

NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW 2018-2023

Initial Consultation 'Your Dales' July 2017

Prepared on behalf of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan Steering Group

Contents

1.	Summary	1
2.	Background and Introduction	2
3.	Overview of responses	3
4.	Questionnaire results	3
5.	Feedback from postcards	6
6.	Email response	6
7.	Extension area feedback	7
8..	Feedback from children	8
9.	Next steps	8
	Annex 1 – selection of comments	9

1. Summary

This report sets out the results of public consultation carried out between 22nd May and 3rd July 2017 on behalf of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan steering group.

The aim of the consultation was to gain an insight into the issues that people (residents, visitors and organisations) feel are important for the future of the Park, and to help inform the 5-yearly review of the Management Plan. A particular objective was to engage with stakeholders in the new area of the National Park that was added on the 1st August 2016.

A number of consultation methods were used. Online and paper questionnaires yielded 540 responses whilst postcards, aimed primarily at visitors to National Park centres, returned 56 responses. Twenty seven emails were returned from organisations and individuals. A total therefore of 623 responses were received.

Consultees were asked three open ended questions;

1. *What do you love about the National Park?*
2. *How do you think the National Park could be improved?*
3. *What do you think are the three most important issues for the National Park Management Plan to tackle over the next five years?*

The headline qualities that most people love about the National Park were:

- landscape/scenery;
- wildlife; and
- open spaces

In terms of areas for improvement, there were a wide range of views. The most numerous revolved around:

1. Access opportunities (notably maintenance and improvement of footpaths, access to caves and support for public transport);
2. Community sustainability (particularly more affordable housing for the young, the safeguarding of services and more jobs); and,
3. Wildlife crime (particularly persecution of birds of prey).
4. Improving biodiversity (in particular by re orientating some upland management practices to better favour wildlife conservation).

The three most commonly mentioned issues to tackle in the new Plan were:

- wildlife conservation;
- community sustainability; and,
- access issues.

Residents consistently pointed to concerns about community sustainability whilst visitors tended to prioritise access and wildlife issues. All respondents shared a similar love of the areas special qualities.

Respondents in the new extension areas commented generally on the same issues as those resident elsewhere in the National Park.

The steering group would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to the consultation. The detailed responses will now be used to inform the drafting of the new Management Plan objectives.

2. Background and Introduction

The 'Your Dales' consultation is the first stage in the production of an updated Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan. The consultation invited respondents to state what they consider to be the qualities of the Park they love, and then an invitation to raise issues of importance for the Management Plan to focus on over the next 5 years.

The aims of this initial consultation were to:

- inform the public and stakeholders about the review of the Management Plan;
- help to identify issues and opportunities that will be used to inform the writing of the new Plan;
- avoid missing significant issues of importance to consultees

We wanted to:

- Provide a variety of methods for feedback;
- Engage communities in the new areas of Lunesdale and south east Cumbria that have not previously been involved in the formulation of a National Park Management Plan.

The consultation took place between 22nd May and 3rd July, although responses received after that date have still been taken into account.

A range of mechanisms were used to engage with different audiences:

- Online questionnaires;
- A paper questionnaire;
- A special postcard available at National Park Centres;
- Two drop in sessions at Orton and Barbon village halls in the new extension areas

Awareness about the consultation was raised by the organisations on the National Park Management Plan Steering Group; and National Park Authority staff and Members. A number of means were used:

- The spring edition of the 'Dales' newspaper focused on the Management Plan and was delivered to all 14,000 households. It contained a questionnaire with a freepost address
- E-mails were sent to a contact list of 270 organisations pointing to the online questionnaire and Management Plan website;
- Several press releases were sent out to local and regional media to inform the public and direct responses through the questionnaire;
- The consultation was promoted on Facebook and Twitter;
- The consultation was promoted at meetings of the three Parish Forums;
- The drop-in events were advertised by local posters and reference in the Dales newspaper.

3. Overview of responses

Overall we received **623** responses. 79% of these were via the online questionnaire.

Table 1 - How many responses have we had?

On line Questionnaire	494
Paper Questionnaire	46
Postcards	56
Email response	27
Total	623

The questionnaire asked people what their interest in the Park was. 57% came from people who live or work there.

Table 2 - Where have the responses come from?

I live and / or work here	57%
I'm a visitor	42%

Table 3 Who are the consultees?

Men	66%
Under the age of 24 yrs	3%
Over the age of 65 yrs	25%
CA and LA6 postcodes (new extension areas)	6%

4. Questionnaire results

The questionnaire received 540 responses. It contained three questions asking respondents to say what they love about the Park, asking how it could be improved and what 3 things should be in the new Management Plan.

Q1 What do you love about the National Park?

Table 4 - Top five 'loves' all respondents

quality referred to	No. of mentions
Landscape and scenery	211
Wildlife	84
Beauty	74
Open spaces	41
Caves	37

Q2 How do you think the National Park could be improved?

Table 5 Residents

Areas of improvement	No. of mentions
Local community sustainability	30
Improved access to countryside, paths etc	28
More consistent planning decisions, more	20

flexibility	
Repair barns/more conversions	17

Table 6 Non-Residents

Areas of improvement	No. of mentions
Wildlife conservation and enhancement, tackling bird of prey persecution	93
Access improvements; caves, public transport	91

Q3 *What do you think are the three most important issues for the National Park Management Plan to tackle over the next five years?*

Table 7 Residents

Most important issues	No. of mentions
Maintain local community – services, business	75
Farming, post Brexit, nature friendly	31
Affordable housing	25
Land management	25
Planning (flexibility and consistency)	25

Table 8 Non Residents

Most important issues	No. of mentions
Wildlife protection and enhancement	83
Local housing, jobs, business, young people	61
Improved or maintained access eg. to caves, open access land, enhanced paths and gates	56
Raptor persecution/birds of prey	56

There were a very wide range of responses to question 3. Annex 1 provides a flavour of the actual comments received.

In order to analyse these more closely and get an overview of what people prioritised, comments are grouped under the headings below;

Special qualities of the National Park

Consultees overwhelmingly shared a love of the landscape, the scenery and the beauty of the Park. There was also strong agreement that its wildlife, open spaces and local people are part of its special qualities.

Access

Many respondents want maintained, improved or easier access in the Park, for walking, cycling and horse riding. This time around there has been strong representation about improving cave access from Countryside and Rights of Way Access land, similar to the opportunities that already exist for climbing. Ease of access remains an issue for many with support for more routes and the replacement of ladder stiles with gates, to improve access for all abilities. Following the successful promotion of road cycling there has been a small backlash about the numbers and impacts on other forms of traffic.

Wildlife crime/birds of prey/raptor persecution

This was an issue raised by both residents and non residents. The strength of this response, particularly from visitors, reflects the high profile this issue is currently receiving locally and in the wider media. It is evident that there has been some campaigning about this specific issue. There are some very negative comments and strong concern about the harm it may be causing to the reputation of the National Park. Blame is laid at the door of certain land management practices around grouse shooting. Suggestions for tackling it include; increased monitoring, use of volunteers, licencing or even banning grouse shooting.

Community services/sustainability

There is great concern from residents and others that the communities in the Park are struggling, as the young continue to leave and are not being replaced. The reasons given are lack of affordable housing and insufficient well paid or secure employment. Elderly care issues were raised together with concern about Maternity and other hospital services that are moving further away from the northern dales. Loss of banks, schools and community vibrancy were mentioned. Consultees wanted better broadband to help keep people better connected. There was widespread encouragement for initiatives to help keep people living in the Park, or encourage them to move into it.

Affordable housing

Affordable housing to buy and rent is needed to keep young people in the area and accommodate existing people already working here. Consultees feel it is essential to keep communities vibrant. Some consultees also felt second homes should be managed, possibly through taxation which could then be used to support affordable provision.

Farming

There was a range of views about farming. Reference was made to changes likely to take place as a consequence of Brexit. There is concern about the viability of upland farming and the need to maintain the farmed landscape qualities of the Park. Mention was made of the 'brand' and the need to support small upland farms. There was also quite a lot of support for wildlife friendly farming practices and payments for ecosystem outputs rather than food production. But there was also a different view from many that farming should move towards lower stocking rates and encompass 'rewilding' to enhance biodiversity.

Land management

There are some strong views about land management, particularly grouse moorland management. Some consultees want more support for the land based economy. Many consultees want increased biodiversity from land management practices and think managers should be paid by results. There was concern about recent heather burning, the impact on peatland and a belief that land should be managed much better to improve water quality and reduce downstream flooding.

There was a strong feeling amongst many consultees that the current management of land for grouse shooting was unfriendly towards wildlife.

There was a lot of support for increased woodland creation and regeneration of native woodland. Consultees felt that more woodland would improve biodiversity, water quality and introduce more nature flood management. Some consultees also wanted to see more scrub woodland and felt that timber could be used as a source of biofuel and carbon capture.

Planning

Comments about planning policy and planning decisions were raised. A number of consultees felt the Authority should be more vigorous with its enforcement, particularly in response to retrospective applications which some consultees thought was an unfair practice.

Some felt that planning policy should be more restrictive but a greater number felt that planning policy should be more flexible and positive than it is now. There was common support for relaxing policy on residential barn conversions.

Concern was raised about the consistency of planning decisions eg. in relation to the use of colour.

There was a feeling in some quarters that planning policy and planning decisions should proactively favour local people.

Public transport

There was a strong call in some quarters to improve public transport by maintaining or raising subsidies for eg. Dalesbus. Public transport was seen as a way of enabling greater diversity of visitors and enabling those who cannot drive, to visit the park and for residents to reach services outside. The environmental benefits of public transport in terms of reducing congestion and pollution were referred to. Practical suggestions to better connect rail and bus services were made. There was support for reinstating the Wensleydale railway, but also for reusing its route as an all abilities cycle track.

5. Feedback from postcards

A total of 56 'Dear Carl' postcards were returned. The purpose of these was to provide a quick, easy way to comment, for people who did not want to fill in a questionnaire. The front of the cards contained the three consultation questions. Consultees were asked to summarise their response on the back.

The post cards were aimed at visitors and many of the responses concern specific issues around footpaths, car parking, dogs, toilets, interpretation and 'off roading'. These will now be passed on to the Park Management department for information.

Other issues raised on the postcards include:

- wildlife crime (raptors)
- improved public transport
- poor mobile phone coverage
- housing/employment
- A request for more volunteer projects
- Support for reopening the former Wensleydale railway track as a cycling/walking route

6. Email response

A total of 27 email responses were received, several of which chose to make no detailed comment at this stage. The following organisations responded:

- Austwick, Bainbridge and Carperby Parish Councils
- The British Association of Shooting and Conservation
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- The Yorkshire Dales Society
- Swinton Estate
- Simonstone Estate
- The Yorkshire Dales Green Lanes Alliance

Respondents listed similar special qualities to those filling in the questionnaire ie. landscape, scenery, cultural heritage and wildlife.

In terms of issues for improvement and for the Management Plan to address, these included the following that were not already mentioned above:

- Better access to rivers (eg. Hawes) and to access land from valley bottoms
- Improve the paths to provide access for all. Provide better bridleways links eg. to create circular routes for horse riders
- Provide a golf course and swimming pool
- Create a Lune valley riverside footpath between Sedbergh and Kirkby Lonsdale
- Enforce against illegal camping and caravans eg. Mallerstang
- Co ordinate cycling events to avoid conflict with rural traffic
- Support more adventurous sports
- Develop projects to reach out to diverse communities in west Yorkshire and elsewhere in the UK, to help deliver the Defra 8 point plan eg. school visits, twinning with Asian National parks, volunteer champions, food events etc
- Revise policy about taking rubbish home. Provide more bins (litter and dog waste)
- Create an economic development plan that will stimulate jobs, housing, in migration of the young, business support and new workspace. The current Management Plan objectives are not adequate to do this.
- Plan differently in the north of the Park to the south
- Promote shooting tourism which is important to the rural economy eg. hotel occupancy and local food and to future landscape and habitat /species
- Encourage visitors to spend more money by improving overnight accommodation and places to eat.
- Invoke the 'Sandford Principle' in relation to persecution of raptors (conservation of wildlife in preference to recreational enjoyment)
- Develop new partnerships to conserve barns in the landscape

7. Extension area feedback

Two informal 'drop-in' sessions about the Management Plan were held at Barbon and Orton village halls in the new area of the National Park area. The purpose was to engage residents that have not previously been involved in a National Park Management Plan.

In terms of what residents love about their area, the response was similar to the rest of the Park ie. scenery, tranquillity, wildlife, and more specifically; hills, caves, rivers, walls and flowers.

In terms of future improvements, most of these were similar to those received about the rest of the Park ie. supporting the young to stay/move in, improved access for all, the future of farming post Brexit, improved broadband eg B4RN, managing motorbike noise and speed, better public transport and new cycle routes on disused rail trackbeds.

There were however a number of issues that were specific to the new extension areas:

- Better signposting for footpaths
- Improved access to sites of national importance eg. Smardale
- Repair dry stone walls; Mallerstang
- Marketing the 'new' Dales
- Reintroduce red squirrels
- Disagreement with the name of the National Park

- More mini-information points eg. Barbon
- Balance the new welcome to tourists with these areas existing qualities of tranquillity
- More toilets
- Develop a new vernacular for the 21st century
- Encourage more wildlife in buildings eg. swifts, swallows, sparrows and bats
- Concern about the impact of fencing on the landscape of the Howgills

8. Feedback from children

The Authority's education and events officer held a targeted consultation for young people in year 7 at Giggleswick Scool (11/12 yrs) and within the Young Rangers group (11-16yrs). These groups stated their love of the scenery, landscape, wildlife and tranquillity, alongside friendliness of local people, uniqueness and quality of the Parks' footpaths.

In term of issues for the Management Plan to address they identified:

- Litter, pollution and noise
- A need for more bins
- More mountain bike tracks
- Better signage,
- Accessible paths for all abilities
- More barn conversions
- Faster internet and better mobile signals
- Speed restrictions for motorbikes
- And visitor education about management of the landscape

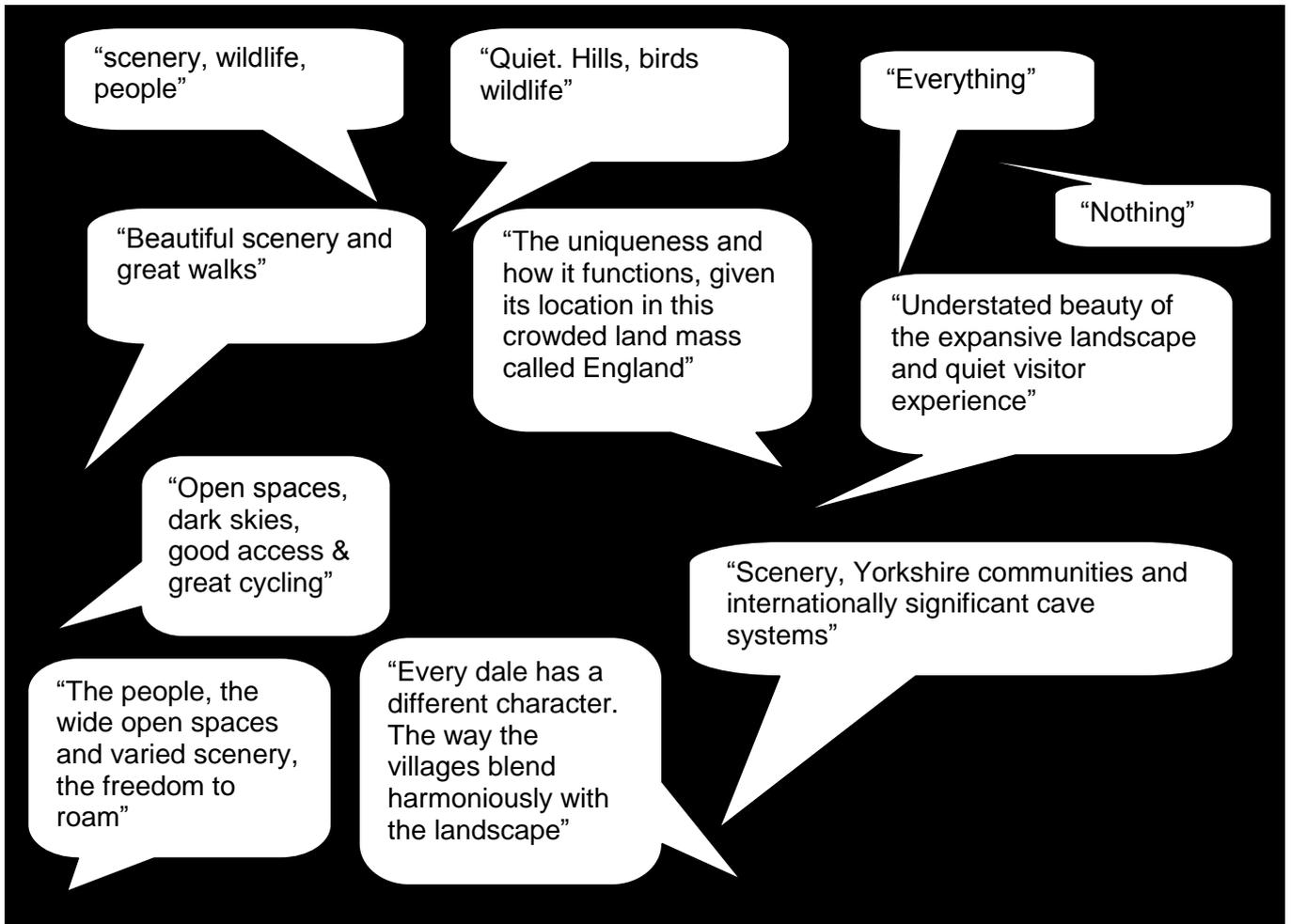
9. Next steps

This report provides a summary of the feedback received from the initial "Your Dales" consultation. It has helped identify the priority issues and concerns of residents, visitors and certain interest groups. It is proposed that both this summary and the more detailed feedback separated into relevant categories, is provided to the drafting groups and used for reference in formulating new objectives for the Management Plan.

Annex 1

Selection of comments from the questionnaires

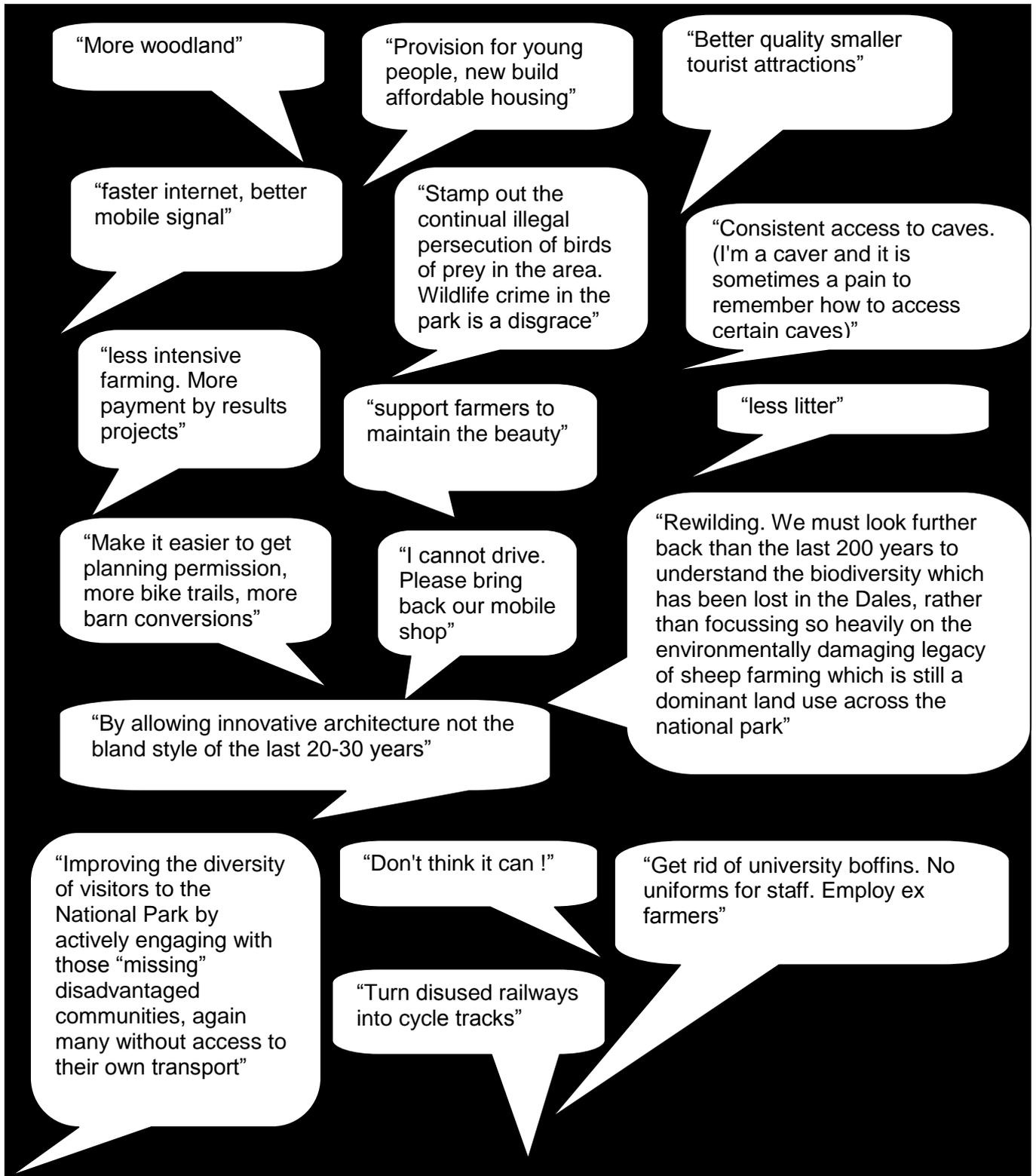
1. What do you love about the National Park?



Annex 1

Selection of comments from the questionnaires

2. How do you think the National Park could be improved?



Annex 1

Selection of comments from the questionnaires

3. What do you think are the three most important issues for the National Park Management Plan to tackle over the next five years?

