

Partnership Statement

Delivering Sustainable Economic Growth in the Visitor Economy through England's National Parks

The English National Parks are a crucial part of England's visitor economy. They are national treasures for their wildlife, iconic landscapes and cultural heritage. For millions of people they offer fantastic opportunities to experience the natural environment, contributing to the economy and quality of life in England.

National Parks England and England's National Park Authorities (NPAs) are recognised in England's Strategic Framework for Tourism 2010 – 2020. They are key partners in the delivery of sustainable economic growth in the visitor economy across a number of priority areas, in particular Destination Management, Rural Tourism, Transport and Wise (i.e. sustainable) Growth.

The Government's Vision and Circular for National Parks published in 2010 identifies the need for National Parks, through their natural beauty and heritage, to encourage visitors and inspire them to act responsibly and to be beacons for sustainable development. It recognises tourism as one of the main economic drivers of rural economies and aims to make tourism with National Parks sustainable, an aim which is reflected in the Management Plans for individual National Parks.

VisitEngland and National Parks England therefore recognise the important role of the visitor economy in realising the economic growth potential of the National Parks. Partnership working at the national and local levels will bring substantial benefits to local economies and communities, and contribute significantly to the wider understanding and enjoyment of National Parks. These benefits must, however, be delivered responsibly taking into account the needs of visitors, the environment, residents and businesses whilst delivering National Park purposes. Sustainable growth of the visitor economy through England's National Parks means visitors will enjoy enhanced experiences at authentic destinations. Residents will feel the benefits of tourism in a way that doesn't undermine their local sense of place. Tourism businesses will reduce costs through greater efficiency, improving quality, creating new jobs and strengthening local economies in the process. And all this will be delivered in such a way that protects and improves the broader environment, natural and built.

Reductions in public sector funding means there is a need to identify opportunities to achieve increased private sector support to help grow the visitor economy and manage the National Parks. This will require greater partnership working and collaboration at national and local level, and it is therefore the intention that national organisations lead the way through this Partnership Statement which recognises the potential to achieve growth in the visitor economy, and an opportunity to further connect the public with their National Parks.

This Partnership Statement outlines the priority areas that we will work together on over the next three years – these are the areas that we believe will have the biggest impact on sustainable economic growth. Delivery against these priorities will be reviewed after three years and future priorities for the partnership will be established.

The Parties to this statement:

National Parks England

National Parks England exists to support policy and practice by coordinating the views of the ten English National Park Authorities (NPAs). Its aims are:

- to promote, support and further the interests and policies of the NPAs;
- to represent and express the opinions of the NPAs members at all levels;
- to act as a forum to facilitate debate about matters of common concern to NPAs;
- to provide information to the public, decision makers and others on the activities of NPAs and any issues of relevance;
- to establish and maintain links with other organisations and partners who activities are relevant to NPAs; and
- to work alongside other Associations representing NPAs elsewhere across the UK in order to achieve mutual objectives in the interests of all National Park Authorities in the United Kingdom.

National Parks England works with NPAs to deliver the [UK Government's Vision for English National Parks and the Broads](#) published in 2010.

VisitEngland

VisitEngland is the national tourist board for England, responsible for leading and driving forward the quality, competitiveness and sustainable growth of England Visitor Economy by providing strategic direction, intelligence and coordinated marketing for the sector.

Tourism presents a key opportunity for sustainable economic growth, contributing to employment and business creation and contributing to quality of life for the population.

The organisation is the custodian of the [National Strategic Framework for Tourism 2010 – 2020](#) and is responsible for driving its implementation through partnership with stakeholders at the national and local levels.

What we agree to do:

Priority 1: Build partnerships and collaborate at the national and local level

We will facilitate partnership working and collaboration at the national and local level to support better understanding of the growth potential of England's National Parks. Information at national and local levels will be shared between organisations and individuals, supporting joint working at operational level.

We will do this by:

- Jointly developing and promoting the tourism offer of the National Parks to engage the wider public with national parks and specifically encourage visits to, and overnight stays in, National Parks from the domestic market. See Priority 4 for further information on this.
- Collaborating on our research agendas and jointly analysing data on consumer behaviour and trends in our sectors and sharing this with our stakeholders.
- Encouraging greater collaboration between organisations at the local level, in particular NPAs, Destination Management Organisations and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), increasing awareness of projects, events and programmes to aid planning to achieve greater economic impact. This will be achieved through:
 - Strengthening the current relationship between Destination Management Organisations and the Sustainable Tourism Officers representing England's National Parks.
 - Ensuring that VisitEngland and Destination websites have content on national parks and are promoting appropriate events and activities.
 - Developing content for the Destination Management online resource that reflects the opportunity of greater collaboration between the Destination Management Organisations and the National Parks and guidance on how to improve this at the local level.
 - Showcasing case studies where closer collaboration has achieved results so that local areas can learn from each other.
 - Building strong relationships between the national bodies, National Park Authorities and Destination Managers through, for example, regular engagement and communication with the Destination Management Forum and VE attendance at meetings of the National Park Authorities CEOs.

Priority 2: Support good destination management

To create a successful and sustainable visitor economy, all the components that make a successful destination need to be managed and integrated over the long-term, focusing on the needs of both communities and visitors. National Parks are destinations in their own right and are beacons of good destination management. They have experiences to share with the wider industry (including Destination Organisations and AONBs) and can support the development of destination management across England – ensuring the visitor experience is of the highest quality and continues to develop and adapt to meet the needs and expectations of visitors. At the local level this will create better destinations - and at a national level this will help to realise England's growth ambitions.

VisitEngland and National Parks England will support the development of good destination management by:

- Encouraging collaboration between NPAs and Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) to ensure that National Park Management Plans and Destination Management Plans are connected and have mutually supportive priorities and objectives.
- Developing case studies on destination management in the National Parks and the impact of collaboration between NPAs and DMOs, sharing these across the industry and with AONBs.
- Encouraging a shared understanding and appreciation of the special qualities of National Parks that will enhance the experience of visitors and ensuring that this is shared widely with all stakeholders in the destination.

Priority 3: Deliver wise (sustainable) visitor economy growth

England's National Parks are a treasured natural asset that everyone should have the opportunity to experience and enjoy. Economic growth must be delivered responsibly and the approach must reflect the needs of visitors, the environment, communities and businesses. The impacts of a thriving visitor economy must be managed to ensure the National Parks are protected and where possible enhanced by all those who benefit from them. This will ensure they can be visited for generations to come.

National Parks already provide many good examples of sustainable approaches to tourism and we will aim to champion these and support wise visitor economy growth in England's National Parks by:

- Updating the 2009 National Parks England Policy Position on Sustainable Tourism to fully embrace the principles of Wise (Sustainable) Growth as set out in England's Strategic Framework, and sustainable development tourism as set out in the National Parks Vision and Circular 2010.

- Sharing case studies and examples with the wider industry on how to grow the visitor economy responsibly and how it can be harnessed to preserve, protect and enhance the natural landscape. This will include examples of new businesses, business growth and sustainable transport solutions in the National Parks.
- Illustrating the value and benefits of a Wise Growth approach to businesses, providing support and advocacy for the model being developed as part of the Wise Growth Action Plan.
- Identifying and sharing examples of local solutions to manage the impacts of tourism between businesses and environmental asset managers in the National Parks to demonstrate how sound environmental management and heritage protection in National Parks adds value to, and opportunities for, the visitor economy.
- Finding innovative solutions to fund and sustain the tourism infrastructure in the National Parks which visitors rely upon. This includes visitor gifting schemes where National Parks England and VisitEngland will identify and share good examples, plus identify potential funding opportunities.
- Develop new and existing products and experiences by aiming to identify and share examples of:
 - The development of new and existing visitor experiences that showcase and support access to the unique natural experience of National Parks, appeal to visitors throughout the year and reflect and support the local distinctiveness of area.
 - Engagement with children and young people ('the tourists of the future') through family oriented activities and experiences and educational experiences which engender an appreciation for and love of our National Parks. NPAs will achieve this through their own work with these audiences to deliver their purposes and the aims of the Natural Environment White Paper. They will also engage with third sector activities by the YHA, National Trust, RSPB and others such as the Natural Childhood campaign. VisitEngland will help promote these opportunities and activities through its marketing and communications activity.
 - The connection between planning, tourism and transport at the local level, and community engagement in the planning process, to improve understanding and realise the growth opportunities through effective use of rural assets, supportive transport provision and interpretation of planning policy.

Priority 4: Promote England's National Parks

If the visitor economy growth opportunities in England's National Parks are to be maximised consumers must be made aware of the wide range of experiences that they have to offer. The offer needs to be communicated to consumers and be targeted effectively to deliver the biggest return on investment for promotional activities. There is a real opportunity through joint working to better connect local people and the general public with our National Parks and in doing so grow the visitor economy.

We will do this by:

- Jointly developing and promoting the tourism offer of the National Parks to engage the wider public with national parks and specifically encourage visits to, and overnight stays in, National Parks from the domestic market.
- Reviewing market research carried out at national and local levels and use this to identify potential growth segments (e.g. young people).
- Developing joint messages that help to reflect the distinctive nature of England's National Parks e.g. the local food offer, adventure, tranquillity, wildlife and landscapes, building on the existing "Britain's Breathing Spaces" messaging.
- Identifying further opportunities under the All-England Marketing Strategy to promote the countryside offer to consumers, encouraging collaboration between England's National Parks, AONBs and other crucial parts of the countryside offer.
- Championing the promotion of National Parks as part of England's offer in international marketing.
- Demonstrating the all year round experiences for visitors in England's National Parks.
- Encouraging NPAs and Destination Organisations (particularly where there are opportunities to spread the benefits of growth through connecting urban and rural areas and other parts of the countryside offer e.g. AONBs) to collaborate on marketing and promotion at the local level that supports England marketing objectives and the underpinning joint messaging, ensuring that the National Parks are an integral part of the destination offer.

Priority 5: Implementing the Partnership Statement and effective use of resources

- VisitEngland and National Parks England will work closely together to plan the activities outlined in the three year statement. The actions set out will be embedded in business plans and resources identified to realise them. The main focus for year 1 of the Partnership will be to work jointly on promotion.

- VisitEngland and National Parks England will explore potential sources of funding to support the growth of the visitor economy in England's National Parks as set out in this statement. This will include working with Government Departments (in particular the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and DCMS), Destination Organisations, tourism and related businesses and other national bodies to identify opportunities to align objectives and influence future funding streams.

This is a partnership agreed on 3 July 2013

between National Parks England

and VisitEngland

REVIEW DATE: 2 July 2016