



IMPACT OF GRANT CUTS ON ENGLISH NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES **A briefing based on responses to Freedom of Information requests**

July 2015

Introduction

National Park Authorities manage our ten English National Parks and have faced substantial cuts in the funding they receive from the Government over the past five years. The Campaign for National Parks is concerned about the impact these funding cuts have had on services the Authorities provide and will potentially have in the future. These impacts will not only be on the quality of these important and treasured landscapes and people's ability to continue to enjoy visiting and learning about these national assets, but the cuts also threaten the social and cultural fabric of our rural communities and businesses.

England's National Parks are environmental and cultural assets playing a valuable role in local and national economies. We also know they have an important role in improving people's health and wellbeing. England's 10 National Parks are special places. Covering just over nine per cent of the area of England, they are our finest landscapes, with iconic archaeological and historical sites and valuable wildlife habitats. They are visited every year by 90million visitors and contain communities who care passionately about these beautiful areas.

Economic activity in National Parks is underpinned by their high quality environments. Key activities such as farming help maintain and enhance the special qualities of National Parks. Published in 2013, *Valuing England's National Parks*¹ provides a detailed picture of the range of economic activities and assets in National Parks.

For example, 17,300 people are employed in farming in National Parks; forestry generates £19m gross added value and one third of the Public Forest Estate is in National Parks. In 2012, £10.4bn of turnover was generated by businesses in National Parks and employment grew by 2.7 per cent. Peat soils in National Parks hold 119 megatons of carbon – the equivalent to England's entire CO₂ emissions for one year.

More than a fifth of land in the National Parks is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (23%) and over 330,000 hectares is recognised and protected as being of international conservation importance.

We also know there is huge support for National Parks. According to one survey, 90 per cent of people say National Parks are important to them and 96 per cent say they want every child to experience a National Park first hand². National Park volunteers put in over 43,000 work days per year, valued at £3.2m.

¹ http://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/338361/Valuing-Englands-National-Parks-Final-Report-10-5-13.pdf

² MG Clarity, National Parks Survey, UK Association of National Park Authorities, December 2012

Yet, their budgets are relatively small and are decreasing. Public spending on National Parks in England costs considerably less than £1 per person per year.

To better understand the impact of the funding cuts we submitted Freedom of Information (Fol) requests to all the National Park Authorities. This briefing summarises the information we received and further underpins our call to Government to 'stop the cuts'.

Background

Between 2010 and 2015, the coalition government oversaw a significant reduction in public spending, designed to reduce the budget deficit. And this is set to continue. If the Government continues to protect certain departmental budgets then cuts to unprotected departmental budgets, such as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), will be considerably higher.

The announcement by the Chancellor George Osborne on 4 June 2015 to find £3bn in savings from government departments in the current financial year will mean that Defra will have to make further savings. It has been reported that Defra has agreed to a budget cut of £83m this year³. This is ahead of a deeper cuts programme to be announced in the Budget on 8 July.

The Campaign for National Parks is concerned about the scale and speed of the cuts. We believe that the National Parks are important national assets and they should be properly valued by the Government and supported financially. National Parks need to be able to access a fair share of resources if they are to deliver their purposes of pursuing the economic and social wellbeing of communities alongside environmental management.

Budget reductions 2010-2015 in real terms

Responses to our Fol requests show that all National Parks in England have had similar reductions in their budget from Defra except for the South Downs National Park Authority, which had a different funding formula due to it only becoming fully functional in 2011.

The figures below take into account the retail price index. National Park Authorities have not only lost Defra funding but they have seen cuts in funding from local authorities and other Government departments, such as the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Specific information we received from National Park Authorities included:

	Funding received		% decrease	Other points to note
	2010/11	2015/16		
Lake District	£7.275m	£4.486m	38	
Broads	£4.23m	£2.74m	35	
Dartmoor	£4.978m	£3.57m	40	
Exmoor	£4.177m	£2.99m	38	Project and programme budget shrunk from £1.55m to £379,000
New Forest	£4.229m	£2.606m	38	

³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-33013567>

North York Moors	£5.7m	£3.7m	35	Additional 5% of budget lost from local authority and DCLG funding
Northumberland	£3.475m	£2.147m	38	
Peak District			36	Fell by £3.5m over five years
South Downs	£10.19m	£9.795m	4	Included start up funding for 4 years
Yorkshire Dales	£5.67m	£4.07m	38	

Projects cut or axed

The evidence garnered from the FOI request shows that many National Parks have had to cut specific projects and programmes. These include:

- New Forest has cut its Sustainable Development Fund grant by 55%; a 25% cut in funding for the National Park's food brand New Forest Marque and a 20% cut in local information New Forest hub.
- The Broads has closed three of its six tourist information centres; withdrawn from virtually all rights of way maintenance (looking after just 23km of footpaths out of 300km of rights of way) and abolished its Sustainable Development Grant scheme.
- The Broads has also cut funding for conservation partnership groups and stopped funding on climate change.
- North York Moors has stopped funding the Moorsbus Network. A considerably smaller service continues to run thanks to the North Yorkshire Moors Association. The National Park Authority has also stopped flood prevention work, managing the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way; work on Green Lanes and climate change mitigation and adaptation work. It has reduced opening hours for tourists at its Helmsley headquarters and cut budgets in its biodiversity and historic environment work, threatening the achievements of the Government's Biodiversity 2020 target.
- Dartmoor has ended its Forestry Stewardship Council woodlands accreditation scheme; cut its "lengthsman" role (someone who keeps the footpaths and bridleways neat and tidy). Dartmoor has outsourced its guided walks to the Ramblers, National Trust and Moorland Guides, reduced support for education to schools and higher education groups. Projects terminated included One Planet Dartmoor; Sustainable Development Fund and Action for Wildlife initiative.
- Northumberland has stopped its climate change and apprenticeship programmes; closed down its sustainable business support; closed two of its three visitors centres; cut marketing and tourism spend; education and engagement; ranger services, rural business and community support programme sustainable development fund programme and spend on recreation.
- Yorkshire Dales has ended its events, branding, geodiversity, climate change, education and public transport programmes; stopped its Definitive Map (Rights of Way) designations and sold its information centre at Sedbergh while other centres have seen their opening hours cut. The Rights of Way programme budget has been cut by 37%. It has also reduced its conservation and built environment programmes and cut back on its countryside skills and apprenticeship training.

- Exmoor has cut its tourist information centres from five to three - of the two, one is being run on a community basis and another is a private business, which has since closed. It has transferred its Pinkery Centre for Outdoor Learning to the YHA; closed its woodland management team and reduced its winter opening hours at its Dulverton information centre.

The Peak District are making savings through reductions in transport, land management and conservation and cultural heritage work and the Authority has also transferred its Centre for Environmental Legacy at Losehill Hall to the YHA.

Other budgetary issues

We also asked all the National Park Authorities about other budgetary issues they are facing, such as the reduction in planning fees due to the economic downturn and the effects of the very low interest rates on capital. The following issues were raised:

- New Forest has seen its bank interest on working capital slump by 76%.
- The Broads has suffered a cut of £70,000 due to the ending of National Insurance relief on pension contributions.
- Northumberland has also seen cash reductions totalling £314,000 in real terms following falls in grants, retail revenues and bank interest rates in the same period.
- Yorkshire Dales has also seen reductions in other grants and a reduction in bank interest on working capital totalling £596,000 (or 30%) in real terms

Impact on staff resources

The total number of jobs lost in the ten England National Parks between April 2010 and April 2015 has been 226.5 full time equivalent (FTE). The largest cuts to staffing levels have been in some of the smallest NPAs – including Northumberland, which has seen a 40% cut and Dartmoor which has seen a 35% reduction.

FTE jobs are different from the wider and more extensive job statistics that have also been provided by the Park Authorities. These include a number of casual and seasonal staff, but the trend there is also downwards.

Specific figures we received are:

	FTE jobs		
	Apr-10	Apr-15	Reduction
Lake District	209	191	18
Broads	127	121	6
Dartmoor	106	67.7	38.3
Exmoor	77	60.6	16.4
New Forest	63	57	6
North York Moors	142	104	38
Northumberland	81.5	48.7	32.8
Peak District	262	221	41
South Downs			0
Yorkshire Dales	129	98	31
TOTAL JOBS LOST	227.5		

Boosting income

All ten National Park Authorities in England have been working with their Welsh and Scottish counterparts to create a new company – National Parks Partnerships Ltd - devoted to identifying commercial opportunities, following a similar successful initiative in the United States. This builds on sponsorship deals brokered by National Parks UK with Airwick and US footwear company Merrell.

There is also a concerted drive to grow commercial income in the National Parks by the individual Authorities. For example:

- The Lake District which has seen a 30% increase in non-grant income of £923,000.
- New Forest income has been boosted through lottery-funded initiatives, environmental stewardship work and with commercial sponsorship for its Walking Festival.

Northumberland has grown its commercial income and is pressing ahead with its ambitious Heritage Lottery-funded Sill project. Northumberland has also seen the establishment of a charitable foundation and the Yorkshire Dales Authority has also been making considerable efforts to increase income generation. This demonstrates a strong ability to lever in external funding for projects.

Conclusions and recommendations

The effects of these cuts are being seen across the English National Parks. Not only are jobs being lost, but projects are being pared back and hundreds of miles of Rights of Way will no longer be maintained in the future.

The Campaign for National Parks is concerned that already too many people are not able to access our National Parks. Over time, with funds that previously supported innovative approaches to public transport and local businesses being closed, as well as less money being invested in conservation work, the negative effect on visitors, local tourism, wildlife and rural businesses will continue to grow.

We are calling on the Westminster Government to effectively resource National Parks, while also enabling them to take innovative approaches to access new or existing funding streams. National Parks are national assets that provide environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits. They are valued by communities and tourists and they need to be properly valued and supported by the Government.