YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

A Recreation Charter for the Yorkshire Dales

The Yorkshire Dales National Park offers great opportunities for outdoor recreation which can improve people's quality of life, their health and lead to increased awareness and enjoyment of the National Park.

The area straddles the Pennines, the backbone of England. The unique landscape of the Yorkshire Dales has been created through a combination of geology, moulded by natural forces and influenced by human activity. It has expression in high fells and heather moors above steep sided grassy valleys. Dramatic and impressive features such as cliffs, wooded scars and caverns can be seen throughout the area. The rivers that flow over bands of hard rock overlying softer rocks give rise to numerous waterfalls, and later develop into wide and flat valley floodplains with barns, walls and hay meadows.

The National Park Authority aims to extend, improve and protect the rights of way network and other opportunities for access to and within the Yorkshire Dales National Park to benefit all.

All visitors and residents of the National Park should be able to enjoy some access to the countryside whatever their level of ability or background. In addition people taking part in outdoor recreation are an important and vibrant part of the economy and this provides opportunities for the local community.

Opportunities for enjoyment

The environmental assets and special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales National Park are important in providing a wide range of nationally renowned and readily accessible resources for outdoor recreation. The area's historic and extensive network of footpaths, bridleways, byways and other routes with public access, extensive areas of Open Access land, rivers, crags and caves mean that it has some of the best walking, caving, climbing, paragliding and cross-country mountain biking to be found anywhere in England.

On foot

- This is an expansive area of hill country that rises to over 700 metres (2,300ft). Rivers have cut deep valleys (dales), each distinctive in character and atmosphere.
- From the classic limestone scenery in the south of the National Park, to the open moorland in the north, and the grassy rounded hills of the Howgills in the west, the landscape is always striking.
- There is a network of over 2000km (1200 miles) of footpaths, bridleways and byways to enjoy, and over 62% of the whole area is Open Access land for recreation on foot. These features make the Dales a great venue for walking and fell running. The National Park is criss-crossed by a variety of long distance routes which can be walked as complete journeys or in sections, such as the Pennine Way National Trail, the Dales Way and the Coast-to-Coast route.
- There are opportunities for wheelchair users and people with limited mobility to access the Yorkshire Dales countryside. (further information can be obtained from National Park Centres).
- On foot or by wheelchair you can access mapped open country and common land. Access to lower lying farmland, buildings, parks and gardens, active quarries, golf courses, railways, or land within 20 metres of a house or building containing livestock within mapped areas is not included. All major access areas are shown on the latest Ordnance Survey maps.
- From time to time access may be restricted in certain areas for land or livestock management. Wherever possible such exclusions and restrictions will be marked by signs on site, and for the most up-to-date information visit www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk or call 0845 1 003298.

Cycling, mountain biking, horse riding and carriage driving

- The Dales has managed to retain its network of meandering valley roads, bordered by drystone walls or hedgerows and flower-rich verges. These have a particular charm and add to the strong sense of place. Higher up the valley sides unfenced roads cross heather moorland and offer dramatic panoramas across the open landscape and the valleys below. This network of roads provides wonderful cycling for people with some experience and a reasonable level of fitness.
- Opportunities for mountain biking, horse riding and carriage driving abound on an extensive network of beautiful bridleways, byways and other routes with public access. Many trails have a history as well as being great fun to ride, being a mixture of Roman roads, monastic highways, mining tracks and drovers' roads.
- The Pennine Bridleway National Trail is currently being developed through the National Park for horse riders, cyclists and walkers. The first section in the Yorkshire Dales, the Settle Loop, is already open and will form part of the 560km (350 mile) route from Derbyshire to Northumberland.

Recreational motor vehicles

- Recreational motor vehicle use of byways is a legitimate activity, but is controversial, and requires very special care to be taken by those undertaking the activity. The National Park Authority believes that the use of unsealed routes by recreational motor vehicles is inappropriate in the National Park.
- The National Park Authority works with the county councils, landowners, farmers, users and user groups to manage the activity and resolve any actual or potential conflict.
- Details of current traffic regulation orders in the Yorkshire Dales National Park are available through www.yorkshiredales.org.uk, or by contacting the Access Projects Officer on 0870 1 666333.

Watersports

- The upland rivers of the Dales respond quickly to rainfall and there are many challenging white water opportunities and spectacular waterfalls after heavy rain. While there is no recognised right of access to a number of these sites informal agreements are in place on some, and others have a history of tolerated use.
- Further information on access to rivers can be found through the River Information Service provided by the British Canoe Union. See www.bcu.org.uk or call 0845 370 9500.
- The post-glacial lake of Semerwater, and reservoirs at Embsay and Grimwith offer opportunities for sailing.

Air sports

- A number of sites in the Dales are recognised as of national significance for paragliding and hang gliding. With its open fells and numerous valleys the Dales give expansive views that display the area's beauty and variety.
- Again some of the sites have formal agreement whilst others have a history of tolerated use.

Climbing and caving

- The south of the National Park displays one of the best examples in Britain of classic limestone scenery, with its crags, pavements, and extensive cave systems.
- The predominantly vertical cave systems are the best of their type in Britain with many long and challenging trips. For the more casual visitor there are show caves at White Scar which is near Ingleton, Ingleborough cave near Clapham and Stump Cross Caverns between Grassington and Greenhow.
- The massive limestone crags of Malham, Gordale and Kilnsey are justifiably famous, but there are many other worthwhile limestone and gritstone crags in the area. There are a number of restrictions each year to protect breeding birds and details of these can be found on the Regional Access Database maintained by the British Mountaineering Council at www.thebmc.co.uk or call them on 0870 010 4878.

Take extra care if you are organising a group, a large scale event or a commercial activity.

There is a long history of events in the Yorkshire Dales including many of national importance. These include the Three Peaks Fell Race and cyclocross event, mountain bike challenges such as Trailquests and the Polaris, and motorsport events such as the Scott Trial. There are also numerous charity challenge events each year.

Large scale and organised events can cause disturbance to local communities and place extra responsibilities on those organising them to ensure that every effort is taken not to damage the area or cause inconvenience to others. Organisers need to assess the likely impact of the event, and ask themselves if it is the right use, at the right level, in the right place and at the right time of year. Advice is available through the National Park Authority's ranger service.

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A special place

The opportunities for recreation are one of the things that make the National Park a special place, but with those opportunities come responsibilities both for the public and land owners. As a user, you need to exercise common sense and take responsibility for your own actions, respecting the interests of others and caring for the environment. You should be aware of The Countryside Code and the advice given by the national governing bodies of your recreational pursuits.

Taking responsibility for your actions

The outdoors is a great place to enjoy but it's also a working environment and has many natural hazards. Get the latest information, follow advice and local signs, and respect the needs of other people enjoying or working in the outdoors.

Help farmers, landowners and others to work safely and effectively.

You can help farmers and landowners by:

- Leaving gates as you find them
- Not blocking or obstructing an entrance or track
- Leaving machinery and livestock alone
- Using local advice to check on restrictions to access that may apply
- Not damaging fences, hedges or walls

Care for the environment

The scenic beauty and natural environment of the Yorkshire Dales contributes greatly to people's quality of life and health. It is important that you:

- Take your litter home
- Do not light fires
- Do not move stones or make cairns – the 'scattered' stones could be part of an archaeological feature
- Treat places with care, leaving them as you find them
- Do not recklessly disturb or intentionally damage wildlife or historic places or features
- Consider leaving your car at home by lift sharing or using public transport or cycling. You can find out more on www.traveldales.org.uk or from any National Park Centre.

Whatever your activity keep your dog under proper control

The Dales is an important habitat for many species of ground nesting birds and it is important to minimise disturbance at all times, especially during the breeding season (1 March to 31 July). You must keep your dog on a short lead during this period when on Open Access land, and try to avoid birds on the ground. On much of the moorland areas you will only be able to take your dog along public rights of way.

When in the vicinity of farm animals your dog needs to be on a lead at all times of the year. However, if cattle react aggressively to your dog then let go of it immediately and take the safest route out of the area.

On public rights of way you need to have your dog under close control which will mean a lead if you can not rely on its obedience.

Dog mess is unpleasant and you should always clear up after your dog.

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Farmers, landowners or managers

If you are a farmer, landowner or manager you should think about the needs of people enjoying the outdoors.

Working with the National Park Authority and other bodies to help integrate access and land management

Most people visiting the countryside want to follow a visible route, prefer using proper access points, and generally want to do the right thing. You can help by keeping rights of way clear and not obstructing people's entry onto access land. You should avoid putting up misleading signs.

Working with the National Park Authority to keep paths, boundaries, waymarks, signs, gates and stiles in good order will help manage access over your land.

Animals likely to attack visitors should not be allowed to roam freely where the public has access, and you may be liable for any resulting harm.

Showing people that they are welcome will help you successfully manage access over your land and help care for the environment. Contact the local Area Ranger if you want any help or advice from the National Park Authority.

Consider whether there are opportunities to improve access that will not significantly impact on your land management. For instance could you replace stiles with gates, or allow access for horse riders and cyclists as well as walkers.

Land mangers can get further advice and information from:

Country Land and Business Association
www.cla.org.uk 01347 823803

National Farmers Union
www.nfu.org.uk 01904 451550

Moorland Association
www.moorlandassociation.org 01524 846846

Further information and advice

For further local information on rights of way issues, and to report any problems or difficulties, you can contact the relevant Area Ranger:

Swaledale	James Lamb	01748 884060
Upper Wensleydale	Matt Neale	01969 666220
Lower Wensleydale	Nigel Metcalfe	01969 662912
Cumbria	Paul Wilkinson	015396 22081
Upper Wharfedale	Iain Mann	01756 751631
Lower Wharfedale	Phil Richards	01756 751652
Malhamdale	Cat Kilner	01969 652383
Ribblesdale	Steve Hastie	01729 825242

Events organisers should initially contact:

Mark Allum — Access Projects Officer
01756 751626

Other useful websites

The National Park Authority site is
www.yorkshiredales.org.uk

For information on travelling to and around the area
www.traveldales.org.uk

For information on road cycling in the area see
www.cyclethedales.org.uk

For information about mountain biking opportunities
www.mtbthedales.org.uk

Information on specific activities can be gained from the governing bodies:

British Mountaineering Council
www.thebmc.co.uk

CTC – the UK's national cyclists' organisation
www.ctc.org.uk

International Mountain Bike Association
www.imba-uk.com

Ramblers Association – Working for Walkers
www.ramblers.org.uk

British Canoe Union
www.bcu.org.uk

British Caving Association
www.british-caving.org.uk

LARA - countryside motor sport and recreation
www.laragb.org

Trail Riders Fellowship
www.trf.org.uk

British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association
www.bhpa.co.uk

Fell Runners Association
www.fellrunner.org.uk

British Orienteering Federation
www.britishorienteering.org.uk

Institute of Fund Raising
www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk