting the outdoors that was undertaken as part of the Campaign for National Parks Mosaic programme. When seeking to increase inclusivity, 'role modelling' can be very important in encouraging people to see activities as 'for them'. With this in mind, it would be good to see the inclusion of actions relating to monitoring and increasing the diversity of staff in the NPA and other relevant partners, particularly those with a public-facing role, such as rangers. Visitors may be more likely to see the National Park as 'for them' if they can see people similar to them in the workforce.

We note that there is no reference to volunteering either here or in the section on thriving communities and we would like to see this included. Volunteering has a key role to play in supporting the maintenance of the National Park and its recreational facilities, but it will also contribute to the environmental awareness raising and knowledge sharing that is going to be so essential for tackling the nature and climate emergencies. It has also significant potential as a route into employment, particularly for young adults, We would like to see the inclusion of measures to increase the opportunities to take part in volunteering and to address the barriers to volunteering that some people experience, such as a lack of awareness of opportunities, the cost of travel etc.

10. Thriving Communities - Tell us how you feel about this aim:

Aim: To have engaged, resilient and balanced communities in a unique living, working landscape

- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Don't agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

11. Please share your thoughts below around thriving communities and how we achieve them within in the National Park.

For example, Northumberland National Park has an aging population of around 2,000 people. Should we strive for a larger and more diverse population?

We support the aim and the activities proposed for achieving it but as set out in response to previous questions there is a need for more specific targets and deadlines to ensure that this aim is delivered effectively.

We welcome the proposed actions in the section aimed at improving transport options for visitors, many of which are in line with the recommendations of our car-free travel report. However, action is also needed to improve the transport options for residents. This is particularly important for the minority of households that don't have access to a car but it would benefit all residents to have more opportunities to choose sustainable travel options. This will also help contribute to net zero targets since surface transport currently accounts for a significant proportion of carbon emissions in the UK.

12. Are these aims ambitious enough? Yes No Don't know

13. Please give reasons for your answer here:

As set out in our response to previous questions, there are a number of areas where we believe the aims could be more ambitious, for example, with regard to net zero targets. There is also a need for the inclusion of much stronger, more challenging targets and a stronger emphasis on securing change as quickly as possible in all areas of the Plan. Without more specific targets, there is a risk that these policies will be simply aspirational so the final plan must include much stronger, and suitably challenging targets for each of the policy areas.

14. Have we missed anything?

Do you think there is a different approach we have not considered? Please share your thoughts below.

As set out in our response to previous questions, we believe that there is need to give greater consideration to how the second statutory purpose is being addressed through the activities proposed as part of this Plan, particularly with regard to helping people understand how the Park will need to change to address the climate and nature emergency.

The other thing that is missing is any detail on who will be responsible for delivering each of the proposed actions.

Section 3. Special Qualities

Below is a list of Special Qualities which are unique to Northumberland National Park. They are the reasons why this landscape should be looked after. Do you agree with the Special Qualities in the list?

The Special Qualities are:

- **A True Sense of Tranquillity** - A place of great beauty, for the health and wellbeing of everyone
- **A Rich Cultural Heritage** - A world class cultural heritage
- **Distinctive Landscape** - A landscape with a character of its own
- **A Place Rich in Biodiversity and Geology** - A wealth of habitats and wildlife

15. Tell us if you agree with these special qualities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A True Sense of Tranquillity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Rich Cultural Heritage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distinctive Landscape	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Place Rich in Biodiversity and Geology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. If you would like to explain your answers, please do so here:

17. Do you think the list of Special Qualities reflects your National Park?

If there's something you feel strongly about that isn't listed, please share your thoughts below.

It would be good to include a specific reference to dark skies in the first of the special qualities, given this makes a significant contribution to the sense of tranquillity.

Section 4. Future Delivery

18. Thinking about the future, what would you like to see in the National Park in 10 years' time?

A wildlife-rich landscape that is home to thriving communities and offers a wide range of recreational opportunities that are easily accessible by public transport, walking or cycling.

19. Northumberland National Park Authority works with partners to deliver the Management Plan. If you feel you, or an organisation or business you work with could support the delivery of the Plan, please comment below:

20. Thank you for your time. If you would like to add any other thoughts about the Draft Management Plan, please comment in the box below.

Section 5. Stay Informed

Answers to these questions will be reviewed by the team as part of the Management Plan review process. If you would like to be kept informed please leave your contact details below. Please note, we will review all correspondence but may not be able to respond to each email individually.

21. Name:

Ruth Bradshaw, Campaign for National Parks

22. Email:

ruthb@cnp.org.uk

23. I would like to be kept up to date about the Management Plan. Yes No

24. Stay informed with the latest news and be kept up to date on what's happening in your National Park by signing up to our mailing list.

We will never share your information with any third parties and we promise to only ever send you information you will want to hear. By signing up to our mailing list, you are agreeing to Northumberland National Park Authority using your details to provide you with information about the National Park. You can unsubscribe at any time by clicking 'unsubscribe'. For more information on how we handle personal data, please see our full Privacy Policy at: <https://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/privacy-policy/>

- Yes, I would like to be added.
- No, I would not like to be added.

We will be carrying out short polls and mini questionnaires through our social media so if this interests you, please do get involved through these too.

Please return this completed consultation form using the self-address envelope to:
Management Plan team, Northumberland National Park Authority, Eastburn, Hexham, NE46 1BS
Or email Managementplan@nnpa.org.uk