

Management of the uplands¹ A policy position statement

May 2017

Our position

1. The upland National Parks are national assets. Centuries of management have produced beautiful and inspiring landscapes that are rich in wildlife and cultural heritage. They also deliver clean air and water, wide ranging opportunities for public access, reduce flood risk, sequester carbon and provide health and wellbeing benefits. These attributes are more important than ever if we are to enable our habitats and species to adapt and we are to mitigate the impacts of climate change. We can and must, therefore, do more to maximise the full spectrum of public benefits that these areas deliver.
2. With the right management, underpinned by the right support, we believe the upland National Parks can be home to beautiful landscapes that provide high quality food and continue to play an important role within the visitor economy. They must also enable more and better public access, contain more abundant and diverse wildlife, have Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) that are in better condition, better protected scheduled ancient monuments and soils and habitats that are better at filtering water, combating flooding and storing carbon.
3. John Dower's report to Government in May 1944 recommending the setting up of National Parks saw farming as central to the special qualities of the areas that he recommended for designation. One of Dower's four founding principles was that 'established agriculture should effectively be maintained' and he recognised that farming in the hills required special assistance in terms of capital improvements and income support. He saw little conflict between farming in the 1940s and the distinctive characteristics of the soon to be designated National Parks.
4. Campaign for National Parks recognises the role of farmers and land managers and their important part in helping us deliver our vision for even better upland National Parks. We do not, however, claim that the management of the uplands has always been exemplary. There have been significant change in farming practices and society since Dower's report was published. Much of this has been driven over the last four decades by the Common Agricultural Policy. Farming has become more mechanised and often more intensive; the use of fertiliser and chemicals more widespread; summer haymaking has been replaced by earlier cuts for silage and haylage; farms have become larger and more specialised; and small farms have become uneconomic but ever more attractive assets for non-farming purchasers. While the appearance of the upland National Parks has been maintained and areas of them remain havens for wildlife, there are concerns about flora and fauna. *The State of Nature Report 2016* found that between 1970 and 2013, 55% of upland species

¹ This policy position statement primarily focusses on land management associated with farming, which may be undertaken by land owners, tenant farmers and/or commoners, and how future funding should be used to deliver more sustainable and beneficial land management in the future. It does not cover other management regimes, such as those associated with game management.

declined, and 15% of upland species are threatened with extinction from Great Britain. While this data is national we know that National Parks, despite their designations, are not bucking these trends. Improvements must be made.

5. Land managers will, however, play a central part in improving and maintaining our treasured landscapes and already have a pivotal role in rural communities. As well as their roles as food and crop producers and employers, hill farmers have been central to creating and maintaining the fabric and the much loved landscapes of the uplands. Our National Parks are living, working landscapes and the farming families and land based workers are the lifeblood of the remote communities in which they live and work. Upland land managers are, therefore, well placed to achieve the changes we need to see in managing the land to deliver more public benefits. We believe that providing environmental and cultural benefits justify an approach based on the provision of public money for public goods

The importance of the uplands

6. Nine of the 13 National Parks in England and Wales contain upland areas. These areas are renowned for their beautiful landscapes and over 78 million visitsⁱ are made each year to them with visitors contributing significant amounts to the local economies. The uplands play an important role in the livestock sectors in England and Wales. Cattle and sheep grazing accounts for 35% of active farm holdings in Wales, the majority of which are on Less Favoured Area landⁱⁱ. And in England, 29% of breeding cows are in the uplands and 44% of breeding sheepⁱⁱⁱ. It is also important to note, that over 45% of English and Welsh commons lie within National Parks, mostly in the uplands^{iv}.

7. The upland Parks are important for biodiversity, heritage and the recreational opportunities they offer. The English uplands contain 53% of our SSSIs^v and while land designated as Severely Disadvantaged Areas account for 12% of England's land area, it contains almost a third of all scheduled ancient monuments^{vi}. The uplands also provide vital ecosystem services. For example, the carbon storage function of peat in Wales is significant; there are over 50,000ha of peat in the Welsh National Parks, representing approximately 13% of their surface area^{vii}.

What Campaign for National Parks wants

8. The Campaign for National Parks seeks to protect and enhance all our National Parks. The outcome of the EU referendum in June 2016 has significant implications for the future of the uplands, including how they are managed. The management of the uplands relies heavily on public money and the £3.2billion that UK farmers currently receive through the Common Agricultural Policy is unlikely to continue to flow to UK farmers in future. A large proportion of the uplands in our National Parks has been, and in many areas still is, managed in line with agri-environment scheme agreements. The future management of the uplands will, therefore, be shaped by future arrangements put in place once the UK leaves the European Union.

9. We are also concerned about the potential impacts of the loss of EU designations such as Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive or Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive. In order to make sure that the many sensitive and important areas for landscape and wildlife in National Parks can be safeguarded, it is essential that protections for our natural resources, including nature, air, soil and water, are maintained, if not enhanced, after the UK leaves the European Union.

10. If we can secure funding for UK farmers and land managers, our exit from the European Union could also present an opportunity. The removal of the current regulations of the CAP should enable the development and implementation of more efficient and targeted

schemes that offer better long term outcomes in terms of the delivery of public goods, through more tailored farm support. The National Parks are inspiring, beautiful places that deliver a wide range of benefits. But we want to make them even better.

11. One method of achieving this will be through supporting farmers and land managers in the uplands financially to maximize the public benefits provided by these areas.

12. Specifically, we want:

- I. An approach that is based on public money for public goods. The current area based, basic payments (Pillar 1) should be phased out as part of a move to a new system. Future payments should be environmentally focused, protecting and enhancing natural capital, thereby recognising the role upland farmers and land managers have in delivering clean air and water, reducing flood risk, carbon sequestration, biodiversity and public access, integral to maintaining these beautiful, cultural landscapes that are valued by much of the public.
- II. In addition to being focused on delivering environmental benefits, future environmental schemes should be locally tailored and delivered. Each of our upland National Parks is different and this should be recognised in the development of environmental schemes. With nationally developed, prescriptive schemes there is a risk that our landscapes will converge. The importance of local delivery, that enables schemes to be more tailored, has been an important lesson from many of the existing schemes being managed, for example, by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority farm liaison team. It will also enable consideration to be given to how best to support the management of commons, where this is relevant.
- III. National Parks should be exemplars of excellence in upland management. Where changes in management regimes are needed to achieve the desired outcomes they should be locally determined. This may mean, for example, that stocking densities are changed in some areas or land is managed less intensively to enable the restoration of natural environmental systems. But this should not be prescribed in detail from a national level.
- IV. A significant expansion in woodland of the right type and in the right places within the upland National Parks. Woodland and trees are a key part of a multi-functional landscape and have multiple benefits in terms of improving connectivity for wildlife, slowing run off and providing shelter for stock. Future environmental schemes should support this.
- V. Within the National Parks the National Park Authorities should deliver future funding schemes in line with an ambitious vision for the area, set out in the management plan. They are best placed to have a landscape scale overview of the vision and needs of the area and have strong links with many of the farmers and land managers within the Parks. They also have the track record of delivering projects on the ground. The Authorities should be provided with sufficient resources to undertake what will be a major role in the future land management of their areas.
- VI. A transition period between the existing schemes and rolling out the new scheme will be needed and must be managed carefully to allow farm businesses and other land management providers to adapt. Pilot projects could be undertaken during this time but it should be noted that pilot projects already exist, including the 'payment by results' project in the Yorkshire Dales National Park^{viii}, which is already one year into its three-year term, and the outcomes focused management of common land through the Dartmoor Farming Futures project^{ix}.

VII. In rolling out a new scheme, it will be important to consider communications. We need to help the public understand that while accessing National Parks is free they are managed landscapes and public funding is needed in these areas. We want to make sure visitors enjoy, value and respect the National Parks. Part of that is supporting them to understand and value the important role of farmers and land managers in maintaining and enhancing these beautiful and important areas.

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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. To find out more about our work please visit www.cnp.org.uk.

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.

ⁱ 70million for English upland National Parks based on STEAM data plus 8million for Welsh Parks, taken from

Arup for National Parks Wales (2013) *Valuing Wales' National Parks*

ⁱⁱ National Assembly for Wales (2016) *The Farming Sector in Wales*

ⁱⁱⁱ Harvey and Scott (2016) *Farm Business Survey 2014/2015: Hill farming in England*

^{iv} Foundation for Common Land (Date unknown) *Common Land and the Uplands*

^v Natural England (2013) *Natural England: Uplands Strategic Standard*

^{vi} English Heritage (2010) *Farming in the Uplands: written evidence submitted by English Heritage*
<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmenvfru/writev/556/12.htm>

^{vii} Arup for National Parks Wales (2013) *Valuing Wales' National Parks*

^{viii} More information available at: <http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/living-and-working/other-services/press-office/news/recent/wensleydale-farmers-pioneer-new-agri-environment-payment-scheme>

^{ix} More information available at: <http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/lookingafter/laf-landmanagement/dartmoor-farming-futures>