

The History of National Parks in the UK

People have lived in the areas now designated as National Parks for more than 5,000 years. In the early 19th century the romantic poets such as Byron, Coleridge and Wordsworth wrote about the inspirational beauty of the "untamed" countryside. Until then relatively wild, remote areas had been seen as uncivilised and dangerous. In the early 19th Century Wordsworth famously claimed the Lake District as "a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and an interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy".

Important dates for National Parks in the UK

1872 President Ulysses S. Grant signed a law declaring that Yellowstone would forever be "dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." Yellowstone was the first National Park ever designated and can be seen as the starting point for a worldwide pattern of protection on a large scale.

1929 Government inquiry into the possibility of creating National Parks in Britain chaired by Mr Addison.

1932 Mass Trespass on Kinder Scout in the Peak District (pictured right) to highlight the lack of access rights – during the protest 5 walkers were imprisoned.

1935 A conference was held for voluntary recreation, conservation and amenity organisations which agreed the formation of the Standing Committee for National Parks (SCNP).

1936 The first meeting of the Standing Committee for National Parks (SCNP) was on the 26th May 1936. From this point on it produced a number of manifestos and pamphlets over the next few years, all arguing the case for National Parks and urging the Government to act.

1945 John Dower's (pictured left) white paper on National Parks was published in May 1945 and is considered one of the most important documents in the history of British National Parks. The Dower Report advocated the creation of National Parks. These areas would combine the protection of wildlife, landscapes and the historic built environment with the encouragement of access and recreation, a model that continues to be influential even to this day.



Kinder Scout Mass Trespass
(Peak District National Park Authority)

1947 The Hobhouse Report was published presenting a first list of 12 areas which with the exception of the South Downs (which is undergoing designation) are all designated as National Parks today.

1949 The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. This was the Act of Parliament to establish National Parks, which received all party support. It was described by Lewis Silkin, the Minister of Town and Country Planning of the time, as "the most exciting Act of the post-war Parliament". The nation was to have its Parks, and their purposes were to preserve and enhance natural beauty and to promote their enjoyment by the public.

1951 This year saw the designation of several National Parks: Dartmoor, The Lake District, The Peak District and Snowdonia.

1952 The North York Moors and Pembrokeshire Coast were designated.

1954 The Yorkshire Dales and Exmoor were designated.

1956 Northumberland was designated.



John Dower (Pauline Dower)

Keeping beautiful places safe

Ymgyrch y PARCIAU CENEDLAETHOL
Campaign for NATIONAL PARKS

1957 Brecon Beacons was designated.

1972 Local Government Act gave the National Parks independent planning authorities for which SCNP had campaigned strongly.

1974 The report of the National Park Policies Review Committee, chaired by Lord Sandford, suggested that the Countryside Commission should address the uneven geographical distribution of National Parks and examine more diverse types of landscape, providing they were of the highest quality. It also suggested that when the two purposes of National Parks are in conflict the protection of wildlife and landscape should take precedence (Sandford Principle).

1977 The SCNP becomes the Council for National Parks.

1984 A Countryside Commission survey shows that just over half of people questioned could name even one National Park without prompting.

1985 The 1984 survey led the Countryside Commission to start a "Watch over the National Parks" campaign with the Association of National Parks and CNP in order to create public awareness about National Parks.

1989 A separate act of parliament created the Broads Authority giving it not only the same level of protection as National Parks but also a navigation purpose due to its value for sailing and boating.

1991 The Report of the National Parks Review Panel (Edwards Report), chaired by Professor Ron Edwards, reviewed the history of the Parks over the past 40 years and identified their key attributes and set out a vision for the future. Many of the recommendations, most notably revised purposes for National Parks, were incorporated in the Environment Act 1995.

1995 The Environment Act revised the purposes of National Parks, which are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks
- To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks.

The Act also amended the 1949 Act to introduce a duty on public bodies to have regard to these purposes when carrying out their functions.

1996 The Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) was formed.

2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) dramatically changed the opportunities for access to open country, not only in National Parks but across the land.

2000 The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 5 July 2000

2002 In July Loch Lomond and the Trossachs was designated as Scotland's first National Park.

2003 In March the Cairngorms was designated making it the largest British National Park.

2005 On 1st April the New Forest National Park became the first new English National Park for the 21st century.

2008 CNP changes its name to the Campaign for National Parks. It continues to be the only national voluntary sector organisation dedicated to National Parks. CNP aims to give the voluntary sector a shared vision and voice on all National Park issues.

2009 In March the Government announced its intention to designate the South Downs as a National Park.

The Future CNP will continue to campaign to protect the National Parks of England and Wales and ensure that statutory bodies have regard to their purposes.



Tom Stevenson (Standing Committee Member) leading Labour MPs on Pennine Way 1948 (Ramblers)

Useful Links

National Park organisations

Campaign for National Parks (CNP)

www.cnp.org.uk

English National Park Authorities Association (ENPAA)

www.enpaa.org.uk

Scottish Campaign for National Parks

www.scpn.saltire.org

UK Association of National Park Authorities (UK ANPA)

www.nationalparks.gov.uk

Welsh Association of National Park Authorities (WANPA)

www.nationalparks.gov.uk/wanpa.htm

Government

Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/protected-areas/national-parks/about.htm

Welsh Assembly Government

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/countrysidecoastalaccess/npwales/

Government Agencies

Countryside Council for Wales

<http://www.ccw.gov.uk/landscape--wildlife/protecting-our-landscape/special-landscapes--sites/protected-landscapes/national-parks.aspx>

Natural England

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designatedareas/nationalparks/

Scottish Natural Heritage

www.snh.org.uk/strategy/sr-adnp00.asp

Relevant Documents

1995 Environment Act

www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/Ukpga_19950025_en_1.htm



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