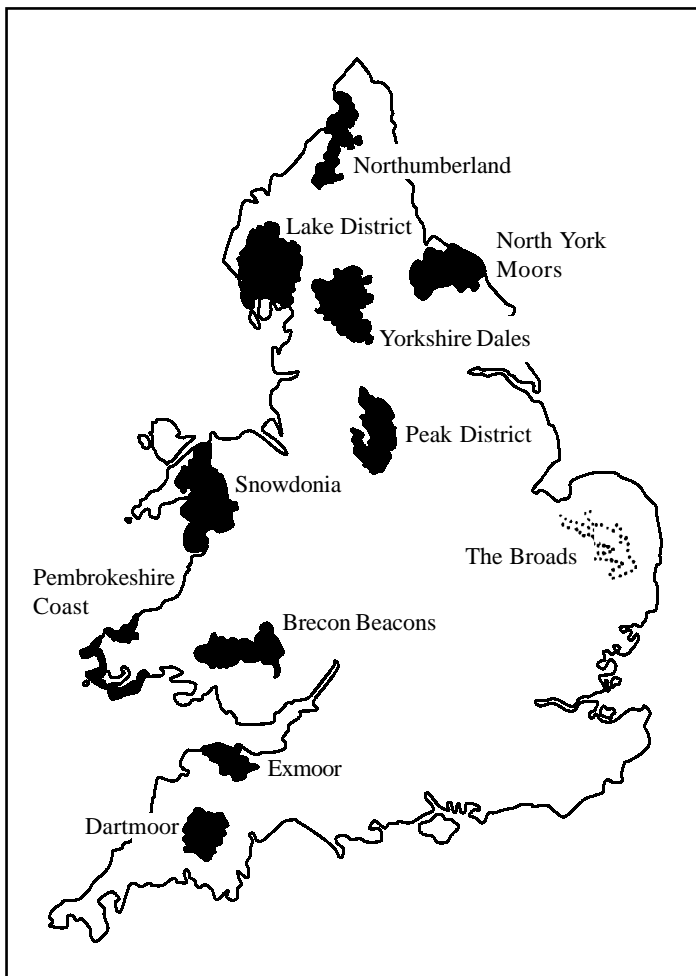




Conflicts in the National Parks

The ten national parks were set up between 1951 and 1957. In 1989 the Broads became the eleventh National Park. The National Parks were set up under The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. The 1995 Environment Act created Independent National Park Authorities who were allowed total control of their area. This Factsheet summarises the major conflicts in the National Parks.

Fig 1. National Parks in England and Wales



The purpose of National Parks

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas.
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the areas by the public.

The authorities also had a duty to promote the social and economic well-being of local communities. In 1975, the **Sandford Report** had established the principle that when there was a conflict between conservation and recreation, conservation should be given priority.

This Factsheet sets out the major conflicts. Detailed case studies of two National Parks will be provided in the April Factsheets.

Each authority has to produce a Park (Structure) Plan which sets out the policies by which the park is to be protected and the above purposes and duties fulfilled. They are able to do this by:

- controlling development
- providing access into the countryside
- setting up and running information centres
- providing car parks and picnic areas
- managing and planting woodland
- buying land
- developing small-scale projects

Conflicts

The National Park authorities have to resolve conflicts which arise between the different users of the park.

The major users of land in the parks are:

- Forestry Commission
- water companies
- industries, particularly quarries
- farmers
- Ministry of Defence
- tourists
- residents
- travellers passing through

Some of the users can claim national importance, others only local.

Conflicts can occur between:

- different types of tourist
- residents and the authorities
- residents and the tourists

The park authorities have to find a balance between local and national priorities, while still fulfilling their duties.

Roads and Traffic

Many of the problems affecting the National Parks can, at least in part, be attributed to the huge increase in tourism to the parks. There are an estimated 100 million individual visits to National Parks each year. Table 1 (overleaf) shows how an increase in traffic can cause problems for National Parks.

Through routes

Many problems are caused not by access roads to the National Parks but by major routes which cross them. These routes are congested by tourist and through traffic. Upgrading is often necessary but this can have a detrimental effect on landscape and general environment.

Table 1. Consequences of increased traffic on National Parks

Reason for traffic increase	Consequences	Remedies
Increased car ownership	Traffic congestion on narrow, winding country roads	Restrictions or bans on vehicle access on some roads
Improved road networks make Parks more accessible	Pollution from exhaust fumes and noise	Negative planning e.g. roads will not be improved or upgraded, limited car parking and narrow, winding lanes will discourage car users
	Danger to pedestrians	Park and Ride schemes reduce congestion
90% of visitors travel by car	Damage to buildings, particularly from heavier vehicles such as coaches	Incentives such as free guided walks are offered to people arriving by public transport
	Delays to traffic such as public transport, essential deliveries and emergency services	Improved public transport access to popular areas
	Shortage of parking spaces	
	Car parks take up land and intrude on the landscape	

Government attitudes

Following the **Sandford Report (1975)** the government stated that:

- Investment in trunk roads should aim to develop routes for long distance traffic which avoid National Parks
- No new routes for long distance traffic should be constructed through a National Park or any existing road upgraded, unless it had been demonstrated that there was a compelling need that could not be met by any reasonable alternative means

Visitors and Recreation

Increasing visitor pressure has a number of results:

- Path erosion** e.g. by the Three Peaks Race in the Yorkshire Dales.
Remedies:
 - signpost alternative paths
 - repair paths using stone blocks, stone chippings, wood and sometimes plastic or textile mats (Pennine Way)
- General erosion** e.g. Screens in Dovedale, Peak District
Other popular areas, even if not paths, may be eroded by overuse. This problem can be solved by fencing off the areas and re-locating paths and bridges to divert tourists away from the eroded area
- Unintentional fires**, especially on heather moorland and in coniferous forests destroy vegetation which accelerates subsequent erosion.
- Litter**
- Vandalism** e.g. deliberate fires, crop trampling etc.
- Loss of privacy for residents of honeypot villages**
- Conflicts between visitors to lakes (Table 2)**

Table 2. Recreational conflicts at lakes

Conflict	Consequence	Remedy
Fast boats and jet skis	Danger to other jet skiers, slower boats, bathers, divers	Set speed limits
Noise from power boats	Disturbance to anglers, bathers, naturalists etc.	Make silencers mandatory on power boats
Power boat wash	Damage to river banks, moored boats	Ban certain types of craft
Boat congestion	Affects all users of the water	Define zones separating conflicting types of boats

Second Homes

Second homes are used mainly in summer, many intermittently, with use concentrated at weekends. Holiday homes are rarely rented out outside the summer season and their purchase, usually by relatively wealthy urban dwellers, is becoming more common.

Holiday homes tend to be concentrated in the most popular and accessible areas. They are particularly common in the Peak District (which is accessible to millions after a relatively short journey) and the Lake District, where many are found close to the major through routes. In Windermere over 15% of houses are second/holiday homes not in permanent occupation. In the Peak District, 5% of houses are second/holiday homes. The advantages and disadvantages of second homes to National Parks are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Advantages and Disadvantages of second homes

Advantages	Disadvantages
Depressed depopulated villages are revived by new residents	To find accommodation young local people may have to move away.
Villages are improved by the renovation of run-down or derelict property	Loss of village community - many of the residents are only present intermittently.
Owners pay council tax but use relatively few services	House price inflation - buyers are able to pay higher house prices. Thus, local people cannot afford to buy property.
	Schools and bus services are little used - many are forced to close.
	Established second home dwellers often spend little money in the area.
	The change to seasonal employment, servicing second home owners, reduces the amount of spending money available to local people.
Local employment of builders, solicitors, estate agents etc.	Local shops/services may decline through lack of trade.

Quarries

Most of the parks are in upland areas and contain hard rock outcrops which can be quarried to provide valuable minerals and aggregates such as: slate in Snowdonia and Lake District, limestone in Peak District, Yorkshire Dales and Brecon Beacons and granite on Dartmoor.

National Park boundaries were drawn to specifically exclude some of the large, pre-existing quarries, as these were seen as a threat to the parks. The problems and benefits of quarrying are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. The effects of quarrying

Problems	Benefits
Noise from periodic blasting and processing plants	Generation of jobs - most employees are local
Dust, from blasting and crushing	Essential industrial materials available e.g. slate for roofing material and limestone for fertiliser, cement and the steel industry
Large lorries on narrow roads	Industrial rates paid to local authorities
Visual pollution from spoil heaps and ugly buildings	Encourages upgrading of roads to cope with lorry traffic
Scenery ruined by scarred hillsides	
Pollution of ground water and streams from run-off	

The Future

The impact of quarrying is likely to increase because:

- Crushed rock aggregates are replacing sand and gravel for some uses
- Many quarries have huge reserves, for which planning permission was granted many years ago with only limited restoration agreements
- New uses for rocks and minerals are being developed e.g. flue-gas desulphurisation plants. Desulphurisation of power station flue gases is an attempt to reduce polluting emissions, yet the demand for extraction of limestone causes a different environmental problem. A flue gas desulphurisation plant at a large power station uses over 300,000 tonnes of high grade limestone each year
- Production is being concentrated at fewer, larger (and more intrusive), cost-effective quarries
- Quarrying companies justify claims for large extensions on the lack of viability of small quarries

Examples of possible future threats:

- Prospecting for oil and gas is now taking place on the North Yorkshire Moors
- The installation of flue gas desulphurisation plants at all power stations
- In 1982 a ruling stated that to re-open a disused quarry is not 'development', which means that several hundred disused quarries in the United Kingdom can be re-opened without planning permission

Policy

Since 1949, before any mineral working developments can take place, the National Park authorities have to show that the following apply:

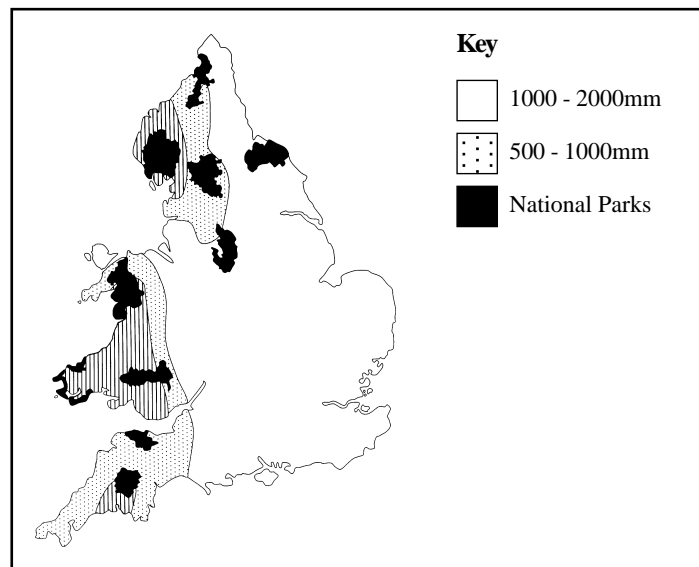
- The exploitation of minerals is 'absolutely necessary' in the public interest
- There is 'no possible alternative source of supply'

If those two conditions are satisfied, permission is subject to the condition that restoration takes place at the earliest possible opportunity

Water Storage

The uplands of England and Wales are the areas with the highest rainfall and run-off. Most of the National Parks are within these areas, and are therefore important sources of water supply (Fig 2).

Fig 2. Mean annual run-off



The National Parks contain 137 reservoirs with a total water surface area of 47 square kilometres. Over 70% of the reservoirs are in four parks (Table 5).

Table 5. Reservoir distribution in National Parks

Park	No. of Reservoirs	Percentage of total reservoirs (%)
Peak District	54	39
Snowdonia	17	12
Lake District	17	12
Brecon Beacons	14	10

There are a number of problems associated with reservoirs in National Parks:

- 1. Landscapes are altered:**
 - Valley bottoms are flooded
 - Dams and pumping stations can be intrusive
 - The non-seasonal outflow of water can expose lake deposits creating an 'artificial' shoreline
 - Hillsides around reservoirs often have blocks of conifers planted, to stabilise the soils
- 2. Economy is altered:**
 - the flooded land is often the most valuable farmland in the area. Farms may be forced to sell stock due to loss of land, thereby becoming economically unviable, or can even be completely flooded
 - altering lake level can cause problems for recreational or commercial boating interests
- 3. Ecology is altered:**
 - raising a lake level, to increase capacity, or lowering it by extraction can put shore plants at risk
 - the migration of fish can be interrupted by dams or weirs
- 4. Access denied:**
 - public access to the lake, reservoir and often the area around can be denied. This is to prevent any possible pollution

There are some benefits from the use of the areas for water storage:

- Provision of an essential resource
- Many believe that additional lakes enhance the landscape.
- The lakes and reservoirs provide an important recreational resource.

The Future

Water consumption is not rising as fast as earlier suggested. No new water resources should be needed until at least 2000. Rising consumption can be at least slowed by investment in modern mains and repairs as some authorities lose over 25% of water through leakage.

Military

There has always been a demand from the military for large areas of open land for training and particularly for live firing. Many of the areas were used by the military before their designation as National Parks. The issues associated with military use of National Park land are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Consequences of military use of National Park land

Problems	Benefits
Access is denied to the public because of the dangers from firing. Dangers from unexploded ammunition. Noise and disturbance from firing and low flying aircraft. Damage to the landscape by explosives and shellfire. Visually obtrusive structures such as warning lags, notices, huts and observation towers.	Military training. Jobs - local residents cannot easily find other forms of employment in such areas.

Table 7 shows the amount of land that is owned or leased by the Military in each National Park

Table 7. Percentage of land owned or leased by Ministry of Defence or over which they have rights

National Park	Percentage	Actual land
Northumberland	22%	22878ha
Dartmoor	15%	14256ha
Pembrokeshire Coast	4.5%	2629ha
Brecon Beacons	1%	1351ha
North Yorks Moors	0.85%	11220ha
Peak District	0.75%	1078ha
Yorkshire Dales	0.4%	707ha
Lake District	0.3%	687ha
Snowdonia	0.1%	214ha
Exmoor	0%	

The Future

- The Countryside Commission and the Council for National Parks both agree that it is unrealistic to expect training to cease in the parks.
- The end of the ‘Cold War’ has permitted a reconsideration of military needs and the Government is now looking to release all land on Dartmoor which is surplus to requirements, to introduce more land for recreational use, and to end all live firing by 2000.

Forestry

Moorland dominates much of the upland of the National Parks, this is not the climax vegetation but it does have conservation and landscape value. Much has been lost due to afforestation by Forestry Commission and private companies, traditionally this has resulted in a monoculture system of conifer plantations to give maximum productivity and ease of management and marketing. The problems associated with this are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Problems caused by Forestry to the National Parks

Problems	Solutions
Mainly coniferous species were planted which are faster growing than native deciduous trees. Being non-native coniferous trees have a low conservation value. Monoculture - unnatural appearance. Planting was in straight lines and regular blocks which did not fit the natural contours. Dense planting, made access difficult. All trees are the same age - visually unattractive especially after clear felling.	The Forestry Commission no longer has timber production as its only aim, so there has been a shift towards recreation orientated activities. In 1998 new government regulations banned ‘all-coniferous’ planting. More irregular planting to increase conservation value and to give a more natural appearance. Access encouraged with provision of recreation facilities e.g. car parks, picnic sites.

Farming

Farming is involved in conflicts in the following areas:

- **Access**
Farmers often wish to deny access to their land to prevent crop damage, disturbance and damage to their walls or fences.
- **Landscape**
Farmers may wish to put up new modern farm buildings which may be obtrusive on the landscape.
- **Conservation**
Overgrazing, particularly by sheep, is a threat to upland flora. The government has the right to impose a 12 month halt on farmers wishing to reclaim moor or heath in National Parks. However, in recent years park authorities have been unable to persuade the government to impose halts on reclamation proposals in Exmoor, The North Yorks Moors and the Pembrokeshire Coast.
- **Pollution**
Pollution of water courses, lakes and reservoirs is caused by fertilisers and spray chemicals leached from fields and silage and slurry run-off.

Planning

As well as ruling on major developments the park authorities are able to control smaller scale plans such as new houses, small buildings, camp sites signs etc. They rule that buildings shall be built from locally occurring materials so as to blend with the general environment and older already existing buildings.

Access

- Over 69% of park land is privately owned, mainly by farmers.
- Another 15% is owned by organisations such as water authorities and the Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- Only 15% is owned by organisations with some commitment to allowing public access e.g. National Trust and the park authorities.

Access has been denied, either permanently or at particular times and in specific places, by the MoD, water authorities, the Forestry Commission, quarries and other industrial organisations and a host of private landowners, particularly farmers. Much MoD land is permanently inaccessible to the public although some areas are open, when not being used by the military. Land used for quarries and mining is virtually all completely closed to the public. In most areas there is no general ‘right to roam’.

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