



**Campaign for  
National Parks**  
Keeping beautiful places safe

# Strategic Plan

April 2018-March 2023

## STRATEGIC PLAN

April 2018 – March 2023

**Our vision:** National Parks are beautiful and inspirational places enjoyed and valued by all

**Our mission:** to inspire everyone to look after and enjoy National Parks

### Where does Campaign for National Parks want to be in 2023?

Our aims:

1. National Parks in England and Wales are protected and enhanced to sustain their special qualities now and in the future
2. The beauty and importance of the English and Welsh National Parks are better understood and valued, and more people are able to access and enjoy them

### How will we get there?

Our goals:

1. National Parks are thriving in terms of their natural beauty, the quality of their landscapes, wildlife, cultural heritage and the rural communities that live within them.
2. The National Parks are defended from threats that diminish their beauty and the ecosystem services they provide.
3. Everyone can access the National Parks and benefit in terms of their health and wellbeing.
4. More people are inspired and committed to looking after the National Parks.

To achieve our aims and goals, Campaign for National Parks will need to operate in a certain way. Working in partnership, for example, will be essential. This strategy also sets out, therefore, our internal priorities or '[enablers](#)'.

## Background

The National Parks are among the most beautiful and valued landscapes in the British Isles, containing some of our most breath-taking scenery, rare wildlife and cultural heritage. Millions of people visit the National Parks every year, eager to enjoy their unique qualities, peace and tranquillity. In light of our history, this is a great source of pride for Campaign for National Parks.

Campaign for National Parks<sup>1</sup> grew from a commitment by a group of outdoor enthusiasts who wanted to see Britain's finest landscapes protected permanently for everyone to enjoy. Established as the Standing Committee on National Parks in 1936, the organisation led the fight to secure the celebrated 1949 Act of Parliament that paved the way for the creation of the Parks. By the end of the 1950s, the first 10 National Parks were designated in England and Wales.

Since the 1950s we have continued to secure notable successes. We were involved in securing the designation of the Broads as part of the National Park family, the New Forest and South Downs National Parks, and most recently the extensions to the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. In the 1990s our long-standing campaign to secure independent authorities to manage the National Parks finally succeeded with the establishment of the National Park Authorities by the *Environment Act 1995*.

We are also extremely proud of our long-running Mosaic programme that enabled over 30,000 people to visit a National Park, many for the first time. Our most recent Mosaic project, funded by the Big Lottery and focused on enabling disadvantaged 16 – 25 year olds to better understand, visit and enjoy five of the English National Parks, sadly came to an end in spring 2016.

Today, we campaign to promote, protect and enhance these landscapes for the benefit of all. We are the only independent watchdog dedicated solely to the protection of all the National Parks in England and Wales.

We work closely with a wide range of organisations, including the National Park Societies, the Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes and the Scottish Campaign for National Parks. We are a membership organisation for both individuals and organisations, which form our Council.

This strategic plan sets out our priorities during 2018 – 2023 and will guide our work to help us achieve our charitable objects.

---

<sup>1</sup> Campaign for National Parks is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

## Looking ahead – current context that informed this strategy

We remain the only independent, campaigning voice standing up for the English and Welsh National Parks and the **pressures on the National Parks remain great**. We continue, therefore, to have a critically important role to play.

Campaign for National Parks has fought for and secured the highest level of planning protection for National Parks but, this is not always enough. Over the years we have seen **major development threaten the Parks** and the Westminster **Government's focus on economic growth** has put further pressure on the National Parks to accept inappropriate development. This is despite warm words about the importance and value of the Parks, including in the recent 25 Year Environment Plan<sup>2</sup>.

It is not only major development that threatens the Parks. With the increased use of permitted development rights, for example, we have seen the **chipping away at planning protections**. There are also more demands on land as we have to consider how to produce more renewable energy, mitigate the impacts of climate change and accommodate a growing population. **The volume and expectations of visitors to the Parks also presents challenges in most of the Parks**.

That is not to say we oppose all change and we recognise that threats come from **a lack of development and loss of rural services**. The importance of thriving rural communities is clear to see in the character of the villages and towns within the Parks and the landscapes rural communities continue to manage. Rural communities continue to face a loss in community facilities and public services, including post offices and schools<sup>3</sup>. The populations within the Parks are also more elderly than national averages for England and Wales<sup>4</sup>; this presents challenges in terms of the provision of services. A major challenge is also access to affordable homes, an issue exacerbated by the proportion of homes in many Parks that are owned as second homes or holiday lets. Average house prices in National Parks are significantly higher than the average house price in their respective region. The premium for a property in a National Park in England varies from 27% to 90% but in five of the 10 National Parks it is over 60%.<sup>5</sup>

In Wales, the National Parks have suffered from the uncertainty caused by repeated reviews commissioned to consider the future of the designated landscapes. These raised the **possibility of a change in the Welsh National Parks' purposes** to make them more focused on economic development and the associated removal of the Sandford Principle. Without this Principle, there would be a **real risk that economic interests would be given priority** over the conservation and enhancement of the Parks. It also threatened the international recognition of the Parks. The Welsh Minister's statement in March 2018 indicated the concerns about the potential implications of these proposals have been listened to and the purposes and principle will be retained. But we must continue to be vigilant.

All of the **National Park Authorities continue to face pressure from reduced government funding**. Budgets continue to be cut in Wales and the focus in both England and Wales is very much on fundraising to 'top up' funding from their respective governments. This in turn is likely to have an impact on charities including Campaign for National Parks as a result of additional competition for limited funds.

---

<sup>2</sup> HM Government (2018) [A Green Future: Our 25 year plan to improve the environment](#)

<sup>3</sup> National Housing Federation (2017) [Affordable housing saving rural services](#)

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics (2017) [Small area population estimates in England and Wales: mid 2016](#)

<sup>5</sup> Cumulus Consultants Ltd & ICF GHK report for National Parks England (2013) [Valuing England's National Parks](#)

**Brexit** also created further uncertainty for all of the Parks. While the National Parks are designated under domestic legislation our exit from the EU presents a number of challenges. Within the National Parks there are numerous sites that are recognized for their importance to wildlife within Europe, they therefore also benefit from being designated as Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive or Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive. Despite assurances from the Prime Minister that protections will not be weakened this is not yet reflected in legislation. It is unclear, therefore, **what will replace these designations and the critically important principles enshrined in EU legislation.**

Another challenge, or opportunity, is in relation to the future of farming. The majority of land in our National Parks is farmed, and currently covered by the Basic Payment Scheme and agri-environment schemes through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). While centuries of largely low intensity management produced landscapes that contain beautiful and inspiring landscapes, rich in wildlife and cultural heritage, past subsidy regimes have encouraged some management practices that have been damaging to our Parks. We now have the opportunity to secure a policy that will **make sure the important features in the National Parks, and what makes them special, are protected, restored and enhanced through future schemes so they deliver even more benefits for residents and visitors.**

In England, the 25 Year Environment Plan presents a number of opportunities we will look to harness. This includes the proposed review of designated landscapes but also the emphasis on natural capital and re-connecting people with nature. In Wales we expect a conclusion to the long-drawn out review process. Within that we want to position the Parks as central to taking forward the Welsh Government's agenda around the sustainable management of natural resources and the well-being of future generations.

At a time of change, as an organisation we also want to be even more forward looking in our approach. The founders of the Standing Committee on National Parks brought together the two traditions of recreation and conservation, as matters of social justice. The majority of our population is now urban based<sup>6</sup>, and people, including children, sit in front of screens for more and more of their day. We believe, therefore, that National Parks are more valuable to the nation than ever in terms of the opportunities they present to people's health and well-being.

We will continue to protect and defend the National Parks from inappropriate development and damaging forms of recreational use. We will continue to celebrate their importance as part of our cultural heritage, but also look to the future and seek to **enhance the National Parks so they are more beautiful, more accessible and fit for the future.** For the Parks to be more beautiful we will focus on more than just their aesthetic. The pressure of climate change means, for example, it is more important than ever to increase the functionality and resilience of the eco-systems within the National Parks.

Campaign for National Parks is a small charity, with much to do and important things to achieve.

---

<sup>6</sup> Government Office for Science (2014) [People in Cities: the numbers](#)

## How we will achieve our goals

### Strategic goal 1:

**National Parks are thriving in terms of their natural beauty, wildlife, cultural heritage and the rural communities that live within them.**

**Strategic objective 1 - The natural beauty of the National Parks is enhanced to make sure these areas are providing even more public benefits.**

We will:

- Campaign to make sure future environmental land management policies and funding deliver habitats and landscapes within the Parks that are more beautiful, functional and resilient. This will be achieved by influencing the future design of funding schemes available to farmers and land managers and promoting the Parks as locations for piloting more innovative approaches. We will work in partnership to secure future schemes that provide public money for public goods and drive improvements within the National Parks.
- Campaign to secure policy changes other than public funding, and action on the ground, to make the Parks more beautiful, including them being more biodiverse and containing higher quality landscapes. We will engage a range of stakeholders in this work to understand current barriers and then campaign to secure necessary changes to secure action on the ground. This will also include seeking to restore ecosystem services within the National Parks, including identifying and promoting innovative approaches to achieving habitats that are bigger, better and more joined up within and between the Parks.
- Make sure the Westminster Government's review of designated landscapes delivers the commitment in the 25 Year Environment Plan to enhance, not just conserve, the Parks and that the review makes a positive and demonstrable difference on the ground.
- Secure the removal of existing eye sores within the Parks. This will include continuing to take an active role in National Grid's Visual Impact Provision project, which will remove overhead powerlines and pylons from designated landscapes. We will also seek to secure further funding for undergrounding of both transmission and distribution lines.
- Secure changes to planning and housing policy to enable and promote appropriate, high quality development that enhances rural communities including affordable housing.

The National Parks are beautiful and inspirational places that are loved and enjoyed by millions of people each year. They were designated for their natural beauty, they provide critically important habitats for wildlife and they are essential parts of our cultural heritage. These tracts of land also provide important environmental services such as sequestering carbon, slowing the run off of water to prevent flooding and filtering water to improve water quality.

But the National Parks are not perfect. We will champion and defend these areas but we will also strive to make sure they are the best they can be. They should be exemplars of good practice in a wide range of areas, including land management, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, rural sustainable development and embedding the Lawton Principles<sup>7</sup> of making habitats 'bigger, better, more joined up'. This will mean they continue to be lived in, used and valued. It will also help make sure they are more greatly valued by decision makers and the general public and, in turn, better protected.

---

<sup>7</sup> Lawton Review (2010) [Making Space for Nature](#)

## Strategic goal 2:

**The National Parks are defended from threats that diminish their beauty and the ecosystem services they provide.**

### **Strategic objective 2a – Campaign to stop significant threats impacting the National Parks.**

We will:

- Campaign to prevent inappropriate development, especially where it would set a national precedent and therefore poses a threat to the National Parks collectively.
- Support the societies to influence draft local plans developed by National Park Authorities, but also potentially by neighbouring local authorities. This will include developing and promoting guidance, to the societies and other relevant partners, which includes examples of existing good practice.
- Use the Fighting Fund to support local action by the societies to prevent inappropriate development.

One of Campaign for National Parks' strengths is our partnership with the network of societies. This enables us to understand what is happening at the local level and take action to resist inappropriate development or other threats within and in the setting of the National Parks. This may be through supporting a campaign led by the local society, or where the threat may set a national precedent, by taking an active role working in partnership with the society.

The major development test is a well-established part of the planning process that makes it clear that planning permission should be refused for major development in designated landscapes except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated the development is in the public interest. Research published in 2016<sup>8</sup> also identified strong local plan policies that relate the national major development test to individual Parks' special qualities, as an important tool for resisting inappropriate development. The research also identified the important role of the Planning Inspectorate in decision making.

### **Strategic objective 2b – Campaign to ensure that the National Parks remain protected and can be enhanced through national legislation and policy.**

We will:

- Work with partners, including the Alliance for Welsh Designated Landscapes, to make sure the Welsh National Parks remain protected and are recognised as being central to the achievement of the sustainable management of natural resources.
- Campaign to ensure that existing and new national legislation and policy protects National Parks and their settings. This will be achieved by influencing Westminster Government policy, including through changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, relevant National Policy Statements and the implementation of the 25 Year Environment Plan, but also relevant decision makers such as the Planning Inspectorate.
- Make sure environmental protections are not weakened due to the UK's departure from the European Union. This will be achieved by working in coalition with a wide range of other environmental organisations.

---

<sup>8</sup> Sheffield Hallam University, commissioned by Campaign for National Parks, CPRE and National Trust (2016) [An Examination of the Development and Implementation of Planning Policy Relating to Major Development in the English and Welsh National Parks](#)

The National Parks are national assets that are meant to benefit from the highest levels of planning protections but this does not always prevent damaging, inappropriate development or proposals that may undermine their future. We need to make sure that the existing protections in policy and legislation are effectively implemented and enforced, and strengthened where necessary. We also want to maximise opportunities for the National Parks presented by positive legislation, such as the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*.

We will work to influence policy or legislative development where it threatens to undermine or overlook the importance of National Parks as national assets. This may be a proactive approach to ensure decision makers are considering the positive role National Parks can play in delivering a current agenda, for example in relation to natural capital, or it may require a defensive, response where proposals would move the Parks away from the important principles on which we campaigned to secure the National Parks back in the 1930s and 40s.



### Strategic goal 3:

**Everyone can access the National Parks and benefit in terms of their health and wellbeing.**

**Strategic objective 3 – Enable access to the National Parks so everyone can benefit from them through appropriate recreation, including through promoting responsible tourism and sustainable transport.**

We will:

- Campaign to secure improvements in accessing the Parks by public transport. This will be underpinned by research to better understand potential solutions and raising awareness of these among relevant decision makers in order to increase the range and ease of use of sustainable transport options available for travelling to and around the Parks.
- Develop thinking about the role of responsible tourism and what that means within the National Parks and seek to promote examples that can better support rural communities within the Parks while minimising negative impacts on these beautiful environments.
- Support under-represented groups to be better equipped to use, enjoy and benefit from the National Parks. This will be informed by working with under-represented groups and the National Park Authorities to understand current barriers and us seeking to secure solutions at the local and national levels.

The Westminster Government's *8 point plan for England's National Parks*<sup>9</sup> sets out an ambition to build on work we started through our successful Mosaic projects, to encourage more diverse visitors to National Parks. The Westminster Government also set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan a clear ambition to reconnect people with nature. While these ambitions are for the English National Parks, we believe they should be championed in Wales too. But the volume of visitors to some parts of the Parks, and at times the type of recreational activities some people want to undertake, already present challenges and we need to recognise and work to manage those.

The lack of public transport to and within National Parks was highlighted as a barrier to accessing and enjoying the Parks by many of those who were involved in our Mosaic projects. We also need to consider what other barriers exist that prevent under-represented groups accessing and benefitting from the National Parks and seek to tackle them.

---

<sup>9</sup> Defra et al (2016) [8 point plan for England's National Parks](#)

#### Strategic goal 4:

**More people are inspired and committed to looking after the National Parks.**

**Strategic objective 4 – Build a larger cohort of supporters for the National Parks by championing and celebrating their importance as national assets.**

We will:

- Champion the National Parks by promoting and celebrating the projects taking place on the ground through our Park Protector Awards.
- Inspire more people to support the National Parks by raising awareness of them with a wider audience. Part of achieving this will be through working with partners to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949*. The scale of this work will depend on available funding.

As a small organisation we cannot achieve everything we want to on our own. The challenges that the National Parks face are many and varied. But they also provide a huge range of public benefits that we want people to know about and value.

It is essential that people continue to enjoy, support and campaign for the National Parks at the local and national level. We hope they will do this through supporting our work, but we also recognise there are many organisations, and substantial numbers of volunteers, playing a role in protecting and enhancing the National Parks. We will work to secure more support for the Parks through working with partners at the local and national level, expanding our reach through our communications work and celebrating the importance and value of the National Parks to the nations.

---

### Our enablers and internally facing priorities:

We are a small organisation with a big job to do. To deliver our strategic plan working in partnership will be essential. This will include our critically important relationship with the National Park Societies. We also want and need to continue to work with a wide range of relevant stakeholders and partners, including the Scottish Campaign for National Parks. We will continue to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible and we will also need to maximise our income and spend prudently. Seeking to increase our reach and impact through traditional and online media is important, as is the need for us to maintain our credibility through the use of evidence to underpin our campaigns.

We will deliver our strategic objectives through adopting best practice in management, governance and partnership working, and by securing long-term and sustainable income. This will be enabled by us:

- i. Being efficient and effective, including by working with partners and other bodies as and when relevant;
- ii. Supporting and enabling the network of National Parks Societies to maximise their impact, and bringing together our national and local strengths;
- iii. Growing sustainable income;
- iv. Continuing to develop our communications so they reach and engage key audiences, including the public; and
- v. Using good evidence to underpin our campaigns.

We will know we have achieved this by the end of the strategic plan if we have:

- delivered our objectives and measured our performance effectively through the period of the plan;
- a diverse and high performing board of trustees advised by a diverse and engaged Council;
- supported the sharing of best practice among the network of National Park Societies, including in relation to policy and fundraising;
- engaged a wide range of organisations, including at both local and national levels, in our campaigns and strengthened our partnerships with relevant organisations with an interest in National Parks;
- secured sustainable income that is enabling us to work at full capacity;
- internal and external communications that are integrated across policy and fundraising and have supported the delivery of our strategic objectives; and
- commissioned new research to inform our priorities and underpin national, and ideally local as well, campaigns.