

VIEWPOINT

Special 75th Anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act Edition



COMMODIFICATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

Access to the countryside should
be a right, not a privilege

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

Radically imagining the next
75 years of National Parks

THE LAST LYNX

Heading back in time to
search for a lost species



CAMPAIGN for
NATIONAL PARKS

YMGYRCH y
PARCIAU CENEDLAETHOL

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Cover artwork by Serafina Parmar-Hill, learn more about her on page 3

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WELCOME

Welcome to this very exciting edition of Viewpoint as we continue the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. In our last issue we cast our minds back and reflected on the historic events which led to the creation of the Parks and how things have changed in the last 75 years. In this issue we're looking ahead to their future to imagine how they'll look in the next 75 years (pages 6-8), what needs to change to ensure their survival (pages 10-12) and hearing from the next generation of National Park custodians.

I'm so excited to be sharing this edition with you as it's been written entirely by young people, thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of our New Perspectives project (page 4). It's been such a joy to bring this edition together and to read about the impact National Parks have had on our contributor's lives, whether that's their careers (page 24), artwork (pages 20-21) or mental health (pages 22-23).

We've also been looking ahead in our own campaigning to work with the new Labour government to ensure National Parks are protected, emphasising nature-recovery (page 3) and leveraging the findings from our Health Check Report to address the dire state of water in our National Parks (page 26). We're also working with Welsh government to encourage support for the new National Park in north east Wales (page 26), which has the potential to be the UK's first National Park that extends into the sea.

I hope you've managed to spend some time in our National Parks over the last few months despite summer doing a great impression of autumn. Thank you for supporting us this year. I really hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as I have.

Harriet Gardiner
Senior Communications Officer



Harriet in the Broads National Park



Sisters Roshni (left) and Serafina (right)

ROSHNI PARMAR-HILL

Roshni describes herself as a mixed-race south Asian nature nerd and Campaign for National Parks Ambassador from Manchester. For her, conservation and climate justice severely lack the lens of collective liberation. So, poetry is a way for her to speak of radical social and ecological regeneration. Her words are a way to honour her heritage and dream of a future where people of colour can find rest and joy in Britain's National Parks.

SERAFINA PARMAR-HILL

Serafina is a psychological wellbeing practitioner working for the NHS in Manchester, with a passion for creative work. She grew up around the moors close to Saddleworth and began using mehndi (henna) at 11 years old. She is inspired by her heritage, and is grateful for the beauty, fullness and joy her Indian roots have given her, and hopes you can see this expressed in this piece as an extension of her and her sister's identity.

I close my eyes and turn to the sun

I close my eyes and turn to the sun.

A land cracked and curved with footsteps of
Peoples pulsating with life. Lineage
Strung across oceans.

Culture found in the winding
String of a tree.
A fasting moon.
The harvest in winter.

Pilgrimages across dales
Fell from holy books
Written with scripts spread
Across a raining sky.

Resting. Mosaic resting.
To roam once again amongst the mango
Groves now homed in the hawthorn
Berries we pick each autumn.

I close my eyes.

These visions I see are
Catastrophically
Beautiful.

*Poem by Roshni Parmar-Hill,
artwork by Serafina Parmar-Hill*



NEW PERSPECTIVES

Our National Parks New Perspectives project first launched in 2021 with the aim to give young people from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to influence and connect with decision makers to change the narratives on who National Parks are for and who has a say in their future. We've worked with some incredible young people to share their stories and explore themes close to their heart.

Just 6% visitors are aged 16-24 and young people are much less likely to live, work or be involved in decision-making in National Parks.

This year we were awarded funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to grow the project and connect even more young people with National Parks over the next two years. The project consists of many different aspects; a variety of grants for young people to share their stories of National Parks, our Future Leaders Course which provides campaigning and leadership skills to inspire future leaders, as well as recruiting youth ambassadors and providing in person opportunities for young people to engage with and influence decision makers.

As we celebrate 75 years of National Parks and look to their future, we know it's vital to inspire the next generation to become the custodians of National Parks for the next 75 years and beyond. The New Perspectives project aims to create a legacy of youth leadership that has a positive and lasting impact on the National Parks in England and Wales.



**To learn more
about the project
scan the QR code.**



This special edition of Viewpoint is made up entirely of contributions from young people. Thank you to lottery players for making this issue possible.

The Right to Discover National Parks

Everyone has the Right to Discover our amazing National Parks, but many young people are excluded from valuable opportunities to connect with them.

As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of National Parks in the UK, we're coming together to create a brighter future— a future where all young people have equal opportunity to discover, feel connected to and enjoy our National Parks.



Lily at her final destination in the New forest

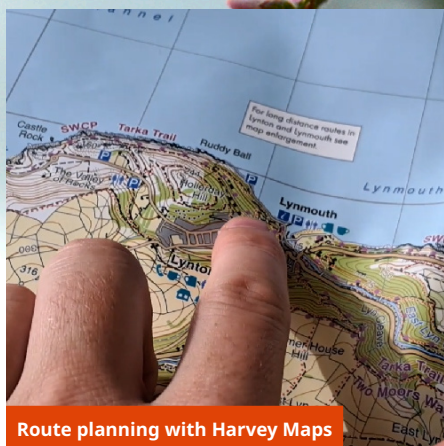


Gareth and Eben's route to Exmoor

RACE TO NATIONAL PARKS

We launched the campaign with our Race to National Parks, pushing ourselves and the transport networks to the limit to get out into nature without a car. Over the coming months, we'll be continuing to work with young people to develop our declaration that National Parks belong to everyone.

To learn more about the campaign and watch the Race to National Parks film, head to cnp.org.uk



Route planning with Harvey Maps

Looking back to look forward- imagining the next 75 years of National Parks

**75 years on from the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, how can we embody the spirit of its creation to tackle the fresh challenges our Protected Landscapes face into the future?
Written by Lily Whitmarsh**



This year, we stand looking back on the legacy of the last 75 years of National Parks. Ahead of us, the next 75 years these living landscapes face. We are reminded of the brilliant people behind the original campaign to protect the country's most important landscapes for nature and recreational access.

National Parks were envisioned by name as national, to give us all opportunities to fulfil our innate need for time in 'wild country'. When our organisation - then called the Standing Committee on National Parks was founded, it was to protect landscapes for the nation. With economic recovery after the second world war came new towns and ambitious public bodies forging ahead to create a Greater Britain. This drive has arguably rarely let up. Today, land use practices driven by economic pressure are in turn driving an unprecedented decline in biodiversity in our Protected Landscapes and our modern lifestyles draw us further away from nature.

Standing Committee Secretary, John Dower's vision for National Parks, where everyone could have fair access to the experience of walking for a whole day immersed in nature, is as aspirational now as it was then. Much of the land in National Parks remains privately owned (90% or more in most Parks in England and Wales) and the campaign for greater rights for everyone to access this land goes strong. Many groups are afforded fewer opportunities to visit our National Parks than others. Access is still largely split along the class divide, with people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, disabled people, young people and older people also amongst the least likely to visit (as identified in the 2019 Landscapes Review).

Yet, the need remains as acute as ever. Our NHS faces a growing mental and physical health crisis, and our increasing societal disconnect from nature is a key driver of the decline in species abundance and biodiversity in our country and the world over.

Now, in 2024, we are also facing the huge challenge of the climate crisis. Our Protected Landscapes are suffering from the effects of changing weather and rising temperatures. We know that despite their designation, these landscapes have not been sufficiently protected by the action of the last 75 years.

Though granite tors, chalk cliffs and limestone mountains move at a pace so slow they seem unchanging, the challenges these landscapes face, and the ways we need to protect them, change constantly.

The Standing Committee's 1938 'Case for National Parks in Great Britain' put this well, "National Parks are not merely a work of preservation." Protected Landscapes cannot thrive into the next 75 years to 2099 by simply preventing further decline. Now as then, "a positive side is equally necessary, not only to secure and increase access [...] but also to preserve wildlife and to maintain landscape beauty and effective farming use." To achieve positive change at the pace necessary, we need bold and radical action. We need to achieve something as transformative as their designation itself.

How can we reframe the stories we tell about Protected Landscapes to achieve this landmark change over the next 75 years? I recently took a walk to the boundary of the Peak District National Park to see if creativity may be just what we need.

Radical imagination is the suggestion that by envisioning our ideal long-term future we can better understand the way through the issues of the present. In the next 75 years to 2099 there will be huge changes in UK landscapes and in the way we as humans live on this planet. When we think about our current biodiversity and climate crisis, and the challenges we already face advocating for National Parks, it's hard to be optimistic. Most of the time we envision things getting worse. Radical imagination invites us to envision things getting better.

How can National Parks be set up for nature to thrive? What is a future like where National Parks belong to everyone? And, most importantly, what is the transformative action needed to get us there?

National Parks were created on precedents, on the original notion someone had that landscapes could be protected for nature and people. To create National Parks that can thrive to 2099, we need to embody a similar idea; that they can.

In 2099, perhaps I as a 99-year-old or more likely a member of a future generation, may look back on our movement now in a similar way to how I have come to regard our campaign's founders through researching for this article. As the generation that created bigger and better National Parks, opened them up for everyone and brought nature back from the brink.



Main image: Shooter's Nab, Peak District by Lily Whitmarsh

Imagining a National Park in 2099

An adventure in the future of the Peak District

At first its busy. Conversations at cafes, at bus stops, as we head through the village from the train station to the start of the trail.

As we go our own way, the people thin. The silence grows. We climb up on the moors and put the road behind us. We weave through the carpet of purple heather and yellow gorse, fluffy white cotton grass and emerald green bracken.

Teenage trees hang out together near the bank of the canal. Past it is the peat bog I lost my boot in as a child, when my teacher had to lend me her spares for the walk back. Now much bigger, I know not to try exploring.

Your hair whips into your face. Grasses dance to sounds of insects humming and we boogie along, arms out to steady ourselves on the unsheltered sections.

The kestrels pay us no notice; visitors to their playground. As they call you join in, humming a song that carries on the wind. People hear. I thrust my arm in the air *Isn't this wonderful* and they wave back *Beautiful*.

We take their lead and leave the dirt track. The trail winds up and onwards, taking an undulating route through the new market garden and the old sheep territory. Their tracks guide us on.

Cresting the next bank, we reach the old fence line, in places still marked by troughs where posts once stood. The ground here is younger, dryer. We fear no danger as we carry on our ascent to the former quarry. Centuries-old stone slabs become a place for us to rest and drink our water. The nab watches on, towering over.

We follow the final track up to meet it. Gritstone holds us fast against the increasing wind. We arrive, wiping the mud from our boots on the tall grass we lie down, backs flat on the stone.

Above, us clouds rush past. The smell of wild garlic runs over at us and away again on the wind. We lay still on the stone. The landscape moves on.



LILY WHITMARSH

Lily is a nature and creative enthusiast and Team & Campaigns Coordinator at Campaign for National Parks. She is passionate about using arts and activism to encourage bolder action for a more socially and environmentally just future.



Main image: Shooter's Nab, Peak District by Lily Whitmarsh

Borders

We look ahead, a horizon obstructed by
nature's intended hindrances,
trace our past through its outline.

There, on the top of that mountain, my friend's parents got engaged.
This one, here, is on my school crest.
Back then, I thought rivers were carbonated,
that every park warden knew me

(they did).

White horses materialise between the reservoir and my memory,
cantering around, marking every recollection
with a sharp clack.

The lost rugby ball / when it was so hot /
the whole embankment surrendered / gathering sheep /
barefoot in the stream / bluebell woodlands /
heritage in the hike / knowing home is where heather grows /
knowing its burning is your own.

My family gathers livestock.
I dance with the breeze carried from Ceredigion
on the edge;

I have done it before and I will do it again.
I can map out the borders of my childhood.
Its cartographer is the Bannau.

Poem by Daphne Harries



DAPHNE HARRIES

Daphne grew up in Bannau Brycheiniog and is a Welsh/Australian writer, who enjoys birdwatching, collecting mugs, and reading Elizabethan verse. She is currently working on her debut pamphlet.

Commodification of the Countryside

In a world where nearly every single part of our lives is commodified, Eben Myrddin Muse pushes back on the financial barriers to nature and reminds us that access to the countryside should be a right, not a privilege.

Under a post on the Facebook page 'UK Wild Camping', a man commented:

"Freeloading scum".

The post in question was a photo by a woman of a beautifully pitched site, clearly excited about her first wild camping experience with her sister, with the phrase "leave no trace" and a heart emoji. Such a disproportionate and aggressive response could be dismissed as trolling, but it merits some analysis because truthfully, it reflects a pervasive British attitude. You hear stories time and again of angry confrontation — of bike-campers being sprayed with slurry, intimidation and altercation — all in reaction to folk who step off the beaten path and go for a wild camp or a discreet trespass.

But what's the root cause of offense in these kinds of cases? That wild camping is perceived as essentially a 'free' activity (discounting costs of equipment, travel, training) is deemed morally reprehensible by some. Why? A night under the stars (or cloud) on the edge of a field doesn't actually siphon off the fruits of anybody's labour. You're just making brief use of a bit of land which has existed there for quite some time, and it's a use that's demonstrably good for us! For a landowner to accuse a wild camper of freeloading in cases like this is to try and reap what they never sowed. But in a world where nearly every single part of our lives is commodified, from the water we drink, to higher education, dental care, our most fundamental needs, it's not so surprising.

Our National Parks, where people make a connection with nature and with the countryside, often for the first time, were not created with profit in mind, but to conserve nature and to provide outdoor recreation for all.

“
But today we see increased financial barriers to nature everywhere.

More pay and display car parks, fines and clamping for van camping, the looming sale of national assets such as Plas Tan y Bwlch study centre, and always, always the message – “if you're here, you better be ready to pay”. We're at a place where landowners approach children doing their Duke of Edinburgh demanding cash on the spot for a night spent on a boggy hillside. What service are they paying for that the landowner provided other than a good fright in the dark?

In Dartmoor a hedge fund manager levies his resources to push off campers, ostensibly so that he can profit from the land via upmarket pheasant shoots, deer stalking and expensive holiday lets (with the endeavour allegedly part funded by shares in a company accused of driving up the price of insulin). Talk about commodification. And it's not just limited to the rural – this year, the Bathurst Estate (with a fortune deriving from the slave trade – another vile commodity), decided they would introduce paid electronic turnstiles for entry on Cirencester Park, previously open to the public for centuries. These big examples shock

us, but we should pay more attention to the small confrontations taking place every day across England and Wales as people simply try and connect with the landscape. “Freeloader” “Cheapskate!” “Moocher!” “LEECH!”

Not limited to purely financial barriers, these types of self-righteous confrontations also inherently engender discrimination: different people are undoubtedly treated differently in the same circumstances – any person belonging to a minority venturing into these places will attest to this. Some people come ready for confrontation, armed with counter arguments or citing trespass as just a civil offense. Others will feel less safe and have to expend much more energy in a confrontational situation, which discourages participation from demographics already underrepresented in the outdoors. Financial barriers unfairly discourage visitors who already face the greatest barriers.

We've allowed ourselves to be socialised into a commodification mindset where every action has to be a financial transaction, and the end result is a rotten culture with more in common with a monopoly board than a healthy society.

The truth is that access to nature should be a right, not a privilege to be bought and paid for by those who have the means. We should encourage support for local economies – of course – but institutions should recognise that commodification of the outdoors actively harms us all.



Best keep your dog on a leash if
you take them wild camping!
Image by David Maddison

O dan bost ar dudalen Facebook 'UK Wild Camping', dywedodd dyn:

"Freeloading scum".

Roedd y post dan sylw yn llun a bostiwyd gan fenyw o wersyllfa hardd, yn amlwg yn gyffrous am ei phrofiad gwersylla gwyllt cyntaf gyda'i chwaer, gyda'r ymadrodd "leave no trace" ac emoji calon. Gellid diystyru ymateb mor afiach ac ymosodol fel trolio, ond i mi mae'n haeddu rhywfaint o ddadansoddi oherwydd mewn gwirionedd, mae'n adlewyrchu agwedd dreiddiol Brydeinig. Rydych chi'n clywed straeon dro ar ôl tro am wrthdaro ffyrnig, neu am wersyllwyr beic yn cael eu chwistrellu â slyri, eu dychryn a'i haflonyddu - i gyd mewn ymateb i bobl gyffredin sy'n mentro oddi ar y llwybr ac yn mynd i wersylla gwyllt neu'n tremasu'n gynnil.

Ond beth yw gwraidd y tramgwydd mewn achosion fel hyn? Mae'r ffaith fod gwersylla gwyllt yn cael ei ystyried yn ei hanfod yn weithgaredd 'am ddim' (gan ddiystyru costau offer, teithio, hyfforddiant) yn cael ei ystyried yn ei gwneud yn foesol gerydd gan rai. Pam? Dydi noson dan y sêr (neu gwmwl) ar ymyl cae mewn gwirionedd ddim yn dwyn ffrwyth llafur unrhyw un. Dim ond gwneud defnydd byrhoedlog o lwmp o dir sydd wedi bodoli yno ers cryn amser, ac mae'n ddefnydd sy'n amlwg yn llesol i ni! Mae tîrffeddiannwr sy'n cyhuddo gwersyllwr gwyllt o fod yn 'freeloader' mewn achosion fel hyn yn ceisio meddi'r hyn na wnaethant erioed ei hau - ond mewn byd lle mae bron pob rhan o'n bywydau wedi'i droi yn nwydd i'w werthu a'i brynu, o'r dŵr rydyn ni'n ei

yfed, at addysg uwch, gofal deintyddol, ein hanghenion mwyaf sylfaenol, nid yw felly'n syndod.

Cafodd ein Parciau Cenedlaethol, lle mae pobl yn ymgysylltu â natur a chefn gwlad, yn aml am y tro cyntaf, ddim eu creu ag elw mewn golwg, ond er mwyn gwarchod natur a darparu hamdden awyr agored i bawb, ond heddiw mae rhwystrau ariannol cynyddol rhag ymwneud â natur ym mhobman. Mwy o feysydd parcio talu ac arddangos, dirwyon a chlampio ar gyfer gwersylla mewn fan, bygythiad gwerthu rhai o'n asedau cenedlaethol mwyaf gwerthfawr, fel Coed y Brenin, a thrwy'r amser, o hyd ac o hyd, y neges - "os ydych chi eisiau bod yma, paratowch i dalu". Rydyn ni mewn byd lle mae tîrffeddiannwyr yn mynd at blant sy'n ceisio am wobwr Dug Caeredin i hawlio arian parod yn y fan a'r lle am dreulio noson ar ochr bryn corsiog. Pa wasanaeth sy'n cael ei ddarparu iddynt heblaw am fraw yn y tywyllwch? Yn Dartmoor mae rheolwr cronfa rhagfantoli yn defnyddio ei adnoddau i wthio gwersyllwyr i ffwrdd o'i dir, yn ôl pob golwg fel y gall elwa o'r tir drwy saethu ffesantod, stelcian ceirw a gosod llety gwyliau drud - gyda'r holl beth yn debygol o fod wedi'i ariannu'n rhannol gan gyfranddaliadau mewn cwmni a gyhuddir o gynyddu pris inswlin. Sôn am fasnach. Ac nid yw wedi'i gyfyngu i'r byd gwledig yn unig - eleni mae Stad Bathurst sef perchnogion Parc Cirencester (diolch i ffortiwn sy'n deillio o fasnach caethweision - nwydd ffiaidd arall), a fu'n agored i'r cyhoedd ers canrifoedd, wedi penderfynu cyflwyno gatiau electronig taledig ar gyfer

mynediad. Mae'r enghreifftiau mawr fel hyn yn ein synnu, mae'n bwysig talu mwy o sylw i'r gwrthdaro bach sy'n digwydd bob dydd ar hyd a lled Cymru a Lloegr wrth i bobl geisio cysylltu â'r dirwedd. "Freeloader!". "Cheapskate!" "Moocher!" "SLYWAN!"

Yn ogystal a rhwystrau ariannol, mae'r mathau hyn o wrthdaro hunangyfiawn hefyd yn anochel i achosi gwahaniaethu: heb os, caiff gwahanol bobl eu trin yn wahanol o dan yr un amgylchiadau - bydd person sy'n perthyn i leiafrif sy'n mentro i'r lleoedd hyn yn dyst. Mae rhai pobl yn dod yn barod i gwyffio, edliu harfogi â gwrthddadleuon neu'n nodi tresmasu fel trosedd sifil yn unig. Bydd eraill yn teimlo'n llai diogel ac yn gorfod disbyddu mwy o egni mewn sefyllfa wrthdrawiadol, sy'n annog pobl i beidio â chymryd rhan, o ddemograffegau sydd eisoes yn cael eu tangynrychioli yn yr awyr agored. Mae rhwystrau ariannol yn atal ymwelwyr sydd eisoes yn wynebu'r rhwystrau mwyaf yn gyffredinol.

Rydyn ni wedi caniatáu i ni ein hunain gael ein cymdeithasu i feddylfryd nwyddol lle mae'n rhaid i bob gweithred fod yn drafodiad ariannol, a'r canlyniad yn y pen draw yw diwylliant pydredig gyda mwy yn gyffredin â bwrdd monopoli na chymdeithas iachus.

Y gwir yw y dylai mynediad at natur fod yn hawl, nid yn ffraind i gael ei phrynu a thalu amdani gan y rhai sydd â'r modd. Dylem annog cefnogaeth i economïau lleol - wrth gwrs - ond fe ddylai sefydliadau gydnabod bod troi'r awyr agored yn nwydd i'w brynu a'i werthu yn gwneud niwed mawr i bob un ohonom.



EBEN MYRDDIN MUSE

Eben is a Campaign for National Parks Ambassador and Campaigns and Policy Officer with the British Mountaineering Council. Eben has always had a close relationship with National Parks as he grew up on the edge of the Eryri National Park in Dyffryn Nantlle.

Mae Eben yn Llysgennad y CNP ac yn Swyddog Ymgyrchoedd a Pholisi gyda Chyngor Mynyddau Prydain. Mae perthynas agos rhwng Eben a Pharciau Cenedlaethol erioed wrth iddo gael ei fagu ar gyrion Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri yn Nyffryn Nantlle.

National Parks and people

Alienor Hammer on finding her roots in Dartmoor and the Lake District National Park

When I think of National Parks, I think of people. Nature is beautiful and awe-inspiring, but most of all it brings us together. National Parks are the best examples of this.

I grew up in an interracial family. This came with clashing cultures, chaos and occasional miscommunication. It was a colourful and loud way to live. But as a family, it never felt like we quite fit into our surroundings. However, every year my dad would drive us out of London, into the countryside. One of our most memorable trips was to the Lake District National Park. Out there, on the wild, windswept hills, we were closer than ever. We didn't need to fit in, we didn't need to understand all the conventions. We could just walk, admiring the lakes, playing near them, getting our feet wet. The further from home we were, the more harmonious we became. When I think back to this trip, it feels like finding my roots.

My relationship with my first long-term boyfriend was full of misunderstandings, despite our best efforts. But when I look back, what I remember is happiness, looking for temperate rainforests with him in Dartmoor National Park. We were cold, drenched and elated. I had never felt so understood as then. My worries washed away like the falling leaves in the river below us. Life, its struggle and triumph, surrounded us, bringing the chaos of our relationship to the fore despite us never having felt so united. We broke up soon after, but these memories contributed to us remaining friends.

National Parks should be protected for so many reasons, but the one that stands out the most to me is their power to inspire beautiful memories, reinforcing our relationships with our loved ones.

Main image by Alienor Hammer

ALIENOR HAMMER

Alienor is an aspiring nature writer and wildlife photographer. She currently works as an environmental researcher in an investment management company and is a freelance journalist writing about environmental issues.





Treasure

Andrei Stance uses his photography to highlight the potential loss if National Parks continue to be defunded

Main image: Windmill in the Broads, taken from Andrei's Treasure series



ANDREI STANCE

Andrei is a landscape photographer based in London, with conservation as the core focus of his work. Through his work he hopes to inspire others to protect nature's beauty and to take action against deforestation, the destruction of natural habitats, human encroachment on wildlife territories and climate change.

See more of Andrei's work at andreistance.com

For the past two years I have been hiking and photographing the 10 National Parks in England.

I came up with the idea for the project when I was on my first trip to the Peak District. I was struck by its beauty, but more so by the fact that these Parks have been defunded by more than 40% in the past decade. I read about the effects this has had on the people who work to maintain the Parks: the job losses and the abandonment of projects aimed at facilitating the visitors' interaction with the natural environment, educating them on climate change and the conservation of wildlife species. I decided to use my photography to both raise awareness on the subject and money for the National Parks by selling 10 fine art prints, one representative of each location.

Visual mediums, such as photography, are some of the most powerful in terms of moving people and making them empathise with causes. Therefore, I had to make a choice between depicting the ugliness of the funding cuts and their effects or the beauty of the Parks and what we stand to lose if we don't take action. I thought the latter would convey a stronger message by giving people a representation of what they should fight for.

"Treasure" is not only meant to raise money through the selling of prints, but to also inspire others to use their art, talent and skills to demand change and bring the issue in view of as many people as possible. Anyone reading this can also help by asking their local politicians to raise the issue and demand proper funding and a reconsideration of nature as a top priority subject, in line with the economy and public health.



Empowering BAME Communities Through National Parks

Dewan Choudhury reflects on why it's so important for everyone to experience nature and how his passion drives his work

OUTDOORS FOR ALL: LET'S DO IT!

As a teacher and youth worker, my mission is to break down the barriers that have long kept many Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals from experiencing the wonders of our National Parks.

This mission is deeply personal; growing up, I didn't have the opportunity to explore these natural spaces. It wasn't until later in life that I discovered the transformative power of nature. My journey to embracing the outdoors began with a significant cycling trip from Rochdale to London, a journey that opened my eyes to the beauty of our countryside and ignited a passion for nature.

I organise residential trips for young people from deprived backgrounds, primarily BAME communities, providing opportunities to explore places beyond their local environments. While teaching abroad in Qatar, I

continued these efforts, attempting to instil a love for the outdoors in my students through similar initiatives. This global perspective has enriched my understanding of how different cultures interact with natural spaces and reinforced my commitment to promoting outdoor engagement.

My faith has also played a significant role in shaping my appreciation for nature. Islam teaches the importance of respecting and preserving the environment, principles that align closely with the ethos of National Parks.

"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, are signs for those of understanding." (Quran- 2:164)

This verse reflects how the beauty and majesty of nature are signs for contemplation and appreciation. It highlights the importance of observing and valuing the natural world. This spiritual connection deepens my resolve to ensure that everyone, regardless of their background, can

experience the tranquillity and beauty of natural spaces.

One of the most memorable moments from my work happened on a camping trip where a young, autistic Bengali boy, who had never ventured far from his local area, had a life-changing experience. After a long hike, we gathered around a campfire. The boy, overwhelmed by the experience, began to cry and said, "This is the best trip I've ever been on." His words, and his excitement about joining our next hike, highlighted the profound impact these experiences can have.

I have also worked with deaf communities, striving to make outdoor activities accessible to everyone. Through tailored programs and inclusive communication methods, I ensure that these experiences are enriching for all participants. This has helped my mission to learn BSL (I'm currently level 3 qualified). My efforts are guided by the principle of access for all, a value deeply rooted in my Islamic teachings, which emphasise inclusivity



and respect for all individuals.

National Parks have always been a sanctuary of beauty and tranquillity. However, for many BAME communities, these spaces can feel distant, both geographically and culturally. My own experiences in National Parks, from tranquil woodland walks to challenging mountain hikes, have been profoundly enriching. They have provided me with a sense of peace and connection that I now strive to share with others.

One of the key barriers is the lack of representation and inclusivity in outdoor spaces. Many young people from BAME communities may not see themselves reflected in the narratives and imagery associated with National Parks. This lack of representation can create a psychological barrier, making these spaces seem less accessible or welcoming.

To address this, I have been actively involved in organising hiking trips and outdoor activities with local charities, specifically targeting BAME youth.

Through these initiatives, I've witnessed firsthand the profound impact that engaging with nature can have on young people's well-being. They gain confidence, forge new friendships and develop a deep appreciation for the natural world.


Looking ahead, I envision a future where National Parks are not just a haven for a select few but a welcoming space for everyone.



By continuing to promote inclusivity and representation, we can ensure that these natural treasures are accessible to all.

As we celebrate 75 years of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, let us commit to making this vision a reality.

"In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks." – John Muir

 **Main image: Waterfall along Watkins Path, Eryri by Lauren Simmonds**



DEWAN CHOUDHURY

Dewan is a teacher, youth worker and avid hiker actively involved with local charities. His passion lies in promoting outdoor activities among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, inspired by his own childhood experience of limited access to natural spaces.

The Last Lynx

Aila Taylor takes us back in time to when the Eurasian lynx roamed the Yorkshire Dales and examines if they could have a future there too

I once claimed that I didn't believe in ghosts. Until one evening, wandering through an old forest on the side of Ingleborough, I began to doubt myself. The trees were gnarled, their trunks twisted and branches weighed down by mossy cloaks. Raindrops glistened on their leaves and cobwebs shimmered in the gaps between, the deep green canopy embroidered with silver. As I stood and listened to their boughs creaking like old bones in the wind, I saw it: a pair of amber eyes. A shadow flitting between trees. A ghost of the past and a dream for the future. When I blinked, it vanished. Only absence remained.

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With amber eyes, a white belly and black-tufted ears, the Eurasian lynx is a majestic wildcat that once frequented the Yorkshire Dales. The term 'lynx' is thought to derive from the Proto-Indo-European 'lewk-' meaning 'light' or

'bright', potentially relating to the way the reflective eyes of lynx shine in the dark. For a long time, lynx were believed to have become extinct in Britain 5,000 years ago. However, in the early 2000s a lynx femur from Kinsey Cave in the Yorkshire Dales National Park was radiocarbon dated to the 6th century. The specimen is the most recent evidence of lynx in Britain, and its discovery suggests that hunting and habitat destruction in the form of deforestation drove lynx to extinction, rather than climatic shifts as previously thought. While it is exciting to know that lynx persevered in England at least until the early medieval period, it is devastating to know that their extinction occurred as a direct result of human interference.

The initial paper exploring the Yorkshire Dales lynx discoveries highlighted the potential for the evidence to support a stronger case for the reintroduction of lynx to northern England. By combining this archaeological evidence with the latest research on lynx behaviour, the case for lynx reintroduction is strengthened further. In caring for our National Parks, we have a responsibility to right the wrongs of the past. Helping lynx return to the Yorkshire Dales, alongside a large area of northern England, would be one way of doing that.



Lynx are solitary animals who hunt nocturnally, stalking and pouncing their prey, and are especially fond of roe deer who share their woodland habitat. The Missing Lynx project has recently used computer modelling techniques to explore the ecological feasibility of reintroducing lynx to different areas of Britain. They found that lynx could form a 'healthy population covering north-west Northumberland, the edge of Cumbria and the bordering areas of southern Scotland' but not in 'other areas of England and Wales', on the basis that there is not enough forest cover elsewhere. Although the Yorkshire Dales has been stripped of its forest cover over centuries and is presently an unsuitable habitat for lynx, extensive tree planting efforts mean that the landscape is rapidly changing.

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In the future, the National Park may once again have enough tree cover to support lynx reintroduction.

Lynx require an extensive area range with good habitat connectivity. The Scottish Borders, Northumberland and Cumbria have already been identified as suitable locations for lynx reintroduction. Expanding this area to include the North Pennines Natural Landscape (where large tree planting efforts are also underway) and Yorkshire Dales National Park could enable lynx to return to a much larger portion of northern England.

Although landscape suitability for lynx is primarily defined by forest cover and area range, the qualities of an ideal lynx habitat are far more nuanced. A recent study on habitat selection by Eurasian lynx has highlighted the significance

of rocky features that are typical of limestone landscapes like the Yorkshire Dales. The study found that lynx preferred to rest near features such as caves and crags during the day, and that these features support lynx hunting at night. In addition to assisting lynx in ambushing their prey, rocks are scent-marked by lynx to mark territory. The Dales are well-known for their geological features, from rippling plateaus of limestone pavement to huge caverns beneath the hills. Such features have been proven to aid lynx populations elsewhere in Europe, such as in the Dinaric Alps where lynx were recently introduced. Archaeological evidence already demonstrates that caves were once frequented by lynx in the Dales. Perhaps in the future, they might be again.

Reintroducing lynx to the Dales could bring further ecological benefits. In the absence of an apex predator, deer numbers have escalated to unsustainable levels, which are hindering tree planting efforts due to browsing. Lynx could be taken into consideration in deer management plans, as they are in Slovenia, and reducing deer numbers would allow our forests to naturally regenerate.

At present, the landscape of the Dales is not ready for lynx to return. It is, however, getting closer to being ready with every passing year. In wildlife conservation, short-term goals (such as planting trees in a field or rewiggling a river) are necessary for staying focused, but long-term goals are important for achieving an overall vision. Both archaeological evidence and research on lynx behaviour demonstrate why lynx reintroduction should factor into our long-term vision for the Yorkshire Dales - the home of the last (known) lynx. Even if it is not possible for that vision to manifest right now, it provides a snapshot of what we could achieve in the future - if we dare to dream.

AILA TAYLOR

Aila is a conservationist, climate activist and outdoor writer based in the Yorkshire Dales. Since founding the UK climate strikes and UK Student Climate Network in 2019, she has expanded her passion for protecting the planet to work in woodland conservation and help restore the uplands of northern England to a wilder, more biodiverse state. With degrees in literature and history, her writing focuses on the intersection between humans and nature, inspired by the mountains and caves that she loves so dearly.

Main image: The entrance to Kinsey Cave



A photograph of a white, semi-transparent cloth with black geometric patterns (triangles, squares, and circles) draped over a dark, craggy rock formation. The cloth is caught in a breeze, creating soft folds and ripples. The background shows a hazy, natural landscape under a bright sky. The overall mood is artistic and serene.

Practice and Place: Dartmoor and its creative influences

Artist Erika Cann immerses us in her artwork and reveals how she finds inspiration from Dartmoor National Park

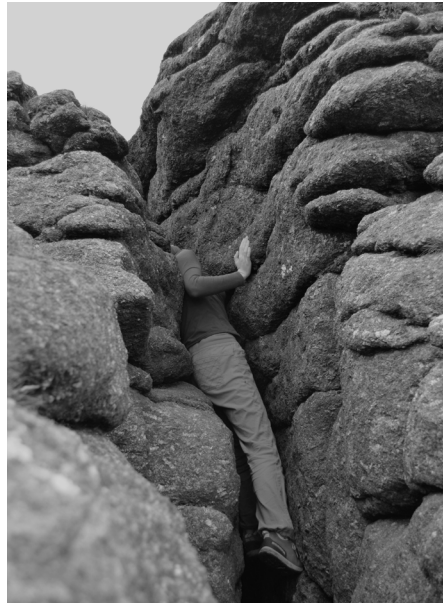
Dartmoor was the place where I began to explore a more connected way of making artworks; using site-specific research and location-responsive material explorations to address geological shifts, the impact of the Anthropocene on future strata, and the entanglements and cycles our bodies share with the land. Having grown up walking, letterboxing and scrambling on the moors, it has always been a place of curiosity for me - the vast and varied landscapes constantly offering new adventures and stories!

In my artistic practice, I aim to uncover these connections and relationships between things, and how they interact and entangle on varying timescales. I use my experiences and personal narratives of a place, often made from time spent climbing and hiking, as an expanded form of my practice and as a more tangible way of learning about a place. This began through making works on and about Dartmoor's geology, which I continually reference and explore.

FELDSPAR SCORES

My interest in interspecies connections and the relationships between bodies and geologies began with my Feldspar Score series. These linocut prints form an alphabet, devised from a plate in James Hutton's 'Theory of the Earth', which illustrates the geological composition of granite. The bright white feldspar megacrysts moving their way through the stone in patterns become a language, not only for climbers to use as foot and hand holds, but for the mosses and lichens, birds finding a place to perch, and many more who are part of the ecosystem. When printed on fabric, the stamps become a score, with potentials for sound, dance, language, climbing and the interactions of the ecosystem.

Main image: Feldspar Score, 2021,
Linocuts on fabric



Between Bodies, 2023, digital print, Granite Clatter

BETWEEN BODIES

Devised after a climbing trip to Dartmoor, this series of photographic self portraits playfully question our relationship to deep time. Bending the photographic image into corners and architectural features warps our perspective of geology, suggesting its fluidity and ever-changing nature. When moving past the image, our omnipresence is revealed as we play a part in the shifts of the landscape, even if we can't see the changes in our own perceptions of time.



Scuffed Knees, 2024, bouldering wall fragments, hold, granite clatter, photographic prints

SCUFFED KNEES

Wanting to explore this dualism of enjoyment and impact on a natural place, I've recently started exploring sculptural works that incorporate materials leftover from the outdoors industry. These materials replicate nature in an urban environment, allowing climbers to train when there's bad weather, and to provide more people with better access to the sport. But the feeling of being outdoors is lost, and the connection to the geology is fragmented. These sculptures create a nostalgia for my childhood exploring and climbing outdoors, but are inevitably uncanny in their retelling of these stories.



ERIKA CANN

Erika's practice explores the relationships between bodies and geology, through her own body as a rock climber and the more-than-human bodies in the landscape. She works across photography, printmaking and sculpture, using these to understand and replicate forms and processes within geology. Plaster imitates the formation of stalactites, print emulates the pressure and layering of fossilisation, and the photographic surface acts as a slice of time through the bedrock.

Erika was part of our 2022 New Perspectives grant scheme where she produced a walking guide to Dartmoor.

Mind Over Mountains

– restoring mental health, naturally

Alex Staniforth shares his journey to creating the charity Mind Over Mountains, which all started one fateful holiday in the Lake District National Park

Like many young people, I found school to be a challenging time. I was fortunate on paper and life was comfortable growing up in Cheshire, but childhood epilepsy set the foundation for a series of other challenges including anxiety, panic attacks and bullying, plus a lifelong stammer that crippled my confidence.

My most profound memory of a National Park was heading to the Lake District for the first time in 2010 on a walking holiday with my friend Tom and his family. I had taken the place of his stepbrother, and this stroke of fate would prove to be lifechanging.

I had only recently discovered outdoor sports and started to build fitness, but hillwalking was something I'd never really tried before. Even during the holiday I remember the intense anxiety when going out for meals, but I more vividly remember the time walking near Kentmere Reservoir and Souther Fell in the Northern Fells.

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At 14 years old I discovered a sanctuary where I suddenly felt safe and calm: a place I belonged.

The summer glow and patchwork of the Lakeland landscapes were imprinted in my young mind and evoked a curiosity for more. At some point they had also inspired the question: “where is Mount Everest?” and I recall researching Everest on the holiday cottage WiFi that evening. At this point I never imagined I'd be standing at Everest Base Camp four years later, on my first expedition to reach the summit.

The Lake District was where I really discovered myself and I returned a few months later to try my first rock climb, seeking new ways to challenge myself. Over the next decade I went on five expeditions to the Himalayas including two attempts at climbing Everest, but I still found ample adventure much closer to home. In 2017 I began a human powered journey to the highest point of all 100 UK county tops by bike, foot and kayak, and visited each of the UK's National Parks in the process. Entering a National Park almost feels like a quality control badge – there's a seal of approval that I'm in a special and safe place.

I even moved to Kendal on the edge of the Lakes in 2019 so that running in the fells – my ‘happy place’ - could become part of my daily routine and toolkit for staying mentally well. Years later, I'm realizing there's a lifetime of adventure

and exploring still to enjoy.

Spending time active in the outdoors has always been my ‘Natural Health Service’. I wanted others to have the same transformational experience and clarity that I'd had in 2010, so I co-founded the charity Mind Over Mountains in 2020, which combines professional coaching and counselling with walking in nature to support people with mental health. Once more, the Northern Lake District would become the inspiration for the experience: the perfect spot to truly disconnect and put our problems into perspective beneath the towering ridges and summits. There's something about walking side-by-side that makes it easier to open up and share our struggles, alongside professional wellbeing support. Now we deliver day walks and weekend retreats all across England and Wales, including in Eryri (Snowdonia), Peak District and Dartmoor National Parks to name a few. We've just launched Project 500 to raise £500,000 for our charity by June next year, by inspiring individuals, teams and communities to challenge themselves in the outdoors, boost their wellbeing and raise money in the process.

Together we can help everyone access our Natural Health Service, one small step at a time!



ALEX STANIFORTH

Alex is a motivational Speaker, Author and Founder of Mind Over Mountains - a charity which brings together walking in nature, mindfulness and professional coaching and counselling in support of good mental health and wellbeing.

Images: Alex in Lakes Meres Waters by Andy Milton Photography (top) Alex at the start of Coast to Coast Walk by Carlos Reina Photography (below)

How National Parks helped shape my career

Olivia Watts shares how her experiences of National Parks guided her career



OLIVIA WATTS

Olivia Watts is the Biodiversity Marketing Officer for an outdoor education charity. She has a background in animal biology, a passion for wildlife and love for the National Parks. She has combined her passions and shaped them into a career where she can share her enthusiasm for nature and the outdoors with others.

My journey with National Parks started in my twenties, now in my early thirties, I look back on the wonderful experiences they gave me. Aged 23, I completed my first mountain walk in the Lake District. Before this, I'd had little exposure to these wild spaces. However, from this initial experience, my eyes were opened to an array of new opportunities — some that I still enjoy to this day, and others that weren't my cup of tea. But that's the beauty of exploring new things, you can find something that you truly enjoy.

I found wild spaces, habitats and wildlife to be my real passion. I've seen the elusive pine martens, an array of bright and beautiful insects, and heard the increasingly rare cuckoo — I hold onto memories of the wildlife I've encountered across the National Parks.

After finding what I love, I spent a year on a placement in Eryri (Snowdonia), which combined my passion for wildlife with outdoor activities and education. It enabled me to share this with the younger generation, which became really important to me. Today, I've combined my love for nature and

outdoor learning into a marketing and communications role. As part of my role, I share articles, blogs, and educational content which encourages others to learn about wildlife and wild spaces across the UK — the more that people understand and appreciate them, the more they will want to protect them.

TIPS TO START EXPLORING NATIONAL PARKS

- **Seek out new experiences** – look for courses, or guided activities to experience new things. Some you may want to do again, and others you might not — and that's okay!
- **Connect with communities** – finding others who have the same interests helps you discover new things. Groups on social media share events, free guidance and bring individuals together to enjoy the outdoors.
- **Tap into opportunities** – you can research organisations and local companies that are based in National Parks. They often offer free opportunities and events such as wildlife walks or guided hikes.



A pine marten spotted on a wildlife event in the Cairngorms by Olivia Watts

The Lie of the Land, by Guy Shrubsole

This brilliant book is essential reading for anyone who cares for our countryside and loves our National Parks. By turns radical and urgent, measured and considered, the Lie of the Land asks some critical questions:

Why are our National Parks not in fact owned by the nation? Why don't National Park Authorities have powers to make them wilder? Why does the public have so little say over the management of these vital national assets?

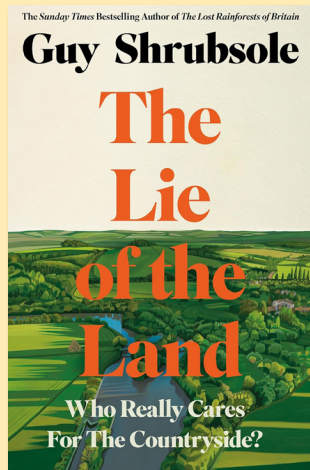
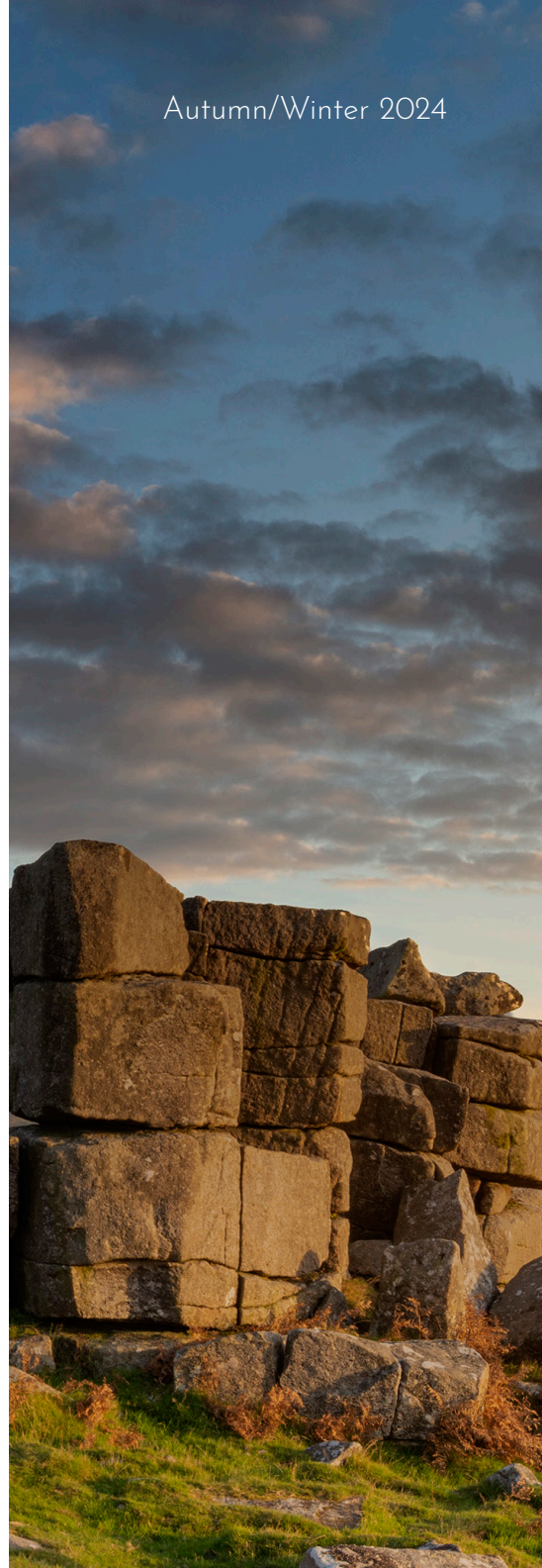
In asking them, Shrubsole shows how taboo and controversial these questions have become, how vested interests have captured the debate.

To answer, The Lie of the Land presents meticulous research and landscapes of possibilities. Tracing the story back to the founding of National Parks, Shrubsole shows how the far-sighted vision - which included public access and state ownership - was compromised, compounded by a lack of powers and dwindling budgets. Despite successive National Park reviews over the last 50 years, Governments have failed to get to grips with a central problem: if

we're going to halt and repair damage to ecosystems, without greater public ownership, we need new powers that compel private landowners to do so.

The Lie of the Land calls for us all to "campaign like hell" to fix the problem. It recommends new duties obliging large landowners to treat that land in accordance with the National Park purposes, greater funding and more public involvement in decision-making. It reimagines Wordsworth's dream of National Parks as "some kind of national property" — as a Public Nature Estate, calling for National Park Authorities and other public bodies to acquire and manage natural assets for the nation.

As the climate and nature emergency becomes even more urgent, it is vital that these ideas are progressed as part of a national debate involving citizens, as well as landowners. With the new Labour Government elected on a welcome promise to make National Parks wilder and co-ordinate nature's recovery across public and private land, The Lie of the Land provides an essential place to start.




WIN A COPY OF THE LIE OF THE LAND

As an exclusive offer to our Friends, we're giving away a copy of The Lie of the Land.

To enter the prize draw, please email info@cnp.org.uk with the subject line 'Book draw' and include your full name and address. Alternatively, you can phone and leave a voicemail message to 020 3096 7714 with your name, membership number (see the letter enclosed in this mailing) and telephone number, and mention that you wish to take part in the book draw.

Draw closes on 24 November 2024

 **Main image: Leather Tor, Dartmoor by Matt Gibson**

NEWS



END WATER POLLUTION IN NATIONAL PARKS

This year we were awarded advertising space as part of Ocean Outdoor's annual 'Drops In The Ocean' environmental fund. We took to the streets of major cities across in England and Wales to let the public know that every single lake, river and stream in England's National Parks is polluted. Only 1 water body in Welsh National Parks meets the highest standards we all expect.

To support our work in calling for strong clean water protections, with legally binding requirements to clean up water bodies, we launched our end water pollution in National Parks campaign urging the public to write to their MPs to demand action for water.

You can learn more about the campaign and how to take action at cnp.org.uk.

Main image: Billboard with our water campaign artwork in London

WALES'S NEW NATIONAL PARK PROPOSAL MOVES TO PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have launched a two-month public consultation (ending on Thurs 16 Dec) which will give the citizens of Wales their first opportunity to learn more about the proposed new National Park in north east Wales and offer their feedback.

After months of detailed assessment, candidate areas have been evaluated for their special qualities and a proposed boundary for the new National Park has been revealed.

Campaign for National Parks are engaging positively with the process, drawing together 18 organisations in a joint statement as well as speaking with MSs to encourage engagement in the process and build support for the new National Park.

RESTORE NATURE NOW

We want to thank everyone who joined us and the thousands of other people marching through London with the clear and united message to restore nature now.

WHAT DO THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANNING REFORMS MEAN FOR NATIONAL PARKS?

The new Government has acted swiftly on its intentions to reform planning and speed up the delivery of housing and infrastructure and has already begun consulting on proposed changes to national planning policy. We are pleased to see that they are not proposing any changes to the additional planning protections which apply in National Parks, but we want to see a greater emphasis on protecting areas just outside their boundaries where there is likely to be increased pressure for development. We also want the Government to use the forthcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill to reform governance in National Parks and ensure there is a much greater emphasis on nature recovery in the decision-making for these areas.

THE UK'S NEXT NATIONAL PARK

The race is on for the 16th and 17th National Parks in the UK. In July, following a public search, the Scottish Government announced that Galloway is in-line to be the third Scottish Park. It's a big win for our friends at Scottish Campaign for National Parks, who will be working closely with NatureScot as they kick off the formal designation process. With plans underway for the new National Park in north east Wales, both devolved Governments are pushing for designation ahead of elections in 2026 — and both areas have potential to be the UK's first National Park that extends into the sea, something we are exploring as part of our new National Marine Parks project.



Campaign for National Parks CEO Rose O'Neill (left) speaking at the march



Campaign for National Parks Trustees, Janette Ward (left) and Anna Beattie (right)



Creating a National Park legacy for the next generation

Morning dew on grassy meadows, the sun breaking through over a mountain pass, the crunch of frost underfoot, playing pooh-sticks over clear streams. These are just some of the things we love National Parks for, some of the memories that they create for us as children and we hope are created for the next generation.

Our charity was created before National Parks existed in this country. Our founders had a vision to preserve and enhance the most naturally beautiful landscapes. That was over 90 years ago and today, our campaign is more important than ever before. We plan to be here for the next 90 years and beyond to make sure that National Parks are safe, that there are more of them, that they are better for nature, for people and for the climate. Could you help us with the most precious gift that you could ever make – leaving a gift in your will?

Did you know that much of our work is funded by gifts in wills? From large legacies through to small gifts, each makes a real difference.

We understand how important it is that your family and close friends come first. But did you know that leaving just 1% of your estate to Campaign for National Parks will help us fight for the Nation's most precious and beautiful landscapes: our National Parks? Future generations of walkers, adventurers and nature-lovers will be forever in your debt.

Please speak to your solicitor when you next review your wishes, or to discuss with us please telephone 020 3096 7714 or email info@cnp.org.uk. Thank you.


CAMPAIGN for
NATIONAL PARKS


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Main image: Grasmere, Lake District National Park by Rod Hutchinson