

# VIEWPOINT

Special 75th Anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act Edition

**A POTTED HISTORY OF NATIONAL PARKS**  
and the driving force behind the 1949 Act

**WANTED - A LONG GREEN TRAIL**  
how the 1949 Act created an inspirational  
long-distance trail network

**NATIONAL PARKS HEALTH CHECK REPORT**  
Our flagship report sets out the first assessment  
of and recommendations for nature recovery in  
National Parks in England and Wales



**CAMPAIGN** for  
**NATIONAL PARKS**

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PARCIAU CENEDLAETHOL



# CONTENTS

- 3-5 NEWS FROM CAMPAIGN FOR NATIONAL PARKS**
- 6-7 A POTTED HISTORY OF NATIONAL PARKS IN THE UK** - we look at what drove the Act to fruition and celebrate those who made it possible
- 8-9 'NATURAL BEAUTY' - A TERM FIT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY** - Sally Marsh examines the history of 'natural beauty' and how it helped shape our National Parks
- 10-11 THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS SUCCESS** - Mountain Training's Nicola Jasieniecka-Evans on the origins and outlook of the awarding body network
- 12-13 WANTED - A LONG GREEN TRAIL** - Andrew McCloy explains how the 1949 Act created an inspirational long-distance trail network
- 14-15 NATIONAL PARKS HEALTH CHECK REPORT** - Our flagship report sets out the first assessment of and recommendations for nature recovery in National Parks in England and Wales
- 16-17 CAIRN** - Winner of the 2023 Working Class Writers Nature Prize Kirsty Whatley
- 18-19 WISHING FOR A FUTURE WHERE NATIONAL PARKS ARE INCLUSIVE...** - Mohammed Dhalech on the challenges in the sector
- 20-21 MY NATIONAL PARKS JOURNEY** - Kate Ashbrook examines her campaigning roots and challenges that persist to this day
- 22-25 POINTS OF VIEW** - Opinion pieces from Director of Cymdeithas Eryri/Snowdonia Society Rory Francis, our Policy & Research Manager Ruth Bradshaw and Huw Irranca-Davies, Member of the Senedd for Ogmere
- 26-27 SAVE OUR NATIONAL PARKS** - Our latest campaign

Cover image of Crib Goch in Eryri National Park by Rachel Roberts; discover more of her work on Instagram @rachelhikes

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# WELCOME

I'm thrilled to welcome you to this special edition of Viewpoint, celebrating the 75th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. We've already kick-started the year with a celebration in the Senedd in March (see page 4), but there's lots more on the horizon and we'll be sharing ways you can get involved too (pages 26-27).

This anniversary has been a good opportunity to look back on what led us to the 1949 Act (pages 6-7) and how this truly visionary legislation shaped the Parks we have today (pages 8-9). The creation of National Parks also provided the blueprints for some other key aspects of the UK countryside including our long-distance trail network (pages 12-13).

People are the heart of our Parks, and bringing together this issue of *Viewpoint* has given me the welcome opportunity to speak to lots of people across the country and hear their personal reflections of National Parks; from a lifelong campaigner (pages 20-21) to passionate advocate for the natural environment of Wales (pages 22-23).

National Parks aren't static, and today nature has seen a steep decline compared to the countryside of the 1940s. While we know that without National Parks things would be significantly worse, there needs to be dramatic changes if they are able to meet the challenges facing nature in the next 75 years and beyond. We've been squirreling away here at Campaign for National Parks on our flagship Health Check Report (pages 14-15) which sets out the first assessment of and recommendations for nature recovery in National Parks in England and Wales. These recommendations will help shape our campaigning work over the coming years.

For now, I hope you can follow in the footsteps of those pioneering men and women who ensured we can all go walking for a whole day immersed in nature by spending some time in our Parks this year.

**Harriet Gardiner**  
Senior Communications Officer



Harriet (2nd from right) with the team in the Senedd in March

# NEWS



## PUTTING NATIONAL PARK ELECTION ASKS TO PARTY LEADERS

To celebrate the start of the 75th anniversary year, the nine National Park Societies from across England have signed an open letter with Campaign for National Parks calling on political parties to set out clear commitments at the next Westminster election to revitalise Protected Landscapes.

The letter highlights eight key manifesto asks to secure the long-term health of the Parks; including for every child to visit a National Park as part of the national curriculum, greater regulation of holiday lets, improving sustainable public transport, more financial rewards for nature friendly farming, and the introduction of visitor levies where appropriate to manage tourist numbers.

## PROGRESS BEING MADE FOR NEW NATIONAL PARKS IN ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES

In England, proposed new National Park areas are vying for attention whilst the designation process is being finalised by Natural England. Meanwhile in Scotland the application window for communities to nominate a new National Park closed at the end of February with Galloway, Lochaber, Loch Awe, Tay Forest and the Scottish Borders nominated. For the proposed new National Park in North East Wales, the designation process now moves on to a detailed boundary setting phase which is expected to conclude with a public consultation this autumn.

**Main image: View from Castell Dinas Brân, The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape**

## NATIONAL PARKS NEW PERSPECTIVES 2024

We're pleased to announce that we have been awarded funding by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver a two-year project connecting young people with National Parks in England and Wales.

This project follows our successful New Perspectives Bursary Scheme and will enable young people to share their experiences, their ideas, and to have a say in the future of our Parks. We're looking forward to sharing their stories with you.





# NEWS



Eryri farmer Alun Elidyr addressing the crowd

## CELEBRATING IN THE SENEDD

75th anniversary celebrations were kick started in the Senedd on 5 March, as we brought together over 100 people to learn more about Welsh National Parks and National Landscapes and our hopes for the next 75 years.

Julie James MS (Minister for Climate Change), Llyr Gruffydd MS (Chair of the Climate Change Committee), Dianne Spencer from Ein Bwyd 1200/Our Food 1200 and Louise Southwell from Primrose Farm, and S4C presenter and Eryri farmer Alun Elidyr presented to the gathered crowd their experiences of living, working in and advocating for National Parks.

We also launched an anniversary statement in partnership with the Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes, laying out 10 key asks for Welsh Government and the soon to be elected new First Minister of Wales.



Hopes for the new National Park on our felt board



Campaign for National Parks CEO Rose O'Neill (right) with Julie James MS (left)



Farmer Louise Southwell from Primrose Farm

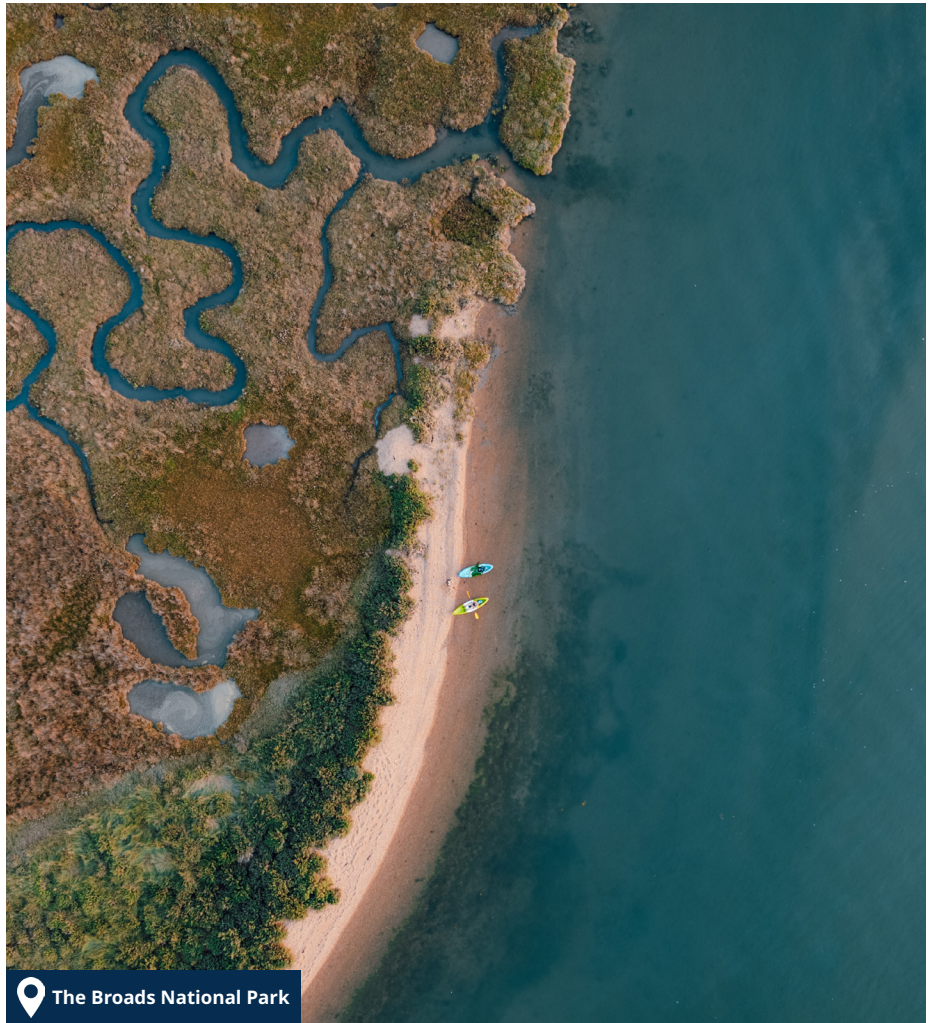



## NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH RESPONSIBLE HOLIDAY COMPANY

We are delighted to announce our partnership with well-respected holiday company Sawday's and its brands Canopy & Stars and Paws & Stay. They are supporting our work by aiming to raise £50,000 over three years, including a donation with every booking to a Canopy & Stars property, many of which are in beautiful rural locations. As well as helping with funding, they are going to be getting involved in projects, funding bursaries and creating responsible travel guides for their customers.

## £20,000 RAISED FOR NATURE

Thank you to everyone who donated towards our Winter Appeal. From match funding through The Big Give online, to cheques sent in the post, we are delighted to have raised £20,000. These important funds are now being used in the work we are doing to highlight the plight of nature in National Parks and how it can be reversed.



 The Broads National Park



 Camping on Dartmoor, Matt Gibson

## DARTMOOR WILD CAMPING BACK UNDER THREAT

The right to wild camp on Dartmoor is under threat again after the Supreme Court granted permission for Alexander Darwall, a wealthy landowner in Dartmoor, to bring a case against it.

This comes after Dartmoor National Park Authority won an appeal last year which sought to ban wild camping in the Park. Camping had been assumed to be allowed under the Dartmoor Commons Act since 1985, until a judge ruled otherwise in January 2023. It was the only place in England where such an activity was allowed without requiring permission from a landowner.

## DARTMOOR REVIEW

In December, the independent review into Dartmoor's Protected Areas published their report.

It identified that the "top priority" is to restore the hydrology of the moor. However, there was little recognition that the dire state of Dartmoor's SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) has been exacerbated by a decade of cuts. We agree that "the way Dartmoor is managed needs to change radically and urgently" and hope Government responds at pace to provide much-needed support to the Park, as well as to its commoners and great projects, like our National Park Protector award winner the South West Peatland Partnership, who are working to restore Dartmoor's most precious habitats.



# A potted history of National Parks in the UK

**With 2024 marking the 75th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, we look at what drove the Act to fruition and celebrate those who made it possible**

The history of National Parks is a history of ambitious campaigns and the power of people coming together.

In 1936, a group of passionate outdoor enthusiasts came together to campaign for National Parks to be established in the UK. Inspired by precedents around the world, including Yellowstone in the United States (created in 1872 and the world's first National Park), they had a vision of the UK's precious landscapes preserved for nature and open for all to enjoy.

## **1860S-1930S: THE BASIS OF THE NATIONAL PARKS MOVEMENT**

The foundations for the National Parks movement were laid throughout the 19th and 20th centuries when various organisations formed to protect countryside landscapes.

The Open Spaces Society and CPRE alongside the YHA (Youth Hostel Association) were the founding members of the formalised movement for National Parks created in 1936, known then as the Standing Committee on National Parks and known now as Campaign for National Parks — us.

## **1930S: NATIONAL PARKS AND ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE**

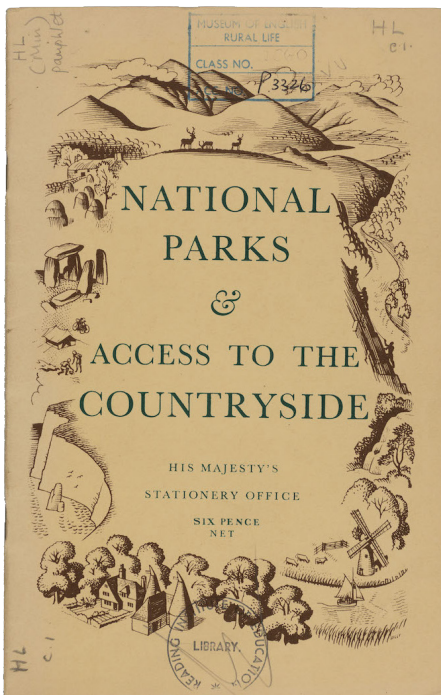
At a similar time, the movement for greater access to all areas of the countryside had been growing. The increasing industrialisation and urbanisation of the early 20th century led more and more people to seek the open spaces and clean air of the countryside, and a campaign for the rights of everyone to access their health and wellbeing benefits gained momentum, a campaign which had great overlaps with the call for National Parks.

Working class people were most affected by poor health and living conditions while wealthy landowners were the ones with the privilege to access and use the countryside. The 1932 Kinder Mass Trespass, where protestors trespassed on wealthy gamekeepers' land, was a key turning point in the fight for countryside access. Its scale — over 400 people were involved — and the harsh sentences given out to some protestors sparked public outrage and support for the campaign grew.



 Kinder Scout mass trespass walk 1932, Working Class Movement Library





Ministry of Town and Country Planning, National Parks and Access to the Countryside booklet 1950, the Museum of English Rural Life

## 1950S-1980S: DESIGNATION OF NATIONAL PARKS

**1951** The first National Park, the Peak District is designated, soon followed by Dartmoor, Eryri (Snowdonia) and the Lake District

**1952** The North York Moors and the Pembrokeshire Coast are designated

**1954** Exmoor, the Yorkshire Dales and Northumberland are designated

**1957** Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) is designated

**1988** The Broads is granted equivalent status as a National Park but has its own third purpose - to protect the interests of navigation

**2002** The first Scottish National Park, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs, was designated, soon followed by the Cairngorms in 2003

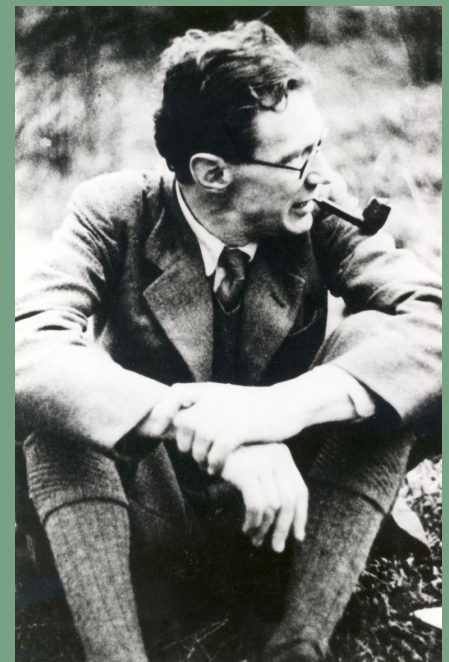
**2005** The New Forest was designated

**2010** The last National Park to be designated (to date), the South Downs

## 1940S: THE SECOND WORLD WAR

After the Second World War, the desire for National Parks was stronger than ever. In May 1945, John Dower, a significant figure in the early National Parks movement alongside his wife Pauline, published a report on the need for National Parks in England and Wales. It reflected the mood of the post-war country: our finest landscapes needed protection to become havens for all to enjoy – places worth fighting for.

Four years later in 1949, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act was passed. This legislation enabled the designation of National Parks and gave the public limited access to areas of the countryside.



## JOHN DOWER

John played a pivotal role in the creation of National Parks. In 1938, over 40,000 copies of his pamphlet 'The Case for National Parks in Great Britain' were distributed, accompanied by a vigorous press campaign and a series of public meetings. This pamphlet was soon followed by the publishing of his White Paper in 1945 in which he established the principles by which National Parks were to be designated. He believed they should be areas of beautiful and wild country where everyone could have fair access to the experience of walking for a whole day immersed in nature.

Sadly, he died in 1947 before the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act was passed. His influence, however, was undeniable and laid the foundations for the creation of the National Parks we continue to enjoy today.

Learn more about the incredible story of John Dower in David Wilkinson's book *Fight for It Now - John Dower and the Struggle for National Parks in Britain*



Mam Tor in the Peak District National Park by Chris Hepburn



# ‘Natural beauty’ – a term fit for the 21st century

Co-Director of the High Weald National Landscape Partnership Sally Marsh examines the history of ‘natural beauty’ and how it helped shape our National Parks

## NATIONAL PARKS AND ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1949

An Act to make provision for National Parks and the establishment of a National Parks Commission; to confer on the Nature Conservancy and local authorities powers for the establishment and maintenance of nature reserves; to make further provision for the recording, creation, maintenance and improvement of public paths and for securing access to open country, and to amend the law relating to rights of way; to confer further powers for preserving and enhancing natural beauty; and for matters connected with the purposes aforesaid. [16th December 1949]

Seventy-five years on from the 1949 Act which allowed for the designation of National Parks and National Landscapes (AONBs), the foresight of those who laid the foundations for the Act is striking. Their choice of the term ‘natural beauty,’ embodying our emotional engagement with nature, and ‘preservation (now conservation) and enhancement’ reflecting the precautionary principle of ‘first do no harm’, are as relevant today as they were 75 years ago.

Natural beauty as an idea has a distinguished history. It was the subject of Immanuel Kant’s philosophical exploration of aesthetics in his *Critique of Judgement* and Wordsworth’s paeans to nature, both written at the turn of the nineteenth century. In the first part of the twentieth century, natural beauty was understood as the feeling of pleasure generated by attending to nature for its own sake rather than some utilitarian end. The benefits that this brought were thought to improve the health and happiness of the nation. Legislation was designed to protect beautiful and extensive areas of nature-rich countryside so that everyone could have fair access to the experience of walking for a whole day immersed in nature.

John Dower explained in 1945 how no one should be excluded from these benefits:

*‘[National Parks and National Landscapes] were not for any privileged or otherwise restricted section of the population, but for all who care to refresh their minds and spirits and to exercise their bodies in a peaceful setting of natural beauty ... [they will be] in the full sense national ... for people – and especially young people – of every class and kind and from every part of the country, indeed the world’.*

Accessibility from urban areas was an important consideration in the selection of candidate areas, balanced against the desire expressed in a government report in 1931 to preserve ‘at least one supreme example of each principal type of scenery’ in Britain. A later report in 1947 explained that this included mountain and moorland, downland and coast, and the green wooded farmed lowlands.



**Together these areas would tell a story about the Nation’s relationship with land over time;**

the important communities of plants and animals associated with their distinct geologies and land management regimes adding value to their natural beauty. By 1945, Dower had narrowed the selection of candidate National Parks to focus on

upland and wilder country, although he made clear this did not mean ‘the “wild” country’. Wildness was a practical consideration rather than an attribute of natural beauty. Dower recognised that the policy might remove a large proportion of unrealised development value and it was only in these more marginal upland areas that the public could at reasonable cost to the Nation be given the wide measure of recreational access intended.


Natural beauty is a complex concept, both in terms of the object we are perceiving — nature — and how we perceive it. As we move through the countryside, exposed to temporal factors such as light and weather, information from all of our senses interact simultaneously with knowledge and emotion centres in our brains. Our senses are able to tune into the tiny details of an insect wing and broad qualities of the landscape, at the same time drawing on the multi-scaler property of nature as an aesthetic object, an attribute reflected in the equal importance of scenery and wildlife to natural beauty. The positive emotions these extended aesthetic experiences in nature generate can aid our well-being and connectedness to the natural world.

Use of the term ‘natural’ is often cited as suggesting that people and structures



created by human ingenuity are omitted from natural beauty, but this was not the intention. In the first part of the twentieth century, lowland pastoral landscapes and upland moors were considered to be natural countryside, although today they are more likely to be described as cultural landscapes. Their natural beauty – including villages and farms, routeways and harbours, prehistoric sites and architecture – had been shaped by generations of people interacting with nature, creating a harmony of form and function, although the hands of those who crafted them remain unseen. Change was not to be feared providing it was harmonious with natural beauty. Concern about housing affordability for local people in National Parks was anticipated by Dower and he welcomed sensitively designed rural buildings to meet this need. He found pleasure in the new aesthetic presented by the checkered wartime ploughing of permanent pasture, and no doubt would have treated rewilding similarly. Providing traditional small-scale pastoral or mixed farming and forestry remained as the engine of natural beauty, all would be well. But this is not what happened. The subsequent economic and social shifts accompanied by weak regulatory regimes for air, soil, and water has led to a catastrophic decline in biodiversity and species abundance, even while broad landscape character has until recently been largely protected.

As a philosophical idea, natural beauty in the first part of the twentieth century was considered to have an ethical (or moral) dimension associated with social justice and societal good. Writing in 1938, J.M. Keynes proposed that natural beauty was an example of a national resource where the state should step in and create social wealth for the benefit of all. In 1949 the state did step in, but the social wealth it aimed to foster has been eroded along with the harmony between people and nature this was considered to represent. Perhaps it is time to embrace again the holistic and non-instrumental nature of natural beauty as intended by the protagonists of the 1949 Act and put the precautionary principle at the centre of decision making?

 **Main image: Horsey Mill, The Broads National Park by Justin Minns**





# The first steps towards success

## Mountain Training's Nicola Jasieniecka-Evans on the origins and outlook of the awarding body network

Mountain Training's qualifications are held by tens of thousands of people across the UK and Ireland, who are walk leaders, climbing instructors and climbing coaches. They're a force for good, involved in all aspects of the outdoors including volunteering, litter picking, educating, and ensuring good quality, safe and sustainable introductions to the outdoors.

Mountain Training's history dates back to 1964 when the Mountain Leadership Certificate was created, administered by a new organisation: the Mountain Leadership Training Board (now Mountain Training England). The desire for a qualification came about because an increasing number of people were attending personal mountaineering courses at centres across the UK and subsequently taking young people from their schools and youth clubs out into the mountains. Unfortunately, they were not being trained to lead or look after others, and no assessment was being made of how much they had learned. So, the Central Council for Physical Recreation (now the Sport and Recreation Alliance) called together a working party including individuals from the British Mountaineering Council, Guides, Scouts, Ministry of Education (Department for Education) and Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and after several meetings the Mountain Leadership Certificate (now the Mountain Leader qualification) was born.

Scottish, Welsh and Irish training boards were soon established to administer the Mountain Leadership Certificate in every nation, and new qualifications were created to cover mountaineering instruction and walk leadership in the

winter mountains to service the ever-increasing public interest in getting outdoors.

What started in the highest hills has spread to include more than just mountains. Today Mountain Training's Climbing Wall Instructor and Lowland Leader are part of a suite of 17 qualifications available to volunteers and professionals. Lowland Leaders frequently lead walks in all National Parks, particularly The Broads, New Forest and South Downs. Hill and Moorland Leaders can be found crossing Dartmoor, Exmoor, Northumberland, North York Moors, Peak District and Yorkshire Dales, while Mountain Leaders love the Lake District for its closely packed peaks and historic valleys.

Rock Climbing Instructors introduce hundreds of thousands of people to rock climbing on the shorter crags scattered throughout and beyond the National Parks, and Mountaineering Instructors teach multi-pitch climbing and scrambling in the bigger mountain cliffs in the Lake District.

Regardless of the terrain, the underpinning principles of all Mountain Training qualifications have always been safety and stewardship. Each qualification equips people with the knowledge and skills to keep other people safe, ensure sustainable and sympathetic use of the outdoors, and encourage a life-long commitment to the activities and the places that make them possible.

New qualifications are created in response to the sector rather than for

commercial gain. A Bouldering Wall Instructor qualification will be launched in the autumn of 2024 in response to demand from bouldering-only walls across the UK and Ireland.

We created two walking skills courses in 2014 and four rock climbing skills courses in 2019, all of which are designed to support people from age 10 through to older adults, to have independent adventures in the hills and at the crags.

“

***Looking to the future, one of our strategic priorities across the Mountain Training network is to continue increasing the diversity of the people gaining our qualifications.***

We are also involved in long-term work with partners to support effective public safety messaging as the number of people enjoying the outdoors continues to increase post-Covid. We believe the influence and reach of our qualified leaders and instructors does contribute to safer and more sustainable experiences for all.

 Main image by Mountain Training

Learn more about Mountain Training's qualifications at [www.mountain-training.org](http://www.mountain-training.org)







# Wanted – A Long Green Trail

Andrew McCloy explains how the 1949 Act created an inspirational long-distance trail network

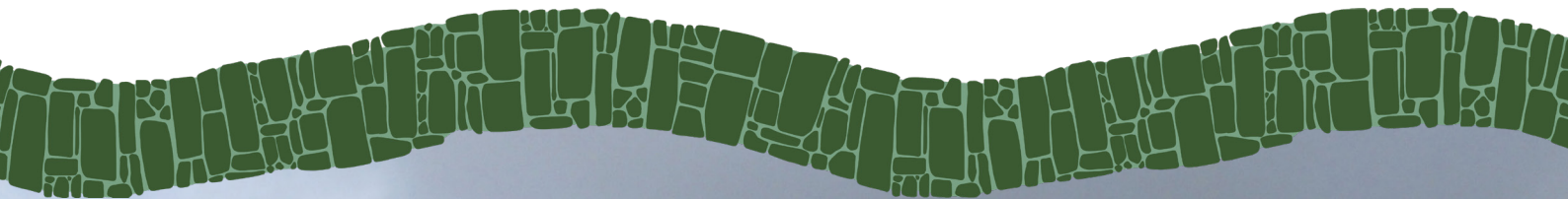
In 2015 I walked the full distance of the Pennine Way to mark its (and my) 50th birthday, and by writing a book about the experience afterwards I learned that the 1949 Act not only produced the blueprint for our long-distance trail network, but also provided the tools to make it happen. Specific provisions empowered local authorities to impose new access links where agreement with landowners couldn't be reached, as well as to compulsorily purchase land, erect buildings and provide 'meals and refreshments (including intoxicating liquor)' for walkers. In this way, public funds helped the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) establish youth hostels on the Pennine Way like Crowden and Baldersdale (both now closed) to plug accommodation gaps. One section of the Act even gave local authorities the power to provide and

operate ferries 'where they are needed for completing the route'.

The Pennine Way was the first of Britain's official long-distance routes, since re-branded as National Trails, and links the Peak District, Yorkshire Dales and Northumberland National Parks. For its creator, Tom Stephenson, the idea of a "Long Green Trail" along the backbone of England was as much a ploy to open up private grouse moors to public access, but although the 1949 Act failed to deliver a wider right to roam the popularity of long-distance walking certainly took off. In 1947, the Hobhouse Committee suggested a number of possible routes, including the Pilgrims Way (which never materialised) and the Thames Towpath (achieved six decades later), but by 1972 the Cleveland Way, Pembrokeshire



Tom Stephenson, Ramblers Archive





Coast Path, Offa's Dyke Path, Ridgeway and South Downs Way were all open. There are now 16 National Trails across England and Wales with the ambitious 2,795-mile England Coast Path joining the ranks, and Wainwright's Coast to Coast Path also designated. Scotland has its own network of 29 'Great Trails', including the West Highland Way and St Cuthbert's Way.

However, the long-distance walking legacy of the 1949 Act extends beyond National Trails, for as much as these are touted as the gold standard, it's the network beneath which is really interesting. The Long Distance Walkers' Association's database lists 1,600 trails of varying descriptions, some of which are depicted on OS maps or waymarked on local signs – from the Two Moors Way and Dales Way to the London Loop and Cambrian Way.

Despite the proliferation of walking trails, developing long distance routes for cyclists and horse riders has been more problematic, as exhibited by the slow progress of realising the Pennine Bridleway. Indeed, just as some landowners tried to thwart the early development of the Pennine Way, there are still access problems on many trails, particularly as you go down the trail

hierarchy. It seems that cuts to public spending on rights of way has resulted in lesser-used parts of the path network being left largely unmanaged, with consequences for local access. And of course, linear access is one thing, but with less than 10% of England and Wales open to wider public access, there's a bigger prize yet to be won.

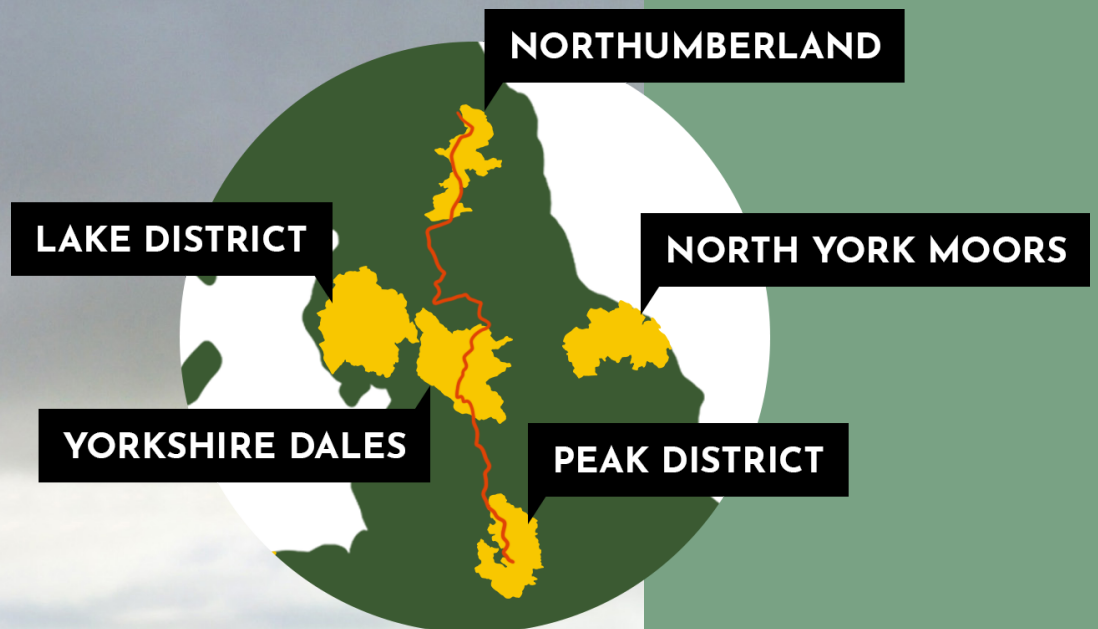
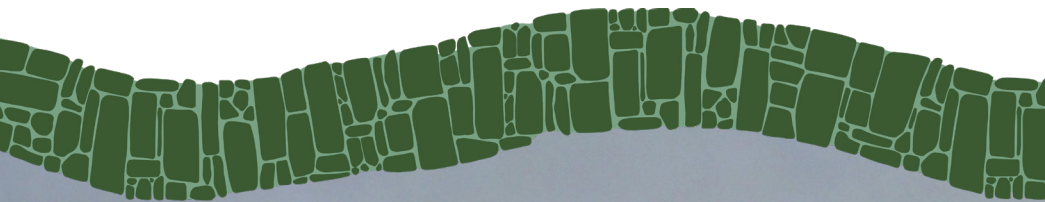
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**All that said, 75 years on from the Act our trail network is quite an achievement and something worth celebrating.**

There are trails in every National Park, they connect urban and rural, and the health and economic benefits they bring are immense. For me, as my Pennine Way journey demonstrated, long-distance trails offer not just adventure and exercise, but a chance to immerse ourselves in our finest landscapes. The pace and rhythm of moving through inspiring scenery on foot, day after day, can be a profound experience that is becoming all too scarce in our hectic modern society. Isn't it time to discover your very own long green trail?



Andrew McCloy is Chair of Trustees for Campaign for National Parks and his book *The Pennine Way - the Path, the People, the Journey*, is published by Cicerone available at [www.cicerone.co.uk](http://www.cicerone.co.uk) or scan the QR code to find out more.



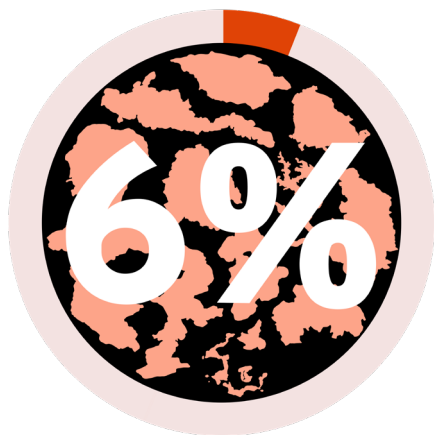


# National Parks HEALTH CHECK REPORT

Our flagship Health Check Report sets out the first assessment of and recommendations for nature recovery in National Parks in England and Wales

Nature is in crisis across the UK. We've carried out a health check of habitats and species in the 13 National Parks of England and Wales. **The results are in for National Parks: nature needs a lifeline.**

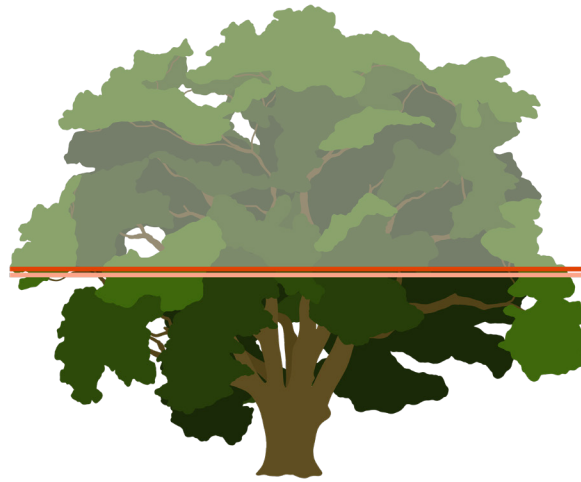
While it is clear that nature in National Parks faces many challenges, just as it does across the UK, these landscapes contain many of the last fragments of priority habitat and the last refuges for many species on the brink of extinction.



**ONLY 6% OF THE TOTAL LAND AREA OF NATIONAL PARKS IS CURRENTLY MANAGED EFFECTIVELY FOR NATURE\***

\*total area of SSSI sites in National Parks considered to be in favourable condition

## Key findings:



FULL POTENTIAL FOR WOODLAND IN NATIONAL PARKS (35% COVER)

15.3% COVER IN 2020  
15.2% COVER IN 2015

### WOODLAND HEALTH

Both the Westminster and Welsh Governments have set ambitious targets for woodland expansion.

Our analysis identified that there was virtually **no change in woodland coverage across all the National Parks** in the five years to 2020, with a total expansion of just 8 square miles across all the National Parks.

### PEATLAND HEALTH

National Parks contain a significant proportion of England and Wales' peat. Peatlands support important wildlife habitats and species, and play a vital role in carbon storage.

Peat accounts for 43% of the land area in the English National Parks and 8% of the land area in the Welsh National Parks.

Various studies have indicated that between **70% and 80% of peatlands in the UK are damaged**. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of peatlands in National Parks are in poor condition and that urgent action is needed to address this.

**Number of sewage releases from storm overflows within the boundaries of National Parks in England and Wales**

### FRESHWATER HEALTH

The waterways of the National Parks are under threat from pollution and historic physical modifications.

The proportion of National Park rivers meeting good ecological status or higher dropped from 47% in 2013 to 39% in 2022, and lakes declined from 18% to 15% over the same period. In Wales, 51% rivers and 21% of lakes in National Parks achieved good overall status or higher in 2021.

**Just five of the 880 water bodies in National Parks meet the highest status.** However, even in the most pristine rivers and lakes in England's National Parks, traces of toxic chemicals are found, resulting in not a single water body in an English National Park being in good overall health.





## PROTECTED AREAS HEALTH

Parts of National Parks have been identified as being of national or international importance for biodiversity and are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or other Protected Areas.

SSSIs in National Parks are on average in worse condition than those elsewhere. The reasons for poor condition which featured most frequently in research included mismanaged livestock grazing; pressure from deer browsing; the spread of invasive species; water pollution and human impacts.

**Concerted action is needed to improve the condition of Protected Areas in National Parks.**

## SPECIES HEALTH

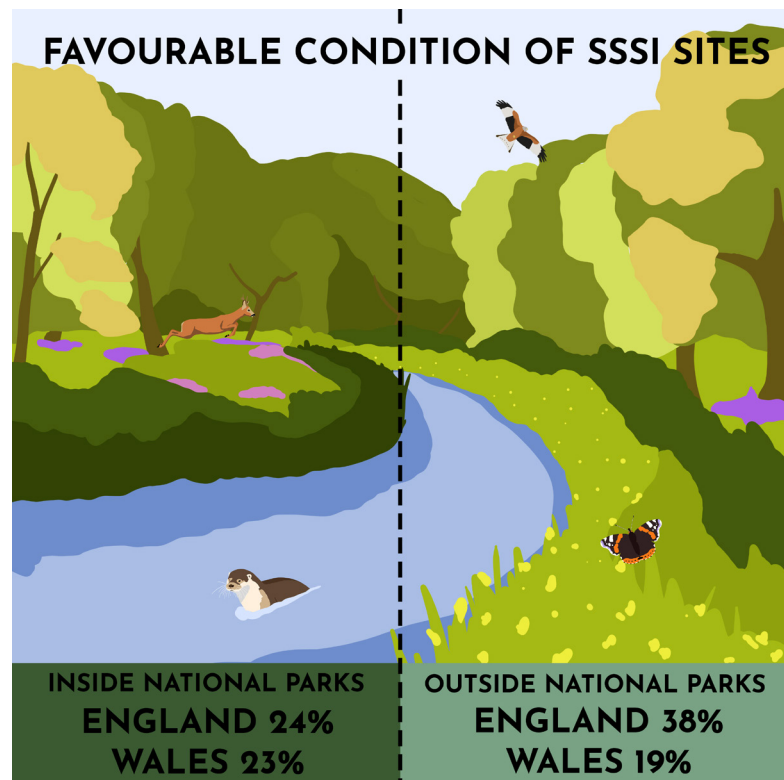
The number of different types of species recorded varies significantly between the Parks. Priority list species which are declining nationally were sighted in all 13 National Parks, including cuckoo, hen harrier and curlew. Other endangered species are found in just a small number of Parks.

**It is clear that National Parks are currently among the last refuges for many species on the brink of being lost from the UK.** Now we need to ensure they become the places from which these species recover and are able to spread.

## BIRD CRIME

Raptor (bird of prey) persecution is a particular problem in several of the National Parks. In the last five years, **56 out of 62 incidents reported in the National Parks took place in just three of them** — the Peak District, the North York Moors and the Yorkshire Dales.

In 2022, at least 70% of all confirmed raptor crimes across England and Wales were associated with gamebird shooting. Sadly, the chances of being caught and convicted for this type of offence are very low.



## Reforms for healthy nature in National Parks

### REFORM NO. 1. MAKE IT CLEAR: NATIONAL PARKS ARE FOR NATURE

Governments in England and Wales must be unambiguous in their expectations and set out reforms to ensure that National Parks are deemed as nature designations as well as landscape designations.

### REFORM NO. 2. A NEW DEAL FOR NATIONAL PARKS

We want to see significantly increased levels of public investment in National Parks including a doubling of the core funding for NPAs, higher levels of agri-environment support and much higher levels of investment from other public bodies.

### REFORM NO. 3. ENFORCE THE LAW AND CREATE NEW POWERS TO HALT HARM AND DRIVE RECOVERY

The 'new deal' for National Parks must provide the incentive framework to drive change, underpinned by new powers and enforcement to deliver the scale of change needed for nature.

### REFORM NO. 4. A NEW 'PEOPLE'S CHARTER' TO ENSURE NATIONAL PARKS THRIVE INTO THE FUTURE

When National Parks were created 75 years ago, it was under a 'People's Charter' that set out a vision for every citizen to be able to walk completely immersed in nature. This vision should be the basis for a renewed social contract.

### ONE QUICK WIN: REVEAL THE EVIDENCE ON THE STATE OF NATURE IN NATIONAL PARKS

This report shows that we still don't know enough about the state of nature across National Parks, and there's a clear role we can all take to support this.

**For full details of our analysis, recommendations and case studies, read the Health Check Report on our website at:**

[cnp.org.uk/health-check-report](https://cnp.org.uk/health-check-report)







# Cairn

This is not only a green and pleasant land.  
Yesterday, the hill was an orca, winter black and ceramic white.  
The hedgerows rippled strange in city colours, pavement-grey  
but spilling rosehips like café light, convivial as Le Moulin Rouge,  
winking rubies in the dimming dusk. Look, see,

this is a riven land, fault-driven to buckle and rise tor-chested to the skies  
yet still in its arms a tenderness of tarns lifting to the light.  
Peat-pitted, blanket-bogged, fine-forested and so born of the sea,  
here shells are tattooed even to the summits in tectonic tales  
of the great slow waves, the ancient undulation beneath our feet.

I love the days of honeycomb and marmalade, the calligraphy  
and sapphire days and even a low grey cloud can settle like feathers  
in a softening, underwing. It is easy to love when butterflies  
are flung by the fistful over corn-swept warmth, scabious-scattered,  
wild with poppies and yes, the green is lush as any paradise.

The other day, the fields were skull yellow, their stubble-bones  
spiking through a saturated slipping of chill cloying clay, exposed  
and brave under a grieving rain. I walked then with a privilege  
of witness to the mess, to the relief in abandonment, to the strength  
and the passing of it, to a freedom from shame; and the truth of it moved

a long-written love living far beneath my skin. Here comes the deepening,  
the battening in of soul to place, the trespass of the moor  
through the strata of my memory, chinking and spilling my nana's voice  
in the breeze, her umber words warm as bees, the bell heather  
her knitwear, contours curved with soft-folded hair; and there

in the spinning sepia sycamore my daughter is flickering,  
open-armed in her duffel coat, a robin's breast amidst the brown.  
On a high bridge my heart heard the wide river's unstoppable "yes",  
in the gushing renewal of my own blood, belief coursing confident,  
expanding, washing out fear; and in some open place

I who thought I did not pray, suddenly knew myself broad as the landscape,  
and all the wrongs were tiny birds lifting lightly in the air.

Do you feel it?

How permeable we are  
how false the boundaries of our bodies  
how prone to pass and trespass  
how much like a net, catching and releasing  
sifting the spaces within and the spaces without.

Bring your memories  
the living stones of your life  
and pile them in a cairn upon this poem.



**Kirsty Whatley is the winner of the 2023 Working Class Writers Nature Prize which was set up in 2020 to help break down barriers to nature writing and what is perceived as a nature writer.**

**Kirsty's poem *Cairn* was written exclusively for Campaign for National Parks, you can find more of her work on Facebook by searching Kirsty Whatley: Creative Professional.**

“

***This prize highlights two vital issues: our relationship with nature and all that means for our world; and the issue of social equality. Working in these areas could not be more important and relevant to our times.***





# Wishing for a future where National Parks are inclusive...

**Mohammed Dhalech, Yorkshire Dales National Park volunteer and Churchill Fellow, lays out the challenges which must be tackled for everyone to truly enjoy National Parks**

I began my journey with National Parks in the 80s, working for the Youth Service in Gloucestershire. One of the first National Parks I visited was Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park, which I still hold dear to my heart and have visited many times since.

My first interaction led to greater connection with most of the Parks, and has developed into not just visiting Parks but caring for them for the future generations. I've been a volunteer and worked for a National Park for a short time, but more importantly I'm connected to them for the health and wellbeing benefits.

However, what stood out for me back then was the limited engagement from Ethnically Diverse communities, either as users of or workers in the sector. This was the beginning of my passion for engaging communities that are underserved; we need to make clear

communities are not underrepresented. We are here and very much reachable; it's the sector that has failed to reach and engage with the communities.

*"The way we protect and improve our landscapes needs to change radically... If their natural beauty is to be in a better condition 70 years from today, even better to look at, far more biodiverse, and alive with people from all backgrounds and parts of the country, they cannot carry on as they do now."*

- DEFRA Landscapes Review, Julian Glover 2019

As highlighted, the landscape bodies, both public and voluntary, need to radically change if they are to respond to the challenge set by Glover, but so far there has been a reluctance to change from the status quo. There seems to be a lack of courage, creativity and thinking outside of the box to engage diverse communities. Over the

last six months, I have come across several initiatives where it's clear there has been no consideration given to attracting diverse communities, be they visitors, staff, volunteers, trustees, etc.

I believe that the three biggest challenges in the sector from an inclusivity perspective are organisational culture, representation and racism. Unless we address these three significant challenges, we will not move forward. In the 2019 Landscapes Review, Glover highlighted:

*"Many communities in modern Britain feel that these landscapes hold no relevance for them. The countryside is seen by both black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and white people as very much a 'white' environment. If that is true today, then the divide is only going to widen as society changes. Our countryside will end up being irrelevant to the country that actually exists."*





 Main image: Mosaic trip to Eryri

## THE THREE CHALLENGES;

- **Organisational culture:** The sector needs to address its internal culture, and organisations need to start the journey to inclusivity at all levels. Inclusivity should be a core business activity, not a short-term time-limited add on.
- **Representation:** Many organisations in the sector look at representation only from the user/visitor perspective, “access” in its narrowest definition, and place very little emphasis on wider inclusivity. This needs to change.
- **Racism:** Individuals and organisations all have a responsibility to tackle racism in the sector, to call it out and act proactively to report it and address it. Many over the years have not been proactive and have stayed silent, which does not help to address the challenges we have in the sector.

This work matters to be able to change the sector, so that it can be more inclusive to all communities and so that everyone can enjoy landscapes without experiencing racism. The sector needs to demonstrate leadership and commitment to inclusivity, and work on this as part of its core business and not just through “Diversity Washing” initiatives (A challenging environment: Experiences of ethnic minority environmental professionals, Institution of Environmental Sciences, February 2022).

“

***There has been more than enough research over the years. It is now time for real and demonstrable action and change.***

Ethnically Diverse communities need to be around the tables where decisions

are made, and our contributions and lived experiences respected and valued. The journey needs to start now (needed to really start many years ago) and with commitment and real resources from senior leaders.

My vision for the future is that the sector will be at the forefront of inclusivity. This is an aspiration and may take many years, but we should seize this opportunity in celebrating 75 years to make a difference for future generations and the landscapes themselves, which belong to us all. Let's make the next 75 years more inclusive, where landscapes are protected and improved, so future generations can have the same enjoyment that I have had over the last 50 years. I want my grandchildren, nephews and nieces, and the community to relish these beautiful landscapes as I have done.

My wish is that National Parks take up this challenge and become more inclusive.

## MOHAMMED REFLECTS ON MOSAIC

Campaign for National Parks Mosaic projects ran over 15 years from 2001 to 2016 and have had a lasting impact. The project found ways to open National Parks to those who had never experienced them before and connected hundreds of people with the countryside.

I was fortunate to be involved with the Mosaic project between 2005 and 2012, and had the opportunity to join Campaign for National Parks Council, where I'm still active. Mosaic provided the community and myself with opportunities to experience the Parks. We have carried this work on as Mosaic Outdoors and Peak District Mosaic, however on reflection the National Parks could have done more to embed and continue the work started almost two decades ago.





# My National Parks Journey

**Kate Ashbrook, Campaign for National Parks Trustee and lifelong campaigner, examines her campaigning roots and challenges that persist to this day**

I can remember the day I discovered Dartmoor. I was 16 and had for the first time ridden from west to east right across the moor, and towards the end crossed the great ridge of Hameldown with its glorious views. Later that evening I saw Sylvia (Lady) Sayer speak courageously to a roomful of people who wanted the incomparably splendid and wild Swincombe valley to be flooded to make a reservoir. I knew then that I must fight for Dartmoor.

I became a close friend of Sylvia who, though 50 years older, treated me generously as her protégée. From her I learnt to campaign: to never start by compromising and to stand up for

what you believe. At first my battles were all Dartmoor ones — stopping the Swincombe reservoir, combating military training, and fighting the Okehampton bypass (only the first of these was successful).

One day Sylvia, who represented the Dartmoor Preservation Association on Campaign for National Parks council, asked me to take her place. From there I was elected to the executive committee in 1983, thus beginning my 40-year relationship with Campaign for National Parks.

Then, the threats to National Parks were starker and clearer cut than they

are today. Then we faced quarrying, mining, road schemes, water storage, military training, moorland ploughing, and afforestation.

These menaces persist, alongside the overarching climate and nature crises, diminution of traditional farming and empty villages, but today the value of our Protected Landscapes is better understood by a wider constituency. This is thanks to relentless work by Campaign for National Parks; weeks spent at public inquiries, threats of legal action, meetings with ministers, parliamentary lobbying, and its panoply of excellent campaigning techniques.



The Park societies have been integral to that effort. Forty years ago, they were fewer and run by volunteers, some paying an honorarium to the secretary. Now most employ staff but their ethos hasn't changed. They are knowledgeable, dedicated, and effective defenders of their Parks.

Campaign for National Parks can be proud of its innovation. In 1983, as its contribution to the Countryside Commission's uplands debate, it commissioned Malcolm McEwen and Geoffrey Sinclair to write *New Life for the Hills*, a vision for farming and conservation in the uplands. Campaign for National Parks was ahead of the times, publishing *Wild by Design* in 1997 before 'rewilding' became common parlance, outlining the nature benefits of wilderness and arguing that to experience even small areas of wilderness can be of crucial value to people and nature. And in 1999, the wonderful Mosaic was born at the National Park Societies' Conference in Eryri (Snowdonia) — a pioneering project to help people from ethnic minority backgrounds discover National Parks.

Campaign for National Parks has led projects and research and has provided opportunities for debate, but above all it excels at light-footed yet heavyweight campaigning. It can say and do those things which others, such as the Park Authorities, cannot and it has used this power to good effect. It recognises the Parks have a wider context, as places where one can test ideas and apply them to the world beyond. It has remained nimble and feisty, courageous and outspoken.

“

***Seventy-five years on the Parks still have a long way to go, but it would be a much longer journey were it not for Campaign for National Parks and the Park societies.***

 Main image: Tavy Cleave, Dartmoor National Park





# POINTS OF VIEW

## ONE OF THE BEST JOBS IN THE WORLD



**DIRECTOR OF CYMDEITHAS ERYRI/SNOWDONIA SOCIETY RORY FRANCIS**

It was a huge privilege last year to be appointed as Director of Cymdeithas Eryri Snowdonia Society. We have a brilliant staff team, conscientious Trustees, amazing partners on our various projects and, of course, dedicated members and volunteers. I've spent the last few months getting to know people, taking part in events and planning activities for the future.

It's been a strange experience in a way, as I spent six years as Director of the Society in the 1990s. I'm still proud of the work I did then. I spent most of the time in between working for the Woodland Trust in Wales.

Of course, Cymdeithas Eryri has changed a great deal since 2000. It is a significantly bigger, more active organisation now than it was then. Even before I formally started the job, I took part in the amazing Make a Difference weekend, when volunteers from across the country converge on Eryri to get involved in conservation work and to have fun. I've also been out with one of the Society's Caru Eryri teams picking up litter from the Llanberis path up Yr Wyddfa. The reaction we got from those coming down the mountain was amazing, and heartening.

Eryri has been an important part of my life. I moved to the area in 1994 to work for the

Society and I've stayed here ever since. Although I grew up in Birkenhead, I was always drawn to North Wales and I learnt Welsh as a teenager. I've been incredibly fortunate to be able to work in roles that involve campaigning to protect and enhance the natural environment in Wales for over 30 years.

In my spare time, I love walking in the mountains, through the woods and along the rivers and streams of Eryri. I'm a keen photographer and I love riding around the area on my ebike. It was the landscape and wildlife, and the Welsh language and culture that drew me to this area, and I am hugely looking forward to being able to spend my working time coordinating the Society's efforts to protect and enhance the natural environment of Eryri.



## UN O'R SWYDDI GORAU YN Y BYD

Braint enfawr y llynedd oedd cael fy mhenodi'n Gyfarwyddwr Cymdeithas Eryri Cymdeithas Eryri. Mae gennym dîm staff gwych, Ymddiriedolwyr cydwybodol, partneriaid anhygoel ar gyfer ein prosiectau amrywiol ac, wrth gwrs, aelodau a gwirfoddolwyr ymroddedig. Rwyf wedi treulio'r ychydig fisoedd diwethaf yn dod i adnabod pobl, cymryd rhan mewn digwyddiadau a chynllunio gweithgareddau yn y dyfodol.


Mae hi wedi bod yn brofiad rhyfedd mewn ffordd, gan i mi dreulio 6 mlynedd fel Cyfarwyddwr y Gymdeithas yn y 1990au. Dwi dal yn falch o'r gwaith wnes i bryd hynny. Treuliais y rhan fwyaf o'r amser yn y canol yn gweithio i Goed Cadw yng Nghymru.

Wrth gwrs, mae Cymdeithas Eryri wedi newid llawer ers 2000. Mae'n fudiad sylweddol fwy, mwy gweithgar yn awr nag yr oedd bryd hynny. Hyd yn oed cyn i mi ddechrau yn y swydd yn ffurfiol, cymerais ran yn y penwythnos Mentro a Dathlu, pan fydd gwirfoddolwyr o bob cwr o'r wlad yn dod at ei gilydd yn Eryri i gymryd rhan mewn gwaith cadwraeth ac i gael hwyl. Rwyf hefyd wedi bod allan gydag un o dimau Caru Eryri'r Gymdeithas yn codi sbwriel ar lwybr i fyny'r Wyddfa o Lanberis. Roedd yr ymateb a gawsom gan y rhai oedd yn dod i lawr o'r mynydd yn anhygoel, ac yn galonogol.

Mae Eryri wedi bod yn rhan bwysig o fy mywyd. Symudais i'r ardal yn 1994 i weithio i'r Gymdeithas ac rwyf wedi aros

yma ers hynny. Er y cefais fy magu ym Mhenbedw, roeddwn bob amser yn cael fy nenu i Ogledd Cymru a mi ddysgais i Gymraeg yn fy arddegau. Rydw i wedi bod yn hynod ffodus i allu gweithio mewn swyddi sy'n cynnwys ymgyrchu i warchod a gwella amgylchedd naturiol Cymru ers dros 30 mlynedd.

Yn fy amser hamdden, rwyf wrth fy modd yn cerdded yn y mynyddoedd, trwy'r coed ac ar hyd afonydd a nentydd Eryri. Rwy'n ffotograffydd brwd ac rwyf wrth fy modd yn seiclo o amgylch yr ardal ar fy meic trydan. Y dirwedd a'r bywyd gwyllt a'r iaith Gymraeg a'i diwylliant a'm denodd i'r ardal, ac rwy'n edrych ymlaen yn fawr at gael treulio fy amser gwaith yn cydlynu ymdrechion y Gymdeithas i warchod a gwella amgylchedd naturiol Eryri.

 **Main image: Cadair Idris, Eryri National Park**





# POINTS OF VIEW

## MY CONNECTION TO NATIONAL PARKS

**RUTH BRADSHAW, POLICY AND RESEARCH MANAGER AT CAMPAIGNS FOR NATIONAL PARKS**

I started working for Campaign for National Parks in 2012 so I'm a relative newcomer compared to all those who've been campaigning for National Parks for decades, but my connection to National Parks goes back a long way. My mother worked for the National Parks Commission before I was born and most of our family holidays were in National Parks, particularly Eryri (Snowdonia) where my parents met. Childhood experiences of making dens in the bracken and swimming beneath waterfalls gave me a lifelong love of the outdoors and inspired me to apply for this job.

Much of my early years at Campaign for National Parks was dominated by our campaign against the potash mine in the North York Moors. My role included the extremely nerve-wracking experience of speaking as an objector at a planning meeting packed with supporters of the



mine. This was a big battle for a tiny organisation – Campaign for National Parks was even smaller then than it is now – and despite all our efforts we lost. We did however succeed in securing an important exemption for National Parks when the Government proposed relaxing the rules on barn conversions in 2013. We are now campaigning to ensure that exemption remains.

Another big achievement was helping to secure the allowance that enables the National Grid to remove power lines and pylons in Protected Landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes). This funding has already delivered huge improvements in the Peak District and is now supporting a major project in Eryri, as well as numerous smaller schemes in other Parks.

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***It is great to have been involved in something that leaves such a visible legacy.***

The National Parks' legislation was less than two decades old when Mum visited them for work. In the intervening years new challenges have emerged and a big focus of my work now is on ensuring the National Parks are properly equipped to play their part in tackling the climate and nature emergency and in ensuring that many more people have the opportunity to visit National Parks and develop their own love for them.



**Pylon falling at Dunford Bridge, Peak District National Park**





## THE MAKINGS OF A PARK

**HUW IRRANCA-DAVIES,  
MEMBER OF THE SENEDD FOR  
OGMORE**

As we look back on 75 years of our National Parks, we carry our own intimate memories and connections. My "local" National Park is Y Bannau Brycheiniog, which I've trekked all parts of in snow and hail, in the sunlight of summer and by winter moons, I've bathed in its streams at Trecastle and paddled its lakes and rivers.

But I have a different personal connection with another stunning National Park at the southernmost end of the UK: our newest National Park, the South Downs.

I was truly fortunate to be the Defra Environment Minister serving under my friend, the Rt Hon Hilary Benn, when together we were tasked with assessing the case for a new National Park in the South Downs. After a huge amount of work (and many months of legislating and detailed pouring over maps) Hilary personally signed the order bringing the South Downs National Park into existence on the 12 November 2009 in Ditchling Tea Rooms, East Sussex - a plaque stands there today!

But the real triumph was thanks to the many campaigners, although sadly some of whom had passed away before seeing their dream become a reality. Around a hundred joined Hilary for the signing event; people who for decades had believed that the creation of a National Park on the South Downs was a piece of unfinished business left over from those dreamers of the post-war generation who gave us our first National Parks.

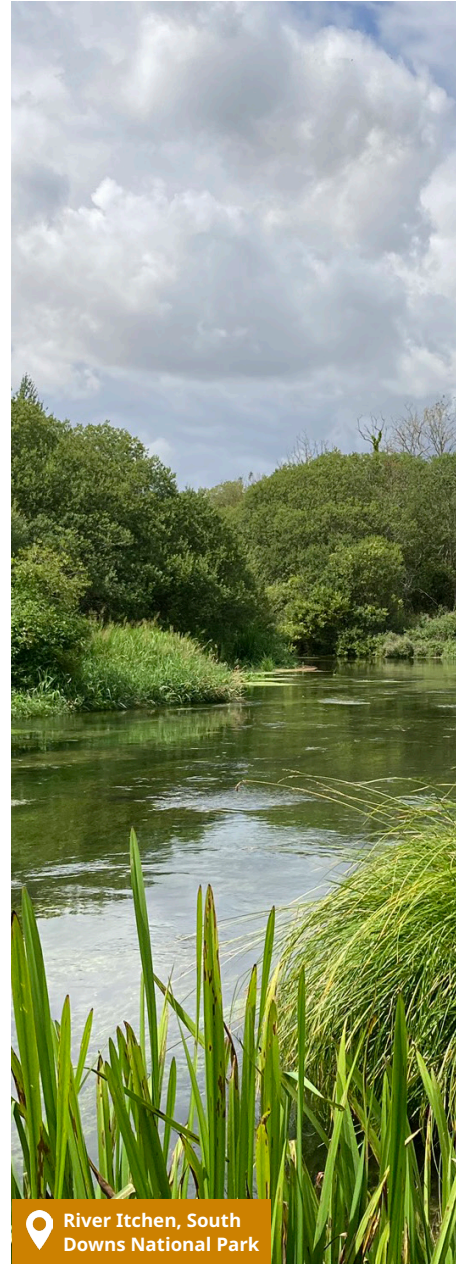
So, that original vision and passion remains strong, bringing people and our most stunning natural and living landscapes together. Protecting these amazing places for future generations to visit, make a living on, and to love and enjoy.



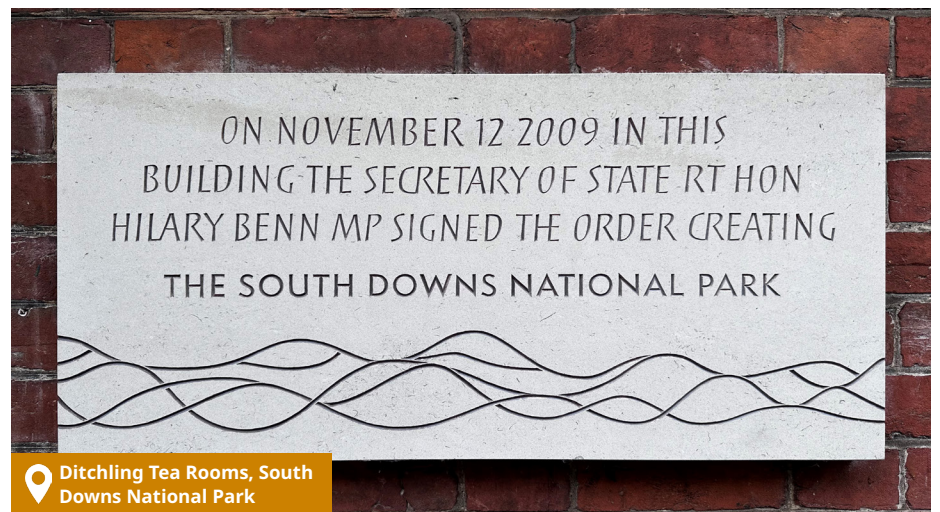
***Our National Parks are winning for nature and for people - those who visit and those who live and work in them.***

Are we finished then? Of course not. The South Downs National Park shows us that we need to keep re-imagining what National Parks can do for us... and what we can do for them. Campaigners will be at the heart of this, as always.

Now, about that Welsh Labour manifesto proposal for a new National Park in North-East Wales...



**River Itchen, South Downs National Park**



**Ditchling Tea Rooms, South Downs National Park**







# SAVE OUR NATIONAL PARKS

**This year, as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of National Parks in the UK, we've launched our Save our National Parks campaign**

National Parks are the UK's most iconic and awe-inspiring landscapes. Like The Beatles and the NHS, they are world renowned and represent the very best of our nation.

They are a source of wellbeing, adventure and connection with nature for millions of people, but scratch the surface and all is not as it seems. The truth is that these places are facing a host of challenges, from habitat destruction and pollution to a growing divide to who can live, work and visit these places.

National Parks can overcome these challenges but are being held back by out-of-date legislation and limited resources. Our politicians hold the key to rescuing these landscapes, but they are failing to take proper and urgent action.

Together we can change this. Join a movement of people from all ages and backgrounds standing up for our National Parks.

## **We want to see National Parks that are:**

- 1. Wilder and nature-rich across land and sea**
- 2. Protected from pollution, destruction and harm**
- 3. Resilient to climate change**
- 4. Inspiring wonder, discovery and wellbeing in everyone**
- 5. Home to thriving communities**
- 6. Benefitting from sustainable tourism, farming and transport**
- 7. Celebrated for their natural beauty and proud heritage**

Sign the petition and send our leaders a powerful message ahead of the next UK election that **National Parks matter**. You can scan the QR code or visit [actionnetwork.org/petitions/save-our-national-parks](https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/save-our-national-parks) to take action today.







# Our National Parks, your legacy

Morning dew on grassy meadows, the sun breaking through over a mountain pass, the crunch of frost underfoot, playing pooh-sticks over clear streams. These are just some of the things we love National Parks for, some of the memories that they create.

Our charity was created before National Parks existed in this country. Our founders had a vision to preserve and enhance the most naturally beautiful landscapes. That was over 90 years ago and today, our campaign is more important than ever before. We plan to be here for the next 90 years and beyond to make sure that National Parks are safe, that there are more of them, that they are better for nature, for people and for the climate. Could you help us with the most precious gift that you could ever make – leaving a gift in your will?

Did you know that much of our work is funded by gifts in wills? From large legacies through to small gifts, each makes a real difference.

We understand how important it is that your family and close friends come first. But did you know that leaving just 1% of your estate to Campaign for National Parks will help us fight for the Nation's most precious and beautiful landscapes: our National Parks? Future generations of walkers, adventurers and nature-lovers will be forever in your debt.

Please speak to your solicitor when you next review your wishes, or to discuss with us please telephone 020 3096 7714 or email [info@cnp.org.uk](mailto:info@cnp.org.uk). Thank you.

  
**CAMPAIGN** for  
**NATIONAL PARKS**

  
**YMGYRCH** y  
PARCIAU CENEDLAETHOL



Main image: Old Winchester Hill, South Downs National Park