



Transport

Policy Position Statement

Introduction

The Campaign for National Parks is the independent voice for National Parks; a charity that campaigns to protect and promote National Parks in England and Wales as beautiful and inspirational places to be enjoyed and valued by all. It has been in existence for over 75 years.

National Parks are our finest landscapes which have been granted the highest level of protection. The statutory purposes of National Parks 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 National Parks.

In those cases where these two purposes are in conflict and reconciliation is impossible, the first purpose takes precedence.

The Broads Authority has a third purpose which is to protect the interests of navigation. All purposes carry the same weight in the Broads.

In pursuing these purposes, National Park Authorities (NPAs) also have a statutory duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of communities living within the National Park.

Many of our members have wider concerns about the protection and enhancement of the countryside, however our charitable purposes relate specifically to National Parks so that is the main focus for this policy statement. Most of the issues covered are equally applicable to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and some are relevant to the wider countryside.

Context

Each National Park has different specific transport challenges and opportunities but a shared characteristic of most National Parks is that they have relatively small, dispersed populations and people often have to travel long distances to access services and facilities. In common with other rural areas, there is a high level of car ownership among National Park residents – in 2011, 88% of households in National Parks owned one or more cars¹, compared with 74% nationally. Those without cars are left increasingly isolated as local shops and services have closed and other transport options have declined, a situation that has been exacerbated recently by a reduction in public funding for bus services.

The limited public transport means there is also a huge reliance on the private car by visitors to National Parks and 93% of visitors to UK National Parks travel by car². A significant proportion of the traffic in many National Parks is through traffic³. The high volume of traffic can undermine the special qualities of National Parks and also has a negative impact on tranquillity and the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and cultural heritage. The rise in the use of sat-nav is also increasing traffic on smaller quieter roads in National Parks, including sometimes directing traffic onto roads which are not suitable for motor vehicles. Other inappropriate uses include HGVs' use of restricted routes, for example where weight or width restrictions are ignored without penalty or prosecutions.

Road transport accounts for 22% of total UK CO₂ emissions⁴ so there are significant wider environmental benefits from providing improved public transport, walking and cycling links, particularly where appropriate marketing is used to promote these to car users. Greater use of electric vehicles would also reduce the carbon emissions from road transport at the point of use although it would not reduce the volume of vehicles in the Parks.

¹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-national-parks-in-england-and-wales/index.html>

² <http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/learningabout/ourchallenges/tourism#howget>

³ i.e. vehicles which are passing through rather than travelling to or from the National Park.

⁴ <http://www.environmental-protection.org.uk/committees/air-quality/air-pollution-and-transport/car-pollution/>

Many of those who might benefit the most from the health and well-being opportunities provided by National Parks are currently excluded from them, due to the lack of public transport. In particular, there are poor services on Sundays and public holidays, despite these being the most popular days for visiting. Where public transport is available, it is often infrequent or finishes early limiting the opportunities for access. The high cost of bus fares can also be a barrier⁵.

Speeding traffic can deter people from walking, cycling and horse-riding in National Parks. One-in-three drivers admit to driving too fast in rural areas⁶. More than half of all fatal crashes (59%) occur on rural roads, considerably higher than the 42% of traffic found on these roads⁷ and speed is a major factor in many of these crashes. The UK rural accident rate (per km) is about half of that on urban roads but accidents on rural roads are more severe (2.1% fatal, 17% serious, compared with 0.6% and 13% respectively for urban roads)⁸. Wildlife and farm animals are also put at risk by speeding traffic.

There has been significant pressure for new road building in or close to National Parks in recent years, despite a policy presumption against this⁹. The Government's Roads Investment Strategy (RIS), published in December 2014, includes a number of major road proposals in National Parks. In addition to the damage caused by major new transport infrastructure, National Parks can also be indirectly affected as a result of the extraction of minerals used for building and maintaining roads, which results in visual impacts, increased pressure on the road network and impacts on communities through HGV movements.

Planning decisions on major road and rail projects are made by the National Infrastructure Planning Unit. The National Policy Statement (NPS) on National Networks¹⁰ sets out the framework for deciding whether particular proposals should be granted development consent. This will also be a material consideration for smaller schemes which will be decided on by local authorities. The final version of this document was endorsed by Parliament in January 2015

⁵ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmenvaud/201/201.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.transport-network.co.uk/One-in-three-drive-too-fast-for-safety-in-rural-areas/10706#.U9YBuLEvf-A>

⁷ <http://www.roadsafetyobservatory.com/Review/10039>

⁸ <http://www.roadsafetyobservatory.com/Review/10039>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-national-parks-and-the-broads-uk-government-vision-and-circular-2010>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statement-for-national-networks>

The tranquillity in some National Parks is also undermined by air transport as they lie under the flight paths of large commercial aircraft or are in areas used by helicopters or for military training purposes. There is also an increasing amount of small aircraft and helicopter traffic over some National Parks for recreational and sight-seeing purposes. Government policy on airspace sets out a requirement to have proper regard to the purposes of National Parks and to take these into account when considering changes to airspace or air navigation routes. The guidelines make recommendations about altitude and noise levels. Despite this the Civil Aviation Authority does not always consult with NPAs about the proposed changes to airspace use over National Parks.

Many different bodies are involved in the funding and delivery of transport. In England, Highways England (formerly the Highways Agency) is responsible for the Strategic Road Network – motorways and the major A-roads. Until a few years ago, local highway authorities were generally responsible for implementing all other local transport schemes with funding provided by the Westminster Government on the basis of Local Transport Plans. Since 2010, a series of measures have been introduced in England to devolve powers to local bodies to plan and fund their own transport developments. Major local transport schemes are now expected to be delivered by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and local authorities, either alone, or as part of new governance arrangements, such as Combined Authorities and City Deals. In Wales, the Welsh Government is responsible for the motorways and the major A-roads and local authorities are responsible for local transport schemes funded by grants from Welsh Government. Network Rail is responsible for rail infrastructure in both England and Wales.

NPAs are not transport authorities but they are planning authorities and can use their planning policies to influence travel patterns. Since 2011, NPAs have been able to submit bids to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) to support improved public transport provision and other sustainable transport measures and a number of National Parks have been successful. There is currently no certainty that any funding will be available for the LSTF beyond 2016 and it is likely that this may be incorporated into the Single Local Growth Fund. However, the Infrastructure Act 2015 requires the Secretary of State to set out a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy meaning that there is a legal obligation on the government to set targets and provide funding for walking and cycling.

What is our position?

The Campaign for National Parks aims to protect and enhance National Parks by strengthening the support they receive and challenging the threats to them. National Parks contribute significantly to the wellbeing of the nation, by providing safe, attractive, healthy places for active travel and recreation. The Campaign for National Parks is keen to see improved access to, from and within

National Parks, to allow everybody to take advantage of these benefits. However, currently a lack of public transport prevents many people from visiting these key national assets and the Government's roads reform programme could lead to major road-building in a number of National Parks.

Improved public transport access to National Parks would provide many benefits including:

- For individuals - contributing to improved physical and mental health for those without private transport through improved opportunities for engaging with nature.
- For local economies – there is evidence that visitors travelling by public transport spend more than those arriving by car¹¹.
- For the environment – reducing the number of people who travel to National Parks by car.
- For residents – enabling access to work and services and preventing the need to move out of the area for young people.

We believe that National Parks are a key national service offering multiple benefits to individuals and the country and that, therefore, physical access to National Parks should be considered just as important as access to other services such as education and healthcare which are already prioritised in Government policy.

Our position is that:

- a) All relevant policy and guidance produced by Government should reflect the need to **protect the special qualities of National Parks**.
- b) There should be a **strategic approach to improving access to, from and within National Parks by sustainable means of transport**. This should include better integration between transport modes and between the different organisations responsible for the delivery of transport. NPAs should establish productive partnerships with LEAs, local highway authorities and public transport operators in order to achieve this.
- c) There should be a **re-prioritisation of spending** away from road-building/improvements to measures which support walking, cycling and public transport to, from and within National Parks.

¹¹MVA Consultancy in association with David Simmonds Consultancy, 2006, Evaluation of Rural Transport Provision (report for Lancashire Economic Partnership)

- d) **Road building in National Parks should always be an option of last resort** in line with the established policy presumption against new road infrastructure in National Parks. Where new road infrastructure is considered to be the best solution, it should be introduced in conjunction with demand management measures so it does not lead to traffic growth or undermine public transport use, walking and cycling by making car use more attractive. In addition, where new road infrastructure cannot be avoided the design should be sensitive to the particular landscape setting and any locally distinctive characteristics.
- e) Government should promote, and highways authorities should adopt, **road maintenance, traffic management and design policies and practices, which are appropriate to the special qualities of National Parks**. In some cases, it may be appropriate to encourage through traffic to use alternative routes outside the National Park to reduce the volume of traffic in the National Park, in other cases, it may be better to focus on mitigation to reduce the impacts of traffic. In particular:
- i. Local highway authorities should **establish road hierarchies which reflect the sensitive character of minor roads in National Parks** and give priority to sustainable modes. These should be integrated with the wider road network beyond the National Park boundary and designed so as to minimise the amount of traffic using inappropriate minor roads. All users should be encouraged to respect the hierarchy particularly freight and coach operators, caravans and similar recreational users.
 - ii. Local highway authorities and NPAs should work together to **introduce lower speed limits where appropriate in National Parks** with the speed limits of particular types of road reflecting their place in the road hierarchy.
 - iii. **Measures to restrict traffic should be adopted** where necessary in order to avoid damaging the special qualities of National Parks. This should include the use of weight and width restrictions and the use of strategic signing at key locations and sat-nav information to direct vehicles on to alternative routes in order to minimise traffic which is not bound for but passing through the National Park.
 - iv. Positive steps should be taken to **reduce the noise pollution and visual intrusion of existing roads in National Parks**. This should include prioritising National Parks in any programmes to resurface roads with noise-reducing materials and reviewing the use of signage, lighting and street furniture in National Parks. Signage and lighting should be

removed where possible (particularly in Dark Skies Reserve locations) and that which remains should be sensitively designed and located. Local highway authorities should consult NPAs on plans to install, or replace, signage and lighting to ensure that landscape and visual impacts can be reduced.

- v. NPAs should work with local highway authorities and LEPs to ensure that the **facilities for charging electric vehicles** are available in National Parks and the infrastructure is designed and located in a way that is sensitive to the special qualities of National Parks.
 - vi. Local highway authorities should identify species rich roadside verges and implement **management techniques which maintain and enhance species diversity** and protect the flora of these verges.
 - vii. **Planning policies should protect local services** and restrict the provision of new housing to existing settlements in order to reduce the need to travel and increase the opportunities for providing public transport. NPAs should also adopt planning policies which safeguard quiet rural roads and use their development management powers to refuse developments which would generate additional traffic on inappropriate roads.
- f) The **parking policies** adopted by local highway authorities and NPAs should reinforce National Park purposes, the design of parking facilities should be sensitive to the local environment and the income from parking charges should be invested in measures which encourage the use of alternatives to the car. Charges should be set at a level which takes account of local circumstances and should not be set so high that people are deterred from visiting or choose to park in inappropriate locations to avoid the charge.
- g) Local highway authorities, LEPs and NPAs should provide and promote **safe, enjoyable and sensitively designed cycle and walking paths** that are designed to meet the needs of both residents and visitors. These should provide links to public transport interchanges and should be marketed to the users of both public and private transport.
- h) NPAs should work with highway authorities and transport operators to ensure that **accurate and up-to-date information on public transport, walking and cycling routes** is consistently available across the National Parks.

- i) NPAs should work with LEPs and local highway authorities to develop **new alternatives to private car use in National Parks**, such as car sharing and community transport schemes that are available to both residents and visitors.
- j) **NPAs should have a greater role in delivering sustainable transport** and their eligibility for sustainable transport funding should be strengthened. They should, for example, be able to bid directly for certain funds without the need for funding to come via the local highways authority.
- k) Where appropriate, local highway authorities and NPAs should promote the **use of water transport in National Parks** and should support related infrastructure developments, such as new jetties. In particular more work needs to be done in developing and encouraging alternative, non-fossil fuel power sources for boats and new ferry and water taxi services should be encouraged.
- l) NPAs should be statutory consultees on proposed **changes to rail franchising, timetabling and routing** to ensure that decisions lead to improvements that support the use of rail for travel to, from and within National Parks.
- m) The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) should work with NPAs on **marketing strategies and integrated ticketing initiatives** that support the use of rail services by National Park visitors.
- n) Any **major new rail infrastructure** should be designed to take account of National Park purposes.
- o) Visit Britain, Visit England, Visit Wales and Tourist Boards should **promote the use of public transport when marketing holidays in National Parks** and should work with NPAs to encourage accommodation and activity providers to offer discounts for public transport users, cyclists and walkers. They should also work with operators to provide integrated tickets covering both bus and rail journeys within a particular area.
- p) The extra protection granted to National Parks should be reflected in all **decisions on aviation which could have an impact on National Parks** or their setting, including the location of

additional runway capacity, changes to flight paths and the use of airspace by helicopters and military planes.

How can we make this happen?

There are two main ways that the Campaign for National Parks can influence transport in National Parks – through the planning system, and through the policies and strategies which impact on the delivery and funding of transport infrastructure and services. We will continue to take up opportunities to influence policy and practice in these areas, focusing particularly on national policy and strategy.

In particular, we will:

- Seek to influence planning policy in England and/or Wales that has implications for transport infrastructure in National Parks. Recent examples include the National Policy Statement for National Networks.
- Lobby to ensure that National Parks benefit from funding for transport initiatives. The Campaign for National Parks secured changes to the original proposals for the Local Sustainable Transport Fund to ensure that NPAs were eligible to bid for it.
- Respond to consultations from Highways England, the Department for Transport and Welsh Government relating to transport proposals which have major implications for National Parks. Recent examples include the approach to the Route-Based Strategies and Feasibility Studies undertaken in 2014.
- Play an active role in the Department for Transport's meetings for environmental NGOs and related working groups to ensure that strategic roads policy takes full account of the extra protection afforded National Parks.
- Support National Park Societies in their work to ensure that National Park Management Plans and Local Plans include strategies and policies which encourage the development of sustainable transport initiatives and reduce the negative impacts of transport infrastructure.
- Respond to planning applications and development consent orders for major transport infrastructure developments in line with our planning casework criteria. This could also include major proposals outside National Parks if they have significant impacts on a National Park.

Case studies of transport good practice in National Parks

The Moorsbus service in the North York Moors has been running for over 30 years and was previously funded by the NPA. However, when the NPA withdrew financial support in 2013 following cuts to its budget, the Moorsbus Community Interest Company (CIC) was formed, with volunteer directors. Since then, the CIC has operated summer Sunday services from Hull and Darlington to Danby via Pickering, Hutton-le-Hole and other popular tourist spots. This has proved very successful and guided walks are also organised in conjunction with some of the services. Moorsbus is now funded through donations from the North Yorkshire Moors Association, parish councils and passengers. The Friends of Moorsbus has been set up to support the service through fundraising and promotional activities.

<http://www.moorsbus.org/>

The New Forest NPA has recently published a Visitor Bus Toolkit featuring case studies from a number of National Parks. The guide emphasises that the best visitor bus services turn the journey into an experience in its own right and that it is possible to develop commercially-viable visitor bus services in popular locations. The case studies cover a variety of different situations, including where the visitors are local residents (South Downs) and are mostly day visitors from surrounding cities (Yorkshire Dales). The guide highlights all the steps involved in creating successful services from making the case for the service to planning the route and deciding on publicity and fares.

http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/downloads/download/286/visitor_bus_toolkit

The South Downs NPA is in the process of agreeing a protocol on effective joint working with Highways England and the four local highways authorities in its area. The protocol will set out the actions the authorities will adopt in order to achieve this and will be accompanied by a good practice guide which the authorities will keep up-to-date. The protocol will be available on the South Downs NPA website shortly.

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/>

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