

NATIONAL PARKS, NATIONAL ASSETS

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INTRODUCTORY SLIDE

Good morning and thank you Europarc Atlantic Isles for inviting me to take part in this webinar on the social and economic benefits of protected landscapes.

As I am the Policy Officer for National Parks England, I will concentrate on the English National Parks drawing on a key piece of work we published in May this year – the Valuing England’s National Parks report - but I will also touch on the Scottish and Welsh National Parks as well. National Parks Wales published their study – Valuing Wales’ National Parks - last week and Greg Pycroft might want to say something more about that in the Q&A session. Much of what I will say would apply equally to the Scottish and Welsh National Parks and National Park Authorities and to AONBs. Both the Cotswold’s economic study and NAANOB’s report from the summer show the economic contributions made by our sister designations.

My presentation (and the Valuing England’s National Parks report) focuses on economic value and valuation of environmental and social benefits. This can be a controversial subject but I think that those attending this webinar can agree that we all know the value of Protected Landscapes in our hearts and minds.

The question for those concerned with managing and protecting protected landscapes is then how do we demonstrate that value to others who may not be convinced so that we can continue to do our jobs to best effect? We might be running slightly behind the curve in proving the social and economic value of Protected Landscapes to those who are not yet convinced but we all have good information to hand to support our arguments, are making good use of it at the moment and hopefully this webinar will help us all do more.

SLIDE 2

So, moving on to the findings of the Valuing England’s National Parks report.

I had hoped to be able to show you the short film we had made called ‘National Parks, National Assets’ which in just 8 minutes and starring famers, a-list celebs, top class sportspeople and National Parks landscapes and people puts the case far more eloquently than I can alone - but technology defeated us! Richard will circulate a link to the film and I hope you will watch it later on.

England’s National Parks are environmental and cultural assets playing a valuable role in local and national economies.

England's National Parks are rural and deep rural areas protected for their special qualities – outstanding landscapes, cultural and natural heritage, biodiversity and recreational opportunities – but their economies should not be overlooked or dismissed. Our National Parks are living, working landscapes with vibrant communities and they are visited every year by millions of people. The local economies of our National Parks are made up of mainly small businesses (some with international reputations and client bases) who are integral to their communities and rely on the land and landscape for their business. They are often locally important – running vital local services – but their combined impact on the national economy is considerable – at combined GVA of between £4-£6bn from the English National Parks alone.

SLIDE 3

While this presentation focuses on the economic benefits derived from National Parks – we never forget the other values provided ranging from a place to walk the dog to inspiration for great art – some of those other values are difficult, if not impossible to assess and some are simply priceless! To paraphrase Bill Clinton – it's not just the economy stupid!

The VENP project looked as widely as possible at the benefits of National Parks given the limits of time and resource and highlighted the scale of social and environmental benefits, including ecosystems services, derived from National Parks even where it was not possible to give an estimated economic value. One of the key conclusions is that there is potential for more work to be done perhaps on health benefits (Natural England are already working in this area with others), cultural benefits (some academics are already looking at this from the ecosystems services angle) or on a breakdown of the NEA to a finer grain of detail (which is also being looked at by Defra and others).

SLIDE 4

Valuing England's National Parks - published in May this year showed that the combined economic contribution of the English National Parks was between £4bn and £6bn – equivalent to the aerospace industry or a city the size of Plymouth or Sunderland. A similar report published for the Welsh National Parks last week showed that the combined GVA contribution of the 3 Welsh Parks at over half a billion £ is greater than agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining and quarrying combined and the contribution to the Scottish economy from the 2 Scottish National Parks from tourism alone is a quarter of a billion £.

So, that's all very well and good you say but that is the economic contribution of all the people and businesses situated in National Parks – what's that got to do with National Park Authorities? It would happen anyway and there might be more economic activity without the designation.

SLIDE 5

Both the Valuing England's National Parks and Valuing Wales' National Parks studies showed that National Park Authorities play an important role in National Park economies. Previous research from the Peak District showed that businesses value being situated in high quality environments and recognise the added value this brings to their business. National Park Authorities core purpose is to protect and enhance those high quality environments but we also have a duty to support and encourage thriving rural communities.

The value studies found that National Park Authorities have direct economic impacts in terms of their own employment and spending but that the influence and involvement that NPAs have in addressing the challenges and opportunities in their local economies was significant. NPAs are working to support and grow sustainable rural economies in a wide variety of ways such as:

- Supporting land based industries – farming and forestry initiatives – local food and drink – woodland advice service – training and skills, etc
- Promoting sustainable tourism and recreation – use of the Britain's Breathing Spaces brand, sustainable transport projects, education, visitor giving, etc
- Encouraging diverse economies – positive development management advice, employment space provision, apprenticeships, business networks, broadband and communications, renewables.
- Supporting rural services – helping communities find ways to maintain rural services such as post offices, surgeries, schools, etc e.g. SDF funding to primary schools in Northumberland and community shops in the South Downs.

SLIDE 6

Probably the most important role of the National Park Authority is as a catalyst and facilitator – bringing people and organisations together, getting projects or activities started, accessing funding and getting national level involvement, support or advice for something– e.g. Dartmoor Farmers, Business Peak District, Brand New Forest.... And I haven't even touched here on the conservation and recreation activities NPAs are involved in which add value in numerous ways. For example, maintaining and improving access to National Parks – who could really put a full value on what's going on in this picture!?.

Without National Park Authorities, National Park economies would definitely be different and I think poorer and less sustainable in every sense of the word.

SLIDE 7

So, as I draw to the end of my talk, I will show you this infographic which boils down the 140 pages Valuing England's National Parks report to 10 pieces of information.

One of the main aims of the Value study was to give us some headline figures which we could use to demonstrate to a wide range of audiences the value of National Parks and this has been

pretty successful with audiences ranging from my mum and son to Michael Heseltine all giving positive feedback.

We selected figures for the infographic that covered the range of national park activity and a range of social and economic benefits so that we could use the leaflet for the Love Your National Parks celebration which aims to raise public awareness and understanding about the benefits of National Parks.

This infographic is available on our website www.nationalparksengland.org.uk and I can provide paper copies if anyone would like them to give to others. These figures mainly represent data for the financial year 2011-12. Running through these quickly they are:

- **Over half** of people in England live within one hour's travel of a National Park
- In 2012 businesses in National Parks generated more than **£10.4bn** of turnover, and employment grew by 2.7%
- Public spending on National Parks costs **less than £1** per person per year. Projects and programmes led or stimulated by NPAs draw in other resources to boost the value of the public spending by a factor of 2-3 times... *by next year it will be 88p per person.*
- **90%** of people say National Parks are important to them, and **96%** want every child to experience a National Park firsthand
- **17,300** people are employed in farming in National Parks (agriculture, forestry and fishing accounts for around 24% of employment in NPs)
- Forestry in National Parks generates **£19m** in Gross Value Added. One third of the Public Forest Estate is in National Parks
- There are **50m** visitors each year, spending £3bn and supporting 48,000 jobs (full time equivalent) **within** the National Parks. There is also a positive effect on areas outside National Park boundaries with an overall number of visitors of around **90 million**
- Peat soils in National Parks hold **119 megatons** of carbon – equivalent to England's entire CO₂ emissions for one year – *Note that this is only peat soils and carbon stored in woods and forests or other vegetation or soils is not included.*
- National Park volunteers put in over 43,000 work days per year, valued at **£3.2m**
- Over **23%** of land in the National Parks is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and over 330,000 hectares is recognised and protected as being of international conservation importance.

SLIDE 8

Finally, National Parks England are holding a 'Love Your National Parks' Tweetathon on Tuesday 26th November. Do join in to help us promote the value of these special places

Please watch the 'National Parks, National Assets' film and do tell others about the value report, infographic and film...spread the message that Protected Landscapes are good for people, biodiversity and the economy.

Thanks for listening