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## 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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).



Credit: Peak District National Park Authority



**1936** – The first meeting of the Standing Committee for National Parks was on the 26<sup>th</sup> 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.

**1947** – The Hobhouse Report was published presenting a first list of 12 areas which with the exception of the South Downs (which is presently undergoing a public inquiry) 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.

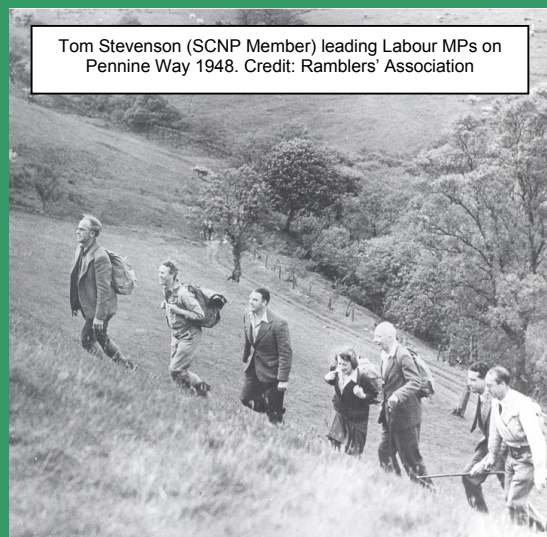
**1951** – This year saw the designation of several National Parks: Dartmoor, The Lake District, The Peak District and Snowdonia.

**1952** – The North York Moors and Pembrokeshire Coast were designated.

**1954** – The Yorkshire Dales and Exmoor were designated.

**1956** – Northumberland was designated.

**1957** – Brecon Beacons was designated



Tom Stevenson (SCNP Member) leading Labour MPs on Pennine Way 1948. Credit: Ramblers' Association

**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 – now known as the 'Sandford Principle'.

**1977** – The SCNP becomes the Council for National Parks. The SCNP understood that it needed to change if it was to be able to continue to protect National Parks adequately. To this day the Council for National Parks (CNP) continues to be the only national voluntary sector organisation dedicated to National Parks. CNP is currently an umbrella of over 40 environmental and amenity groups. CNP aims to give the voluntary sector a shared vision and voice on all National Park issues.

**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 campaign, “Watch over the National Parks”, together with the Association of National Parks and CNP in order to create public awareness about National Parks.

**1989** – Using a separate act of parliament the Broads Authority was created 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 “Edwards Report” or The Report of the National Parks Review Panel, 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:

(a) To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks; and

(b) To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public.

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). This Act 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. The Act itself does not set up any National Parks, but provides the powers for this to be done by means of a designation order.

**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 Scottish National Park.

**2005** – On April the 1<sup>st</sup> the New Forest National Park became the first new English National Park for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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



## Useful Web Links:

Countryside Council for Wales

<http://www.ccw.gov.uk/Generalinfo/index.cfm?Action=ResourceMore&ResourceID=35&Subject=ProtectedSites>

Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/landscap/natparks.htm>

Countryside Agency

[http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/finest\\_countryside/index.asp](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LivingLandscapes/finest_countryside/index.asp)

Welsh Assembly Government

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subicountry/content/national-parks-e.htm>

Scottish Natural Heritage

<http://www.snh.org.uk/>

Scottish Council for National Parks

<http://www.scnp.org.uk/>

1995 Environment Act

[http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/Ukpga\\_19950025\\_en\\_1.htm](http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/Ukpga_19950025_en_1.htm)

Association for National Park Authorities (ANPA)

<http://www.anpa.gov.uk>

More information about CNP

[www.cnp.org.uk/](http://www.cnp.org.uk/)