

Date: 29 September 2009

Report: SPECIAL QUALITIES, SPECIAL EXPERIENCES - A RECREATION AND TOURISM STRATEGY FOR THE YORKSHIRE DALES

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - (a) Consider ‘special qualities, special experiences’, a thematic strategy bringing together policy and principles for access, recreation, diversity, visitor management and sustainable tourism in the Yorkshire Dales.
 - (b) Seek endorsement of the draft strategy for public consultation.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information and recommendations contained in this report are consistent with the Authority’s statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:
 - **Corporate Plan 2009/10**

44 (e) Review the Integrated Access Strategy

Background

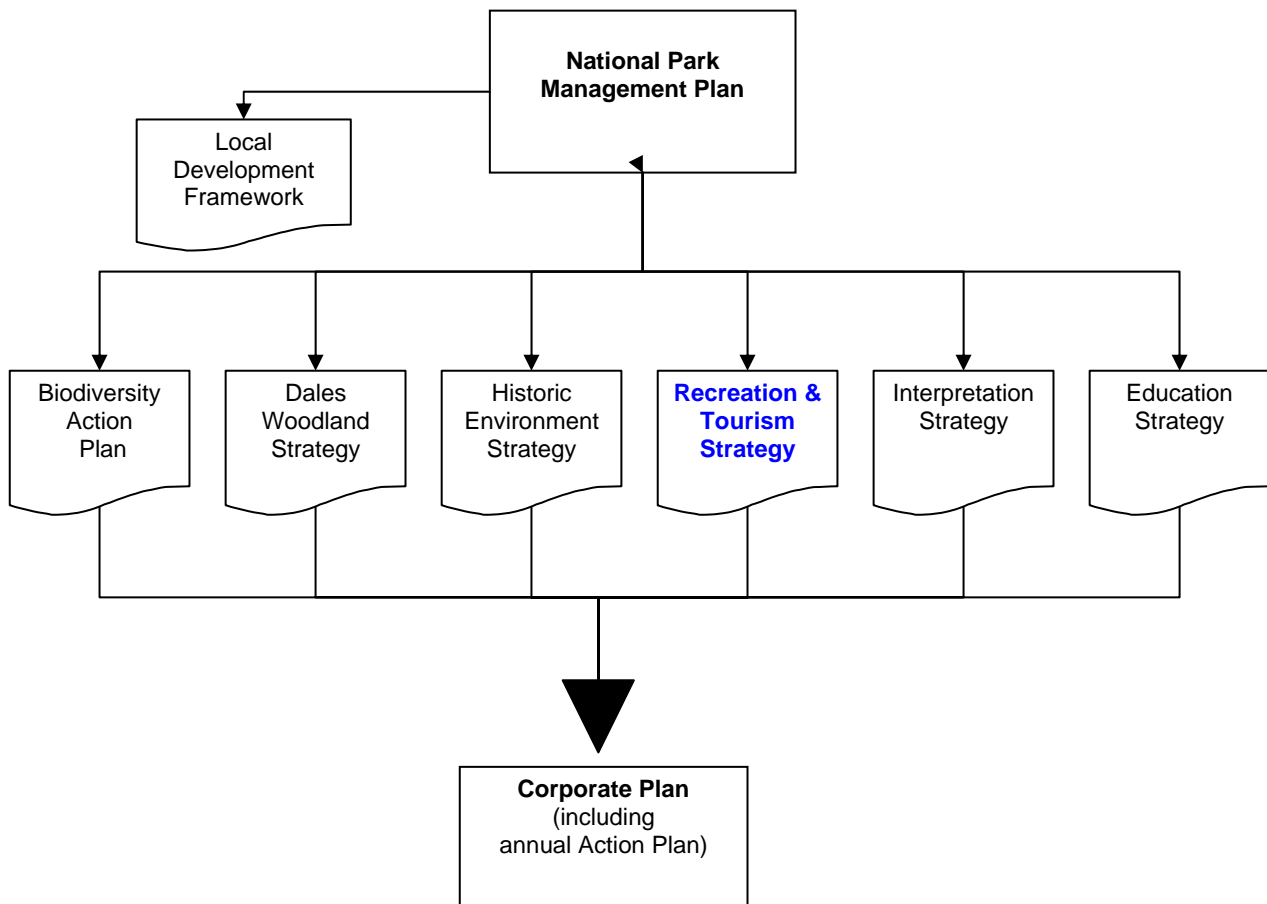
3. Since January 2005, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority has had a thematic strategy, the ‘Integrated Access Strategy’ that covers seven main policy areas:
 - Managing and improving the access resource eg rights of way, open access
 - Accessibility and visitor management eg facilities and quieter and busier areas
 - Sustainable transport
 - Access for all
 - Healthy living
 - Social inclusion
 - Sustainable tourism.

The integrated access strategy is a five year plan which runs from 2005 to 2010.

4. In the Authority’s corporate document hierarchy it provides the policy which sits under the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) and above the Corporate Plan. The NPMP has SMART objectives relating to these areas of work, whilst the Corporate Plan has the specific business plan objectives and actions. This thematic strategy

shows the Authority’s detailed policy framework in which the aims, objectives and actions relating to the topic areas are delivered (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1 A diagram to show the relationship between this thematic strategy and other Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority strategic documents



A Cross-Cutting Document

5. This thematic strategy cuts across the work of several departments. In recognition of this, the review process has involved input from specialist officers across all departments of the Authority, particularly Park Management and External Affairs. A cross-departmental task and finish working group was set up to help produce the draft document. This has ensured ownership of the document amongst all key delivery officers.

- **Revised name**

6. It was decided very early on in the review process that a more suitable name should be found for the ‘Integrated Access Strategy’, to describe better its subject matter - an integrated strategy bringing together policy and principles for access, recreation, diversity, visitor management and sustainable tourism in the Yorkshire Dales. The working title of the revised strategy is ‘Special Qualities, Special Experiences’.

- **Target audience**

7. The target audience for the Integrated Access Strategy was originally public organisations such as the county and district councils, funding bodies such as Yorkshire Forward, and interest groups such as the Ramblers Association and British Horse Society, rather than individuals or parish councils. That being said, the strategy has proved very useful in highlighting our 'position' to individuals and parish councils on a wide variety of access related issues, e.g. green lanes management.
8. The revised strategy is also written with partner organisations and interested bodies in mind, rather than individuals. However it will continue to be a very useful reference tool to explain our position to anyone with an interest in its subject matter.

The Review Process

9. The review process began by seeking the views of the Senior Management Team (SMT), the Local Access Forum (LAF) and Access Committee on how useful the previous strategy had, or had not, been and asking for suggestions for improvement. Discussion at the Access Committee in April 2009, and the LAF meeting in May 2009, summarised the changes that were needed; specifically that much of the content of the original strategy was useful, but that the document should be re-structured, and some sections needed up-dating.
10. Another key driver behind the re-structuring of the strategy, and the introduction of a spatial element in particular, was the award of the European Sustainable Tourism Charter in 2008. The report on the accreditation visit was very specific in its recommendation with regard to the Integrated Access Strategy. It said:

'Various documents contribute to the visitor management: the Integrated Access Strategy and the Biodiversity Action Plan being two key examples. These should be further developed to serve as a visitor management plan with more conclusions about tourism as to the spatial distribution of tourism, areas of sensitivity, tourist attractions, information and interpretation in order that such a Plan could serve as futures guidelines for what to offer where, places to promote or not to promote, activities and places/times etc.'

11. This matched with officers' views. The Strategic Planning Officer had highlighted the need for better links between this thematic strategy and the emerging Core Strategy, as part of our Local Development Framework. The Landscape Officer, working on the interpretation of the Landscape Character Assessment had picked up sensitivity issues that had resonance with the Authority's approach to green lanes management, and sustainable access work, and the importance of tranquillity to the recreational experience on offer. The revised strategy combines these elements and suggests a spatial approach based on the current distribution of facilities and features, to deliver the recommendation above.

Special Qualities, Special Experiences

12. The draft strategy for consultation (**Annex A**) sets out principles and policies through four main sections:

- **The special environment and unique experiences.**
The experiences the National Park has to offer through its special qualities and access and recreation opportunities, and the contribution it can make to other national agendas such as health and well-being, equality and diversity.
- **Access and Accessibility.**
The ease in which individuals can travel to and around the National Park to access the special qualities, encouraging visitors to think about their travel choice; information and signing to help visitors find their way around; interpretation and new technology; ways of increasing the diversity of our visitor profile.
- **Safeguarding the special qualities (including visitor management).**
The spatial distribution of visitors, and visitor facilities; managing people including numbers to and timing of visitors to a site (where possible) to safeguard the environment and the quality of experience, thereby ensuring tranquillity, land management, landscape, historic environment and wildlife interests are protected.
- **Sustainable tourism.**
The economic and other benefits of people enjoying the National Park; ensuring tourism is sustainable and provides economic opportunities without harming the special qualities and is in accordance with the European Sustainable Tourism Charter principles.

13. Each section is broken down further into sub-sections as follows:

Introductory paragraph	This introduces the issues and scope of the topic. It provides a brief context for the guiding principles and strategic policies that follow.
Guiding principle	These guiding principles are our rationale; they shape our policy and overall approach to what we do in relation to the topic. They should be read together with the future strategy.
Future strategy	A series of strategic policies that explain how the National Park Authority will manage the issues identified earlier in the section including cross references to the relevant National Park Management Plan objective(s) to show how performance will be measured.

14. The National Park Management Plan and Corporate Plan objectives and related targets are the reporting mechanisms and measures of achievement for each section.

- **Equality Impact Assessment**

15. Under current legislation the Authority must undertake an Equality Impact Assessment of any service, function or strategy. This is to ensure its services are appropriate and accessible to everyone, to avoid discrimination and wherever possible promote equality and to consider the impact, if any, on the general public. A draft equality

impact assessment has been produced for the revised strategy (**Annex B**). This will also be the subject of public consultation. In addition the Authority's Equality Group will consider what changes may be necessary to avoid any high impact unintentional or discriminatory outcomes. A revised Equality Impact Assessment will be brought back to the Authority with the final draft strategy.

The role of the Access Committee

16. Within the scheme of delegation to committees and officers the Access Committee has delegated authority to 'agree the Authority's Access and Recreation Strategy, and receive reports on the progress and implementation of the Strategy, including issues relevant to its implementation, such as health, Access for All, recreation provision and management, traffic and transport' (B4.4 b).
17. As described above the strategy contains policy which covers many aspects of the Authority's work on the second purpose (such as tourism), and so is of relevance to much of the Authority. Notwithstanding the delegated powers of the Access Committee, it is appropriate therefore that the draft revised plan should be debated by the full Authority. To this end the draft plan is being brought to the Authority for comment and endorsement prior to consultation.

Next steps

18. Subject to endorsement by the Authority, it is proposed that the draft strategy and equality impact assessment is sent out for consultation to all relevant organisations and interested bodies. The purpose of this consultation is to help refine the documents further and seek support from partner organisations for our policies, where appropriate. Individuals will also be free to comment, but given the target audience of the document the consultation will be focused on organisations.

Date	Committee	
End of September 09	Authority	Consultation draft agreed by the Authority
October 09		Consultation draft sent out to interested organisations and the public for comment
End of November 09		End of public consultation
December 09		Consultation responses assessed and draft strategy amended to take on board comments from consultees
January 2010	Access Committee	Consultation responses summarised, strategy revised and endorsed by Access Committee
March 2010	Authority	final draft taken to Authority for agreement

Conclusion

19. 'Special Qualities, Special Experiences' provides the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's policies and principles for access, recreation, visitor management, diversity and tourism. It is underpinned by the aims and objectives in the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan: Today and Tomorrow and the European Charter Principles for Sustainable Tourism. It replaces the Integrated Access Strategy produced by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority in 2005. The National Park Management Plan and Corporate Plan objectives and related targets will be the reporting mechanisms and measures of our achievement of the strategy.
20. The revision of the strategy has progressed well and subject to members' endorsement it is on course for a consultation draft to be published in October. The revised document will bring together the Authority's policies and principles relating to access and recreation, visitor experience, accessibility, visitor management and sustainable tourism. These policies and principles will be refined further, following wide consultation, before being formally adopted.

RECOMMENDATION

21. It is recommended that members endorse the draft strategy 'Special Qualities, Special Experiences' for public consultation.

Kathryn Beardmore
Access and Recreation Manager

10 September 2009

Background documents:

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, *Integrated Access Strategy*, January 2005
Access Committee Paper *review of the integrated access strategy and annual report 2008/9* 16 April 2009