OUR NATIONAL PARKS

FILEX 1 looks at the origins and history of National Parks in England and Wales, gives brief details of each National Park and explains why they are needed and how they are managed.

What is a National Park?
There is no real wilderness left in Britain but National Parks are large areas which remain relatively wild, open and unspoilt, offering opportunities for outdoor recreation. There are mountains and moors, heathland and woodland, sometimes lakes, but also farmland, towns and villages. They each have distinctive characters, making them different from other places. This is one of their ‘special qualities’, which include beauty and tranquillity. National Parks are not like country or theme parks, set up simply for recreation, neither are they nature reserves. Ordinary people live and work in them. Lots of people visit National Parks to walk and enjoy the scenery and take part in outdoor activities. The public do not have to pay to enter but most of the land is privately owned and so people can’t wander just where they wish or do what they like. Each National Park is managed by a National Park Authority which works to balance the needs of those who live in the National Park, the visitors and the landscape itself.

Why do we need National Parks?
The movement towards National Parks in Britain began in the early 19th century, when artists and writers of the Romantic Movement recognised the inspirational value of beautiful landscapes. Conservation and amenity societies saw that much of our heritage was being lost as Britain became more built up. City dwellers clamoured for access to open countryside for fresh air, exercise and relief from the stress of everyday life.

Recent surveys show that land in England is being developed at the rate of 11,000 ha (27,160 acres) each year. Soon 20% of the country will be built up, creating great demands on the remaining countryside. From 1932 onwards laws have been passed to allow for national planning to reserve areas for farming, forestry and recreation, making sure that the most useful countryside is not completely built over or spoilt.

National Parks came from a law passed in 1949. This followed reports published during the Second World War. Many of the people who had fought or suffered in the war felt that they deserved a better way of life and part of this was that they should have better access to beautiful countryside.

Over 10% of England and Wales has been given special protection as National Parks and more is being added but this does not mean that the rest of the countryside is unimportant.
Where are the National Parks?

There are many places in the United Kingdom that are protected but some large areas of countryside have been chosen for special protection as the finest landscapes in these countries. Ten (seven in England and three in Wales) were made National Parks in the 1950s while the Broads were given similar protection in 1988. The New Forest was designated in 2004. The South Downs are following and National Parks have been created in Scotland. There is a great variety abroad, ranging from ones which are completely wild with nobody living in them and where all wildlife is protected to ones which are lived in and just protected for their cultural interest. Britain’s National Parks come somewhere in the middle in terms of how strongly they are protected.

How are the National Parks run?

Each National Park is managed by an Authority whose members are appointed from the County, District and Parish Councils that lie within the Park boundaries, and also by the Government.

Much of the money comes from the Government. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs provides an annual grant, which is different for each National Park. The National Park Authority can also spend any money it raises for itself, through such things as sales at visitor centres, fees for planning applications and letting land. Extra money comes as grants for special projects with which the Authority is involved. It works with other organisations on these projects and they all contribute money.

Each National Park Authority appoints a National Park Officer who is in charge of staff made up of specialists in environmental, recreational and educational matters, professional planners, rangers and field staff as well as clerical staff to run the office and other supporting services. Many volunteers also help to maintain the National Parks and look after visitors. By law each Authority has to prepare a National Park Management Plan, showing its objectives and policies for the next five years and a Local Plan, which sets out the strategy for development within the National Park.

What are the aims of National Park Authorities?

National Park Authorities are there to further the purposes of National Parks. These are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Parks (Conservation)
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks by the public (Recreation)

They can do this in any way they like, and this often involves encouraging others to support National Park purposes. Whilst doing this they have certain duties to remember. One is seeking to foster the social and economic well-being of the communities living within the National Park.

Challenges facing the National Parks

National Park Authorities have made great advances in balancing the demands on land in their care, but although they have powers to control development and special government funding to help them fulfil their aims there are still many problems which are beyond their control.

- Since the 1950s, 28% of Britain’s internationally important moorland, much of it in National Parks, has been lost to agricultural improvement and forestry.
- Broad-leaved woodlands and hedgerows have also been lost, often through neglect.
- Military use prevents public access to large areas in some National Parks.
- Developments such as reservoirs, telecommunications masts, wind turbines, road improvements, mining, quarrying and tourist facilities can be unsightly.
- Visitors spend at least 118 million days each year in National Parks in England and Wales, bringing traffic congestion and erosion to popular beauty spots.
- Unemployment and high housing costs cause country people to move away and the regional culture and skills which helped create our distinctive landscapes are being lost.
- Following the Kyoto Protocol, the UN set targets to ensure that global warming is combated with reductions in greenhouse gases worldwide. Britain’s target by 2020 is to achieve a 26% per cent reduction from its 1990 CO2 emissions level. National Park Authorities are embracing this challenge through sustainable development and efficiency of operation.
Key dates in the History of National Parks

1810 The Romantic poet, William Wordsworth, published his ‘Guide to the Lakes’. He said the area was ‘a sort of national property in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy’.

1872 The world’s first National Park was created in Yellowstone, Wyoming, as a ‘pleasing ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people’.

1895 The National Trust was established. Other conservation organisations followed.

1910 The Kinderscout mass trespass focussed public attention on access to open country. Thousands of hikers went for a walk near Edale in the Peak District to highlight the issue. Five men were arrested in clashes with gamekeepers trying to keep them off private land.

1932 Voluntary organisations, lobbying for National Parks to be set up and campaigning for the right of access to the countryside, got together and formed a Standing Committee for National Parks to present their case to the government. This later became the Council for National Parks.

1942 During the war people hoped for a better Britain in the future. The Scott Report on rural land looked ahead to a thriving countryside and restated the case for National Parks.

1945 John Dower, civil servant and architect, set out what he thought National Parks in England and Wales should be like...‘extensive tracts of beautiful and wild countryside which would provide scope for open-air recreation’.

1947 These ideas were taken up by the Hobhouse Committee which proposed twelve National Parks, including Exmoor, each with its own administration, and a National Parks Commission to frame national policy.

1949 The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act made National Parks a reality and set up the National Parks Commission, succeeded by the Countryside Commission and the Countryside Agency. It also enabled the creation of National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

1950s Ten National Parks were designated. Exmoor was confirmed as the eighth National Park in 1954.

1974 The Local Government Act gave new responsibilities and resources to National Park Authorities and Exmoor National Park Authority became a single organisation under Somerset County Council with its own staff and offices at Dulverton.


1989 The Broads became, in effect, the eleventh National Park.


2000 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act allowed for greater public access to open countryside and gave better protection to Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

2002 Loch Lomond and the Trossachs became Scotland’s first National Park.

2003 Cairngorms designated - Britain’s largest National Park.


2005 New Forest designated a National Park.

2007 Policy statement for the National Parks in Wales. First use of the terms ‘Sustainable Development’ and ‘Climate Change’

2010 South Downs designated a National Park.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Confirmation year/order</th>
<th>Size in hectares/rank</th>
<th>Highest point in metres/rank</th>
<th>Population 2001 census/rank</th>
<th>Visitor days per year - estimate/rank</th>
<th>Address of National Park Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peak District</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>143,833ha</td>
<td>Kinder Scout 637m</td>
<td>37,937</td>
<td>12.4 million</td>
<td>Aldern House, Baslow road, BAKEWELL, Derbyshire, DE45 1AE Tel: 01629 816200 e-mail: <a href="mailto:aldern@peakdistrict-npa.gov.uk">aldern@peakdistrict-npa.gov.uk</a> web: <a href="http://www.peakdistrict.org">www.peakdistrict.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake District</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>229,198ha</td>
<td>Scafell Pike 987m</td>
<td>41,831</td>
<td>14 million</td>
<td>Murley Moss, Oxenholme road, KENDAL, Cumbria, LA9 7RL Tel: 01539 724555 e-mail: <a href="mailto:hjg@lake-district.gov.uk">hjg@lake-district.gov.uk</a> web: <a href="http://www.lake-district.gov.uk">www.lake-district.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowdonia</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>214,159ha</td>
<td>Snowdon 1085</td>
<td>25,482</td>
<td>6.6 million</td>
<td>National Park Office, PENRHYNDEUDAETH, Gwynedd, LL48 6LF Tel: 01766 770274 e-mail: <a href="mailto:parc@snowdonia-npa.gov.uk">parc@snowdonia-npa.gov.uk</a> web: <a href="http://www.Eryri-npa.co.uk">www.Eryri-npa.co.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dartmoor</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>95,338ha</td>
<td>High Willhays 621m</td>
<td>33,552</td>
<td>3.8 million</td>
<td>Park, BOVEY TRACEY, Devon, TQ13 9JQ Tel: 01626 832093 e-mail: <a href="mailto:hq@dartmoor-npa.gov.uk">hq@dartmoor-npa.gov.uk</a> web: <a href="http://www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk">www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pembroke Coast</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>58,431ha</td>
<td>Foel Cwm Cerwyn 536m</td>
<td>22,542</td>
<td>4.6 million</td>
<td>Llwynr Fawr, PEMBROKE DOCK, Pembroke, SA72 6DY Tel: 0845 345 7275 e-mail: <a href="mailto:penp@pembrokeshirecoast.org">penp@pembrokeshirecoast.org</a> web: <a href="http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org">www.pembrokeshirecoast.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>North York Moors</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>143,603ha</td>
<td>Urra Moor 454m</td>
<td>23,939</td>
<td>7.8 million</td>
<td>The Old Vicarage, Bondgate, HELMSLEY, North Yorkshire, YO62 5PB Tel: 01439 770657 e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk">info@northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk</a> web: <a href="http://www.northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk">www.northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yorkshire Dales</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>176,869ha</td>
<td>Whernside 736m</td>
<td>19,654</td>
<td>8.3 million</td>
<td>Yorebridge House, Bainbridge, LEYBURN, North Yorkshire, DL8 3BP Tel: 01969 650456 e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@yorkshiredales.org.uk">info@yorkshiredales.org.uk</a> web: <a href="http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk">www.yorkshiredales.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exmoor</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>69,280ha</td>
<td>Dunkery Beacon 519m</td>
<td>10,873</td>
<td>1.4 million</td>
<td>Exmoor House, DULVERTON, Somerset, TA22 9HL Tel: 01398 323665 e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk">info@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk</a> web: <a href="http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk">www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Northumberland</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>104,974ha</td>
<td>The Cheviot 815m</td>
<td>1,936</td>
<td>1.4 million</td>
<td>Eastburn, South Park, HEXHAM, Northumberland, NE46 1BS Tel: 01434 605555 e-mail: <a href="mailto:admin@npa.gov.uk">admin@npa.gov.uk</a> web: <a href="http://www.northumberland-national-park.org.uk">www.northumberland-national-park.org.uk</a></td>
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<td>Brecon Beacons</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>135,144ha</td>
<td>Pen y Fan 886m</td>
<td>32,609</td>
<td>3.6 million</td>
<td>Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, BRECON, Powys, LD3 7HP Tel: 01874 264437 e-mail: <a href="mailto:enquiries@breconbeacons.org">enquiries@breconbeacons.org</a> web: <a href="http://www.breconbeacons.org">www.breconbeacons.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Broads</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>30,292ha</td>
<td>Bath Hills 25m</td>
<td>5,876</td>
<td>5 million</td>
<td>Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, BRECON, Powys, LD3 7HP Tel: 01874 264437 e-mail: <a href="mailto:enquiries@breconbeacons.org">enquiries@breconbeacons.org</a> web: <a href="http://www.breconbeacons.org">www.breconbeacons.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Loch Lomond and the Trossachs</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>186,500ha</td>
<td>Ben More 1171m</td>
<td>15,600</td>
<td>4 million</td>
<td>National Park Headquarters, The Old Station, Balloch Road, BALLOCH, G82 8BF Tel: 01389 722600 e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@lochlomond-trossachs.org">info@lochlomond-trossachs.org</a> web: <a href="http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org">www.lochlomond-trossachs.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cairngorms</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>380,000ha</td>
<td>Ben Macdui 1296m</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>1.4 million</td>
<td>14 The Square, GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY, Moray, PH26 3HG Tel: 01479 873535 e-mail: <a href="mailto:enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk">enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk</a> web: <a href="http://www.Cairngorms.co.uk">www.Cairngorms.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Forest</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>56,651ha</td>
<td>Braemar Hill 135m</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>13.5 million</td>
<td>South Eddy House, Milford Road, EVRON, LYMINGTON, S041 0JD Tel: 01590 646600 e-mail: <a href="mailto:enquiries@newforestnpa.gov.uk">enquiries@newforestnpa.gov.uk</a> web: <a href="http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk">www.newforestnpa.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>South Downs</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>164,800ha</td>
<td>Blackdown 280m</td>
<td>108,000</td>
<td>39 million</td>
<td>Hatton House, Bepton Road, MIDHURST, West Sussex, GU29 9LU Tel: 0300 303 1053 e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@southdowns.gov.uk">info@southdowns.gov.uk</a> web: <a href="http://www.southdowns.gov.uk">www.southdowns.gov.uk</a></td>
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